Much Ado About ‘Noting’ Essay, Research Paper

Much Ado About Nothing is a play that centers around the question and battle between deception and reality. One first notices of the image of deception as we witness the masking and unmasking at the masquerade. In the play, most overhear discussions are deceptions. It is through eavesdropping that we see the true battle between deception and reality as we look at the subplots of Benedick and Beatrice, Hero and Claudio, as well as the comedy of Dogberry and his crew.

The relationship between Benedick and Beatrice is one manufactured completely through deception on the behalf of their friends. Though the plot to unite them was planned, many of the problems that arose were because of things that were overheard accidentally or on purpose. In Act II, Scene 3 Benedick is deceived into thinking that Beatrice loves him because of the speech in the garden between Leonato, Claudio, and Don Pedro. Beatrice is sent to fetch Benedick for dinner, and Benedick notes “some marks of love in her,” and he decides to take pity upon her and return her love. In Act III, Scene 1 Beatrice is deceived as she overhears Hero and Ursula talk of Benedick’s affection for her. Beatrice then decides to allow herself to be tamed by Benedick’s “loving hand,” and return his love. Beatrice and Benedick re made to fall in love through the deception of those around them, and ironically find happiness more readily than Claudio and Hero.

The relationship between Claudio and Hero is a seemingly pure and happy one at the start of the play, but as the play goes on we witness the emergence of deception into their relationship as well. The deception starts as Borachio reports to Don John of a conversation he overheard between Claudio and Don Pedro. At the ball, while Don Pedro is dancing with Hero in hopes of wooing her for Claudio, Don John and Borachio move in to convince Claudio that Don Pedro is in love with Hero and wants to ask Leonato for her hand in marriage. When Don John is asked how he knows Don Pedro loves Hero he responds that he “heard him swear his affection,” and Borachio confirms this. They go off, and Claudio is left broken hearted. Later Don Pedro informs Claudio that he has wooed Hero for him and Leonato has given his consent. This leaves an open door for Don John to devise a plan that entails Borachio and Margaret (pretending to be Hero and her lover) at the window while Don John with Don Pedro and Claudio witness the event. Hero will then be accused of being a “contaminated stale.” At the wedding, Claudio accuses Hero of knowing the “heat of a luxurious bed,” and her blushes are a sign of her guilt. The wedding is called off and everyone is unhappy, except for Don John who has fled from Messina. Later Borachio confesses to Don Pedro and Claudio, and Claudio is stricken with remorse. This is when the ultimate deception within this play occurs as Claudio is deceived into thinking he has lost Hero and must make up for what he has done. Leonato orders Claudio to inform the habitants of Messina of the truth of Hero’s death, “hang her an epitaph upon her tomb”, and marry Antonio’s daughter (who look like Hero). This deception was devised by Leonato to ensure Claudio is true.

It is through Dogberry and his crew that most of the humor in the play takes place. We see through Dogberry’s behavior that he tries to rise above his position in society. He does this by not only taking his job quite seriously, but by trying to speak in a more educated way, therefore resulting in his many malapropisms. Dogberry also adds much of the suspense to the play as it is revealed through him of Don John’s evil slander and deception. Without Dogberry as the middleman much of the deception within the play would never be unraveled. This therefore making Dogberry a much more important role than one first perceives.

Much Ado About Nothing is a play big on puns. One of the most significant puns we come across, “Note notes, forsooth, and nothing!” (II,iii,57) ‘Nothing ‘ is meant to be pronounced ‘noting’. Noting is also used to mean observe, and throughout the play each character at sometime is required to observe and judge, and most characters judge poorly. It is this deception which plays a large part in these misjudgments, and therefore meaning that this story is based upon mis-noting. It is this mis-noting that builds the idea of deception versus reality within the play.

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