“How shall we find the concord of this discord?” A Midsummer Night’s Dream and the religious controversies of late sixteenth-century England

Vasiliki Markidou

In his Arden edition of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Harold F. Brooks notes that “love and marriage is the central theme [of the play]: love aspiring to and consummated in marriage, or to a harmonious partnership within it.”[1] Lois Montrose in turn, in his seminal article on the Shakespearean play, pays homage to Brooks’ argument by pointing out that it “summarizes the consensus of modern criticism” (114). While fully acknowledging this point, my concern in this paper is to re-examine *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* via its rich religious lexicon. For this early Shakespearean play is permeated with a religious discourse that was repeatedly employed in Elizabethan church controversies. It is my contention that by taking into consideration these elements and by examining their re-presentation in the Shakespearean play, we will become acutely aware that, apart from dramatizing the stock issues related to the genre of early modern comedy (namely, unruly love and its containment through the social institution of marriage), Shakespeare simultaneously reworked contemporary disputes over church polity and offered his “evaluative judgements” on them.[2]

Indeed, the religious associations of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are in need of further interpretation. Although the Christian overtones of the play have been registered by a multitude of critics, these refer almost exclusively to Bottom’s “rare vision” and note its centrality within the play and its function as a Pauline allusion. Bottom’s inability to articulate his ‘dream’ has repeatedly been read as a parody of St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians. In Act IV, Scene I, Bottom exclaims:

Gramma / Γράμμα: Journal of Theory and Criticism 9 (2001)

© 2001 by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

> 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.... 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. (IV.i.203-209).

The passage bears a striking verbal and structural similarity to the Pauline Epistle to the Corinthians, 2: 9-10, which in the King James Bible reads: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

Bottom's "rare vision" is not the sole passage of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* linked to St. Paul. In Tyndale's translation (1534) and the Geneva New Testament (1557), we read: "the Spirite searcheth all thinges, ye the botome of Goddes secrettes." The Epistle also includes the verse: "And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not to bring to naught things that are" (1 Cor. 1:28), while in Tyndale and the Geneva Bible this verse starts "and vile things of the worlde".[3] As Jan Kott has already pointed out, in Helena's exclamation that "[t]hings base and vile, holding no quantity, / Love can transpose to form and dignity," "'[t]hings base...' appears to be borrowed from the Geneva Bible, and 'vile' repeats the wording of the Authorized Version" (Kott 31). The Pauline allusion of Helena's speech thus even more firmly than Bottom's "rare vision" ties the knot between love and religion within the play.

Having emphasised the multiple allusions to the Pauline discourse in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I would like to turn the reader's attention to a religious propagandist text of the last decade of the sixteenth century which, while producing its own (hi)story, also reflected the controversies between Puritans and Conformists over church policy that marked the Elizabethan era. Published in 1599, it bore the following title: *A Christian Letter of certaine English Protestantes, unfayned favourers of the present state of religion, authorised and professed in England unto that Reverend and Learned man, Maister R. Hoo. requiring resolution in certayne matters of doctrine (which seeme to overthrowe the foundation of Christian Religion, and of the Church among us) expreslie contayned in his five bookes of Ecclesiasticall Policie*. Its author was the leading Puritan clergyman of the reign of Elizabeth I, namely, Thomas Cartwright, while its target – as the title of the work makes clear – was the quintessential defender of the Elizabethan settlement, Richard Hooker. In particular, Cartwright's focus was Hooker's seminal work, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, which defined the position of the Church of England at a time when it was attacked by both Puritans and stout Catholics recently reinforced by the Counter-Reformation.

The first four books of *Ecclesiastical Polity* were published in 1593, the great fifth in 1597, and the remaining three just prior to Hooker's death in 1600. In these, Hooker articulated the position of the Church of England as a *via media* between the above-mentioned religious extremists. Hooker's model was based on Scripture and Reason (the former interpreted by the latter) and promoted the values of toleration and scepticism. Liberal Protestants and liberal Catholics were welcomed, while extreme Protestants and extreme Catholics were rejected (Trevor-Roper 197). Cartwright, on the other hand, was the chief exponent of the Puritan side in the Elizabethan religious struggle; in 1572-3, he engaged in a great controversy with the future Archbishop, Whitgift, which came to its closure with the victory of "the architect of the Elizabethan settlement" (Pollard 14). Two decades later, Cartwright attacked Hooker, a fact that is registered in Cartwright's polemical text.

The tone of the text is established from the beginning. The first half of the title raises the banner of Protestantism while at the same time evoking the issue of truth and falsity within its bosom ("unfayned favourers of the present state or religion" presupposes their 'fayned' counterparts). The addressee of this "Christian letter" is then announced: "that Reverend and Learned man, Maister R. Hoo." Cartwright seems at this point to pay his respects to Hooker's religious authority and his great intellectual grasp. Such an acknowledgement is soon proved short-lived, for Cartwright labels Hooker's *Ecclesiasticall Policie* as a likely Pandora's box: it contains arguments on "certayne matters of doctrine" which "seeme to overthrowe the foundation of Christian religion", thereby "requiring resolution".

Clearly, the Puritan polemicist is raising the possibility of Hooker having mis-represented the position of the Church of England on issues of doctrine, thus leading Puritans to confusion about and misjudgement of his intentions and, by extension, raising a serious threat to the unity of Protestantism ("*seeme* to overthrow the foundation of the Christian religion"). This rhetorical tactic both acknowledges a 'truth' and promotes an 'untruth': as both this and the beginning of the title of Cartwright's polemical text indicate, the members of the Church of England and the Puritans belonged, after all, to the same religion; yet here, on the other hand, Cartwright erases the fact that "in terms of doctrine, there were no significant differences separating Puritans and Conformists" (Lake 61). On the contrary, his bitter attack on Hooker paints such differences as potential promoters of a serious rift within Protestantism.

The opening part of Cartwright's text reads:

> When men dreame they are asleepe, and while men sleepe the enemie soweth tares, and tares take roote and hinder the good corne of the Church, before it be espied. Therefore *Wise men through silence permitt nothing looselie to passe away as in a dreame.* Your offer then, Maist. Hoo. is godly and laudable, to *enforme men of the estate of the church of God established among us*. For the Teachers of righteous things, are highlie to be commended. And he that leadeth men rightlie to judge of the church of God, is to be beloued of all men. Howbeit sometimes go-

> odlie promises are meere formal, and great offers serve onely to hoodwinke such as meane well. And as by a faire shew of *wishing well*, our first parents were fowlie deceauved: so is there a cunning framed method, by excellencie of wordes, & intising speeches of mans wisedome, to beguile and bewitch the verie Church of GOD. And such as are used for this purpose come in sheepes clothing. For he translateth him self into an Angel of light, who blindeth all men with utter darknes. (3)[4]

A multitude of striking verbal similarities can be traced between Cartwright's text and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Prior to pointing them out, I would like to clarify that by offering a reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in conjunction to the particular religious account, I am not arguing for Shakespeare's use of the particular text as a source of his early comedy. Although the exact date of the play's composition is unknown, the majority of literary critics point to 1595 or 1596,[5] that is to say, three to four years prior to the publication of Cartwright's propagandist text. However, Shakespeare's contact with a number of Puritan sympathisers through his theatrical performances at the Inns of Court may well have rendered him distinctly aware of such crucial religious and, by extension, political disputes, as well as of the stock rhetoric that was employed by each side in order to discredit the other. In fact, as *The first parte of Pasquils apologie* (1590) noted, "when T. C. (Thomas Cartwright) could not find enough ministers who could preach, he said, 'he [would look] for help from the Innes of Court'" (Hamilton 63).

The Puritan extract begins with a "dreame"; the Shakespearean comedy focuses on Bottom's dream and magnifies the importance of 'dreaming' through its experience by a multitude of other characters (both Titania and the four Athenian lovers). Cartwright alerts his readers to the danger of being deceived by "the enemie" (i.e. Hooker in particular, and the Elizabethan Church in general) if he finds them in a relaxed rather than polemical stance ("while men sleepe"). In such a case, he "soweth tares" which "hinder the good corne of the Church, before it be espied". In other words, the unity of Protestantism will be disrupted. Interestingly, Shakespeare uses the corn imagery to describe the outcome of another disruption, namely, the bitter quarrel between the fairy king and queen: "the green corn / Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard; / The fold stands empty in the drowned field, / And crows are fatted with the murrion flock" (II.i.94-97).[6] Linking the destruction of corn to a sheep-plague, Shakespeare fixes this "progeny of evils" (115) within a distinctly theological background. Accordingly, his fairy queen, Titania, argues that this 'progeny' "comes / From our debate, from our *dissention*" (II.i.115-6) [emphasis mine]. The religious controversy background of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is reinforced once we take into consideration that fairies were often associated with religious 'others'; the theologian Richard Corbet read them as Catholics: "since of late, Elizabeth, / And after James, came in, / They never danced on any heath, / As when the time hath been. / By which we note the Fairies were of the old profession, /

Their songs were Ave Maries, / Their dances were procession" (Wilson 18).

Cartwright's description of religious dissemblers (i.e. the Church of England) as those who "come in sheepes clothing" bears a striking resemblance to Titania's attack against the fairy king for having acquired the guise of a mild shepherd in order to deceive: "When thou hast stol'n away from fairy land, / And *in the shape of Corin*, sat all day / Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love / To amorous Phillida" (II.i.65-68) [emphasis mine]. Taking into consideration the link between threatening religious 'others' and fairies, we realise that pastoral metamorphosis either 'constitutes' (in Cartwright's text) or evokes (in the Shakespearean play) the theatrical facet of the religious dissembler. Clearly then, Shakespeare's dramatization of a dissension taking place between fairies, characteristically linked to religious 'others', sets *A Midsummer Night's Dream* firmly within the religious disputes of the late Elizabethan era.

The religious overtones of the play also permeate the lovers' chase in the woods. In Act II, Scene II, Hermia and Helena run (separately) into the forest in search of their beloved men. Within the religious framework of the play, each maiden can function as the topos of "the church represented as a woman, a topos which originated in Revelation, where protestant, anticatholic polemicists read the woman wandering in the wilderness as the true church and the whore of Babylon as the false one" (Hamilton 67). Under the influence of Oberon's magic flower juice, associated – as has already been noted – with the Catholic forces, men are involved in a struggle to distinguish between true and false woman, namely, the true and false church (i.e. Protestantism versus Catholicism). Lysander, affected by the magic potion, renounces his love, Hermia, for Helena by means of a distinctly religious rhetoric:

> Or as the *heresies* that men do leave
> Are hated most of those they did deceive;
> So thou, my surfeit and my *heresy*,
> Of all be hated, but the most of me!
> And, all my powers, address your love and might
> To honour Helen, and to be her knight!
> (II.ii.138-43; emphases mine)

Through Lysander's repeated use of a stock religious term ('heresie') as well as his rejection of his true love (Hermia) for a false one (Helena), Shakespeare evokes the ease with which the religious person could mistake the false church for the true one and reject the latter for the sake of the former.[7] The playwright reinforces this thorny issue in Act III, Scene II. When Oberon accuses Puck of having "Some true love turn'd, and not a false turn'd true" (III.ii.91), Puck replies: "one man holding truth / A million fail, confounding oath on oath" (III.ii.92-93). Puck's commentary alludes to the recusant and renegade activities in which a great number of English people were involved during the late sixteenth century.[8] Indeed, confusion over religious matters and lack of solid religious belief produced a need for the English people to be *persuaded* about such life-and-death choices; hence, the large-scale effort on behalf of the various religious sects of the reign of Elizabeth I to *argue* convincingly that they were the sole possessors of the absolute 'truth', while the rest were dissemblers. One such case was Cartwright's propaganda text.

Being distinctly aware of Hooker's ability to surpass him in erudition and eloquence, Cartwright tries to undermine his enemy's intellectual and verbal power to his best interests: he presents his enemy's "excellencie of wordes, & intising speeches of mans wisedome" as forces that "beguile and bewitch the verie Church of GOD". He even reaches the point of comparing such a deception to the quintessential theological one, namely that of Adam and Eve. The image of the histrionic, talking serpent lurks underneath Cartwright's argument that "by a faire shew of *wishing well*, our first parents were fowlie deceaued". In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the evil power of eloquence and its bewitching effect is insisted on very early; Egeus accuses Lysander of having

> ... *'bewitch'd* the bosom of my child.
> Thou, thou Lysander, thou hast *given her rhymes*,
> [...]
> Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
> With *feigning* voices verses of *feigning* love,
> [...]
> *Turn'd* her obedience (which is due to me)
> To stubborn harshness.
> (I.i.27-38; emphases mine)[9]

Like the Cartwrightian text, the Shakespearean play brings forth the issues of deceit and bewitchment due to evil verbal expertise, while their outcome is a 'translation', a metamorphosis. If in the play, such a change is effected on Hermia (initially, and then on the majority of the play's characters), in Cartwright's propaganda text it refers to that of the religious 'enemie': "For he *translateth* him self into an Angel of light, who blindeth all men with utter darknes" [emphasis mine].

Having firmly set the ground of Hooker's image as an evil dissembler, Cartwright elaborates on it:

> When wee therefore, your loving cuntrymen ... were made verie secure, and by the sweete sounde of your melodious stile, almost cast into a dreaming sleepe: Wee happelie remembring your Preface that there might bee some *other cause*, opened at the length our heavie eyes, and casting some more earnest and intentive sight into your manner of sight, it seemed unto us that couertlie and underhand you did bende all your skill and force against the present state of our English church.... For we saw the theme and the cause you have in hand, to be notable simples, whereof a

> skilfull popishe Apoticarie can readilie make some fine potion or sweete smelling ointment, to bring heedlesse men into the pleasant dreame of well-weening: while they closelie set on fire the house of God. (3-4)

Deceit through eloquence is reinforced in this passage ("your melodious stile"); its outcome is once more "a dreaming sleepe". Hooker is accused by his religious opponent of clearing the ground for "a skilfull popishe Apoticarie" to "make some fine potion of sweete smelling ointment" which will cast men to "the pleasant dreame of *well-weening*", while destroying the Protestant church. Once again, Cartwright's religious propaganda stands in a homologous position to Shakespeare's play, in which the fairy king – through his servant, Puck – anoints the "*sleeping* eyelids" (II.i.170) of both Titania and the Athenian male lovers with the "juice" of "a little western flower" (II.i.166), bringing about confusion and chaos [emphasis mine]. It thus becomes clear that Shakespeare is alluding to the stock attack of Puritans on Conformist Protestants, namely, that they allow the enemy of Protestantism, the Catholics, to confuse the people over the true religion (i.e. Protestantism) and draw them towards the false one (i.e. Catholicism). Indeed, as has already been demonstrated, Oberon, linked to Catholicism through his fairy state, confuses Lysander over the true and false church, evoked by Hermia and Helena respectively.

The radical Puritan propagandist continues:

> ...wee seeke and beate our braynes, but are hardely able, by our meane capacitie, to gather any thinge: but as a man a farre beholding *a bryer tree*; all blowen over with his flowers, with great desire approacheth neere unto it, and findeth himselfe deceayed; so the delight of reading your booke is meruelous great, but the fruit thereof (howsoever it come to passe) unto us that search and examine it, is far unlike the goodlie shew and appearance. (46; emphasis mine)

Cartwright reinforces his argument on Hooker's counterfeiting by comparing *Ecclesiastical Polity* to the dissembling brier tree. The same imagery is employed twice in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Act II, Scene I, a representative of the fairy train exclaims: "Over hill, over dale, / Thorough bush, thorough *briar*, / ... I serve the Fairy Queen" (ll. 1-2, 7), while the Athenian lovers, heaping confusion upon confusion, are "torn with *briars*" (III.ii.443) [emphases mine]. In the former case, the brier tree is linked to the histrionic fairies, in the latter, it evokes the great disorder effected by them on the youths of the play.

Like Oberon's servant, Puck, Hooker is painted by Cartwright as a force that desires "to bring in a confusion of all thinges"; he is also willing "to reconcile heauen and earth and to make all religions equal." Indeed, the first threat that Hooker presents within the Cartwrightian argument is strikingly similar to Titania's description of the outcome of her and Oberon's dissent: "And the quaint mazes in the wanton green / For lack of tread are indistinguishable" (II.i.99-

100). The imagery is re-presented later on in the same speech: "... the mazed world, / By their increase, now knows not which is which" (II.i.113-114).[10] Titania's complaint both registers a great confusion in the world of the play and introduces its quintessential symbol, the labyrinth. Apart from signifying confusion, this imagery constituted a focal part of the myth of Theseus; Titania's double evocation of the labyrinth thus evokes Theseus' entrance into it, his slaying of the Minotaur and his exit from it via Ariadne's thread. But while Theseus manages to exit the Cretan maze, the four youths fail to find the exodus of the labyrinthine Athenian forest till the last act of the play, while Cartwright's Puritans are fully trapped in the linguistic maze that the religious dissembler, Hooker, has expertly crafted:

> ...or that you would beare downe the cause with swelling wordes of vanitie, and cunningly framed sentences to blinde and intangle the simple; or that you would shew your selfe another Aristotle by a certaine metaphisicall and crupticall method *to bring men into a maze*, that they should rather wonder at your learning, then be able to understand what you teach in your writinge. (45; emphasis mine)

The labyrinth imagery becomes in this case a metaphor for Hooker's work, which aims at confusing its readers by means of its eloquent, 'literary' style, while simultaneously concealing its author's intentions and disorientating the readers from 'truth'. The force of this symbolic representation is reinforced through its repetition: in Cartwright's own words: "...in your writing wee are mightely incombred; wee walke as in a *labyrinth*" (46; emphasis mine)

Hooker's linguistic maze, a source of hypocrisy and deceit, stands in stark contrast to the verbal simplicity of the 'true' "writinges of the Reverend and learned Fathers of our church, as of *Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Iewell, Whitgeest, Fox, Fulke, & c.*" (45). Even more importantly, it differs from "the simplicitie of holie Scripture" itself (45). Apart from revealing Hooker's falsity, Cartwright represents the latter writers as carriers of 'truth' in absolute terms; for in their plain style, these works demonstrate their affinity to the simplicity of the word of the absolute authority, God. Cartwright's argument on the "simplicity of the holie Scripture" and the counterfeiting dimension of intellectual preaching brings to mind the quintessential religious authority evoked in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, namely St. Paul. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians – part of which, as has already been mentioned, is parodied by Shakespeare in Bottom's speech on his "rare vision" – the apostle notes:

> And I brethen, when I came to you, came not in gloriousness of words, or of wisedome, shewing unto you the testimony of God. For I esteemed not to know any thing among you in weaknesse, and in feare, and in much trembling. And my wordes and my preaching was not with entising words of mans wisedome, but in shewing of the spirit, and of

> power: That your faith should not stand in the wisedome of men, but in the power of God.[11]

Addressing the Corinthians, St. Paul expresses his distrust of the power of the world represented by eloquent, intellectual men and glorifies the power of God transmitted in verbal humility. Interestingly, the application of Pauline rhetoric was not the sole prerogative of Puritans such as Cartwright. The early Protestant martyr Tyndale had employed the same discourse in order to strengthen his image as the conveyor of God's 'truth'. In his prologue to another Pauline Epistle, namely that to the Romans, he declared:

> I will therefore bestow my labour and diligence, through this little preface or prologue, to prepare a way in thereunto, so far forth as God shall give me grace, that it may be the better understood of every man: for it hath been hitherto evil darkened with glosses and wonderful *dreams* of sophisters, that no man could spy out the intent and meaning of it; which nevertheless of itself is a bright light, and sufficient to give light unto all the scripture...[12] [emphasis mine]

Not only do both Tyndale and Cartwright criticize those who are skilled in tongues for producing the people's confusion over the word of God; they also convey this issue through the same imagery, namely that of the dream. Their shared rhetoric strongly deconstructs the binary opposition between 'true' Puritans and 'false' Conformists that the Cartwrightian text is struggling to construct.

It seems to me that Shakespeare is dramatizing a similar deconstruction in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Interestingly, the striking majority of the common people who belonged to the Puritan sect were either craftsmen or tradesmen involved in the cloth and wool trades. In Barry Reay's words:

> England had a tradition of heresy and nonconformity: the Lollards, the Family of Love, the Anabaptists, *Puritan quasi-separatism*. The leaders of these groups were often university men or members of the clergy. But the rank and file were mostly *craftsmen* and tradesmen (and their wives) who were sometimes ... closely linked to the highly mobile cloth and *wool trade.* (102; emphases mine)

Shakespeare's dramatization of a group of craftsmen and of their chief representative, a man whose name and trade are strongly linked to wool, as those who employ verbal simplicity and a literal approach to all issues – a stock practice of Puritan defenders as Cartwright's text attests – thus seems to me far from a simple striking coincidence. Equally interestingly, the connotations of Bottom's name allude to the practice of over-expanded discourse,[13] the exact accusation that Puritan defenders were thrusting on Conformist Protestantism.

It thus becomes clear that Shakespeare's "rude mechanicals" (and especially, Bottom the weaver) function as a dramatic 'meeting-ground' for Puritans and Conformist Protestants.

Not only do the Athenian artisans join together the particular conflicting groups of Protestantism; they also manage to fuse another pair of religious enemies, namely, Catholics and Protestants. For on the one hand, these men, like the fairies, become linked to Catholics and their nefarious practices since they undertake acting. According to the quintessential Puritan antitheatrical text, namely, Phillip Stubbes' *Anatomie of Abuses*, plays "are quite contrarie to the woorde of grace, and sucked out of the Deuilles teates, to nourishe us in Idolatrie, Heathenrie, and sinne,"[14] qualities that were also attributed to Catholicism in general and its head, the Pope, in particular. In his famous work, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, for example, Robert Burton fuses the histrionic qualities of actors and Catholics by painting the papacy as "a new scene of superstitious imposters and heretics, a new company of actors."[15]

Surprisingly enough, these 'popish' thespians disrupt theatrical norms by demonstrating a great anxiety to explain in plain words each and every theatrical prop. The impersonator of the wall announces: "I, one Snout by name, present a wall" (V.i.156), while the actor of the lion accordingly explains that "I as Snug the joiner am / A lion fell" (V.i.218-19); Starveling too, exclaims: "This lantern doth the horned moon present; / Myself the Man i'th'Moon do seem to be" (V.i.235-36). By pointing out their theatrical roles, these men annul the audience's 'willing suspension of disbelief' and highlight their immutable identities beneath their impersonations. Announcing and then acting out their counterfeiting, they reduce the world of the marvellous to the world of the literal. Their adherence to the literal world and verbal simplicity links them strongly with radical Protestantism. Such an adherence however, leads to a play tinged with artificiality and absurdity. The play-within-the play thus evokes the histrionic qualities of Catholicism, while simultaneously displaying the limitations of a literal approach to a world that transcends reality – an approach supported by Puritans – and demonstrating that eloquence and intellectuality are invaluable assets rather than diabolic qualities in human beings' attempt to appreciate, interpret and represent a world of wonders.

By projecting Catholicism and Protestant fundamentalism as mirror images of each other, as well as by employing forces that weld together radically hostile religious denominations (Conformist Protestants, Puritans and Catholics), Shakespeare is arguing for a transcendence of sectarianism and a reunited Christendom. Such a claim becomes reinforced through the symbolic imagery of the craft of joinery represented by the 'rude mechanicals' of the play and Snug, the joiner, in particular. As Patricia Parker notes, the craft of joinery evokes "the mystical 'Copula' of Christ as the basis of both matrimonial conjoining and Christian *communitas*", thus fusing once again the social and religious institutions. Indeed, Parker notes, "[a] homily of 1547 – employing precisely this artisanal figure – counsels that 'We cannot be *jointed* to Christ our Head, except we be glued with concord and charitie one to another'" (90). Accordingly, when the Athenian duke discovers the sleeping youths, "he rouses them in an unusual manner: 'Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns' (IV.i.137). Both Quarto and Folio indicate 'They all start up' as though trumpets have announced judgement day, and the first words spoken thereafter by one of them are 'Pardon, my lord'." (IV.i.140; Morris 250). Theseus notes that the "rival enemies" (IV.i.141) have reached a "gentle concord" (IV.i.142) and announces the matrimonies that will take place "in the temple" (IV.i.179). Moving away from the dissensions and violence of the main plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,[16] the play comes to its closure on a much happier note. Still, its darker overtones make a lasting impression on the audience. For if within the theatrical world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, religious disputes were brought to their resolution, they still constituted a permanent reality within early modern England, forcing Elizabeth I to a struggle to defuse these serious threats to the 'concord' of her reign to its very closure.

Notes

I am grateful to Anita Pacheco for her useful comments on this essay.

1. In the introduction to his edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, p. cxxx.
2. Donna Hamilton, *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England*, p. 60. I am indebted to Hamilton's argument on Shakespeare's dramatisation of contemporary church polity affairs in *The Comedy of Errors*. In her analysis of the play, Hamilton demonstrates that Shakespeare has "'refunctionalised' the language of church-state discourse in a parodic form that evaluates current controversies, deflates the threat that conformists understood the puritan challenge to represent, and argues that a more tolerant attitude toward nonconformists can foster unity" (61).
3. For the King James Bible version as well as Tyndale's and the Geneva New Testament versions, see Ian Kott, *The Bottom Translation: Marlowe and Shakespeare and the Carnival Tradition*, p. 31.
4. Thomas Cartwright, *A Christian Letter of certaine English Protestantes, unfayned favourers of the present state of religion, authorised and professed in England unto that Reverend and Learned man, Maister R. Hoo. requiring resolution in certayne matters of doctrine (which seeme to overthrowe the foundation of Christian Religion, and of the Church among us) expreslie contayned in his five bookes of Ecclesiasticall Policie* (London, 1599), p. 3. All further references are to this edition.
5. See, for example, Brooks, p. xxxiv; Foakes, p. 4.
6. This and all subsequent quotations from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* refer to the edition by Harold F. Brooks (The Arden Shakespeare, London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
7. Donna Hamilton makes a similar argument in relation to Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. See Hamilton, p. 69.
8. For the threat of recusancy, see Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion 1558-1603*, pp. 48-63; for the renegade issue, see N. I. Matar, "The Renegade in English Seventeenth-Century Imagination."
9. Although Egeus's bitter attack on Lysander is discredited by its savage brand of patriarchy, it nevertheless carries a forceful message on the dangers of eloquence.

10. '[M]azed' in this case means 'amazed'; however, its roots are the same as those of the 'maze' to which the fairy queen has referred minutes ago in the very same speech of hers.
11. This particular passage of the Epistle precedes that which is parodied in Bottom's "rare vision" speech. See Chris Hassel, Jr., *Faith and Folly in Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies*, p. 71.
12. H. Walter (ed.), *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures by William Tyndale, Martyr, 1536* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848), p. 484. Cited in Englander, p. 203.
13. Patricia Parker points out that "the bottoms of thread long acknowledged to be behind his [Bottom's] name also served in the period as the familiar material figure for ... an extending or spinning out of discourse, 'skeins or bottoms of thread, to be unwinded *at large*', as Francis Bacon, for example, put it in his description of the dilation or amplification of discourse, with its attendant danger of tedious prolixity." See Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context*, p. 96.
14. Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (London, 1583), sig. H2v. Cited in Kastan, p. 111.
15. Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1628), p. 606. Cited in Shapiro, p. 139.
16. As Jan Kott has already noted, "'[d]eath' and 'dead' are uttered twenty-eight times; 'dying' and 'die' occur fourteen times.... The frequency of 'kill' and 'killing' is thirteen, and 'sick' and 'sickness' occur six times. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which has often been called a happy comedy of love, 'kiss' and 'kissing' occur only six times, always within the context of the burlesque: 'joy' occurs eight times, 'happy' six, and 'happiness' none" (Kott 55).

Works Cited

Brooks, Harold F., ed. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By William Shakespeare. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Methuen, 1979. Repr. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Burton, Robert. *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Oxford, 1628.

Cartwright, Thomas. *A Christian Letter of certaine English Protestantes, unfayned favourers of the present state of religion, authorised and professed in England unto that Reverend and Learned man, Maister R. Hoo. requiring resolution in certayne matters of doctrine (which seeme to overthrowe the foundation of Christian Religion, and of the Church among us) expreslie contayned in his five bookes of Ecclesiasticall Policie*. London, 1599.

Doran, Susan. *Elizabeth I and Religion 1558-1603*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Englander, David et al., eds. *Culture and Belief in Europe 1450-1600*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990.

Foakes, R. A., ed. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By William Shakespeare. The New Cambridge Shakespeare. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Repr. 1995.

Hamilton, Donna B. *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England*. New York, etc.: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.

Hassel, Chris, Jr. *Faith and Folly in Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1980.

Kastan, David Scott. *Shakespeare After Theory*. New York and London: Routledge, 1999.

Kott, Ian. *The Bottom Translation: Marlowe and Shakespeare and the Carnival Tradition*. Trans. Daniela Miedzyrzecka and Lillian Vallee. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1987.

Lake, Peter. "Religious Identities in Shakespeare's England." *A Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

Matar, N. I. "The Renegade in English Seventeenth-Century Imagination." *Studies in English Literature* 33 (1993): 489-505.

Morris, Harry. *Last Things in Shakespeare*. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1985.

Montrose, Lois. "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form." *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama*. Eds. Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton. London and New York: Longman, 1992. 109-30.

Parker, Patricia. *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1996.

Pollard, Athur. *Richard Hooker*. Essex: Longman for the British Council, 1966.

Reay, Barry. "Popular Religion." *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*. Ed. Barry Reay. New York and London: Routledge, 1988. 91-128.

Shapiro, James. *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Stubbes, Phillip. *The Anatomie of Abuses*. London, 1583.

Trevor-Roper, Hugh. *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth Century Essays*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1987.

Walter, H., ed. *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures by William Tyndale, Martyr, 1536*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848.

Wilson, Richard. "The Kindly Ones: The Death of the Author in Shakespearean Athens." *Essays and Studies* 46 (1993): 1-24.

"How shall we find the concord of this discord?" Το *΄Ονειρο Θερινής Νυκτός* και οι θρησκευτικές διαμάχες της Αγγλίας κατά τον ύστερο 16ο αιώνα

Βασιλική Μαρκίδου

Το άρθρο αυτό στοχεύει σε μια ανάγνωση των ύστερων Ελισαβετιανών διαμαχών στην πρώιμη κωμωδία του Σαίξπηρ, *΄Ονειρο Θερινής Νυκτός*. Παρουσιάζει μια διακειμενική ανάγνωση του έργου αυτού σε σχέση με το Πουριτανικό προπαγανδιστικό κείμενο του Thomas Cartwright, *΄Ενα Χριστιανικό γράμμα ορισμένων Άγγλων Προτεσταντών* (*A Christian Letter of Certaine English Protestants*), το οποίο με τη σειρά του αποτελεί επίθεση στον απολογητή της Ανακοίνωσης της Ελισαβετιανής Εκκλησίας (*Elizabethan Church Stattement*), Richard Hooker, και του θεμελιώδους θρησκευτικού έργου του, *Περί των Νόμων της Εκκλησιαστικής Πολιτικής Διοίκησης* (*Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Policy*). Το άρθρο εντοπίζει μια πλειάδα εντυπωσιακών λεκτικών ομοιοτήτων και εννοιολογικών συγκλίσεων μεταξύ του Πουριτανικού κειμένου και του πρώιμου Σαιξπηρικού έργου και υποστηρίζει ότι η βαθιά γνώση του Σαίξπηρ επί του συνήθους θρησκευτικού λόγου, όπως αυτός είχε εφαρμοστεί στις σύγχρονες διαμάχες σχετικά με την πολιτική διοίκηση της εκκλησίας, ήταν καθοριστικής σημασίας για τη δημιουργία του *Ονείρου Θερινής Νυκτός*. Το άρθρο αποσκοπεί στο να καταδείξει ότι, εκτός από τη δραματοποίηση της ανυπότακτης αγάπης και της ανάσχεσής της μέσω του κοινωνικού θεσμού του γάμου, το πρώιμο αυτό έργο του Σαίξπηρ προβάλλει μια ενωτική θεώρηση της Χριστιανοσύνης μέσω της υπέρβασης του θρησκευτικού σεχταρισμού.