

Beauty and Art II: Shakespeare

David Banach

<http://dbanach.com/art2>

I. Shakespeare: Who, What, When, and Where

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) Stratford upon Avon in England

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Written between 1594 and 1596, first performed at court 1604.

Background:

Europe had a Renaissance then a Reformation

Renaissance: Man reflects the divine image in form and reason.

- Man's reason can understand Nature and trace the intention of God in the rational order of the universe.
- Man encounters God directly in reason and in faith and in good works.
- Rediscovery of Philosophy, Science, Art, and Literature of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Reformation- Protestant break from Catholic Church

1517. Martin Luther

England had a Reformation then a Renaissance

Church of England 1509

Baroque (Counter-Reformation) (1600's)

- Multiple layers of images.
- Human mind clouded by original sin.
- God and Truth perceived only through the veil of complex imagery.

II. How to read Shakespeare

- learn the words
- speak the words
- watch the play

[Resources:](#) (link)

Meters:

Iambic pentameter 10 syllables 5 iambic feet

Iambic short (unstressed) then long (stressed) ◡ –

Trochaic: long (stressed) short (unstressed) – ◡

other iambic meters

tetrameter (4 iambs)

8 and 6 (Hymn)

Important Techniques: (the surfaces of things lie)

Metaphorical Density. layers of metaphors

Word Play: slippery language, multiple meanings and puns

Mistaken and hidden identities

•It is made up of five feet.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
da-dum da-dum da-dum da-dum da-dum

•It therefore uses ten syllables in each line.

III. Plot, Character, Settings, Themes

Are you a Tyrant or a Lover? Power and stratagems vs. Love
Magic, Mischief, and Imagination: Dreamy interlude away from power.
Transformations: Ovid *Metamorphoses* (8 CE)

Theseus and Hippolyta
Demetrius and Helena
Lysander and Hermia

Oberon and Titania
Puck

Bottom and the Players

Settings: 1. City/Palace 2. Forest 3. Play within a Play

IV. Shakespeare's Advice for Living; A Midsummer Night's Conversatio

Imagination makes a space where Human nature can be transformed. Dream, Dance, lose yourself in love in a forest or a fancy, go a bit crazy, be a bit queer. You will come back a better person. And who knows if the dream is for the sake of daily life or if daily life and work are for the sake of the dream.

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
V, i, 1835

V. Questions for Seminar

1. Who and what is Puck? Why so mischievous? What is his role in the fairy and human world?
2. Are you pleased with the way the love lives of the two sets of lovers are sorted? Were they artificially manipulated, or just shaken up to find their real selves?
3. Why is the play within a play there? Do we learn anything in that play?
4. Is Oberon Cruel? How does the Fairy world and its rules differ from ours?
5. Why is Bottom's transformation and love affair with Titania important to the play? What does it mean? Does Bottom's dream really have no bottom? What would that mean?
6. Would you want a night out in that forest with your friends? What might happen?
7. What is leisure for Shakespeare? Do we work to be at leisure in that sense? Is it the point of our lives?

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