INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in “sectioning” the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again – beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from “photographs” if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of “photographs” may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.

5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

Xerox University Microfilms
300 North Zeib Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
WEATHERS, Martha Bell, 1940-
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM AND THE DREAM PERSPECTIVE: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS.

Rice University, Ph.D., 1973
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

©
Copyright
Martha Bell Weathers
1973

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED.
RICE UNIVERSITY

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM AND THE DREAM PERSPECTIVE: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

by

Martha Bell Weathers

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis Director's signature:

Garrett Hardman

Houston, Texas

May, 1973
ABSTRACT

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM AND THE DREAM PERSPECTIVE: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Martha Bell Weathers

This study examines the dramatic, comic function of the dream perspective in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, utilizing an historical critical approach. Chapter I analyzes the possibilities of dealing with the imaginative hypothesis that drama is dream, considering both the nature of the play itself and several previous critical evaluations of the dream motif in the play. The latter have tended to be reductive in their assessments of what dream means and, consequently, of how the dream perspective functions in the play, particularly as it bears of the play's meaning. An examination of Renaissance concepts about the nature, causes, and functions of dreams, the subject of Chapter II, demonstrates the great diversity of ideas about dreams available for Shakespeare's dramatic use: dreams are illusions, in the sense that they are imaginative representations, but while, on the one hand, they may be only idle fancies, deceptions, or delusions, they may, on the other hand, be manifestations of the passions, thoughts, or humors of the dreamer or representations of supernatural truths. The many-faceted potentiality of the dreaming experience thus explains its versatility as a literary device and its viability as a metaphor for A Midsummer Night's Dream, particularly in the light of Renaissance controversies about the nature and function of poetry.

Chapter III explores the dramatic appropriateness and risibility of the dream motif, first by suggesting ways in which the dreaming experience is a
viable metaphor for a dramatic experience of the play and then by illustrating ways in which Shakespeare uses dreams and the dream perspective to generate laughter and delight. Both dreams and drama are imaginative illusions of reality, grounded in familiar images (regardless of how transformed they may become in the dreaming or artistic process), but experienced emotionally as real. Thus both are paradoxically false but true, real and unreal. Dreams are the means of initiating laughter-producing deceptions in the plot; yet these "deceptions" are simultaneously revelations, for the "dreams" expose the characters' follies. Chapter IV then explores the meaning of the play from the point of view of the dream perspective, utilizing as a guideline various characters' interpretations of the "dreams" of the night. Since the "dreams" or the "story of the night" is synonymous with the events of the play, the subject of the play becomes the play itself as a specimen of dramatic, comic poetry. The dream perspective points out the illusory nature of drama and discourages a literalistic approach; simultaneously it functions to encourage an audience to give imaginative assent to its dramatic experience and to suggest that the surface of the play shadows truths. This study maintains that the play's subject is primarily the transform- ing power of the imagination and its ability to generate a "golden" world out of a "brazen" one. Like a dream, it has the capacity to mirror from two directions and to be both an imitation and a creation; as such, the play simultaneously reveals a "brazen" nature and projects a cosmic vision of creation.

As a metaphor for A Midsummer Night's Dream, the image of a dream is both a vessel well chosen to contain the paradoxes of a comic, dramatic illusion and a vehicle well able to direct an audience to a many-faceted response.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM AND THE DREAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSPECTIVE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POSSIBILITIES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>RENAISSANCE CONCEPTS OF SLEEP AND DREAMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFINITION OF DREAM</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPES OF DREAMS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Dreams</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine and Diabolical Dreams</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Dreams</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF DREAMS</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>THE DRAMATIC APPROPRIATENESS AND RISIBILITY OF THE DREAM PERSPECTIVE IN A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DREAMS, FAIRIES, LOVERS, AND MIDSUMMER</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE DRAMATIC APPROPRIATENESS OF THE DREAM PERSPECTIVE</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE RISIBILITY OF SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMATIC USE OF SLEEP AND DREAMS</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>SHAKESPEARE'S DREAM INTERPRETERS AND THE MEANING OF A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BOTTOM'S VISION: POETRY AS REALITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>THESEUS' SPEECH: THE POET AS MADMAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poetry as Falsehood and Deception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poetry as a Representation of Higher Truths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIPPOLYTA'S VIEW: POETRY AS A REPRESENTATION OF HIGHER TRUTHS--CONTINUED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PUCK'S INVITATION AND THE DREAM SYNTHESIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|         | FOOTNOTES                                                                                | 157  |
|         | LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED                                                                  | 173  |
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine the dramatic, comic function of the dream perspective in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Many critics have noted the dreamlike qualities of the play and have commented diversely on the effect of Puck's dismissal of the play as a dream and the substance of Bottom's "most rare vision" as they bear on the meaning of the play. However, no critic, in discussing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, has considered comprehensively Renaissance concepts about the causes, nature, and meanings of dreams or traditional literary uses of dreams available in the Renaissance. This study of the play attempts to provide the historical context of Renaissance notions about dreams in both theory and literary practice; and it proposes that such a context is relevant to several of the most frequently discussed considerations about the nature and function of comic poetry in the Renaissance and enlightens the nature of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a dramatic, comic experience.

The first chapter presents a critical analysis of the possibilities of dealing with the imaginative hypothesis that drama is dream in regard to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, considering both the nature of the play itself and several previous critical evaluations of the dream motif in the play. The second chapter deals with Renaissance concepts about the nature, causes,
and functions of dreams and demonstrates the great diversity of ideas available for Shakespeare's dramatic use. The conclusion to the second chapter then suggests the relevance of the diversity of dream theory to the literary use of dreams in general and to A Midsummer Night's Dream in particular. The third chapter explores the dramatis appropriateness and visibility of the dream motif, first by suggesting ways in which the dreaming experience is a viable metaphor for a dramatic experience of the play and then by illustrating ways in which Shakespeare uses dreams and the dream perspective to generate laughter and delight. Finally, the fourth chapter explores the meaning of the play from the point of view of the dream perspective, utilizing as a guideline various characters' interpretations of the "dreams" of the night. Since the "dreams" or the "story of the night" is synonymous with the events of the play, the subject of the play becomes the play itself as a specimen of dramatic, comic poetry.

This analysis of A Midsummer Night's Dream assumes the principle of manifold meaning both in the sense that there are numerous legitimate critical approaches to any given work of art and in the sense that a single critical approach can yield an indefinite number of legitimate meanings. At the same time it does attempt to point out some of the limitations of previous studies of the play in order to demonstrate the validity of exploring
other possibilities. This study is itself critically eclectic, but implicit in its diversity is a system of checks and balances. Its primary critical focus is historical, attempting to demonstrate that an understanding of certain Renaissance concepts, traditions, and attitudes forms a perspective "within which we can see the work properly" and realize that this perspective is "really implicit in it." At every point the range of historical inquiry has been determined by the play itself, by its artistic use of topics or words that have possibilities of meaning not readily discerned or assumed without a historical approach. In addition to its historical emphasis, the critical method of this analysis is pragmatic, in that it is concerned with the effect of the play on an audience. A pragmatic approach is appropriate not only because any drama written for the stage must concern itself with elicitng moment by moment a desired response from its audience (particularly, in regard to comedy, laughter), but because of the pragmatically-oriented nature of Renaissance critical theory itself—its consistently reiterated assumption that the function of poetry is to please and to teach—and, finally, because the relationship between a work of art and its audience is always a legitimate critical concern. Since the notion of "the Elizabethan audience" is itself a fiction, evaluations of the dramatic, comic, and thematic effects of A Midsummer Night's Dream are necessarily subjective. Subjectivism,
however, has its legitimate place in critical theory and is, indeed implicit in one way or another in any critical response to a work of art. This study aims at checking subjectivism with an analytic attention to the text, on the one hand, and historicism, on the other.

The psychological implications of the dream elements in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, relating to the psychology of poetic creation, of character, or of audience response, are described in terms of Renaissance psychology rather than of modern psychology, not because the perspective of present-day psychological theories is judged incapable of yielding new insight into these matters, but because this study of the play is arbitrarily confined to the historical perspective, except for a brief consideration of several critical approaches to the play in Chapter I. Finally, the critical aim of this investigation is descriptive rather than normative, except insofar as it maintains the comic effectiveness of the play. At no point does this study attempt to ascertain what Shakespeare actually thought about dreams or life or the creative process; consistently it emphasizes the dramatic, comic use of widely known Renaissance concepts. Thus Shakespeare's "intention" is limited to considerations of genre, to the assumption that his intention was to write a good comedy.
CHAPTER I

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM AND THE DREAM

PERСПЕКТИВА: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POSSIBILITIES

At the end of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Puck invites the audience to think of its dramatic experience of the play as a dream:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream. . . .

The purpose of this study is to investigate the possibilities of viewing the dramatic experience of the play as a dream, particularly in the context of Renaissance conceptions of sleep and dreams, of conventional literary uses of dreams, and of certain notions about poetry and comedy that are discussed by Renaissance literary critics. The dream perspective both heightens the fun and clarifies the meaning of the play.

The possibility of the interpenetration of poetry, on the one hand, and the world of dreams and visions the human psyche experiences, on the other, is a speculation as old as antiquity and as new as modern psychology. Plato characterizes the poet as "an airy thing, a winged and holy thing"
and endows him with special visionary powers or experiences. Under the influence of a divine madness that proceeds from the Muses, the poet is inspired to create and becomes thereby one of "the gods' interpreters."² But even before Plato the scriptures afforded examples of divinely-inspired authors, such as Moses, Daniel, Ezekiel, Solomon, and particularly David, who embodied their supernaturally-communicated visions or messages in verse. The supernatural derivation and nexus of poetry and dreams, a hypothesis recurring and eloquently espoused through the centuries has been largely displaced in this century by the advent of modern psychology. Sigmund Freud explains: "When modes of thought belonging to natural science began to flourish, all this ingenious mythology was transformed into psychology, and today only a small minority of educated people doubt that dreams are a product of the dreamer's own mind."³ The interrelation of art and dreams is postulated in modern psychology largely because of the belief that both are derived ultimately from the unconscious regions of the mind. For Sigmund Freud, both art and dreams are activities that function to allay ungratified wishes that reside in the unconscious.⁴ For C. G. Jung, the artist is "collective man"—"one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind." A creative work of art, like dreams, "arises from unconscious depths—we might say, from the realm of the mothers. Whenever the creative force predominates,
human life is ruled and molded by the unconscious as against the active will, and the conscious is swept along on a subterranean current, being nothing more than a helpless observer of events."^5 Whether the realm that the poet has access to is identified as external and supernatural or as internal and unconscious, the poet has been recurrently characterized through the centuries as a creature of special visionary powers, who can both pierce the superficial veil of life and communicate some of the secrets he has witnessed.

Shakespearean comedy in general and A Midsummer Night's Dream in particular are tempting candidates for an examination of the possible relationships between art and dreams. It is commonplace to categorize Renaissance comedy into two main types: Jonsonian comedy, which is generally characterized as critical, satiric, or realistic, versus Shakespearean comedy, which is generally characterized as romantic. As romantic comedy, Shakespearean comedy exhibits much of the stock-in-trade of the romance writers: an interest in "fine fabling," usually focused on a love story for its subject matter or framework, that normally involves plenty of suspense and surprise and plenty of the preposterous, far-fetched, and unbelievable. In short, Shakespeare generally produces a type of story that calls for a large, sustained suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader or listener.
The world of Shakespearean comedy has been described as a golden one or, according to Northrop Frye, a green one. "The green world has analogies to the dream world that we create out of our own desires." Although this green world "collides with the stumbling and blinded follies of the world of experience," it does not accede to "reality," but "proves strong enough to impose the form of desire on it." Far from being subservient to any laws of verisimilitude, Shakespearean comedy "illustrates, as clearly as any mythos we have, the archetypal function of literature in visualizing the world of desire . . . as the genuine form of the world that human life tries to imitate." 8

Even without the internal evidence of Puck's invitation to view the play as a dream, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by its very nature, particularly invites an inquiry into the possible interpenetration of art and dreams. This play makes available a dramatic, comic experience of the supernatural operating behind the inexplicable in human life. In Robert W. Dent's words, the play allows us "for one single night to witness, and thereby understand, 'the mystery of things, / As if we were God's spies.'" 9 Like Bottom, we are exposed to "a most rare vision." According to James Calderwood, "Under the influence of ubiquitous moonlight, the borders between dream, drama, and reality deliquesce so that all three circulate together in strange solution." 10 The basic strangeness of the world of this
play is universally acknowledged. It has been described as both "a world in which the operation of the laws of nature is suspended" and a work that requires a "surrealistic shuttling between the four worlds that comprise the boroughs of Shakespeare's shadowy domain..." T. Walter Herbert speaks of the experience of "dislocation" the audience undergoes in the play's transitions, while Katharine Briggs descriptively summarizes the great diversity of materials that are fused in the play:

Theseus and Hippolyta, half classical, half medieval, hunt through the wood; the lovers, romantic after Chaucer's tradition, but a little perhaps forgetting Chaucer's manners, quarrel in it; the Elizabethan tradesmen re-hearse in it; a league away at Athens Diana's voltaresses are chanting hymns to the moon; but the wood is in Warwickshire, with its brakes of sweet brier and beds of primroses and banks of wild thyme. In the same way Oberon derives through Huon of Bordeaux from Alberich, the German dwarf, Titania inherits the rites of Diana, by the late classical tradition of the gods descended into fairies, the Celtic Puck shares a character with the English Robin Goodfellow, and shows the traits of the Bogey Beast, the Brag and the Grant; yet the fairies, like Queen Elizabeth, are "mere English."

Such a concoction, described apart from the dramatic experience of the play, is indeed like a dream in its fusion of seemingly disparate elements with a blatant disregard for normal, conscious attitudes about time and space.
and the verisimilar. Briggs' description of the substance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is similar to Nashe's description of dreams: "No such figure of the first Chaos whereout the world was extraught, as our dreames in the night. In them all states, all sexes, all places are confounded and meete together." 14

As a perspective for viewing this strange world, Shakespeare utilizes a dream framework. Unlike *The Taming of the Shrew*, which presents the dream framework at the beginning of the play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents it at the end of the play in Puck's speech to the audience already cited. The dream perspective is subtly sounded at the beginning of the play, when Hippolyta remarks to Theseus, "Four nights will quickly dream away the time" (1.1.8). For the most part, however, the audience comes to the experience of the play as do its characters: first it experiences; then it is invited to think about that experience as a dream. So Bottom is transformed and wooed by Titania, and only afterwards, when the transformation is concluded, does he speak of his experience as a dream: "I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was..." (IV.i.208-210). Likewise, the four lovers experience the frustrations of unrequited love and awaken to harmonious relationships before they speak of their experiences as dreams. Demetrius asks in befuddlement:
Are you sure
That we are awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream.

(IV.i.194-196)

This technique of postulating the dream perspective after the fact is verisimilar to the dream experience itself, for when a person dreams he is usually unaware that he is dreaming; he simply experiences the dream as real. The mental faculties normally used to separate truth from falsehood while awake are suspended. It is only when awake that a person can think about the experience of a dream as a dream. Similarly, an auditor ideally comes to the experience of A Midsummer Night's Dream with a willing suspension of disbelief that is rooted in the knowledge that a play is a play, the stage a stage, but that allows for an imaginative acceptance of the hypotheses of the play. 15 Cumulatively, however, first by Bottom's and then the lovers' descriptions of their experiences as dreams and lastly by Puck's invitation, the audience is invited to think of its experience of the play as a dream. It should be noted that there is only one "actual" dream in the context of the play: Hermia's dream of the snake that eats her heart, a dream that ominously foreshadows the subsequent turn in her fortune (II.ii.145ff.).

Although most critics of A Midsummer Night's Dream mention dreams in connection with the play in one way or another, there is no full exploration of the possible functions and significance of the dream perspective in
terms of Renaissance concepts of sleep and dreams. Most frequently, the word dream is utilized critically only in the sense of "unreality." There is slim acknowledgement of alternative Elizabethan ideas about dreams, as to either their possible natural or supernatural causes and meanings. Though several critics maintain that Shakespeare's "dream" does have high import, only one attempts an extended allegorical interpretation of the play as a somnium oneiros, an allegorical, supernatural dream. 16 Very little attention has been given to traditional uses of or references to dreams in literature as they might throw light on Shakespeare's utilization of the dream perspective in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Further confusion in the available critical commentary on the play resides in frequent use of the word dream, unaccompanied by explicit explanations of what is meant by the term. The popularity of the study of the unconscious in this century, particularly as the unconscious expresses itself in dreams and in art, encourages the literary critic to use psychological notions in analyzing literature. Yet even a superficial examination of the dream theories of giants like Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung, to say nothing of all the variant hypotheses currently available for determining the meaning of dreams, clearly demonstrates that unless a literary critic is extremely meticulous in defining his terms and in applying them to a piece of literature, his analysis is confusing. 17
The remainder of this chapter will consider various critical interpretations of the meaning of A Midsummer Night's Dream, particularly as they exemplify different responses to Puck's invitation to view the play as a dream. A crucial factor in how critics respond to the meaning of the play resides in their assumptions about what dream means. Obviously, if one assumes that dreams are only insignificant, meaningless fantasies, he will respond to Puck's invitation differently from one who assumes dreams are meaningful expressions of either the unconscious mind or the supernatural. The following analysis of criticism may seem excessively lengthy. Its purpose, however, is to clarify both the possibilities and pitfalls of the topic and to provide a useful perspective and raison d'être for the remainder of the analysis. The following discussion is highly selective, attempting to be representative of basic reactions to the meaning of A Midsummer Night's Dream that are simultaneously relevant to the topic. Other criticism of the play will be utilized throughout this paper when it is pertinent.

C. L. Barber's analysis of A Midsummer Night's Dream is illustrative of those critics whose primary assumption is that dreams are basically idle fancies. He does not go as far as Samuel Pepys, who dismissed the play as "the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life," or as far as D. A. Traversi, who thinks the play "barely more than a delicate, tenuous
piece of decoration," but he does basically share Theseus' skeptical attitude toward such "fairy toys." Though Barber's primary interest in examining the play is to assess the relation of dramatic form to social custom, his assumptions about dreams are crucial to his interpretation of the play's meaning. As occurs so often in the criticism on this play, the use of the word dream lacks clarity. Barber says, "The whole night's action is presented as a release of shaping fantasy which brings clarification about the tricks of strong imagination. We watch a dream; but we are awake...." In this statement Barber appears to mean that a dream is "the release of shaping fantasy." However, he subsequently states that dreams, in plays of the same period, "are several times presented as oracles of irrational powers shaping life" and that A Midsummer Night's Dream "presents a resolution of the dream forces which so often augur conflict." He then speaks of the indulgence in "dreamlike irrationality" as "one of the basic satisfactions of wit" (pp. 157-158). One wonders exactly what Barber means by the "dream forces" that are resolved in the play and how dream as "shaping fantasy" can be reconciled with dream as essentially "irrationality."

Barber's most prominent assumption about dreams, however, resides in his belief that Shakespeare's calling the play a "dream" signals a skeptical attitude toward the play's subject matter (p. 123). Barber therefore feels the
fantastic elements of the play should not be taken seriously. The play's subject is "the folly of fantasy." Of the fairies he states that "any superstitious tendency to believe in their literal reality is mocked." "We watch a dream; but we are awake, thanks to pervasive humor about the tendency to take fantasy literally, whether in love, in superstition, or in Bottom's mechanical dramatics" (p. 124). He views the fairies as symbolic only, as an embodiment of "the mind's proclivity to court its own omnipotence" or as a representation of "the power of imagination" (pp. 139-140). In spite of the fact that at the end of his analysis Barber concedes that Theseus "does not quite have the last word" in the play, the main thrust of his reading of the play is in Theseus' vein: "The fun which Mercutio makes of dreams and fairies in Romeo and Juliet is an attempt to do in a single speech what the whole action does in A Midsummer Night's Dream. . . . A Midsummer Night's Dream is a play in the spirit of Mercutio: the dreaming in it includes the knowledge 'that dreamers often lie'" (pp. 158-159). For Barber, the substance and the shadow, "the imaginary and the real are too easy to separate" in this play. Imagination tends to be "merely expressive, an evidence of passion rather than a mode of perception" (pp. 160-161). He identifies Shakespeare's sense of reality with "the proud scepticism of Theseus" and states that not until later does Shakespeare recognize the imagination as a
way of knowing. With Prospero, we see that "we, not just the Titaniąs and Oberons, are such stuff as dreams are made on" (p. 161).

Barber's assumption that dreams are unrealities that lack significance is in accord with one attitude Elizabethans had toward dreams. Some Renaissance writers think dreams are most likely only figments of an idle imagination, and all writers acknowledge that some dreams are so. Imogene initially reacts to her dream in Cymbeline in this manner: "'Twas but a bolt of nothing, shot at nothing, / Which the brain makes of fumes . . ." (IV.ii.300-302). Barber's assumption about dreams is thus legitimate, but limiting. He considers none of the other theories about dreams available in the Renaissance; nor does he give weight to the fact that in both comedies and tragedies of the Renaissance characters repeatedly belittle the significance of dreams that clearly have, or are meant to have, significance. In his examination of dreams in Renaissance drama, Bain Tate Stewart finds that the belittling of significant dreams occurs so often that it can be considered a dramatic convention. 19 Barber's reference to dreams as "oracles of irrational powers shaping life" in Elizabethan plays is incorrect. They may appear "irrational" to a modern auditor, but to the Elizabethan the proper word is supernatural. In dealing with dreams or dream references in Renaissance drama, therefore, one can never be perfectly certain that dreams signify merely insignificant
realities until he has considered other possibilities. A dream or dream reference most generally has dramatic or thematic significance, or the dramatist would not have included it in the first place.

Barber uses his assumption about dreams to support his argument that the fairies are symbolic only, that "any superstitious tendency to believe in their literal reality is mocked" (p. 124). Such a conclusion is challenged by both Elizabethan conjectures about fairies and the dramatic context of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Minor White Latham and Katharine Briggs, the two scholars who have examined beliefs about fairies in the Renaissance most thoroughly, suggest that fairies were well within the realm of the imaginatively possible. The former states that "it was a matter of common belief that they [fairies] were real and actual beings." The latter explains that the popularity of fairy literature in late Elizabethan times rested not only on the artistic usefulness of fairies, but on a familiarity of both Court and Country with fairy-lore and on "a kind of pleasurable half-belief"; at the least one must acknowledge that "... the blank incredulity and materialism of the present day was foreign to the temper of the times." 20 Further, no matter how many times Puck, Oberon, the lovers, and Bottom may speak of the experiences of the play as dreams, dramatically they have actually occurred. The audience has seen the fairies, as has Bottom, and
they do not disappear when the other characters have emerged from the woods. The play operates on the dramatic assumption that the fairies are real. Because Barber can consider the dream in only skeptical terms, he thinks of the contents of Shakespeare's "dream" in skeptical terms and is reduced to making the fairies merely symbolic of an inner mental faculty, a vague "power of the imagination." Because Barber sees the fairies as "unreal" and the play as a sort of playful illusion, he naturally concludes that the imagination in this play is "merely expressive," and not a "mode of perception" (pp. 160-161). In reacting against romantic critics, who could not accept the dramatic representation, or illusion, of the fairies because of the difficulties of presenting real fairies on stage, he also fails to accept the fairies as dramatic illusions, but for opposite reasons. He cannot accept the imaginative hypothesis of fairies because he dismisses the possibility that fairies actually exist. Both of these extremes are examples of literalism. One takes the fairies too literally; the other takes the dream perspective too literally, and in a very limited sense. Melvin Seiden explains the danger of taking Puck's disclaiming invitation too literally:

At any rate, the dependence of all comedy and this play in particular upon the moral and emotional safeguard of a pervasive sense of inconsequentiality is of central importance. This is because the comic probabilities are dangerously potent in the Midsummer Night's Dream. They threaten to do their work too well. A comic vision which causes all semblance of
humdrum reality to wither away makes it possible for us to believe that the play as a whole does not matter; it seems to encourage our willingness to dismiss the play and its dreams as not mattering in a sense quite different from the way in which comic disasters do not matter. The modern reader is predisposed to submit the play's nocturnal images to the corrosive daylight of recalcitrant commonsense; and because much of the play pretends to nothing more than nonsense, triumphant commonsense is likely to assert that this mixture of fantasy and comedy has, after all, no sense. (p. 85)

Certainly Shakespeare's fairies are not real fairies, anymore than the lovers are real lovers or Theseus the real Theseus: all are dramatic representations of the imaginatively possible to an Elizabethan audience. Because Shakespeare keeps his audience aware that dramatic illusion is dramatic illusion is insufficient reason to assume that the illusion has no reference point in an external reality. Dreams and dramas are both unreal in the sense that they are only representations, but they are composed of images, however confused or translated, of "real" things. Barber does not approach the play with a willing suspension of disbelief. By asking the audience to think of the play as a dream, Puck does ask us to think of it as an illusion, but an illusion of what? Illusions, whether dreams or dramas, represent significant truths as well as vague inner processes.

A second basic response to the dream perspective of A Midsummer Night's Dream is one which maintains that dream elements have thematic
significance, that "something of great constancy" takes place in the play, but one that utilizes concepts of the dream that are not precisely consistent with Renaissance concepts of dream. This position may be illustrated by James A. Calderwood's "A Midsummer Night's Dream: The Illusion of Drama." Calderwood considers the play as "one phase of Shakespeare's continuing exploration of the nature, function, and value of art" (p. 507). He is particularly interested in exploring the role of the audience in contributing to the meaning of the dramatic occasion. The audience's response to Puck's invitation to view the drama as a dream is thus crucial. "More to the point, through Puck Shakespeare is suggesting that his audience may do precisely what the lovers did at the end of their forest drama--collapse drama into dream and thus deny that there are any connections between the 'story of the night' and ordinary reality" (p. 515). However, argues Calderwood, the dream-drama of the night does not disappear at dawn. He therefore thinks that Shakespeare's epilogue really says by way of irony: "If it makes you feel more 'reasonable,' adopt Theseus' view and regard the play as an idle dream--at best, a way of passing the time; but, like the lovers who also converted drama into dream, whether you realize it or not, you have experienced something here of enduring value and with a reality of its own" (p. 516). To Calderwood the play is not an idle dream, but one that provides the audience with an opportunity for self-knowledge. "The events and characters in the forest present the drama of
the dreaming mind whose imaginative impulses are released from reason (though often rationalized in terms of it) and divorced from daytime fact . . . .

Dream, in short, becomes drama, a drama in which man sees his dreams" (p. 518). The "dreaming mind" that Shakespeare reveals in external dramatic form is described by Calderwood in various ways: "the inner forms and impulses of the human mind itself—the tricks and shaping fantasies of strong imagination and the forces that direct it, but the range and limits of cool reason as well" (p. 517); "the normally incommunicable, subjective dimension of human experience, of which dream is the emblem" (p. 519); or the "realm of nightmare," "irrationality and chaos," and "the potentially terrifying" transformed into high comedy (p. 521). Thus for Calderwood the "dream" that is this play reveals a world "within, rather than outside or above, man" (p. 518).

At no point does Calderwood refer to Elizabethan concepts of dreams. Nor does he explicitly define dream in terms of any modern theory. At best one can conjecture from his descriptions that he considers a dream to be a manifestation of the subconscious, or "id" region of the mind. Though he objects to the "judicious vagueness" of those critics who imply that the fairies are metaphors "for something like 'wayward providence,' 'heaven-with-hellish-aspects,' or some other supersensory reality" (p. 518) rather than metaphors for an inner world, his own interpretation is no less vague. Practically,
Calderwood's analysis reasserts commonplace observations on the manner in which the action of the play exposes "the tricks and shaping fantasies of strong imagination" or the "irrational." The distorting powers of the imagination and its capacity to motivate men to irrational behavior are not a "normally incommunicable, subjective" matter for the Elizabethan; on the contrary, these concepts are the articulate stock-in-trade of every Elizabethan psychologist and most preachers and a popular source material for literature. One wishes that Calderwood would be more explicit about what he means by "the inner forms and impulses of the human mind" and exactly how the action of the play reveals them.

Calderwood's interpretation of the play as dream is mild compared to some analyses that treat the play as a couch-case for psychoanalysis. An example is Weston A. Gui's analysis of _A Midsummer Night's Dream_. The play, Mr. Gui states, is about dreams. Out of the six experiences described in the play as dreams, Bottom's is the key dream, since he alone sees the fairies. His dream "has no bottom," a state of affairs that Gui interprets "as meaning that Bottom is living again a childhood bliss before any responsibilities about cleanliness." The fact that Bottom gets his itching, hairy ears scratched Gui interprets as a physical, sexual satisfaction. Further, the moon in the play supposedly symbolizes "the chaste, unattainable mother," while
the chase of the four lovers is to be seen "as sexual pursuit and their appearing and disappearing as fantasies about love between the parents." The Pyramus and Thisbe play is also a symbol for the fantasy "of watching the parents love." Building on Gui's interpretation, Dr. Donald F. Jacobson reads the play "as a working out of psychological insights into feminine development." Titania's stealing the changeling "corresponds to the common fantasy of young girls that they steal a baby from their mother," and so on. Morton Kaplan observes that such analyses are critically sterile and psychoanalytically unsound. Norman Holland briefly suggests that the play, "at a higher psychoanalytic level," deals with an oedipal theme and that it should be possible to see the play as "a dynamic continuum from oral phase through phallic (primal scene and oedipal themes) to the meaning and morality, the adaptive level, that concerns conventional criticism," but he does not develop his thesis with a practical analysis of the play, so that there is no way to ascertain its validity.

Different as the above interpretations are, they all assume that the dream elements of A Midsummer Night's Dream do have significance and that Shakespeare's "dream" has meaning. They all assume that dreams are revelations of man's unconscious mind and that therefore the play gives us an opportunity to become aware of hidden desires within ourselves and to release them vicariously. The Elizabethans acknowledge that dreams are often caused
by man's internal nature. Dreams may reveal the state of the body's humors or reflect the thoughts and passions of the dreamer. They may even disclose the secret sins of the heart and the wild beast nature in man. Thus there is a historical validity to approaching the "dreams" of the play in terms of character revelation. It is also possible that modern psychology could clarify aspects of A Midsummer Night's Dream, but as yet, there is no full analysis of the play that is representative of both a high psychoanalytic level and a high level of literary criticism.

A third basic response to the meaning of A Midsummer Night's Dream is one that interprets the play allegorically, or symbolically. Though no critic fully utilizes the perspective of Renaissance dream theory or comments fully on the dream perspective of the play, two critics do mention the fact that dreams in the Renaissance can be allegorical in nature and of high import. Though both of the critics specifically mention the possibility of the allegorical dream almost exclusively in relation to Bottom's "vision," and then in terms of Macrobius' categories, their interpretations, in finding rather weighty thematic concerns in this play, represent in essence an approach to a third possible response to the dream perspective of the play. Such a response is made possible by the Renaissance belief that dreams, particularly ones containing supernatural elements, may be allegorical expressions of divine truths perceived by the soul in sleep.
Paul A. Olson, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Meaning of Court Marriage," thinks that the play utilizes throughout "a sophisticated Renaissance philosophy of the nature of love in both its rational and irrational forms" (pp. 95-96). Although Olson does not dwell on Elizabethan concepts of dreams, his one brief reference being to Bottom's vision as Macrobius' somnium, "a veiled truth between the gates of horn" (p. 99), his emblematic-symbolic-allegorical interpretation of the play is an attempt to show that "the dream becomes more than a fanciful illusion and grows, in Hippolita's phrase, 'to something of great constancy'" (p. 119). Olson does not emphasize the dream perspective. However, his interpretation treats the drama as an allegorical dream, for he views the play in the context of Renaissance Neoplatonic criticism, according to which it is "the artist's duty to incarnate the universal (or 'form') in the concrete visual emblem" (p. 98). He thus sees the play "as a skillfully composed fabric of iconological referents giving local habitation to the 'invisible and abstract entities' which would be likely to claim the attention of a marriage audience" (p. 98). He sees in the play a three-movement pattern proceeding from order (Act I) through a Fall (Acts II and III) to redemption; or "to a realization of the charity and cohesive community morality in which it began" (Acts IV and V). In this context Theseus is an emblem of "the reasonable man and the ideal ruler of both his lower nature and his subjects," significantly having brought to submission
through marriage Hippolita, who as an Amazon signified to the Renaissance "a false usurpation of the duties of the male reason by the lower, female passions" (pp. 101-102). Shakespeare uses the fairies to represent the "Other-world of allegory—that is, of Platonic Ideas, which constitute a higher reality of which earthly things are only imperfect copies" (p. 108). Oberon is "a delicate figure for grace," who furthers celestial love when he is sovereign; Titania symbolizes earthly love; together, "the king and queen of the woods dramatize the two poles of the scale of values which gave meaning to marriage" (pp. 109-111). Bottom's ass head symbolizes "stupidity and sensuality, for the carnal man as opposed to the spiritual," though Bottom himself does not stand for such qualities throughout the play (p. 113). The changeling Olson finds to be an emblem of man's rational soul (p. 112). Though Olson notes that paraphrase impoverishes dramatic symbol, he ventures that one might see in the fairy plot the following: "celestial love in the form of Oberon attempts to capture the young man (the 'sprete' or the changeling) into his train and bring earthly love under his control in order that the rational and animal in man may form a proper marriage" (p. 114). The lovers experience a pattern of fall and redemption (p. 115), descending into the chaos of earthly love in the woods and emerging with a rational love in accord with the ideal of celestial love. Finally, Olson says that "Shakespeare's purpose is to bring
to life certain truths about wedlock which may have seemed at best abstractions, at worst clichés, to his audience" (p. 119).

It is difficult to do justice to Olson's fine article, for more than any other critic of A Midsummer Night's Dream he provides the reader with a rich and varied context of Renaissance ideas and thus with an opportunity to see meanings in the play that might otherwise be missed. His recognition that Shakespeare may be up to a lot more in this play than he superficially pretends is valuable. Yet the play resists the allegorical interpretation he suggests. For instance, to consider Oberon as a "figure for grace" who at the same time must win sovereignty seems a contradiction in terms. Is the grace of God not sovereign? Further, though Titania, under the delusion initiated by Oberon briefly dotes on an object beneath her nature, she detests the delusion when her normal sight has been returned, and it is difficult to view her role in the play as simply an emblem of earthly love throughout. Olson himself concedes inconsistency when he maintains that Bottom's ass head symbolizes "stupidity and sensuality," but that Bottom himself does not symbolize these qualities throughout the play. Finally, it is difficult to accept that the lovers experience a pattern of fall and redemption in any serious way since Shakespeare provides no evidence that they have in any conscious way recognized and willfully responded to a saving grace. If
the play deals with redemption, it is one that only the audience can perceive, not a theme acknowledged by the characters.

The difficulties of a symbolic interpretation of the play are evident when one juxtaposes Olson's interpretation with Frank Kermode's. Kermode, too, is interested in the two types of love, irrational and divine, that are used in the play though he maintains that "the disorders of the fantasy (imagination) are the main topic of the play" (p. 214). Yet his interpretation of the Titania-Bottom episode is entirely opposed to Olson's. Since for Olson Titania is earthly, sensual love, Bottom's somnium for Olson must be an allegorical vision of earthly love, or a dream in which man's beastly nature finds release. Yet Kermode maintains that Bottom has a vision of divine love. Emphasizing the allusions to Apuleius and St. Paul embodied in the Titania-Bottom affair, Kermode maintains that Bottom "has known the love of the triple goddess in a vision," or allegorically, the love of God. "Bottom is there to tell us that the blindness of love, the dominance of the mind over the eye, can be interpreted as a means to grace as well as to irrational animalism; that the two aspects are, perhaps, inseparable" (p. 219). Kermode's interpretation does not fit the context of the play in several respects. In the first place, Bottom does not see Titania in a vision at all; dramatically, he sees her in fact and is made to think that it was only a vision afterwards.
More importantly, Bottom himself is not "there to tell us" much of anything. He is unable to articulate the experience at all and remains wholly unchanged by it. The Bottom of Act V is the same Bottom of Act I. If there is anything to "see" beyond the fact of the encounter in the Titania-Bottom episode, it must be seen and understood by the audience, not Bottom.

These, then, are three basic alternative ways to approach the drama of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a dream: 1) to enjoy it as a flight of fancy signifying little or nothing; 2) to interpret the dream on natural or psychological grounds; or 3) to interpret the dream symbolically as an embodiment of higher truths. The sharp differences between these approaches—each one in turn threatens to exclude automatically the other two—raise questions. One wonders which approach is correct; what Shakespeare means by dream; if each approach has some validity; and finally, if each is at least partially valid, how such diverse assumptions about dreams function simultaneously and harmoniously in one play. These are some of the questions for which this study of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* hopes to suggest some reasonable answers.

These questions are partially answered by the examination of Renaissance dream theory that follows. While each of the above analyses of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* tends to be reductive in its assumptions about
dreams, to the Elizabethans dreams may signify many things. This study will demonstrate that Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* utilizes the diversity of Renaissance dream theory, that no single definition of dream is adequate to account for the dramatic, comic functions of the dream perspective of the play, and that it is the chameleon-like character of dreams that makes the dreaming experience a viable metaphor for drama.
CHAPTER II

RENAISSANCE CONCEPTS OF SLEEP AND DREAMS

Part of the rationale behind the dream-drama metaphor in _A Midsummer Night's Dream_ is that in the Renaissance dreams and poetry are generally thought to have a common denominator: the imagination. The number of roles this faculty is assigned, which will be briefly reviewed below, is reflected in the diversity both of ideas about dreams and of assumptions about poetry that are current in the Renaissance. As will be seen, a rather consistent, though not perfect, parallelism is evident between ideas on sleep, imagination, dreams, and certain assumptions about poetry. As the imagination may be subject to the influence of the passions, a bad constitution, the devil, or its own capricious nature, so sleep may be viewed as a state in which reason, for all practical purposes, is inactive; so dreams may result that range from fantastic nonsense or reflections of the dreamer's own passions and humors to devilish delusions; and so poetry may be composed of lies and fraught with immorality. In contrast, as the imagination may function under the control of reason or have some part in the divine contemplations or perceptions of the soul, so sleep may be viewed as a time of soul-awakening when the soul is freed from bodily cares; so dreams may result that are mirrors
of heavenly things; and so poetry may with a rational feigning present a "golden" world beyond the "brazen" world of nature. This chapter will explore Renaissance concepts of sleep and dreams, while Chapters III and IV will suggest their relevance to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Renaissance concepts of sleep and dreams are largely derived from the authority of scripture and classical writings and from the elaboration, interpretation, or partial revision of those writings effected by prominent medieval authorities, such as Augustine and Macrobius, and by contemporary physicians, psychologists, churchmen, philosophers, and men of letters.¹

This respect for authority is readily illustrated by the number of authorities utilized by Peter Martir Vermigli in his discussion of dreams and visions in *The Commonplaces*: Aristotle, Democritus, Hippocrates, Galen, Plato, Homer, Virgil, Epicurus, Philo, the Bible, Augustine, Tertullian, and Cyprian.²

Other authorities on dreams cited by Renaissance authors are Plutarch, Pliny, Plotinus, Artemidorus, Aquinus, John of Salisbury, Ovid, Quintilian, Macrobius, and Albertus Magnus, to name only a few. Some of the most important of these earlier authorities may almost be taken as contemporary documents. Renaissance ideas on sleep and dreams also derive from the authority of experience, but largely as those exemplary experiences are recorded in authorities, or as the observations of various authors led them
to reject some authorities and embrace others. To an artist such as Shakespeare, the Renaissance made available a wealth of diverse hypotheses about dreams.

1. DEFINITION OF DREAM

Bain Tate Stewart states that while Renaissance writers recognize a variety of secondary causes for dreams, there is "almost universal agreement that the direct and necessary source of all dreams is the imagination" (p. 35). For instance, Christopher Langton says, "A dreame is nothyng, but an ymagi- nation made in the sleape," and Thomas Hobbes notes: "The imaginations of them that sleep, are those we call Dreams."3 The reason and the humors, however, can function importantly in dreaming, and their significance will be intermittently noted in the following discussion whenever relevant. The general definition of a dream as an activity of the imagination during sleep is clarified by a brief examination of Renaissance concepts of both the imagination and sleep.

Elizabethan psychologists commonly consider the imagination as that faculty of the mind whose primary function is "to preserve and reproduce upon demand images which have been apprehended by the external sense and given some sort of order by the common sense; and its power is so great that it can almost create the same impression as the original object" (Stewart, p. 15).
The imagination has a crucial position in Renaissance epistemology. William Rossky describes the hierarchical order of communication thus:

... the general course of communication runs from the perception of the outward senses to common sense, or directly to imagination, which unites the various reports of the senses into impressions and reflects them back to the Imagination and Sensible Reason, should they turn to it to recall past incidents. Beyond these faculties and functions lies the overseeing and judging power of the highest Understanding, which in turn informs the Will.⁴

A common conclusion, considering this crucial position of the imagination, is that expressed by Thomas Wright: "... whatsoever we understand, passeth by the gates of our imagination."⁵ Properly, the imagination functions as "A glasse, wherein the object of our Sense / Ought to reflect true height, or declination, / For understandings cleare intelligence."⁶

In addition to its passive roles as receiver, reporter, and retainer, the imagination also functions actively as a creator, or inventor. As Andreas Laurentius observes, "The imagination compoundeth and ioyneth together the formes of things, as of Golde and a mountaine, it maketh a golden mountaine, which the common sence cannot doe. . . ."⁷ Because of its "compounding" capacity, the imagination is both denounced as the source of distorted visions of external reality that delude reason, often effecting thereby immoral action, and lauded as the source of all the Arts
and Sciences. Psychological writings of the period are generally biased against the imagination for three basic reasons: 1) its dependence on the fallible senses, which are tied to the flesh and since the Fall are not to be trusted to present "sensible things" perfectly; 2) its susceptibility to the influence of a bad constitution, particularly the disease of melancholy, the passions, and the devil; and 3) its basic capriciousness, which "left to its own devices, may make what it will, creating in almost absolute disregard of the images furnished by the senses and hence fashioning often the fondest impossibilities" (Rossky, pp. 53-61). The adherents of poetry in the period, however, insist that precisely because of the imagination's active powers, the poet with "deliberate, purposeful, moral, and rational" feigning, can present a "golden" world beyond the "brazen" world of nature, a world that is at once verisimilar (finding its source in the observations of the senses) and yet of a higher truth, the "perfect patterne." Though imagination may be misused and thus lead men into error, the poet, by placing it under the supervision of reason, can use its persuasive power, along with its higher truth and feigning, to move and teach men to love the good and hate the bad more effectively than can the abstractness of the philosopher or the particularity of historian (Rossky, pp. 64-65).

Moreover, Renaissance psychologists themselves have no uniformity of opinion on the imagination. 8 Descriptions of the imagination's basic
functions remain fairly consistent, but some authors emphasize the imagination's alliance with the senses and the beastly aspects of man, while others emphasize its alliance with the reason. For instance, Andreas Laurentius treats the Imagination and Memory as the handmaids of Reason, separate from the vegetative and sensitive faculties (p. 73), whereas Burton considers it a sensitive faculty. Further, some writers acknowledge the possibility of two imaginations—or two distinct functions of the imagination—one intellectual and one sensual, belonging to the higher and lower souls respectively. Stewart notes that authority for this hypothesis can be found in Plato (Timaeus), Plotinus (whose works were popularized by Ficino), and Paracelsus. He notes Bacon's reference to the concept of "imagination exalted" in Paracelsus and cites Pierre le Loyer, who in A Treatise of Specters (1605) distinguishes man from the animals in that he possesses "two sortes of Imagination, namely one Intellectual, and without corporall substance: the other sensible and corporall. The Intellectual is the Fantasie, of which is bred and engendered in us a memory or remembrance . . . and the discours of the reasonable soul" (p. 26).

In general, however, the terms phantasy, fantzie, and fancy are used interchangeably with imagination and do not designate separate functions of the imagination (Rossky, p. 50, note 4). Although the imagination's
powers are generally circumscribed to its intermediary position between the internal sense and the reason, even its wildest fantasies thus being rooted in the external world, the imagination is frequently cited as having vaster powers. If the imagination is accessible to the devil, it is also accessible to the angels. It is sometimes credited with the ability to foresee the future and to affect the beings of others. Thus Charron elaborates on the diverse powers of the imagination: "It makes a man to lose his understanding, his knowledge, judgment; it turns him foole and madman . . . it inspireth a man with the foreknowledge of things secret and to come, and causeth those inspirations, predictions and marvelous inventions, yet it raviseth with ecstasies." Though the imagination may be dependent on the sense for its images, no matter how wildly it may combine them, it has access to a knowledge beyond this world, either directly or via the reason. As will be illustrated later in connection with dreams, the imagination may therefore function as a mirror that can translate what it reflects into apprehensible images. Thus according to whether the imagination is associated closely with the higher faculties or the lower faculties in man, it can be a good angel or a harlot.

The imagination is particularly active during sleep, which is variously viewed by Elizabethan authors as a separation of the soul from the body, a rest of the five outward senses along with the common sense, or a warming
and moistening of the spirits. The latter view is related to the belief that the sleeping process is closely associated with the digestive process. Andreas Laurentius explains that the material cause of sleep is a pleasant vapor that rises up to the brain as a result of the digestive process. When this moist vapor reaches the cold brain, it congeals and thus clogs the nerves through which the animal spirits flow, thereby causing all motion to stop (pp. 94-95). Sleep is universally considered to be an absolute necessity for the maintenance of good health. Levin Lemnius gives a typical expression of the value of sleep: it "refresheth the wearied powers of the body, fyrreth vp the Spirites, recreateth the mynde, putteth away sorrow, & bringeth a man into good and quiet temper."12

As with the imagination, there is no uniformity of opinion among Renaissance authors on sleep. According to some authors the soul's intellectual activity becomes intense during sleep, while according to others certain bodily elements, particularly the humors, are extremely active during sleep.13 Stewart observes: "Sleep, then, may increase the activity of the imagination either as a sensitive or a rational faculty" (p. 33). Although most authors note a resting of the senses during sleep, it is also commonly held that the capacity to notice small things, such as changes in the air or insignificant noises, is greatly increased during sleep—a seeming contradiction.14 These
differing views on the activities of the body, the reason, and the imagination during sleep will be more fully elaborated as they become relevant in the following discussion of dreams.

II. TYPES OF DREAMS

Most Renaissance authorities on dreams recognize the possibility of a number of secondary causes for dreams. Agencies frequently cited as affecting the imagination during sleep and thereby determining the nature of the dream range from such internal factors as the humors, vapors, spirits, emotions, or predominant waking thoughts of the dreamer to such external entities as God, angels, Satan, devils, spirits of the dead, magicians, the stars, an Anima Mundi, and various rather vague intelligences, forms, and so forth. As to how these external entities influence the imagination—whether angels or spirits of the dead actually appear to the dreamer or whether they influence the imagination indirectly by working through the humors or spirits of the body—there is much disagreement. The plentiful number of possible secondary causes is illustrated by the summary in Henricus Cornelius Agrippa's Of the Vanitie and Vncertainte of the Artes and Sciences. Agrippa, attempting to discredit prognostication by dreams, argues that authorities cannot agree on either the inward or the outward causes of dreams:
For the Platonicks reckon them [causes of dreams] among the specific and concrete Notions of the Soul. Avicen makes the Cause of Dreams to be an Ultimate Intelligence moving the Moon in the middle of That Light with which the fancies of men are Illuminate while they sleep. Aristotle refers the Cause thereof to Common Sense, but plac'd in the Fancy. Averroes places the Cause in the Imagination. Democritus ascribes it to little Images or Representatives, separated from the things themselves. Albertus to the Superior Influences which continually flow from the Skie through many Specific Mediums. The Physicians impute the cause thereof to Vapours and Humours; others to the affections and cares predominant in persons when awake. Others joyn the powers of the Soul, Celestial Influences and Images together, all making but one Cause.

Most writers acknowledge the general premise that dreams of all kinds can be literal or allegorical. The variety of possible causes of dreams results in a recognition of a number of types of dreams. Carroll Camden notes: "Elizabethan professional writers usually discuss five kinds of dreams: natural, accidental, divine, diabolical, and supernatural. Some writers, however, combine natural and accidental, while others combine divine, diabolical, and supernatural" (p. 123). The following discussion utilizes a categorization of dreams suggested by Vermigli: 1) natural; 2) divine and diabolical; and 3) mixed (p. 32). Some dreams are clearly attributed to natural causes, others to divine; however, the causes and nature of "mixed" dreams, which are generally prophetic dreams, are controversial topics.
There is much disagreement as to whether they are natural or supernatural, caused by the influences of the heavens or by the innate powers of the soul awakened in sleep.

A. Natural Dreams

William Perkins considers natural dreams as coming "either from the thoughtes of the minde, or the affections of the heart, or the constitution of the bodie." Some writers believe that the humors are the cause of all dreams, in that they are responsible for activating the imagination through the instrumentality of the spirits of the sensitive soul. This belief is rooted in the assumption that since sleep results from the digestive process, the activity of the bodily elements, especially the humors, is increased during sleep. For instance, Thomas Wright explains that dreams may be caused "by the spirits, which ascend into the imagination, the which being purer or grosser, hotter or colder, more or lesse, (which diversities dependeth upon the humours of the body) move divers Passions according to thier nature" (p. 65). Vermigli, citing Galen, explains that in the daytime the fantasy is preoccupied with what the senses perceive, but that at night it is free to apprehend "those sights and likenesses of things, which humors alwaies raise in us" (p. 33). Shakespeare in Cymbeline illustrates an awareness that dreams can be caused by a vaporous humor rising from the stomach to the brain as a result of
digestion when Imogene says of her dream: "'Twas but a bolt of nothing, shot at nothing, / Which the brain makes of fumes . . . " (IV.ii.300-301). Some writers, as will be noted later, consider the possibility that even dreams induced by supernatural agencies may influence the imagination only by way of the humors.

In addition to the general role of the humors in dream production, an overabundancy of a particular humor can determine the substance of a dream. Thus the choleric man may dream of wars, fire, or debates; the phlegmatic man, though less likely to dream than men of other complexions, may dream of water, drownings, or storms; the sanguine man may dream of love and happy things, merry company, music, conversation, and rich dress, or of bloody things; and the melancholic man may dream of death, dangers, fears, dungeons, poverty, waste places, or evil spirits. 17 Shakespeare uses this explanation of dreams in Richard III, when Anne tells Gloucester, "Thou wast provoked by thy bloody mind, / Which never dreamt on aught but butcheries" (I.ii.99-100), an indication of his choleric temperament.

Hamlet's dreams are associated with melancholy. Timothy Bright explains that the fearful dreams of the melancholy person are caused partly by their fearful waking thoughts and "partly through blacke and darke fumes of melancholie, rising vp to the braine, whereof the fantasie forgeth objectes"
Nightmares that are designated as the Incubus or the Mare, in which the dreamer experiences a terrible burden on his chest so heavy that he cannot move and has difficulty breathing, are sometimes attributed to the humors or to illnesses and dietary indiscretions that upset the humors, particularly melancholy (Camden, pp. 117-120). According to Thomas Nashe, the melancholic humor is "the mother of dreames, and of all terrours of the night whatsoever" (1,357), while Reginald Scot blames melancholy for all seemingly diabolical dreams. Poetic and prophetic inspiration, whether evaluated as genuine divine ecstasy or diabolical delusion, is sometimes attributed to melancholy (Laurentius, p. 86; Burton, p. 894). Vermigli, citing Galen, refers dreams of flying to a want of humors (p. 35). Considering the influence that the humors can have on the imagination during sleep, it is no wonder that most writers emphasize the effect that diet or sickness can have on dreams by disturbing the humors. Overeating or overdrinking can easily induce a bout with the Mare.

Thoughts and passions can also determine the substance of dreams. Peter de La Primaudaye explains that during sleep, while the external senses are inactive, "the imagination, thought consideration and remembrance of those things we have seen, heard, tasted, smelt, touched and perceived with corporal senses, remaine still in vs." The memory, retaining these
impressions, presents them to the fantasy again during sleep. The scriptural authority frequently used to substantiate this causal theory is Ecclesiastes 5.3: "For a dream cometh through the multitude of business. . . ."^20 Andreas Laurentius, referring to this category of dreams as "dreames of the minde," claims that it is the most frequent kind of dream, "for if we haue seene, or thought vpon, or talked of any thing very earnestly in the day, the night following the same thing will offer it selfe vnto vs. The fisherman (sayth Theocritus) dreameth commonly of fishes, rivers and nets: the souldier of alarums, taking of townes, and the sounding of trumpets: the amorous raue of nothing in the night, but of their loues object" (pp. 99-100). Mercutio's Queen Mab speech in _Romeo and Juliet_ utilizes this theory of dreams. Mercutio tells Romeo:

And in this state she gallops night by night  
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;  
On courtiers' knees, that dream on curtseys straight,  
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees,  
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream, . . . .  
Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,  
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit;  
And sometime comes she with a tithe pig's tail  
Tickling a parson's nose as 'a lies asleep,  
Then dreams he of another benefice.  
Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,  
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,  
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,  
Of healths five fathom deep; and then anon  
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes,  
And being thus frighted swears a prayer or two  
And sleeps again.  

(l.i.v.70-88)
Passions, as well as thoughts, can motivate dreams. The passion of fear can produce terrible dreams, and it is generally believed in the Renaissance that a guilty conscience produces unquiet sleep. Various Renaissance writers recognize a wish-fulfillment impulse in dreaming. Levin Lemnus observes that a dream may be an "earnest & greedy desyre to co-passe somewhat, which wee would very fayne bring to passe" (fol. 113Y), and Stephan Batman states: "... the couteous dream, they imbrace riches: the lecherous, that they imbrace those which the day before they secretly desired: the wrathful, that they are fighting, killing, robbing, and brauling: the careless, that they are piping, singing, whisteling, hawking, hunting, dauncing and such lyke." Thus in The Merchant of Venice Shylock dreams of moneybags (II.v.18), and Julia (Sebastian) says to Proteus in The Two Gentlemen of Verona: "She dreams on him that has forgot her love; / You dote on her that cares not for your love" (IV.iv.86-87). Eleanor's dream related in 2 Henry VI is a typical wish-fulfilling dream of an ambitious person:

Methought I sat in seat of majesty
In the cathedral church of Westminster,
And in that chair where kings and queens are crown'd;
Where Henry and Dame Margaret kneel'd to me,
And on my head did set the diadem.

(1.ii.36-40)
Plato observes that unlawful pleasures and appetites "awaken when the reasoning and human ruling power is asleep" and that "even in good men, there is a lawless wild-beast nature, which peers out in sleep."\textsuperscript{23}

In addition to being caused by humors, thoughts, and passions, natural dreams may be caused by sundry external stimuli, such as noises. This notion seems to be a contradiction of the view that the senses are inactive during sleep, but it is nonetheless affirmed by most authorities. Thomas Nashe explains the contents of many dreams with this theory: "As for example; if in the dead of the night there be anie rumbling, knocking, or disturbaunce neere vs, wee straight dreame of warres, or of thunder. If a dogge howle, we suppose we are transported into hell, where we heare the complaint of damned ghosts. If our heads lye double or vneasie, we imagine we vphold all heauen with our shoulder like Atlas. If wee bee troubled with too manie clothes, then we suppose the night mare rides vs" (I,356-357).\textsuperscript{24}

B. Divine and Diabolical Dreams

Renaissance writers all acknowledge that some dreams come from God; at least they did in the past if not in the present. Frequently cited is the authority of Job 33.15-16: "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he [God] openeth
the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." That man during sleep is subject to divine communications and insights is generally attributed to the notion that the soul's powers are greater during the sleeping state, when it is essentially relieved of its duties to the body; for during sleep the five outward senses rest, along with the sixth or common sense (Burton, p. 140). Timothy Bright, in his *A Treatise of Melancholie*, expresses this aptitude of the sleeping state for supernatural revelation when he states that "... sleepe is a kind of separation of the soule from the body for a time, at the least a rest from outward sensible actions, whereby it more freely applyeth it selfe to those divine contemplations, which is onely learned from the instinct of creation, & neuer apprehended by any other instruction" (pp. 117-118).

These divine dreams may come from God directly or by way of an angel; they also may be literal or allegorical. Dreams directly or indirectly from God generally function to warn, to instruct, or to foretell. Thus in Matthew the angel of the Lord appears to Joseph, Mary's husband, in literal dreams three times in order to warn him and give him instructions (1.20-21; 2.13; 2.19-20). Writers frequently cite the career of Joseph as recorded in Genesis to illustrate allegorical dreams from God that foretell the future (37.7-10; 40.9-23; 41.1-36).

There is a variety of opinions among Renaissance writers on how these dreams from God are effected. Most writers do not definitely separate
sleeping visions from waking visions. Vermigli refers to the division of
visions that Augustine uses in his De genesi ad litteram, a division that
conveniently sets forth the major Renaissance theories on the mechanical
operation of dreams from God. According to Augustine, Vermigli says,
visions are of several kinds: 1) corporeal, which pertain to the outward
senses; 2) spiritual, which "consisteth of shewes or images, and haue place
about the phantasie or power imaginative"; and 3) intellectual, which "be
onelie comprehended by reason and judgement of the mind." Vermigli
himself favors the view that God presents images either to the outward
senses, as when Belshazzar perceives outwardly the fingers of a man's
hand writing on the wall (Daniel 5.5), or to the inward imagination.
God affects the inward imagination by either calling back for His own
use similitudes retained in the dreamer's mind, as when Jeremiah is shown
a seething pot turned toward the north (Jeremiah 13), or by showing the
dreamer new forms that have never been perceived by his senses, as when
a man blind from birth sees colors (p. 36). However, some writers maintain,
as does Augustine, that dreams from God may appeal directly to the dreamer's
rational powers without benefit of the imagination.25 Scriptural authority for
this hypothesis is the fact that Solomon receives the divine wisdom of God
in a dream (I Kings 3.5-15). Most writers, even if they do not endorse
this particular explanation of Godly communication, recognize explicitly or
implicitly the importance of rational activity in regard to divine dreams, for it is imperative that the dreamer be able to understand the import of these dreams as well as passively perceive the images. According to scripture, this divine understanding may be given to the dreamer or to someone else (i.e., Joseph and Daniel in the Old Testament). God or His angels can also induce dreams indirectly by way of the humors, but this method is not emphasized as much in dreams from God as in dreams from Satan.

Renaissance authorities hold various views as to who receives dreams from God—the wise? the pure and just? the simple and foolish? or even the evil or pagan man? Though the most common view is that divine communications come to the pure in heart, there is scriptural authority for the fact that God sends dreams to whomever He pleases, the unjust as well as the just. So He had done to Pharaoh. This latter possibility contributes to a general confusion as to how to classify the pagan oracles and the prophetic dreams that are related by precious classical authorities and constantly used as examples of prophetic dreams in Renaissance writings. Technically, the pagan oracles are often attributed to evil spirits or demons, yet the impulse is to use these pagan prophetic dreams as examples to support the hypothesis that men receive divine foreknowledge in dreams from God.26

Shakespeare uses in his dramas no dreams explicitly attributed to God in Christian terms. However, one can argue that Richard III’s dream
of conscience is sent from God to urge his repentence. Richard, of course, chooses to dismiss this possibility. Richmond's prophetic dream on the same night may also be attributed to God. Shakespeare uses the literary tradition of the objective dream from God or the gods in his pagan romances.

The consensus of Renaissance writers on dreams is generally that the vast powers of the devil or evil spirits to seduce the souls of men include the ability to influence man's imagination during both sleeping and waking. As with dreams from God, dreams or visions from the devil can be initiated in several ways. Outwardly, the devil can form in the air whatever images it pleases him to produce. Inwardly, he can influence the imagination or passions. Though demons are not usually given the capacity to put thoughts directly into a man's mind, they are believed to incite thoughts indirectly by stirring up the humors. The disturbed humors are then responsible for inciting the passions and deceiving the imagination, which then beclouds the reason and thereby leads the demonic victim to despair and damnation. A person suffering from melancholy is particularly vulnerable to demonic attack. Finally, evil spirits can enter and possess the human body, a belief that is the root of the terrible Incubus type of dream, in which the devil or a demon oppresses and seduces the dreamer's body. 27

Writers recognize various sorts of diabolical dreams. Reginald Scot, although he attempts to dismiss all diabolical dreams as effects of melancholy
and is thus an exception to the general belief, refers to three sorts of diabolical dreams mentioned by Nicolaus Hemingius: 1) those in which the devil himself, corporally, "offreth anie matter of dreame"; 2) those in which the devil "sheweth revelations to them that have made request"; and 3) those in which the dream substance is caused by the magicians art" (p. 161). Demonic dreams can sometimes be prophetic, for although evil spirits and the devil do not have foreknowledge, as fallen angels they know more than men do, especially concerning the causes of things, and are able to make good conjectures about the future. Augustine in De genesi ad litteram tells of one possessed by a devil, who had a vision of the very hour the priest would come to him and by what places he passed. Further proof is the fact that the pagans had oracles that prophesied truly (Vermigli, p. 37). Above all, however, the diabolical dream is deceptive and treacherous, for the devil can come in a dream disguised as an angel, as Christ, even as God Himself, or in the likeness of a close relative, perhaps a loved one now deceased. The devil disguises himself, because, in the words of Thomas Nashe, "... in those shapes which hee supposeth most familiar vnto vs, and that wee are inclined to with a naturall kind of love, we will sooner harken to him than otherwise. Should he not disguise himselfe in such subtil formes of affection, we would flie from him as a serpent" (1, 348). Diabolical dreams are particularly
associated with witches and conjurers, but they may annoy anyone (Camden, p. 125). The person with a bad conscience is commonly disturbed with diabolical dreams.

Walter Clyde Curry in his *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns* makes a convincing case for attributing various sleeping and waking visions in *Macbeth* to the devil or demonic forces (pp. 81-91). For instance, honest Banquo invokes Powers, "precisely that order of angels which God, in his providence, has deputed to be concerned especially with the restraint and coercion of demons," for protection after his terrifying sleeping vision of the Weird Sisters (p. 81). Curry explains Macbeth's hallucinations or illusions as ultimately demonic-inspired, their purpose being to lure him on to total despair and damnation, and he asserts that Shakespeare's age "would undoubtedly have pronounced Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking an instance of demoniacal somnambulism."

C. Mixed Dreams

"Mixed dreams," as Vermigli refers to them, are intermediate between the natural and divine types of dreams. Like the natural dream, they are usually described as being self-generated; yet they involve and reflect extra-worldly forces and phenomena. The mixed dream is attributed variously to
the innate power of the soul when relieved from bodily cares during sleep; to the inspiration of some external spiritual force or creature; to a sympathy existing between the mind of the dreamer and heavenly influences; and, ultimately, to the primitive belief the soul leaves the body during sleep and experiences the dream events apart from the body.\textsuperscript{28} William Vaughan describes this category as follows:

Supernatural dreames are placed in the middest, betweene the divine dreames and the natural, for they may happen without being precisely sent from God, & their cause comes not onely by the sole deprauation of humours, as naturall dreames doe, but by the rauishment of the spirit, which wakes while the body reposeth, and which being oftentimes holpen by the inspiration of some good Angel or \textit{Genius}, doth represent by such Dreames things which commonly come to passe.\textsuperscript{29}

David Person says that although many learned men attribute these "accidental" prophetic dreams to a \textit{spiritus universitatis} or \textit{Anima Mundi}, he thinks they are rather due to "some peculiar extra ordinary inspiration in the dreamer for the time" (p. 253). Laurentius explains that as the body becomes more weak and feeble, the reason "whirleth through the ayre, and walketh over the wide world, when the bodie is immoueable." At such times the soul often sees "some glaunces of his divine nature in foretelling things to come" and, if the vapors arising from the digestive process are not excessive, it even may behold "the glorie of the Angels and mysteries of heauen" (pp.
6-7; also p. 78). The translator of Artemidorous says that he concurs with Ovid’s opinion that at daybreak, or after midnight, when the digestion has been effected and the senses are at rest, "the Soule which alwaies watcheth, laboring more easily faigneth, fashioneth, and representeth maruelous things for the honour or safety of his host the body, shewing him in a mirrour, certaine forms, figures, & kindes of visions both of good, and euil, past or to come."

Through the influence of the Stoics and Neoplatonists, the concept of the increased powers of the soul during sleep becomes increasingly associated with judicial astrology and the belief that the stars sympathize with man, sending out images or vibrations of future events which the human mind is most able to receive in the sleeping state (Stewart, p. 89; Weidhorn, pp. 19-21). Evidence of the prevalence of this notion in the Renaissance is found in the number of admonitions authors express against a too superstitious observation of dreams and their reference to the popularity of books of dream interpretation, such as those of Abraham, Solomon, and Daniel. Thus Reginald Scot, though trying to discourage dream interpretation, presents a useful survey of authorities on the prophetic capacity of dreams current in the Renaissance:
Synesius, Themistius, Democritus, and others grounding themselves upon examples that chance hath sometimes verified, persuade men, that nothing is dreamed in vaine: affirming that the hevenlie influencies doo bring forthe divers formes in corporall matters; and of the same influencies, visions and dreames are printed in the fantasticall power, which is instrumentall, with a celestiall disposition meeete to bring forth some effect, especiallie in sleepe, when the mind (being free from bodilie cares) may more liberallie receive the heavenlie influencies, whereby many things are knowne to them sleeping in dreames, which they that wake cannot see. Plato attributethem to the formes and ingendred knowledges of the souls; Avicen to the last intelligence that moveth the moone, through the light that lighteneth the fantasie in sleepe; Aristotle to the phantasticall sense; Averroes to the imaginative; Albert to the influence of superior bodies.

(pp. 160-161)

Agrippa refers to these notions (Vanitie, fol. 52V-53V), as does Vermigli, who discusses Democritus' explanation that images of future things flow from them and are carried into bodies in sleep, "affecting them with the qualitie and similitude which they bring with them" (p. 34). As late as 1695 Thomas Tryon's A Treatise of Dreams & Visions adheres to the belief that the stars can influence the nature of dreams. Dreams influenced by Saturn are fearful and sorrowful; by Mars, fierce and terrible; by Jupiter, grave and moderate; by Venus, pleasant and amorous; by Mercury, mixed and confused; by the sun, light and splendid; and by the moon, confused and inconstant, both
truthful and false. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo connects dreams with judicial astrology. In spite of Mercutio's skeptical attitude regarding the prophetic potentiality of dreams, Romeo fears that his dream is a result of stellar influence that will prove prophetic:

```
... for my mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels and expire the term
Of a despised life closed in my breast
By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
```

(*1.4* 107-111)

The above survey of references to the "mixed" type of dream in Renaissance writings demonstrates that while some writers emphasize the innate occult powers residing in the soul, others emphasize the external influences on the soul. Some writers emphasize the heightened rational activity that occurs in this type of dreaming; others emphasize the role of the imagination; still others simply emphasize the powers of the soul without designating specific roles for different faculties. The role of the imagination is implicitly dual: as the receptor of heavenly influences or visions, either directly or indirectly, it is passive; as the provider of images that can give perceptible form to extra-worldly phenomena, it is active.
III. THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF DREAMS

The task of interpreting dreams is a far more problematical matter than the Renaissance habit of classifying dreams initially suggests, both because attitudes toward dream interpretation itself differ sharply and because the nature and meaning of particular dreams, whether they occur in life or literature, can be very elusive.

Since dream interpretation is closely linked with prophecy in the Renaissance, attitudes toward it differ sharply. The presence of a strong tradition of moral censure regarding man's divinatory attempts, whether rooted in astrology or dreams, is articulated in Agrippa's discussion of dreams: "... for so much as we are men, we must not seeke to know any thing aboue our reach: but earthly things alone: and which is more, seinge we be Christians and beleue in Christe, let us leave the howers & minutes to God the father, who hath put them in his owne power" (Vanity, fol. 45v). Similarly, Reginald Scot, though he acknowledges the phenomenon of divine and prophetic dreams in scripture, argues that "the operation of miracles are ceased," for the truth of the Word has been realized in Christ (p. 162). He is extremely skeptical of any dream interpretation: "And as for dreames, whatsoever credit is attributed unto them, proceedeth of follie ..." (p. 159). Finally, Scot cites scripture, referring to the
scathing denunciation of the adulterous prophets of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 23, who "speak a vision of their owne heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord," as proof that men should not heed dreams or their interpreters (p. 167). Most Renaissance discussions of dreams dutifully caution the reader against false prophets, particularly fortunetellers, soothsayers, and dream interpreters.

Other arguments and authorities are presented to discourage dream interpretation. Aristotle maintains that prophetic dreams are merely chance occurrences and that it is therefore foolish to waste time looking for prognostications of the future in dreams (Vermigli, p. 34). Vermigli, though he implies that prophetic dreams come indirectly from God, argues against an enthusiastic observance of mixed dreams because they are unreliable and difficult to interpret. As "signes of things not fullie perfected," the substance of dreams can be altered by sundry factors before it becomes actual. Even if the cause of dreams is in the stars, "who yet can refer these signes to their owne proper cause, that is unto some stars rather than to others?" Further, even if one can properly "refer these signes," judicial astrology is "a most uncerteine art" (pp. 34-35).

Despite moral censure, however, there is reason to believe that the observance of dreams is common in the Renaissance. Stewart believes that the tradition of Christian Neoplatonism, reinterpreted and popularized by
Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, encouraged the persistence of the notion that God frequently communicates with men concerning the future (p. 73). The classics provided a host of frequently cited examples to prove that dreams can be prophetic, and the number of contemporary accounts of prophetic dreams, particularly those related as the personal experiences of men as prominent as Jerome Cardan, Joseph Hall, and Izaak Walton, suggest that dream interpretation is common in the Renaissance. Finally, the number of admonitions against dream interpretation and against the use of books of dream interpretation that are attributed to authorities such as Abraham, Solomon, and Daniel imply the popularity of dream interpretation.

Dream interpretation itself is fraught with difficulties, which will be considered first in relation to divine dreams and then in relation to mixed dreams. Divine dreams are not automatically easy to identify or interpret. For instance, William Perkins, the Puritan divine and author of religious works, deals with the problem of differentiating between dreams from God and dreams from the devil. He explains that divine dreams are generally concerned with serious matters, necessary to a man's salvation, while natural and satanic dreams are generally concerned with trivial concerns that are easy to comprehend. The substance of divine dreams is in agreement with God's will, whereas natural and diabolical dreams are either
repugnant to His will or outright attempts to subvert true religion and create a disobedient heart. Furthermore, divine dreams are presented plainly, so that they can be understood, or, if allegorical, they contain evident signs that will lead to a correct interpretation. Dreams from Satan, on the contrary, are often ambiguous and doubtful (p. 100ff.). Vermigli also makes it a requirement of the divine dream that the power to interpret be given either to the dreamer himself or to a prophet (p. 36). Finally, dreams from God are always true, their prophecies reliable, whereas dreams from the devil are unreliable.

These guides for interpreting divine dreams sound good in theory but are difficult to apply in practice. First, as noted before, the devil can disguise himself and appear under the guise of God Himself in dreams. The substance of a diabolical dream may therefore seem to the dreamer to be of God. The devil can prophesy accurately at times because of his superior knowledge and thereby delude the dreamer, so that waiting for the event to prove the prophecy of a dream true or false is not always an accurate test. Further, if acting upon the substance of a dream is important to avert some catastrophe, the dreamer cannot afford to wait till time proves the prophecy to be true or false. Finally, scripture demonstrates that not all dreams from God are understood by the dreamer. Pharaoh's dreams are
explicated by Joseph, Nebuchadnezzar's by Daniel. Is it then possible that an allegorical dream might be from God, yet the dreamer be unable to benefit from it because he has no Daniel or Joseph to interpret it? Or there is the possibility that the dreamer can have a true dream from God, yet be deceived by a false prophet, who interprets it wrongly. Thus the difficulties in interpreting divine dreams are immense. St. Augustine is often quoted by writers to this effect: "I would to God I could perceive the difference between visions, which are given to deceive me; and those which are given to salvation" (Vermigli, p. 37). If one can, however, discern a dream from God and its import, then writers are agreed that such dreams do indeed have significance and can be trusted. Such dreams truly instruct man and are prophetically accurate. If a dream is from the devil, one should have recourse to prayer and, of course, decide against whatever heretical thoughts or deeds the devil might be tempting one to have or do.

One gets a real sample of the difficulty of dream interpretation by browsing through Artemidorus. As the translator explains, general rules produce errors, for the same dream can signify different things to different dreamers. For example, Artemidorus says that books are "the life of him which dreams of them." To dream that one eats books is good for school masters, students, and all who profit by books, but for others this dream
signifies sudden death (p. 95). To dream of being wounded in the heart or stomach signifies love for the young, but griefs and heaviness for the old (p. 123). Since so many dreams simply signify good or bad to come in the future, they are prophetically useless. For surely, anyone can find some good or some evil that befalls him after his dream and then say the dream was prophetic. 33 Artemidorus says that the people who appear in dreams and are to be most believed are, in descending order, gods, kings, princes, fathers, mothers, sisters, the dead, children, old folks, and beasts. "No others are to be beleued, except those which liue well and solitarily" (p. 106). These are precisely the people whom the devil loves to disguise himself as, so that he can seduce the dreamer. The interpretations of some dreams are logical. For instance, "To play or see plaide tragedies, signifiyth travaile, fyghting, injury, and a thousand euills. But to play merry playes, is a merry issue of affaires" (p. 35). However, many of Artemidorus' interpretations are far-fetched; for instance, "To see people sacrificed, and kild, is good, for it is a signe, that our busines is accomplished, or nere the end" (p. 117).

The uncertainty of the prophetic reliability of dreams is responsible for the notion that a dream means the opposite of what it portrays. Scot refers to the currency in England of the proverb "Dreames proove contrarie"
(p. 163). Posthumous, in *Cymbeline*, refers to this notion when he wakes from his masque-like dream and comments:

> And so I am awake. Poor wretches that depend On greatness' favour dream as I have done, Wake and find nothing. But alas, I swerve: Many dream not to find, neither deserve, And yet, are steep'd in favours.  

*(V.iv.127-131)*

Thus the general consensus of opinion in the Renaissance on prophetic dreams is that they do occur but are generally unreliable and difficult to interpret, no matter how superstitiously they may be observed.

Natural dreams are only occasionally associated with prophecy. Although some writers dismiss their significance entirely, most writers acknowledge that dreams can reveal truths about the dreamer himself. Dreams can be useful to a diagnosing physician, for during sleep the mind can sometimes detect and reflect imaginatively certain conditions in the humors that have not yet become manifest enough for the waking mind to notice. Dreams can thus indicate the complexion and constitution of the dreamer.34 Dreams determined by thoughts and passions can reveal the character of the dreamer. David Person explains that by dreams resulting from the affections "we may presage, and judge of the affections, and passions of the mind, and so consequently of the vices, consisting in their extreames" (p. 252). Similarly, Thomas Cooper states: "And so also by these Dreames may we conjecture of
the sinnes of the heart: because what we conceiue or practise in the day,
will be corruptly dreamed of in the night, to make vs more inexcusable. 35
Thomas Adams suggests that if a person desires to make any use of dreams he
should examine his dreams to discover his strongest inclinations, "... and so
by thy thoughts in the night, thou shalt learne to know thy selfe in the day....
Thus God may be said to teach a man by his dreames still: ... not what
shall be, but what he is. Not future events, but present conditions may bee
thus learned." 36

IV. CONCLUSION

Renaissance ideas about sleep and dreams are diverse. Sleep is viewed both
as a state closely related to physiological processes and as a state that allows
for a temporary liberation of the soul. The direct cause of dreams is the
imagination, which has intimate relationships with both the higher and lower
faculties of man and is therefore a faculty capable both of deluding man's
reason and of making higher truths apprehensible. The theoretical versatility
of the imagination parallels and in large part explains the versatility of
Renaissance dream theory. When sleep is viewed as a state in which the
reason, for all practical purposes, is asleep, and the imagination is left to
its own devices and to the influences of the humors, the passions, or the
devil, then dreams result which are manifestations either of nonsense, of
the predominant humors, passions, or preoccupations of the dreamer, or of
devilish delusions. When sleep is viewed as a time of soul-awakening,
during which the soul or the higher faculties of man are liberated from
bodily concerns, then dreams may result that are mirrors of heavenly things.
Basically, then, Renaissance dream theory explains natural dreams by natural
causes and supernatural dreams by supernatural causes, but in many instances
this is an oversimplification: on the one hand, the supernatural may work
indirectly through natural causes; on the other hand, natural conditions,
particularly the disease of melancholy, may be ultimately responsible for
supernatural influence.

The many-faceted nature and fascination of the dream experience
itself, as examined in this chapter, are the roots of its versatility as a
literary device. Because the dream as a literary device has been examined
by previous scholars, this study will restrict itself to mentioning four of the
most basic literary uses of dreams.37

First, the dream is a superb motivational device, largely because
of the supernatural and prophetic associations of dreams. As a medium for
communications of gods to men, dreams function in the Iliad, the Odyssey
and the Aeneid as part of the supernatural machinery that controls the worlds
of the poems. Dreams of supernatural direction, commonly occurring at a
crisis and functioning to provide a rationale for the action, are one of the commonest literary uses of dreams. Because of the notion that dreams may be allegorical and/or prophetic, a character may decide to act on a dream without clearly ascertaining its source to be supernatural. A wish-fulfillment dream may be used to motivate a character to attempt to make the contents of a dream come true, or an ominous dream may be used to motivate the dreamer to attempt to avert the possibly prophetic substance of the dream. In the latter case, the dreamer may, ironically, make possible the fulfillment of the prophecy by his very attempts to avert it. Manfred Weidhorn observes that dreams are so useful in motivating characters that they are frequently used to provide a rationale for any rationally inexplicable behavior (p. 59). Even fictitious dreams, related by characters as actual though in fact they have had no such dreams, can be used to control action. Shakespeare, for instance, uses a supernatural vision to effect the denouement of Pericles (V. i.241ff.); the ambiguous dream of Antigonus in The Winter's Tale to provide a rationale for Antigonus' decision to leave the child "upon the earth / Of its right father," an action absolutely essential to the plot development of the play (III.iii.15-46); and the fictitious dream Iago concocts in Othello (III.iii.413-429) to convince Othello further of Desdemona's guilt and thereby lead Othello to his determination to kill her.
Second, dreams may be used to provide the raison d'etre and substance of an entire poem. A multitude of dream prologues incorporate a dream or waking vision as a literary device signifying the poet’s communication with a supernatural dimension. Such a stance, obviously associated both with the idea of the soul’s heightened perception during sleep and with the concept of the inspired poet, argues the credibility and value of the poem. The utilization of the dream stance in vision works also functions as a rationale for poetic freedom. Lifted beyond the confines of the waking world, the poet is no longer bound to a slavish imitation of what the senses perceive or to the confines of logical, rational discourse. He need follow only the nature of a dream, which may deal with one subject or many, may be superficially coherent or incoherent, and may be allegorical or literal. In most vision works, the literalism or actual occurrence of the dreams is not an issue at all; the dream framework primarily provides an artistic perspective that functions as an excuse for artistic license and a signal that the subject matter is allegorical or that higher truths lurk behind the surface of the poem.  

Perhaps not as readily adapted to the drama as other typical literary uses of dreams, the profusion of visions works in the Middle Ages possibly contributed subtly to the Renaissance drama, in conjunction with the moralties and mysteries, by providing a perspective that enabled dramatists to work toward a more realistic verisimilitude without sacrificing entirely the
habit of figuring forth the universal, or "quasi-religious," by means of the secular and concrete. In this respect, John Lyly's use of a partial dream framework in The Woman in the Moone, which R. Warwick Bond dates as prior to A Midsummer Night's Dream, is significant. John Lyly presents the dream framework for The Woman in the Moone in the "Prologus":

Ovr Poet slumbring in the Muses laps,
Hath seene a Woman seated in the Moone,
A point beyond the auncient Theorique:
And as it was so he presents his dreame,
Here in the bounds of Fayre Utopia,
Where louely Nature being onely Queene,
Bestowes such workmanship on earthly mould
That Heauens themselves enuy her glorious worke.
. But all in vaine: for (malice being spent)
They yeeld themselves to follow Natures doom;
And Fayre Pandora sits in Cynthias orbe.
This, but the shadow of our Authors dreame,
Argues the substance to be neere at hand:
At whose appearance I most humbly craue,
That in your forehead she may read content.
If many faults escape in her discourse,
Remember all is but a Poets dreame,
The first he had in Phoebus holy bowre,
But not the last, vnsless the first displease.

Then the play begins with its cast largely composed of personifications and mythological figures: Nature, her handmaids, Concord and Discord, the Seven Planets, Pandora (the Woman), the Utopian Shepherds, and so forth. Clearly the play is allegorical. The excuse that the play is but a dream, like the excuse in the Prologue of Endimion that the play is but "a tale of the man in the Moone," is not only a plea directed to the audience for
tolerance and sympathy, but a justification for poetic freedom and simultaneously, in Bond's words, "the excuse which is its own accuser" (III, 85). The plays clearly intend more than they pretend to. 42

Third, without actually initiating or changing the course of plot development, a dream can still function as an architectonic device, foreshadowing later action. Used in this way a dream may overshadow an entire play or simply signal a change in mood. It heightens suspense (will the dream come true and how?) and generates a powerful numinous atmosphere, suggesting the presence of superhuman forces operating behind the surface of action to bring about an inevitable end, whether it be ominous or auspicious. Bain Tate Stewart argues that prophetic dreams, foreshadowing action but improperly understood by the characters themselves, constitute one of the most dramatically significant uses of dreams in Renaissance drama. The minimization of the importance of prophetic dreams is "one of the more obvious conventional features of Elizabethan dream usage" (Stewart, p. 173ff.). Usually dreams are dismissed as products of fancy, sometimes as products of indigestion or the thoughts of the dreamer; the proof of their validity resides in the outcome of the action. Romeo's ominous dream dismissed by Mercutio (I.iv.49ff.), discussed previously, or Calpurnia's ominous dream dismissed and ingeniously misinterpreted by Decius in *Julius Caesar* (II.ii.75ff.) are instances of
Shakespeare's use of ominous prophetic dreams; the oracle that overshadows the last half of *The Winter's Tale* (III.1.134-137) and the dream of Posthumous in *Cymbeline* (V.iv.30ff.) are imperfectly understood by the characters themselves, but provide an auspicious inevitability to the plot. The mood created by such dreams Stewart characterizes by citing Hamlet: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will" (pp. 183-184).

Fourth, because of Renaissance assumptions about diverse natural causes of dreams, dreams can be used for the purposes of characterization, revealing the predominant thoughts, passions, or humor of a character. According to Stewart, this use of dreams is common among Renaissance dramatists (pp. 157-165). Shylock's dreams of moneybags in *The Merchant of Venice*, Eleanor's ambitious wish-fulfilling dream in *2 Henry VI*, Hamlet's melancholic dreams, and Lady Macbeth's fearful dreams that disclose her secret sin: all are examples, discussed previously in relation to natural dreams, of the use of dreams for the purposes of characterization.

Shakespeare's familiarity with and dramatic use of various Renaissance concepts of sleep and dreams has been established by previous scholars and illustrated by examples in this chapter. Nevertheless, his actual beliefs about dreams cannot be ascertained by examining his literary use of dreams. This assertion is aptly illustrated by Cicero, who in theory derided the supernatural and prophetic capacities of dreams and yet used them to good literary
effect in his *Somnium Scipionis*. Clearly Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* utilizes the diversity both of Renaissance dream theory and of the literary use of dreams. First, through dreamlike experiences the supernatural creatures in the play control the plot. Second, certainly one of the dramatic functions of Puck's concluding disclaimer is that of an excuse for poetic freedom. Third, though the only prophetic dream in the play (Hermia's) plays a small part, functioning to signal a change of mood and fortune, Puck's disclaimer is similar to the conventional minimization of dreams that actually have meaning. Finally, the dreamlike experiences of the characters also serve purposes of character revelation.

The diversity of Renaissance dream theory helps to explain the diverse effects Shakespeare is able to get by his use of dreams in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which will be explored in the remainder of this paper. It explains in large part the various critical reactions to the meaning of the play explored in Chapter 1. According to Renaissance dream theory, a dream may be a meaningless flight of the imagination, a revelation of character, or a mirror of higher truths. So Barber views the play primarily as an imaginative exercise, Calderwood views the play as an opportunity for self-knowledge, and Olson views it as an allegorical representation of certain contemporary notions about wedlock. Each of these approaches is legitimate in the context of
Renaissance dream theory, but each is limited in the sense that it is reductive, for Shakespeare in _A Midsummer Night's Dream_ draws on numerous ideas about dreams.

Dreams have an implicit kinship with poetry in the Renaissance because they are both viewed as largely products of the imagination. Various concepts about dreams discussed in this chapter bear similarities to various ideas about comedy and poetry in general that are discussed by Renaissance literary critics. One is that poetry is composed of lies and therefore morally useless if not downright immoral or, indeed, a product of the devil. 43 Similarly, some writers claim that dreams mean nothing and that to interpret them is folly, while others observe that they can be manifestations of the wild beast in man or devices of the devil meant to mislead the dreamer. These notions become relevant to the potential meaning and humor of _A Midsummer Night's Dream_ when one considers the questionable nature of the spiritual realm that comprises the substance of the poet's "dream" in the play; Theseus' suggestion that poetic visions arise from the "fine frenzy" of a poet's "rolling" eye; and the fact that the play emphasizes its own illusory nature and ridicules the literalistic approach to drama that equates imaginative representation with reality. Defenders of poetry counter the accusation that poetry is immoral and lies with various arguments, one being that comedy is a fictitious
but verisimilar imitation of life that exposes common follies and thereby inspires men to shun them. Similarly, most Renaissance discussions of dreams recognize that dreams can make manifest the passions, thoughts, and humors of the dreamer, thereby providing the dreamer with an opportunity for self-knowledge. This similarity between the function of comedy and dreams becomes relevant when one considers how the dream-induced delusions of the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* expose the irrational aspects of love. A second argument against the detractors of poetry is eloquently expressed by Sidney: poetry is an imitation and never pretends to be the truth; therefore, it does not lie. Further, of all the arts poetry alone is not restricted to the works of nature "for his principall obiect." "Onely the Poet, disdayning to be tied to any such subjection, lifted vp with the vigor of his owne invention, dooth growe in effect another nature, in making things either better then Nature bringeth forth, or, quite a newe, formes such as neuer were in Nature... ."  

Nature's world is "brasen," but the poet's is "golden." Similarly, dreams are often viewed in the Renaissance as representations beyond the scope of nature, mirrors of heavenly things that the soul can perceive when liberated from the body in sleep. In the context of the capacity of both dreams and poetry to mirror the supernatural as well as the natural, the play's emphasis on the illusory nature of drama may be intended to prompt the audience to
see higher metaphysical realities that the drama shadows forth. Perhaps the
moon-permeated *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, like Tryon's description of
moon-induced dreams (pp. 55-57), is both true and false: both illusion and
reality.

The following discussion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will demon-
strate that all of these commonplace notions about art and dreams have a
place in the dramatic, comic experience of the play and that Shakespeare's
use of dreams is largely responsible for their happy synthesis in the play.
The following chapter will focus on the dreaming experience as a viable
metaphor for a dramatic experience of the play and then as a comic device.
The final chapter will explore the meaning of the play from the point of view
of the dream perspective. Criticism has consistently exhibited a double impulse
toward this play: on the one hand, a tendency to consider it as a light and
airy plaything; on the other, a tendency to suspect that the play means more
than it pretends. This study of the play suggests that both tendencies are
basically correct and that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a dramatic tour de
force. Utilizing materials basically disparate, resistant to a sense of veri-
similitude, and, in some cases, potentially immoral, Shakespeare transforms
them into a comedy that is simultaneously a fictious, but verisimilar imitation
of life that has didactic value and a feigning of "golden world" beyond the
scope of nature that both teaches and delights. Part of the exuberance of the play resides in the way it seems to court the impossible, the nonsensical, and the morally dangerous, and yet triumphs with a meaning.
CHAPTER III

THE DRAMATIC APPROPRIATENESS AND RISIBILITY

OF THE DREAM PERSPECTIVE IN A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Shakespeare's use of the dream perspective in A Midsummer Night's
Dream is highly appropriate and effective for his dramatic, comic exploration
of the fairy world and love on a Midsummer Eve. First, dreams, fairies,
lovers, and Midsummer have interrelations in Renaissance thought. Secondly,
the dramatic experience of the play has interesting affinities with the dream-
ing experience that clarify aspects of the dramatic process. Thirdly,
Shakespeare's dramatic use of sleep and dreams is largely responsible for
the laughter and delight of the play.

1. DREAMS, FAIRIES, LOVERS, AND MIDSUMMER

As has been established in the last chapter, dreams are considered
one of the primary means by which mortals gain access to the supernatural,
according to both Renaissance dream theory and literary practice. As had
many authors before him, Shakespeare chooses to use the dream perspective
as an appropriate means of utilizing the supernatural, in this case the country
fairies of England—"an almost untouched piece of poetic machinery" (Briggs, Anatomy, p. 6). However, not only is the dream dimension in A Midsummer Night's Dream generally appropriate because of its traditional associations with the supernatural, but it is specifically appropriate for a portrayal of fairies on a Midsummer Eve.

First, dreams are often connected with fairies in folk belief. In Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare has Mercutio attribute, flippantly, a large variety of dreams to Queen Mab. Perhaps more importantly, many of the experiences of mortals with fairies, as related and passed on, are partially framed with sleep. Either the mortal falls asleep and finds himself in fairy-land, or he enters the fairy world and then finds himself awake someplace. Many actual accounts of these experiences thus have the same ambiguity that Shakespeare uses dramatically—did it happen or not? Two accounts taken from K. M. Briggs' The Fairies in English Tradition and Literature will suffice to illustrate this point. Briggs cites as typical the Legend of Innis Sark, about a young man who falls asleep under a haystack on November Eve and awakens in the same place the next morning. In the course of the night, however, he has entered fairyland, worked for the fairies, and been invited to sup with them. He awakens tired from his labors. In the Cornish tale of The Fairy Dwelling on Selena Moor, a Mr. Noy gets lost one night on his way
home, stumbles into fairyland where he has various experiences, and then is
found sound asleep in a ruined barn at the end of a three days' search for
him. These accounts are not discredited as illegitimate because sleep is
involved. Nor is sleep by any means associated consistently with fairy
encounters. These two instances are intended to illustrate merely that it
is not unusual for sleep and dreams to be associated with the entrance to
or exit from the fairy world or for there to be a certain ambiguity or hazi-
ness about these encounters between fairies and mortals.

Secondly, both dreams and fairies have a significant place in folk
beliefs about Midsummer. Although fairies are not considered to be generally
subject to human time schemes, their being "an almost world-wide belief that
time in Fairyland passes much more quickly than among mortals," they are
"bound to the seasons" (Briggs, Fairies, pp. 104-105). Midsummer and May
Day are times often cited as those when fairies can be seen or when men
get into fairyland. Shakespeare's inclusion of May Day observances in his
Midsummer Night's Dream, a situation that has puzzled many critics, estab-
lishes a double appropriateness for a dramatic involvement with the fairy
realms. Further explaining the times when fairies are most likely to be
seen, Briggs states: "The time of the full moon and the days before and
after it are important to the fairies. Certain times of day belong to them--
twilight, midnight, and full moon are times when fairies are to be seen" (Fairies, p. 106). In addition to beliefs about the activities of fairies on Midsummer Eve, there are also traditions affirming that Midsummer Eve and a full moon are dream-inducers. Several traditions about Midsummer establish it as "a time when maids might find out who their true love would be by dreams or divinations" (Barber, p. 123). Shakespeare effectively fuses these beliefs about Midsummer. The lovers do divine their true loves by means of dreams or dreamlike experiences generated by the fairies.

Additionally, the world of dreams and the fairy realms have certain basic similarities, most obviously a freedom from natural laws. Not only has the merging of May Day and Midsummer in A Midsummer Night's Dream been a critical stumbling block, but the duration of time in the play. Even though the observance of the rites of May is not restricted historically to May 1, their appearance as late as June 23 is stretching it a bit. Further, Hippolyta specifies in her first speech that four nights are to pass before the wedding solemnities occur (1.1.8-11). What happens to the four nights? H. H. Furness summarizes critical responses to the ambiguity in the play's setting and duration in time and contributes himself an elaborate scheme to account for all the days and nights that are supposed to pass in the course of the play. More to the point is the suggestion that the play uses fairy
time. Both May Day and Midsummer are significant in fairy time, and the mortal time perspective is simply not observed in the play. Just as in folk belief fairy time passes more quickly than human time, so in the play four nights has the effect of dissolving into what seems a day and a half. Freedom from human time schemes is also a frequently observed characteristic of dreams. Timothy Bright suggests that in dreams all time seems to be present:

Neither are these sensible actions of the mind to be accompted false: because it seeth in dreams things past as present: for so it doth also future things sometimes: which rather may argue, that both past, and to come are both present vnto the mind, of such things as fall into the capacitie of her consideration. (p. 119)

Of course, the probable reason Shakespeare includes both May Day and Midsummer festivities is that he wants the benefits of both, the effect of transition from one to the other. In the Renaissance May is considered a very unpropitious month for marriages, whereas June is considered an excellent month for matrimony, especially if the day chosen is that of a new or full moon (R. Chambers, p. 719; Brand, pp. 147-148). By including both festivities, Shakespeare combines the effects of the unluckiness of May for honorable mating, the setting in the woods (since young people go to the woods for May Day observances), Midsummer madness, and the propitiousness of June and a new moon for matrimony. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's
choice of the dream experience as a perspective for an imaginative experience of his fairy materials has an appropriateness that goes beyond the traditional association of dreams with the supernatural in literature.

II. THE DRAMATIC APPROPRIATENESS OF THE DREAM PERSPECTIVE

The dream perspective is not only appropriate for a representation of fairies on a Midsummer Eve, but for the substance of the entire play as a dramatic experience. Even though the dream perspective is not emphasized until the latter part of the play, a retroactive analysis of the dramatic process of the play in relation to the dream perspective is appropriate not only because of inherent similarities between dreaming and dramatic experiences, but because of particular dreamlike qualities of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Shakespeare's play, like so many works that had utilized the dream framework before it, is not bound by naturalistic laws. Yet Shakespeare does not use the dream framework initially to win an assent to his dramatic illusion; this aim he accomplishes by his art. As does a dream, the play bewitches an audience into its own world. Its fusion of elements drawn from distinct times and places creates an atmosphere and provides the audience with an experience similar to the dreaming experience as it is described by Thomas Tryon in A Treatise of Dreams and Visions: "For the Soul in Dreams, when
the Body and sensual Powers of the outward elemental grossness are asleep, or dead . . . is as it were already in Eternity. . . . there is neither time nor place, night nor day, but all is essentially present" (pp. 220-221). Dr. Timothy Bright, in his description of the dreaming experience, captures the two qualities of that experience that make it an appropriate metaphor for an imaginative acceptance of the strange world of A Midsummer Night's Dream: 1) the intensity and vividness of the dreaming experience; and 2) the supernatural aspect of that experience, in the full sense of being "over" or "above" nature. Dr. Bright explains:

In sleep I say, our dreams in some sort make evident vnto vs, how the soule without instrument, lacketh not the practise of the senses: in which dreames we see with our soules, heare, talke, conferre, and practise what action soever, as evidently with affection of ioye or sorowe, as if the very object of these senses were represented vnto vs brode awake at noone day. If you will say it is nothing else, but the images of outward thinges, which hang in the common sense presented to the fantasie, or offered of the memorie, which inward senses are always watchfull when the outward take rest: how then commeth it to passe, that we can not in like sort fancie being awake? . . . every dreame seemeth to be a kind of extasie, or traunce, & separation of the soule from this bodily societie, in which it hath bene in olde times instructed of God by revelation, and mysteries of secrets revealede vnto it, as then more fit to apprehend such diviine oracles. . . ."

(p. 118)
A play, of course, is not a dream, and hopefully an audience does not sleep; yet a dramatist strives to induce an imaginative acceptance of the vision he presents, so that the audience can respond to it as if it were actual. In short, the dramatist cultivates a willing suspension of disbelief that will enable us to "see with our soules, heare, talke, conferre, and practise what action soever, as evidently with affection of ioye or sorowe, as if the very obiecte of these senses were represented vnto vs brede. awake at noone day." Unlike dreaming experiences, in which illusions are normally mistaken for realities in fact, we always know that dramatic illusions are experienced as illusions. As Samuel Johnson observes: "It is false, that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramatic fable in its materiality was ever credible, or, for a single moment, was ever credited." In responding to dramatic representations, auditors "fancie being awake," to use Dr. Bright's words. Johnson goes on to observe that audiences "credit" drama "whenever it moves, as a just picture of a real original; as representing to the auditor what he would himself feel if he were to do or suffer what is there feigned to be suffered or to be done." What involves our emotions is not that we suppose the evils or joys before us to be real, but that they are evils or joys that we ourselves may be exposed to. The "fallacy" is not that we suppose the players to be happy or unhappy in actuality, but that we suppose
ourselves happy or unhappy for a moment (p. 39). While it is true, however, that an audience never mistakes a representation for reality, it is also hope-
fully true that auditors relinquish that critical part of the mind that distinguishes between reality and illusion, unless the dramatist does something to awaken it—something that arouses an awareness that the dramatic vision is not "a just picture of a real original." Just as Thomas Hobbes observes that dreams are so vivid that it is very difficult "to distinguish exactly between Sense and Dreaming" (p. 25), so A Midsummer Night's Dream tends to dissolve the boundaries between reality and illusion both in the willing suspension of dis-
belief that Shakespeare carefully cultivates in his audience and in the experi-
ience of the characters themselves as presented dramatically.

Shakespeare in A Midsummer Night's Dream artistically initiates his audience into a world as strange as that of man's dreams, but he does so without allowing his auditors to be overcome by that strangeness. As Madeleine Doran observes, questions of verisimilitude and anachronism do not normally occur when the play is watched, in spite of the fact that it is full of anomalus situations, such as a Fairy King who is "suspected of a flirtation" with the Amazonian Queen Hippolyta and an Anglo-Saxon hobgoblin who "blesses the bride-bed of the Athenian Theseus and follows the dragon-team of Hecate, Medea's goddess of dreadful spells." These questions do not
occur, Doran explains, because "Shakespeare has effected a genuine meta-
morphosis of the most diverse materials of myth, legend, and folklore--ancient, 
medieval, and contemporary--into a perfect and timeless work of art" (p. 113).

The artistic techniques that Shakespeare employs to gain an imaginative 
acceptance of his fantastic world are numerous. The following paragraphs will 
attempt to suggest a few of the most basic techniques: 1) a continual blend-
ing of the past and the present, the familiar and the unfamiliar; 2) a skillful 
movement from the less fantastic to the more fantastic; 3) a general classical 
distancing; and 4) consistent preparation of the audience for the transformations 
and transitions in the play that might otherwise be too startling for imaginative 
acceptance.

Before precipitating an audience into fairyland, Shakespeare introduces 
it to Theseus and Hippolyta. In the Renaissance Theseus is a well-known 
legendary figure; to a Renaissance audience he would definitely have "the 
appearance of reality" (Doran, "A MND," p. 128). He is simultaneously 
verisimilar because he is portrayed in the familiar guise of a sage Renaissance 
prince. From this point the audience is eased into a world of romance 
materials--a father's opposition to his daughter's choice, a love triangle, 
and a planned elopement. This transition to romance and Theseus' role as 
arbiter in amatory matters is not unsettling because his imminent marriage
has the effect of suiting him for domestic affairs. In the second scene a group of apparent misfits appear, characters most probably dressed in "the jerkins, breeches, and netherstocks of Elizabethan craftsmen" (Doran, "A MND," p. 130). Immediately, however, they explain that they are gathering to organize an interlude for the wedding festivities. The audience has been prepared for this scene by Theseus' order to Philostrate, near the beginning of the play: "Stir up the Athenian youth to merriment; / Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth" (1.1.13-14). Here are the youth, being quite familiar and Elizabethan, yet preparing a play quite appropriate for the court of Theseus of Athens, though hardly appropriate for a wedding without considerable revision.

The first scene of Act II is set in a wood near Athens, a transition auditors have been prepared for by the last dozen lines of the preceding scene, in which Quince and Bottom discuss their plan to meet in the palace wood for rehearsal. Entrance into a more ethereal world is signaled by Puck: "How now, spirit! whither wander you?" (1.1.1). While the entrance of fairies elicits wonder and surprise, it is not a jarring shock. In spite of the fact that Elizabethans would have had far less trouble accepting the fairies imaginatively than a modern audience, both because of a more general acceptance of the possible existence of fairies and because of a dramatic
exposure to a host of allegorical figures and gods and goddesses that filled the Elizabethan stage and seem even less real than fairies, Shakespeare is careful even here not to disorient his audience. Significantly, he initiates the audience into his fairy world by way of the most familiar of household spirits: Robin Goodfellow. Minor White Latham comments: "Of all the spirits who were believed to haunt England, there was not one whom he could have better chosen to give a sense of reality to his fairy plot, or to furnish, to an audience, the immediate assurance of boisterous gayety and of harmless fun" (p. 221).

The fairy whom Puck meets quickly identifies himself as a servant of the Fairy Queen, and Puck suggests his own relationship with Oberon and outlines the quarrel between the King and Queen, thus preparing the audience for their entrance. The next twenty-five lines outline the various activities of Puck and get observers accustomed to an atmosphere of fairy magic and fairy pranks. Though the introduction of Puck into a play about Theseus may have seemed contrary to folk belief, Dr. Latham maintains that Shakespeare's choice is not only a stroke of genius, in relation to the audience's familiarity with Robin Goodfellow, but a demonstration of his knowledge of folklore, since "nothing definite seems to have been known in the sixteenth century concerning his [Robin's] race or his original name" (p. 223). Considering the immortality, or at least the extraordinarily long
life, of fairies and their seeming ubiquity, emphasized early in the scene ("I do wander every where, / Swifter than the moon's sphere"), why should not Puck and the fairies be wherever they please? The woods described are, as is so often noted by critics, cowslip-filled Warwickshire woods, another detail to put the audience on familiar ground. Finally, an audience is subtly prepared for an imaginative acceptance of a dramatic representation of fairies by the preceding scene of the rude mechanicals. If Nick Bottom, the weaver, is to be Pyramus, and Francis Flute, the bellows-mender, is to be Thisby, then what is to prevent an acceptance of the imaginative hypothesis that players are fairies? Shakespeare has well prepared us to enter a world of dramatic make-believe.

After the above initiation into the fairy world, Oberon and Titania are introduced. The metamorphic blending of the mortal and the immortal, the familiar and the remote, accomplished simultaneously while tying them into the plot, is a real tour de force in the art of sustaining dramatic illusion. Before the audience are a husband and a wife quarreling like any two mortals—familiar enough substance for any audience to accept. Yet these are immortals, as the substance of the quarrel subtly re-establishes. Titania casts aspersions upon Oberon's assuming the shape of Corin to court Phillida and of coming from India now to bless the marriage of "the bouncing Amazon, / Your buskin'd
mistress and your warrior love" (1.ii.70-71). The association of the Queen of Fairies with the goddess Diana is not strange in Elizabethan fairy lore, for the fairies are sometimes linked with the old gods of mythology in regard to their origin and nature (Latham, p. 49ff.). Familiar fairy lore is thus blended with the pastoral and mythological in such a way that the result is a substance at once familiar and yet entirely suitable for a play that is classically distanced.

A continuation of this type of analysis would only illustrate further Shakespeare's deftness in securing dramatic illusion, but the above is enough to demonstrate that Shakespeare has not built this play with the purpose of inducing shocks and skepticism in his audience. The classical distancing, by keeping the play in a time when gods and mortals mingled freely, consistently helps to maintain a sense of the verisimilar. After he has accomplished the introduction of Oberon and Titania, Shakespeare has secured from his auditors a willing consent to accept imaginatively his magic world. They are carefully prepared for the intermingling of the fairies, the lovers, and the players in the woods. Shakespeare continues to let his audience in on the fairy plans, so that it is not overly surprised by the abrupt transformations of Demetrius and Lysander or at Titania's ability to love a creature with the head of an ass. The only transformation not fully forecasted is Bottom's, but by this time the audience has had a good dose of fairy magic,
and even in this instance Puck discloses that Bottom will undergo some sort of transformation (III.i.88-90).

An awareness of the bizarre nature of what the play has bewitched an audience into accepting imaginatively is not encouraged until after the fact. Significantly, Shakespeare builds the dream perspective gradually as he carefully releases auditors from the magic world of the play. As Bottom and the lovers awaken and speak of their experiences as dreams, then as Theseus refers to the lovers' stories of the past night as "fairy toys," and finally as Puck tells the audience directly to think of its dramatic experience as a dream, observers are gradually moved from the woods to the court of Theseus, to the playhouse, and to reality. Withdrawal from fairyland is accomplished just as carefully as the earlier initiation into it. It seems that Shakespeare purposely, though gradually, awakens the critical senses to get the audience to think about illusion as illusion and to consider just how valid his dramatic illusion is.

The final dream perspective may serve various functions. On the one hand, it functions as a bone for scoffers, or a last justification for poetic license at a time when the audience must get off the magic carpet and go home to reality. As Furness describes the effect of the dream perspective, "But if, in spite of all our best endeavours, our feeble wits refuse to follow
him, SHAKESPEARE smiles gently and benignantly as the curtain falls, and begging us to take no offence at shadows, bids us think it all as no more yielding than a dream" (p. xxiv).

On the other hand, the final dream perspective has a baffling effect. A dramatic experience of the play roughly parallels the lovers' and Bottom's encounters with the fairies. Just as they have had dramatically actual experiences induced by the fairies, so auditors have given imaginative assent to Shakespeare's vision. Just as Oberon arranges matters so that the characters awaken thinking of their experiences as dreams, so Shakespeare arranges matters so that his audience is gradually awakened in a way it has not been awake during the play and is instructed to think of its dramatic experience as a dream. Just as the lovers are baffled and disoriented, wondering whether they are awake or dreaming, so we are baffled and disoriented. How to take the play, what to make of the fairies, what it all means, and what Shakespeare is up to are considerations that normally occur to those who have experienced A Midsummer Night's Dream. Thomas Hobbes in his Leviathan notes that dreams are so clear and vivid "that it is a hard matter . . . to distinguish exactly between Sense and Dreaming. . . . And because waking I often observe the absurdity of Dreams, but never dream of the absurdities of my waking thoughts; I am well satisfied, that being awake, I know I
dreame not, though when I dreame, I think my selfe awake" (p. 25). So Shakespeare informs us by way of the dream perspective that we have been asleep, even though we may have thought we were awake, and that we are now to wake up in truth. This partial dissolution of the boundaries between reality and illusion is, in Shakespearean comedy, a phenomenon that is usually experienced by the characters as well as one that is hopefully induced in an audience. Certainly in the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the dreaming experience is an appropriate parallel or metaphor for both an experience of the strange world of the play and a puzzled emergence from it. That Shakespeare purposely cultivates a sense of bewilderment in his audience in order to provoke them to look at the play in certain ways is a point that will be elaborated later in this study.

III. THE RISIBILITY OF SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMATIC USE OF SLEEP AND DREAMS

It is impossible to discuss comic technique without indirectly dealing with thematic considerations, since the analysis of the laughable or pleasurable inevitably leads to an examination of subject matter and the artist's manner of dealing with it. For the purposes of analysis, however, some risible aspects of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be emphasized in order to
illustrate Shakespeare's skill in handling sleep and dreams to generate laughter and to fulfill the Renaissance double standard for art: profit and delight. The play is, after all, a comedy, and its success is largely due to the simple fact that it is enjoyable whether one goes on to "expound" the dream or not. It seems only fair to attempt to understand at least in some small measure how Shakespeare produces, moment by moment, such a large measure of laughter and joy in his audience. Any thematic considerations that occur in the course of this examination of comic technique will hopefully be assimilated hereafter when the play's meaning is discussed.

This demonstration of Shakespeare's use of sleep and dreams to achieve comic results will proceed first by suggesting two basic comic principles on which the play operates and then by illustrating how sleep and dreams are utilized to fulfill these principles. References to the theories of various authors on the laughable or the ridiculous serve to identify and explain in part the mystery of laughter and joy and are not meant to suggest that Shakespeare learned his art by studying such theories. 9

Sidney in his An Apologie for Poetrie (1583) complains that "our Comedians thinke there is no delight without laughter," whereas he believes that comedy should be primarily full of delight, though the two may go well together (p. 140). Whether one opposes laughter and delight or, like Antonio
Riccoboni, explains that "not everything that causes laughter is ridiculous" or, like Minturno, maintains that the function of the comic poet is both teaching and pleasing, most Renaissance writers on the comic recognize a double impulse in it. 10 Sidney goes on to explain the contrary natures of laughter and delight: "for delight we scarcely doe but in things that have a conueiencie to our selues or to the generall nature: laughter almost ever commeth of things most disproportioned to our selues and nature. Delight hath a joy in it, either permanent or present. Laughter hath onely a scornful tickling. For example, we are rauished with delight to see a faire woman, and yet are far from being moved to laughter. We laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly we cannot delight. We delight in good chaues, we laugh at mischaunces . . ." (p. 140). One impulse implies judgment on the part of the audience, in the sense of convicting as wrong or inadequate from a sense of superiority to what passes before its eyes. This impulse is variously described as the scornful, mocking, or ridiculous impulse to "strip the ragged follies of the time, / Naked, as at their birth--" or as what Plato described as an envious mental feeling, that curious pleasure derived from other's misfortunes. 11 However one describes it, this impulse separates or distances the audience from the players that are thus exposed and is rooted in differentiation rather than identification. The second impulse is rooted in identification.
Northrop Frye calls it sympathy (Anatomy, p. 177). At its most basic, one might simply call it good will, or the desire that everything will come out all right in the end and that no real harm has been done. It is nonjudicial in a fault-finding sense and is that mirth that increases amity, "recreates our spirits, and voideth pensiveness" that Nicholas Udall praises in his Prologue to Ralph Roister Doister (c.1553).12

This double impulse of comedy to generate laughter and delight, or ridicule and sympathy, is remarkably fused in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. The comic, or festive, spirit of the play is expressed primarily by Oberon and Puck, who both stage and comment on the substance of the play. By the explicit statements and actions of these two characters and by the implications of the content of the play, it is possible to reconstruct a comic theory informing this play. Generally, Puck expresses and provokes the ridiculous, while Oberon expresses the spirit of sympathy and directs the course of events toward a happy ending. It is Puck who maintains an emotional aloofness from the mortals and delights in their misfortunes.

Shall we their fond pageant see?  
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

Then will two at once woo one;  
That must needs be sport alone;  
And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously.

(III.ii.114-115; 118-121)
It is Puck who observes the "false sport" and "foul derision" (III.iii.194,197) that Helena suffers and rejoices that he mistook Lysander for Demetrius in applying the pansy juice, "As this their jangling I esteem a sport" (III.ii.352-353). On the other hand, it is Oberon who expresses compassion for Helena and devises the plan to obtain her lover for her (II.i.259-267), who oversees Puck and directs the correction of errors so that "all things shall be peace" (III.ii.377), and who expresses pity for Titania in her dotage (IV.i.50). However, the difference between the festive spirits of Oberon and Puck is actually one of degree in emphasis rather than kind. Thus although Oberon primarily embodies a sympathetic impulse, he also wants to torment Titania for doting on the changeling (II.i.171-172), and he allows Puck his full measure of laughter when he tells Puck to overcast the night, to lead the rivals astray, to prevent them from harming one another, but in short, to enjoy their deception before righting the situation (III.ii.354ff.). And although Puck primarily embodies the impulse to ridicule, he obeys Oberon, operating only within the bounds of his authority, and is the means of righting the lover's situation and expressing the sympathetic desire that all will be well. Observing the anguish of Helena before she falls asleep, he comments, "Cupid is a knavish lad, / Thus to make poor females mad" (III.ii.440-441). Remedying the distressful situation by applying the juice to Lysander's eyes, Puck sings:
On the ground
Sleep sound:
I'll apply
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy.
(Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eyes.
When thou wak'est,
Thou takest
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye:
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown:
Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.
(III.ii.448-463)

Shakespeare's dramatic use of sleep and dreams accounts for a good deal of the laughter and delight inherent in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The transformations of Lysander, Titania, Demetrius, and Bottom, which take up the better part of this comedy, induce many situations traditionally considered to be sources of the ridiculous. Three of these transformations are accomplished by influencing characters in their sleep. In Renaissance psychology the eye is a primary, if not the primary, gatherer of source materials for the imagination. By sprinkling the flower's juice on the eyes during sleep, Puck effects a change in the sleeper's judgment. A good conjecture as to the mechanics of these transformations is that the judgment is powerfully influenced by an imaginative dream experience. Reginald Scot
discusses various "receipts and ointments" supposed to have powerful effects on
the imagination so vivid that witches, for instance, think themselves to have
been transported; "they neither consider nor remember that they were in a
dream" (pp. 164-166). The ability of the imagination to influence the passions
and judgment and vice versa is a commonplace of Renaissance psychology. Also,
the use of the dream experience to account for an inexplicable change in
behavior is, as illustrated in Chapter II, a literary commonplace. Shakespeare
thus draws on one of the traditional literary uses of dreams: by means of
supernaturally induced dreams, he motivates characters and controls plot
development to achieve comic effects.

These abrupt transformations, brought about by means of sleep and
dreams, produce situations intrinsically ridiculous. They are the primary
source of deception in the play. They are a source of the unexpected
event——"that after which some remarkable mutation follows,"—-the debasing
of personages, and the incongruous. Lysander vows to Hermia that he
will "end life when I end loyalty" (II.ii.63), sleeps, and then wakes a few
moments later to vow to Helena: "And run through fire I will for thy sweet
sake" (II.ii.103). Titania awakens to observe the ass-headed Bottom and
asks, "What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?" (III.i.123). The
pretense of having greater powers than one actually possesses is exposed when
Lysander vows undying love for Hermia and then imputes his sudden devotion for Helena to "reason" (II.i.116-117) and when Titania's vow to "purge" Bottom's "mortal grossness so / That thou shalt like an airy spirit go" (III.i.163-164) results only in Bottom's urgent desire to be scratched (IV.i.7). Because of the dream-induced deceptions, the love triangle is reversed and the "jangling" which Puck enjoys so much results. In short, because of the dream-induced transformations, all the delusions and misunderstandings that sustain a sense of the ridiculous in this play are generated and a host of follies exposed, primarily centered on the theme that "reason and love keep little company together now-a-days" (III.i.146-147).

Marvin Herrick, discussing Renaissance ideas about the risible, states:

"Cicero himself remarked the effectiveness, for laughter, of the unexpected turn, of which there are numerous examples. Madius found that admiration in the ridiculous may arise by means of an unexpected turn or by means of a turpitude that seems new" (pp. 45-46). Dreams are not only a source of delusions in A Midsummer Night's Dream, but a device for character revelation. The irrationality of the lovers is made evident in Act I, but their dream-induced transformations, which they later refer to as "dreams," also function as the "unexpected turn" that makes their turpitude appear new. The lovers' "dreams" are simply a full manifestation of follies that already
exist in Act I. It will be recalled that in dreams with natural causes Renaissance writers generally consider reason to be at a low ebb and imagination to be at a full steam and subject to the influence of man's "lawless wild-beast nature." Because of the lovers' irrationality, the dreaming experience is an appropriate metaphor for their nighttime experiences in the woods.

Each of the lovers is at variance with reason on some count before he or she ever enters the woods. Lysander and Hermia are at variance with reason when they go against Egeus' parental authority and arrange a clandestine meeting. Demetrius' irrationality is manifest in his broken troth to Helena and his obstinate pursuance of unrequited love. Lysander says that Helena "Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry / Upon this spotted and inconstant man" (1.1.109-110). Love, which should induce order both by Christian and Neoplatonic standards, here produces chaos. Hermia refers to the "tempest of my eyes" (1.1.131). Love, which should make a heaven of hell, here makes a hell of heaven, for Hermia comments:

Before the time I did Lysander see,
Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me:
O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell!
(1.1.204-207)

Lysander emphasizes the impermanence of love; even if lovers do mate happily, Lysander laments, something comes along to ruin matters and make love "Swift
as a shadow, short as any dream; / Brief as the lightning in the collied night" (1.1.144-145). The primary image of love evoked in the first scene of Act I is thus blind Cupid and his characteristic chaotic effects. Hermia swears "by Cupid's strongest bow" and somewhat strangely "By all the vows that ever men have broke" to meet Lysander the next night (1.1.169;175). She thus ironically swears constancy by evoking images of inconstancy. Finally, the first scene ends with Helena's explanation of "Cupid painted blind":

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;
Wings and no eyes figure unheedly haste:
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjured every where:
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.
(1.1.234-245)

The lovers' irrationality continues to be established in Act II. Demetrius comments: "And here am I, and wood within this wood" (11.i.192). Looking back on his dotage after he has recovered his judgment, Demetrius compares his former state to a sickness (IV.i.177-178). Finally, just before Lysander's first transformation, he argues prettily to persuade Hermia to lie by him and consequently exhibits an undercurrent of lust incongruent with such "pretty" riddles (11.ii.41ff.).
The irrational elements in the lovers' passions and the consequent disorders of the imagination are simply amplified and fully manifested in their consequent "dream" experiences. The beastial or subhuman level that irrationality produces is suggested in the subhuman name-calling contest that occurs in Act III, scene iii: "loathed medicine! hated potion!", "cankerblossom," "counterfeit," "puppet," "painted maypole," "dwarf," "You minimus, of hindering know-grass made; / You bead, you acorn," and so on. Stephen Fender relates: "A version recently put on in San Francisco dressed the lovers in codpieces which lit up whenever one of them expressed his undying love to another. It might have surprised the fourth forms, but it came closer to the truth of the play than the sort of production which causes words like 'delightful' and 'enchanting' to spring to the lips of the critics." The lovers' experiences in the woods are like a dream in that they do make manifest to the audience, if not to the lovers, the "present conditions" and "secret inclinations" inherent in their love.

Similarly, Bottom's transformation, which the audience is invited to think of as a dream, is simply a manifestation of his assiduity. His "vision," however, will be discussed later in another context.

The manifestations of the follies of dotage, or the almost maniacal pursuit of unrequited love, reach a peak in Act III, scene ii, where all
the characters are either deceived or think themselves deceived. They rebuke and/or scorn each other mercilessly, and the play here comes nearest to being a scurrilous, derisive type of comedy, in which the audience is encouraged to laugh at things that are not funny. Helena rebukes this type of comedy when she rebukes Lysander and Demetrius:

A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! none of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin and extort
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

(III.ii.157-161)

It is this scurrilous form of laughter that Sidney rebukes, reprimanding artists for encouraging laughter "in sinfull things, which are rather execrable then ridiculous: or in miserable, which are rather to be pittied then scorned" (p. 141). There is really nothing funny about being or thinking oneself scorned, about being rejected, or about being reprimanded, a situation that all of the lovers experience in Act III, scene ii. Nor are the transformation of Bottom and his being courted by the Fairy Queen matters to laugh at, in view of the Renaissance fear that such things might really be possible, and if so, full of danger for one's immortal soul. How then does Shakespeare induce laughter at such things and simultaneously make such laughter delightful?

Shakespeare secures delight also through his use of sleep and dreams. One reason, obviously, that the lover's mishaps are not taken seriously is
that Oberon has expressed his intention to make everything come out right. Auditors know the nightmarish confusion will end. Just as sudden transformations create comic chaos, they also create instant comic concord in the first scene of Act IV. Instead of the unexpected or surprising event that causes deceptions and mishaps, an audience experiences the relief of the lovers' awakening to unexpected happiness. Through the second series of transformations abruptly brought about again through sleep and dreams, the characters recover or acquire what they value, a sure source of delight (Minturno, p. 85). In this context, dreams become a means of wish-fulfillment.

Besides this auspicious inevitability of the comic form, however, there are more subtle reasons for our ability to laugh at distressing situations in A Midsummer Night's Dream. By constructing a dream perspective, Shakespeare makes the distressful appear unreal. Before the observer has time to appraise his laughter critically, Shakespeare makes the experiences of the initial transformations appear illusory. Oberon comments that the lovers and then Bottom will look on their night experiences as "a dream," a "fruitless vision," or the "fierce vexation of a dream" (III.ii.370-371; IV.i.71). The dream perspective is exactly what these characters adopt when they awake and begin to expound their "dreams." The characters themselves,
with the exception of Titania (who is not mortal), never realize their folly or how fully they have been exposed and exploited just for someone else's fun. If they did, an audience would be tempted to pity them and to find fault with Puck and Oberon for debasing them. Their sustained deception, as they look at the events of the night as only dream events, creates an illusion that enables an audience to feel secure in its laughter. In a sense Shakespeare tricks his auditors into believing that no pain or harm has been done to the characters. Melvin Seiden calls this comic technique the principle of inconsequentially.

In Act III, scene i, the rude mechanicals deal with this problem of making the potentially serious and sad laughable and delightful. This scene is frequently cited as an exposure of the folly of a literalistic interpretation of art, but it is also in part an exposition on comic technique. Their problem is that the story of Pyramus and Thisbe has some elements in it that are not comic and might distress the ladies; namely, a suicide (Pyramus') and a lion. Bottom's device for dealing with both problems is simply to tell the audience that they are not real. Disagreeing with Starveling, who proposes that they simply leave the killing out, Bottom protests: "Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords and that Pyramus is not killed indeed;
and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear" (III.i.18-23). Another prologue must explain to the audience that the lion is not a lion. He must tell the audience: "If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are . . . " (III.i.42-44). The mechanicals are simply doing on a most obvious level what Shakespeare accomplishes more subtly—making the audience accept the potentially tragic as a matter for mirth by making it appear unreal. Whereas Bottom explains to the audience in a prologue that drama is not reality, Shakespeare uses the dream perspective for the same purpose. The reductio ad absurdum of this principle is Quince's pronouncement in the Prologue: "All for your delight / We are not here" (V.i.114-115). If we took play for reality in earnest, we could seldom, if ever, enjoy it.

Thus Shakespeare's use of the dream perspective in _A Midsummer Night's Dream_ is not only appropriate for the subject matter of the play and our dramatic experience of it, but it is largely responsible for our enjoyment of it. The dream perspective is responsible for another great source of delight other than the risible effects mentioned above: a search for significant ideas and meaning. As noted previously, the dream perspective has a baffling effect. It elicits an awareness that illusion is illusion and a bewilderment in regard to Shakespeare's intentions. In short, the dream perspective is
enigmatic and provokes us to search for a new understanding of the play. Peter Saccio, concluding his study of John Lyly's dramas, reminds his readers that the search for serious ideas is not antipathetic to the comic form and that particularly in the Renaissance significant ideas are intended to contribute to our pleasure. Summarizing Judith Dundas' study of allegory as a form of wit, Saccio says that "... the Elizabethan meanings of wit are various. ... wit may be the rational soul (as opposed to the sensitive and the vegetative), reason (as opposed to passion), the selector among the materials thrown up by fancy when literary invention is operating (what came to be called 'judgment'), and the whole faculty of invention, both imaginative and selective. In any case, the exercise of intellectual faculties implied by all four definitions was something demanded by Elizabethan critics of literary inventions" (pp. 219-220).17 So Sidney, though far from dismissing the importance of the literal level of a work, says that we should not believe a poet's tale; rather, we should "use the narration but as an imaginative groundplot of a profitable invention" (p. 128). Our delight in a work lies not only in its surface, but even more fully in meanings that the surface shadows forth. Shakespeare's handling of the dream perspective in A Midsummer Night's Dream certainly appears to function in a way that severs its audience from the literal level of the play and sets it searching for further meanings. That Shakespeare
provokes the audience to an exploration of possible undermeanings and is aware of various possible responses is corroborated by internal evidence in the play other than the dream perspective. The following chapter is a response to the enigmatic effect of the dream perspective and therefore an exploration of various possible responses to the play's meaning. As such, the search for possible significance is not divorced from the pleasurable aspects of comedy, but a further exploration of the delight inherent in Shakespeare's play.
CHAPTER IV

SHAKESPEARE'S DREAM INTERPRETERS AND THE MEANING OF A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Chapter I presented different critical reactions to the meaning of A Midsummer Night's Dream based in part on different assumptions about dreams: 1) dreams are idle illusions; therefore the play proposes a skeptical attitude toward its subject matter; 2) dreams are manifestations of the human mind; therefore the play makes increased self-knowledge available to its audience; and 3) dreams may be revelations of higher truths; it is possible therefore that the surface of the play is allegorical. The second chapter, by examining Renaissance theories about dreams, clarified the legitimacy of such diverse responses by the diversity of ideas about dreams current in Shakespeare's time and briefly suggested the kinship of various ideas about dreams, on the one hand, and poetry, on the other: 1) poetry is composed of lies; 2) comedy is a fictitious but verisimilar imitation of domestic life that exposes common follies and thereby teaches men to shun them; and 3) poetry is a feigning of a higher, better world than nature. The similarity between these diverse ideas about art and the diverse critical reactions enumerated above is evident. Because the play uses dream as a metaphor for drama, assessments of the
"dream" tend to become statements about the nature of the drama. This chapter picks up various previous suggestions concerning the play's meaning and explores the meaning of the play from the point of view of the dream perspective.

The three most frequently discussed passages in regard to the meaning of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are Bottom's "most rare vision" speech (IV.i. 207ff.), Theseus' speech about madmen, lovers, and poets in conjunction with Hippolyta's rejoinder (V.i.2ff.), and Puck's closing speech (V.i.430ff.). Each of these is directly or indirectly concerned with dreams and with the nature of poetry. Each is concerned with the reality or nonreality of the supernatural realm of the play and is almost universally considered to be crucial to an assessment of the play's meaning. In the context of the play, dream or vision, poetry, and the fairies tend to become interchangeable metaphors for each other, so that when the characters begin to respond to their experience of fairy power, they simultaneously are reacting to the validity or invalidity of the poetic imagination. Since the fairies are largely responsible for the substance of the play, the characters are in the ironic position of questioning the reality of the play of which they are a part and to which they owe their own existence. Simultaneously, the fairies are relegated to the realm of dreams and visions as the characters awaken to think of their experiences as dream, so that dream
becomes a metaphor for the reality of fairy power and the validity of the poetic imagination. Thus Bottom, the lovers, Theseus, and Hippolyta become both dream interpreters and literary critics as they contemplate the experiences of the night.

This study proposes that the subject of A Midsummer Night's Dream is the nature of comedy, more specifically, the nature of dramatic, comic, poetry. Repeatedly throughout the play characters are concerned with producing plays or they are acting in plays or they are commenting on the nature of plays. The rude mechanicals, who first appear in Act I, scene ii, are involved in preparing a "lamentable comedy" for production; they later meet for rehearsal (III.1), and most of Act V consists of their dramatic performance, interspersed with the critical comments of an audience. Puck and Oberon initiate the production of their drama of the night in the first scene of Act II and function alternately as directors, actors, and spectators, commenting on the "fond pageant" they produce. The lovers and Bottom first function as actors in the drama that is the "story of the night," then become critics of that drama as they awaken and comment variously on the substance of their "dreams." Theseus and Hippolyta function as literary critics when they join in with their observations. By analyzing first Bottom's response to his 'dream,' then the responses of Theseus and Hippolyta to the lovers'
"dreams," and finally Puck's invitation to view the play as a dream, this chapter will explore alternative answers to the question of the relationship between reality and poetic illusion and the final reconciliation of these alternatives in the dream metaphor.

I. BOTTOM'S VISION: POETRY AS REALITY

Most critics consider the Bottom-Titania episode to be the comic high point of A Midsummer Night's Dream and crucial to an understanding of the play's meaning. Bottom's privileged authority is attributed to the fact that he is the only human character who actually perceives and interacts with the supernatural realm of the play and therefore has access to a more accurate view of what actually happens in the play than do the other characters. Awaking from his transformation and his encounter with the supernatural realm, Bottom soliloquizes:

I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: It shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death.

(IV.i.207-221)
Even though the special significance of this passage to the play's meaning is almost universally held, assessments of what it actually does mean are so varied that one wonders if indeed man is "but an ass" or a "patched fool" if he attempts to say what Bottom's dream or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* means. This position is in fact held by several critics, who point to the above passage to argue that the "dream" and the play do have high import, but that this great revelation is so mysterious that one cannot hope to articulate it. Like Bottom in his experience of his "dream," the proper response to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a sort of inarticulate, reverential awe before the mystery of great art. According to J. O. Halliwell-Phillips, aesthetic criticism is totally out of place on this comedy; it "deadens the 'native woodnote wild'" and dulls the exquisiteness of the composition.\(^2\) Granted that great art is mysterious and that, as such, its total possible meanings can never be fully articulated, the task of literary criticism is to go beyond Bottom's response and to try to articulate the experience of art. As noted earlier, those who have attempted to "expound" Bottom's dream have interpreted his encounter with Titania to signify everything from a revelation of celestial love to a manifestation of fleshly love (pp. 24-25).

Bottom's "most rare vision" refers dramatically to his transformation and his encounter with Titania, and it involves two basic and paradoxical jokes that are seemingly inexhaustible sources of hilarity for the Elizabethans. The
first jest is that the fool sees more than the wise man; specifically, in the context of the play, that Bottom, the silly ass, "sees" more than Theseus, the wise ruler and voice of rational commonsense. The second paradox is that the "seer" does not see; Bottom emerges from the encounter omnipotent in his ignorance both of Titania's nature and his own. This double joke is clarified first by viewing Bottom's "dream" as a revelation of character and then by appraising Bottom's role in the play as a prophet or literary critic.

Thelma Greenfield notes that Bottom is the same with or without his ass head and that "the joke of his transformation is not so much in the change as in the revelation of his true nature." Bottom's "dream" functions largely as a variant manifestation of assiduity. That Bottom is paradoxically a seer-fool who does not see is consistent with the paradoxical traditions concerning the ass current in the Renaissance. The ass is simultaneously a symbol for stupidity, sensuality, and spiritual insight. A brief survey of these varying traditions will be given; then Bottom will be viewed in their context.

The Renaissance inherited a tradition of long-standing in regard to the ass's grossness and stupidity. D. W. Robertson comments in his Preface to Chaucer: "One of the most common iconographic devices for showing deafness to celestial harmony throughout the Gothic period was to represent an ass seated before a harp. This spiritually stupid beast, which amusingly figures those who have ears but hear
not because of a lack of spiritual understanding, owes his popularity to a very profound philosophical work, the *Consolation* of Boethius.*⁵* Two of Shakespeare's contemporaries use this aspect of the ass symbol. Thus in Lyly's *Midas*, Midas receives the ears of the ass because he prefers the sensual music of Pan to Apollo's harmony (*Works*, III, 144). Sidney also refers to the ass-ears of Midas near the end of his *Apology*, but, interestingly, adjusts their significance. As he concludes his argument for the divine fury of poetry, the ass's ears clearly signify imaginative or aesthetic dullness more than spiritual dullness: "But if (fie of such a but) you be borne so neere the dull making *Cataphract of Nilus* that you cannot heare the Planet-like Musick of Poetrie, if you haue so earth-creeping a mind that it cannot lift it selfe vp to look to the sky of Poetry, or rather, by a certaine rusticall disdane, will become such a Mome as to be a *Momus* of poetry; then, though I will not wish vnto you the Asses eares of Midas, nor . . . to be driven by verse to hang yourself," he does wish you to fail to get your lady for lack of a sonnet and to die from memory for lack of an epitaph (p. 146). The association of the ass with physical and mental grossness is even utilized in the medical profession of the Renaissance. Andreas Laurentius identifies one type of melancholy as that which is commonly called "Asse-like melancholie": it is altogether "grosse and earthie, cold and drie," and it "maketh men altogether grosse and slacke in all their actions both of bodie and minde, fearefull, sluggish, and without vnderstanding" (pp. 84–85).
The sensuality of the ass symbol as it relates more specifically to bodily lust than to mental grossness derives largely from the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius. Adlington, the Renaissance translator of Apuleius, asserts that "under the wrap of this transformation, is taxed the life of mortall men, when as we suffer our mindes so to bee drowned in the sensuall lusts of the flesh, and the beastly pleasure thereof."^6

A contrasting tradition of the significance of the ass, which emphasizes the good qualities of the ass, particularly its capacity for apprehending divine mysteries, is current in the Renaissance and has roots in the authority of both antiquity and the scripture and in the traditional Feast of the Ass that was part of church ritual in the Middle Ages. Plato, maintaining that "the seat of divination" was placed in the liver so that man's inferior parts might be corrected and "attain a measure of truth," goes on to explain: "And herein is a proof that God has given the art of divination not to the wisdom, but to the foolishness of man. No man, when in his wits, attains to prophetic truth and inspiration; but when he receives the inspired word, either his intelligence is enthralled in sleep or he is demented by some distemper or possession."^7 The utilization of this concept in traditions surrounding the ass, particularly its utilization in scripture, is fully expressed in "A Digression in praise of the Asse," which occurs at the end of Agrippa's *Vanity* (fol. 183\(^v\)-185\(^v\)). After noting that the wisest of the world have missed what Christ
taught to idiots and asses, Agrippa launches into his digression on "the mysteries of the Ass." He argues that his digression is "not from the pourspe":

For the Doctours of the Hebrewes say that this beast is an example of fortitude and strength, patience, and clemencie, that his influence dependeth on Sephiroth, which is called Hochma, that is to say, wisdome. For his conditions are very necessarie for a disciple of wisdome, he liueth by little forrage, & is contented there- with whatsoever it be, he can very well endure penurie, hunger, laboure, stripes, rechlesnes, and very wel sufferinge all persecution, of a very simple and poore understanding that he cannot discerne from thistels, of an innocent and cleane hart, & without choler, hauing peace with al liuing creatures, & he is pacient bearinge all burdens on his backe, for a rewarde of which he wanteth lice, he is seldom sicke, & liueth longer then any other beaste.

Agrippa goes on to support his case by citing Varro, whose account of C. Marius illustrates "what available messenger the Asse is in Augurie," for an ass led Marius out of the country to safety when he was threatened by Scylla. Further, Agrippa maintains, in the Old Testament God honored the ass, for when He said that the first-begotten should be slain for sacrifice, He favored men and asses by granting that a sheep could substitute for an ass. The ass figured significantly in Christ's life three times: an ass wit- nessed Christ's nativity; by an ass Christ was saved from the hands of Herod; and Christ entered Jerusalem in triumph on an ass, thereby fulfilling the
oracle of Zacharius. Abraham rode only on asses, "so that this olde Proverbe emonge the people is not spoken in vaine, which saithe: that the Asse carieth mysteries." Apuleius of Megara would not have been admitted into the mysteries of Isis if he had not been turned into an ass. Balaam's ass was endowed with the spirit of prophecy. "So saie I," Agrippa continues, "the simple and rude idiots doth oftentimes see those things, whiche a Schole Doctoure corrupted with the traditions of men cannot perceiue." Sampson slew the Philistines with the jaw bone of an ass, and his thirst was quenched from it afterwards when water poured out and refreshed his spirits. Agrippa climaxes his argument with a full association of the ass with the fool of Christ:

Did not Christe, in the mouths of his simple Asses and rude idoites his Apostles & Disciples, overcomand strike all the Philosophers of the Gentiles, and Lawiers of the Jewes, and overthrew, & cast vnder foote all mannes wisdome, drinkinge to vs out of that cheeke bone of his Asses, the water of wisdome and everlastinge life. By these thinges then whiche are already said, it is more manifest then the sonne, that there is no beaste so able to receive diviniteit as the Asse, into whome if yee shall not be tourned, yee shall not be able to carrie the diviune misteries. In time past emonge the Romaines the proper name of the Christians was that they shoulde be called Asinarii, and they were wont to paint the Image of Christe with the eares of an Asse: a witnes hereof is Tertullian. . . ."
Bottom reflects the complex diversity of these traditions surrounding the ass. He is mentally gross and stupid and has no true apprehension of Titania's spirituality or sexuality. Instead of having his own "mortal grossness" purged into the likeness of "an airy spirit," he utilizes the fairy world to satisfy his own gross needs with a honey bag, a good head-scratch, a peck of provender, some dried peas, and the tongs and the bones, thereby reducing their spirituality to a fulfillment of bodily needs. Though some critics make a case for Bottom's sexuality, a case consistent with one of the significances of the ass, textually the sexual interests appear to be one-sided, and Bottom's stupidity carries over into a physical sluggishness and an apparent inability to comprehend either Titania's sexual advances or the apparent danger of his situation. Bottom and Titania have only two on-stage encounters. In the first scene of Act III, there is nothing specifically sexual about Titania's first interview with Bottom until Titania's last speech:

Come wait upon him; lead him to my bower.
The moon methinks looks with a watery eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.

(Ill.iii.202ff.)

Textually, the next time Bottom and Titania appear, accompanied by fairies and Oberon (behind unseen), they are just arriving at Titania's bower:
"Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed..." Just when Titania is her most amorously enthusiastic, Bottom says, "I have an exposition of sleep come upon me" (IV.1.42). Spirits' powers of copulation are a real issue in the Renaissance and widely feared, particularly the incubi or succubi who seduce people in their sleep. Authority for the two types of sexes of evil spirits goes back to Augustine. Compton Rees surveys contemporary anecdotes of such cases of seduction related by authors like Andrew Boorde, Stephen Batman, Sebastian Michaelis, and Pierre Le Loyer. Ideas that such unions can have terrible effects, such as the transformation of the victims into wolves or the birth of deformed babies, are evidently widespread, in spite of arguments presented against these superstitious notions (Rees, p. 71ff.). Part of the humor of the encounter is Bottom's lack of comprehension of his danger as he casually falls asleep and Titania says:

Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away. [Exeunt fairies.
So doth the woodbine and sweet honeysuckle
Gentle entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee! [They sleep.
(IV.1.43ff.)

Immediately after Titania's speech Oberon relates to Puck his encounter with Titania and Bottom in the woods (occurring between III.1. and IV.1.), his taunting of Titania, and his success in retrieving the changeling. Then he
corrects Titania's dotage with Dia's bud. Thus there is no clear time, textually, when Titania and Bottom may be considered to have had an opportunity for sexual intercourse. Oberon corrects the situation just when the possibility is most likely to occur. Bottom's mental and physical grossness appears to be constant throughout the encounter, whether related to Titania's spirituality or sexuality. His lack of imagination or perception excludes him from innuendo.

Simultaneously, Bottom is the only mortal allowed to see the fairies in the play. He has fortitude and patience. He lives "by little forrage," and his "very simple and poore understanding" renders him impervious to exposure and persecution at Puck's hands. He has "an innocent and cleane hart, & without choler, hauing peace with al liuing creatures." As "the simple and rude idiote" he sees more than the wise man, is the bearer of mystery in the play, and awakens full of the spirit of prophecy.

Bottom's awakening contains the same paradoxical characteristics as his "dream." One of the gifts fairies may bestow on men is the power of prophecy or second-sight (Latham, pp. 139-141), and Bottom assumes the stance of the divine seer who has pierced the veil and must now communicate his vision to mankind in literary form: "I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke:
peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death" 
(IV.i.218ff.). When he meets his colleagues, he protests: "Masters, I am 
to discourse wonders: but ask me not what" (IV.ii.28-29). He says that he 
will tell all, but they get "not a word" of Bottom. Part of the rationale 
behind Bottom's inarticulateness may be that it is considered dangerous to 
speak about fairies (Latham, p. 139-141). However, his mental confusion 
and inarticulateness also imply his poor comprehension of what he saw. 
Plato, after stating that divination is given to the foolishness of man, goes 
on to explain that the prophet must "first recover his wits" before he can 
"determine by reason the meaning of the apparitions which he has seen. . . . ." 
Prophets are not necessarily able to interpret their own prophecies (Timaeus, 
Section 72, p. 35). Bottom does not "recover his wits"; indeed he had none 
to begin with. His confusion of the activities of the sensitive faculties in 
his allusion to I Corinthians 2.9--"the eye of man hath not heard, the ear 
of man hath not seen," and so forth--not only emphasizes the point that 
spiritual truths cannot be grasped by man's senses, but underlines the inept-
ness of Bottom's faculties. Just as he cannot get the functions of the faculties 
straight verbally, so he cannot perceive the truth with his faculties when it is 
set right before them. He is simultaneously the fool who sees and one of 
those other fools who "seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither 
do they understand" (Matthew 13.13).
In the context of the play, however, the mysteries of God are transmuted to the mysteries of fairies, and spiritual vision becomes a metaphor for poetic vision. Bottom's "most rare vision" and his garbled awakening expose him as the same literalist that he is throughout the play. His literalism is emphasized in the way that he takes the diminutive fairies literally (III.i.182ff.) and his inability to apprehend Titania's nature. As a literary critic of the "dream" Bottom is the literalist. The message of his vision and the essence of his authority in the play reside in his recognition that fairies are real and therefore, metaphorically, fiction is real. The joke is that even though he is one of those who, in Sidney's words, "have so earth creeping a mind that it cannot lift it selfe vp to looke to the sky of Poetry," he grasps more about the validity of poetry than the skeptic.

II. THESEUS' SPEECH: THE POET AS MADMAN

At the beginning of Act V, Theseus takes his turn as an interpreter of the lover's "dreams," or the stories of the night, and thereby assumes the role of a literary critic. His speech uses the traditional linking of the madman, the lover, and the poet that can be used alternately, depending on one's sympathies, to argue the divine fury of poets or to assert the relative worthlessness of poetry. Theseus comments:
More strange than true: I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason every 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.

(V.1.2-17)

A. Poetry as Falsehood and Deception

Theseus links the madman, the lover, and the poet in order to diminish the significance or reality of the strange and mysterious tales he has been told. He reasons that lovers, madmen, and poets all have erratic and overcharged imaginations and that their "dreams" or stories are therefore not to be trusted. Given the notion current in the Renaissance that dreams and visions may be caused by the state of mind or bodily condition of the dreamer, Theseus' observations are perfectly logical. First, one can make a case that both Bottom and the lovers are suffering from melancholy: Bottom from asslike melancholy; the lovers from amorous, or lover's melancholy. Melancholy
is notorious for its ability to induce frightful dreams; in Thomas Nashe's words, melancholy "is the mother of dreames, and of all the terrours of the night whatsoever" (1,357; also Scot, p. 162). Theseus' interpretation would exclude the possibility of "real" demonic influence, but it suggests that the "story of the night" and the drama as dream may be dismissed as wild apparitions of melancholy. Secondly, if one excludes the melancholic theory, the lovers' "dreams" and Bottom's "most rare vision" may still be explained as a natural result of their predominant thoughts and passions. The lovers enter the woods in a frustrated state, each fearing his or her love will be thwarted. Their experiences, which they later characterize as "dreams," are natural manifestations of their fears. Bottom's passions and thoughts are centered on playing Pyramus, the great lover, and his "most rare vision" certainly provides him with an opportunity to practice the part. His thoughts are still preoccupied with his dramatic role when he awakens from his encounter with Titania: "When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is, 'Most fair Pyramus'" (IV.i.204-205). Similarly, the play as a whole may be explained as a normal result of the poet's preoccupation with inventions and fantasy in his waking life; in sleep the imaginative power is given full rein, uncurbed by the waking activities of the external senses, and the fantastic "dream" that is the play results.
To Theseus the "story of the night" and the lovers' "dreams" are simply untrue. Since his skepticism is directed toward the substance of the play, Theseus' view of poetry is, metaphorically, that it is unreal, its substance an idle fancy or "airy nothing." His attitude as expressed at the beginning of Act V is consistent with his condescending attitude toward the Pyramus and Thisbe play. The implication of his comment that "The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them" (V.i.213-214) is that poetry is not real anyway, so that there really is not much difference between good poetry and bad poetry. All poetry is false, its usefulness being merely a means of beguiling "the heavy gait of night (V.i.374-375).

Though Theseus himself does not attack poetry on moral grounds, his assumption that poetry is essentially false and associated with madness is but a step from the accusation frequently expressed in the Renaissance that poetry is nothing but a fabric of lies and therefore morally treacherous. Henry Cornelius Agrippa, for instance, maintains that poetry is an art "devised to no other ends, but to placate the eares of foolish men, with wanton Rithmes, with measures, and weightinesse of sillables, and with a vaine iarringe of wordes, and to deceiue mens mindes with the delectation of fables, and with fardels of lies" (Vanity, fol. 11r). According to Agrippa,
poetry is a brother to drunkenness and madness. He explains, "There are yet some, which have come to so greate furie of maddenesse, that they beleue that they have in them certaine divine Oracles . . . ," but this is a delusion and the reason Augustine banishes poets from the City of God and Plato banishes them from his Commonwealth (fol. 12r). All virtuous men have known that poetry is the "mother of lies" and that poets only work "disciullie to devise all thinges vpon a matter of nothinge . . . " (fol. 13r). Phillip Stubbies, one of the more articulate Elizabethan disparagers of poetry and particularly stage plays, goes a step further and considers the essential falseness of poetry as downright demonic delusion. He asserts adamantly that stage plays, whether sacred or profane, are "sucked out of the Deuills teates to nourish vs in ydolatrie, hethenrie, and sinne." Gathering force from the authority of scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers, Stubbies argues: "Than, seeing that Playes were first inuented by the Deuill, practised by the heathen gentiles, and dedicat to their false ydols, Goddes and Goddesses . . . they are no fit exercyse for a Christen Man to follow." After all, do not stage plays "maintaine bawdrie, insinuate folery, & renue the remembrance of hethen ydolatrie?" Robert Burton in his Anatomy of Melancholy explains that though melancholy may induce genuine divine ecstasy, it can also be easily misdirected and abused by the devil to produce false prophecies,
"mere dotage," or madness. Apollo's priests were deceived by the devil in this way, and the heathen oracles were only devilish devices to lead men from the truth (pp. 894-895). Such disparaging views of the visions of frenzied poets with their "rolling" eyes are consistent with the close associations between melancholy (the basic catchall of various types of madness in the Renaissance), dreams, and demonic influence established in Chapter II of this study.

The characters' "dreams" and the drama as dream reveal yet another facet when viewed from the perspective of these deprecations of poetry and the possible connections between the madness of lovers and poets' demonic influence. The supernatural realm that controls the world of this play is, at best, morally ambivalent. Recognition that the supernatural creatures of A Midsummer Night's Dream are a radical transformation of Elizabethan notions of fairies, involving principally the deletion of the more malevolent aspects of fairies, has encouraged the attitude that Shakespeare's fairies are nothing more than imaginative variations on the exquisitely ethereal, pretty poet's toys, beautiful to contemplate but largely ineffectual, or, in Sir Edmund Chambers' words, "eternal children."

More recently the fact that Shakespeare's fairies have not relinquished all their potential malevolence and moral ambivalence has been repeatedly observed. To divorce this play
from its times is to miss a good deal of its verve and audacity. In the
Renaissance fairies are primarily classified either as fallen angels, heathen
divinities, devils, souls of the dead, or creatures of a "middle" nature that
have nothing to do with heaven or hell. Only occasionally is it suggested
that fairies may be capable of salvation (Latham, pp. 23-64; Briggs, Anatomy,
pp. 163-183). Though many of the fairies' earthly activities are of a harm-
less, whimsical, or even benevolent nature, others are downright malevolent;
in any case, association with fairies is a dangerous business. Because of
their associations with witches and because of James I's belief that fairies
are devils, trafficking with fairies is designated in 1603 as an offense pun-
ishable by death (Latham, pp. 111-167). Furthermore, the first of May
and Midsummer Eve are the two times when these dubious creatures "were
most powerful and most enjoyed themselves. He was a brave mortal who
wandered out to enjoy the moonlight on the evening of midsummer . . ."
(Latham, pp. 101-102).

The predominance of the fairies in both the "dreams" of the char-
acters and the "dream" that is the drama may be explained by the Renaissance
notion that irrationality and madness make persons particularly susceptible to
demonic influence. The lovers' condition, upon entering the woods, is
decidedly irrational; that Bottom may be a classic case of asslike melancholy
has already been suggested. From the point of view of Renaissance dream theory, it is perfectly logical that they should be highly susceptible to demonic influence, even excluding the fact that humans are most likely to fall prey to fairy power on May Day or Midsummer Eve anyway. From this perspective the "story of the night" and Bottom's "most rare vision" are products of madness and heathen spirits. Similarly, it is possible to view the entire play as a product of misdirected contemplation and its "visions" as a product of dotage and the devil. After all, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* shows human beings under the influence and guidance of morally ambivalent spirits; lovers indiscreetly running around the woods in an obviously irrational state; and a Fairy Queen seducing a mortal. Furthermore, none of these elements is explicitly censured. Even if the fairies are on relatively good behavior for the course of the play, the drama still renews "the remembrance of heathen yolatrie." Further, the metamorphosis of these morally ambivalent creatures into benevolent ones for the course of the play is not without its dangers, for is it not devilish to make heathen divinities appear good? In short, the substance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is such that those with "chaste ears" who consider poetry deceptive and morally treacherous have plenty to condemn with pious enthusiasm. The play presents as truth a vision that is certainly false. Just as the lovers and Bottom have been tricked into accepting their dream-induced
delusions as reality, so the drama as dream tricks the audience into giving imaginative consent to a poet's monstrous delusion. The exploration of _A Midsummer Night's Dream_ as a demonic deception, opened by Theseus' association of the madman, the lover, and the poet as viewed in the context of denigrating arguments against poetry in the Renaissance, is not intended to suggest that Shakespeare purposely set out to write a devilish, immoral play to win more souls for hell. It does reveal, however, that there is a quality of bravura in his handling of fairies on Midsummer Eve that may well be missed in the twentieth century, a sense of playing with fire without getting hurt. To fail to sense the danger that the play flirts with is to miss the elation of danger escaped.

In contrast to Bottom's conclusion that fairies are real and therefore, metaphorically, poetry is reality, Theseus' linking of the madman, the lover, and the poet has thus far rendered two perspectives for the "story of the night" that assert the falsity of poetry; the first, simply its invalidity in relation to reality and commonsense; the second, its beguiling and treacherous deceitfulness. Implicit in Theseus' speech is a third alternative view of poetry that has the potential to reconcile Bottom's and Theseus' views and to ameliorate the possibility that the play is a demonic deception.
B. Poetry as a Representation of Higher Truths

The authority of Theseus' skepticism is subtly undermined in the context of the play, not least of all because his linking of the poet, madman, and lover and his description of the poetic process as giving "shapes" to the "forms of things unknown" can be turned into an argument for the divine fury of the poet. The audience has a vantage point that enables it to see the limited nature of Theseus' response. Stephen Fender comments: "If one considers his [Theseus'] first speech in Act V together with his misunderstanding of what the lovers have been doing when he finds them asleep in the wood, one is faced with a deliberate reduction in his range of view." Although Theseus appears to be in control of everything at the beginning of the play, by the end of Act IV "the major events of the play seem to have passed him by" (p. 53). Theseus' authority is also undermined by the irony of his skeptical attitude toward "antique fables" when he himself owes his existence in the play to them. Thus the audience is in a position to consider an alternate evaluation of the poet as madman and to apply another critical perspective to the substance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The vestiges of the concept of the divine fury of the poet that are still used to establish the prestige of poetry in the Renaissance owe their perpetuation to the examples of divine inspiration in scripture and the
popularization of Neoplatonism effected largely by Marsilio Ficino. According to Plato, in his Phaedrus, "... the greatest blessings we have spring from madness, when granted by divine bounty" (p. 320). This blessed madness is particularly associated with lovers and poets. Furor poeticus is described as "a third possession and madness proceeding from the Muses, which seizing upon a tender and chaste soul, and rousing and inspiring it to the composition of odes and other species of poetry, by adorning the countless deeds of antiquity, instructs posterity. But he who without the madness of the Muses approaches the gates of poesy under the persuasion that by means of art he can become an efficient poet, both himself fails in his purpose, and his poetry, being that of a sane man, is thrown into the shade by the poetry of such as are mad" (pp. 320-321). Plotinus characterizes the true artist as he who has attained the vision of Intellectual Beauty and then infuses as much of that vision as he can into an embodied form.\textsuperscript{11} Described by P. V. Pistorius, Plotinus' concept of art is "the expression in a time-space medium of the recognition of the presence of the Ideal World in a time-space entity."\textsuperscript{12} Pico della Mirandola charges us to be "driven by the frenzies of Socrates" and to study moral philosophy, so that the resultant harmonious passions will enable us to "be stirred by the frenzy of the Muses and drink the heavenly harmony with our inmost hearing."\textsuperscript{13} Marsilio Ficino perpetuates
the concept that the artist gives form to a given material, a form that is "originally a concept or Idea in the mind of the creative artist." He utilizes this notion "to furnish a human analogy for divine creation and to prove the inner congruence between art and nature." In the context of certain Neoplatonic ideas that are current in the Renaissance, then, Theseus' speech functions as a reminder that, instead of being composed of lies, the poet inspired by madness may communicate divine truths and that the "dreams" of the night may be more than idle fancies.

In Elizabethan times both Sir Philip Sidney and George Puttenham refer to the ancient concept of poet as divine seer to support their cases for the prestige of poetry. Sidney refers to the poet as *Vates*, "which is as much as a Diviner, Fore-seer, or Prophet . . ." (p. 102), and Puttenham refers to the poets' original distinction as "the first Priests and ministers of the holy misteries" and their aptness "to receaue visions, both waking and sleeping." Not willing to give up the divine aspect of poetic inspiration entirely, Sidney still shifts emphasis from the external, divine source of poetry, which makes the poet simply a mouthpiece for something outside himself, to the poet's own powers. Thus he says that the ancients called poetry "a divine gift, and no humaine skill" because a poet is born with it. If his "Genius bee not carried vnto it," no amount of work will make a man a poet (p. 137). On the one
hand, the poet is said to participate in "the divine consideration of what may be, and should be," but his activity is also described as "freely ranging onely within the Zodiack of his owne wit" (p. 104 and p. 106). Similarly Puttenham says that "this science [poetry] in his perfection can not grow but by some divine instinct--the Platonicks call it furor; or by excellencie of nature and complexion; or by great subtiltie of the spirits & wit; or by much experience and observation of the world, and course of kinde; or peraduenture, b: all or most part of them." Whether they invent "by instinct divine or naturall," poets are "surely much favoured from aboue" (pp. 148-149). For Sidney, the poet is a being with a heightened insight into the Idea or "perfect patterne" behind the individual instances of nature's creation who can therefore, "with the force of a divine breath," make things that far surpass nature's doings (pp. 104-105; 114). This type of poetic inspiration, as well as mere dotage, is described by Laurentius as a special form of melancholy in which dryness predominates, but the brain is neither too soft nor too hard. This kind of melancholy makes men witty and produces deep conceits, strong bodies, and good memories: "and when this humour growtheth hot, by the vapours of blood, it causeth as it were, a kinde of divine ravishment, commonly called Enthousiasma, which stirreth men vp to plate the Philosophers, Poets, and also to prophesie: in such manner, as that it may seeme to
contain some divine parts" (p. 86). In this inspired state the poet, "lifted up with the vigor of his owne invention, dooth growe in effect another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite a newe, formes such as never were in Nature . . ." (Sidney, p. 104). This explanation of the poetic process thus shares attributes with the divine and "mixed" categories of dreams in which the soul, freed from the concerns of the body and the limitations of the sensitive faculties bound to a world of sense, awakens to visions above the range of nature.

In the context of these Neoplatonic notions about the poet and poetry, Theseus' linking of the madman, the lover, and the poet and his description of the process of poetic creation can render a conclusion about the nature of poetry that is far different from Theseus' skeptical attitude. The poet's "glance from heaven to earth" may indicate the poet contemplating nature on the one hand, and "the divine consideration of what may be, and should be" on the other. "The forms of things unknown" become the ideas or the "perfect pattern" the imagination is able to body forth in "shapes."

This alternate interpretation of the inspired poet provides yet another perspective for the fairies, the "dreams" of the night, and the drama itself. The earlier survey of Elizabethan concepts of fairies demonstrates clearly that
Shakespeare has purposely made his fairies better than "real" fairies. They are not representations of individual, actual fairies, but a representation of what "may be" and "should be" in regard to fairies. Much of the delight of the play is generated by the cancellation of the fairies' potential evil; for instance, Bottom's seduction that is nipped in the bud or the concluding fairy blessing on unborn babies in place of their power to blight infants with disease and deformity. Reminders of the malevolence of fairies are left in the play to point out to the audience the difference between the reality and the illusion of fairy. C. L. Barber is right in noting that Shakespeare encourages in the audience an awareness of the illusory nature of the substance of the play, but wrong in concluding that Shakespeare's purpose in doing so is to make the audience aware of the improbability of his creation. One of the primary critical norms of Renaissance comedy is that the fiction must be verisimilar and that any departure from the verisimilar must be made to seem probable (Herrick, pp. 65-66). Shakespeare's handling of his materials as explored in Chapter III of this study indicates that the play consistently affords example after example of a successful effort to give the material of the play a sense of verisimilitude that is, indeed, one of the dramatic feats of the play. The dramatic function of an awareness of the illusory nature of the fairies in the play is to emphasize the fact that they are poetical transformations of
reality and thereby to emphasize something about the nature of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as a dramatic comedy. In this sense the fairies are symbols of the poetic imagination.

The transformed nature of the fairies in the play points out that the nature of this comedy is, in a most literal sense, a vision that makes things "better than Nature bringeth forth." Just as the dramatist has transformed the fairies into a more "perfect patterne," so Oberon and Puck function to transform the substance of the play into a more "perfect patterne," exposing human folly and finally producing proper harmony. In this sense the "dreams" may be interpreted as the poetic process itself, the bringing forth of a "golden world" that is, on the one hand, an illusion, but is, in another sense, more real and true than nature. That Shakespeare succeeded is the testimony of history. Sidney speaks of the poet's purpose as being not "to make many Cyrus's," but "to bestow a Cyrus vpon the worlde" (p. 105). Both Minor White Latham and Katharine Briggs demonstrate that Shakespeare did indeed bestow the idea of fairy on the world and that the fairies of both literature and popular belief were changed in large part because of Shakespeare's portrayal of fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Latham, p. 193; Briggs, *Anatomy*, p. 56ff.).
Theseus' speech has thus led to two very different perspectives for the
fairies, the "dreams," and the nature of poetry itself. Sidney, in arguing
against the accusation that poetry "is the Nurse of abuse, infecting vs with
many pestilent desires; with a Syrens sweetnes, drawing the mind to the
Serpents tayle of sinfull fancyey," differentiates between "Phantastike" and
"Eikastike" poetry. Fantastic poetry infects "the fancie with vnworthy objects,"
while iastic poetry is defined as "figuring foorth good things" (pp. 127-129).
The first evaluation of Theseus' speech, which led to an awareness of the
falseness and deceitfulness of the "dreams" of the play, points out the fantastic
nature of the play, while the latter evaluation of Theseus' association of the
poet, lover, and madman leads to an iastic view. The quality of bravura
noted earlier in Shakespeare's treatment of fairies on Midsummer Eve is further
clarified by an iastic view of the play, for one of the dramatic feats of the
play is the imaginative transformation of the essentially "Phantastike" into the
"Eikastike."

III. HIPPOLYTA'S VIEW: POETRY AS A

REPRESENTATION OF HIGHER TRUTHS---CONTINUED

That the "dreams" of the play constitute a representation of reality is
further suggested by Hippolyta's view of the "story of the night," for Theseus'
skeptical view is also questioned by Hippolyta as she contributes her observations:

But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancy's images
And grows to something of great constancy;
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

(V.i.23ff.)

She reasons that there must be some reality to the story (and therefore, metaphorically, to the fairies and poetic illusion) because of the effect it has produced. The story must be more than simply an imaginative creation. Her emphasis on the constancy that has emerged from a chaotic inconstancy is representative of the thematic emphasis placed on the issuance of harmony out of discord that begins in IV.i.107ff. and, in the context of some Neoplatonic ideas, suggests further reason to regard the dream-drama as a representation of higher truths.

Form is naturally inherent in all art, but Hippolyta's comment is an instance of a decided emphasis on form, on the issuance of harmony out of discord, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that is thematically significant. Various critics, such as Enid Welsford, Paul Olson, and P. Siegel, note the play's emphasis on harmony, but none of them explores fully the thematic implications of this emphasis. After the chaos and discord of the middle portion of the comedy, the characters begin to comment on the new
harmony. Titania and Oberon are now "new in amity" and dance together to express their reconciliation (IV.i.89ff.). Theseus comes on the scene with a long speech about the "music" of his hounds and their "tuneable" cry, while Hippolyta says she "never heard / So musical a discord, such sweet thunder" as when she heard the hounds of Sparta (IV.i.107ff.). Theseus comments on the new harmonious relationships of the lovers: "How comes this gentle concord in the world, / That hatred is so far from jealousy, / To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?" (IV.i.147-149). In place of the unstable images of love expressed in the first act, where love is "Swift as a shadow, short as any dream," now love is viewed in terms of stability. "These couples shall eternally be knit," Theseus proclaims (IV.i.185). Then comes Hippolyta's observation that "something of great constancy" has now emerged (V.i.26). Oberon proclaims that "the couples three" shall "Ever true in loving be" (V.i.414-415). Finally, the fairies, before they leave, are to bless each chamber "with sweet peace" (V.i.425).

The play's decided emphasis on marriage is closely related to its emphasis on the emergence of harmony out of chaos. Although most of Shakespeare's comedies end either with marriage or with the certain expectation of it, A Midsummer Night's Dream particularly emphasizes it. The play opens with marital plans, the mechanicals keep the audience aware
of the future wedding festivities, and the entirety of the fifth act is an enactment of festivities celebrated on the occasion of a triple wedding, concluded by a fairy blessing on those marriages. All this emphasis on marriage is appropriate from the point of view that the play was probably first written to be performed at a wedding celebration, but marriage itself is assigned great significance in the Renaissance. According to Ficino, for instance, marriage is simultaneously an antidote to bestial love, which is considered to be a form of disease or insanity, and a realization in the corporal realm of heavenly love or beauty. As an instance of Amor humanus, which resides in the sphere of Venus Vulgaris, it "gives life and shape to things in nature and thereby makes the intelligible beauty accessible to our perception and imagination." 18 Thus, as Paul Olson observes, the love in a well-ordered marriage is part of the "faire cheyne of love" or the "sweete bond of the world" that produces harmony and concord, both socially and spiritually (pp. 99-100). Ficino's account of marriage's significance is a good description of what happens in the course of A Midsummer Night's Dream—the resolution of chaotic, irrational love, as illustrated in Chapter III, in harmony and marriage.

The harmony that is a product of the 'story of the night' is both an effect expected from comedy and an idea that has metaphysical significance for the Renaissance. Distinguishing between the emotions belonging properly
to comedy and tragedy, Quintilian says that *ethos* belongs to comedy and designates attitudes of mind "which are calm and gentle," which subdue the passions, and which "persuade and induce a feeling of goodwill." This distinction is repeatedly referred to throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Herrick, pp. 69-70). Similarly, Madius, a commentator on Terrence, after observing the "extreme perturbations" of tragedy, comments: "Truly we have not been born for strife and discord, but for peace and harmony. . . . Comedy employs those emotions that are easily reduced to a middle state which is called strength of character" (Herrick, p. 71). Trissino likewise observes that in comedy disturbances end in good, in weddings and peaceful agreements, and in tranquility (Herrick, p. 85).

A vision of harmony issuing from chaos, or the emergence of form, is not only descriptive of the substance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and comedy in general, but of the substance of the mystical, or intellective, visions that Neoplatonists discuss. According to Ficino there is a circular attraction between the world and God: the outflow of God (*emanatio*—beauty) into the world (*raptio*—love), which then converts and returns to God (*remeatio*—delight). Creation, or the process of emanation is continuous, and when the lover of beauty, initially struck by a vision of earthly beauty, is lifted above the world and ravished by a heavenly vision, what he sees
is at one and the same time this creative process going on in the world and in himself. 19 Explaining that all creation arises from love, Ficino describes creation in terms of harmony emerging from chaos:

That still-formless essence is what we mean by chaos. Its first turning to God is the birth of love: its reception of the divine ray is the nourishing of love, its illumination, which follows, is the growing of love; its cleaving to God is the inrush of love; and its reception of form is love's perfection. This uniting of form with idea the Latins call a world, and the Greeks a cosmos. The grace of the world, when it is thus adorned, is beauty. As soon as love is born, it draws the Angelic Mind to beauty and a substance that was shapeless becomes fair. 20

Plotinus describes the reportable substance of the vision as "God in travail of a beautiful offspring, God engendering a universe within Himself..." (p. 178). For Castiglione a ravishing vision of earthly beauty can lead the lover of beauty to see, with the inner eye, heavenly love or beauty—"Thou the most sweete bond of the world, a meane betwixt heavenly and earthly things..." Thus is described the work of love in creation: "Thou with agreement bringest the Elements in one, stirrest nature to bring forth, and that which ariseth and is borne for the succession of the life. Thou bringest severed matters into one, to the unperfect givest perfection, to the unlike likeness, to enimitie amitie, to the earth fruites, to the Sea calmness, to the heaven, lively light." 21 Just as love is the means of cosmic creation, in A Midsummer Night's Dream love is the means of comic creation or transformation.
From the perspective of Hippolyta's view, by its emphasis on the constancy that has been born of inconstancy, comic vision becomes cosmic vision, and poetic process becomes poetic substance. The uniting of form with idea, the making of a world better than nature brings forth, or the birth of harmonious form out of chaos is simultaneously the poetic process of the play, as explored earlier, the subject of the comedy, and the metaphysical vision that the play makes available to an audience. Poetic creation can thus become a vision of cosmic creation, for the work of the maker of the play is like the work of that maker's Maker; a point of comparison Sidney makes in his Apologie (p. 105) and Puttenham in his The Arte of English Poesie (p. 148).

IV. PUCK’S INVITATION AND THE DREAM SYNTHESIS

After the characters respond to the visions of the night and, since those visions comprise the substance of the play itself, simultaneously comment on the nature of A Midsummer Night's Dream, Puck invites the audience to take its turn at dream interpretation:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here.
While these visions did appear,
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream, . . . .

(V.1.430ff.)
The characters themselves collectively grasp very little about the events of the play; the audience, however, who has been allowed a fuller view of the substance of the play, is in a position to see that implicit in the characters' comments is a variety of possible perspectives germane to a critical appreciation of the play. As a metaphor for the drama, the image of a dream is simultaneously a vessel well chosen to contain the paradoxes of a comic, dramatic illusion and a vehicle well able to direct an audience to a many-faceted response. Puck's disclaimer is both bulwark and lodestar, for on the one hand, if the play does not please, the disclaimer protests that the drama is only a dream, while on the other hand, for those willing to look, the disclaimer promises to divulge secrets.

The paradoxes of comic, dramatic poetry explored in the play are effectively expressed and clarified by the dream metaphor. Both are illusions of reality, composed of images, but experienced emotionally as real. Thus both are paradoxically false but true, real and unreal. Both are capable of mirroring from two directions. Just as dreams may reflect the thoughts, passions, and humors of the dreamer, so comedy exposes follies of character. Just as dreams may use images stored in the memory to reflect supernatural insights, so the poetic imagination can give shape or form to ideas beyond the scope of nature. Thus dreams as well as poetry have the capacity to be,
in Puttenham's words, an art of "making" and an art of "imitation"; the dreamer, like the poet, "both a maker and a counterfator" (p. 148). As products of the imagination, both are capable of being either deceitful, devilish illusions or representations of the divinest truths man's reason or soul is able to perceive.

The diversity of Renaissance dream theory accounts for the number of ways Shakespeare is able to use the dream perspective. The illusory nature of dreams is emphasized to make comic mishaps appear unreal and to discourage a literalistic approach. Yet the dream perspective functions also to justify the rightness of a willingness to give imaginative assent to the drama. Dreams are the means of initiating the laughter-producing deceptions and the transformations of characters in the plot. At the same time, dreams function as a metaphor for the transforming power of the poetic imagination. Dreams function as a device for character revelation, since the "story of the night," which exposes the follies of the lovers and Bottom, is both initiated by dream experiences (with the exception of Bottom's transformation) and then referred to as "dreams" after the fact. From one point of view, dreams represent the irrationality of human nature; from another point of view, dreams represent the divine nature of man.

Puck's invitation is a reinforcement of multiple possibilities of meaning already made implicit in the play. Like Theseus, one can be skeptical
toward the substance of the play or consider it an idle fancy, an enjoyable
means of filling the time, but not instructive. Because dreams, as well as
poetry, are composed of nature's images, no matter how wildly they may
combine them, one can approach the play as a fictitious, but verisimilar
exposure of human folly. A Stubbes-like mentality may view it as an out-
right deception or a vision of the devil that makes falsehoods seem real.
Finally, one may approach the play as a revelation of higher truths.
Puck's awakening of the audience can effect both a release from illusion
or deception and an awakening of the soul whereby it may see, with its
inner eye, the metaphysical truths that the vision of the play shadows. 22

An awareness of all these possibilities and of the way that
Shakespeare handles them in A Midsummer Night's Dream leads to the
recognition that the play is a dramatic tour de force. The play transforms
the disparate and improbable into a unified verisimilitude. It transforms
the dangerous and ugly into benevolent and beautiful. The transforming
power of the imagination and its ability to make reality more golden than
it is, is the unifying motif of the play, for it is involved in every aspect
of the play: the lovers' ability to transpose "things base and vile" to "form
and dignity" (1.i.232-233); the mechanicals' concern that the lamentable
aspects of the Pyramus and Thisbe story be eliminated; Oberon and Puck's
successful efforts to generate harmony out of the chaotic human relationships the play begins with; and Titania's ability to see an angel in an ass. The mechanicals' consistent efforts to transform the unpleasant into the pleasant is a foil to what Shakespeare accomplishes more subtly in the play as a whole. Even the inept performance of the mechanicals, in his hands, is transformed into expert and beautiful comedy. By means of this transforming power, Shakespeare presents in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a fictitious, but veri-similar representation of some common follies in domestic life that is simultaneously a representation of a better world than nature produces, and as such, a vision that has metaphysical validity.
CONCLUSION

The dreamlike qualities of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have received frequent critical notice: its fusion of seemingly disparate elements with a disregard for normal, conscious attitudes about time and space and the verisimilar. Assessments of the meaning of the play which have considered Puck's final invitation to the audience to think of the play as a dream have been quite diverse. This diversity results in large part from different assumptions, explicit or implicit, about what dream means. Thus C. L. Barber treats dream primarily as meaning "idle fancy" and believes that Shakespeare's calling the play a "dream" signals a skeptical attitude toward the play's subject matter.

James A. Calderwood thinks of dream as "the inner forms and impulses of the human mind" or "the normally incommunicable, subjective dimension of human experience" and concludes that the drama, by making manifest the dreaming mind, makes self-knowledge available to an audience. Paul Olson's allegorical interpretation of the play is based on the assumption that dreams can be representations of higher truths and that "the dream becomes more than a fanciful illusion." Different as the above assessments of dream are, they each tend to be reductive in the sense that none of them considers the possibility that dream may signify many different things in the play and that the
dream perspective may function in different ways to accomplish different purposes. No critic considers comprehensively the Elizabethan concepts of dreams.

An examination of Elizabethan concepts of dreams reveals that dreams may signify many different things. All dreams are illusions, in the sense that they are imaginative representations, but while, on the one hand, they may be only idle fancies, deceptions, or delusions, they may, on the other hand, be manifestations of the passions, thoughts, or humors of the dreamer or representations of supernatural truths. Sleep may thus be a time when irrationality has sway, when the imagination is left to its own devices and to the influences of the humors, the passions, or the devil; or sleep may be a time of soul-awakening, when the soul or higher faculties are liberated from bodily concerns and are free to perceive heavenly things. The diversity of Renaissance dream theory explains the versatility of the dream as a literary device. Because of the possible supernatural connections of dreams, they can be used effectively to control plot development, to provide authority for a poem, to suggest allegorical undermeanings, or to foreshadow later action. Dreams provide a ready-made excuse for poetic license. Because of the possible natural causes of dreams, they may be used for purposes of character revelation. Dreams have an implicit kinship with poetry in the
Renaissance because they are both viewed largely as products of the imagination. Just as dreams may be deceptions, revelations of character, or representations of supernatural truths, so Renaissance authors countered arguments that poetry is composed of lies and presents immoral actions with the argument that though poetry is fiction, on the one hand it exposes the common follies of people, while on the other it also may represent a "golden" world that is better than the one nature provides. The diversity of Renaissance dream theory thus helps to explain the diverse critical responses to the play's meaning, suggests the appropriateness of a dream as a metaphor for drama, and delineates various possible significances dreams may have in _A Midsummer Night's Dream_.

Shakespeare's use of the dream perspective in _A Midsummer Night's Dream_ is highly appropriate and effective for his dramatic, comic exploration of the fairy world and love on Midsummer Eve. Dreams, fairies, lovers, and Midsummer have interrelations in Renaissance thought that give Shakespeare's use of the dream perspective an appropriateness that goes beyond the traditional association of dreams with the supernatural in literature. Further, a dramatic experience of the play has affinities with the dreaming experience. Just as a dreamer generally experiences dreams as realities, so Shakespeare artfully nurtures a willing suspension of disbelief in his auditors so that they experience the strange world of the play as imaginatively probable. By a continual
blending of the past and the present, the familiar and the unfamiliar, by a skillful movement from the less fantastic to the more fantastic, by a general classical distancing that places the fantastic in the long ago and far away, and by consistent preparation of the audience for transformations and transitions, Shakespeare insures that questions of verisimilitude and anachronism will not normally occur to an audience. Just as the dreamer can think of his dream as a dream only after the fact, so Shakespeare gradually encourages his audience to think of its imaginative experience of the play as a dream when he step by step removes it from the woods to Athens, to the playhouse, and finally to reality.

Shakespeare's dramatic use of sleep and dreams accounts for much of the laughter and delight inherent in the play. Initiated by a mistake of Puck's, dreams provide the primary source of deception in the comedy and account for the abrupt transformations of the lovers that produce situations intrinsically ridiculous—the unexpected event, the debasing of personages, and the incongruous. Simultaneously, the "dreams" that Puck induces are clearly a means of character revelation, for they make manifest the irrationality of the lovers suggested in the first act of the play. Dreams thus become a device to "strip the ragged follies of the time." At the same time the dream perspective enables both the characters and the audience to look at
the exposure of the characters as unreal; so that the audience remains secure in its laughter with the conviction that no harm has actually been done. When the lovers awaken the second time, dreams are used in their wish-fulfilling capacity and secure the delight of both the characters and the audience.

As Puck invites the audience to view the drama as a dream, literary criticism becomes dream interpretation. The fusion of the two analytical processes is accomplished even before Puck's disclaimer when the lovers, Bottom, Theseus, and Hippolyta all make comments on the possible validity of the "dreams" of the night that are the substance of the drama. The subject of the play becomes the play itself, or the nature of a dramatic, comic poem. In the context of Renaissance dream theory, considering the drama as a dream presents various possibilities: 1) drama is an idle fancy; 2) drama is a product of character and reflects the thoughts, passions, or humors of the poet-dramatist; or 3) drama is a feigning of truths that surpass nature's doings. These alternatives are implicit in the characters' comments on their "dreams." An analysis of their comments gradually leads to an awareness of the nature of A Midsummer Night's Dream and the relationship between dramatic illusion and reality. Bottom's "dream" and his response to it expose him as the imaginative literalist that he is throughout the play. His message is, essentially, that poetry is real. Theseus, by linking the
poet, the lover, and the madman, places two very different possible perspectives for the "story of the night" before the audience. Theseus himself represents a skeptical attitude toward the validity of the "dreams," as they are simply the product of an over-active imagination; in other words, a reflection of the nature of the poet (or dreamer). Implicit in his speech, however, is another perspective for the substance of the play. In the context of certain Neoplatonic ideas, his linking of the poet, the madman, and the lover can be interpreted to signify the poet as a creature of special visionary powers who gives intelligible form to the truths he has perceived. Hippolyta's reply further encourages the view that the drama is a feigning of supernatural truths. Cumulatively, the dream perspective reveals the nature of A Midsummer Night's Dream as a fictitious, but verisimilar representation of some of the common follies of daily life and, simultaneously, a representation of a world that surpasses nature. As such, the play is primarily about the power of the imagination to transform the potentially ugly into the beautiful. This process is not only the essence of the creation of comedy but is similar to Renaissance notions of cosmic creation. As do dreams, A Midsummer Night's Dream has the ability to function as a mirror that reflects from two different directions. As an expositor of folly, it reflects a nature that is "brazen"; as a mirror that reflects things beyond nature, it shows a "golden world," or
shows its "brazen" world being transformed into something better than nature's work. The making of the comic vision of this play thus has affinities with God's continuous making of a world and His bringing order and harmony out of chaos. The comic vision the play makes available to an audience can thus function as an instance of visible beauty that lifts the beholder to a cosmic vision of metaphysical validity.

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a dramatic tour de force. Moving consistently with an air of gaiety and a lightness of touch, it draws circles around the auditor's imagination. The improbable becomes the probable; the potentially malevolent and ugly becomes beautiful. Bewitching its observers into a willing assent, the play then informs them in the person of Puck that it is only an illusion after all. Then pretending to be nonsense, it plays its final joke. For those who are haunted by its vision and return to interpret the dream are left additional delights and discoveries as the paradoxes of the dream become clear, and lies become truths, illusions become realities, and nonsense yields mysterious meanings.
FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION


CHAPTER I

1 The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. Hardin Craig (Dallas, 1951).


Chapter I—continued

7 See E. C. Pettet, Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition (New York, 1949), for an extensive analysis of the romantic aspect of Shakespearean comedy.


15 C. L. Barber in his Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom (New York, 1963) argues that we are "awake" while we watch. See pp. 13-19 below.

Chapter I--continued


CHAPTER II

Brief, but useful surveys of dream theory are to be found in Fromm's The Forgotten Language; Werner Wolff's The Dream--Mirror of Conscience (New York, 1952); and Manfred Weidhorn's Dreams in Seventeenth-Century English Literature (The Hague, 1970). Background for Renaissance dream theory is provided by Walter Clyde Curry, Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences (New York, 1926); and Constance B. Hieatt, The Realism of Dream Visions: The Poetic Exploitation of the Dream-Experience in Chaucer and his Contemporaries (The Hague, 1967). The best sampling of Renaissance concepts of sleep and dreams is still to be found in Carroll Camden, Jr.'s "Shakespeare on Sleep and Dreams," Rice Institute Pamphlet, XXIII, No. 2 (April, 1936), 106-133. The two most thorough treatments of the subject are unpublished: Bain Tate Stewart's dissertation and Compton Rees, Jr.'s "English Renaissance Dream Theory and Its Use in Shakespeare," Thesis Rice Institute 1958. Since the purpose of this chapter is to illustrate various ideas about dreams current in the Renaissance and not to identify Shakespeare's sources, the survey has not been restricted to writers published preceding the composition of A Midsummer Night's Dream or even to Shakespeare's contemporaries, although most of the writers mentioned are so. Robert Burton, for instance, is cited simply because The Anatomy expresses well ideas that were current in Shakespeare's time.


Chapter II--continued


8. Various ideas about the divisions of the soul and the exact placement of the imagination among the mental faculties are complicated. See Ruth Leila Anderson, Elizabethan Psychology and Shakespeare's Plays (Iowa City, 1927), pp. 7-17.


13. For instance, Laurentius and Lemnius emphasize the activity of the bodily elements, while the intellectual activity during sleep is emphasized by Timothy Bright, A Treatise of Melancholie (London, 1586), pp. 117-118; and Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici, in Works, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Chicago, 1964), i, 87-88.

14. See, for instance, Nashe, 1,356-357.

Chapter II—continued


20 All scriptural citations are from the King James translation.

21 Camden, p. 124; Langton, fol. 87r-87v; Person, p. 247 and p. 252; and Burton, p. 465.


24 See also Vermigli, p. 33; Batman, fol. 84r.


26 Vermigli, shortly after suggesting that the oracles of the pagans found their source in evil spirits, confines Aristotle's argument that God would only send prophetic dreams to the wise and good (if He sent prophetic dreams, which
Chapter II—continued

He does not do according to Aristotle), by arguing that God often warned and corrected pagans through dreams. He refers to Tertullian's De anima for support, p. 37.


28 These "mixed" dreams, as Vermigli calls them, are variously labeled by Renaissance authors as supernatural dreams, accidental dreams, prophetic dreams, or astrological dreams, or they are simply discussed as to cause without being labeled. Stewart refers to this category of dreams as "prophetic dreams which are motivated by the sympathy considered to exist between the mind of man and the world" (p. 88ff.), while Compton Rees, Jr., refers to them as "external natural dreams" (p. 63ff.). Manfred Weidhorn calls them "self-generated heuristic and mantic dreams" and briefly traces the development of the concept from Orphic—Pythagorean ideas of the 5th and 6th centuries B.C. through Stoic and Neoplatonist variations (particularly Posidonius and Synesius of Cyrene) to its persistence in the Middle Ages, largely unchanged by Christian doctrine in men like St. Athanasius, St. Clement, Nemestis of Emesa, Prudentius, and Paracelsus, right on into the Renaissance along with the old Stoic motif of sympatheta (pp. 19-21).


30 Daldianus Artemidorus, The Iudgement, or exposition of Dreames (London, 1606)—"The Epistle Dedicatory.


32 For instance, Socrates dreamed he saw a little swan in his lap, whose feathers grew until the bird spread its wings, flew, and sang a sweet and harmonious song; the next day Plato was sent to him to be his scholar.
Chapter II—continued

Cicero saw in a dream the face of one who would be emperor; the next day he recognized that face in Augustus, who was yet a boy playing in the market place and whom Cicero had never seen before. See Stewart, pp. 60-61, 73-75 for contemporary accounts of prophetic dreams.

33. The general observations Artemidorus makes on what things signify in dreams also points to the range of interpretation most dreams can have. Dreams in which things happen only to the dreamer concern the future of the dreamer, but dreams about the body or outward things may happen to others or to the dreamer, according to usage. The head in a dream stands for the father, but a right hand may stand for a wife, a friend, a daughter, or a sister. Dreams that contain persons other than the dreamer generally concern the future of others; yet if these dreams concern friends and signify good, good will come to the dreamer also; and if they signify evil, bad will come to the dreamer (pp. 1-2).

34. Vermigli, p. 33; Camden, pp. 126-127; and Lemnius, fol. 112v-113r.


37. Several authors have examined various shapes and functions that dreams have assumed in different literary periods: William Stuart Messer, The Dream in Homer and Greek Poetry (New York, 1918); John Barker Stearns, Studies of the Dream as a Technical Device in Latin Epic and Drama (Lancaster, Pa., 1927); Constance B. Hieatt's study in regard to Chaucer and his contemporaries; Bain Tate Stewart's and Compton Rees, Jr.'s unpublished studies in regard to Renaissance drama, particularly Shakespeare; and Manfred Weidhorn's analysis of dream usage in 17th century English literature.

38. See Messer, p. 9, pp. 29-30; Stearns, pp. 14-31, pp. 44-47.

39. See Messer, pp. 54-55; Stearns, pp. 1-7; Weidhorn, pp. 48-52; and Hieatt, p. 21.
Chapter II--continued


42 Stewart notes that the use of a dream framework to embrace complete action is rare in Elizabethan drama. Plays that do use a dream framework normally have only a fragmentary one, suggesting it at either the beginning or the end of the play. Besides A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Woman in the Moone, dream frameworks are used in Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew and Middleton's A Game at Chess (1624).


CHAPTER III


Chapter III—continued

3. The summer solstice takes place on June 21; however, Midsummer, or St. John's Day is June 24, and most of the observances connected with this holiday take place on the night of June 23, or Midsummer Eve. The divergence between the solstice itself and the celebration of the solstice may be explained by a statement of R. Chambers in The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities, (London, 1864): "The sun, formally speaking, reaches the most northerly point in the zodiac, and enters the constellation of Cancer, on the 21st of June; but for several days about that time there is no observable difference in his position, or his hours of rising and setting" (1,719).


8. When Proteus, Silvia, and Julia enter the forest in the frontiers of Mantua in Two Gentlemen of Verona, Valentine exclaims: "How like a dream is this I see and hear!" (V.iv.26). Antipholus of Syracuse, at the end of The Comedy of Errors, tells Luciana he will "make good" what he told her earlier, "If this be not a dream I see and hear" (V.i.376). The ruse of the "Induction" to The Taming of the Shrew precipitates Sly into the exclamation: "Or do I dream? or have I dream'd till now?" Sly's deception is also an enactment of the uncertain state the dramatist attempts to induce in an audience; Sly is somewhat representative of an audience who is told that illusion
Chapter III—continued

is real and gradually consents to consider it so. After hearing of Falstaff's escape from detection in a laundry basket, Ford in The Merry Wives of Windsor tries to clarify his befuddled state: "Hum! ha! is this a vision? is this a dream? do I sleep? Master Ford, awake! awake, Master Ford!" (III.v.140-141).

9 This discussion of the risible in regard to A Midsummer Night's Dream is based on Theories of Comedy, ed. Paul Lauter (Garden City, N.Y., 1964) and Marvin Herrick's Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 37-64.

10 Antonio Riccoboni, "from The Comic Art (1585)," in Theories of Comedy, p. 107; Antonio Sebastiano Minturno, "from The Art of Poetry (1563)," in Theories of Comedy, p. 76.

11 Ben Jonson, "Induction," Every Man Out of His Humour (1599), in Theories of Comedy, p. 114; Plato, Philebus (Numbers 47-50), in Theories of Comedy, pp. 5-6.

12 "Prologue," Ralph Roister Doister, in Theories of Comedy, p. 113.

13 Minturno, p. 85; and Colsilinian Tractate, in Theories of Comedy, p. 22.


16 Lodovico Castelvetro, in his Commentary on Aristotle's "Poetics" (1570) discusses an audience's response to deluded people, who through
Chapter III—continued

ignorance do not know what men usually know—a situation both the lovers and Bottom exemplify, since they are unaware of how they are being exploited for our laughter. "Yet though the stupidity of such people provokes our laughter, it is to be borne in mind that their stupidity does them no very great harm; otherwise it would either fail to make us laugh or would moderate our laughter considerably." Ignorant people are easily imposed upon, and "men feel pity for those who are easily harmed, and perhaps envy or scorn for those who harm them" (Theories of Comedy, p. 90). Herrick also cites many instances of the critical injunction that the exposure of the ugly must not be harmful or painful to others, p. 38ff.


CHAPTER IV

See, for instance, Dent, pp. 121-122; Kermode, p. 218; Young, pp. 111-126; and William J. Martz, Shakespeare's Universe of Comedy (New York, 1971), p. 61ff. Martz, Dent, and Calderwood emphasize, as does this study, the play's thematic interest in the relationship between art and reality. Dent sees the play as a sort of defense of poesy, arguing the high moral function of the poetic imagination. He argues that the play does have meaning, but does not get specific about what it does say or what its relation to life is. "Clearly," Martz says, "the question to be asked is what Bottom's transformation means in terms of the nature of poetic illusion or of imaginative reality" (p. 70). The play's subject "is the imagination, or the relationship between art and life," its theme that "the life of the imagination is more real than any literal reality" (p. 31, p. 37). Puck's reference to "these visions" implies "a glimpse of timeless reality," that "art in its ultimate sense implies total order and harmony, or God," and that the "endpoint of the total imaginative act that is the play" is brotherly love (pp. 64-65). This study reaches some of the same conclusions, but from a different angle of approach and with different interpretations of individual aspects of the play.
Chapter IV—continued


7 Timaeus, trans. Benjamin Jowett, with Intro. by Glen R. Morrow (Kansas City, 1949), Section 72, p. 55—The Library of Liberal Arts series.

8 Theseus' speech has been the subject of many conjectures concerning Shakespeare's aesthetic. What exactly it means and what Theseus means are controversial. The ambiguity arises from the fact that Theseus uses words to arrive at a skeptical conclusion which can be interpreted in other ways that undermine a skeptical position. Theseus' speech and Hippolyta's reply are discussed at length as representative of two different theories of art by J. A. Bryant, Jr., in *Hippolyta's View: Some Christian Aspects of Shakespeare's Plays* (Lexington, Ky., 1961), pp. 1-18. Theseus' theory reduces poetry to a "mechanical kind of allegory," according to Bryant, while Hippolyta endorses a Christian conception of poetry, what Bevan has called "symbols behind which we cannot see" (pp. 2-3). M. Poirier, in "Sidney's Influence upon A Midsummer Night's Dream," *SP*, XLIV (1947), 483-489, believes certain phrases in Theseus' speech demonstrate the influence of Sidney's *Apology*, but does not apply his opinion to the meaning of the play except as it relates to the date of composition. H. Nemerov, in "The Marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta,"
Chapter IV—continued

KR, XVIII (1956), 633-641, says that the two speeches represent contrasting views of art; one seeing it as primarily entertainment; the other as primarily mystery. He finds Theseus' speech, though possibly remotely based on Plato's Phaedrus and Ion, neither "distinguished nor illuminating" and considers Theseus a sort of priggish civil authority. Paul Olson (pp. 97-98) and David Young (pp. 137-151) both see Theseus' speech in the context of Neoplatonist criticism.


Suppose two blocks of stone lying side by side, one unpatterned, quite untouched by art, the other wrought into the statue of some god or man, Grace or Muse—a creation in which the sculptor's art, has concentrated much loveliness.

Now the stone thus wrought by the artist's hand to beauty of form is beautiful not as stone—for so the crude block would be as pleasant—but in virtue of the form imposed on it by art. This form is in the designer before ever it enters the stone; he holds it not by his equipment of eyes and hands but by his participation in his art. The beauty, therefore, exists in a far higher state in the art; that original beauty is not transferred; what comes over is a derivative and a minor, and even that appears in the statue only in so far as stone yielded to the art.
Chapter IV—continued

12 Plotinus and Neoplatonism (Cambridge, England, 1952), p. 149. Pistorius goes on to contrast the Aristotelean conception of art as a representation of a material entity (even when that entity is idealized) with the Plotinian conception of art as a representation "of the immaterial and perfect Ideal World, in a material or semi-material medium." He proposes:

For Aristotle the work of art would be lower than the entity that it represents. I make a statue of Socrates. It is only an imitation of Socrates, and therefore less than Socrates. With Plotinus it is otherwise. The statue of Socrates is not an imitation of the time-space entity that is Socrates, but of the idea of Socrates, the essence of the man, or, in other words, of the manifestation of the Ideal World in the time-space entity Socrates. The work of art is therefore higher than the time-space entity.

(p. 150)


16 In his Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century, Marvin T. Herrick cites Donatus' ingenious differentiation between "counterfeit," "lie," "fiction," and "fact," which was relevant both because of the commonly held attitude that comic plots and characters, though feigned, must "preserve an air of truth" and because of the enormous influence of Donatus' commentaries on
Chapter IV—continued

Terrence in the development of sixteenth-century comic theory. Donatus comments: "Counterfeit is the dissembling of fact, a lie is what cannot happen, a fiction is what is not fact but could happen. A counterfeit is a feigned untruth similar to the truth, a lie is neither possible nor verisimilar, a fiction is wholly without truth but verisimilar. To utter a counterfeit is deceptive, a fiction clever, a falsehood stupid. To utter a counterfeit is a fault, a fiction an ingenuity, a lie a folly. We are deceived by counterfeit, we are delighted by fictions, we despise lies" (p. 65). Barber seems to think Shakespeare's intent was to "lie."


18 On the different kinds of love discussed by Neoplatonists, see Erwin Panofsky, pp. 142-145.


20 From Marsilio Ficino's commentary on the Symposium, trans. by Vyvyan in his Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty, pp. 37-38, based on Sopra l'Amore o Vero Convito di Platone (Firenze, 1594), 1.11.


22 The intuitive or intellective apprehension of the Absolute (whether it is referred to as Love, Beauty, or God) is frequently described in terms of an awakening of the soul and an opening of the inner eye by Neoplatonists. For instance, see Plotinus, p. 102; Castiglione, p. 611; and Pico della Mirandola, p. 229. The awakening may occur during sleep or from sleep, but the essence of awakening is always a leap from the sensible world (shadow) to the supersensible (reality).
LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED


Artemidorus, Daldianus. The Iudgement, or exposition of Dreames, Written by Artimodorus, an Auentient and famous Author, first in Greeke, then Translated into Latin, After into French, and now into English. Trans. Robert Wood (?). London, 1606.


---


Greenfield, Thelma N. "A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Praise of Folly." CL, XX (Summer, 1968), 236-244.


Langton, Christopher. *An introduction into phisycke*. London, 1550?


Siegel, P. "A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Wedding Guests." ShQ, IV (1953), 139-144.


