Much Ado About Nothing (2013) Directed by Joss Whedon

Preparing for the Film

1. What expectations might viewers today have prior to seeing a Shakespeare production?
2. What are some characteristics of romantic comedies that you have seen in films today?
3. What are some real-life challenges in dating and committing to a long-term relationship?
4. If you have read Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing, what are some challenges that a director might encounter adapting it for a film version for today's viewers?

Reflecting on the Film

1. What are the most compelling aspects of the film's opening scene?
2. When the dialogue begins, what is the effect of the contemporary setting and dress?
3. Why is the costume party particularly engaging for today's viewers?
4. Explain the significance of the striking scene with Claudio in a snorkeling mask in the pool.
5. Describe the parallel scenes when Benedick and Beatrice overhear friends reveal how each is loved by the other.
6. How is Don John's malevolence revealed and explained?
7. How are Borachio and Conrade caught in their scheme? What effect do Dogberry and Verges' scenes have on the film?
8. How does the director emphasize Hero's pain when Claudio, at the wedding ceremony, accuses Hero of infidelity?
9. Although Hero's humiliation is a near-tragedy, what are the positive results and how do they develop?
10. Analyze the film's ending and the resolution for both couples.

Writing about the Film

1. Focusing on the two parallel sequences where Benedict and Beatrice "overhear" their friends discussing how they are loved by each other, write an analysis of the strategies used by their friends and of their effectiveness. Which comments are most convincing to Benedick and to Beatrice--and why? Include specific quotations from the friends and from the lovers in their private reflections immediately afterwards to support your claims.
2. Write an analysis of the scenes and changes in Joss Whedon's film that seem designed to encourage viewers to enjoy and relate to Shakespeare's original work despite the differences in time period and language. Which themes and concerns seem particularly timeless and relevant in Whedon's production? Analyze specific details from the film and lines from the play to support your points.
3. Write an analysis of the relationship between Benedick and Beatrice that argues that they are a good match. Use specific scenes and select lines to support your view of each person and the relationship of the couple.
4. Decide which aspects of the plot and characterizations depicted in this film are most disconcerting to a modern audience. Argue in your analysis that these problems are
overcome by the compelling themes, talented actors and director, and the pleasure of watching the film—or that they are not.

5. Screen the 1993 Branagh production of Much Ado About Nothing with the goal of contrasting it with Joss Whedon’s film and determining which is the better handling of Shakespeare’s play. Select a limited number of key elements (Setting? Costumes? Characterizations? Length of scenes? Effect of the conclusion? Use of music?) for your contrast analysis.

6. Write an analysis of the Dogberry scenes by contrasting and/or comparing Whedon’s handling of this character and his scenes with the way he is depicted in Shakespeare or in the Kenneth Branagh 1993 film.

Works Cited


Select Film Reviews and Critical Analyses of Joss Whedon's Much Ado About Nothing:


http://wegotthiscovered.com/blu-ray/ado-bluray-review/