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The Great Feast of Language in "Love's Labour's Lost" (Princeton Legacy Library)

William C. Carroll

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This book contends that in *Love's Labour's Lost* Shakespeare sought to discover the ways in which the imagination uses and abuses language. The author's critical reading shows that the characters are endowed with a wide variety of rhetorical disguises. Each assumes that his verbal and social point of view is correct, and the limitations and virtues of each viewpoint are explored as the drama unfolds.

In an elegant examination of theme and style, Professor Carroll heightens the reader's awareness of Shakespeare's marvellously inventive use of language. The author analyzes the different kinds of style, the characters' attitudes toward language, the play's theatrical modes, the frequent metamorphoses, and the debates. The term "debate"--justified by Shakespeare's use of the medieval *conflictus*--relates to both theme and structure. The author finds that the conflicting theories about the proper relation of language and imagination are resolved stylistically and thematically only in the final Debate between Spring and Winter, where the playwright reasserts the nature and value of good art.

Originally published in 1976.

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