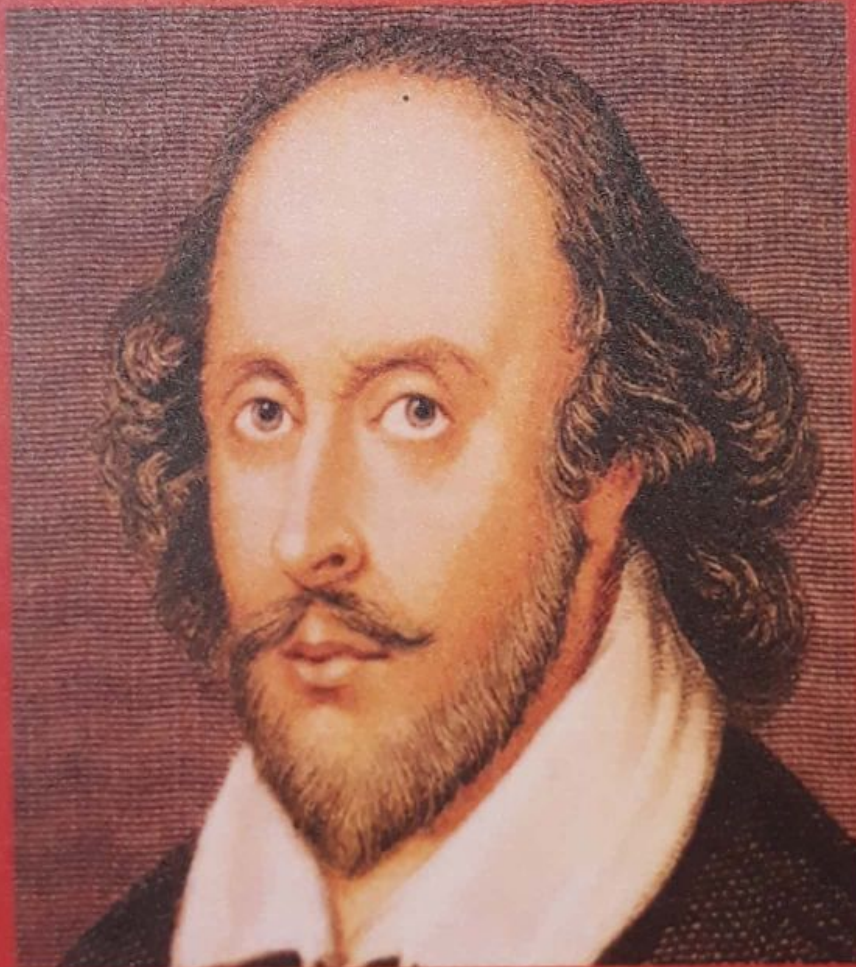


SHAKESPEARE FOREVER

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GOMEZ SOPHIA
V. ANAMICA*



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Periyakulam, Tamilnadu, India

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Title of the Book	:	Shakespeare Forever
Editors	:	T.M.Uma Rani Gomez Sophia U. Anamica
First impression	:	February 2017
Pages	:	214
Price	:	700
ISBN	:	978-93-84193-78-2
Printed at	:	Laser Point, Madurai-625 003.

Publisher

Department of English
 Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women (Autonomous)
 Accredited With "A" Grade in III Cycle by NAAC
 DST – FIST Supported College
 Periyakulam-625601, Theni Dt, Tamil Nadu.
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 (Affiliated to Mother Teresa Women's University, Kodaikanal-
 624102, Tamilnadu.)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We deeply acknowledge our heartfelt reverence and gratitude with a feeling of utmost gratification to our beloved and aspiring Principal **Rev.Dr.Sr.Nirmala** for her encouragement.

Our sincere thanks to our Secretary **Rev.Dr.Sr. Queensly Jeyanthi**, the highest source of deepest thought and aspirations.

We thank our Mother Superior **Rev.Dr.Sr.Maria Alphonsal** for her support and prayer.

We thank the united efforts of the staff of the Department of English who worked with willing heart and ready mind. We thank all the contributors and well wishers who were instrumental in bringing out this book.

EDITORS

PREFACE

Shakespeare Forever, a collection of research articles from teachers and scholars, is a literary tribute to Shakespeare who has chartered a road through which literarians have triumphantly tread. Down the centuries he has inspired and appealed to the imagination of mankind. His dramatic master pieces stand unique in glory and artistic expression. His image imprints upon the eye of every soul and affects every portion of daily life, softening and subduing. The department of English commemorates this Muse who soared to the stars. To leaf and scan Shakespeare is real Feast!.

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CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS RESPONSES
OF A READER TO SHAKESPEARE'S 'A
MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

G. PETRICIA ALPHINE NIRMALA

Literature is not a therapy but a reader attends a play for enjoyment, not for treatment. The expectations are different and the outcome is more modest and short lived since the desired result are rather alleviation of anxiety and pain, of hopelessness and helplessness; and more positively, the gain of an enhanced sense of value in self and others. Any author is a sub-creator who could build a secondary belief in the reader. However, fantasy writer is possessed with an extraordinary power to travel all through the minds of various readers of variant traits. The exploration of the reader's response to literature begins with Sigmund Freud's idea of literature that allows the reader to enjoy forbidden fantasies. Since the literature of the fantastic seeks to fill itself and its readers with a life force, the reader attempts to control these fantasies so that reading involves an interchange between writer's and reader's fantasies and their modes of control. The readers find their own fantasies in the text and transform them to more intellectually significant meanings. The text is more intrepid in its approach to life than the reader's actual awareness of himself or herself.

Shakespeare, the uncrowned monarch of literature, draws the creative power from the Maker (God) who created man in His own image. As per the concept of Freud.

Shakespeare creates a world of phantasy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which he takes very seriously—that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion—while separating the wood near Athens sharply from reality. Shakespeare's original and imaginative treatment of the fascinating subject influences all contemporary fairy literature, despite of characters like malicious, evil, lawless creatures that had to be obeyed and pleased. The fairy element also is closely connected with all the other elements of the play. The love-tangle of the main plot is untied through fairy intervention and the caprice redresses. Moreover, the rude mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* enter a forest for their rehearsal and pretend that it is a wooden *O*: "This green plot shall be our stage..." Nevertheless, the 'spectator' reaction to the scene is concerned with perception and understanding of wood as a forest. The unconscious can immediately and effortlessly understand certain things, which the conscious intelligence of the reader would find puzzling and even inexplicable. It offers escape from wish fulfillment, enthusiasm or sheer entertainment, to release from habitual suppositions, thus providing a vantage point from which new possibilities can be realized. Tolkien, in his essay 'On Fairy Stories' describes the fairy tale as means of setting free needs and desires, confirming the validity of their pursuit and fulfillment, presenting the recovery of fragmented or lost desires, and thus also offering consolation (56).

As scientific study of the fairy-enchanted woods in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a pursuit of Shakespeare using the fairy elements not as they are meant to be used, but as a quarry

from which to dig evidence, or information, about matters in which he is interested, it represents the locus of a fantasy world. In turn, it is used to comment critically on the "real" world of the reader. The fantastic characters provide the thread of reason, which can restore peace and harmony. They are forms of response in which the readers, who are unconsciously participate in the stories, are actors and not merely spectators. When Lysander has been made to transfer his love from Hermia to Helena under the power of love-juice, he says:

*The will of man is by his reason sway'd,
And reason says you are the worthier maid
Things growing are not ripe until their season;
So, I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will,
And leads me to your eyes; where I o'er look
Love's stories; written in love's richest book.*

(2.2.115-122)

The victim is under the delusion that he is following reason in his choice, which constitutes a kind of activity that is psychic, not actual but tolerated by the ego on that account. Of the reality of unconscious response of the reader to this scene, there is no basis for reasonable doubt. But it permits the reader to identify some of the processes, which take place below the threshold of awareness, and to describe them with a fair degree of assurance. The real motives, though contrasted with the explanation offered by a character, blind to the forces driving the reader or dishonest reasons advanced to deceive someone.

Shakespeare wants the reader to be aware of the truth. The things, which are meant to be unconsciously apprehended, are unaware of their unconscious significance. Under the light of depth psychology, one can comprehend how Shakespeare consciously weaves in to the fantastic elements, which he intends to be consciously understood. It seems safer to develop a definition in terms of the reader. It fits with the attempts of the reader at solution and can be traced back without exception to something familiar that has been repressed (cf. Freud 155)

With the natural creative power of genius, Shakespeare has given form and place to the fairy kingdom and has humanized his creations of the fairyland. Indeed the play begins with the revolt against parental authority and this eternal conflict between the old and the young is resolved satisfactorily only through the intervention of the fairy king Oberon and his love-juice. Bottom is spotted by Puck, who transforms his head into that of a donkey. Animals can be deceived by an appearance imitating a reality, but the human way to deceive a man is to imitate the dissimulation of reality. As he enters this transcendent state, the usual oppositions between animate and inanimate, human and animal, are submerged and united in an undifferentiated cosmic which is supposed to conceal the inner world.(cf. Žižek 223). Titania's love for Bottom serves to stress the irrationality and absurdity of romantic love. The quarrel, between the fairy Queen and the King over the Indian boy, depicts their jealousy. They are also capable of pity and sympathy that result in complications in the affairs of mortals, but also brings about the resolution of such complications so that

the lovers are happily united in the end. The names of the little fairies, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustard Seed suggest the beauties of nature personified. When the reader is engrossed in the play, he /she imaginatively experiences the entire action and acts out every role. The reader does not ordinarily experience all parts of the action of the play with the same degree of intensity. There are differences in accordance with the individual traits and needs. Analogizing may involve either the recognition of similarities between the fantastical events and something that has happened to the reader or the welcome alteration of past experience. It is a question of the relationships between action and desire and of the former's fundamental failure to catch up with the latter (cf. Lacan 385)

Thus, fantasy is not just the domain of childhood. As Mikita and David Sterritt point out, the reader's desire to escape the limited confines of one's mental and physical routines and explore other dimensions of existence propels a boundless range of activity and thought from the artificial idealism of advertising scenarios to the transcendent hopefulness of spiritual quests (157). Analogizing supplies additional evidence of power of the play to affect the reader simultaneously in many ways and to engage him or her personally.

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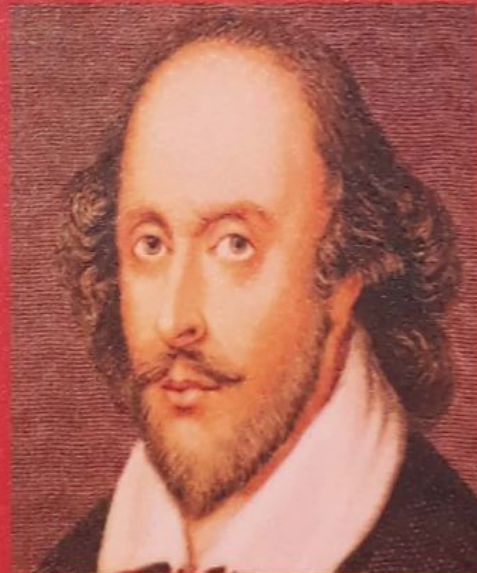
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