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Satirizing the Silence: A Critique of the Patriarchy's Destruction of the Female Character in *Much Ado About Nothing*

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Oral Presentation O5.2

**SATIRIZING THE SILENCE: A CRITIQUE OF THE PATRIARCHY'S DESTRUCTION OF
THE FEMALE CHARACTER IN *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING***

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The purpose of my Research Honors project is to analyze women's roles in *Much Ado About Nothing* using both semiotic and feminist theory. The play enacts the disastrous effects of placing strict limitations on women and endowing men with unquestionable authority simply because of their gender. *Much Ado* presents two possible responses for women in a patriarchy: Hero's silent, compliant tongue and Beatrice's rebellious, outspoken tongue. Despite Hero's compliance with the patriarchy, the men read her as a text and assign meaning based on their interpretations, which leads to their slander of her spotless reputation. Although Beatrice is given a more privileged tongue, her voice is ignored due to her gender. I argue that the ending of the play is left intentionally unresolved to spark social debate on problems with the patriarchy: no matter what her response to patriarchal rule, a woman will always be silenced and overruled.