

# How does shakespeare present deception in the play? essay sample

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



Much Ado about nothing is about 'misapprehensions, misprisions, misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and misapplications'. The plot of the play is based upon deliberate deceptions, some malevolent and others gracious. The deception of Claudio and Don Pedro results in Hero's disgrace, while the ruse of her death prepares the way for her redemption and reconciliation with Claudio. Lines like "men were deceivers ever" (2. 3. 54) bring about the fact that the deception is a key theme in the play. Each of the characters in the play is the victim of deception, and it is because they are deceived that they act in the ways that they do. Nothing shows that deceit is essentially evil, but in the play it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between good and bad deception. The bible says: "But people who are evil and cheat others will go from bad to worse. They will fool others, but they will also be fooling themselves." (2 Tim 3: 13). The play is about the nature of love and the power it has to mislead men and women in delusion, forming a reality that they wish to see rather than the truth. The theme of deception is one that runs throughout the play and Benedick and Beatrice are central to most of these plots. Their relationship comments on that of Hero and Claudio which ends in tragedy because of deception.

In act one when the love match between Claudio and Hero has been set in motion by Don Pedro with his plan to woo Hero in disguise, is the first of many deceptions in the play. Then at the instigation of Don John, Claudio begins to mistrust Don Pedro, thinking he has been deceived. Shakespeare presents deception for the audience to be able to distinguish truth and illusion.

Benedick's wit comes from self-deception; he pretends to be a hardened bachelor who takes notice of women: 'Shall I never see a bachelor three score again? Claudio asks his best friend if he did 'note' her, his future wife. Benedick creates an image of himself as 'a professed tyrant of their sex.... I do not like her'. From the description he gives, he has obviously studied her in considerable detail. His friends are really making fun of him. Claudio's reply shows completely he is later deceived over the plot about Hero. Here he is all praises: 'a modest young lady', it does not take a great deal to change his mind about her. Benedick says that Beatrice 'were she not possessed with fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May cloth the last December', so the second piece of deception is about his perceived relationship with Beatrice. He finds her attractive but she will not be seen as inferior to his wit.

In the second scene Benedick is in hiding and is made to 'note' the words of his friends. But he is being 'noted' as well. After Balthasar has sung an appropriate song to put Benedick in the mood to believe that he is loved, and his respect for Leonato's age has provided Benedick with the assurance to believe what he is hearing, it is easy to convince Benedick that Beatrice loves him. This deception is done out of a sense of fun and a bringing together of two people whose pride would keep them apart. The exact opposite of this scene is carried out by Hero on Beatrice, who so both are deceived and both want to be deceived because they are too proud and set in their ways to make the first approach.

The deception is comic because in the final analysis the conclusion of the action is a happy one, with the characters succeeding in overcoming the obstacles placed in their way. Deception in the play is of three kinds involving, character, situation and language. An example of Shakespeare's use of deception involving character might be the parallel changes of attitude which Beatrice and Benedick have towards each other. From the outside Beatrice is established as a 'realistic' character: 'I have a goodbye, uncle; I can see a church by daylight' (II. 1. 72-3), and she is opposed to the notion of marriage since she believes no man is worthy of her. But for all this realism of outlook, and despite her alleged ability to 'apprehend' the motives of others, she is deceived in Act 3, scene 1 into believing that she has misjudged Benedick, and she resolves to change.

From this point she aside her 'wit' and struggles to find a language which will adequately describe her feelings, but the situation is exacerbated by her earlier railing against the very condition, which she now espouses. Right to the end of the play, she is forced to preserve a 'public' face, which reminds the reader of her earlier attitude, as she has been trapped, like Benedick, into a sense of the contradictions in her own character. Thus what she thinks she knows about herself is clearly at odds with what at least some of the other characters know about her, and with what we know about all of them.

Benedick's situation is a little more complicated since Act 3 scene 1 Hero and Ursula are in part correct in saying that he is in love with Beatrice. But in Act 2, scene 3 Benedick has no evidence whatever upon which to base his change of heart except the contrived dialogue which he has overheard. This

scene begins with his reiterating his rejection of marriage, although it does not take much to persuade him. What he overhears leads him, so he thinks to a new knowledge of himself, although we know that it is an awareness which has very little basis in reality. The irony of Benedick's position, and indeed, his character here, is that he is now doing exactly what Beatrice had earlier accused him of doing: Changing his 'faith' according to each new 'fashion', and yet we know that there is more to genuine self-knowledge than that. Benedick had far further to go than he thinks, and it is the distance between his notion of himself and ours which provides the source for the comic deception attached to his character.

The play abounds with the deception of situation. Don Pedro's offer to woo Hero for Claudio provides one occasion, since creates an ambiguous impression upon more than one character in the play. Also, the series of plots within plots, where by manipulators are transformed into victims all contribute to the kind of deception of situation, which generates an awareness of the disparity between the knowledge that the characters themselves possess concerning their predicaments.

The way in which Shakespeare presents deception in the play is extensive involving situations, character, and language itself. Through out the play there is 'false report', mainly through people over hearing conversations. Benedick overhears his friends talking about them and Hero, the plot against Hero depends upon this; Leonato is told that someone has overheard Don Pedro tell Claudio that he is in love with Hero. The masked dance is a form of deception with people disguising themselves. Many of these deceptions are

carried out in order to do evil. Don John is mostly responsible for this. Hero is 'killed' by the deception played upon her, the tragic element of the play. The Friar's plot to announce her death until her name can be cleared is yet another deception, but here the motive is good.

The watch brings a comic element to the deceptions. They are deluded about their own power and the power of the words they use malapropism, show this. However their deception helped clarify the plot later. At the end of the play Shakespeare presents deception as the resolution to an end. Claudio shows that he has abandoned jealousy and suspicions and fears of being controlled, which were all deceptions and others illusions and is ready to marry. 'Give me your hand before the holy friar, I am your husband if you like me to be' Claudio's acceptance of his masked bride demonstrates the truth of his love for Hero, while Hero unmarks to reveal the truth of her chastity.

Much Ado about nothing is a play based on deception, which Shakespeare presents to us in many ways. Through love, jealousy, fear and truth we can see deception appear in all circumstances to the deceit of the characters for one another. Although there are many other themes: the idea of social grace, loss of honour and public shaming in the end deception is neither positive nor negative, it is the means to an end.