

# Movie Essays - Narrative Holes in Films of Shakespeare's Plays

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## Narrative Holes in Films of Shakespeare's Plays

My subject in this essay is playtexts and in films of those playtexts. Drama offers the storyteller a simple choice about how to communicate each element of the story to the audience: show it, or have a character describe it. Often in drama narration is used because an event cannot be shown, but occasionally telling is used when showing is perfectly possible and Shakespeare uses this device self-consciously to draw attention to the medium rather than the message of his story. Shakespeare appears then interested in ekphrasis, which the [Oxford Classical Dictionary](#) calls "an extended and detailed literary description of any object, real or imaginary" (Hornblower & Spawforth 1996) but which is commonly used in the more precise sense summarized by Grant F. Scott as "a verbal representation of a visual representation" (Scott 1991, 301).

In Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* there is an important hole in the narrative which has been placed there by the dramatist. The moment when Claudio and Don Pedro witness a sign of Hero's infidelity is only anticipated and recalled in the play, not shown.

First Don John promises "Go but with me tonight, you shall see her [chamber](#) window entered" (III.ii.102-3) and in the next scene Borachio brags how he brought Margaret into the deception: "She leans me out at her mistress' chamber window, bids me a thousand times good night" (III.iii.140-2). Between III.ii and III.iii the deception takes place without being shown to the audience. It certainly would have been possible for Shakespeare's stage to represent Borachio entering or leaving the bedchamber, so we should consider why Shakespeare chose instead to use dialogue referring to t...

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