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A GREEN WORLD

Jo Miller

It was a great pleasure last fall to welcome the Grand Valley community to a dedication of the Shakespeare Garden. Like coming into the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, or like meeting in the woods outside of Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I felt as if, together, we were entering what in Shakespeare's plays would be called a "Green World." Far away from the stress and corruption of the urban landscape, the Green World in Shakespeare offers the play's characters a heightened moment of existence, a space where their senses are keenly alive, their emotions are highly charged, the hierarchies of their court world are forgotten, and their problems begin to seem less overwhelming.

A character's time in the Green World is, of course, limited; it is a transitory and dream-like thing. Nobody can stay there, and when you return, it is not at all certain that anybody will believe what you've experienced there, even if you can articulate it.

Still, beyond a doubt, characters emerge from the Green World near the end of a comic play, refreshed, renewed, ready to remake the everyday world they must return to. And at the end of our reading of the plays, we might ask which levels of experience are more important to their (and our) lives: those they encounter in a dream-like state (a place like a theatre, perhaps) or those they live through in waking hours, in the everyday world of rules and buildings and rigidly established positions?

I think this garden, this Green World that has sprung up here on our campus, might provide us with the same kind of reflection. For I find myself asking as I walk past the garden these days, which is more important to the advancement of learning, to the improvement of our individual characters, and by extension the world we share—the time we spend inside of these buildings or the time, however limited and transitory, we can now spend in a space like this garden?

Like Shakespeare's Green World, and like any work of art or any dream, the garden offers us a space for *imagination* to work in. I doubt if there is any one activity or quality of our lives more important than imagination to the kind of renewal we need (the same kind of renewal I think we seek in Shakespeare's plays), and I doubt if there is any activity or quality more endangered by the way we spend most of our working hours.

Roz Mayberry's vision has made this little plot of beauty possible. Roz has done what Shakespeare says is done only by "lunatics, lovers, and poets," for she has given us all a great gift, not only the gift of the garden itself, for which she has worked tirelessly, but a gift of imagination. Like Shakespeare himself, Roz has "bodied forth" what was first just a dream, a piece of imagination. As Shakespeare does in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Roz has performed the poet's work by giving to "airy nothing, / A local habitation and a name."