

76 A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM [ACT III]

In earnest, shall I say?

Lys. Ay, by my life!

And never did desire to see thee more.  
Therefore, be out of hope, of question, of doubt;  
Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest 280  
That I do hate thee, and love Helena.

Her. O me! [*To Helena.*] You juggler! You canker-blossom!  
You thief of love! What, have you come by night  
And stol'n my love's heart from him?

Hel. Fine, i'faith!  
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame, 285  
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear

Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?  
Fie, fie, you counterfeit! You puppet you!

Her. 'Puppet'! Why, so? Ay, that way goes the game!  
Now I perceive that she hath made compare 290  
Between our statures; she hath urg'd her height;  
And with her personage, her tall personage,  
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.  
And are you grown so high in his esteem  
Because I am so dwarfish and so low? 295

279. of doubt] *Qq, F*; doubt *Pope*. 289. Why, so?] *This edn*; why so?  
*Qq, F*; why, so: *Theobald*; why so! *Rann*; why, so! *Kittredge*.

279. *be . . . hope*] abandon hope;  
'out of', destitute of.

*of doubt*] The emphasis with which  
Lysander dwells on each of the three  
parallel phrases carries and is even  
helped by the disturbance this 'of'  
makes in the metre. Pope's smoothing  
might be defended on the plea that  
*Q1* had mistakenly assimilated the  
third phrase to the two preceding;  
but his reading is hardly natural  
English.

282. *juggler*] trickster; a glide-vowel  
makes the word trisyllabic.  
*canker-blossom*] grub that ruins  
(cankers) 'the blossom (of love)'  
(Wells).

288-98.] Stature (cf. also ll. 305,  
325 f., 328-30, 343) is the argument  
of Scintilla and Favilla's quarrel (with

two youths present) in *Endimion*, II.  
ii. 19 ff.: '*Favil . . . because your  
Pantables bee higher with corke,  
therefore your foote must needs be  
higher in the instepes: you will be  
mine elder, because you stande upon  
a stoole, and I on the floore . . .  
Scint. I am not angry, but it spited me  
to see howe short she was.*' See Intro-  
duction, p. lxxx.

289. *Why, so?*] O indeed, so that's  
how it is? (Kittredge, subst.). *Hermia*  
is unlikely to ask 'Why so?' (Why do  
you term me 'puppet?'); she knows  
the excuse for the insult only too well.

292. *personage*] For 'personage' as  
an allurement (though to the reverse  
sex) cf. *Lyly, Euphues and his England*,  
II. 119. 7: 'all woemenns are not  
allured with personage'.

SC. II] A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM 77

How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak:  
How low am I? I am not yet so low  
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

Hel. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,  
Let her not hurt me. I was never curst; 300  
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;  
I am a right maid for my cowardice;  
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,  
Because she is something lower than myself,  
That I can match her.

Her. 'Lower'? Hark, again! 305

Hel. Good *Hermia*, do not be so bitter with me.  
I evermore did love you, *Hermia*,  
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you,  
Save that, in love unto *Demetrius*,  
I told him of your stealth unto this wood. 310  
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;  
But he hath chid me hence, and threaten'd me  
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:  
And now, so you will let me quiet go,  
To Athens will I bear my folly back, 315  
And follow you no further. Let me go:  
You see how simple and how fond I am.

Her. Why, get you gone! Who is't that hinders you?

Hel. A foolish heart that I leave here behind.

Her. What! with *Lysander*?

Hel. With *Demetrius*. 320

Lys. Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee, *Helena*.

Dem. No sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

299. gentlemen] *Q2, F*; gentleman *Q1*. 320. Hel.] *Qq*; *Her. F*.

296. *painted maypole*] two insults in  
one image. 'Maypole' was proverbial  
for someone skinny and overtall:  
Tilley, N778. Any mention of painting  
in the same breath as female looks  
carried the customary aspersion;  
cf. *Ham.*, III. i. 147, *Tw.N.*, I. v.  
239.

300. *curst*] Cf. 'Kate the curst'  
(shrewish); *Shr.*, II. i. 185.

302. *right*] proper, real.

305. *can match*] am a match for.  
310. *stealth*] furtively stealing away;  
cf. *OED* †3, its earliest instance.  
312. *chid me hence*] tried to drive me  
away by scolding; *OED*'s earliest  
instance.

315-16.] With *Helena*'s repentance  
that she ever entered the wood cf. the  
hero's in *Huon* (below, p. 146, at n.  
154. Cf. Bottom, III. i. 143-6.