***Much Ado about Nothing***

1. i. Claudio is praised by the assembled company, while Benedick is ridiculed. Leonato and his nieces mingle with guests. Claudio is in love with Hero, while Benedick is a steadfast bachelor.

ii. Leonato’s brother reports that Don Pedro is in love with Hero.

iii. Don John declares himself a villain and learns of Claudio’s love.

1. i. Leonato tells Hero to accept Don Pedro; the couple dances, as do Borachio and Margaret, Ursula and Antonio, Beatrice and Benedick. During the dance, Don John tries to make trouble by telling Claudio that Don Pedro is wooing and winning Hero for himself. Then Benedick rails on Beatrice, Leonato and Don Pedro give Hero to Claudio, and the scene ends with Claudio, Hero, Don Pedro, and Leonato plotting to make a match between Beatrice and Benedick.

ii. Borachio proposes a plot against Hero to Don John.

iii. Benedick mocks Claudio for loving, but then he overhears a conversation among Claudio, Don Pedro, and Leonato about Beatrice’s love for him.

1. i. Beatrice overhears a conversation between Ursula and Hero about Benedick’s love for her.

ii. Claudio, Don Pedro, and Leonato mock Benedick for loving. Don John tries to make trouble by telling Claudio and Don Pedro that Hero may be seen to be immoral.

iii. Dogberry charges the watchmen; they detain Borachio and Conrade.

iv. Hero, Margaret, and Beatrice talk before dressing for the wedding.

1. i. The wedding is called off; Beatrice, Benedick, and the Friar believe Hero, but her father believes the accusations. They feign her death. Beatrice and Benedick then declare their love for each other; she asks him to kill Claudio and, after much protest, he promises to challenge him.

ii. Dogberry examines Borachio and Conrade.

1. i. Leonato and Antonio mourn; they challenge Claudio when he enters; they exit. Benedick enters, challenges Claudio, and exits. Dogberry brings Borachio on to confess; Leonato orders new wedding after lamentation at Hero’s tomb; Dogberry leaves the play, pronounced an ass.

ii. Beatrice and Benedick play the closest thing to a love-scene they can manage.

iii. Claudio and Don Pedro lament at Hero’s tomb.

iv. Masked ladies reveal themselves and dance with their lovers before the weddings.

This comedy is somewhat obsessed with cuckoldry. Note that adultery is defined as having sex with a married woman; her husband thereby becomes a cuckold, and she loses her virtue. The adulterous man is guilty both of having unlicensed sex (which would be fornication if his partner were not married) and of stealing another man’s property, which is a wife’s legal status. That’s why fornication is a venial sin but adultery is a moral sin. Although the adulterer and the wife are the sinners, the cuckolded husband is considered ridiculous because he is unable to satisfy his wife sexually and/or unable to protect her from other men – either way, he is a contemptible weakling. In a play full of ridicule, this matters a lot. See these eleven relevant passages:

I.i.104-108, 198-199, 240-246, 262-270

II.i.21-26, 42-46

V.i.181-182

V.ii.38

V.iv.43-51, 114-115, 123-24