WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

A Midsummer Night's Dream

FULLY ANNOTATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY **BURTON RAFFEL**

WITH AN ESSAY BY **HAROLD BLOOM**

A Midsummer Night's Dream

William Shakespeare

Fully annotated, with an Introduction, by Burton Raffel
With an essay by Harold Bloom

For Yehuda Yair Pride

CONTENTS

In act 5, scene 1, Hippolyta and her future husband, Theseus, conduct the following exchange:

Hippolyta 'Tis strange my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

Theseus   More strange than true. I never may believe
  These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
  Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
  Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
  More than cool reason ever comprehends.
  The lunatic, the lover and the poet
  Are of imagination all compact.
  One sees more devils than vast hell can hold:
  That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
  Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
  The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy, rolling,
  Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.
  And as imagination bodies forth
  The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
  Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
  A local habitation, and a name.

Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy.
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear?
(lines 1–22)

This was perfectly understandable, we must assume, to the mostly very average persons who paid to watch Elizabethan plays. But who today can make much sense of it? In this very fully annotated edition, I therefore present this passage, not in the bare form quoted above, but thoroughly supported by bottom-of-the-page notes:

Hippolyta 'Tis strange my Theseus, that[1] these lovers speak of.
Theseus   More strange than true. I never may[2] believe
   These antique fables,[3] nor these fairy toys.[4]
   Lovers and madmen have such seething[5] brains,
   Such shaping[6] fantasies, that apprehend[7]
   More than cool reason ever comprehends.
   The lunatic, the lover and the poet
   Are of imagination all compact.[8]
   One sees more devils than vast hell can hold:

1 that which
2 can
3 antique fables = old/old-fashioned legendary/mythological fiction,
   falsehoods, nonsense
4 idle/fantastic tales
5 boiling, tumultuous, ceaselessly agitated
6 formative/creative
7 learn, perceive, understand, become conscious of
8 (1) composed, (2) linked closely together

x

That is the madman. The lover, all[9] as frantic,[10]
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.[11]
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy,[12] rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.
And as imagination bodies forth[13]
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation,[14] and a name.
Such tricks[15] hath strong imagination,[16]
That[17] if it would but[18] apprehend some joy,
It comprehends[19] some bringer of that joy.
Or[20] in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear?

The modern reader or listener may well better understand this intensely sarcastic speech in context, as the play continues. But without full explanation of words that have over the years shifted in meaning, and usages that have been altered, neither the modern reader nor the modern listener is likely to be equipped for anything like the full comprehension that Shakespeare intended and all readers or listeners deserve.

9 every bit
10 wild, raging
11 brow of Egypt = dark/gypsy face
12 fine frenzy = pure/consummate/elevated delirium/mania
13 bodies forth = embodies, gives shape to
14 local habitation = spatial position, dwelling, residence
15 devices, stratagems
16 iMAgiNAsiON
17 so that
18 would but = only
19 grasps, understands
20 in the same way

I believe annotations of this sort create the necessary bridges from Shakespeare's four-centuries-old English across to ours. Some readers, to be sure, will be able to comprehend unusual, historically different meanings without glosses. Those not familiar with the modern meaning of particular words will easily find clear, simple definitions in any modern dictionary. But most readers are not likely to understand Shakespeare's intended meaning, absent such glosses as I here offer.

My annotation practices have followed the same principles used in *The Annotated Milton,* published in 1999, and in my annotated editions of *Hamlet,* published (as the initial volume in this series) in 2003, and *Romeo and Juliet* (published in 2004). Classroom experience has validated these editions. Classes of mixed upper-level undergraduates and graduate students have more quickly and thoroughly transcended language barriers than ever before. This allows the teacher, or a general reader without a teacher, to move more promptly and confidently to the non-linguistic matters that have made Shakespeare and Milton great and important poets.

It is the inevitable forces of linguistic change, operant in all living tongues, which have inevitably created such wide degrees of obstacles to ready comprehension—not only sharply different meanings, but subtle, partial shifts in meaning that allow us to think we understand when, alas, we do not. Speakers of related languages like Dutch and German also experience this shifting of the linguistic ground. Like early Modern English (ca. 1600) and the Modern English now current, those languages are too close for those who know only one language, and not the other, to be readily able always to recognize what they correctly understand

and what they do not. When, for example, a speaker of Dutch says, "Men kofer is kapot," a speaker of German will know that something belonging to the Dutchman is broken (*kapot* = "ka-putt" in German, and *men* = "mein"). But without more linguistic awareness than the average person is apt to have, the German speaker will not identify "kofer" ("trunk" in Dutch) with "Kör-per"—a modern German word meaning "physique, build, body." The closest word to "kofer" in modern German, indeed, is "Scrankkoffer," which is too large a leap for ready comprehension. Speakers of different Romance languages (such as French, Spanish, or Italian), and all other related but not identical tongues, all experience these difficulties, as well as the difficulty of understanding a text written in their own language five, or six, or seven hundred years earlier. Shakespeare's English is not yet so old that it requires, like many historical texts in French and German, or like Old English texts—for example, *Beowulf*—a modern translation. Much poetry evaporates in translation: language is immensely particular. The sheer sound of Dante in thirteenth-century Italian is profoundly worth preserving. So too is the sound of Shakespeare.

I have annotated prosody (metrics) only when it seemed truly necessary or particularly helpful. Except in the few instances where modern usage syllabifies the "e," whenever an "e" in Shakespeare is *not* silent, it is marked "è". The notation used for prosody, which is also used in the explanation of Elizabethan pronunciation, follows the extremely simple form of my *From Stress to Stress: An Autobiography of English Prosody* (see "Further Reading," near the end of this book). Syllables with metrical stress are capitalized; all other syllables are in lowercase letters. I have man-

xiii

aged to employ normalized Elizabethan spellings, in most indications of pronunciation, but I have sometimes been obliged to deviate, in the higher interest of being understood.

I have annotated, as well, a limited number of such other matters, sometimes of interpretation, sometimes of general or historical relevance, as have seemed to me seriously worthy of inclusion. These annotations have been most carefully restricted: this is not intended to be a book of literary commentary. It is for that reason that the glossing of metaphors has been severely restricted. There is almost literally no end to discussion and/or analysis of metaphor, especially in Shakespeare. To yield to temptation might well be to double or triple the size of this book—and would also change it from a historically oriented language guide to a work of an unsteadily mixed nature. In the process, I believe, neither language nor literature would be well or clearly served.

Since the original printed texts of (there not being, as there never are for Shakespeare, any surviving manuscripts) are frequently careless as well as self-contradictory, I have been relatively free with the wording of stage directions—and in some cases have added brief directions, to indicate who is speaking to whom. I have made no emendations; I have necessarily been obliged to make choices. Textual decisions have been annotated when the differences between or among the original printed texts seem either marked or of unusual interest.

In the interests of compactness and brevity, I have employed in my annotations (as consistently as I am able) a number of stylistic and typographical devices:

• The annotation of a single word does not repeat that word

• The annotation of more than one word repeats the words

being annotated, which are followed by an equals sign and then by the annotation; the footnote number in the text is placed after the last of the words being annotated

- In annotations of a single word, alternate meanings are usually separated by commas; if there are distinctly different ranges of meaning, the annotations are separated by arabic numerals inside parentheses—(1), (2), and so on; in more complexly worded annotations, alternative meanings expressed by a single word are linked by a forward slash, or solidus: /

- Explanations of textual meaning are not in parentheses; comments about textual meaning are

- Except for proper nouns, the word at the beginning of all annotations is in lower case

- Uncertainties are followed by a question mark, set in parentheses: (?)

- When particularly relevant, "translations" into twenty-first-century English have been added, in parentheses

- Annotations of repeated words are not repeated. Explanations of the first instance of such common words are followed by the sign ★. Readers may easily track down the first annotation, using the brief Finding List at the back of the book. Words with entirely separate meanings are annotated only for meanings no longer current in Modern English.

The most important typographical device here employed is the sign ★ placed after the first (and only) annotation of words and phrases occurring more than once. There is an alphabetically arranged listing of such words and phrases in the Finding List at the back of the book. The Finding List contains no annotations

but simply gives the words or phrases themselves and the numbers of the relevant act, the scene within that act, and the footnote number within that scene for the word's first occurrence.

This Text

For most of Shakespeare's plays, there are competing contemporary printed versions. (There are no manuscript versions of any of the plays.) Editorial judgment, in such situations, is frequently not an option, but a necessity.

But *Dream* has only one authoritative contemporary text, the 1600 Quarto. Inevitably, there are typographical (and perhaps other errors) in the Quarto; these are for the most part noted, here, and sometimes discussed in the annotations to particular words and passages. Some lesser errors are corrected in the 1623 Folio and a very few in the 1619 Second Quarto. The twenty-first-century editor must be cautious about tampering with an essentially unique textual source, four hundred years old.

Spelling is not on the whole a basic issue, but punctuation and lineation must be given high respect. The First Quarto uses few exclamation marks or semicolons, which is to be sure a matter of the conventions of a very different era. Still, our modern preferences cannot be lightly substituted for what is, after a fashion, the closest thing to a Shakespeare manuscript we are likely ever to have. We do not know whether these particular seventeenth-century printers, like most of that time, were responsible for question marks, commas, periods and, especially, all-purpose colons, or whether these particular printers tried to follow their handwritten sources. Nor do we know if those sources, or what part thereof, might have been in Shakespeare's own hand, or even whether those sources were accurate representations of what

Shakespeare wrote, either in the first version of the play, in 1595, or in the later, revised versions that appear to have been produced. But in spite of these equivocations and uncertainties, it remains true that, to a very considerable extent, punctuation tends to result from just how the mind responsible for that punctuating *hears* the text. And twenty-first century minds have no business, in such matters, overruling seventeenth-century ones. Whoever the compositors were, they were more or less Shakespeare's contemporaries, and we are not.

Accordingly, when the First Quarto text uses a comma, we are being signaled that *they* (whoever "they" were) did not hear the text coming to a syntactic stop but continuing to some later stopping point. To replace Quarto commas with editorial periods is thus risky and, in a lyrically textured play, on the whole an undesirable practice. (The dramatic action of a tragedy may require us, for twenty-first-century readers, to highlight what four-hundred-year-old punctuation standards may not make clear—and may even, at times, misrepresent. But *Dream* is a complex comedy, in the formal Elizabethan sense of comedic, and its appreciation therefore depends less on action than on a blending of narrative and meditation. Verbal rhythms thus have a prominence, in *Dream,* that they do not have, say, in *Romeo and Juliet,* for all that *Romeo* is justly considered to be richly poetic. So too, for that matter, is *Hamlet* richly poetic—but its presentation of dramatic action is, like *Romeo*'s, bound into a quite different verbal texture.)

When the First Quarto text has a colon, what we are being signaled is that *they* heard a syntactic stop—though not necessarily or even usually the particular kind of syntactic stop we associate, today, with the colon. It is therefore inappropriate, in a lyrical drama like *Dream,* to substitute editorial commas for Quarto

xvii

colons. It is also inappropriate to employ editorial colons when *their* syntactic usage of colons does not match ours. In general, the closest thing to *their* syntactic sense of the colon is our (and their) period.

The Quarto's interrogation (question) marks, too, merit extremely respectful handling in a play like *Dream*. In particular, editorial exclamation marks should very rarely be substituted for the Quarto's interrogation marks. The exclamation marks of the Quarto should of course be preserved.

It follows from these considerations that the movement and sometimes the meaning of what we must take to be Shakespeare's *Dream* will at times be different, depending on whose punctuation we follow, *theirs* or our own. I have tried to use the First Quarto's seventeenth-century text as a guide to both *hearing* and *understanding* what Shakespeare wrote.

There has never been much question that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is delightful. Probably written and first performed in 1595, though we have no clear proof of either dating, it is usually viewed from two main perspectives: first, as an examination of the nature and intensity of the rare and often exalted delight it gives us, and second, as a kind of turning point in the overall development of Shakespeare as a dramatist. These are accurate and useful approaches. Yet I do not think an analysis of *Dream*'s many delights, in particular, takes us anything like as far as we need to go, for a full appreciation of the play. Both its pleasures and its achievement are based in profound and broad-ranging complexities—of characterization, of narrative and structure, of language—which are the furthest thing from light or happily inconsequential. The play's intensity is primarily lyrical, which necessarily changes both its overall texture and the relative prominence given to poetic meditation as contrasted with dramatic action. But no one would suggest, I think, that the lyrics of Shakespeare's younger contemporary, John Donne, are light and happily inconsequential. When Harold C. Goddard, one of the most dependably sensible of Shakespearean critics, calls *Dream*

"one of the lightest and in many respects the most purely playful of Shakespeare's plays," he perpetuates a long-standing tradition of miscomprehension (*Meaning of Shakespeare,* 1:74*)*. I want to demonstrate in some detail why such simplistic approaches do not do justice to a resplendent lyrical drama that, like all great lyricism, is chock-full of social and psychological wisdom of the most serious sort.

Characterization

The numerical total of a play's cast of characters is usually irrelevant, especially in Elizabethan drama. *Dream* and the two plays that immediately precede it, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard II,* are generally agreed to be the first of Shakespeare's incontestably great dramas. These three plays have, respectively, Dramatis Personae of twenty-two, twenty-six, and twenty-three named roles. But among the three plays, the gradations of importance, from lead to supporting and, finally, to minor (that is, more than merely walk-on but less significant and much less developed) roles, are exceedingly unlike. *Romeo and Juliet* has just two lead roles (Romeo and Juliet), though Juliet's Nurse, Friar Lawrence, and Mercutio have large supporting parts, and there are three other supporting roles (Paris, Benvolio, and Tybalt). *Richard II* has two lead roles (Richard and Bolingbroke), plus three supporting roles (York, Isabel, and the Duchess of Gloucester). But *Dream* has nine lead roles (Theseus, Lysander, Demetrius, Bottom, Hermia, Helena, Oberon, Titania, and Puck)—or, if we choose to say that there are in fact no lead roles whatever, the play then has twelve supporting roles (adding Egeus, Quince, and Hippolyta). The precise gradations are not important. However, the huge differ-

ence between *Dream* and its two immediate predecessors is not only deeply significant but is, in fact, a basic difference between *Dream* and all of Shakespeare's great plays. From *Romeo* to *The Tempest,* they are each dominated and shaped by one lead role (Portia, Hal, Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Henry V, Brutus), sometimes by two (Hotspur, Falstaff, Othello and Iago, Anthony).

It would be hard to overstate the dramatic consequences of a play with nine lead roles (or with none). If the audience cannot focus on one or, usually, on at most two lead roles, how can spectator attention and plot continuity be maintained? How, indeed, can a playwright satisfactorily characterize nine lead roles in the same evening's work? He has only two and a half or three hours with which to operate. Divide 150 or 180 minutes by 9 and, even if there were no other characters present on stage, and no more or less wordless action to consume additional stage time, there would still be from 15 to a maximum of 20 minutes for each lead role. *Dream* is not a brief playlet, a mere interlude, but a full-length, five-act performance. It is plainly a vastly superior and a gorgeously satisfying performance vehicle. But how is that possible? No beef stew worth eating can be prepared with nine potatoes, a carrot, and a hamburger, nor can a functional football team be made up of nine centers, a pass thrower, and a pass catcher. What legerdemain, what the-hand-is-quicker-than-the-eye magic, has Shakespeare employed?

Under "Characterization," this first of my three subheadings, let me consider, in summary fashion rather than by close examination, only the three royal figures in *Dream,* a human duke and a fairy king and queen. To begin with the characters of highest social standing would be a proper Elizabethan approach—and I

xxi

want to postpone textual analysis for the second and the third of my categories, "Narrative and Structure" and "Language."

Neither Theseus nor Oberon commands the stage as do Richard II and Bolingbroke, who have greater visibility—many more lines to speak, much more time in which to display themselves. Yet both Theseus and Oberon have the distinctly individuated personalities associated with lead roles. Theseus is quietly, confidently commanding. He is not arrogant, though understandably proud of his link with Hercules. (Who would not be?) For an Elizabethan male, he is remarkably deferential to his soon-to-be duchess. He is suave and sensitive in handling Egeus and the young lovers, not playing out his cards until he needs to, carefully conducting delicate negotiations in private. Though clearly well disposed toward a union between Lysander and Hermia, he does not make such a marriage possible, over the continued, stubborn objections of her father, until Demetrius' pursuit of Hermia has been terminally aborted. He is well inclined toward the artisans and their play, displaying tact and (for the time) a wonderfully sympathetic stance toward men considered to be infinitely below him. He is wise about the workings of the artistic mind. And all these traits are manifested in relatively spare, subtly eloquent ways, not even deeply expansive when he expounds on his all-pervading fascination—shared by Hippolyta, his Amazon queen—with the very sounds of *the* aristocratic avocation of the Renaissance, hunting.

Oberon is a totally different sort of ruler. His status as a fairy is not a controlling cause of his personality, except perhaps in his comparative immaturity: after all, fairies have no great need to grow up, or to be socially responsible. Oberon is inclined to arrogance, petulance, and the kind of slack but peremptory attitude

xxii

toward subordinates that he plainly shares with most human rulers. He demands obedience without ensuring it. And when he is opposed, he immediately seeks vengeance: neither conciliation nor compromise ever occurs to him. He is capable of feeling pity for Titania, wallowing in her ridiculous, drug-induced love for Bottom—but only once she has agreed to give him the servant he so wants. Before that point, his almost adolescent relish for her ludicrous displays is utterly shameless. He can think logically and correctly about his status, as fairy and as a king, but has no patience for thought and reason in other contexts. Oberon is without question kingly—and because he for the most part acts in ways that we, the audience, either approve of or find appropriate to a fairy ruler, he does not present himself as obnoxious.

Titania is both a woman and, within her queenly provinces, a ruler. Queens were notoriously subordinate to kings, in direct confrontation, but capable of successful maneuvering in their own best interests. Women, in Elizabethan perspective, were more feeling toward others, especially other women. Women were also viewed as sexually less self-controlled than men. These characteristics are quite evident in Titania. But there is a good deal more to her personality. She exudes fairy lightness, in movement, speech, and all her dealings. Oberon has compelled her into her ludicrous relationship with Bottom, but like a hypnotist he cannot eliminate her basic character: she perfectly understands Bottom's unending talkativeness, and when she has him brought to her bower, for sexual activity, she orders her servants to muzzle him. "Tie up my lover's tongue," she instructs, "bring him silently" (3.1.180). Her impudent chiding of Oberon is wonderfully pert; her deft manipulation of Bottom is wholly admirable; her re-emergence as a fully empowered queen is sweepingly

xxiii

effected. Oberon is to tell her, she declares in her final lines, "How it came this night / That I sleeping here was found / With these mortals on the ground" (4.1.99–101). With these "mortals," indeed!

Shakespeare's "magic," in matters of characterization, is founded in (1) his amazing capacity for such three-dimensional, individuated portrayals, and (2) the narrative and structural urgencies that simultaneously link and shape such portrayals. *Dream* is a reciprocally integrated whole, a flowing series of evolving inter-relationships. Nothing—or very nearly nothing—is presented to us outside that evolution, which is constantly in motion. That is, nothing is presented in isolation, or purely for the sake of being inserted into the play. No songs are sung for the sake of having music; no words are spoken in order to make the drama eloquent; no actions are taken because action for the sake of action seems to the playwright to be necessary. *Dream* is a fully realized, totally interdependent entity—the kind of functioning, delicate complexity so perfectly engineered that it does not seem to be anything like as complex as in truly is, but merely light and "purely playful."

This is, of course, an exceedingly rare achievement, within the grasp of very, very few writers. In a university course dealing with sixteenth-century English lyric poetry, I once brought students through the marshes, bogs, underbrush, and half-cleared woodlands of Skelton, Surrey, Wyatt et al., up to the towering summit of Shakespeare's sonnets. Starting with the first sonnet, not particularly famous, I said that, without embroidering, I would show how many poetic balls this magician could and did keep in the air at the same time, effortlessly, seamlessly, unobtrusively. An hour later, I had still not exhausted *what was actually there,* and had to leave the remainder of this one uncelebrated poem for our next meeting.

sample content of A Midsummer Night's Dream (Folger Shakespeare Library)

- [read Chaparral Range War (Phil Guthrey , Book 1) book](#)
- *[click Don't Care High pdf, azw (kindle), epub, doc, mobi](#)*
- **[download online Summer in the shadow of Byron pdf, azw (kindle), epub, doc, mobi](#)**
- [Physics Demystified: A Self-Teaching Guide pdf](#)

- http://cambridgebrass.com/?freebooks/The-Look-of-Love--The-Life-and-Times-of-Paul-Raymond--Soho---s-King-of-Clubs.pdf
- http://transtrade.cz/?ebooks/Draw-50-Airplanes--Aircraft--and-Spacecraft--The-Step-by-Step-Way-to-Draw-World-War-II-Fighter-Planes--Modern-J
- http://flog.co.id/library/Summer-in-the-shadow-of-Byron.pdf
- http://nexson.arzamaszev.com/library/The-Big-Four--Hercule-Poirot--Book-5-.pdf