

## Shakespeare and Sleep

“Again, sleep is one of the natural goods of life, beautiful in itself, like flowers, like the songs of birds. It is the touchstone of health...

The relation to sleep therefore becomes an index of character and of psychic constitution and a means of portraying them. Such intimate revelations are pathetic; their very intimacy tends toward pathos. There is something magical in the mere sight of a sleeper; the sheer passivity, the immobility, the innocence, the helplessness, even of the strong, even of the wicked, come home to us, with out comment, directly; the sleeper is made one with nature. And sleep has another direct effect on the imagination to which Shakespeare, like other poets, was keenly alive: it is the portrait and prognostic of the sleep that ends all. Death itself, except in association with childhood, he almost never rendered pathetically; but, in sleep, "death's counterfeit", and in the preparations for it, he seemed to find exactly that fanciful and tender symbol of the dread finality which harmonized with his pathos.”

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/biography/shakespearepathos5.html>

1. Quick recap: In the excerpt above, what is the complex nature of sleep in Shakespeare?
2. If you have read any other Shakespearean plays besides *MSDN*, do you remember sleep being addressed? If so, what was the role of sleep?
3. Describe a few moments in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where the characters either sleep or talk about sleep. Plotwise, what is sleep used for in this play?
4. So far, what seems to be the complex role of sleep in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?