

The art of storytelling



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Picasso once said, “ Art is lies that tell the truth.” Art requires the suspension of reality or rather the ability to transcend the expected. In suspending that reality, however, greater truths can be addressed without the restrictions established by grounding the work within the confines of everyday existence. Throughout William Shakespeare’s comedic play *Much Ado about Nothing*, the art of deceit exposes pre-existing truths. Furthermore, because deceit is employed for an amiable intent and outcome, the dishonest means by which this truth is uncovered is justified. While the companions of Beatrice and Benedick contrive them into thinking the other loves them first, they are merely offering a gentle nudge to a romance that existed all along. Because Beatrice and Benedick do in fact love one another, their companions commit no wrong by spreading those rumors. Whether or not the end justifies the means is academic and too generic to be covered in that blanket statement. Rather, the focus should be that the perhaps-deceitful means are excusable when the intention and outcome result in the uncovering of a truth.

Somewhat concealed amidst the sparring of wit between Benedick and Beatrice lies a true love and sense of respect for one another. Upon hearing of the soldier’s return from the war, Beatrice is quick to inquire the safety, albeit it coupled with an insult, of Benedick (MAAN. I. I. 28). Her eagerness to know of his safety above all other details reveals a genuine concern for him. Additionally, Leonato reveals soon thereafter that the two have long engaged in a sort of “ merry war,” thereby establishing that the two have history and therefore chemistry in their relationship (MAAN. I. I. 57).

Furthermore, Benedick’s love for Beatrice is slightly uncovered at the ball when she “ unwittingly” tells Benedick her assessment of his character. Upon learning that Beatrice thinks him “ the prince’s jester,” he becomes obsessed

with learning why his “ Lady Beatrice should know [him], and not know [him]” (MAAN. II. I. 131, 193-194). Had Benedick truly hated Beatrice with the passion he portrays in his dialogue, he would pay little attention to her opinion of him. Because all of these instances occur before the “ setup” plot is even contrived, it becomes apparent that “ Beatrice and Benedick are in love with each other without knowing it” (Goddard 276). In discovering that amorous feelings do exist between Beatrice and Benedick, the meddling actions of their friends, hoping to nurture that love, is excusable. Had Don Pedro and the others “ concocted their whole plot out of nothing” their deceitful means of bringing them together “ would not have been justified” (Goddard 276). Recognizing that Beatrice would be an “ excellent wife for Benedick” and Benedick not being the “ unhopefulest husband,” Don Pedro devises a plot with the intention of giving “ nature a nudge” by contriving to have them overhear deceptive reports exposing their mutual, though feared unrequited, love (MAAN. II. II. 332, 356, Goddard 276). The eagerness with which both characters receive these overheard conversations, coupled with their willingness to cast aside their former abhorrence of marriage, further supports that love is at the basis of their relationship. Throughout the exposition of the play, subtle changes in their humors and actions (such as the change in attitude toward marriage and the sonnet writing) indicate that, given the chance and proper environment, their love will grow (MAAN. III. I. 229-232, V. IV. 91). Even after the lies begin to unravel at the wedding scene and Beatrice and Benedick briefly revisit their former state of being too proud for love, they are unable to fight the truth of their love. Because the deception occurred out of pure intention and resulted in a joyful outcome, the act of intentionally lying to Beatrice and Benedick is justified. Although

Beatrice and Benedick have a deep love for one another from the start, their sense of pride inhibits them from expressing their emotions. The interference and meddling of their friends serve as lies that tell the truth. By removing that initial fear of weakness that comes with being the first to reveal love, neither Beatrice nor Benedick feel they are at risk of seeming inferior to the other. They are able to transcend their past reality, grounded in pride, in order to finally see the greater truth of their love for one another. Although deceit and trickery are used to “toy” with their emotions, the intention and outcome succeed in revealing a love that existed the entire time. In this particular scenario, the ends could be said to justify the means—all it took was a little artful storytelling to uncover the truth.