

Midsummer nights dream and lunatics



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In A Midsummer Nights Dream, the moon is the guiding force of madness in the

play which influences the chaotic nature and lunacy of the characters. The moon

seems to preside over the entire play and is a symbol of change. Oberon and

Titania, king and queen of the fairies, are one example of lunatic lovers that parallel the theme of changeability. Oberon and Titania are quarreling over the

possession of an Indian boy that Titania has mothered since the boy was a baby.

This makes Oberon very jealous. But, Oberon doesn't help matters much with his

straying after nymphs and admiring Hippolyta. This quarrel becomes so intense

that it begins to affect the seasons on earth. Titania describes it as: The

spring, the summer, The chiding autumn, angry winter, change Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world By their increase now knows not which is which,

And this same progeny of evils comes From our debate, from our dissension;

We

are their parents and original. II: I 114-20 The constant changing of the earths state in the seasons creates chaos among mother nature. In order to solve the quarrel, Oberon wants to teach Titania a lesson by telling Puck or Robin Goodfellow to use a magical nectar on her and the Athenian man called

Demetrius: Fetch me a flower; the herb that I showed thee once The juice of it

on sleeping eyelids laid Will make man or woman madly dote Upon the next live

creature that it sees. II: I 172-75 In the case of the two lovers, Hermia and Lysander, they plan to meet by moonlight and elope in Athens. Egeus, Hermias

father, wishes for her to marry a man named Demetrius whom he thinks is of high

stature and is fitting for his daughter as a husband. Hermia is very much in love with Lysander and chooses to directly disobey Athenian law and her fathers wishes by eloping. Hermias willingness to risk banishment from her homeland shows that love can make a person do irrational things. Helena,

Hermias friend, was once the beloved of Demetrius and if she can win back his

love, then Hermia and Lysander will be free to wed. In an effort to gain the attention of Demetrius, Helena betrays the secret of her dearest friend when she

informs Demetrius that Hermia and Lysander are eloping. This is another example

of a lunatic lover in Shakespeare. Helena knows that she must keep

Hermias secret, but she cannot help but tell it to Demetrius in order to get

him to notice her. Helenas love for Demetrius could cost her the friendship that she has with Hermia but when a person is so much in love sometimes he or

she will risk anything. A mistake made by Puck increases the chaos and madness

in the play. Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius and sprinkles Lysanders

eyes with the potion instead. Lysander awakens and the first person he sees is

Helena. Under the influence of the potion, he immediately falls in love with

her. A catastrophe is created when Hermia awakens from her slumber and finds

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that Lysander has only eyes for Helena. A fight emerges among the two best friends when Helena says: O spite! O hell! I see you are all bent To set against

me for your merriment. If you were civil and knew courtesy You would not do me

thus much injury. III: II 148-51 . Puck also sprinkles the potion on Titania's

eyes causing her to act like a lovesick lunatic. When she awakens, she

sees Bottom who is now an ass head, and she immediately falls in love with him.

Even though Bottom is an ass head, the potion hinders her judgment and she is

attracted to him anyway. Otherwise, Titania would certainly not be attracted to

the ass head, Bottom, at all. In these lines, Titania talks of the repulsive

Bottom as a very handsome man: Come, sit thee down upon this flowry bed,

While I thy amiable cheeks do coy, And stick muskroses in thy sleek smooth head,

And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy. IV: I 1-4 The madness of this type

of love is reflected in the line, reason and love keep little company

nowadays from Act III, Scene I (145-46). Love is blind to reason and sometimes love overpowers reason. Theseus in A Midsummer Nights Dream reemphasizes the connection of the lunatic and the lover, hence the phrase lovers are lunatics: Lovers and madmen have such seething brains, Such shaping