Shakespeare

Third year- Second semester

**A Midsummer Night's Dream**

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We will start a new play ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ for William Shakespeare. It is a comedy and this is my opinion. Hamlet is considered to be the most critical tragedy for William Shakespeare because it is full of modern elements which are not understood by everybody. That is why we call it difficult. A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ is the same. It is the most difficult comedy by Shakespeare because it is full of modern elements again. There is a question that imposes itself. What are the modern elements in this comedy?

Let us to the first page. The introduction of course is the same one of ‘Hamlet’. The entire introduction is the same/ the same situation/ theory of humors/ William Shakespeare is a renaissance humanist. And you know what humanism is.

Let us go to the first page.

***The characters:***

The first character we have is somebody called Theseus. He is the duke of Athens. Athens is the capital of Greece. Athens is a very old city; it goes back to the days of Plato and Aristotle and Socrates before the birth of Christ. Aristotle was four centuries before the birth of Christ. We expect classical elements in the play. William Shakespeare is always brings classical allusions in his plays because he is a renaissance writer. Theseus is a Greek name. He is using Greek names for some of his characters like Theseus and the one he loves; Hippolyta. [Hippolyta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolyta) is the Queen of the Amazons. So, Theseus; the duke of Athens, loves Hippolyta; the Queen of the Amazons, and they are going to get married. Who are the **Amazons**? A tribe of women living by themselves in the forest. They do not allow the company of men. It is said that they used to cut off one of their breasts so that they could more easily draw to draw their swords in the face of any enemy. This is from Greek mythology. This is **classical allusion**. From the beginning, we find classical allusion in the play. There is a reference to Greek Mythology. William Shakespeare brings the character of Hippolyta from Greek Mythology and it is a Greek name as well. And **the setting is Athens.** In ‘*As You Like It’*, the setting is France. In the play ‘*Twelfth Night*’, the setting is [Illyria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illyria). [Illyria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illyria) is in Russia. William Shakespeare talks about England and the English people, but he makes the setting not England, he makes it a foreign country whatever this foreign country is. **Why does William Shakespeare avoid making his setting as England?** Because Shakespeare criticizes the English society and he wants to avoid punishment by the king or the queen. Despite of this Ben Johnson in his play *‘****Volpone’***, makes his setting Italy and he is punished. He went to prison by King James I. He criticizes England and King James I and the English people and King James I put him in prison, maybe because it was puritan time.

Shakespeare does not know too much about Greece. He is not really refereeing to Greece; he is not giving information about Greece. He is just talking about England. The geographical information or the historical information about Greece is not of interest for him, also his audience. He uses classical references because he is a renaissance writer only, but he is not referring to Greece. I want to add to your information one new thing. It has to do with **the technique** which is discovered in the 19th century. William Shakespeare was a head of his time; he uses certain technique in the 16th century and then in the 19th century, literary critics start to this technique. So, **he is a head of his time because he employs modern techniques in the 16th century which are used later in the 19th century**.

Shakespeare appeals to ‘defamiliarization’, a modern technique that is defined by Victor Shklovsky in the 19th century. He defamiliarizes the real by replacing England with Athens for the setting of the play. He mentions ‘Athens’ but the characters act and react as English people. They describe the English countryside (forest) with its plants and flowers. The real ‘Athens’ is far from any forests in reality. Similarly, Shakespeare uses few French words in the English conversation like ‘adieu’ which means ‘farewell’ for the sake of **defamiliarization** as well.

This is the technique of defamiliarization.

What is familiarization?

Familiarization= الاعتياد

Defamiliarization= كسر الاعتياد

When you study 19th century literary criticism, you will study **the Russian Formalism School**; school of literary criticism. It says that the form in any text is very important because it shows the meaning. A reader receives the meaning from the form of a text. From this school, there was Victor Shklovsky. And there were Roman Jakobson and Victor Shklovsky and others. In the 19th century, Victor Shklovsky comes up with the term defamiliarization and he defines it. Let us know what the meaning of defamiliarization is. I remember I told you before last semester about familiarization and defamiliarization. There is a proverb called ***‘familiarity breeds contempt’***. What is the meaning? When you get used to something too much, it becomes very bad. For example, If a couple; a husband and a wife, if they get used to each other so much, they started calling each other names swearing because they are very familiar, like cursing each other. They show no respect. To avoid this, we have to defamiliarize our mood of behavior/ our manners/ our life. So, that is why Victor Shklovsky discovered that defamiliarization is very important to us in life. How do we defamiliarize our lives? By putting red lines. For example, Do not allow anybody whoever he is, like your father/ mother/ husband/ fiancé to call you names or to swear. In my house I put furniture in a certain way but I get used to it, I feel bored and I start hating the place and I want to change. So, every month I start changing the places of the furniture even if they do not look nice. So, you have to make changes no matter whether it is symmetrical or not. Change is important for our souls/ for our spirits.

What about literature? How do you defamiliarize what is there? If you use traditional techniques, this is familiar/ boring. For example, if a play is to be judged in a festival/ if it is traditional, it never wins. We say it is bad play because it is traditional. How does William Shakespeare make defamiliarization in the play? By moving the setting from England to a foreign country, like Athens, France, and Illyria. This is for the sake of defamiliarization and he is talking about England, the English people, their traditions, and their habits. He is criticizing them, the plants/ the flowers in England. He does something else. He uses few French words in the English conversation, like ‘adieu’ instead of ‘farewell’. This is a problem with the 16th century audience because they are not cultured. But what is about the modern audience? They must be cultured. They must know some French. So, they must understand what is there.

Let us go back to the play. Act I, scene i is the exposition because we expect William Shakespeare to employ the classical structure of comedy. What is the classical structure of comedy? We start with an exposition and then the events rise to the climax and then we have falling events. And there is resolution at the end which is called the denouement.

**ACT I**

**SCENE I: Athens. The palace of THESEUS.**

Theseus and [Hippolyta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolyta) are talking. They love each other.

THESEUS: Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour

Draws on apace; four happy days bring in

Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow

This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,

Like to a step-dame or a dowager

Long withering out a young man revenue.

We have to wait four days.

She = moon

So, here Theseus complains to [Hippolyta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolyta) for waiting four whole days until the rise of the new moon which will witness their marriage. They are going to marry after four days because they are waiting for the new moon/ waiting for the crescent.

HIPPOLYTA: Four days will quickly steep themselves in

night;

Four nights will quickly dream away the time;

And then the moon, like to a silver bow

New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night

Of our solemnities

Time will pass quickly. Do not feel bad. Four days just will run like this.

From the very beginning, **does William Shakespeare keep the unity of time?** From the very beginning, William Shakespeare shows us that he is not going to preserve the unity of time. Theseus tells [Hippolyta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolyta) that they have to wait four whole days until they make their wedding party. This is a proof that there is no unity of time. Is this a modern element or a traditional element? **It is a modern element.**

**The modern elements:**

1-**defamiliarization**.

2-**violating the unity of time.**

There is somebody in the play called [**Egeus**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egeus). He is an old man. He goes to Theseus and [Hippolyta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolyta). He talked to Theseus; duke of Athens, and he complains to him from his daughter. He has a beautiful daughter called [**Hermia**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermia). He complains from her because she disobeys him. He wants to marry her to a young man called **Demetrius** but she refuses because she loves somebody called [**Lysander**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysander_(Shakespeare))**.** She loves another person called [Lysander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysander_(Shakespeare)). All of them are young people like teenagers/ young lovers. Theseus is supposed to judge among them. All those people are front of Theseus and he supposed to judge. **Theseus** is a **figure of order**. He listens to them. [Egeus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egeus) accuses [Lysander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysander_(Shakespeare)) in front of the duke that he has bewitched his daughter by writing love poems to her and giving her love-tokens. (Love-tokens are given from the lovers to their beloveds) and by sending messenger every now and then carrying letters, poems, and love-token things. [Lysander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysander_(Shakespeare)) defends himself and he tells Theseus that he loves [Hermia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermia) and he does not understand why [Egeus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egeus) is against him. He is from a noble family and his family is wealthy is equal to Demetrius. He does not understand why [Egeus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egeus) prefers Demetrius to him. Theseus listens to [Hermia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermia) and [Hermia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermia) says that she disagrees with her father and she has chosen [Lysander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysander_(Shakespeare)) and she wants to marry him.

Theseus; the duke, is a **theme of order in the play.** He tells Hermia that he has to apply the Athenian law.

What is **the Athenian law**?

According to this law, Hermia has three choices. The Athenian law says that the father owns his child. He is free to make him/her or break him/her. The father is the one who helped in the creation of the child. So, he owns the child. The child has to be obedient to the father in whatever he says. The child is not free to do anything from his own will. So, the duke gives three choices to Hermia either to obey her father and marry Demetrius who has been chosen by her father or to be punished with death or to live away from men’s company like a nun forever. Because she is teenager, she rashly tells the duke that she wants to live as a nun and she will end her life like this. The duke gives her four days to think over or to review her decision and on his wedding day, she should come and tell him her decision. The duke is a figure of order. He took the side of her father because he applies the Athenian law.

So, she has three choices:

1-obeys her father

2-to be punished with death.

3-to live away from men’s company like a nun forever.

What is the main plot of the play? It is clear here. **The main theme is gap between generations.** The old generation is represented by [**Egeus**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egeus)who is domineering. He controls his daughter’s will. He chooses the future husband for her. He does not give her any free choice. And the young generation is represented by [Hermia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermia), [Lysander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysander_(Shakespeare)), and Demetrius. Hermia wants to be free. She wants to liberate herself from her father domination. So, this is the main theme in the play and this is the main plot and these are the main characters. According to Athenian law, the father is like a god.

After everybody leaves, [Lysander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysander_(Shakespeare)) talks to [Hermia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermia) to comment on what happened.

P62:

LYSANDER: A good persuasion: therefore, hear me, Hermia.

I have a widow aunt, a dowager

Of great revenue, and she hath no child:

From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;

And she respects me as her only son.

There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;

Dowager= أرملة من النبلاء a wealthy widow. (Of great revenue) she has good fortune.

(There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;) he instigates her to elope with him at night.

)And to that place the sharp Athenian law

Cannot pursue us.(

لما نهرب برا أثينا، قانون أثينا ما بيطبق علينا

)If thou lovest me then

Steal forth thy father’s house to-morrow night;(

He gives her time (tomorrow night). The following day at night, you come and meet me and in the wood.

(a league without the town,) حوالي ميل من المدينة

(Where I did meet thee once with Helena,

To do observance to a morn of May,

There will I stay for thee.)

Remember the place where you were with your friend Helena and when we were celebrating the first of May, I will come and met you. So, in the following night I will meet you in this place.

She does not think; she is rash/ teenager.

HERMIA: My good Lysander!

I swear to thee, by Cupid’s strongest bow,

By his best arrow with the golden head,

She starts to swear to him that she is coming. I swear I am coming. Do not give me any time for thinking. I already made my decision. I am coming with you. So, now she swears by **Cupid**. Who is Cupid? He is the god of love. He is like an angel. He has wings. He is a naughty child. He has a bow and he shoots invisible arrows to the heart of lovers and makes them suffer from the agony of love. She swears by Cupid. This is **classical allusion**.

If you a question on the classical elements in the play, you talk about the classical allusion and you mention the Greek names of some characters. You mention [Hippolyta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolyta); figure from Greek mythology and you mention [Hermia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermia) swears by Cupid; the god of love, and she also swears by Venus and somebody called Dido. She swears by those three people.

So, Cupid is the god of love. He is a naughty boy with bow and arrows and he shoots his arrows to the heart of young people and makes them suffer from the agony of love.

She swears also by Venus. **Venus** is goddess of love and she is the mother of Cupid.

She also swears by Dido. **Dido** is the queen of carthage who burnt herself in grief when her lover Aeneas was abroad far away from her.

This is in mythology. All these examples are classical allusions.

Helena; the friend of Hermia comes. Helena tells Hermia and Lysander that she is upset because she loves Demetrius very much and he does not care about her at all. Helena says that Demetrius used to love her very much as well until he saw Hermia. He is bewitched by her beauty and he turns his back to Helena and he keeps on following Hermia. He wants to marry Hermia. So, imagine what feelings does Helena bears. She is jilted by Demetrius. Helena used to love Demetrius and he used to love her and the relationship was very good until Demetrius saw Hermia. Hermia is very beautiful. He is bewitched with her beauty and he proposed her to her father and her father accepted his as a future husband for Hermia. And he jilted Helena. Helena is a friend of Hermia. So, she found Hermia talking with Lysander. She told them that she is upset and sad because Demetrius does not care about her anymore and she still loves him. So, Lysander and Hermia are foolish lovers/ young lovers/ teenagers. They told Helena their secret. They told her that they will elope the following day at night. They will meet in the wood and then they will escape. So, Demetrius will not find anybody except her and she can have him. So, they told her their own secret. Now after they left Helena says a soliloquy.

HELENA: Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;

Helena says something very truthful; it is realist. Part of the realism of the play. So, there is **a realistic element** in the play. We know that William Shakespeare has been realistic as well. It does not mean that he likes to experiment with some modern techniques that he I not realistic. He is realistic. His realism is shown in the idea he is discussing through Helena.

And therefore is wing’d Cupid painted blind: دائما يرسموا كيوبيد أعمى

Cupid is always painter either blind or having his eyes bandaged. And she says why? He does not need his eyes. Lovers do not need their eyes. Lovers love with their minds, not with the eyes. This is very true. She wants to say that Demetrius is bewitched by Hermia. He loves her by his mind; not by the eyes. She believes that this is good for him. If he sees reality, she fits him/ she is good him/ she loves him. She can give him more. Hermia rejects him. Just before this quotation, Hermia tell her friend Helena that she curses Demetrius/ she frowns to him and he loves her more. He does not see that she hates him. He loves her through the mind. He is bewitched. This is what she says. This is true again because when young people love, they are bewitched because everybody believes that the one day choice is not the right one. He does not suit them, but they still live him and they do not see the truth after their relationship goes very bad.

Nor hath Love’s mind of any judgement taste;

Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:

And therefore is Love said to be a child,

Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.

As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,

So the boy Love is perjured every where:

For ere Demetrius look’d on Hermia’s eyne,

He hail’d down oaths that he was only mine;

And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,

So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.

I will go tell him of fair Hermia’s flight:

Hermia will disclose the secret which [Lysander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysander_(Shakespeare)) and Hermia have entrusted to her.Is she a good friend? She is not a good friend. Is she envious of Hermia? Yes, she is envious of Hermia. Are Lysander and Hermia are foolish to tell her the secret? Yes, they are teenagers.

Then to the wood will he to-morrow night

Pursue her; and for this intelligence

If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:

He will estimate me better. He will realize that I care. He will know that I care about him. Although he has jilted me, I still care about him.

But herein mean I to enrich my pain,

To have his sight thither and back again.

She has hopes that he might come back to her again.

This is the end of scene i / the exposition. We know about the main character, main theme, and main plot. In scene ii, we will know the subplot, and miner figures in the play. There are of **workers (working men/ mechanicals/ craftsmen).**

I forget to tell you that in Helena’s quotation at the end of scene I, Helena is talking about **the traditional love triangles. She** talks about two traditional love triangles. First, she says that she (Helena) used to love Demetrius. The other love triangle: Hermia loves [Lysander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysander_(Shakespeare)).

In scene ii, Shakespeare uses allegorical names for his characters. Their names reflect their professions.

- [**Quince**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Quince). Quince is **a name of a tree**. This person works as a **carpenter**.

-[**Snug**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snug_(A_Midsummer_Night%27s_Dream))is a **tight fitting** which gives warmth. He is a **joiner**.

[**Bottom**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Bottom) is the base of a thread that is wound at the end. He is a **weaver** نساج.

**-Flute** is a **musical instrument** that works by blowing. He is a **bellows-mender** مصلح منافيخ.

-[**Snout**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Snout) is the **nose of a kettle** which is shaped by a tinker. He is a **tinker**.

-[**Starveling**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_Starveling)means a **starving man**. He is a **tailor** because tailors are supposed to be thin. There is a stereotype of tailors.

**Is using allegorical names a modern technique or a traditional one? It is a traditional technique. It is even there in the morality plays in the Middle Ages.**

So, these are the characters of the working men. Who is the most important character? Quince is the leader of the group. [Bottom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Bottom) is important character also. He will turn to be donkey. Now he is a normal man.

Act I is realistic. It shows normal characters who act normally during daylight. Then there will be a switch to night; the events will take place during the night. There will be imagination. But now in the whole act is realistic. There is realism and it happens during the day.

Bottom talks a lot. He asks Quince to distribute the roles of the play. Why do they gather up? They want to perform a play/ interlude in front of the duke and the duchess. They want to make a play in honor of Duke Theseus and Queen [Hippolyta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolyta) on the occasion of their wedding/ in their weeding part after four days. Bottom asks Quince to distribute their roles. Bottom talks a lot. He misuses the words in his speech. He always says wrong words in sentences which make him look funny. This is funny. This is for the sake of humors. **This is in the 16th century. In the 18th century, Richard Sheridan creates the character of** [**Mrs. Malaprop**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malapropism#Mrs._Malaprop) **and she is misusing the words and this play becomes very popular and a technique called Malapropism spreads all over the world.** But originally, William Shakespeare has used it and maybe other people before William Shakespeare used it. But in Richard Sheridan’s play became popular and the technique became popular in comedy. So, it s called Malapropism. Bottom is like [**Mrs. Malaprop**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malapropism#Mrs._Malaprop) **in ‘The Rivals’**. For example, he says generally instead of saying particularly. He says also scrip instead of saying script. He said Ercles instead of saying Hercules.

Quince swears that the play they are making is **the most lamentable comedy** because it talks about misfortune of the lovers. Two lovers meet their fate. أكتر كوميديا فيها مأساة. It seems that the actors are foolish. They mistake a tragedy for a comedy.

**Is it appropriate to perform a play about misfortunate lovers in the wedding party of the duke and the duchess?**

It is inappropriate to create a play about unfortunate lovers in a wedding party.

Quince says that the play is about Pyramus and his beloved Thisbe. Pyramus is the male protagonist and Thisbe is the female protagonist of his play. Quince tells Bottom to play Pyramus. And Flute will play Thisbe. Flute objects. He says the he has a growing beard. He wants to take another role but Quince tells him that it does not matter because he is going to wear a mask. They are discussing **theatrical affairs**. This is **a Metatheatrical technique.** It is a modern technique. William Shakespeare employs Metatheater in his play. He makes a group of workers or craftsmen make a play. It is a play-within-a play. Moreover, the characters discuss theatrical affairs. Where is ‘the theatrical affairs’ here? It is when Flue objects and he wants to change his role. He does not want to play the woman/ the female protagonist because he has a growing beard. Quince tells him that it does not matter because he is going to wear a mask. This is reality in the 16th century. So, Quince is discussing theatrical affairs with Flute.

[**Starveling**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_Starveling)**;** the tailor, takes the role of Pyramus’s father. Quince will play the father of Thisbe. Snug will play the lion’s part. He says that he wants to change his role but Quince tells him, you will do nothing, just roaring.

Let us read Quince comment.

QUINCE: Some of your French crowns have no hair at all,

and then you will play bare-faced. But, masters, here are

your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you and

desire you, to con them by to-morrow night;

He asks them to come tomorrow night.

and meet

me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight

نتقابل في الغابة على بعد ميل من مدينة أثينا

there will we rehearse,

نعمل بروفا

for if we meet in the city,

we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known.

If we meet in the city, we shall be followed.

In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as

our play wants.

I will bring stage props. This is a theatrical affair.

I pray you, fail me not. لا تخذلوني

What do you guess? Is the same place the young lovers will meet? It may be the same place and time the young lovers will meet.