The Theme Of Love In William Shakespeare’s Play A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Few events, writings, and people are as influential today as they were during the 16th century. Despite having made an impact when the world was going through changes, some of the critical people and historical events are new to the ears of readers. Not so with most of William Shakespeare's plays and comedies, which still ring familiarity in literature classes. A Midsummer Night’s Dream is one of Shakespeare's most significant plays and is always performed all over the world. While there are many themes such as that of family, marriage, and order and disorder cleverly intertwined in the comedic play, the issue of love dominates. In this play featuring Theseus, Hippolyta, and some young Athenian lovers, William Shakespeare proves that love can be deceiving, as well as solely based on sexual attraction and desire.

The opening of the comedic play in Act one is an indication that the play may bring to the forefront the romantic affairs of the actors such as Theseus and his subjects such as Egeus. William Shakespeare portrays how people of different gender are likely to fall in love with people who appear attractive to them. While some of the episodes display the intention of love leading to marriage, others portray infatuated love meant for the gratification of sexual desire. While Theseus plans to marry the love of his life, Hippolyta, he is faced with Egeus' request to have him intervene in a case where his daughter, Hermia, refuses to marry Demetrius, the man her father has chosen for her (Garber par. 2). It is apparent that to Hermia, love is meant for the gratification of deeper desires that cannot be satiated through what one is not attracted to. Love propels Hermia to elope with Lysander, the man she loves. Shakespeare proves that love overcomes all barriers as Hermia defies Theseus’ orders to either die or live as a nun. This first scene is the perfect display of the power of love and the deception that comes with it. Shakespeare states that “Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind; and therefore is winged Cupid painted blind (Act 1, Scene 1, p. 8) .' Hermia punctuates this virtue by defying the law and her parents to marry what her heart truly loved. While the young lovers get into the forest to protect love, it is done for the wrong partner, going to the extent of threatening their aggressors with murder. When this love fails to work, the play tells the world that

The deception of love comes out clearly when Helena, Hermia's friend, secretly wishes that Hermia and Lysander disappear into the woods so that she can be married by Demetrius, the man she secretly admires. Helena's attraction to Demetrius seems to serve selfish desires as she looks to gratify her eyes and body through the 'love and sex' that her relationship to Demetrius would offer. To this end, the blindness of love, as portrayed by William Shakespeare, proves its existence when Helena follows Demetrius into the dangers of the woods as he tries to pursue his first love, Hermia, and her lover (Act 1, Scene 1, p. 11). This comedy reveals that the passion of love can turn the hearts of men and women desperately wicked, selfish, and foolish. This is because love causes people to abandon sanity and pursue what, in their right senses, they would not associate themselves with. Despite the protection women were offered during the 16th century, Helena would be willing to walk into the dangers of the unknown to pursue what, to her, was eloping love. The relationship between Hermia and Lysander goes to the deepest level of the deception of love, such that it would cause one to rebel against their parents.

William Shakespeare was a genius in the way he would twist his characters to reveal the deep mysteries of love. While the characters are physically attracted to the ones they love, all evidence points that the heart loves deeper than what the eyes may perceive. The play shows that both genders are ready to forego everything for the sake of love (Garber par. 3). In other words, love arches itself over every sphere of life of the antagonists and protagonists. In William Shakespeare's words, "The course of true love never did run smooth (Act 1, Scene 1, p. 5)." The roughness of the way of love is shown by the hurdles the characters have to overcome to end up with the marriages of their dreams. To a significant extent, the deception of love, its desire, and the lengths it can go, is presented as an illusion. Shakespeare argues that "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet, are of imagination all compact." What an in-depth comparison of how deceptive love can become! Despite the mysteries and all odds being against some characters' love affairs, they chose to imagine a happy haven for themselves. This means that nothing can hold them back when the love bug has bitten. Whether the amount of energy expended in making the affection between Helena and Lysander, Theseus and Hippolyta, and Oberon and Titania, among others, work is a debate Shakespeare concludes by showing that while love can build, its deception is destructive.

Sexual aggression is a picture perfectly painted within the play's theme of love. While some of the characters display mature love, the young Athenian lovers' aggression is a sexual infatuation that Shakespeare addresses in this play and the other ones. The perfect display of sexual aggression within the precincts of love is Theseus' pursuit of Hippolyta (Garber par. 3). While he wins her heart, he seeks to own her 'more fully.' This is an indication that Theseus forces Hippolyta to submit to his desires through the gratification of sexual desires. Nothing presents love as driven by sexual desire and attraction than Theseus' judgment, where he condemns Hermia to chastity if she does not want to marry Demetrius, her father's choice. In other words, love is presented here as a means of gratifying sexual desires. Besides, Helena's desire to win Demetrius is a significant presentation of sexual infatuation. At the same time, Oberon places a love portion over Titania so that he can win her over for sexual gratification (Garber par. 3). In Act 3 Scene 2, Shakespeare notes that 'When at that moment, so it came to pass, Titania waked and straightway loved an ass (Act 3, Scene 2, p. 31).' Oberon had a desire strong enough to transform Titania to submit everything he wanted, more so love him, and gratify his sexual desire. The actions of the different lovers indicate that the place of sexual desire in love relationships is something A Midsummer Night's Dream would not leave out.

In conclusion, A Midsummer Night's Dream goes beyond the boundaries of entertainment and comic relief through highlighting the theme of love in a more profound way than most of the other comedies of its time. The lovers in the play (Lysander and Hermia, Oberon and Titania, Theseus and Hippolyta, and Demetrius and Helena) go to significant lengths to show that love can become deceptive, and, in the end, maybe meant solely for sexual desire and attraction.

Works Cited

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