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ENGL 357

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Scene Analysis 1

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Careless, Hilarious, Trickery: All that is Necessary for a Happy Marriage?

*The Careless Lovers* follows two gentlemen as they navigate a romantic adventure. Mr. Careless and Mr. Lovell are arguably foils of each other as Mr. Lovell pursues what can be contrived as a traditional marriage in which he seeks to be with the one woman of his choosing, Jacinta. Whereas Mr. Careless, like his namesake, is quite careless with his romantic relationships and advocates for quantity of mistresses over quality of one wife. The conflict of the play is orchestrated around Lovell’s desire and pursuit of Jacinta despite her uncle’s predisposition to marry her to an eccentric Lord, Sir De Boastado. Careless and Lovell, with the assistance of Jacinta, her mischievous cousin, Hillaria, and the servants Toby and Beatrice, conspire a plot to defame De Boastado and thrust the two lovers into matrimony. Over the course of this plan, Hillaria disguises herself and antagonizes Mr. Careless because of his overtly lewd attempts to lay with her. As the play progresses, it becomes clear that not only are Jacinta and Lovell inamoratas, but so are Hillaria and Careless (even De Bosatado finds a wife in Jacinta’s maid, Beatrice as a result of the plan to defame and lead him away from Jacinta). The play concludes with Jacinta and Lovell’s marriage and Hillaria and Careless’ atypical marriage.

The scene in question, Act III lines 1-269, begins with Jacinta’s father advocating for his decision to marry her off to Lord De Boastado. This discussion becomes hijacked by Hillaria, who employs Jacinta’s clear dissatisfaction with her father’s choice as rhetorical fodder for her case against marriage in which she asserts that “man and wife are not one” (III:28-29). Spurring an argument with her uncle, Hillaria’s disposition eventually maddens him enough to remove himself from speaking further with her, allowing the cousins to discuss the issue of Jacinta and Lovell’s romance. Though their conversation is cut short with the arrival of Lovell and Careless who have anticipated Muchworth’s departure. The duo has appeared on Lovell’s accord to discuss his love for Jacinta, however this intention is obfuscated by Careless’ attempts to identify Hillaria whom he has only met with a mask on. Soon Muchworth returns, interrupting Careless’ attempts to swoon Hillaria, bringing with him a sense of anxiety for Lovell and Jacinta. By line 269, Careless has convinced Muchworth that he is a frivolous Lord with an estate who has come to court Hillaria accompanied by Lovell.

The scene laid out by Act III lines 1-269 proves to be a significant aspect of the play’s overall development for it lays the framework in which the series of tricks authored by Hillaria and Careless factor into its main plot. Leading up to this scene, Careless has only met Hillaria with a mask on, and she has intentionally referred to Jacinta as Hillaria to further toy with him (II:507). It is through this teasing that Careless becomes further infatuated with Hillaria and it further becomes evident that the two are likely to become romantic partners. The pair become forced to at least imagine themselves as courting immediately following Hillaria’s attempts to make a fool out of Careless, where she thwarts his attempts to identify her (III:89-154). This back-and-forth jesting, a manifestation of the play’s farcical properties, gets interrupted by Muchworth’s return and presents an opportunity for Carless to “serve [his] friend and these ladies” and gain some clout with Hillaria (III:233).

The beginning of act III outlines Hillaria and Careless’ eventual relationship, if not outright foreshadowing it. The play’s closure sees Jacinta and Lovell married, and the focus turns to Hillaria and Careless. Neither of which have actually changed their opinions on marriage, for they still wish to have the ability to be with other partners as stated in their proviso, which lines up with both Hillaria and Careless’ humors as described in act III (V.ii:333-384). In act III the two are forced to imagine themselves in a romantic partnership because of the dramatic context that is manifested by Lovell and Jacinta’s “forbidden” marriage. In addition to the game that Hillaria has been conducting with Careless, Careless’ lie to Muchworth to cover for Lovell appears to be less of a lie, and more of a convenient circumstance for his pursuit of the tricky Hillaria.

Based on the events of the play building up to the beginning of Act III, the section of the play itself and the play’s conclusion, it is clear that the aforementioned section of the play is critical for setting up the unlikely end of the play. In a sense, Careless and Hillaria’s romantic plot serves as a play within a play that turns out to not be a play at all. It emphasizes Hillaria’s trickery and her compatibility with the rakish and aptly careless nature of Careless. Thus, becoming an effective frame for the play’s conclusion.

Works Cited

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