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Shakespeare

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*Much Ado about Nothing* Dramaturgical Analysis

In the French scene of *Much Ado about Nothing* Act 1, Scene 1, lines 111-135 in which Claudio is asking Benedict about Hero and telling him he is in love with her, there are several staging requirements to make it a successful scene. In regards to space, I would want the stage to be relatively small but with a little bit of walking room because this scene does only have two people in it, and it is an intimate sort of conversation. If the stage were larger, we might place the scene in a corner of the stage, so that it looks like the rest of the stage might not be part of the scene, but I think a stage about the size of the Shakespeare Tavern would work best because it can be made to look large or small, depending on how much of it is being used and how many people are on stage. It would also require some kind of entrance and exit space for the beginning and end of the scene, when some characters leave and enter the scene.

Kinetically, this scene is relatively inactive, however Benedict will need to be walking around some and Claudio I think should be sitting down for at least some of it. Sitting him down would help signify his love for Hero because he would be able to act as if he were daydreaming or just really happy while in the conversation with Benedict. Claudio's lines are shorter than Benedict's as well so I think it would be better to have Benedict walking around and Claudio stay in one place. Benedict should be moving around, contemplating what his friend is telling him because he just can't fathom how he could possibly want to get married.

The only real spectacle this scene would be that it should be performed in the daytime with plenty of light around because at the very beginning of Act 1 Scene 1, Leonato says “I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Arragon comes this night to Messina” (1.1.1), and by saying that someone is coming tonight it is safe to assume that it is not yet night. If it were performed inside or during the night, it would require a lot of lanterns all over the stage, which would make the willing suspension of disbelief hard to occur for the audience.

There could be a few symbols in the scene, but mostly it would be the costumes. Claudio and Benedict should both be in uniform because earlier in the scene the characters talk about how Don Pedro and his men, including Claudio and Benedict, have just come from war.

Shakespeare’s textual clues as to what would be necessary for the scene are mostly the words the actors are saying themselves. For example, “Why, i’ faith, methinks she’s too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise. Only this commendation I can afford her, that were she other than she is, she were unhandsome, and being no other but as she is, I do not like her” (1.1.118-121). This passage is Benedict putting Hero down so that Claudio might change his mind; he is explaining that he really doesn’t think she’s nice, pretty, or anything of good quality. Frankly, I’m surprised Claudio didn’t get mad at the things he was saying about Hero.

One really cool section of the passage that I wanted to point out is: “Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you this with a sad brow? Or do you play the flouting Jack, to tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder and a Vulcan a rare carpenter? Come, in what key shall a man take you to go in the song” (1.1.125-127). I didn’t really understand much of what was going on until I looked up a few words. Essentially, Benedict makes a joke about Hero when he says “Yea, and a case to put it into” (1.1.125), because “case” has many meanings in Shakespeare’s time, one of

them being a kind of slang for “lady parts.” He’s making a play on words so as to contradict Claudio’s previous question: “can the world buy such a jewel” (1.1.124)? The next sentence is what was really cool to me, though. “Or do you play the flouting Jack, to tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder and a Vulcan a rare carpenter” (1.1.125-127)? This sentence was really interesting to me because it’s loaded with metaphors. What Benedict is literally saying is: “Or do you act like a joking commoner, to tell us Cupid (god of love) is a good hare hunter and a Vulcan (god of fire) a rare carpenter?” He is essentially accusing Claudio of messing with him, underestimating him, or insulting him because these gods he’s talking about are obviously not simple hunters and carpenters. He’s accusing Claudio of lying.

Overall, I this passage requires very little but says a lot about Benedict’s original character before he falls in love himself. It sets the stage for his change. It also shows Claudio’s character, which doesn’t really change but rather intensifies as the story progresses. He goes from immature to even more immature.

Works Cited

“Much Ado About Nothing: Act 1, Scene 1.” *PlayShakespeare.com*. Kontent Design, n.d. Web.

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