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## 0: PRELIMINARY MATERIALS

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-Annotated Bibliography of completed casebook

- Dobson, Michael, and Stanley W. Wells. 2001. *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 307-310.

Dobson and Wells' one-volume research resource is a great place to begin searching for a broad topic in Shakespearian history or scholarship. Reproduced in the casebook is the Companion's entry for *Much Ado About Nothing*, which includes a synopsis and discusses source materials and representative criticism for the play.

## 1: SHAKESPEARE AND THE CANNON

- "Shakespeare Was Italian, Professor Claims." *International Herald Tribune* (April 12, 2000.)

This brief report profiles the attempt of Italian scholar Martino Iuvara's attempts to prove that Shakespeare was actually born in Messina and named Michelangelo Florio Crollalanza.

- Greenblatt, Stephen. 2004. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. New York: W.W. Norton. 118-148, 288-299.

Greenblatt's biography of Shakespeare has received considerable attention in the past decade. The most notable and controversial theory that Greenblatt puts forth in the book is that Shakespeare may have secretly served as a Catholic priest in his early adulthood. Two chapters are included here: one that chronicles his courtship and marriage, which are directly compared to *Much Ado About Nothing*, and another that covers the approximate time range in which we wrote the play (1597-1599.)

- Friedman, Michael D. 2002. *The World Must Be Peopled: Shakespeare's Comedies of Forgiveness*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. 76-111.

Though he frames his reading of the play as addressing "the problem of Claudio," Friedman's book does not fall into the trap of categorizing *Much Ado About Nothing* as a "problem comedy," instead dubbing it a "comedy of forgiveness." Friedman also weaves recent productions and their choices into his analysis.

## 2: INTRODUCTORY CRITICISM

- Garber, Marjorie B. 2004. *Shakespeare After All*. New York: Pantheon Books. 370-390

Garber's book is culled from her Harvard lectures on each of Shakespeare's plays. Her treatment of *Much Ado About Nothing* centers on the strong debt that Restoration comedies owe to the play. She claims that *Much Ado About Nothing* "virtually inaugurated a genre."

- Davis, Walter R. 1969. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "Much Ado About Nothing"; A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. 54-59.

Included in the casebook from Davis' collection is Francis Ferguson's essay "Ritual and Insight." Ferguson separates and analyses each of the three major plot threads and explores some of the challenges to twentieth century production of the play.

- Halliwell-Phillips, J.O. 1879. *Memoranda on All's Well That Ends Well, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Much Ado About Nothing, and Titus Andronicus*. Brighton: Fleet and Bishop. 33-45.

The *Memoranda* were highly influential on late nineteenth century approaches to the plays. The sources of *Much Ado About Nothing* and the ways they were adapted for stage by other playwrights in Continental Europe are discussed.

- Tanner, Tony. 2010. *Prefaces to Shakespeare*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 180-199.

Tanner's preface to *Much Ado About Nothing* is closely tied to his larger analysis of the other comedies. He describes the ways in which the play draws upon its comic forebears, most notably *Taming of the Shrew*.

- Myhill, Nova. "Spectatorship in/of 'Much Ado About Nothing.'" *Studies In English Literature, 1500-1900*. Vol, 39, No. 2. 291-311.

A rare essay based upon the audience reception rather than onstage concerns of the play. Myhill frames much of her analysis on the antitheatrical tracts of the 1580s, which stressed the role reception might play in the promotion of immorality.

- Evans, Bertrand. 1960. *Shakespeare's Comedies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 68-87.

Major literary critic Bertrand Evans frames his discussion of *Much Ado About Nothing* with the masked party. He draws upon larger concepts of the party (and theatre) as transgressive spaces in Shakespeare's England.

- Levin, Richard Louis. 1971. *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 55-108.

Levin characterizes the plot of *Much Ado About Nothing* as a “three-level hierarchy,” noting three distinct plots. In this extended analysis of the form, Levin contextualizes both Shakespearian and Non-Shakespearian usages of this complex structure.

### 3: SHAKESPEARE’S SOURCES

- Cairncross, Andrew. “Shakespeare and Ariosto: ‘Much Ado About Nothing’, ‘King Lear’, and ‘Othello.’” *Renaissance Quarterly*. Vol. 29, No. 2. 178-182.

The borrowing of *Much Ado About Nothing*’s Hero and Claudio plot from Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* is often used as proof of Shakespeare’s access to translated Italian sources. However, Cairncross argues that Shakespeare used untranslated sections of *Orlando Furioso* in three plays and, hence, spoke Italian.

- Mueller, Martin. “Shakespeare’s Sleeping Beauties: The Sources of ‘Much Ado About Nothing’ and the Play of Their Repetitions.” *Modern Philology*. Vol. 91, No. 3. 288-311.

Mueller compares Hero’s falsified death to the “sleeping beauty” plots in *The Winter’s Tale* and *Romeo and Juliet*. He also explores Shakespeare’s usage of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*.

- Prouty, Charles Tyler, and Peter Beverley. 1950. *The Sources of Much Ado About Nothing, a Critical Study, Together with the Text of Peter Beverley’s “Ariodanto and Ieneura.”* New Haven: Yale University Press. 75-142.

A complete text of *Ariodanto and Ieneura*, the poem widely believed to be Shakespeare’s source for the Hero and Claudio plot in *Much Ado About Nothing*. This translation, first published by Peter Beverley in 1590, would have been the sole translation available to Shakespeare, and is reprinted with explanatory notes.

### 4: WOMEN AND MARRIAGE

- Lederer, Wolfgang. 1968. *The Fear of Women*. New York: Grune & Stratton. 153-168.

Lederer’s extremely influential text traces male mistrust of women from Biblical times through Shakespeare’s own era. He makes a key distinction between “the cult of sexual immorality” and “the cult of individual immorality” that is particularly useful in thinking about *Much Ado About Nothing*.

- Hamilton, Sharon. 2003. *Shakespeare’s Daughters*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland. 69-80.

Hamilton classifies Hero, Lavinia, and Ophelia as “daughters who acquiesce,” contrasting them to more rebellious daughters. She points to Hero’s shaming as the comic version of the tragic deaths of Lavinia and Ophelia.

- Callaghan, Dymphna. 2000. *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage*. London: Routledge. 59-74.

It frequently bears reminding that Shakespeare’s company would have used young men to play the female characters in *Much Ado About Nothing*. This chapter, “The Castrator’s Song,” focuses on techniques of vocal delivery in female impersonations of the period.

- Cook, Carol. “The Sign and Semblance of Her Honor: Reading Gender Difference in ‘Much Ado About Nothing.’” *PMLA*. Vol. 101, No. 2. 186-202.

Cook offers an in-depth reading of many previous gender-based interpretations of the play. Ultimately, she argues against the “ritual transcendence” that many of her contemporaries have argued for in the play’s conclusion.

- Menon, Madhavi. 2011. *Shakespeare: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Durham: Duke University Press. 245-253.

Included from Menon’s anthology is Ann Pellegrini’s essay “Closing Ranks, Keeping Company: Marriage Plots and the Will to be Single in ‘Much Ado About Nothing.’” Curiously, Pellegrini uses Sondheim’s *Company* as a frame to explore *Much Ado About Nothing*’s attitudes towards marriage.

- Neely, Carol Thomas. 1985. *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 24-57.

In her chapter on Shakespeare’s comedies, Neely notes the general absence of female resistance to marriage. She also explores the role of the masked party and false staging of Hero’s death upon the marriages in the play.

- Sokol, B. J., and Mary Sokol. 2003. *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 73-92.

This study’s chapter on the solemnization of marriage stresses the details of the ceremony itself in Shakespeare’s era. Importantly, it notes that although most of Shakespeare’s comedies center upon marriage, *Much Ado About Nothing* is the only play to stage an actual marriage ceremony.

- Bloom, Harold. 1988. *William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers. 21-37.

Included from Bloom's critical anthology is Harry Berger, Jr.'s essay "Against the Sink-a-pace: Sexual and Family Politics in *Much Ado About Nothing*." Like other twentieth century scholars, Berger seeks to disrupt the tidiness of the play's resolution.

## 5: MASCULINITY AND CUCKOLDRY

- Smith, Bruce R. 2000. *Shakespeare and Masculinity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 100-129.

Smith's chapter "Others" focusing on the othering of women, racial minorities, and non-heterosexual acts in the Shakespeare canon. Particularly interesting to study of *Much Ado About Nothing* is Smith's explication of the way male friendships in the plays are often voices with the rhetoric of Petrarchan love poetry.

- MacFaul, Tom. 2007. *Male Friendship in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 141-168.

MacFaul's chapter on fellowship explores the way the male peer group of Benedict, Claudio, and Don Pedro is complicated throughout the play. He cites Don Pedro's offer to woo on Claudio's behalf as the starting point for the male group's problems.

- Espinosa, Ruben. 2011. *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy in Shakespeare's England*. Farnham: Ashgate. 1-35.

Espinosa sketches the links between Shakespeare's plays and the cult of the Virgin Mary. Female strength in the image of the Virgin Mary, for Espinosa, is central to understanding the clashes of the sexes in *Much Ado About Nothing* and other Shakespearian works.

- Wells, Robin Headlam. 2000. *Shakespeare on Masculinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1-30.

Wells' introduction sketches the relationship between the heroes of Greek and Roman antiquity and the male figures in Shakespeare's plays. Hercules and Orpheus are central paradigms, and both are referenced explicitly in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

- Bruster, Douglas. "The Horn of Plenty: Cuckoldry and Capital in the Drama of the Age of Shakespeare." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. Vol. 30, No. 2. 195-215.

Bruster explores the centrality of fears of cuckoldry in Shakespeare's era, noting the existence of the Cuckold's Haven and Cuckold's Tavern. He argues that "London's drama seized upon the cuckold myth as a dialectical metaphor capable

of reconciling—however uneasily—evolving tensions between country and city, production and reproduction, female and male.”

- Hiatt, L. R. “On Cuckoldry.” *Journal of Social and Biological Structures*. Vol. 12, No. 1. 53-72.

Hiatt studies the phenomenon of cuckoldry in both humans and animals. Male parasitism proves to be a challenge to the nuclear family in a variety of species.

- Cohen, Stephen. “‘No Assembly but Horn-Beast’: The Politics of Cuckoldry in Shakespeare’s Romantic Comedies.” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*. Vol. 4, No. 2. 5-34.

Cohen notes the influence that an unmarried female ruler had on conceptions of cuckoldry in Shakespeare’s England. *Much Ado About Nothing* and *All’s Well That Ends Well* are the principal texts of his study.

## 6: ITALY AND MESSINA

- Levith, Murray J. 1989. *Shakespeare’s Italian Settings and Plays*. Basingstoke: Macmillan. 76-82.

Levith explores the Italian sources and references in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Ultimately, he concludes that: “The playwright does not call particular attention to his Italian setting except in a most general way.”

- Marrapodi, Michele. 2004. *Shakespeare, Italy, and Intertextuality*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 26-44.

In the chapter “English Bodies, Italian Habits,” Keir Elam notes the contradiction between Shakespeare’s Italian settings and English references in plays like *Much Ado About Nothing*. He ties his analysis to an increasingly multicultural discourse in Shakespeare’s era.

- Marrapodi, Michele, and A. J. Hoenselaars. 1998. *The Italian World of English Renaissance Drama: Cultural Exchange and Intertextuality*. Newark, Del: University of Delaware Press. 225-238.

Leo Salingar’s essay “Boracchio’s Indiscretion: Some Noting about ‘Much Ado’” tracks the changes Shakespeare made to Ariosto’s source material. He argues that Shakespeare turns a black-and-white plot into a bittersweet and ambiguous resolution.

## 7: MUSICAL TREATMENTS

- Track List for Spotify Playlist

- Davis, Walter R. 1969. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "Much Ado About Nothing;" A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. 88-95.

Also included from the anthology is "Music for *Much Ado About Nothing*" by Virgil Thomson, who wrote scores for many of Orson Welles and John Houseman's classical productions for the Federal Theatre Project. He argues for a fundamentally minimalist approach to scoring Shakespeare, claiming that many of the plays can be scored with only one song and its variations.

- Sheppard, Philippa. "'Sigh No More Ladies'—The Song in 'Much Ado About Nothing': Shakespeare and Branagh Deliver Aural Pleasure." *Literature/Film Quarterly*. Vol. 33, No. 2. 92-100.

Philippa explores the centrality of music and on-stage songs to *Much Ado About Nothing*. Exploring the lyrics of the play's songs in depth, she profiles the ways Kenneth Branagh's film version of the play capitalizes on its musical depth and dexterity.

## 8: VISUAL TREATMENTS

- Shakespeare, William, and John F. Cox. 1997. *Much Ado About Nothing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 88-93.

This collection of production resources has two types of notable images: drawings of iconic actors David Garrick and Charles Kemble in the role of Benedick, and set drawings by Edward Gordon Craig and Tanya Moiseiwitsch.

- Bell, John. 1969. *Dramatic Character Plates for Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays, 1775-1776*. London: Cornmarket. 88.

This collection of late eighteenth-century drawings of Shakespearian performers includes an illustration of "Mrs. Abington," presumably noted eighteenth-century British actress Frances "Fanny" Abington, as Beatrice.

- Friedman, Winifred H. 1976. *Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery*. New York: Garland. 99-221.

Boydell's Gallery is a collection of paintings from the late eighteenth century that interpret scenes from the Shakespeare canon. The selections for *Much Ado About Nothing* include works by Francis Wheatley, William Hamilton, Mathew Peters, and Robert Smirke.

- Menges, Jeff A. 2011. *Shakespeare Illustrated: Art by Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac, Charles Robinson and Others*. Mineola, N.Y.: Dover. 74-79.

This collection contains eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century paintings based on Shakespearian works. Included in the *Much Ado About Nothing* section

are paintings by Matthew Peters, John Gilbert, Norman Price, Charles Folkard, Artus Scheiner, and Frank Pape.

- Merchant, W. Moelwyn. 1959. *Shakespeare and the Artist*. London: Oxford University Press. 24.

Moelwyn's collection features reproductions of prominent Shakespearian paintings from a variety of historical eras. Included from *Much Ado About Nothing* is a Peter Simon engraving of William Hamilton's 18-century depiction of Hero fainting at the play's first wedding ceremony.

## 9: MAJOR PRODUCTIONS

- "Much Ado About Nothing." *Theatre Arts Monthly*. Vol. 21. 35.

This series of three photographs shows some of the set variations from the Vakhtangov Theatre's 1937 Moscow production of the play. By adding and subtracting painted flats and wagon units alongside two stationary arched spires, the production was able to quickly create a wide range of visual compositions.

- Shakespeare, William, and John F. Cox. 1997. *Much Ado About Nothing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 151-68.

The appendix of this production history contains a chronology of major English-language productions of the play. Productions are grouped by date, venue, and principal personnel (commonly lead actors.)

- Brown, John Russell. 1979. *Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing and As You Like It: A Casebook*. London: Macmillan. 221-231.

Brown's casebook features performance reviews that center on the work of actors and directors in *Much Ado About Nothing* from a wide range of historical eras. Included are discussions of work on the play by William Charles Macready, Charles Kemble, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, John Gielgud, Franco Zeffirelli, Helen Mirren, John Barton, Judi Dench, and others.

- Gay, Penny. 1994. *As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women*. London: Routledge. 142-177.

Gay's book analyses how evolving gender politics affected twentieth century productions of Shakespeare's plays. "A Kind of Merry War," her treatment of *Much Ado About Nothing*, explores productions by John Gielgud, Trevor Nunn, Ronald Eyre, Franco Zeffirelli, and Terry Hands.

## 10: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- List of Additional Resources