MINISTERY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION OF UZBEKISTAN

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FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

COURSE WORK

On the theme: ***The theme of love in Shakespeare's "Midsummer's Night's Dream"***

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Content

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The great poet and dramatist William Shakespeare is often called by his people “Our National Bard”, “The Immortal poet of Nature” and “The Great Unknown”. Little indeed can be told about his life with certainty, even the year of his birth is much doubted. Yet, a patient research among old times of the 16th century has helped some scholars if not to restore his biography, at least to bring back the personality of the dramatist, who being the greatest was at the same time the humblest of poets.

Romantic love appears in several different ways in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Hermia and Lysander demonstrate young love, while Helena's love is that of desperation. Demetrius' love is fickle. Theseus gains his "love," Hippolyta, as a trophy of war. Titania and Oberon, married for ages, inflict pain and trickery on each other regularly. While there is no one common definition of love that suits all of the characters, the romantic relationships in this play all comply to one simple rule laid out by Lysander in Act I—the course of true love does not run smooth.

Love is something that will never be defined. No one knows what love is. When Egeus describes it as being “feign”, and “cunning”, he is, for the most part, corredt. Love can sneak on a person, or a person can sneak up on it. I can back the former from personal experience. Love can be truly cunning, and when it is, it hurts. For example, Hermia and Lysander have to make plans to elope because otherwise they cannot be together

A Midsummer Night's Dream Love? Is love controlled by human beings who love one another or is love controlled by a higher power? There are many people because of her father, Theseus. Theseus wants her to marry Demetrius because Theseus likes him better. This makes the love that Lysander and Hermia have for each other hurt more than love already should, and then puts them in danger when they decide to elope. Thus, love can be a problem. One solution to this would be for Lysander to challenge Demetrius to a duel, as was a custom in Shakespeare’s days. If Lysander won, then he and Hermia would

Love? Is love controlled by human beings who love one another or is love controlled by a higher power? There are many people who believe that a higher no longer have to worry about him, and they could be wed. In this however, there is a problem in the solution. Love is one of those things where there is no real “Gray Area”. Many people know if they are or if they aren’t. It’s something that just comes. Often at the wrong times, like when it is not returned. Love can be a blessing, though, when it is returned, and can lead to many years of joy

What is True Love? The overriding theme of the play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" ;by William Shakespeare deals with the nature of love. Though true love seems to be held and prosperity, as long as the love is respected. Often times though, love is deceitful, and can stop on a dime. There is no solution for that.

The theoretical value of the fiven topic is the concern with the specific theme of love in the play.

The practical value of the investigation is the benefit of examining the social concerns during the English lessons for learning a vast variety of traits, styles and ideas of the play transmission.

The object of the course work is literary and social concerns in the play of William Sakespeare.

The subject of the corse work is the play of William Shakespeare, The author’s approaches and manners of the passing the theme of love.

The aim of the work is the theoretical and practical substantiation of the concerns with the specific theme of love in the play William Shakespeare.

ChapterI Peculiaries of Shakespeare's works

William Shakespeare, born in 1594, is one of the greatest writers in literature. He dies in 1616 after completing many sonnets and plays. One of which is "A Midsummer Night's Dream." They say that this play is the most purely romantic of Shakespeare's comedies. The themes of the play are dreams and reality, love and magic. This extraordinary play is a play-with-in-a-play, which master writers only write successfully. Shakespeare proves here to be a master writer. Critics find it a task to explain the intricateness of the play, audiences find it very pleasing to read and watch. "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is a comedy combining elements of love, fairies, magic, and dreams.

Shakespeare's native place was Stratford- on- Avon, a little town in Warwickshire, which is generally described as being in the middle of England.

John Shakespeare, the poet's father, was engaged in the wool industry. He had some pasture land of his own, and also rented a house and land belonging to Robert Arden (3 miles from the town) whose youngest daughter Mary he later married. When his business prospered, the couple settled in Stratford.

In those days most of the municipal duties were carried out by the merchants themselves. John Shakespeare was elected alderman (next to the mayor), and by the time their eldest children were born he acted as bailiff which meant be had to keep order in the town according to the by- laws (local laws).

Some documents of the time indicate that John Shakespeare was illiterate; he marked his name by a cross because he was unable to write it. John and Mary Shakespeare had eight children, four girls and four boys, but their two eldest daughters died at an early age. The third child that was born to them was a son. He was named William.

William was a boy of a free and open nature, much like his mother who was a woman of a lively disposition.

There was a free Grammar School at Stratford. The priest of the church was also schoolmaster. At first school William Shakespeare learned to read and spell and was taught his first Latin.

In Shakespeare's time there was much guess- work in the way English children were taught to read. Reading was the same as learning by heart. If, for example, the children had to learn the word "Bar", the first who letters were given- BA, the last latter R was replaced by a sign shaped like a horn- -' (BA'). The pupil had to guess this last missing consonant. A book of such exercises was called the "Horn- book". Shakespeare gives an example of such an exercise in his play "Love's Labour's Lost" ("Love's Labour Is Lost").

What is A, B, spelt to learn by such a rebus- like method. The schoolmasters of the 16th century kept up discipline according to the proverb: "Spare the rod and you spoil the child."

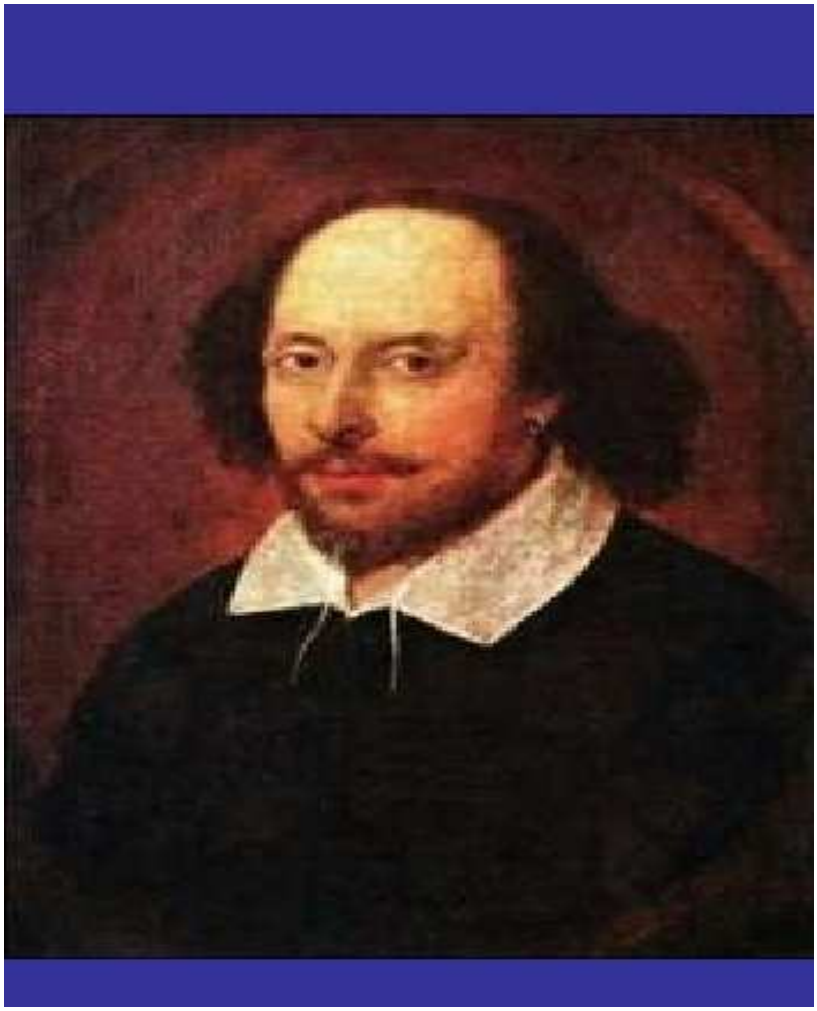
It was not easy to learn by such a rebus-like method. The schoolmaster of the 16th century kept up discipline according to the proverb: "Spare the rod and you spoil the child."

However it would be a mistake to suppose that the days of Shakespeare's boyhood were dull and lifeless. There was plenty of fishing, and hunting, and hawking, which was called "sport" (a hunter was called a "sportsman"). Every season of the year had its own festivities.

The visits of custom for actors to wait upon the mayor or bailiff of the town in order to ask permission to perform in the town hall or elsewhere. William's father, when bailiff, encouraged those visits. It would happen that the corporation of merchants paid for the performance and anyone could come and see it. It was the time when the legends of Greece and Rome and the ancient tales of England, Scotland and Wales were just beginning to appear on the stage. Small companies of traveling players hired only the principal actors, and when they gave a play many boys of the town were given a chance to help them

William Shakespeare was still a boy when he began to set and produce plays. Though he had to work hard in his father's business nothing would make him give up his hobby.

Upon the wide margin of a Bible- book belonging to Shakespeare there are some drafts of play bills (placards announcing a play). They tell us of his first theatrical performances and of his friends.



1.1.The language of Shakespeare

Although we can observe features of the play's language on the page, it should be noted that the play was written (never published) by Shakespeare for theatrical performance, and that effects of language are meant to be heard, as by an attentive audience they would be. Moreover, few of these effects are merely decorative; most help interpret the action on stage. In discussing the play's language, you should not merely list matters of interest, but should structure your comments according to categories or some other arrangement. The headings under which this section of commentary has been arranged may help.

By narrating events, Shakespeare is able to shorten the time directly represented on stage while providing the audience with necessary background information. Good examples of this would be Puck's account to the fairy of his master's quarrel with Titania, or Titania's own account of how she came by the changeling child. Where a tale may be already known to most of the audience, the narration can be very brief, as in Theseus's "I wooed thee with my sword/And won thy love, doing thee injury". More immediate events not directly shown may also be narrated, as when Puck tells the audience he has gone through the forest "But Athenian found I none", or when Oberon tells Puck how he has met Titania, "Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool" (Bottom) and that she has given up the child. Description, often with an element of narration, is essential to this play.

Imagination is an important theme, and the playwright boldly initiates a debate about imagination in the latter part of the play. "The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them", to which comes the retort that in watching Pyramus and Thisbe the "audience" must compensate for the defective imaginations of the "performers". In the Dream, as elsewhere, Shakespeare depends upon, but successfully excites, the audience's imagination. Things that cannot possibly be shown on stage are described vividly to us. These include:

• Oberon's celebrated "bank whereon the wild thyme blows"

• Lysander's and Hermia's description to Helena, of the moonlight and the wood;

• Helena's description in of her "school-days' friendship" with Hermia, with its repeated images of "union in partition",

• and Puck's description of Night's terrors at the end of the play ("Now the hungry lion roars/And the wolf behowls the moon") contrasted with the security of those in Theseus's house ("…not a mouse/Shall disturb this hallow'd house").

A sense of the fairies' magical power and of exoticism is established in references to remote places ("the farthest steppe of India" or "the spiced Indian air") or Puck's ability to circle the earth in "forty minutes" (much less on stage). The wood, too, is exotic and ambiguous: it is beautiful but dangerous. The

description of these things contrasts with the more homely and familiar elements: the native English flowers and herbs, and the folk traditions reflected in Puck's account of his mischief. Often narration and description are mixed. This is true of the example cited above of Titania's account of the "votaress" of her order, as well as of her account of the disruption in the natural world caused by her quarrel with Oberon. Oberon, in his account of the "fair vestal, throned by the west" also mixes narration with descriptive detail, as does Puck when he explains to his master how "Titania wak'd and straightway loved an ass". The frequent references to the wood and the moon instruct us to keep thinking of what we cannot directly see, while a line such as "weeds of Athens he doth wear" explains Puck's mistaking Lysander for Demetrius. What the playwright conveys here is not sartorial information but the nature of Puck's error. Lysander could be wearing any style of clothing and we will accept what Puck says.

Comment is of course frequent in Shakespeare: characters comment on their own situation, on others' actions, or more generally. In the play's first act Lysander, Hermia and Helena comment on their own situation and move on to make general statements about love. Helena's general comments are wiser, as her own conduct is more foolish. In the final act of the play comes Theseus's extended discussion of the imaginations of poets, lovers and madmen, while some of the most memorable comment is made pithy by its brevity: "Reason and love keep little company together nowadays" and "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" Theseus's long speech on imagination is addressed ostensibly to Hippolyta but has the quality of thinking aloud usually found in the soliloquy, while two other remarkable extended comment-speeches are soliloquies. All of these invite the audience to reflect, with the speaker, on the subject of his comment. In this play songs have a special place, as in The Tempest. They allow unusual verse-forms, and these suggest to the audience the magical power that the fairies command. For the magic of "Cupid's flower" and "Dian's bud", a rhythmic tetrameter couplet (eight syllables, or seven by omission of the unstressed syllable, but always with

four stresses) is used, and becomes the characteristic voice of Oberon, Puck and Titania in the latter part of the play.

1.2.The main themes touched in the play

General comments on some of these subjects follow. A word of caution is in order first. One can readily identify possible subjects for essay questions, and you should be prepared to answer on any of these. This is not the same as writing out an essay you have prepared before the exam (always a foolish idea). Questions will be worded so as to make this difficult, and to make it obvious if you do it: examiners like organized answers but dislike the “prepared essay”. Take your time

to read both alternative questions carefully. It is very often the case that a question which looks hard, because of its wording, is straightforward in reality while a question which looks simple, rarely is! Order and disorder is a favourite theme of the playwright. In this play the apparently anarchic tendencies of the young lovers, of the mechanicals-as-actors, and of Puck are restrained by the “sharp Athenian law” and the law of the Palace Wood, by Theseus and Oberon, and their respective consorts. This tension within the world of the play is matched in its construction: in performance it can at times seem riotous and out of control, and yet the structure of the play shows a clear interest in symmetry and patterning. Confronted by the “sharp” law of Athens, and not wishing to obey it, Lysander thinks of escape. But he has no idea that the wood, which he sees merely as a rendezvous before he and Hermia fly to his aunt, has its own law and ruler. As Theseus is compromised by his own law, so is Oberon. Theseus wishes to overrule Egeus, but knows that his own authority derives from the law, that this cannot be set aside when it does not suit the ruler’s wishes. He does discover a merciful provision of the law which Egeus has overlooked (for Hermia to choose “the livery of a nun”) but hopes to persuade Demetrius to relinquish his claim, insisting that Hermia take time before choosing her fate. The lovers’ difficulties are made clear by the law of Athens, but arise from their own passions: thus, when they enter the woods, they take their problems with them. Oberon is compromised because his quarrel with Titania has caused him and her to neglect their duties: Oberon, who should rule firmly over the entire fairy kingdom cannot rule in his own domestic arrangements. We see how each ruler, in turn, resolves this problem, without further breaking of his law. In the love relationships of Theseus and Hippolyta, of Oberon and Titania and of the two pairs of young lovers, we see love which, in a manner appropriate to the status and character of the lovers, is idealized eventually. The duke and his consort have had their quarrel before the action of the play begins, but Shakespeare’s choice of mythical ruler means the audience well knows the “sword” and “injuries” referred to in 1.2; we see the resolution of the fairies’ quarrel and that of the lovers during the play, and all is happy at its end. But whereas the rulers resolve their own

problems, as befits their maturity and status, the young lovers are not able to do so, and this task is shared by Oberon and Theseus. Oberon orders Puck to keep Lysander and Demetrius from harming each other, and Theseus confirms their wishes as he overbears Egeus' will. He is not now breaking his own law, because Demetrius cannot be compelled to marry against his will. A ridiculous parallel case of young lovers so subject to passion that, after disobeying their parents' law, they take their own lives, is provided by Pyramus and Thisbe. Lysander and Demetrius laugh at the mechanicals' exaggerated portrayal of these unfortunates, but the audience has seen the same excessive passion in earnest from these two. If Lysander breaks – or evades – the Athenian law knowingly, then the mechanicals break the law of the wood unwittingly. Puck's conversation with the first fairy in makes clear that the wood is where Oberon and Titania keep their court, though they travel further afield. (Oberon, according to Titania, has come "from the farthest steep of India" because of the marriage of his favourite to Theseus, while the Fairy Queen has also been in India with the mother of her changeling.) When he finds the workmen rehearsing, Puck notes the impertinence of these "hempen homespuns" being so near the bower of the Fairy Queen. And when we see that bower, we see Titania with her attendant fairies, we hear the ceremonial etiquette of their speaking in turn, even to "hail" the ass-headed Bottom. The incursion of these mortals into the fairies' domain may be somewhat of an impertinence, but Oberon lets there be no doubt that he is ruler here. The audience, taken into his and Puck's confidence, may see the mortals in the wood as "fools", subject to the power of the unseen spirits; but we also see how that power is exercised for the good of the uninvited guests. Bottom, in the arms of Titania, would seem to the Elizabethan audience to be playing with fire; and yet no harm comes to him. If the principal characters in the play serve to subvert or to restore order, how do we categorize Puck? By his own admission he is the most successful of all practical jokers. And his giving Bottom the ass's head or his delight on discovering the results of administering the juice of love-in-idleness to the wrong person ("this their jangling I esteem a sport") suggest that he is another representative of

anarchy. But charged with a serious duty, he is perfectly obedient ("I go, I go, look how I go") and he is taken into his master's confidence. It is Puck who perfectly explains how order is to be restored to the young lovers' confused relations:
"Jack shall have Jill/Naught shall go ill/The man shall have his mare again and all shall be well".

It is Puck who keeps the young men from harming each other, and it is Puck, with his broom, who leads the fairies in their blessing of Theseus' house in the final episode of Act 5. Though the hard work of restoring harmony to his own relations with Titania, and among the young lovers is principally done by Oberon and Puck, Theseus also has a part to play. In the opening scene, he is clearly trying to calm heated passions and buy time for Hermia. He does not know how or why the four lovers are "fortunately met", but he acts decisively in over-bearing Egeus' will but compensates him for any loss of face with the honour of a joint wedding ceremony. In Act 5, we see how his own great happiness makes the Duke more, not less, eager to promote the happiness of the young lovers ("Joy, gentle friends, joy and fresh days of love/ Accompany your hearts") and to show considerate approval of the efforts of the amateur performers of Pyramus and Thisbe. We do not see the threat to Athenian order posed by the incursion of the Amazons, but we do see, and enjoy with Puck, the confusion of the lovers and others in the wood, in the play's middle scenes. Though Puck and Oberon will eventually succeed, their first efforts to help Helena lead to an aggravation of the lovers' plight: Shakespeare contrives that each of the four, by the end of 3.2 will have a different perception (in every case wrong) of his or her situation. The serious disorder brought about in the natural world by the fairies' quarrel cannot be shown directly, but is graphically described by Titania; what can be shown is the incongruous pairing of the Fairy Queen and ass-headed Bottom. A different kind of chaos is seen in the attempts of the mechanicals to perform a play. We actually see casting, rehearsal, revision of the text and eventual performance. The ineptitude of the actors counterpoints the virtuosity of Shakespeare's control of the play proper. This is shown both on the small and the large scale. The linguistic variety of the play (see below) and the

control of the four narrative strands are such that the play has enjoyed great success in performance. In the wood, Shakespeare will leave a group of characters alone for as long as he needs to, but we never lose touch with their story. It is typical of Shakespeare that the mortals we see first in the wood are Demetrius and Helena; at once the playwright shows us the cause of Demetrius' rejection of Helena and lets us know that the other pair are also in the wood. We do not need to see Lysander and Hermia before they have lost their way, but we are ready for Puck's mistake as he seeks one in "Athenian garments".

Chapter II The Young lovers

For the proper view of their plight we should look to other characters in the play. We are invited to sympathize with their situation, but to see as rather ridiculous the posturing to which it leads. This is evident in their language which is often highly formal in use of rhetorical devices, and in Lysander's and Hermia's generalizing of "the course of true love" (the "reasons" they give why love does not "run smooth" clearly do not refer to their own particular problems: they are not "different in blood", nor mismatched "in respect of years"). Pyramus and Thisbe is not only Shakespeare's parody of the work of other playwrights but also a mock-tragic illustration of Lysander's famous remark. This is evident in a number of similarities to the scenes in the Dream in which the young lovers are present. Before the play begins, and at its end, as Demetrius loves Helena, we see two happy couples; but Demetrius' loss of love for Helena (arising from, or leading to, his infatuation with Hermia) disturbs the equilibrium. That Demetrius really does

re-discover his love for Helena in the wood (as opposed to continuing merely in a dotage induced by the juice of love-in-idleness) is clear from his speech on waking. Unlike his “goddess, nymph, divine” outburst, this defence of his love and repentance for his infatuation with Hermia (likened to a sickness) is measured and persuasive. The critic who objects to the absence of any stage direction for the giving to Demetrius of Dian’s bud, the antidote to Cupid’s flower, can be answered thus: in a performance, the audience is not likely to detect the omission; we may suppose the effects of the flower to wear off over time, but Demetrius’ love does not; in any case, Puck could “apply” the “remedy” to the eyes of each “gentle lover”, at the end of Act 3, if the director is troubled by this seeming discrepancy. But the best reason is that Demetrius’s profession of his new-found love makes the antidote or its absence redundant in his case. Early in the play we laugh at what the young lovers say. Lysander is aware of his and Hermia’s sufferings, but to pontificate about “the course of true love” generally, to say it “never did run smooth”, is risible. The alternate lines in which Lysander proposes a reason why love does not “run smooth”, while Hermia comments on his statement, invite ridicule, as his “or” (leading to another reason) is followed by her “O”, bewailing the cause of the lovers’ suffering. In the same scene, we note how the same device (_tichomythia) is used rather differently, as Hermia and Helena expound Demetrius’ preferences: “I frown upon him, yet he loves me still”/”O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!”. Here the use of similar vocabulary with opposite meaning is made emphatic by the rhyming couplet. When Helena soliloquizes about love, at the end of the scene, she speaks wisely, in her general account, but her inability to be wise in her own situation is comic. Disclosing her rival’s flight to Demetrius, to enjoy his company briefly, seems perverse, but is wholly plausible: young people in love often do silly things. In the wood, we see the likely outcome of Oberon’s orders to Puck, as we know that a man in “Athenian garments” could be Lysander, who, according to Demetrius and Helena, is already in the wood. But the multiple confusion caused by the love-in-idleness

among the four lovers is richly comic in its variety. Each has a different understanding of the situation.

• Lysander sees no reason why he should not reject Hermia (in spite of his rash promise: “And then end life, when I end loyalty”) as love justifies this conduct, an exaggerated version of Demetrius’s disloyalty to Helena previously.

• Demetrius loves Helena, and wishes to resume his earlier claim on her affections. Each man loves her and cannot see why she doubts him.

• Hermia has no doubt that they love Helena, but believes Helena to have used doubtful means to steal Lysander’s love (Egeus has earlier accused Lysander of doing this to woo his daughter).

• Helena disbelieves all three, assuming that Hermia’s complaints are feigned, and that “she is one of this confederacy”. The characters have no proper understanding of what they feel; the whole episode is a Night’smare magnification of the madness love ordinarily can lead to. And when the men “seek a place to fight”, they are serious in their purpose. But the audience is assured by Oberon’s vigilance and Puck’s activity that “all shall be well”. And the proper response to them is to agree with Puck: “Lord, what fools these mortals be”. The actors should play the parts without any sense of irony, however.

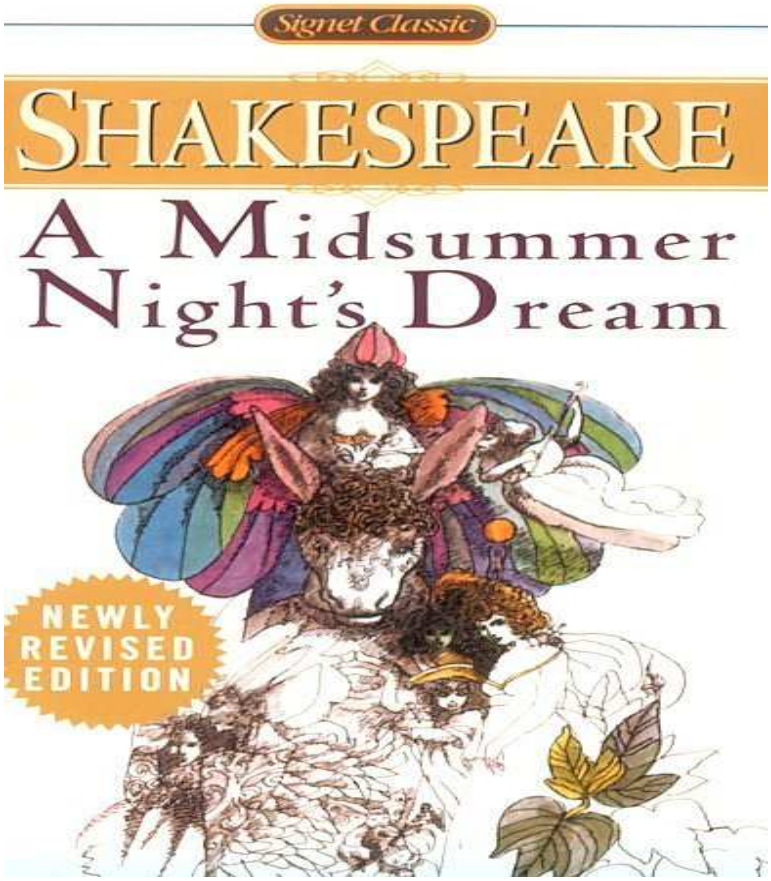
2.1.Different Types of Love in Midsummer Night’s Dream

Love and lovers, both can be described as many different things. William Shakespeare shows us this in his play, A Midsummer Night’s Dream. In this play we see all types of love, from passionate love to foolish love. Along with this we also see different types of lovers and pairs. Examples of these lovers come from pairs like, Hermia and Lysander, Demetrius and Helena, Titana and Bottom, and Oberon and Titana. It seems that in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Shakespeare shows different types of love and lovers. One love that Shakespeare shows in Midsummer is passion. Passion is a burning emotion, a strong feeling or a desire that is deep within your soul. When you have found the perfect man/ women you will be passionately in love. The lovers that show this in the play are Lysander and Hermia. The two of them really define the passion and true love. Lysander and

Hermia are determined to be with each other, but are denial by Egeus (Hermia's father). Egeus wants Hermia to marry Demetrius, but she is in love with Lysander. Egeus and Theseus (The Duke of Athens) then agree that if Hermia does not marry Demetrius she is either to become a nun or die. When Hermia is alone with Lysander she tells him, "Belike for what of rain, which I could well/ Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes" . In this quote she is telling Lysander that because of all this commotion, her eyes are starting to fill with water and about to cry. With Lysander being the faithful and uplifting person he is he replies, "Ay me! For aught that I could ever read/ could ever hear by tale or history, / The course of true love never did run smooth" . In this quote Lysander is telling Hermia that from everything he has heard from stories and history, the path of true love was never easy. Determined to be with each other, Lysander and Hermia decide to run away to marry each other. They are eventually caught up to and returned to Athens.

The work is composed onto three major parts: introduction, main part and conclusion. Each part has its subdivision onto the specific thematically items. There are three points in the introductory part: the first item tells about the general characteristics of the work, the second paragraph gives us some words about the author of the play and the history of his work "A Midsummer Night's Dream", while the third part of introduction analyzes the critical works dedicated to the immortal comedy of William Shakespeare.. The main part of our qualification work consists of four chapters which, in their turn, are subdivided into several thematically paragraphs. The first chapter of the main part discusses the compositional structure of the comedy, its plot and main idea. Here we also gave the particular attention to the description and further analysis of the most meaningful scenes in each act of the play. The second chapter thoroughly takes into consideration the peculiar features of Shakespeare's language. In this chapter we tried to make our conclusions to the points of verse and prose correspondence, rhethoric, patterning and wordplay talent of the "Avon Bard". The third chapter takes into consideration the main themes touched upon the play, and their correspondence to the described epoch from the one side, and their actuality in the

21st century from the other. The last chapter of the main part observes the characters of their play and their interrelations in respect to the society, mental and age status. In conclusion to our work we gave our ideas got in the result of our investigation and appreciated the future perspectives of the latter. At the very end of our qualification work we supplied our work with the bibliography list and the internet materials.



"A Midsummer Night's Dream" is more or less contemporary with Romeo and Juliet, and dates from the mid 1590s. In it, Shakespeare is painstaking in his attention to details of language (as in the early Love's Labors Lost), but the play also shows the maturity of his best later work in its stagecraft. It is one of a group of plays known sometimes as festive comedies – the others being "As You Like It and Twelfth Night's". The plays are associated with festive seasons and traditional celebrations. "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is more democratic than many of Shakespeare's plays – rulers, nobles, workmen and spirits all dominate the drama at different points. As a term to describe a category (kind) of play, tragedy (which

means “goat song” in classical Greek!) originates in Athens in ancient times. Aristotle (a philosopher and scientist, but no playwright) describes rules or principles for the drama which tragedians should follow. These rules have proved helpful as a working description, but should not be seen as absolute: Shakespeare, in practice, ignores them more or less. Comedy is a term applied to the humorous plays of Greek (e.g. Aristophanes) and later Roman (e.g. Terence) dramatists. For Shakespeare, a comedy is a play with a happy ending – it may or may not be comical in the modern sense of being humorous. In trying to arrange Shakespeare’s work into categories (as for publication in book form) editors have produced a third category, of histories.  More recently critics have noted that Shakespeare’s latest plays do not fit any of these categories easily. Thus we have problem plays (or tragicomedies) in Measure for Measure and All’s Well that Ends Well and pastoral plays or romances in Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter’s Tale and The Tempest. We should know that these labels were not consistently or even commonly applied in Shakespeare’s time. Plays classed as tragedies (such as Macbeth) may have a clearly historical subject. Some of our “histories” (such as Richard II and Richard III) were advertised as tragedies at the time of their performance. Shakespeare wrote plays to be seen in a complete performance which would, for “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”, last about two and a half hours. The play would be performed by daylight (between about two and four o’clock) in the purpose-built open air theatres, or with artificial light (lanterns

and candles) in private houses of wealthy patrons (The Tempest may well have been originally written for private performance: many of the special effects work best indoors and under artificial light; both Hamlet and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” show plays-within-the-play which are performed indoors, at Night’s). The plays were not written to be read or studied and (hand-written) copies of the text were originally made only for the use of the performers. It is important to remember this when you study the play as a text (with extensive editorial comment) on which you will be examined. Shakespeare’s company was the most successful of its day, and his plays filled the theatres. Many (most?) of the audience in a public performance would lack formal education and be technically illiterate (this does not mean that they were unintelligent). But these were people for whom the spoken word was of greater value than is the case today: they would be more attentive, more sensitive in listening to patterns of verse and rhyme, and aware of imagery.

The intervals between Shakespeare’s “scenes” represent changes in time or place, but not of scenery, which would be minimal or non-existent. Basic stage furniture would serve a variety of purposes, but stage properties and costume would be more elaborate and suggestive. A range of gestures and movements with conventional connotations of meaning was used, but we are not sure today how these were performed.

For a more sympathetic view of the lovers, we should consider Theseus’s attempt to show Hermia how much she would lose, to “endure the livery of a nun”.

The appeals to “desire”, “youth” and “blood” show his awareness of the sexual desire of a young woman, while his comparison of the “rose distill’d” to that on the “virgin thorn” delicately advertises the attraction of maternity. Hermia’s reply shows her understanding of his reason, and her determination. In the duke’s presence she is shown at her best; when he leaves, her conversation with Lysander is touching initially, as they comfort each other, but soon becomes overwrought, exaggerating their passion. In Actкcxct 4, suddenly with no cause for further enmity, there is no hint of a grudge on the part of any; each has, impossibly, it seems, the prospect of immediate marriage to the preferred partner, while the feuding of the previous Night’s is remembered but, in its many confusions (changes of desire, seeming betrayals, quarrels, voices from nowhere) thought of as a dream. This view is anticipated by the pair of six-line stanzas spoken by Helena and Hermia at the end of Act 3. Each is a moving expression of despair and resignation (though Helena’s “O weary Night’s, O long and tedious Night’s” has a hint of Pyramus’s “O grim-looked Night’s, O Night’s with hue so black!” about it. If Puck hints at how we are to see the lovers in the wood, Theseus is able, in the final act, to articulate our happiness at the comic resolution: “Joy, gentle friends, joy and fresh days of love/Accompany your hearts”, while we inwardly endorse the fairies’ blessing and Oberon’s promise that the lovers’ “issue” shall “ever…be fortunate”, the couples “ever true in loving”. We rejoice to see Lysander’s pessimistic utterance contradicted.

2.2Theme of love and its interpretation in the third act

We know from the short Act 1, scene 2 that the workmen have planned to tritium their play of Pyramus and Thisbe in the wood. Conveniently they come to the place just vacated by Hermia, where Titania still lies asleep. (The workmen hope that their play will be performed for Theseus, but we learn from 5.1, that there are many rival attractions: theirs will be chosen because of its amusing (contradictory) title and Philostrate’s harsh comments.)Puck, at first amused by the crudity of the acting, sees how to perfect Oberon’s plan for Titania. Titania’s

instant infatuation with Bottom parallels that of Lysander (in the last scene) and Demetrius (in the next) with Helena.

Oberon tells Puck that Titania has readily given up the changeling boy to him. The sight of his queen's doting on "this hateful fool" awakens a sense of tenderness in Oberon, leading to a renewal of their love, while Bottom's strange experience leads to his puzzled soliloquy and his seeming-miraculous return to his fellows in 4.2. Pyramus and Thisbe, as performed by the mechanicals in 5.1, is a perfect commentary on how "the course of true love" has run, hitherto, for the young lovers. Structure is a fairly simple scene structurally: the workmen's rehearsal ends when Puck gives Bottom the ass's head; Bottom's efforts to keep his spirits up wake Titania, who declares her love for the bemused Bottom and commands her fairies to minister to him. There is much to admire here, but especially

• the contrast between the grossness and clumsy speech of Bottom and the elegance, beauty and majesty of Titania,

• and the questions raised by Pyramus and Thisbe as to what constitutes a good play.

At first the scene is rather static: the workmen honestly try to solve their own “theatrical problems”; although Bottom is overbearing at times, his essential good nature and his friends’ respect mean that the “players” (in contrast with the four young lovers and the fairy rulers) work harmoniously, though the result of their labors is fatuous. The acting of Pyramus and Thisbe requires movement on (and off) the stage. The “hawthorn brake” could well be off the real stage (so, ironically, the supposed “tiring house” of the workmen could be provided by the real tiring house in the theatre) as the ass’s head must be placed on Bottom off stage, between lines 86 and 102 (see stage directions).

Quince’s comments indicate how the play is being performed:

“This be, stand forth…he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again…you must not speak that yet…Pyramus, enter». Puck’s “I’ll follow you…” speech is apparently not heard by Bottom, otherwise “Why do they run away?” makes no sense. The speech is evidently to inform the audience and invites mimicry, both in sound and movement, of the animals Puck names. Titania’s promise to make Bottom move “like an airy spirit” is not likely to prove true (as Oberon’s and her own comments in 4.1 shows). The regal, graceful movement of Titania and the delicacy of her fairies contrast with the robustness and “mortal grossness” of Bottom. Bottom is soon at ease in his strange situation, and speaks to Titania and the fairies with the same familiarity he shows to Theseus in 5.1. For different reasons neither ruler takes offence, but Shakespeare’s audience would feel a frisson of danger at the seeming impertinence. The proper (appropriate) attitude to someone of Titania’s or Theseus’ status is awed reverence of the kind the duke describes in 5.1, 93-105. Only a fool would fail to see this. When the fool wears an ass’s head, the impertinence seems greater. Here are some reasons why this will amuse the audience:

• The ass’s head is a visible symbol, and so, theatrically effective;

• “Ass” and “ass-head” are both used as synonyms of stupidity in the 16th century;

• the ass is obstinate and (thought) clumsy and ugly;

• it is a beast of burden, suggestive of Bottom’s “mechanical” (menial) status;

• the pronunciation of the word allows a pun on “are”, suggested by Bottom’s name. (He is called “Bottom”, as he is a weaver; “weaver’s bottom” like “housemaid’s knee” was a well-known medical condition. It is a kind of stichomythic strain injury – isocheimal bursitis in Latin);[6]

• and Oberon has intended that Titania should love a beast.

Act 3, scene 2 This is the longest scene in the play; indeed it is longer than any of the play’s other acts. The sport Puck unintentionally causes – but greatly enjoys – reaches a climax, which might prove fatal but for his intervention; at the end of the scene he tells the audience that “all shall be well”, and this leads naturally to the reconciliation of the rivals in the next act, and the celebration of the threefold nuptials in Act 5. This is such a long scene that the structure in episodes can be hard to follow; in fact, it is not very complex if one notes that almost half of the scene is taken up with one extended episode (as long as the whole performance, in Act 5, of Pyramus and Thisbe).

• Puck explains to Oberon what he has done;

• seeing Demetrius and Hermia (where and how has she found him?) Puck learns of his error;

• he is to fetch Helena (and, therefore, Lysander, too) while the flower juice is given (by Oberon – there is no stage direction, but he tells us what he is doing) to Demetrius, who wakes at the sound of Helena’s voice and declares his love;

• the confusion is completed by the return of Hermia (it is dark, but she has heard Lysander’s voice);

• when the arguments threaten to turn to physical violence, Puck, commanded by Oberon, uses his skills in mimicry to separate the four, though eventually leading each to a sleeping place near the others. He puts in Lysander's eyes the antidote (given him by Oberon) to the flower juice, and leaves the lovers sleeping.

The central episode here is perhaps the most amusing part of the play, but the humour is of a wholly different kind from that provided by the mechanicals. The workmen are obviously comic because of their class, their speech and their notions of acting. By contrast, the four lovers are characters of some status and dignity, whose situation in itself is very far from amusing. In the first scene the lovers are amusing in their tendency to sensationalize their predicament, to claim for themselves a tragic grandeur. Here, however, we are entertained by the plight of each character, both because we know so much more than he or she does, and because we see, and the lovers do not, how and why their own attempts to understand their predicament are utterly mistaken. Lysander recalls that he loved Hermia but is now repelled by her, and can only see his former love as an error of judgement. Demetrius has had the same experience, but is able to revert to his even earlier claim to Helena's love. Neither man can understand why Helena disbelieves his protestations. It seems that each believes the other, however: having been bitter rivals for Hermia's hand, they now bring the same rivalry to the pursuit of Helena. Helena loves Demetrius still, but assumes that his and Lysander's courtship of her is a cruel elaboration of Demetrius' earlier rejection; the men, though enemies, must hate her so much that they have agreed to offer ironic praise. Hermia's

outrage Helena takes to be part of the game; “she is one of this confederacy”. Hermia is genuinely puzzled by Lysander’s sudden change of heart, but believes Helena to be at fault. An ambiguous insult (“puppet”; Helena means “counterfeit” but Hermia thinks she refers to her size) gives Hermia a reason for Lysander’s inconstancy. The scene requires energy and much action in the performance: the two men are fawning on Helena, while in part struggling with each other; yet they must keep breaking off from this to defend Helena from Hermia. Helena is trying to hold off the men, and escape Hermia’s attacks. Hermia wants to assault Helena but is restrained by the men. All the while Oberon and Puck are watching, invisible to the mortals.Eventually the desire to settle their rivalry causes the men to leave the women alone, whereupon Helena runs away from Hermia, and Puck is able to intervene. Without this, the scene could have gone on for ever, but Shakespeare has allowed time to exploit fully its comic potential. It is essential, in the acting, that the performers do not exhibit self-consciousness or any sense of irony about their ridiculous situation. The men believe as they do because they are drugged; Helena’s response is quite a rational one; Hermia’s less so, but she can see no other, more simple, explanation. In any case, all of them are passionate people, whose motives for being in the wood are not conducive to calm or reason; they may be tired, they are in an unfamiliar place (this is not the wood as described in 1.1) and as much in the dark metaphorically as literally. Heated and excitable behavior is exactly what one would expect, and Puck has seen it coming. Before the men go off to fight, some violence will be threatened in gesture. As each tries to find the other, he may strike at shadows. We know they are to use swords, as Puck, in Demetrius’ voice, calls out (402) that he is “drawn and ready”. Most of the scene is rhymed verse, but in mid-speech Helena (195) switches to blank verse. As with the fairies in 2.1, this indicates a greater seriousness in the four lovers’ dispute. As the threatened violence descends into farcical pursuit it is Helena again (340) who picks up the rhyme. In general the lovers use pentameters arranged as couplets, but more elaborate patterns are used for particular purposes: Lysander and Helena speak in six-line stanzas when they come on stage; with the next two

lines (a couplet) they form a sonnet in effect. The same six-line stanza is used by Helena and Hermia at the end of the scene, though for Hermia the metre is subtly varied (suggesting her exhaustion) with “Never so weary, never so in woe”. The fairies use both pentameter and tetrameter, and a more fluid verse form (lines varying in length) for Puck’s final speech. Although the men trade insults and go off to fight, the most sharp verbal exchanges are between Helena and Hermia. Helena speaks at length of their past friendship, accusing Hermia on treachery. Helena’s calling Hermia a “puppet” leads to a series of insults, mostly from the men, at the expense of Hermia’s stature and dark coloring. To this Hermia responds by calling Helena a “painted maypole”. Many of the best lines in the scene are Puck’s: the final speech and the earlier “Lord, what fools these mortals be” stand out. On Hermia’s exit Puck’s and Oberon’s exchange is used to describe the passing of the Night’s, preparing us for the hunting in the next act. It also means that Puck must act “in haste” while the darkness he needs to mislead the men lasts. Two other parts of the dialogue are worthy of note. Demetrius’ “goddess, nymph, perfect, divine” and what followsmatches, if it does not surpass, Lysander’s “And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake” in Helena’s “O weary Night’s, O long and tedious Night’s” could almost be taken from Pyramus and Thisbe (Helena (not the Night’s) is weary (the epithet is transferred) and it is her speech here which is tedious. In the audience’s view it is a good thing for the Night’s to end now, but it has been far from tedious!

As noted above, this scene is remarkable for the number of characters on stage, and movements must take account of this. As it is now daylight, the sleepers

will be seen by anyone who comes near them. When Bottom and Titania come on stage, they must, therefore avoid the lovers. Titania's words describe her actions as does Bottom's asking Mustardseed to help Cobweb scratch his face: Titania sees the "sleek smooth head" and "fair large ears" but loves Bottom because, rather than in spite, of these. There is continued humour in the incongruity here: offered fairy music, Bottom calls for "the tongs and the bones"; when Titania offers a dainty delicacy ("the squirrel's hoard"), Bottom seeks huge quantities of animal fodder. When Titania comes to her senses, her dancing with Oberon is very important: their movement in time to the fairy music and rhythmic verse anticipates their activity in the next act. To "rock the ground" is what they have for long failed to do (with the dire results described by Titania in 2.1).Theseus and Hippolyta come on stage as the fairy king and queen leave it: this order is reversed in the next act; in each case we recognize a symmetry in the two pairs of rulers. The duke and his consort seek a vantage-point from which to watch the hunt. For obvious reasons the audience will not see the hounds, so a word-picture is required; once the lovers are found, the hunting can be "set aside". Theseus evidently approaches the part of the stage where the young lovers (but not Bottom) sleep. "But soft, what nymphs are these?" may be ironic (he would recognize them if he looked) but he may not have a clear view. Egeus is able to identify his own daughter, and the others, and has to state the obvious in voicing his surprise at "their being here together" (the surprise is as much at their being "together", as in the wood at all).

When the lovers wake, their words are in striking contrast to their previous waking: in the Night's both Lysander and Demetrius have woken instantly, filled with certain love for Helena; now both are hesitant, unsure what to say. We have not seen either of them exhibit such careful introspection nor attempt to be so conciliatory before. But Demetrius' renewal of love for Helena solves Theseus' problem. He cannot confirm Egeus' choice because Demetrius cannot (unlike Hermia) be compelled to marry against his will. So Egeus is over-ruled and the Athenian law has not been compromised. Bottom,on waking, experiences equal confusion, if not greater. Where the young lovers have no idea why their affections have altered so radically (and back, in Lysander's case), Bottom has had sight of the fairy world, but will find it difficult now to believe. He attempts to put his "dream" in words but is unequal to the task, though he hopes Peter Quince may be able to turn it into a ballad. If the action of the scene is marked by waking, the language is marked by references to dreaming. Oberon suggests that Bottom and the lovers will think of "this Night's's accidents" as "the fierce vexation of a dream", while Titania wakes believing she has had "visions". Lysander, speaking to Theseus thinks he is "half sleep, half waking", Hermia thinks she is seeing double (a faithless and a faithful Lysander?) and has already dreamed of Lysander's watching a serpent eat her heart away. Demetrius suggests they are still dreaming, but sees he must be awake when he realizes that the other three have seen and heard the same things as himself. Bottom's soliloquy repeats the word "dream" six times and also refers to a "vision". He does not attempt to describe what he has seen, suggesting that only a "patched fool" (that is, a jester or "professional" Fool) would attempt it. (A Fool of this kind would have the learning and wit indeed to explain the dream.) Saint Paul's comment on spiritual gifts is called in evidence, but as usual Bottom assigns sense-experiences, not to the organs which experience them, but to others. He and Quince confuse sight and sound elsewhere (Quince in 3.1, 90; Bottom in 5.1, 188-9). This idea of the events in the wood as a dream, is continued in the next act: Hippolyta argues that the common elements in what the lovers say indicate that something odd occurred.

Later, Puck, in speaking the epilogue will argue that the play is the audience's, as much as the performers', dream.The rude everyday speech of the workmen, embellished by Bottom's and Quince's errors, is to be contrasted with the stilted (unnatural) attempts at eloquence in Pyramus and Thisbe (compounded by mispronunciation) and with the very real eloquence of Titania. The informality of the workmen's language is shown in their normally speaking in prose, with commonplaces such as "by'r lakin", "not a whit", "well", "nay" and "ay". Bottom also contributes "more better" and "saying thus, or to the same defect" (for "effect") while Quince manages "disfigure" (for "figure") and "to see a noise". The simple folk-song crudely sung by Bottom is in sharp contrast to the delicate lullaby which has lulled Titania to sleep. Her reaction "What angel wakes me…?" and "Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note" is comically incongruous. There is further comic contrast between Titania's verse, rhymed after her first waking speech, and Bottom's prose: the one is eloquent, stately and (in any other context) dignified; the other homely and humble. We fear that Bottom will commit some gross breach of etiquette, but he is saved by Titania's infatuation. Titania's power is also shown in the ceremonial order of the fairies' responses to her (160) and Bottom (172). In contrast with Lysander's implausible claim to love Helena according to reason, Bottom notes with unusual perception that "reason and love keep little company together nowadays", as if his present case were but an extreme illustration of a general truth, with which the audience concurs. His suggestion (that "honest neighbours" should "make them friends") may also hint at the activities of Theseus and Oberon in trying to resolve the problems of those made unreasonable by love. Bottom, because he is uneducated, is prone to errors in speech, especially when trying to impress. But as this and the "Bottom's dream" speech (in 4.1) show, he is capable of real intelligence, which may account for the regard in which his friends hold him. Finally note the contrast between the fey delicacy of the fairies' names and the errands they are to perform, and the practical, homely comments of Bottom who thinks of the medical use of the cobweb and the culinary merits of peas and mustard.

Conclusion

Having said about Shakespeare's comedies we dare to say that it is the most important milestone in the creative activity of him. But even amongst his immortal works of this kind the play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" stands in the special play. The first reason of this lies in the period of writing of it. The play is referred to the third, last period of creative activity, it is seemingly summarizes the whole life of the dramatist and the death of the main heroes at the fourth act is a hint for the closest death of Shakespeare himself. So one another reason for the significance of the comedy follows just after: it maybe the only work of Shakespeare where the humour and laughter are being mixed with the tragedy. And this mixing appears on the background of the exact description of humans life and characters which are closely similar to the historic chronicles. In our work we tried to demonstrate this spirit of comedy mixed with the tragedic chronicles of the author himself.

My work aimed to show the novelity of the play though it was written three-four centuries ago, we tried to prove that even being a dream the narration does not lose the real character. We made our conclusion that fairy tales cannot but link with the real life and the problems of life, love, happiness, sadness, revenge exist in both at the Heavens and the Earth.Conclusion

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