

Much ado about nothing benedick and beatrice essay



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Ayush Salgia 9T 12/02/12 Explore the ways in which Beatrice and Benedick are presented in the masked revellers scene, and elsewhere in the play, and in the performed version. In 'Much Ado About Nothing,' William Shakespeare presents two very similar characters: Benedick of Padua and Beatrice of Messina in a variety of ways, from rancorous 'harpy' to machiavellian 'jester' after their suggested punitive break up to strong lovers who ensue the play harmoniously engaged, with plenty of witticisms along the way.

The play charts the major change in both of them and their relationship in their most comedic and romantic moments and their relationship is affectionately brought to life in Kenneth Branagh's 1993 version of the play. Firstly, in act II scene I of 'Much Ado About Nothing' by William Shakespeare, Beatrice of Messina is portrayed as a woman who is extremely satirical of men and in particular, Benedick of Padua, who she had a previous relationship with. This is clearly demonstrated by her pernicious jests aimed solely at men: Why, he is the Prince's jester, a very dull fool. Only his gift is devising impossible slanders. ' Beatrice's cunning and haughty barb to a masked Benedick shows her averseness to Benedick. In addition to this, she further insults Benedick by the words 'dull' and 'fool. ' it implies that Benedick is gray, boring and imbecilic, contrary to what Benedick thinks about himself. The choice of words add further insult to Benedick as they are strong words, not used in their ordinary fights, showing Benedick the true hatred of him by Beatrice for a variety of reasons.

The satirical paraphrase 'only his gift is devising impossible slanders' is particularly wounding to Benedick as it alludes to the fact that he is useless, and is not good at anything, from love to war, it's clearly sacrificial as it

amuses other people, while still affecting Benedick and her male victims exceptionally. This hurts Benedick particularly because Beatrice implies that their previous relationship was destroyed by Benedick being good for nothing, except slandering Beatrice.

She hints that he was to blame for their relationship breaking up and them ending up like this. Her antagonism towards Benedick is also shown in earlier scenes, just before their first encounter where Beatrice cunningly asks 'I pray you, is Signor Mountanto returned from the wars, or no? ' She cleverly coins the name 'Mountanto' with obvious sexual innuendo from a fencing term for an upward thrust, insulting Benedick once more.

Her hatred of Benedick is shown from a slightly different perspective by the witticism 'stuffed man' in which she implies that he is a scarecrow ie something ugly and mocked which causes the birds, in this case ladies, to run away, just as Beatrice had. In Beatrice's barb: 'one is too like an image and says nothing,' her criticalness of all men is exposed. This is because she describes Don John, a quiet and reserved villain , unknown as notorious at the time, who had not insulted her previously and had not even talked to her, in an extremely antagonistic way.

This clearly portrays that Beatrice is unwilling to marry, and that she detests all men, furthermore emphasized by her witty statement to her uncle, Leonato, in which she states 'he that hath no beard is less than a man, and he that hath no beard is less than a man' showing that she believes no man is perfect for her. Thus, Beatrice is shown as critical of men and especially Benedick with her satirical comments. This is upheld in the 1993 film version of the 'Much Ado About Nothing', directed by Kenneth Branagh.

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Her satirical comments at once envelop the scene and, while amusing the audience both in the screen and out, hurt Benedick very deeply. Her jests are first of all aimed at Don John, where she states: 'I am heartburned an hour after' in a comedic way, causing Antonio to snigger. Here, her criticalness of all men is shown as even though it caused her family members to laugh, Beatrice said it with a veil of sincerity, shown by her facial and bodily gestures of seriousness, emphasized by a long shot to capture everyone in the background and their reactions.

Beatrice particular emphasis on the word 'heartburned' to show her extreme distaste for him, and all men by saying that she feels ill and frail when she sees him. 'Heartburn' is a strong adjective that conjures images of extreme pain and discomfort, and Branagh has cleverly used this image to add emphasis on the word. When Beatrice guilefully insults Benedick when they are each behind their masks talking, insulting Benedick by calling him a 'dull fool,' she again demonstrates her abhorrence of Benedick, backed up by the close up of her face, with her wittily raised eyebrows and satirical expression to highlight the fact for the audience.

Secondly, in act II scene I of Shakespeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing,' Benedick, normally hard and comedic, is portrayed as profoundly sensitive underneath his outer shell: 'I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards and every word stabs. ' Benedick's desperate confession to Don Pedro after Beatrice's vindictive and machiavellian barbs show that, while on the outside, Benedick doesn't seem to care about what Beatrice thinks and remarks about him, inside, Benedick is hurting badly.

In addition, Benedick seems to hate Beatrice thinking badly of him, hinting to a previous earlier relationship between them both. By personifying Beatrice's jests to 'poniards,' Benedick shows that he has been hurt more by Beatrice's few words than in the war, heightening the depth of Beatrice's insults. By stating that he 'stood like a man at a mark,' Benedick believes that he is noble and honest, unlike Beatrice. It also increases the impact of witticisms. 'Every word stabs' personifies Beatrice's crass taunts as sharp weapons.

Benedick claims that Beatrice's words had literally sucked the blood out of him, just as when stabbed, someone loses a lot of blood. This is reiterated momentarily in act I scene I in their first proper war of tongues, where Benedick says 'o' God's name, I have done. ' The reader can perceive this comment by Benedick as a dismissal gesture, probably to stop Beatrice saying something hurtful about their previous relationship, which would change who the other characters in the play's thoughts on who had won.

As such, Benedick is depicted as sensitive underneath a robust carapace.. Moreover, in the film version of the play, the audience can clearly see this in both the part where Beatrice is insulting him pretending not to know who was actually behind the mask and nearer to the end of the scene, when Benedick despondently admitted to Don Pedro how much Beatrice's words actually hurt him.. When Beatrice is insulting Benedick underneath his mask, the audience can see Benedick's head droop at Beatrice's taunts, where she says ' why, he is the prince's jester, a very dull fool. Benedick seems visibly hurt and this is astutely emphasised by a close up shot of his face, where the audience can see him stand with his head bowed silently and touching his face during an awkward silence. Benedick's inner sensitive and slight

childishness is recapitulated by Benedick's foolish mask and puerile accent, which was evidently not a natural accent. It is also shown after Beatrice insults Benedick with sacrificial barbs and witticisms, when Benedick runs up to Don Pedro and pleads the Don to send him away from 'this harpy', referring to Beatrice.

Benedick's desperation is apparent due to close ups of his face, showing his desperate and wounded face, this, coupled with his strained voice which was close to tears, depicts the fact that Benedick inside has a soft heart. , which can easily be broken. When Benedick pleads with Don Pedro, saying 'will your grace command me any service to the worlds end,' Beatrice raises an eyebrow humorously, indicating that she is happy to see Benedick hurting from her words.

Benedick's childlike and sensitive manner is also shown in act II scene III, where, when Benedick sees Claudio, Don Pedro and Leonato approaching, he runs away with his foldable chair, and instead tries to place it further away from the trio, however, he wasn't able to open it out properly and thus he couldn't sit down, this was coupled with his imbecilic like sneaking around when Don Pedro, Claudio and Leonato were discussing how Beatrice loved Benedick.

Therefore, Benedick is portrayed as sensitive under his outer shell in the film version of the play as well. Thus, the audience witness a clear change in the characters of Beatrice and Benedick, in terms of their cynical views on marriage, opposition against the opposite sex and their change in emotions and how they portray it. An unexpected change is presented in both characters by the end of the play, as they both fall deeply in love and marry

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each other. Benedick becomes 'the married man' and Beatrice's mouth is finally 'stop(ped)'.

In contrary, it is obvious that they will never fully abandon their 'war of sexes', shown by Benedick claiming he takes her only 'for pity' and Beatrice 'to save life'. Their jocular relationship becomes the most important resolution of the play, followed by the capture of Don John, 'the plain dealing villain. ' Their relationship is critical in structuring the events of the play and they both ultimately bring back order and conclude to the play through a happy marriage.