

Much ado about
nothing act ii scene iii
and love's labour's
lost act iv scene iii...



The title Much Ado About Nothing perhaps superficially intimates a great amount of irrelevant, unnecessary fuss, however deeper consideration indicates it has a profound resonance. The major 'Ado' or complication within the plot springs from Claudio's denunciation of Hero and moreover, the minor 'Ado' derives from the deception which unites Beatrice and Benedick. Act II Scene iii is significant in this minor narrative because it acts as a catalyst for the expression of perhaps an already latent attraction between the latter two characters.

Furthermore, the Elizabethan pronunciation of 'Nothing' as 'Noting' denotes that the themes of eavesdropping and overhearing are central to the play's importance. Similarly, they can be applied to Act IV Scene iii of the play Love's Labour's Lost although their importance is by contrast, not pivotal to the play's narrative. Thus in this essay the significance of deception, eavesdropping and the discovery of the truth shall be investigated within both scenes in order to analyze their functions within the plots and their overall importance to the corresponding plays.

The character of Benedick, within Much Ado About Nothing openly scorns and disdains the notion of love. His misogynistic beliefs are emphasized in his opening soliloquy of Act II Scene iii where he criticizes Claudio for becoming 'the argument of his own scorn by falling in love' (II. iii. 11-12). However Benedick never completely dismisses the possibility that he may eventually be 'made an oyster of' (II. iii. 25), and in preparation he contemplates all the graces he expects his woman to have.

... Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll one; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, ... (II. iii. 30-34). All of these qualities, with the exception of 'mild' ironically portray the character of Beatrice whom Benedick previously addresses as 'my dear Lady Disdain' (I. i. 109). Comic conventions additionally suggest that the end of the play will assuredly unite the couple together. Therefore, much significance dwells upon the theme of deception.

Perhaps from the outset, Benedick is a victim of deceit or denial with regard to his true emotions? Alternatively, maybe Benedick's decision to requite Beatrice's supposed feelings stem from an element of sympathy embedded in his mind by Claudio's declaration, 'Hero thinks surely she will die; for she says she / will die if he love her not... ' (II. iii. 169-170)? This has caused controversy in the play's critical examination of the couple's relationship, however Act II Scene iii is implicitly indicative that both suggestions have significance in their own right.

The speed in which Benedick reacts to the revelation of Beatrice's affections suggests that he possesses underlying feelings and the mere fact that "the white bearded fellow speaks it" contributes to the genuineness of what he overhears. In addition, the art of soliloquy allows him to be true to his heart. 'I will be horribly in love with / her' (II. iii. 226-227) expresses an innate enthusiasm, which provides a sharp contrast to his reaction in the prior scene where he states 'I would not marry / her, though she were endowed with all that Adam / had left him before he transgressed' (II. . 234-236).

Such an abrupt change of opinion denotes that there is evidence to support the view that Benedick is perhaps a victim of self-denial. Nonetheless, the ambiguity in the speech derives from Benedick's contemplation of what he overhears. What seems to dominate his consciousness initially is not primarily that Beatrice loves him, but that she is suffering because of her feelings for him, ' They seem to pity the lady: it seems / her affections have their full bent. Love me?

Why, / it must be requited' (II. iii. 214-216). The question of the couple's sincerity towards each other remains unresolved until the end of the play, where it is still suggested, even if only in fun, that they sympathize with each other's predicaments and that is the reason for their marriage: Bene. Come, I will have thee, but by this light I take thee for pity (V. iv. 92-93). Beat. I would not deny you, but by this good day I yield upon great persuasion, and partly to save our life, for I was told you were in consumption (V. iv. 94-96).

However, the relevance of the scene within the play coupled with the parallel scene that follows, allows both characters to question their emotional mind sets, whilst providing necessary entertainment and lightheartedness in preparation for the sharp contrast of the main plot, the denunciation of Hero that supercedes it. Balthasar's song is central to the scene's depiction of deception, coupled with male inconstancy within loving relationships.

Balthasar moreover lures the reader to the ambivalence of the title Much Ado About Nothing whilst preparing for his song: ' Note this before my notes; / There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting' (II. iii. 54-55). The song

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cleverly unites elements of both the main and sub plots under the theme of deception. Within the immediate context, Claudio, Don Pedro and Leonato are planning on deceiving Benedick to enable him to grasp an essential truth about his possible feelings for Beatrice. In the wider framework of the main narrative, Claudio accompanied by Don Pedro are later deceived into believing that Hero has committed adultery.

Don Pedro's request of ' get us some excellent music; for tomorrow / night we would have it at the Lady Hero's cham- / ber-window' (II. iii. 84-87) provides a clear reminder in the reader's mind of the calculated conspiracy to shame Hero, soon to take place. In addition, the song acts as an apology for male inconstancy or fundamental ambivalence, perhaps implying that ' One foot in the sea, and one on the shore / To one thing constant never' (II. iii. 64) is inevitable. The theme of male inconstancy is additionally prevalent within Act IV Scene iii of Love's Labour's Lost.

At the beginning of the play Berowne Dumaine and Longaville swear an oath of allegiance that they will solely dedicate all their efforts to the Court and their study. However in contrast to Much Ado About Nothing, the play turns the conventional allegory of love upside down, for the men's oath is suppose to protect them from the importunities of suitors. ' I am betrayed by keeping company / With men like you, men of inconstancy' (IV. iii. 176-177) indicates not a warning to women about male variability, (Balthasar's song) but ironically in this instance, suggests that women are the influential source of these circumstances.

In comparison to Act IV Scene iii in *Love's Labour's Lost* the hoax of Benedick is written ultimately in the form of prose. The principle contrast between the two scenes is the fact that whilst Benedick is deceived into believing Beatrice's rumored affections, Berowne, Dumaine, Longaville and the King of Navarre collectively declare true expressions of love for their respective potential suitors (although they each believe they are alone whilst confessing). The theme of eavesdropping or 'noting' is universal to both of the Comedies. Within *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act IV Scene iii is primarily written in verse.

This emphasizes the heightened emotion and passion that accumulates, from the expressions of love, between the four male characters. Berowne initiates the revelations of love, although he equates himself with a 'fool' and being 'as mad as Ajax' (IV. iii. 6). Shakespeare frequently uses the image of a 'fool' in association with men falling in love, and this is evident within Act II Scene iii in *Much Ado About Nothing*: I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of this own scorn by falling in love: (Benedick, II. iii. 7-12)

Furthermore, Berowne again refers to himself and the other members of the Court as 'Four woodcocks in a dish' (IV. iii. 79) which provides the reader with a constant reminder of male pride and reputation underlying the matters of love. There is significant irony in Berowne's statement 'I would not care a pin if / the other three were in' (IV. iii. 16-17) because he is about to witness each and every confession from his fellow courtiers.

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One of the few moments in *Love's Labour's Lost* that is intrinsically dramatic in inspiration is the comedy of the multiple eavesdropping. The order in which the men reveal their affections is the mirror image of the order that it is exposed. This creates the opportunity for humorous hypocrisy as the amusement increases in intensity when each character reveals himself, 'He, he and you - and you, my liege - and I / Are pick-purses in love and we deserve to die' (IV. iii. 204-205). Nonetheless, the heroes are too good humored to resent being 'noted' and exposed.

The shared experience regarding their affections, unite them with one goal, the romantic pursuit of their suitors. Berowne remarks 'how love can vary wit' (IV. iii. 97), which holds great significance in relation to the theme of inconstancy. The idea is moreover evident within Act II Scene iii in *Much Ado About Nothing*. The discovery that Beatrice allegedly loves Benedick compels him to uncover double meanings in the true harshness of Beatrice's words 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to / dinner' (II. iii. 238-239) and furthermore, 'I look no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me' - that's as much as to say, 'Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks' (II. iii. 249-2252). Benedick's change in his style of expression towards Beatrice not only provides affirmation of male inconstancy within the play but furthermore, presents a positive sign that the plan to deceive him has been successful. The effectiveness of both scenes can be evaluated in relation to whether the discovery of the truth, or assumed truth, contributes to the rest of the respective narratives.

Although *Love's Labour's Lost* has a relatively simplified plot in comparison to other Shakespearean comedies, Act IV Scene iii nonetheless forwards the <https://assignbuster.com/much-ado-about-nothing-act-ii-scene-iii-and-loves-labours-lost-act-iv-scene-iii-essay-sample/>

narrative through extremely witty and verbal speeches. The king of Navarre and his lords philosophize about what they originally swore: 'To fast, to study and to see no woman' (IV. iii. 288). The element of creating an environment to overhear one another's sonnets of love, allow the men to openly express their affections unabashedly, leading them to the eventual agreeable conclusion,

Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves to find ourselves, Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths (IV. iii. 335-336). In terms of plot progression, as the title *Love's Labour's Lost* suggests, the men never succeed in their quest for the pursuit of their suitors. Nonetheless, Act IV Scene iii unites their desired affections, giving them a combined courage, which at least enables them to prioritize about what is important to their happiness. Benedick's cynicism towards romantic relationships is challenged within Act II Scene iii in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

His final soliloquy where he states, 'When I said I would die a bachelor, I did / not think I should live till I were married' (II. iii. 234-235), suggests the plot to deceive him has been productive. In the wider context of the plot, the scene becomes a play within a play, which drives the eavesdropper Benedick to love his former antagonist. Furthermore, as the first hoax in a play full of several deceptions, the sub plot appears to represent an opportunity for new beginnings whilst in sharp contrast the main narrative is soon to experience the bleak complications of Don John's deception of Hero.

Nonetheless, the tone at the end of Act II Scene iii is one of optimism as is indicated by Benedick's statement, 'I will go get her picture' (II. iii. 254). In

this instance the theme of deception and eavesdropping works for the good of the narrative. It allows Benedick to discover a certain truth, perhaps one that he wants to hear, but definitely one that remodels his character into a confident and steadfast human being, a contrast to the whimsical, stubborn and image of male inconstancy that he represented at the beginning of the play.