

## ang070 S/Ü "Introduction to the Critical and Scholarly Discussion of Literature" Assignment 2: "Analysing Drama"

This assignment is a mandatory part of your portfolio and needs to be handed in on time. It is ungraded but you will receive feedback. Additionally, a sample solution will be published on the Institutswiki.

Please make sure to submit your assignment stapled together but not bound in any folder. Every assignment must include a cover sheet and the statement on plagiarism. You may write up to three pages of text, according to the formatting specifications of our style sheet. Any text beyond the first three pages will be ignored.

Please analyse the following passage by addressing the tasks below:

Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri. The Arden Edition, third series. London et al.: Bloomsbury, 2017. 2.1.119-147.

### Formal and Media-specific Analysis: Dramatic Communication, Characterisation, Rhetoric, etc.

#### (1) Dramatic Communication and Topic:

Structure the passage by subdividing it into sections and give a concise summary of each section. Analyse the dramatic communication and its development closely.

#### Subdivisions and Summaries:

- 119 – 137: Oberon requests the Indian boy from Titania; Titania refuses this request, firmly but with elaborate explanations; exposition (Titania and her relationship to the boy's mother)
- 138 – 142: Oberon changes the subject, asking Titania about the duration of her stay; Titania – in a reconciliatory gesture – invites Oberon to accompany her to Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding, however: she states her conditions
- 143 – 145: Oberon renews his request, this time more bluntly and forcefully; Titania – withdrawing her reconciliatory manner – declines Oberon's request once and for all and leaves.
- 146 – 147 Oberon, angry and offended, addresses Titania in her absence, 'warning her' about the consequences of her 'desertion'

Alternative Subdivision: 119-137; 138-139; 140-145; 146-147

Other options might be possible, depending on the plausibility of your line of reasoning.

#### Dramatic Communication:

Dialogue between Oberon and Titania (with Robin on stage, not saying anything); Dialogical tendencies throughout the passage; however, after Titania and her train exit, the dramatic communication shows monological tendencies.

#### Dominance:

Oberon tries (and fails) to assert his dominance over Titania

- He gets to decide about the topic of their conversation and changes it
- Rhetoric of self-empowerment grows increasingly blunt, impolite (and desperate):

At first:

- Rhetorical questions
- Use of euphemisms ("beg")
- Polite form of address ("You")
- Questions

Later:

- Use of imperatives ("Give me")
- Utterances grow shorter
- Impolite form of address ("Thee")
- Threats

Titania disempowers Oberon's attempts to dominate her and asserts her standpoint, meeting him on equal terms, even as her offer of reconciliation is turned down.

- She accepts Oberon's choice of topics but does not accept his attempts to submit/dominate her
- Rhetoric of self-assertion and resistance begins determined, if polite and at times even reconciliatory, only to grow decidedly dismissive towards the end

At first:

- Use of imperatives, perhaps even interruptions ("Set your heart at rest")
- Elaborate answers to questions ("His mother [...] I will not part with him")
- Length of speech

Later:

- Use of conditional clauses ("If you will", "If not")
- Ends dialogue with Oberon/dramatic communication
- Talks to her entourage but no longer to Oberon ("Fairies, away.")

(2) Characterisation: How are Oberon and Titania characterised in the given passage? Make use of the relevant modes of characterisation to devise a coherent character sketch and support your findings with textual proof.

#### Oberon:

- seeking dominance (via (rhetorical) questions and euphemisms), demanding submission; accusatory; pretended politeness ("Why should Titania cross Oberon?", "I do but beg"); figural implicit verbal (over-)excited; stirred up; heated ("Set your heart at rest"); figural explicit commentary by Titania in a dialogue in praesentia after his first appearance
- encroaching, intrusive; minding sth. that is not his business ("The fairy land buys not the child of me."); figural explicit commentary by Titania in a dialogue in praesentia after his first appearance
- sidestepping, shifty; refusing to acknowledge her response; seeking to establish dominance once more (via questions and change of topic ("How long [...]": figural implicit verbal

- pressing, urging; impatient; obstinate; brusque; now desperately seeking to establish dominance (via imperatives)
- ("Give me that boy [...]): figural implicit verbal powerful, self-empowering (via imperatives and threats) vs. offended, vengeful, threatening, powerless (seeing as he address s.o. who is no longer listening)
- ("go thy way", "Till I torment thee for this injury"): figural explicit self-commentary in a dialogue; figural implicit verbal

Titania:

- (self-)assertive; unperturbed; unimpressed by Oberon's displays of dominance; refusing dominance
- ("Set your heart at rest"): figural implicit verbal acknowledging his request, but firm in her rejection (elaborate explanation; "I will not part with him"); figural implicit verbal loyal, responsible (in her behaviour toward her friend and her friend's son)
- ("for her sake do I rear up her boy"): figural explicit self-commentary in dialogue self-determined, autonomous
- ("Fairies, away!"): figural implicit verbal (refusal to address/speak to Oberon); ("Exeunt"): figural implicit non-verbal (leaves)
- his social equal; authoritative, imposing and imperial (King of the fairies vs. Queen of the fairies); authorial implicit correspondence/contrast

(3) Rhetoric: Discuss the stylistic level(s) of this section with regard to the subdivisions you have suggested in (1).

Discernible shift/decrease in style as the dialogue gets increasingly confrontational

- beginning: genus mixtum – designed to delight, appealing to character
  - blank verse
  - use of "you" rather than "thee"/"thou"
  - elaborate syntactical structures to give appropriate explanations
  - Titania's part of the dialogue (2.1.123-2.1.137) includes elements of a speech (narratio 2.1.123-35 and argumentatio 2.1.136-37 or other plausible distinction)
    - genre: genus demonstrativum to underline her honor

later: genus humile

- short sentences
- address increasingly informal: "thee"/"thy"
- in-your-face

#### Functional Analysis: Toward a Problem-oriented Sample Analysis

Build your functional analysis on the data generated through your formal analysis and suggest a possible problem orientation:

- (4) Identify a research problem on the basis of your formal analysis.
- (5) Suggest one other passage from the play that corresponds and/or contrasts with the given passage in an aspect relevant to the research problem you have specified.
- (6) Briefly discuss how both passages relate to this problem. Address potential differences in representation and their possible functions.