

We are Not Born Under a Rhyming Planet

I mean in singing. But in loving, Leander the good swimmer, Troilus the first employer of panders, and a whole book full of these quondam carpetmongers, whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse, why they were never so truly turned over and over as my poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme. I have tried. I can find out no rhyme to lady, but baby -- an innocent rhyme; for scorn, and horn -- a hard rhyme for school, fool -- a babbling rhyme, very ominous endings. No, I was not born under a rhyming planet, nor I cannot woo in festival terms.

[*Much Ado About Nothing*; Act 5 Scene 2, Lines 30-41]

The sort of love in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* is the kind that, in opposition to a lot of the tradition and period pieces that he regularly features in his plays, is still present and popular among lovebirds today. This distinctly universal trait of the work makes it an interesting study, both in the context of old, lawless London and today's relatively cultured society. Of note is the love between Benedick and Beatrice, whose relationship makes a creative use of something normally considered taboo, deception in love, which is craftily bent by supporting characters to form a happy and satisfying conclusion to their courtship.

The excerpt above features something common among lovers both old and new -- the use of poetry (in the first half of this case, musically appended poetry) in romantic wooing. Unlike the typical romantic hero in literature, however, Benedick humbly admits the pitifulness of his singing. More important than the singing, however, is his interesting "analysis," if you will, of his capacity to create rhyme.

Rhyme, as an element of literature, is a marriage of words with an agreement in sound that makes them pleasant to the ear. Rhyme is often used in poetry and goes hand-in-hand with the sort of romantic balladry that fills the ears of heart-swept women. What Benedick admits, however, is the poor ability of his to rhyme -- only in basic and unsentimental matters can he create proper rhyme. This is a remarkable corollary to his relationship with Beatrice, both from the artificial birth of their love to the organic and true culmination of it in their marriage.

Benedick was shown to be a character with a hidden desire for Beatrice from the very beginning, and while his proud heart prevented him from any innocent, independent admission of admiration for Beatrice, after the trickery employed by Don Pedro, Leonato, and Claudio, he could do nothing short of holding back his true feelings. Beatrice, meanwhile, was a character whose love for Benedick the audience couldn't really pick up at the beginning, but after the deception executed by dear friends Hero and Ursula, her love shone. Like Benedick's ability to rhyme simple, meaningless words, the simplicity and shallowness of the instant connection they both developed for one another, though they failed to reveal to each other, is an interesting reflection of the sort of rhyme that Benedick admits is the only sort of rhyme he can compose. Once the story picks up steam and true love begins to be known to the two characters, there is a fascinating entropy to their dealings with each other -- instead of naturally

Literary Commentary: Much Ado About Nothing

becoming more attuned and one with the other, they seem to be unsure and unsteady in their meetings and conversations with one another. Only behind each others' backs do they truly realize the deepness of their feelings for the other. Even until their wedding scene, only until previously hidden evidence of one's confessions of love for the other is revealed do they finally submit to the union of marriage.

Looking at the relationship between the two, there truly does not seem to be any reason or logic behind the progression of their relationship -- totally unpredictable, except for the gulling scenes that triggered the love in the first place. Like Benedick mentions, "they were never so truly turned over and over as my poor self in love." Love is not something that necessarily created harmony between the two over its development and progression, but, if anything, contributed to clouding their perceptions of one another. The true moments of harmony experienced are, ironically enough, in the scenes which in some way relate to the failed first marriage of Claudio and Hero -- the "death" of Hero, which caused Benedick to comfort Beatrice, and the scene after that where Benedick swore to her that he would confront Claudio about his malice. Much like the maladroit inability of Benedick to effectively create rhyme about love, so does their relationship remain weird and awkward while they are in love.

Comparing the love between Benedick and Beatrice and Benedick's rhyme, while the two seem to present confusing and nonsensical notions about both common perceptions of true love and what rhyme is, respectively, this is in fact the true nature of love -- it is not necessarily logical; it does not follow the postulates of reason. The fact is, there are no "laws" to love -- or at the very least, the laws of love can be more closely linked to promoting chaos, and not order. This is truly what love is -- the inexplicable attraction of two people; this is the world we now live in, love is not forced, there is no perfectly natural harmony, no "rhyming planet" we are born to. There are no proper words, no "festival terms," to completely capture the uniqueness of what love truly is for each couple. Observing the veritable odd "dance" of two individuals in love, this is as true now as it was true in Shakespeare's time, and Benedick's neutered capacity to rhyme is a cleverly sly manifestation of this notion: That love is most definitely a unique, almost incomprehensible aspect of our humanity, beautifully chaotic, for all its joys and sorrows -- it is truly something beyond rhyme and reason.

Word Count: 994 words