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In the course of my recent work, I have sought to establish a more nuanced understanding of the pedagogical role played by Shakespeare's fools. Education, and the rapidly growing access to it, was a hot topic for debate in Renaissance England. With this increased access came anxiety, as education came to be viewed and feared as a vehicle for social mobility. Using the historical work of Nicholas Orme, the critical work of Enid Welsford and Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of speech genres, I have argued that Shakespeare's fools, due to the inordinate number of parallels between fool and schoolmaster, may be viewed as dramatic commentaries on this anxiety over the social role of education. In essence, I have expanded on Jonathan Bate's notion of Shakespeare as a "foolosopher," and defined his fools as "foolmasters." *Love's Labour's Lost*, long recognized as Shakespeare's most pedantically educational play, is the logical place to continue this inquiry.

Building on the work of Darryll Grantley, Emily Bryan, and particularly Ursula Potter, my paper will engage with three very specific encounters between the schoolmaster Holofernes and three verbal opponents—Dull, Moth and the gathered members of the court. Holofernes, the embodiment of the worst sort of schoolmaster as defined by Erasmus, repeatedly attempts to cross social boundaries through the commoditization of his learning. Rather than use his knowledge to better understand his world, Holofernes views his incomplete education as a commodity to be exchanged for increased social status. Each of his three opponents, who rise incrementally in social class, may be read as a clash between Holofernes and a sentry of sorts, guarding the very boundary that Holofernes attempts to cross. My paper will argue that Holofernes, though he attempts to rise over the borders between himself and the upper class, is actually reduced in each of the three encounters. Rather than constructing a noble identity, Holofernes experiences a complete loss of identity. He ends the play neither as the proper fool—a role fulfilled by Costard—nor as a true pedant—defined by R.B. McKerrow as a person whose standard of excellence is higher than one's own.

In Holofernes, a sad and somewhat pitiful figure emerges—not quite foolish enough to be a fool, but not quite skilled enough to be a pedant. The result, the pedantic fool, belongs nowhere and is punished everywhere to the delight of all. By trying to construct an identity that could traverse borders, he has reduced himself into a being that only exists within those borders. The comic role played by such a character is clear—the long-overdue punishment of Holofernes' irascible arrogance and social pretension is a joyous event. On a larger scale, however, I will argue that Holofernes serves as an object lesson to both the members of the court and to the Elizabethan audience—not against seeking an education, but rather against seeking to utilize education to poorly redefine oneself.