“Send Me No Husband” How Succession Anxiety in Elizabethan England Influenced the Marital Politics in Shakespeare's Comedies

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“SEND ME NO HUSBAND”
HOW SUCCESSION ANXIETY IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND INFLUENCED THE MARITAL POLITICS IN SHAKESPEARE’S COMEDIES

by
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SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

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Table of Contents

I. Critical Exploration.........................3-18
II. The Rehearsal Process.....................18-27
III. Project Execution-Performance........27-29
IV. Performance Assessment..................29-33
V. Self-Evaluation..............................33-37
VI. Works Cited.................................38-39
I. Critical Exploration

The 16th century Elizabethan era was a period defined by transition as England thrived under its most successful queendom to date. Queen Elizabeth I oversaw economic, religious, and artistic prosperity, and England transformed from a violent, divided nation (under the Catholic Queen Mary “Bloody Mary” I) to a powerful and stable country. Despite Elizabeth’s feats and her consistency in her civic duties, her personal duties as a woman and monarch gave cause for anxiety among British citizens. Famously known as the “Virgin Queen”, Elizabeth’s decision to neither marry nor have children brought about what was known as succession anxiety, or ambivalence over the heir. Around the same time as England worried about their next ruler, Europe witnessed an upsurge in women’s rights and gender politics. The movement was labelled the “Querelle des Femmes”, or “the woman question”, and the continent engaged in a wide scale debate over women’s roles to their husbands and to society. The movement mostly consisted of upper-class men, and the general consensus was women were either inferior to men or equal to men only when necessary. Although not explicitly linked to Elizabeth, her position as monarch and her unconventional practices can be a presumed catalyst in furthering national debates. By the end of the century, as the queen was nearing her inevitable death in 1603, both national succession anxiety and curiosity surrounding “the woman question” continued to grow. The general public feared England returning back to its chaotic state before Elizabeth took the throne as well as the future of their own livelihoods up until her passing at age 73.

Simultaneously, Elizabeth’s physical decline was met with the rise of the Stratford playwright William Shakespeare. Shakespeare’s ability to expertly examine the human condition through language catapulted him to national recognition and adoration, his peak of
fame taking place under Elizabeth’s rule. Most of the plays written during Elizabeth’s time were comedies, all ending with their trademark conclusion of marriage. As Shakespeare was a writer of his time and greatly benefitted from political and royal patrons, it is assumed his plays were often either tailored to or influenced by the British heads of state. While the trope of marriage fits the lighthearted nature of the overall comedic narratives, it can be inferred the consistent emphasis placed on marital values was intentional. By having every single female character, especially unconventional women such as Katherine, Phebe, and Beatrice, be paired off at the end, Shakespeare sends a clear message that juxtaposes the unmarried status of Queen Elizabeth.

Through this paper, I will examine how the plot devices of courtship and marriage in Shakespeare’s comedies further an idealized, patriarchal agenda English society could not find in their monarch. In doing so Shakespeare adds his voice to the subject of the Unconventional Woman that was at the forefront of the Querelle des Femmes Movement. The peace and idealism presented in the comedies’ endings and the utilization of marriage to control and ensnare disobedient women contrast with the social unrest surrounding Elizabeth’s reign. This can be seen as a combination of pointed commentary on the part of Shakespeare and the public’s response speaking to 16th-17th century ideals surrounding marriage and a woman’s place within the patriarchy. I will also discuss how this idea of Shakespearean succession anxiety and Querelle des Femmes influenced my performance of Beatrice, one of Shakespeare’s most famous and beloved Unconventional Women, in Pomona College’s production about *Much Ado About Nothing*, as well as the parallels to Queen Elizabeth that I found in her character.
The nonconformity of Queen Elizabeth’s rule only seemed to follow her family’s, the notorious House of Tudors, trend for the idiosyncratic. Daughter to King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, the monarch’s second wife, Elizabeth's scandalous conception labelled her as unconventional from the moment she was born. When she was only a toddler, her father had established the Anglican Church, divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and had executed her mother. These were just a few instances where, according to Alison Weir in her book *Elizabeth the Queen*, “[Elizabeth] had seen several unions in her immediate family break down, including that of her own parents…. Witnessing these terrible events at an early age, it has been argued, may have put Elizabeth off marriage.” Although the queen had been pursued multiple times in exchange for her hand and rumours circulated about her having lovers, Elizabeth refused to become a wife. As Weir also mentions, many believe that Elizabeth’s concerns towards marriage were due to the fear of being stripped of her reputation and titles. If Elizabeth had married, she would have been viewed as a wife and a mother rather than a monarch despite still maintaining her title of queen. Her husband, although taking on the less prestigious title of prince regent, would have overshadowed her influence over England due to his gender. Reportedly, while residing with one of her suitors, Elizabeth is quoted to have said “I will have but one mistress and no master” when prompted on marriage, establishing that it is highly likely she did in fact see the proposition of marriage as diminishing her power and identity.

While we will never truly know Elizabeth’s true agenda in not marrying, this bold statement of remaining single is often viewed as empowering by modern day society, especially for a woman of her rank. However, her unwillingness to conform to social

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standards translated differently to a 16th century audience. While Elizabeth was by no means a resented monarch, carrying much power and prestige and being adored by her subjects, her choice to not marry was questionable. As time passed and no heir to the throne had been proclaimed, this decision did cause much grievance among British citizens.\(^2\)

Succession crisis was not an unfamiliar trend to the monarchy, and by the time Elizabeth took the throne, having children was royal protocol (much like today). As early as the 12th century, female monarchs and successors were considered taboo due to women being viewed as unqualified. For example, the title of Britain’s first queen, Empress Matilda of the 1100s, was merely decorative, the public rejecting her as their ruler despite her father the king naming her as his heir. Rather, the position of monarch was given to her son Henry II, and while she served as the Queen Mother, the outcry over her status as next-in-line is telling.\(^3\) With this stigma against female rulers already established once Elizabeth ascended the throne, she was immediately met with staggering expectations heavily shaped around patriarchal ideals concerning the female identity.

Elizabeth’s whole existence was based on the idea of succession and she saw firsthand the consequences of failing to produce a male heir through her mother’s execution. As England had finally regained its footing after the death of Elizabeth’s half-brother Edward VI, the execution of Lady Jane Grey, and Mary I’s horrible regime that ended with no children, the country had had its share of radical and unstable female monarchies. As Elizabeth was not only a single woman, but had no means to pass on her bloodline through children, heightened tensions rose throughout England due to the lack of a successor. The

succession anxiety that steadily increased as Elizabeth aged was further promoted by the Querelle des Femmes Movement that peaked during the Elizabethan Age. Beginning with German philosopher Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa in 1509 claiming classical texts and the Bible preached female superiority rather than inferiority, this European phenomenon can be defined as a discussion both men and women participated in (though mostly men dominated the conversation). Agrippa’s argument also focused on gender and the political and justice systems, claiming that women were actively oppressed by the government:⁴

But since the excessive tyranny of men prevails over divine right and natural law, the freedom that was once accorded to women is in our day obstructed by unjust laws, suppressed by custom and usage, reduced to nothing by education. For as soon as she is born a woman is confined in idleness at home from her earliest years, and, as if incapable of functions more important, she has no other prospect than needle and thread.⁵

The debate surrounding women and politics only continued after Agrippa. Specifically, one of the biggest debates centered around whether women had the authority and the right to take a position in office or as a ruler. The controversy of the female-led monarchy was now placed in the spotlight. While many disagreed on other aspects of the Querelle des Femmes Movement, the negative responses towards the prospect of a woman ruler were mostly unanimous. Overall, female monarchs were treated scornfully and their title was usually put into relation of male monarchs. While the Querelle des Femmes Movement started before Elizabeth became queen, her presence on the throne only furthered discourse, specifically on women as sovereign rulers. In fact, women as monarchs was a topic that especially took precedence in England, this fact allowing for better understanding.

⁴ “Querelle des Femmes.” *Encyclopedia.*
⁵ Agrippa, Cornelius Heinrich. *Declaration on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex*, 1529.
of both succession anxiety and how Elizabeth’s unconventional ways were truly affecting her subjects. For example, Scottish Minister John Knox, one of the more conservative voices of Querelle des Femmes, published his most notable work *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the monstrous regiment of Women* in 1558. Written in response to Queen Mary I, Elizabeth’s cousin, Knox argued that allowing a woman to come to power was a crime against the government, religion, and humanity. He introduces his paper as so:

*The Proposition. To promote a Woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion or empire above any realm, nation or city is*

A. Repugnant to nature.

B. Contumely to GOD.

C. The subversion of good order, of all equity and justice.⁶

Knox’s main defense is equating a woman in power to blasphemy, and his conclusion proves how prominent gender politics were in varying aspects of society, such as politics and religion. In other words, the Unconventional Woman was not welcomed in 16th century society, evident in Knox’s words and the fact the majority of participants in the Querelle des Femmes Movement were men. As stated previously, while Knox’s manifesto pertains specifically to the Catholic religion and Queen Mary I, it was published towards the start of Elizabeth I’s reign, the timing an interesting notion.

Although Knox was not the sole voice of the movement, he was certainly an important one, and even the most progressive viewpoints did not stray far from his original

essay. In his novel *The Defence of Good Women*, intellectual Sir Thomas Elyot claimed that female monarchs should only take on the position of sovereign in extreme cases, such as assuming the title of queen regent if the male heir is incapacitated. However, while queen regents had some semblance of authority due to tending to royal duties, they were considered acceptable positions for women as the title holds the implication of temporality. Until the primogeniture law passed in 2011 that states birth order instead of gender determines the succession line, men who served as regents, or prince regents, would presumably take on the title of king if anything happened to the monarch. Women did not have that privilege to look forward to unless there were no other male heirs, a highly unlikely situation. In summary, Elyot’s view, even though it is technically more liberal from those such as Knox’s, still puts female nonconformity in service to men rather than for the sake of equality. Queen Elizabeth’s already atypical position as a female monarch and her decision to not marry made her unconventionality unmanageable, her peoples’ disdain for her lack of a husband going beyond the succession line and striking a patriarchal chord. Her childless state and her solitary presence on the throne was met with outrage on the behalf of not only a governmental viewpoint, but one deeply embedded in misogyny and gender politics.

While the Querelle des Femmes Movement mostly took place in the political and literary spheres, some artists began attempting to take on the idea of the Unconventional Woman through their art. As Elizabeth was an avid artistic patron, the Renaissance travelled from the other side of Europe to Britain and Elizabethan England became a hub for the arts. In particular, the performing and theatre arts excelled and Britain was established as one of the predominant sites for Western theatre. In theatre, the Unconventional Woman trope was

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7 “Querelle des Femmes.” *Encyclopedia.*
usually exhibited through a failing social structure against the background of tragedy, women who stray from their domestic duties depicted as malicious and cunning. However, while also taking advantage of this plot device, in the 1590s William Shakespeare provided a different variation in dealing with the non-adhering female. Rather than having his stories always end devastatingly, he took on the genre of comedy. Specifically, rather than have his nonconforming female characters die or cast them out of society’s good graces, Shakespeare surprisingly married them off. When married off, their unorthodox qualities seemed to vanish.⁹

Despite the almost simplicity and sloppiness of finishing with a wedding, the comedies won the audiences over and satisfied their need for a happy ending. As mentioned before, most of the plays written during Elizabeth’s reign were comedies, and all of them utilized the same conclusion of marriage and weddings. While the comedies were favorably received by the public, according to scholar Mihoko Suzuki in her article “Gender Class, and the Ideology of Comic Form: *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*”, Elizabeth apparently carried a particular disdain for how they ended, believing the marriages in the plays (some works having multiple like *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *As You Like It*) were directed towards her own unmarried status. While never clear if Shakespeare knew of this, Elizabeth’s assumptions were most likely not too far from the truth. As Suzuki notes in her essay, the comedies are shockingly similar, perhaps even worse, to how the tragedies approach female characters in the wake of unconventionality:

> In these plays, insubordinate wives accomplish the murder of their husbands by allying themselves with ambitious males who refuse to acquiesce to their

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classed position in the social order. Unlike these tragedies that baldly
dramatize the consequences of the rebellion of wives and social upstarts, the
comic form of plays such as *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*
enables Shakespeare to manage these disruptions rather than allowing them to
be destructive of the social order (137).

Suzuki explicitly distinguishes how both tragedy and comedy (Shakespeare’s in
particular) treat women while concurrently showing how they both result in female
oppression. While one associates the woman with the tragedy of the plot and the lack of
social order in the play, the other shows the potential for tragedy in a woman that is stopped
due to being placated by the marital institution. In other words, while tragedies are out of
control, comedies take control. Unconventionality in Shakespeare’s tragedies and comedies
also present themselves differently. While women in the comedies tend to conform through
marriage, the women in the tragedies who defy their femininity and go against gender rules,
such as Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra, meet fateful ends through death. Through this
comparison, Shakespeare establishes a simplified “Choose Your Own Adventure”:
conformity ends in life and nonconformity ends in death. In special cases, such as Lady
Macduff, Portia of *Julius Caesar*, and Cordelia of *King Lear*, women who keep their
femininity and conventionality intact but end up dying are portrayed as martyrs. This is due
to their victimization by the tragedy instead of helping to carry the tragedy out.

In order to understand the trajectory of Shakespeare’s comedic format, it is important
to explore how he introduces and establishes the Unconventional Woman. Nonconformity

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10 Suzuki, Mihoko. “Gender, Class, and the Ideology of Comic Form: Much Ado About
Nothing and Twelfth Night.” *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, edited by Dympna
within Shakespearean comedies are seen almost as a personality trait, the women who are labelled as such defined strictly by how unconventional they are. This noncompliance is usually emphasized by a foil female character, contrasting their outspoken and brazen manner with meekness and virtue. In turn, both women not only have contrasting personalities, but contrasting views on their societal duties, specifically in relation to marriage. These pairings, seen in characters such as Phebe and Rosalind, Katherine and Bianca, and Beatrice and Hero, end up creating division and one-dimensional characterizations based on conventionality. While Bianca and Hero are the classic female ingenues, their arcs centering around attaining a husband, Katherine and Beatrice are unguarded, at times crass, and are vocal about their unwillingness to marry. For example, Katherine’s first appearance in *The Taming of the Shrew* immediately distances her from women of her rank and assumed feminine responsibilities. This is similar to how Elizabeth, while not as outwardly vicious and crude as Katherine, differentiated herself from other female monarchs by not marrying and having children. When her and Bianca are introduced to potential suitors, Katherine asks her father Baptista, “I pray you, sir, is it your will/To make a stale of me amongst these mates?” (Act 1, Scene 1, 57-58). While her first line in the play is rather short, it immediately points to Katherine’s objection to taking part in marriage as well as how marriage is, as Linda T. Fitz points out in her essay “What Says The Married Woman? Marriage Theory and Feminism in the English Renaissance” “a domestic partnership” based on economic factors (3). The word “stale” is 16th century jargon for “prostitute”, contributing to the character’s boldness as well as creating an image of women literally being sold for the price of marriage.
Katherine’s awareness of the patriarchal system, however, comes off as unappealing, presenting her nonconformity in a way the audience neither wants to root for nor feels comfortable identifying with. Bianca, on the other hand, is an easier character to both relate to and find redeemable qualities in. She combats Katherine with a sweetness and humility that only stresses her sister’s aggressive nature. When told that in order for her to marry, Katherine must marry as well, Bianca gently replies:

Sister, content you in my discontent.—
Sir, to your pleasure humbly I subscribe.
My books and instruments shall be my company
On them to look and practice by myself. (Act 1, Scene 1 82-85)

Bianca demonstrates two paths a 16th century woman could take: marriage or studies, particularly religious studies as a nun. If a woman cannot be with a husband, she must be alone or with God, seen through the phrasing of “On them to look and practice by myself.” Bianca not only exhibits a kind of contentedness despite being denounced her right to marry, she also shows acceptance of the limitations of her future. Her lack of autonomy and absolute compliance paints Bianca as a sympathetic character next to the violent and rude Katherine. In fact, as Katherine’s repulsion towards marriage serves as the cause for Bianca’s unmarried status, she is almost vilified and symbolizes an obstacle towards her sister’s happiness. In short, while the conventional woman in Bianca is viewed as “good”, the Unconventional Woman in Katherine is viewed as “bad”.

Not only are unconventional women established by how they compare to conventionality, but their behavior and independence are constantly criticized by the other characters within the plays. This reinforces the audiences’ views and shows how these women clash with their respective environments. For example, in *As You Like It* when
coming across Phebe rejecting the shepard Silvius, Shakespeare has Rosalind (dressed as Ganymede) chastise her for what she sees as cruelty:

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What though you have no beauty,--
As, by my faith, I see no more in you
Than without candle may go dark to bed--
Must you be therefore proud and pitiless?....
You foolish shepherd, wherefore do you follow her,
Like foggy south puffing with wind and rain?
You are a thousand times a properer man
Than she a woman:....But, mistress, know yourself: down on your knees,
And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man's love:
For I must tell you friendly in your ear,
Sell when you can: you are not for all markets:
Cry the man mercy; love him; take his offer. (Act 3, Scene 5, 37-73)
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Rosalind condemns Phebe for supposedly not giving into Silvius’ flirtations, claiming she is heartless. She goes so far as to insult her physical appearance, remarking that she “ha[s] no beauty” and that Silvius’ pursuit of her is something that she should be flattered by rather than resisting. A modern day reading of *As You Like It* would declare Silvius’ chasing after Phebe as stalking or even sexual harassment. Instead, Rosalind takes a viewpoint that insists women should take nonconsensual courting from men as compliments, suggesting Phebe should consider herself lucky for receiving any male attention at all. This criticism, while certainly not word for word, can be connected back to the backlash Queen Elizabeth received. Despite being sought after by many men and even engaging with some romantically, she never wanted nor tried to take on a husband. As Phebe is of the lower class and her marital status is not crucial to society like Elizabeth’s, her unwillingness to succumb moves Rosalind to speak out. This is similar to how British citizens bitterly regarded Elizabeth’s stubbornness over marriage. Rosalind’s quip of “sell what you can; you are not
for all markets” also directly associates Phebe with property and is a parallel to Katherine’s 
remarks about being sold in *Taming of the Shrew*. In this instance, Phebe is grossly reduced to 
her value, and her “unwomanly” manner decreases her likelihood to attract another man. 

Rosalind even comforts Silvius through the line “You are a thousand times a proper 
man/Than she a woman.” By associating Silvius’ unsuccessful but persistent courting of 
Phebe with masculinity and Phebe’s rejection as unfeminine, Rosalind is asserting Phebe’s 
defiance of gender roles not only goes against her identity as a woman, but is an insult and 
impacts the men of society. There is a complete disregard for women here and points out that 
women neither had a say nor were their voices often taken into consideration. The fact 
Elizabeth had a platform where she was made to be heard while exhibiting behaviors 
comparable to Phebe’s caused even more protestations due to her unsubmitting demeanor. 

While the previous passage showed an instance in Shakespeare where the 
Unconventional Woman is shunned by her own kin, most of the scorn Shakespearean women 
face comes from their male counterparts. Similar to how men made up the majority of the 
conversations surrounding the Querelle des Femmes Movement, male Shakespearean 
characters often engage in discussions surrounding a woman’s place and roles as a wife, 
mother, and a lady of society. Consequently, unconventionality within women is severely 
punished no matter the accuser, whether the female character accurately fits this description 
or not. When Claudio overhears a false rumour concerning his betrothed Hero’s infidelity in 
*Much Ado About Nothing*, he destroys the wedding and renounces Hero due to her 
supposedly feigned chastity:

She's but the sign and semblance of her honour. 
Behold how like a maid she blushes here! 
O, what authority and show of truth 
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!
Comes not that blood as modest evidence  
To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,  
All you that see her, that she were a maid,  
By these exterior shows? But she is none:  
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed;  
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty. (Act 4, Scene 2, 30-39)

As Hero is solidified as the innocent ingenue at the beginning of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Claudio sees her as the perfect person to wed due to her conformity. However, once he believes he has been betrayed, he attacks her for not only being unfaithful, but apparently lying about it. She looks and acts like a “maid”, but the reality is she is anything but.

Although Hero was framed and Claudio is mistaken, his reaction speaks to a kind of prejudice in relation to unconventionality and female sexuality. Dr. Anna Whitelock explains in her article: “Elizabeth I’s love life: was she really a ‘Virgin Queen’?” that women in the 16th century were thought to have hidden, “insatiable sexual appetites.” While most eccentric women in Shakespeare’s plays are made to be obviously nonconforming, Claudio’s confronting of Hero serves as a cautionary tale that anyone, even women that appear conventional, could either become unconventional or are hiding their unconventionality. Claudio’s anger and abusive language, therefore, is somehow made justifiable because he believes Hero is now an Unconventional Woman. It also must be noted that this is a public affair, Claudio breaking off the engagement at the wedding to completely humiliate her. This form of slut-shaming, therefore, is directly placed in the public eye. However, this probably would not have been so shocking to audiences during Shakespeare’s day. In fact, a 16th century audience would have most likely agreed with Claudio even though they know of Hero’s innocence. Furthermore, despite his behavior, his character is rewarded by
reconnecting with and marrying Hero at the end, completely excusing his mistreatment of her.

In terms of historical context, the standards in *Much Ado About Nothing* surrounding virginity and marriage is applicable to Queen Elizabeth. While her nickname was the “Virgin Queen”, she was courted by and loved multiple men throughout her lifetime. In other words, the probability of Elizabeth actually being a virgin is most likely farfetched. This was a fact the British public picked up on and recognized and Elizabeth was often mocked, by both enemies and her own people, for contradicting her image of celibacy through her sexuality.\(^1\) Hero seemingly concealing her promiscuity parallels Elizabeth’s concealment of hers. Furthermore, the play later reveals that it was not Hero caught in the act but rather Margaret, a servant whose reputation is rather licentious. It is noteworthy when this is discovered, the reaction contrasts greatly to that when directed towards Hero. In fact, it is a discovery quickly tossed aside and something the other characters can laugh about, as if it something typical within the court. As Hero and Margaret are of distinct classes, it can be assumed that Hero, as well as other women of her status, is held to higher standards due to her role in society. Margaret is allowed more liberties because of her unimportance and lack of presence in the societal sphere. The same can be applied to Phebe in *As You Like It*, as mentioned previously. Although Phebe does get married at the end, it is less critical and used more as a means to bring the upper-class couples of Rosalind and Orlando and Celia and Oliver together. As Elizabeth was not only a woman of the upper class but the monarch of a country, she was expected out of duty and her gender to marry. Her failure to do so as well as to

\(^1\) Whitelock, Anna. “Elizabeth I’s love life: was she really a ‘Virgin Queen’? *Elizabeth’s Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen’s Court.* HistoryExtra, 2013.
remain chaste aggravated her subjects and inspired Shakespeare, proving that a woman’s sexuality and unmarried state were often punished politically and artistically.

Nicole Dominguez in her paper “Lovely Weather for a Wedding: Marriage in Shakespeare Plays” once said “In nearly all of Shakespeare’s plays, there is a marriage. Whether it’s the presence of a married couple or two people who will be wed, it is a common theme in his works, especially in his comedies.” (36) Marriage is a tool Shakespeare uses to piece everything together, but his excessive utilization of it does not indicate simply striving for “Happily Ever After.” Due to the situation with Queen Elizabeth and how her choice to not marry was affecting the country, Shakespeare implored marriage to show the societal benefits of controlling women. By forcing independent, sexually liberated and outspoken women into submission at the end of his comedic works, Shakespeare shows how marriage can help sustain the patriarchal society as well as give the public an answer not seen within their ruler. As a result, he becomes a part of the Querelle des Femmes Movement and provides his stance through his female characters’ arcs: that there is no place for the Unconventional Female in his narratives and within the monarchy.

II. The Rehearsal Process

Upon hearing that our spring production would be Much Ado About Nothing, I knew that writing about Queen Elizabeth, succession anxiety, and the Unconventional Woman would go perfectly with the narrative. I hoped that I would be cast in one of the female roles to get the most out of my thesis, and I was thrilled to portray Beatrice, a character I have loved, admired, and have longed to take on for the longest time. As I finally stepped into her shoes with Queen Elizabeth in the back of the mind, I uncovered new truths about her character as well as gender in both 16th century and modern settings.
Much Ado About Nothing was published and premiered somewhere between 1598 and 1599, only a few years before Queen Elizabeth’s death. A product of Shakespeare’s own creativity and inspiration from other published texts, the play premiered at the height of his career and only further solidified his reputation as England’s finest poet.\textsuperscript{12} Similarly to other Shakespearean works, Much Ado About Nothing ventures away from British society and takes place in the Sicilian city of Messina during the 16th century. Following two couples, Benedick and Beatrice and Hero and Claudio, the plot tracks the highs and lows of love and ends in a glamorous double wedding. The style of the play, though very typical of Shakespeare’s usual style, combines tropes found in commedia and farce that go hand-in-hand with the show’s Italian setting.

For our production, “Messina” is a popular hotel in the 1920s, taking place after the Spanish Influenza and World War I as a reference to the current pandemic. The Roaring 20s was an era of prosperity and luxury and a time where the 20th century saw a rise in social reformation amongst women. The emergence of the suffragette, the flapper, and the “modern woman” began to take hold of society and influence how women were perceived and seen within the public eye. It was a time period of unconventionality and the Unconventional Woman was at the forefront of it, making it a perfect setting to study both the figures of Beatrice and Queen Elizabeth. However, despite this shift in feminine ideals, these women were met with hostility, creating a dynamic between liberal-minded youths and older, more conservative members of society.\textsuperscript{13} This translates nicely towards Beatrice’s character arc in Much Ado About Nothing. While she very much embodies the flapper traits and enjoys her independence, she is constantly being pressured into marriage and actively fights against it.

\textsuperscript{12} “Dates And Sources.” Much Ado About Nothing. Royal Shakespeare Company.
\textsuperscript{13} “How did Society React to the Change in Women?” Forever 20s.
Similarly, Queen Elizabeth, coming into the role of monarch unexpectedly, was firm in her beliefs and against marriage due to not wanting to give up any of her power. The roles of gender definitely come into play in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and having an all-female/nonbinary cast acts as commentary on the complexities and fluidity of gender. With Beatrice and Queen Elizabeth, this fluidity is present by taking on more “masculine,” traditionally non-feminine traits.

As mentioned before, *Much Ado About Nothing* is set in Messina, the play opening with soldiers returning from an unnamed war. The army is led by Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon, who is flanked by his second-in-command Claudio, good friend Benedick, and illegitimate brother Don John. The men are greeted by Leonato, the governor of Messina, his daughter Hero, and his niece Beatrice. Beatrice and Benedick are known to quarrel, and it is hinted their bickering is meant as a type of defense mechanism. Although not explicitly stated, there are references to the two being in a previously failed relationship. The play is moved along by meddling: Claudio’s attempts to win Hero’s heart with the help of Don Pedro, the Messina court trying to set Benedick and Beatrice up, and Don Jon scheming to ruin everything for the fun of it. The plots and shenanigans seen throughout bolster the comedy’s humorous portions, and sets up *Much Ado About Nothing* as a play reliant on misunderstandings. Fortunately, these misunderstandings are resolved and the characters are rewarded with a happy ending, as Shakespeare’s comedies always seem to provide.

While Benedick and Beatrice are considered the “main” couple of the story, the inciting incident lies when Claudio sees Hero for the first time since returning home. Although never taking notice of her before, he is now met with a charming and beautiful woman and immediately expresses interest. He confides in Benedick and Don Pedro of his
love, and the events of the plot result in the two of them getting engaged while attending a masked ball. Interestingly, the main conflict of the story also resides in Claudio and Hero’s relationship. When the cunning Don John tricks Claudio into believing Hero is unfaithful, Claudio renounces his love on the wedding day and falsely condemns her to the public. At a loss, Benedick, Beatrice, and the others convince Claudio that Hero has died of a broken heart and that he must marry one of Leonato’s other nieces to repent. Claudio, who is overcome with shame and guilt, agrees and shows up blindly the next day to be married off to an unknown bride. To his surprise, the other niece turns out to be Hero in disguise and the two make up and marry.

While Hero and Claudio’s story is busy unfolding, audiences simultaneously witness the romance between Benedick and Beatrice. Their seeming dislike for one another blooms into a passionate love, tested and strengthened through the Hero and Claudio subplot. As they are too stubborn to admit their feelings, it takes conniving from their peers and gossip to convince both parties their arguing was merely a front. However, their bickering shows no signs of stopping, as the two continue to fight even after they tie the knot. Their squabbling is at the core of Much Ado About Nothing’s humor.

Although not much can be found regarding Much Ado About Nothing’s original reception, the general understanding is that it was critically acclaimed and has only increased in popularity over the centuries. Much Ado About Nothing’s cultural significance lies in how its women are treated, and its narrative allows for these women, specifically Beatrice, to take up space and be themselves while being portrayed in a positive light. In fact, despite Beatrice being an Unconventional Woman, her nonconformity does not make her any less desirable.
Rather, her wit, charm, and boldness draw audiences to her in a manner different from other past, unconventional Shakespearean women such as Katherine and Rosalind.

However, while William Shakespeare was more progressive than most 16th century writers, was certainly a man of his time. Although many are quick to call *Much Ado About Nothing* a feminist work due to Beatrice’s autonomy, there are a few incidents that contradict this label. The treatment of Hero, casual slut-shaming of Margaret, and the play ending in a traditional wedding all point to *Much Ado About Nothing* not being as forward thinking as it is credited to be. Nevertheless, it is important to not completely discredit how Shakespeare represents women, particularly through Beatrice. This role is incredibly important and would have been quite extraordinary for the 16th century stage. In the weekly journal I kept throughout the rehearsal process, I wrote down during our first week the observation that:

[Beatrice] is different from what I’m covering in my thesis, but at the same time not. Yes, she is brash and rude, but she is also incredibly likeable. She’s not polarizing like Katherine nor is she slightly irritating like Rosalind can sometimes be. Katherine is likened to a wild beast, so unnatural and separate from humanity that she needs to be controlled and subdued. Rosalind, though quick-witted like Beatrice and granted a character arc often given to male protagonists, continually brings down other women such as Phebe who stray away from conventionalities. This is in spite of the fact she unconventionally dresses as a man while in the Forest of Arden. Rosalind is also defined by her love for Orlando, and her independence through Ganymede is overshadowed by her wooing of him. In the case of Beatrice, the audience is positioned to root for her and her love story without Benedick making up her whole personality. We want to see her get her happy ending, and it is quite literally cathartic
when her and Benedick finally get engaged. Even to the end of their relationship, she still picks a fight with him and is his intellectual equal, which is lovely to see. And yet, why do I feel hesitant to call her a feminist character? (1/26/2021-1/30/2021)

Another aspect I wrote about in my journal is that despite ending up in a happy and loving marriage with Benedick, Beatrice does not speak at the end of the play after they are married. While the duration of this period is short, it indicates that her taking on the role as a wife signifies her silence and her conforming to society. The line “I’ll stop your mouth”, (Act 5, Scene 4, 100) though cut from our production, is what Benedick tells Beatrice before kissing her and confirming their love to the public. This line can be read as both a physical and metaphorical silence as Beatrice is stripped away of her individualism and voice.

As mentioned in the first part of my thesis, Queen Elizabeth reportedly did not favor Shakespeare’s comedies due to their endings, believing that the as many as quadruple weddings were an explicit message regarding her unmarried status. It can be assumed that a character like Beatrice, as Shakespeare took much inspiration from Britain’s social and political climates, could be a foil for a figure like Elizabeth: an Unconventional Woman in a position of power who gets tricked, falls in love, and ends up given her autonomy away through marriage. Much of Beatrice’s fear surrounding marriage, while she does love Benedick, comes from the patriarchal dynamic between a husband and a wife. While Elizabeth certainly had male companions, her refusal to marry any of them was based on them naturally assuming a title due to their matrimony. As Elizabeth did not want to be overshadowed by a king, Beatrice doesn't want to be overshadowed by her husband and therefore pushes back against traditional marital values.
Much like other Shakespearean characters, most of Beatrice’s biography is left to be determined by the imagination. Niece to Leonato and cousin to Hero, she comes from an upper-class family with an immense amount of wealth and privilege. She is presumably in her 20s or perhaps 30s and would have been considered too old to find a good husband, unlike Hero who is seemingly younger. Because the setting we chose is the 1920s, I tried to set Beatrice in a post World War I world. To do so, I began thinking of women who reminded me of Beatrice and had similar qualities to her. My mind immediately went to Virginia Woolf and how both her and Beatrice use words to express themselves. I also kept in mind the early feminist movements of the time, from the suffragettes to the flappers. While Beatrice was very unconventional for her time, she fits right into the unconventionality of the 20s.

Beatrice’s main dramatic function in the play is as the main female love interest. While Hero and Claudio’s story drives the plot, it is Benedick and Beatrice’s relationship that the audience roots for and is more fun to watch play out. Her contributions to the play’s resolution are helping to defend Hero’s honor and carry out the plan to bring her and Claudio back together. She is also one of the most talked about subjects in Much Ado About Nothing. While her family and friends clearly care for her, they seem to harbor frustration and anxiety over her unmarried status. In fact, Beatrice’s love life is consistently brought up right until the moment her and Benedick become publicly engaged. Love and marriage are also reflected in Beatrice’s overall objectives, which change as the play progresses. While she intends and focuses on staying unmarried, she switches to wanting to marry Benedick when overhearing Hero and Margaret’s staged gossip. In regard to her tactics in achieving her goals, she doesn't have any apart from ordering Benedick to kill Claudio. This is to prove his love for her and as well as assert her power in the relationship, power she fears she will lose
once becoming a wife due to her gender. Benedick is the one who confesses his love first, and it is him who coaxes Beatrice’s affections for him out of her. While Beatrice uses her words to their full extent, she often hesitates in her actions as a defense mechanism and out of anxiety surrounding the patriarchy. Finding this balance was particularly interesting as an actor, and imagining that constraint helped in understanding both her and presumably Queen Elizabeth’s struggle during the Querelle des Femmes Movement.

Beatrice is a character who relies mostly on her voice because that’s the only freedom she is permitted to utilize. This is particularly due to her role as an upper-class, more privileged woman. Throughout Much Ado About Nothing, she is constantly frustrated with her inability to act on her words because she is a woman, so the most crucial part in playing her is emphasizing her speech in every way possible. As Beatrice speaks in prose, it is slightly easier to say her lines without worrying about rhythm. However, throughout rehearsal we tried to maintain some structure within Shakespeare’s language, such as emphasizing verbs and nouns rather than adjectives. This is something that I struggled with, as I tended to put more emphasis on adjectives and lean into descriptors. While descriptors are certainly excellent, focusing solely on them did not do anything for the storytelling. When emphasis is put on the action through verbs and nouns, it gives the language a steady and comprehensible rhythm to follow.

An exercise I used to practice when memorizing lines was reciting the text in a British accent in an attempt to speak in a dialect closer to Shakespeare’s own. British cadence differs extremely from that of Americans. While the typical American accent is closer to the front of the mouth, the British accent is spoken more towards the back. The British accent also naturally emphasizes nouns and keeps a steadier rhythm in pitch more while Americans
tend to emphasize adjectives and speaking in varying pitches. These speech patterns are something I noticed in myself even after studying abroad in London, my voice sounding closer to the British dialect after living there for several months. I found doing this exercise while preparing was extremely helpful and allowed for me to become used to a way of speaking that is different from my own.

Shakespeare is difficult because of its language, so having a character like Beatrice who speaks nonstop while trying to make what she’s saying accessible is no small feat. Breathwork is especially crucial as well as pace. The speed of Beatrice’s dialogue should neither be too fast that it is incomprehensible nor too slow that it drags on. While it is important to have faith in one’s audience, Shakespeare is slightly different because the language is not familiar. Therefore, it is important to give the audience an answer key through one’s voice. Tone, emphasis, and pitch are three of the key tools in making Shakespeare approachable. A suggestion our director Jennifer Chang had that helped me significantly was to imagine telling a story to a five-year-old when acting out dialogue. As Beatrice tends to go on and on in her storytelling, it is easy to become lost in it. This piece of advice allowed me to really hone in on the language and make it easier for both my scene partners and the audience to understand. It also reminded me of when I was a child and would see Shakespeare productions with my parents. Despite not knowing the language word-for-word, the way the actors said their dialogue helped me to understand what was going on. I wanted to create that experience for viewers, those both familiar and unfamiliar with Shakespeare, so I kept these memories in mind while rehearsing.

Beatrice’s physicality is directly affected by her words. While her wit is the part of her personality that is the most expressed, I wanted Beatrice’s physical movements to help
distinguish her from other women of her day. In scenes where she is at the forefront and more confident, I played with a looser posture, hands on the hips, and standing with one foot holding more of my weight than the other to convey an active carelessness. In scenes where Beatrice is confronted about her emotions or is uncomfortable, I tried to do the exact opposite with a stiff posture and crossed arms to protect myself in case I was put in a position of emotional vulnerability.

III. Project Execution-The Performance

As we were now performing in front of a camera rather than a live audience, pre-show preparation was starkly different from in-person performances. During the rehearsal process, Jen would lead us in a series of warmups before read-throughs and scene work. However, once filming started, this was a process we tackled on our own due to time. While setting up my equipment and putting on my costume and makeup, I found myself doing vocal exercises, stretching, and listening to a playlist I made that reminded me of Beatrice. Playlists are a tool I always use with characters because I believe music helps me to tune better into my emotions and to scenarios I am acting out. For Beatrice, my playlist was a mix of old rock, pop, and feminist anthems. I wanted to feel as strong as I felt listening to those songs when playing her, and it was a nice way to delve deeper into the character. I could imagine Beatrice listening to the same music as I was (despite not aligning with our 1920s time period), and it helped to form more of a connection with her in this commonality.

As for the limitations that came with filming, I tried to channel the frustrations that came out of not being in person and apply them to Beatrice’s experience. I wrote in my
journal that the feeling of speaking to nobody when acting out scenes reminded me of how Beatrice must feel due to the restrictions surrounding her gender:

It’s difficult to look at a point on a wall and pretend it’s a face. While I have enjoyed connecting with my peers virtually, I will not lie and say that acting by yourself is easy. However, this is a challenge I try to incorporate in my scene work. While talking to the wall, or the light, or the poster from my mom’s second grade classroom, I tried putting myself into Beatrice’s shoes. It’s hard to imagine being around people when you haven’t really seen anyone in a year, but it also adds to the experience of feeling isolated. What’s it like talking to a room of people who aren’t there or aren’t willing to listen? It reminds me of Queen Elizabeth and how she had to make herself bigger and better than everyone else to be taken seriously. (2/22/2021-2/28/2021)

The scene that was most challenging physically for me in this regard was the wedding scene taking place in Act 4 when Claudio publicly rejects Hero. As Beatrice is part of the wedding and does not speak for a majority of the scene, I had to figure out how exactly to react to my cousin and dear friend being slut-shamed. Especially because we were on Zoom and not in-person, I had to find ways in which to stand still while also conveying my emotions. This was difficult as I did not want to appear stiff or like I was trying too hard, but it ended up being a useful exercise in understanding her character. The constant urge to move, to run, to do anything helped me get into her mindset along with that of women such as Queen Elizabeth in the 16th century. Although Elizabeth was making strides and changing society’s political scene, she was also inhibited due to the overarching patriarchy and the Querelle des Femmes movement. Having this physical barrier of not being on a stage and filming in my own house reinforced the limitations that women faced because of gender roles. Beatrice can
talk, but she can’t act, which made her anger in the next scene (with the famous “I would eat his heart in the marketplace” line) much more palpable to play out.

The addition of costumes and makeup further elevated the image of Beatrice in my mind. All of her outfits grab attention and the loose fit of the 20s allows her to move comfortably and how she pleases. The first ensemble, a black and white dress with red scarves on the ends and a long beaded necklace with earrings, presents a confident woman who is aware of her status and enjoys it. As the show moves forward, her costumes change. While still eye-catching, they become softer in their fit and in color to mark her growing feelings for Benedick. By the end of the show, in a blue bridesmaid’s dress and a white veil, Beatrice still maintains her identity but her walls have come down to let Benedick in.

The makeup and hair look, due to us being at home, was more up to the actors than in previous productions. We were provided images of common 1920s hairstyles and makeup looks, but were given the freedom to figure out what we wanted to look like. I knew for Beatrice that I wanted something bold to match her wardrobe. My look ended up being composed of a brownish-green eyeshadow, eyeliner, pink blush, and a red lip. My hair, due to it being too long to put in a more iconic flapper do, was tied into a low Spanish knot. Everytime I stepped into a costume, I always felt powerful and ready to take on the character. I also felt self-aware in that like the clothes, Beatrice uses her appearance and words as a facade to deflect. I attempted to weaponize my costume along with language to forge that duality within the character.

IV. Performance Assessment
Outside of rehearsal, we were meant to do our own text work and come to rehearsal prepared. I have previously described some of the techniques that I used to help familiarize myself with the text and the character. Interestingly enough, what helped me the most in portraying Beatrice was stepping back from the script and looking at her in comparison to myself. I began to recognize her within me after believing for so long we were nothing alike, and upon this discovery I excitedly wrote in my journal:

I have realized that after reading the script over and over, Beatrice and I are not as different as I thought. When I first approached the character, I was quite scared of her. She seemed larger than life and bringing her off of the paper and into the world was a challenge I was not sure I could take on. It only became apparent after doing a few read-throughs and self-examination that Beatrice and I do something very similar: we deflect with humor. Like myself, Beatrice comes off as extroverted, but her quips and jokes are a wall she constructs to keep her true feelings hidden. I tend to do the same, or I brush off comments or ideas that have hurt me with a laugh and a smile. I told my mom about my revelation and she said “You’re right. You’re very similar to her. You’re both sort of wacky”, which made me laugh. (2/3/2021-2/6/2021)

I also noticed in my pre-show preparation how focusing on Beatrice’s evading of gender roles allowed me to not constrain the character nor myself when playing her. Our show is about deconstructing gender and studying how men and women act in different situations, so I was already in that mindset when approaching Beatrice. Initially, I did not know exactly what to make of her in regards to her gender presentation. While she is a woman, the way she acts is more traditionally masculine, and she is given room to do so. Beatrice is certainly not
the norm for how Shakespearean women behave, and despite her abrasive and stubborn nature, we are meant to root for her rather than view her as an antagonist.

I struggled with finding how to play her due to this unique characterization. Surprisingly, the moment where it started to make sense to me was when I began as an exercise to imagine her as a man. I immediately noticed the changes in my posture, the volume of my voice, and the conviction in which I spoke my lines. I asked myself why exactly I felt this way and I came to realize that as a man, I felt like I did not need permission in taking control of the space. This logic can also be applied to Queen Elizabeth coming to the throne as a young woman. While being the monarch was viewed as her God-given right, her gender caused concerns surrounding her capabilities and having a patriarchal society be subjected to a female ruler. In her now famous Speech to the Troops at Tilbury when facing the Spanish Armada in 1588, Elizabeth is quoted to have said, “I know I have the body but of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too.” Elizabeth was placed in a position of power that was seen as unconventional for women, so she had to play into this unconventionality by taking on the conventional masculinity this role supposedly required. She knew, like Beatrice, that the world would always see her as a woman, so she had to subvert those expectations and gender norms in order to be taken seriously. As Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558 and this speech was given thirty years after, this proves this was a fight she had to take on her entire reign. It also points to how against society was to the Unconventional Woman, particularly those with an influence, and this connection leant more insights into Beatrice struggling to be seen beyond her femininity.14

My grasp on Beatrice only continued when I also began to study the way men presented themselves in film and other types of media. While machismo is still very present in modern media, I slowly started to notice male characters who, like Beatrice, were neither stereotypically masculine nor stereotypically feminine. The fictionalized take on Geoffrey Chaucer in Brian Helgeland’s anachronistic period film *A Knight’s Tale*, while traditionally masculine in presentation and his ability to command a room, possesses a kind of innate femininity in expressing his love for his friends and within his poetry. Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*, a ruthless Mafiaboss, is also a family man who prioritizes his wife and children above all else. I then realized that by having the mindset of Beatrice being a man and being traditionally masculine, I shied away from her complexity and the qualities that made her a woman. Rather, I now view Beatrice as a woman who is merely trying to rise above patriarchal society through unconventionality, paralleling to how Queen Elizabeth embodied masculine traits while also maintaining her womanhood. Beatrice merely acts how all women wish they could act outside of the patriarchal gaze, and it is unfortunately society’s response that determines whether her behavior is acceptable or not. I now saw Beatrice for who she was: trapped and trying to be the opposite of everyone’s expectations as a means of escape.

Being on Zoom meant that as a cast and crew, we were met with many challenges. However, amongst those difficulties there were multiple times we all took a step back and marveled at the work we were able to do despite being virtual. After finishing one of our Benedick and Beatrice scenes, Maya Barbon and I were astounded at how connected we felt just through a screen. This experience has truly reinforced for me the power and the beauty of art. Despite the state of the world and the trauma and grief we had all been experiencing, art was able to prevail and give all of us on the cast and crew a purpose. It was truly a joy to
attend rehearsals because they served as a reminder of the limitlessness of our creativity, especially when tackling a complex text like Shakespeare.

Finding the strength within myself to play a character such as Beatrice was also an incredibly rewarding discovery. Beatrice is everything I’ve wanted in a character: complex, witty, and a woman who can be unabashedly herself. While initially very anxious, I slowly began to trust myself and my work. After one read-through, Jen asked me during our one-on-one character conference if I “had any idea I was able to do that.” At first, I responded that I hadn’t, but then I realized that I had known but didn’t let myself believe it. Being Beatrice allowed me to find the courage within myself, and I’ll forever be grateful for this opportunity. I entered this process unsure and have come out of it stronger and more trusting of my voice and my right to take up space. I have loved every single minute being this character, even when I felt like I could not do it, and will always look back on this time fondly.

V. Self-Evaluation

I am someone who has a difficult time watching myself, especially when I am performing. If a recording of my performance is somehow available, I prefer not to see it as I tend to overanalyze and criticize my acting choices. When I watched the Much Ado About Nothing livestream with my family in late April, I warned my parents about me having to excuse myself at least several times throughout our watch party.

To my greatest surprise and delight, I did not leave once nor did I find myself fixating on my onscreen presence. Rather, with much gratitude towards the editing and technical teams, I was able to sit back and appreciate the work I had done. While there were some moments where I still critiqued aspects of my performances, overall I was astounded not only
but my castmates, but at the culmination of my journey in taking on this role. Playing this part has allowed me to become more confident in my abilities and see how much I can accomplish as an actor. As this was my first time acting on screen, I believe I can still continue to improve on acting more subtly. I am most familiar with stage acting, so my style tends to be more dramatic and at times less realistic, so I am hoping in future projects I become more comfortable with acting in front of the camera.

Having the opportunity to portray Beatrice completely exceeded my expectations, and I loved having the background information on the time period, Queen Elizabeth, and the Querelle des Femmes Movement in mind while doing so. This thesis truly guided me in exploring Beatrice’s place in her world, as a part of nobility and as a woman. I am so thankful to have taken this on during the pandemic, and have felt I have learned more about myself as well as women within Shakespeare. I will take this experience with me wherever I go and will continue to view Shakespeare in this manner: with a critical eye that looks into how his works reflected the social and political environments around him, and what characters like Beatrice meant for the stage and the public.
Much Ado About Nothing Unofficial Poster
by Emma Lemire (PO ‘23)

Much Ado About Nothing Show Logo
by Kendall Packman (PO ‘22)

Costumes for Beatrice by Suzanne Reed and Sherry Linnell
Rehearsal Shots and Instagram Promo Shot (Top Left, Edited by Kendall Packman (PO ‘22))
LEONATO: Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick too much, but he'll be with you, I doubt it not.

MESSENGER: He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.

BEATRICE: I pray you, answer, his excellency. He is a very valiant, brave, and well-composed gentleman; he has, in all appearances, a valiant soul.

MESSENGER: And a good soldier too, lady. [50]

BEATRICE: And a good one, to a man; but what is he to a woman? [55]

MESSENGER: A lord to a lord, a man to a man, stuffed with all honourable virtues.

BEATRICE: It is so indeed, he is no less than a valiant man; but for the stuffing - well, we are all mortal.

LEONATO: You must not, sir, mistake my niece; there is a kind of merry war between Signior Benedick and her. They never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them. [60]

BEATRICE: Alas, he gets it, by that proud last contention of his pride, his wit got halting off, and now is the whole man governed with one, so that if he have wit enough to keep himself warm, let him bear it for a difference between himself and his name, for it is all the world.

MESSENGER: Is it possible?

BEATRICE: Very easily possible. He wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat, it ever changes with the next.

MESSENGER: I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.

BEATRICE: No, he is not. I would know my study. But I pray you, what is his companion? Is there no young

MESSENGER: He is most in the company of the right noble Claudio. [80]

BEATRICE: Lord, he will be won on him like a disease. He is sooner caught than the pestilence, and the taking comes presently. When God doth the good, he does it. If he have caught the willow, it will cost him an heavy.

MESSENGER: I will hold friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE: [To good friends]

LEONATO: You will never run mad, niece.

BEATRICE: No, not till our enemy.

MESSENGER: Don Pedro is approached. [80]

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and [DON JOHN the bastard.]

DON PEDRO: Good Signior Leonato, are you come to meet your trouble? The fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

LEONATO: Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace, for, trouble being gone, comfort should remain; but when you depart from me, sorrow abides, and happiness takes his leave.

DON PEDRO: You embrace your charge too willingly. I think this is your daughter.

LEONATO: Her mother hath many times to do me so. [100]

BENEDICK: Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?

LEONATO: Signior Benedick, no, for then were you a child.

DON PEDRO: You have it full, Benedick; we may guess by this what you are, being a man. Truly, the lady furs herself. Be happy, lady, for you are like an honourable father. [Don Pedro and Leonato walk apart.]
VI. Works Cited

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