

Comic elements in the first act of "much ado about nothing"

Law



In the era in which "much ado about nothing" was set the wealth and power of someone was far more credible than their personality and this is portrayed in the first few lines of the play when Leonato asks "how many gentlemen have you lost in this action" and the messenger replies "but few of any sort, and none of name" he segregates the wealthy from the poor as though they are two different beings and doesn't tell us how many lower class people died as if it is irrelevant.

Vanity and hypocrisy are prominent themes that occur throughout the play, in the times of "much ado about nothing" the people were so focused on how they looked towards other people that their extravagant clothes, over the top mannerisms and the contrast in language in comparison to modern day were all somewhat outrageous and in turn humorous. Don John, the typical villain, only says one thing in act 1 scene 1 "I thank you, I am not of many words, But I thank you" this is quite a disappointing first line, the audience expects him to stamp his authority on the play but instead he stays relatively quiet, it is an anti-climax with no climax except the anticipation of how he will be portrayed in the play.

The main comical relationship in this play is between Beatrice and Benedick and they also feature hugely in act 1 scene 1. Beatrice first speaks of Benedick when she refers to him as "Signor Mountanto" which basically means ladies' man; this is the first bit of intentional comedy in the whole play, you could argue its sarcasm or the mocking of his inability to bed down a relationship, which is ironic because Beatrice is in pretty much the same situation as Benedick. As a result of Beatrice's complex humour the

messenger gets somewhat confused "I know none of that name, lady, there
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was none such in the army of any sort" this is humorous at the messenger's expense because of his confusion, an audience tends to like it when they are in the know and the people on stage are somewhat lost. Beatrice's constant insulting almost seems uncontrollable, with everything she says comes some sort of insult towards Benedick.

Benedick is extremely against marriage, because of the possibility of an unfaithful wife, and in lines 145 to 147 this becomes very evident, saying married men whose wives whom are unfaithful should wear caps " Is't come to this? In faith, hath not the world one man, but he will wear his cap with suspicion?"

Although Beatrice and Benedick argue every time they see each other, it can't go unnoticed that Benedick is all Beatrice talks about, which makes it so painstakingly obvious that they will get married, it's funny, it is also Dramatic irony because the audience know what is going to happen and Beatrice and Benedick don't.