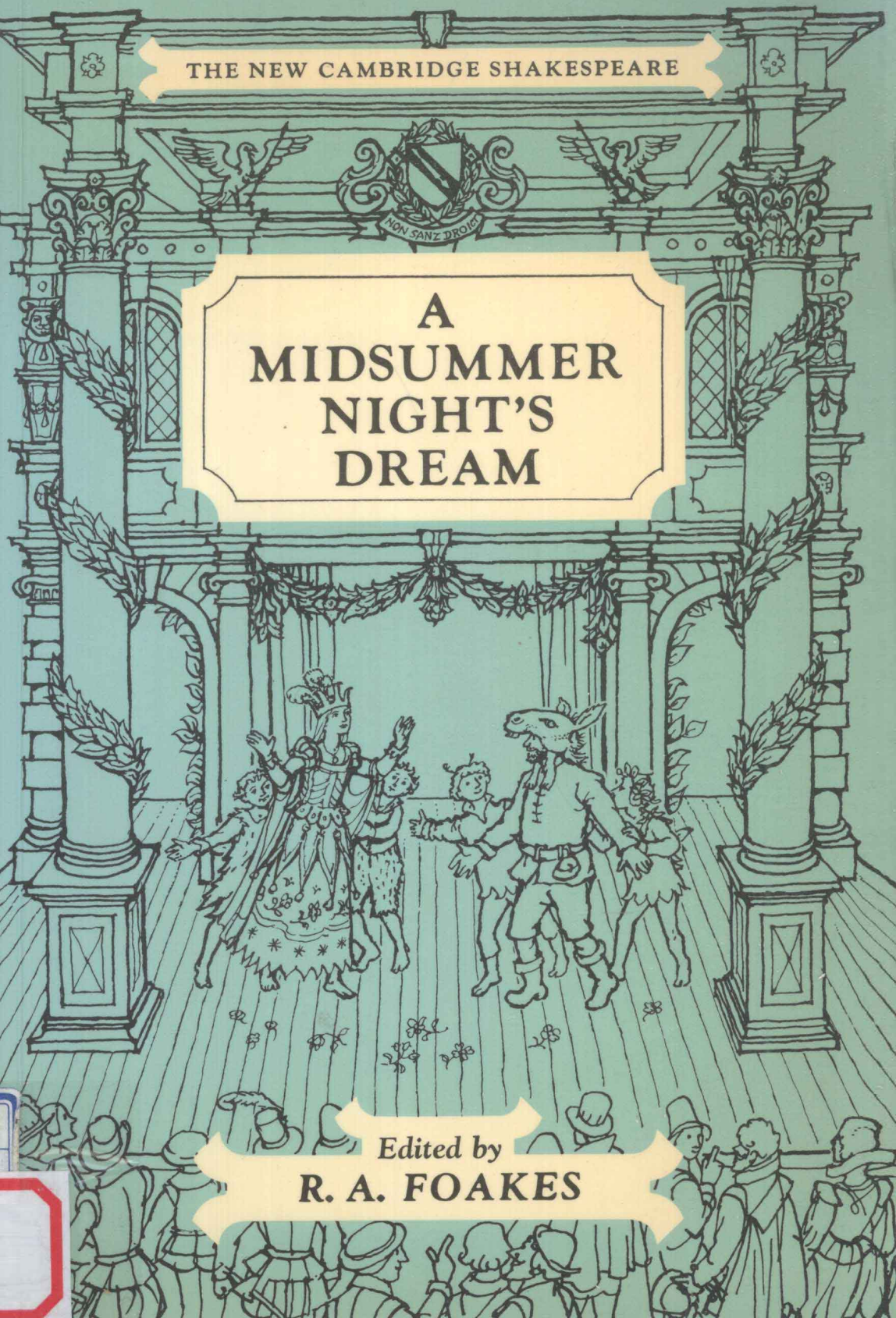
THE NEW CAMBRIDGE SHAKESPEARE

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM



Edited by

R. A. FOAKES

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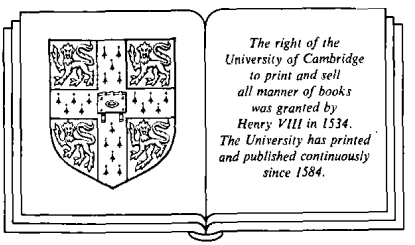

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THE NEW CAMBRIDGE SHAKESPEARE

The *New Cambridge Shakespeare* succeeds *The New Shakespeare* which began publication in 1921 under the general editorship of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, and was completed in the 1960s, with the assistance of G. I. Duthie, Alice Walker, Peter Ure and J. C. Maxwell. *The New Shakespeare* itself followed upon *The Cambridge Shakespeare*, 1863–6, edited by W. G. Clark, J. Glover and W. A. Wright.

The New Shakespeare won high esteem both for its scholarship and for its design, but shifts of critical taste and insight, recent Shakespearean research, and a changing sense of what is important in our understanding of the plays, have made it necessary to re-edit and redesign, not merely to revise, the series.

The *New Cambridge Shakespeare* aims to be of value to a new generation of playgoers and readers who wish to enjoy fuller access to Shakespeare's poetic and dramatic art. While offering ample academic guidance, it reflects current critical interests and is more attentive than some earlier editions have been to the realisation of the plays on the stage, and to their social and cultural settings. The text of each play has been freshly edited, with textual data made available to those users who wish to know why and how one published text differs from another. Although modernised, the edition conserves forms that appear to be expressive and characteristically Shakespearean, and it does not attempt to disguise the fact that the plays were written in a language other than that of our own time.

Illustrations are usually integrated into the critical and historical discussion of the play and include some reconstructions of early performances by C. Walter Hodges. Some editors have also made use of the advice and experience of Maurice Daniels, for many years a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Each volume is addressed to the needs and problems of a particular text, and each therefore differs in style and emphasis from others in the series.

PHILIP BROCKBANK
General Editor

PREFACE

Innocent fantasy or sinister nightmare – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems, in the twentieth century at any rate, to yield anything we might wish to find in it. The stage history and the history of its treatment in criticism alike show how this apparently simple and delightful play can yield strange and complex resonances, profundities as fathomless as Bottom's dream. In the Introduction I have therefore dealt at some length with the stage history of the play, and its bearing upon critical interpretation. In the Commentary, too, there is much emphasis upon staging, groupings of characters and the significance of stage directions. I hope this will help the reader in what is perhaps the most difficult aspect of studying a play-text – I mean in visualising in the imagination what action is taking place, and how the characters relate to one another on stage. The sources of the play have been analysed in detail by Kenneth Muir in *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays,* and by H. F. Brooks in his edition of the play, and most of them are readily available in Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. I. I have not attempted to duplicate their work, but have rather tried to show, on the one hand, how Shakespeare transformed his source-materials, and to distinguish, on the other, between genuine sources, consciously used as such, and images, ideas, hints drawn, probably unconsciously, from the capacious storehouse of a well-read dramatist's memory. Over all, I have tried to keep the Commentary and other editorial matter brief, so as not to intervene more than is necessary between the reader and the play, but only to display and elucidate its richness of meaning.

I am grateful to many colleagues and friends who have willingly talked over problems or helped in various ways, and to the staff of a number of libraries, especially the Huntington Library in San Marino, and the Shakespeare Centre Library in Stratford-upon-Avon. The work of two recent editors of the play, Stanley Wells and H. F. Brooks, has made my task much lighter than it might have been, but also, I am glad to say, left me plenty to do in presenting the play with a very different emphasis from theirs. To the General Editors, especially Brian Gibbons, and to Paul Chipchase of Cambridge University Press, I am indebted for their guidance, and their sharp eyes in noticing errors or inconsistencies; they are, of course, in no way responsible for any that remain.

R. A. F.

ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

1. Shakespeare's plays

The abbreviated titles of Shakespeare's plays have been modified from those used in the *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*. All quotations and line references to plays other than *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are to G. Blakemore Evans (ed.), *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 1974, on which the *Concordance* is based.

Ado	*Much Ado about Nothing*
Ant.	*Antony and Cleopatra*
AWW	*All's Well That Ends Well*
AYLI	*As You Like It*
Cor.	*Coriolanus*
Cym.	*Cymbeline*
Err.	*The Comedy of Errors*
Ham.	*Hamlet*
1H4	*The First Part of King Henry the Fourth*
2H4	*The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth*
H5	*King Henry the Fifth*
1H6	*The First Part of King Henry the Sixth*
2H6	*The Second Part of King Henry the Sixth*
3H6	*The Third Part of King Henry the Sixth*
H8	*King Henry the Eighth*
JC	*Julius Caesar*
John	*King John*
LLL	*Love's Labour's Lost*
Lear	*King Lear*
Mac.	*Macbeth*
MM	*Measure for Measure*
MND	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*
MV	*The Merchant of Venice*
Oth.	*Othello*
Per.	*Pericles*
R2	*King Richard the Second*
R3	*King Richard the Third*
Rom.	*Romeo and Juliet*
Shr.	*The Taming of the Shrew*
STM	*Sir Thomas More*
Temp.	*The Tempest*
TGV	*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*
Tim.	*Timon of Athens*
Tit.	*Titus Andronicus*
TN	*Twelfth Night*
TNK	*The Two Noble Kinsmen*
Tro.	*Troilus and Cressida*

Wiv.	*The Merry Wives of Windsor*
WT	*The Winter's Tale*

2. Editions

Alexander	*William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Peter Alexander, 1951
Brooks	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks, 1979 (Arden Shakespeare)
Cam.	*The Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. W. G. Clark, John Glover and W. Aldis Wright, 9 vols., 1863–6 (Cambridge Shakespeare)
Capell	*Mr. William Shakespeare his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, ed. Edward Capell, 10 vols., 1767
Chambers	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. E. K. Chambers, 1897 (Warwick Shakespeare)
Cuningham	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Henry Cuningham, 1905, rev. edn 1930 (Arden Shakespeare)
Dyce	*The Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. Alexander Dyce, 6 vols., 1857
F	*Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*, 1623 (First Folio)
F2	*Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories & Tragedies*, 1632 (Second Folio)
F4	*Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*, 1685 (Fourth Folio)
Halliwell	*The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, 3 vols., 1852
Hanmer	*The Works of Shakespeare . . . Carefully Revised and Corrected by the former Editions*, ed. Thomas Hanmer, 6 vols., 1744
Johnson	*The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Samuel Johnson, 8 vols., 1765
Knight	*The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Charles Knight, 8 vols., 1839–43
Malone	*The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, ed. Edward Malone, 10 vols., 1790
NS	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, 1924, rev. edn 1968 (New Shakespeare)
Pope	*The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Alexander Pope, 6 vols., 1723–5
Q1	*A Midsommer nights dreame*, Imprinted at London for Thomas Fisher, 1600 (first quarto)
Q2	*A Midsommer nights dreame*, Printed by James Roberts, 1600 (in fact by William Jaggard, 1619: second quarto)
Rann	*The Dramatic Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Joseph Rann, 6 vols., 1786–91
Rolfe	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. W. J. Rolfe, 1877
Rowe	*The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols., 1709 (second edition also 1709)

Rowe³	*The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. Nicholas Rowe, third edition, 8 vols., 1714
Singer	*The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. S. W. Singer, 10 vols., 1826
Staunton	*The Plays of Shakespeare*, ed. Howard Staunton 3 vols, 1858–60
Steevens	*The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. George Steevens, 10 vols., 1773
Theobald	*The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Lewis Theobald, 7 vols., 1733
Var. 1778	*The Plays of William Shakespeare*, with the corrections and illustrations of various commentators, to which are added notes by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, 10 vols., 1778
Warburton	*The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. William Warburton, 8 vols., 1747
Wells	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. S. W. Wells, 1967 (New Penguin Shakespeare)
White	*Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies Histories Tragedies and Poems*, ed. Richard Grant White, 6 vols., 1883
Wright, Aldis	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. W. Aldis Wright, 1877 (Clarendon Shakespeare)
Wright, Martin	*A Midsummer Night's Dream Edited from the Quarto of 1600*, Martin Wright, 1968

3. Other works, periodicals, general references

Bullough	*Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, I, 1957
Chambers, *Shakespeare*	E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols., 1930
conj.	conjecture
EETS	Early English Text Society
ELH	*ELH: A Journal of Literary History*
Folks	Martin Folks, conjectural emendations in Theobald
Geneva	Geneva translation of the Bible (1560)
Golding	*Shakespeare's Ovid: being Arthur Golding's Translation of the Metamorphoses*, ed. W. H. D. Rouse, 1961
Greg	W. W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio*, 1955
Henslowe's Diary	*Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert, 1961
Kökeritz	Helge Kökeritz, *Shakespeare's Pronunciation*, 1953
Linthicum	M. Channing Linthicum, *Costume in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, 1936
McKerrow	R. B. McKerrow, *Printers' & Publishers' Devices in England and Scotland 1485–1640*, 1913
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
Muir	Kenneth Muir, *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*, 1977
North	*The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, compared together by... Plutarke... translated... into French by Sir James Amyot, and... into English by Sir Thomas North* (1579, reissued 1595)

OED	*The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. Sir J. A. H. Murray, W. A. Craigie and C. T. Onions, 13 vols., 1933
Onions	C. T. Onions, *A Shakespeare Glossary*, 2nd edn, 1946
Qq	Both quartos
SD	stage direction
Shakespeare's England	*Shakespeare's England: An Account of the Life and Manners of his Age*, ed. Sidney Lee and C. T. Onions, 2 vols., 1916
Sisson	C. J. Sisson, *New Readings in Shakespeare*, 2 vols., 1956
SJ	*Shakespeare Jahrbuch*
SQ	*Shakespeare Quarterly*
S.Sur.	*Shakespeare Survey*
subst.	substantively
Thirlby	Styan Thirlby, conjectural emendations in Theobald
Tilley	M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 1950 (references are to numbered proverbs)
Tyrwhitt	Thomas Tyrwhitt, *Observations and Conjectures upon Some Passages of Shakespeare*, 1766
Williams, 'Discord'	Gary Jay Williams, '"The concord of this discord": music in the stage history of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *Yale/Theatre* 4 (1973), 40–68
Williams, 'Vestris'	Gary Jay Williams, 'Madame Vestris, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the web of Victorian tradition', *Theatre Survey* 18 (1977), 1–22

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Date and occasion

The dating of Shakespeare's earlier plays remains largely speculative, and in the absence of hard information, it is tempting to look for topical allusions or particular events – in the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a wedding – which might provide a point of reference for the play. The best evidence for dating this play remains, in fact, its nature and style, for it shares with a group of plays written about 1594–7 the mastery of lyrical drama achieved by Shakespeare in the mid 1590s; there is good reason, therefore, to accept the usual dating of the play within a chronology that probably goes as follows:

1594–5	*Love's Labour's Lost*
1595	*Richard II*
1595–6	*Romeo and Juliet*
1595–6	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*
1596–7	*The Merchant of Venice*

In all of these plays there is a conscious display of poetic and rhetorical skills and devices. In *Love's Labour's Lost* Shakespeare took delight in shaping for his characters 'a set of wit well played', as they engage in virtuoso games of repartee, exchanging balanced speeches, and capping one another's riddles or rhymes. Even in this intellectual play Shakespeare's deeper concerns emerge in his dramatisation of the limitations of wit, and the contrast between words and deeds, as, for instance, between the impressively latinate word 'remuneration' and the three farthings it represents. The primary emphasis nevertheless is on words, as it is in *Richard II*, in which the great set speeches of Gaunt and Richard himself carry the emotional weight of the play, and make Bullingbrook's deeds appear, by contrast, of less concern. Here again is a good deal of rhyme, formal antithesis, and stichomythia. *Romeo and Juliet* too contains rhyming passages, stichomythia, and great verse cadenzas, such as Mercutio's Queen Mab speech in 1.4; it makes memorable the passion of the lovers in speeches that have caused this to become perhaps the best-known of all love stories, yet the dialogue of the lovers is highly artificial, and its lyrical power is generated as much by its relation to the conceits and rhetoric of love poetry (exemplified, for instance, in the great vogue for sonnets at this time) as by its reference to character: so the thirteen-year-old Juliet summons night with a witty image of Phaëton whipping the horses of the sun:

> Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
> Towards Phoebus' lodging; such a waggoner
> As Phaëton would whip you to the west,
> And bring in cloudy night immediately. (*Rom.* 3.2.1–4)

In *Richard II* even the gardeners speak in verse, but in the other plays Shakespeare was developing his skills in creating prose characters, such as Costard in *Love's Labour's Lost* and the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*. These skills come to fruition in the speeches of Shakespeare's first great clown figure, bully Bottom; through him romantic ardour is genially mocked in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, even as the dramatist's poetic skills are ravishingly displayed. There is no need to suppose that Shakespeare was deliberately repudiating *Romeo and Juliet* in using a similar story, that of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', for the 'tragical mirth' (5.1.57) of Peter Quince's play in Act 5, but it seems that he had the earlier play in mind.[1] The common ground between the stories, 'lovers disregarding parental opposition, meeting in secret and, through mistiming at a rendezvous, coming to a tragic end, the heroine killing herself over the hero's dead body',[2] suggests an element of conscious burlesque. Although the parents are not present in 'Pyramus and Thisbe', Shakespeare began by thinking of them, for Quince includes them in his casting for the play (1.2.49–52), and at the end Bottom leaps up to cry 'the wall is down that parted their fathers'. The natural assumption is that Shakespeare first treated the story seriously in his tragedy, and afterwards exploited its possibilities for burlesque and farce in a comedy.

The Merchant of Venice, which is generally thought to follow *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the sequence of Shakespeare's plays, brings harsher and more discordant notes to clash against the poetic charm of Belmont, notably in Shylock and the lonely figure of Antonio, and in enmeshing the music and amorous fancy of the lovers within a dramatic world dominated by the cash-nexus. This takes comedy, rather uncomfortably, and at the cost of an anticlimactic fifth act, into new territory for Shakespeare, and to this extent may be seen as an advance on his previous plays. All these plays are often grouped among his early works, and it is as well to notice, therefore, that, on the usual chronological reckoning, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was the twelfth play Shakespeare provided for his company to act.[3] The apprentice years were well past, and this is a harmonious, finely structured play of great stylistic variety, and complexity of meaning. It stands to his later comedies as *Hamlet* does to the later tragedies. Other plays may, through their range, intensity or complexity, establish new boundaries for these genres, and the general vote is more likely to be awarded to, say, *Twelfth Night* as the 'greatest' of the comedies, and *King Lear* as the highest achievement among the tragedies. None, however, has the archetypal quality and general appeal of the two earlier works, which are known to all who know anything of Shakespeare as a dramatist.

This needs to be kept in mind in considering speculations about an occasion for which *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may have been written. Because the play is designed to culminate in the wedding celebration of Theseus and Hippolyta, many

[1] See Glynne Wickham, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: the setting and the text', in *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage*, 1969, pp. 184–6, and C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, 1959, p. 152 and n.

[2] Brooks, p. xliv.

[3] A terminal date is provided by the listing by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia Wits Treasury* (1598), p. 282, of the plays by Shakespeare he was aware of, among them *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

have conjectured that it must have been written to grace a specific event, a wedding in a noble household. Two possible occasions would have been the marriage between Elizabeth Vere and the Earl of Derby on 26 January 1595, and that between Elizabeth Carey and Thomas Berkeley on 19 February 1596. There is no evidence to connect the play with either ceremony, and, as Wells points out, while aristocratic weddings were sometimes enhanced by formal entertainments, these usually took the form of a masque, and the first play known to have been provided specifically for such an occasion was Samuel Daniel's pastoral *Hymen's Triumph* (1614), written about twenty years later, when courtly entertainments had become much more elaborate.[1] If an occasion must be sought, then the second is more plausible in terms of date, and both the bride's grandfather, Lord Hunsdon, and her father, Sir George Carey, were successively patrons of Shakespeare's company, which might suggest another kind of link. The play contains what is probably a graceful compliment to Queen Elizabeth as a virgin queen, throned 'by the west' (2.1.158 ff.), and while it is not necessary to link this with a specific occasion, she was involved in celebrations relating to the wedding of Elizabeth Vere, and, although there is no evidence to connect her with the nuptials of Elizabeth Carey, she may have had something to do with them, as the bride was her god-daughter.

The best reasons for seeking an occasion for the play do not concern its nature as a wedding play, for in this respect it is simply a variant of Shakespeare's characteristic mode of romantic comedy; *As You Like It*, for example, ends with the god of marriage, Hymen, celebrating the coupling of four pairs of lovers. Two other aspects of the play provide better grounds, though in my view still not very convincing ones, for linking it with a specific event or date. One is the influence of Lyly on this play,[2] which led G. K. Hunter to link it with *Love's Labour's Lost* as marked off from Shakespeare's other comedies 'because the occasion of these plays is aristocratic rather than popular'.[3] Those, indeed, who take it for granted that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written for a courtly wedding tend to see it as a play for intellectuals, imbued with a 'sophisticated Renaissance philosophy of the nature of love in both its rational and irrational forms'.[4] As against this, it has to be acknowledged, as Hunter shows, that Shakespeare 'remains true to himself' in a play which is in the line of most of his other work in appealing just as readily to unsophisticated audiences. A second feature of the play which has prompted scholars to look for topical explanations is the demand it makes on casting, and in terms of music. The play has four named fairies, and several other parts that boys would have played (Hermia, Helena, Titania, Hippolyta). It is possible that for a production in a private household, extra resources would have been available, perhaps, as Paul Siegel prettily speculates, more boys to play fairies and to dance with lighted tapers at the end in benediction of an actual wedding pair. The fairies carrying tapers in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 5.5 are often adduced as analogous; there Evans says 'twenty glow-worms shall our lanthorns be',

[1] A point made by Wells, p. 14.
[2] See p. 5 below.
[3] G. K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier*, 1962, p. 318.
[4] Paul H. Olson, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the meaning of court marriage', *ELH* 24 (1957), 95–6; see also Paul N. Siegel, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the wedding guests', *SQ* 4 (1953), 139–44.

and if the number need not be taken literally, it suggests that more than a few fairies were present. Like *A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Merry Wives of Windsor* has been associated with a possible private performance, specifically for a feast on 23 April 1597 when Sir George Carey was among those newly admitted to the Order of the Garter. The connection looks neat, but the arguments about this play are again speculative; it is difficult to see how Shakespeare could have fitted it in during a busy writing period in 1597, it is not mentioned by Francis Meres, and it could belong to a date nearer 1602, when it was published.[1]

The title page of the first quarto of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents it as it has been 'sundry times publickely acted' by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and Shakespeare, who acted with the company, must have known that they had the resources to stage it. In his ingenious study of the number of actors required to perform the early plays, William A. Ringler, Jr, has claimed that Shakespeare 'to the very end of his writing career adhered to his original basic pattern of a cast of 16 actors';[2] he shows how the twenty-two speaking parts in the quarto could have been played by eleven or twelve adults and four boys, on the assumption that there were four fairies only in the 'train' of Titania and Oberon, and that these were played by the same adult actors who took the parts of Flute, Starveling, Snout and Snug. This might seem to be flying in the face of the late-nineteenth-century stage-tradition in doubling adults as fairies, but it is more plausible than to suppose that Shakespeare wrote for a special occasion on the assumption that a private patron would provide several boys to swell the company. At any rate, it is pointless to speculate further about a possible occasion for the play, and it does not affect the dating of its composition in 1595–6.

Sources

The word 'source' is clumsy in relation to a play like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Shakespeare used or adapted names, ideas, images or hints for incidents from various works he certainly knew, and echoed a number more, so that a long list of works can be compiled that probably contributed in some way to the play. The detection of these has its own fascination and is useful in so far as they illustrate the workings of Shakespeare's imagination, but the most notable feature of the play is the dramatist's inventiveness, brilliantly fusing scattered elements from legend, folklore and earlier books and plays into a whole that remains as fresh and original now as when it was composed. The range of reference underlying it deserves attention also, however, because it helps to explain something of the archetypal force of the comedy, showing the dramatist's instinct for seizing on whatever might articulate and enrich the web of meanings and relationships developed in it.

[1] For Meres, see above, p. 2 and n. The case for a 1597 date is presented in full by William Green in *Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1962.

[2] 'The number of actors in Shakespeare's early plays', in G. E. Bentley (ed.), *The Seventeenth-Century Stage*, 1968, pp. 110–34; the quotation is from p. 126. See also Stephen Booth, 'Speculations on doubling', in *King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition, and Tragedy*, 1983, pp. 131–4.

A play so much concerned with transformation transforms its sources, none more so than the work which has recently been proposed as 'the primary influence' on it, and indeed a major source for it, namely John Lyly's *Gallathea* (?1585; printed 1592).[1] Shakespeare certainly knew the plays of Lyly, and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he built up the action 'in the manner of Lyly, by balancing a number of self-contained groups, one against the other',[2] and presenting each group in turn. In drawing attention to Lyly's influence in this general way, G. K. Hunter pointed especially to *Sapho and Phao* (not published until 1632) and *Midas* (1589; printed 1592), in which Midas's head is 'metamorphosed' (4.1.168) into an ass's head, anticipating Bottom's transformation. In her more recent essay, Leah Scragg claims that *Gallathea* was much more directly influential on Shakespeare's play in its concern with love in relation to 'a pervasive process of metamorphosis'.[3] Lyly's plot begins from the disguise of two girls, Gallathea and Phyleida, as boys, so that neither will be made the victim in the sacrifice of a virgin. Lyly plays variations on the effect of this change as they fall in love, until at the end one or other of the girls is to be transformed into a boy so that they can marry. However, *Gallathea* is not much more than an elegant debate on love and chastity, passion and virtue, and the action has to be resolved in the end by a compromise arranged between Venus and Diana. The subplot, involving the three sons of a miller and their dealings with a mariner, an alchemist and an astronomer, has no connection with Shakespeare's play, apart from the dance of fairies Lyly inserted in 2.3, and Lyly's balanced prose, written for his schoolboy actors, appears stylised, monotonous and thin when set against the variety of textures in Shakespeare's language, and the rich play of metaphor and image in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Whatever hints Shakespeare picked up from Lyly he developed beyond recognition, so that the differences are far more remarkable than the similarities, and G. K. Hunter's account of Lyly's impact on Shakespeare remains persuasive; he assessed Lyly's dramatic achievement sympathetically, and showed too how Shakespeare went beyond him in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to create 'a whole realm of action whose poetic atmosphere is alone sufficient to characterize the ideas it contains'.[4]

The framing device of the play – the wedding celebrations of Theseus – Shakespeare developed from the narrative in Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, which refers to the conquest by Theseus of the Amazons and their queen, Hippolyta (1, 866–83), and the great 'solempnytee' and feast of the wedding (compare 'the night / Of our solemnities', 1.1.10–11).[5] In Chaucer's poem Theseus is represented as a keen hunter, riding out 'With hunte and horn and houndes him bisyde' (1, 1678;[6] compare 4.1.100 ff.). Chaucer stresses the wisdom, dignity and great state of Theseus, and

[1] Leah Scragg, 'Shakespeare, Lyly and Ovid: the influence of "Gallathea" on "A Midsummer Night's Dream"', *S.Sur.* 30 (1977), 125–34, p. 133. This essay has been supplemented and reworked in *The Metamorphosis of Gallathea: A Study in Creative Adaptation*, 1982, pp. 57–77.

[2] Hunter, *John Lyly*, p. 318; the section in this book on 'Lyly and Shakespeare', pp. 298–340, remains the best study of their relationship.

[3] Scragg, 'Shakespeare, Lyly and Ovid', p. 128.

[4] Hunter, *John Lyly*, p. 327.

[5] See Ann Thompson's useful account of *Shakespeare and Chaucer*, 1978, esp. pp. 88–94.

[6] Line references are to the text as arranged in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd edn, 1957.

Shakespeare clouded his picture by taking from Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's 'Life of Theseus' the names of various women he was there said to have loved and abandoned (2.1.77–80). Shakespeare's Theseus, if Oberon (and Plutarch) can be believed, had doted like the lovers in the play, whose story also owes something to Chaucer. In *The Knight's Tale* Theseus returns home to Athens after his wedding to be stopped by a 'compaignye of ladyes' (I, 898) kneeling in the highway and seeking his help against the 'tiraunt Creon' (I, 961) of Thebes, who has refused to allow them to bury their husbands, killed in battle. Theseus in turn slays Creon, and in the fight takes prisoner two young knights, friends and cousins, Palamon and Arcite, who both fall in love with Emily when, from their prison tower, they see her setting out to 'do May observance' (I, 1047, 1500; compare 1.1.167). Their story, involving their meeting in a wood after Arcite's release and Palamon's escape, and their quarrel arising from a clash between love and friendship, suggested the escape of the lovers to a wood in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as their quarrels and eventual reconciliation. Shakespeare, of course, creates two pairs of lovers and transfers the emphasis on friendship and 'sisters' vows' (3.2.199) to the girls, Hermia and Helena. In Chaucer's tale, Theseus, out hunting on a May morning, comes upon Palamon and Arcite fighting one another for the love of Emily; in the play, Theseus, again out hunting, encounters the two pairs of lovers asleep in 4.1, supposing they have risen 'early to observe / The rite of May' (4.1.129–30). Shakespeare also borrowed the names Philostrate and Egeus from Chaucer; Philostrate is the alias adopted by Arcite at I, 1428, and Egeus is the name of the old father of Theseus (I, 2838, 2905). Shakespeare transformed the company of ladies who complain to Theseus at the beginning of *The Knight's Tale* into Egeus complaining against Hermia in 1.1.

Shakespeare probably derived the general idea for a King and Queen of Fairies who quarrel between themselves, and intervene in the affairs of human beings, from Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*. Chaucer's king and queen are called Pluto and Proserpine, and the outcome of their debate about love, sex and the relations of wife and husband, in which Pluto attacks and Proserpine defends the treacheries of women, is that Pluto restores the sight of the old man January in time for him to see his wife, May, making love to the young squire Damian in a pear tree, while Proserpine ensures that May has the wit to persuade January to believe he imagined what he saw. Like Pluto and Proserpine, Oberon and Titania take sides in their support respectively for Hippolyta and Theseus, but Shakespeare richly develops the basic idea by making his fairy king a lover of Hippolyta, and Titania a lover of Theseus, by inventing their quarrel over the Indian boy, and by providing them with a train of fairies and adding Puck; although in Chaucer's tale Pluto is King of the Fairies, no fairies appear, and he is somewhat oddly accompanied by 'many a lady' (IV, 2228).

The name Oberon derives from the romance *Huon of Bordeaux*, translated by Lord Berners (first published 1533–42), and well enough known to have provided matter for a play, no longer extant, in the repertory of the Earl of Sussex's Men in 1593–4,[1] and for incidents in Robert Greene's play *The Scottish History of James IV* (?1590),

[1] It was performed three times in December 1593 and January 1594; see *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 20.