

DIGESTING SHAKESPEARE –  
TWO CENTURIES OF ADAPTING  
*A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* FOR CHILDREN

By

Elriza Chimeni Vermeulen

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## Abstract

The purpose of my thesis has been to establish the reasons for adapting Shakespeare for children in the modern age and to see if adaptations are influenced by the time they are written. From my analysis of forty- two adaptations for children of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, covering a period of almost two hundred years, three distinct trends have emerged. The first is the evolution of Shakespeare, in terms of his reputation and literary prestige. The second is the growth in the variety of adaptations of Shakespeare for children. The third is the tendency of treatments to reflect the eras in which they were produced.

This project represents an under-discussed field of Shakespeare studies. Comparing a wide variety of texts in the context of the time they were written has been neglected, as has the comparison of texts in different eras. This project covers seven time periods (with a chapter devoted to each): 1800 to 1840 (The Beginning); 1850 to 1910 (The Golden Age), 1919 to 1939 (Between the Wars); 1940 to 1959 (Post War Recovery); 1960 to 1979 (Performance Adaptations); 1980 to 1989 (Shakespeare in Schools) and 1990 to 1999 (End of a Millennium).

I argue three points: The first is that the prestige of Shakespeare has been systematically and consistently reinforced in each generation echoing his development from England's greatest writer to an international icon. The second is that adaptations of *MND* have been influenced for the past 200 years by education in one way or another, either for pedagogic use or as metatheatrical device, ensuring an increasing variety of adaptations. The third is that *MND* has been rewritten to suit a specific era and audience.



## Contents

Acknowledgements:.....	3
Abstract.....	5
Chapter 1 – Introduction .....	8
Chapter 2 – 1800 to 1840 – The Beginning .....	12
Chapter 3 – 1850 to 1910 – The Golden Age .....	24
Chapter 4 – 1919 to 1939 – Between the Wars .....	45
Chapter 5 – 1940 to 1959 – Post War Recovery.....	52
Chapter 6 – 1960 to 1979 – Performance Adaptations .....	63
Chapter 7 – 1980 to 1989 – Shakespeare in Schools .....	76
Chapter 8 – 1990 to 1999 – End of a Millennium .....	93
Chapter 9 – Conclusions .....	120
Appendix – Illustrations of Fairies .....	125
Bibliography .....	128

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

In this thesis, I propose to explore adaptations of Shakespeare for children, by examining adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the first English adaptation in 1807 to the end of the twentieth century, in order to see what happens to the play when it is retold in another time and cultural context, and for a different audience. How, I ask, are the dominant values of the time (when the adaptation at issue was written) reflected by the writer and illustrator, and by the way the teller, listener and child reader are constructed?

The term adaptation is used in the wider sense to include abridgements, paraphrases, retellings, appropriations, summaries and reconceptualizations. For the purposes of this study “children’s literature” will include young adult literature. I propose to answer the following specific questions in a comparative context:

- 1 How does each adaptation depart from its source?
- 2 To what extent does each adaptation attempt to update and/or relocate the play?
- 3 How do the adaptations reflect the state of children’s literature in their periods?
- 4 What do the adaptations tell us about the socio-political thinking of their different periods?
- 5 To what extent is Shakespeare ‘sanitised’ in each work?

My starting point in each case will be the history of children’s literature in the era to contextualise the adaptation historically. I shall be concerned throughout to understand the sustained cultural investment in introducing Shakespeare to children. I shall consider the biographical background of the author or illustrator to establish what beliefs and



certainities on the part of the adaptor are revealed by their “voices” in the adaption, as writers for children usually desire to promote a social-cultural value which they assume is common between them and their audience (Stephens 2). As we shall see by the end of the twentieth century a canon of Shakespeare adaptations for children had been established and Shakespeare had developed into a form of “cultural capital” as England’s greatest writer. There are three main interrelated cultural functions of Shakespeare’s adaptations that are linked by the assumption that Shakespeare is cultural capital: The first is to serve as an introduction to Shakespeare, the second is to create a canon of adaptations in the Shakespeare-for-children genre and the third is to communicate the culture’s core values to children (Stephens and McCallum 255).

In his essay “*Descending Shakespeare: Toward a Theory of Adaptation for Children*” (2003), Howard Marchitello writes: “Adapting Shakespeare for children is not only far more complex than is generally believed (by typical adult readers, at least), but it is at the same time an intensive labour that hides its own traces. As a consequence, the politics of adaptation have generally remained undertheorized” (181). Marchitello suggests that adaptations have double “genealogies”. The first derives from the idealistic idea that adaptations will direct children to the original Shakespearean text; and the second originates from the idea of Shakespeare, and the nature of Shakespearean text itself that exists behind a particular adaptation. Fabula and sjužet are two terms originating in Russian Formalism that are employed in narratology to describe narrative construction. Sjužet is an employment of narrative and fabula is the chronological order of the retold events – the fabula is the raw material of a story, and sjužet, the way a story is organized, for example flashbacks. Marchitello uses the concepts of fabula and sjužet to suggest that adaptations not only recreate the play, but also create secondary stories by, for example, introductions or readers’ responses: As he rightly suggests “the first is the

story communicated by the play, and the second is the story we produce in response to the (story communicated by) the play“ (186). In my thesis, I will examine the secondary stories that have been created by introductions and prefaces to establish the adaptor’s attitude to Shakespeare.

In contemporary literature Shakespeare’s work is believed to contain universal values that are timeless and many of his characters serve as examples of behaviour to emulate. As Erica Hateley (2009) notes, Shakespeare has “become the vehicle of naturalised, historicised and authorised discourses of normative gender, subjectivity and behaviour” (19). I will examine the adaptations to establish how Shakespeare became a moral writer for children.

Only a few studies to date have compared Shakespeare adaptations for children over time. Janet Bottoms’ 2009 article on adaptations of Shakespeare for children discusses the aim of such adaptations and interestingly concludes that Shakespeare’s greatness must be taken on trust. Karley Adney’s 2009 study of *Shakespeare’s Tragic Daughters* focusses on adaptations of *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* through four historical periods, written by Charles and Mary Lamb (1807), Edith Nesbitt (1907), Leon Garfield (1985), Beverley Birch (1988), Jennifer Mulherin and Abigail Frost (1993) and Geraldine McCaughrean (1994). She critically examines the way in which the adaptors shape their portrayal of Cordelia, Goneril, Regan Ophelia, Juliet and Desdemona for young readers and convincingly argues that the cultural resonances adaptors pass to their readers shape the Shakespearean texts they adapt, as adaptors are influenced by their own personal backgrounds and the time period they are writing in. Laura Tosi (2009) discusses the changing cultural implications and difficulties adaptors face in retelling *Hamlet*, by focussing on adaptations of Charles Lamb (1807), Mary Cowden Clarke (1850), Bernard Miles (1976), Leon Garfield (1985), Marcia Williams, (1988) and Andrew

Matthews (2000). David Skinner (2011) analyses Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales of Shakespeare* and Thomas Bowdler's *The Family Shakespeare*, in a critical and historical context, by examining the origins of both children's literature and Shakespeare adaptations. He convincingly argues the influence of the Lambs and Bowdlers over adaptors in subsequent years and their contribution to bringing Shakespeare's texts into the home and making them part of family reading.

My thesis is more comprehensive in scope than Adney, Tosi, Bottoms or Skinner, as I have tried to include every adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream (MND)* aimed at children that I could find, and discuss the texts at the time they were first published. While previous similar studies have focussed on one or two text for one or two periods in time, my thesis thus attempts to be broader and deeper in scope. This thesis includes seven chapters examining forty-two versions of *MND* published between the first in 1807 to 1999, divided into time periods as follows: 1800 to 1840 (Chapter 2); 1850 to 1910 (Chapter 3); 1919 to 1939 (Chapter 4); 1940 to 1959 (Chapter 5); 1960s and 1970s (Chapter 6); 1980s (Chapter 7) and 1990s (Chapter 8). I selected *MND* as it is often the first Shakespearean text studied at school and is one of the plays that is most commonly adapted for children. This project represents a comparatively unexplored field of Shakespeare studies and, as Adney suggests, the examination of the adaptations as "products of their times has been almost entirely neglected" (14). I plan to explore the cultural rebranding of the adaptations of *MND* in, for example, images, texts and settings to make it more recognizable in terms of the time or place it was rewritten.

## Chapter 2 – 1800 to 1840 – The Beginning

Children's literature up to and including the early nineteenth century was primarily aimed at educating children in reading and morality, and from these early roots Shakespeare had a part to play in educating children. The first full-length novel for children, Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749) is prefaced with the statement that "the true Use of Books is to make you wise and better, you will have both Profit and Pleasure from what you read." Shakespeare is offered as an example to children as Fielding includes 13 lines from Helena's admonishment to Hermia in *MND*: "Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd ... But yet an union in partition" (3.2.198-210).

As Seth Lerer (2008) has suggested, the writing of the late seventeenth century philosopher John Locke, which espoused the idea that children being a "blank slate" were a product of their education, reinforced the didacticism of children's literature (104-5). Locke also suggested that picture books could be used as a teaching tool for children. The English book publisher John Newbery (1713–1767) was the first to make children's literature a sustainable and profitable part of the literary market, as for twenty years from 1744, he promoted his theories for "playful education" (Lerer 116). The critic Sarah Trimmer's periodical *The Guardian of Education* (1802-1806) was the first journal to seriously review children's literature in Britain.

The first adaptation of Shakespeare for children was Jean-Baptiste Perrin's *Contes Moraux amusans & instructifs, à l'usage de la jeunesse, tirés des tragédies de Shakespeare* (Moral and Instructive Tales for the Use of the Young, drawn from

Shakespeare's Tragedies, 1783). The book was often used by governesses in the instruction of French. The first English adaptation was Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. The famous writer and anarchist William Godwin (1756-1836) and his wife, Mary Jane Clairmont, had established "The Juvenile Library" in 1805. Clairmont contracted Mary Lamb to create a children's Shakespeare collection similar to the French *Tirés des tragédies* for the series and so *Tales from Shakespeare* was published in 1807. Though delighted by the opportunity to establish a literary reputation outside of her close circle of friends, Mary was inexperienced with editing and so enlisted her brother's help (Skinner 74).

*The Family Shakespeare* written by Thomas and Henrietta Bowdler was published during the same year (1807) as *Tales from Shakespeare* and, although not strictly an adaptation *per se*, many of its aims coincided with those of *Tales from Shakespeare* and, therefore, contextualize the Lambs' objectives.

Social reform during the latter decade of the Georgian period included the establishment of Sunday Schools to offer education to the underprivileged. Ushering in Romanticism, the early nineteenth century was nevertheless influenced by enlightenment values and the belief that behaviours should be based on logical thought, clear reasoning and scientific explanations rather than on feelings, hunches and superstitions. Children were often educated at home, and girls' education differed widely from that of their brothers, with boys studying the classics, mathematics, history, Latin, French and Greek while girls concentrated on embroidery, music, singing, dancing, drawing and French. Books were used to guide girls into becoming what Georgian society believed to be the ideal young lady. Irish writer Maria Edgeworth (1768–1849), considered a progressive educator in her time, asserted in *Practical Education* (1798) that "we should preserve children from the knowledge of any vice, or any folly, of which the idea has never yet

entered their minds,” and advised mothers to censor language and content with the “necessary operations by her scissors” (1:280). “A mother” she wrote, “ought to be answerable to her daughter’s husband for the books her daughter had read” (2:136). This quote highlights the attitude of “ignorance is bliss” in educating children – a trend that will be seen in children’s adaptations of Shakespeare. As James Andreas (2003) rightly suggests: “Both the Lamb and Bowdler projects illuminate the process of transforming classical but problematic texts into icons of moral rectitude which could be safely consumed by children” (100). As we shall see, *Tales from Shakespeare* is aimed, by simplifying the text, at making Shakespeare’s more accessible to children, and to girls in particular. This adaptation is designed to prepare children for reading Shakespeare’s original plays and other adaptations: whilst *The Family Shakespeare* censored Shakespeare’s reference to sex and bodily functions, and any obscene or blasphemous language, and was written to replace the original (Skinner 71).

In keeping with the ideal that ladies had to be decorous and anonymous to be feminine, the names of neither Mary Lamb nor Henrietta Bowdler appear on the title pages of the first publications of *Tales from Shakespeare* and *The Family Shakespeare*. This was in spite of the fact that Mary Lamb was responsible for the fourteen comedies, (while Charles adapted six tragedies), and that the pair wrote the Preface between them. (The fact that Mary had gained notoriety after murdering her mother with a kitchen knife eleven years previously probably contributed to the omission.) As for the Bowdlers, it was Henrietta who wrote *The Family Shakespeare*, while Thomas published the collection and wrote the Preface. As Henrietta had opted to publish anonymously, it was often wrongly thought that Thomas had authored both the 1807 version (20 plays) and the 1818 version (36 plays), even though they were different in style (implying different

authors), and that the latter version had been adapted by Thomas. The Bowdlers would be vilified for the next 200 years for their “bowdlerisation” of Shakespeare.

In the Preface to *The Family Shakespeare*, Thomas Bowdler’s admiration for Shakespeare and his reservations about his language are delineated. He refers to Shakespeare as “the first of the dramatic writers” and “our immortal bard” who “will remain the subject of admiration as long as taste and literature shall exist, and whose writings will be handed down to posterity in their native beauty”. Bowdler suggests that if profanity and obscenities “could be obliterated, the transcendent genius of the poet would undoubtedly shine with more unclouded lustre”. He further writes:

My great objects in this undertaking are to remove from the writings of Shakespeare some defects which diminish their value, and at the same time to present to the public an edition of his plays, which the parent, the guardian, and the instructor of youth may place without fear in the hands of the pupil; and from which the pupil may derive instruction, as well as pleasure; may improve his moral principles while he refines his taste; (n. pag.)

It can be seen that Bowdler’s primary goal was to present Shakespeare as a moral writer. Bowdler was praised for this project by Lord Jeffrey, who claimed in the *Edinburgh Review* (1821) that there were “many passages in Shakespeare which a father could not read aloud to his children—a brother to his sister—or a gentleman to a lady:… and, as what cannot be pronounced in decent company cannot well afford much pleasure in the closet, we think it is better, every way, that what cannot be spoken, and ought not to have been written, should now cease to be printed (52).

*The Family Shakespeare* includes *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, in which Henrietta Bowdler wields her redacting pen relatively lightly with six deletions as follows:

No	Reference	Lines deleted
1	2.1.109	'devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry'
2	2.1.217-9	"To trust the opportunity of night, And ill counsel of a desert place, and the rich worth of your virginity"
3	2.1.40-57	Lysander and Hermia's dialogue: "One turf shall serve ... in humane modesty"
4	4.1.31	"God shield us"
5	4.1.206	"God's my life" (changed to Odd's my life)
6	5.1.412-3 5.1.416-21	"And the issue, there create, /Ever shall be fortunate" "And the blots of Nature's hand ... Shall upon their children be"

The first deletion relates to the idea of loving someone to such an extent as to see them as a god. Henrietta would have considered it blasphemous to worship anyone other than the Christian God, and although Shakespeare's "idolatry" recognizes this, perhaps Henrietta thought he was also encouraging it. Deletions four and five are due to profanity, where "God" has either been deleted or changed to Odds. Deletions two, three and six allude to sex. In deletion two, Demetrius' reference to Helena's virginity would have been too explicit for the Georgians, at least in their role as responsible parents. Similarly, deletion three was made as Lysander is encouraging Hermia to lie with him before they are married, and he uses words such as "bosom". The final deletion again alludes to intercourse, and this Henrietta also considered unsuitable for children. The deletions of irreverent references to God or any allusions of a sexual nature in *The Family Shakespeare* are in keeping with the Bowdler's intentions as outlined in the Preface.

The Lambs were also concerned with the dichotomy of the perceived impropriety of some of Shakespeare's content for children on the one hand, while at the same time proclaiming Shakespeare and his status as a moral writer, on the other. In the Preface to *Tales from Shakespeare*, the Lambs encourage readers to pursue Shakespeare studies as they mature, as his plays are "enrichers of fancy, strengtheners of virtue, a withdrawing



from all selfish and mercenary thoughts, a lesson of all sweet and honourable thoughts and actions, to teach courtesy, benignity, generosity, humanity" (67). As they respect Shakespeare and want to do his writing justice, the Lambs mention in the preface the difficulties of adapting Shakespeare for the children. As they had meant the book to be an introduction to the "study of Shakespeare" their first challenge was to adapt the play into a narrative, and "give them the regular form of a connected story" (51). Secondly, the authors acknowledge the challenge of adapting Shakespeare's language, and refer to their attempts as "faint and imperfect images" – as "the beauty of his language is too frequently destroyed by the necessity of changing many of his excellent words into words far less expressive of his true sense, to make it read something like prose" (57). The Lambs admit their final challenge was to adapt the content for "very young children" to read and acknowledge that "the subjects of most of them [Shakespeare's plays] made this a very difficult task" (59).

Mary Lamb tackled these problems of adaptation in *MND* (the second tale in *Tales from Shakespeare*) by rearranging Shakespeare's *sjuzet* into a linear narrative, by using Shakespearean quotations and words from his era, and by omitting content and characters. For the most part, the story is told in the third person. When Mary uses direct speech, it is usually a quotation from Shakespeare's original – either a full quotation or a contraction. For example, she writes that the fairies began to "sing this song: 'You spotted snakes, with double tongue, Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen; Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong; Come not near our fairy queen'" (62). To abridge the story, the scenes of the workmen are left out and Bottom is referred to as a clown. Apart from wanting to shorten the narrative, Mary could have deemed the antics of rough workmen unsuitable for girls and for the same reason shortened the lovers' story. She focusses, instead, on the comic aspects of the fairies' narrative. When adapting the interaction

between Titania and Bottom, Mary joins the end of Act 3, Scene 1 to the beginning of Act 4, Scene 1 to make a linear narrative. Bottom is referred to in the scene as “the foolish clown” (73), “the ass-headed clown” (74) and “the clown” (75) who “with his ass’s head had got an ass’s appetite” (76), and never by name. Mary warns her readers of the pitfalls of falling in love with the wrong type of man when she explains Shakespeare’s implication that Bottom was more concerned with food and the care the fairies lavished upon him than Titania’s love: “‘Where is Peas-blossom’ said the ass-headed clown, not much regarding the fairy queen’s courtship, but very proud of his new attendants” (74). Mary also emphasizes Bottom’s interest in food by omitting Titania’s offer of music in the original version of the play. In Shakespeare’s original Titania says “Come, sit thee down upon this flow’ry bed, \While I thy amiable cheeks do coy, \And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head \And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy” (5.1.1-4). Mary modernises this to “Come sit with me,” said she to the clown, “and let me play with your amiable hairy cheeks, my beautiful ass! And kiss your fair large ears, my gentle joy.” By adding “clown” and “beautiful ass” to this sentence, Mary focuses on the comic rather than sexual aspects of Titania’s love. Although Mary retains Shakespeare’s image of Bottom sleeping in Titania’s arms, she omits Shakespeare’s imagery of clinging honeysuckle and ivy.

The Bowdlers’ concern for perceived inappropriate language in Shakespeare’s works is also reflected in *Tales of Shakespeare*. As with Bowdler, Mary omits any allusions to sex, as she indicates that Titania has foresworn Oberon’s “company” (no mention is made of his bed) and also does not give a reason for Hermia and Lysander lying apart in the woods. In addition, Oberon also calls Titania “rash fairy” instead of “rash wanton” (2.1.63).

In the Preface the Lambs emphasize that the book is aimed as a stepping stone for girls and encourage brothers to clarify lines, while reading to their sisters those parts that have been carefully selected to be “proper for a young sister’s ear”.<sup>1</sup> Three interesting points on the prevailing attitude at the time can be noted by this revealing quotation: First, girls needed a male mediator to understand Shakespeare. Second, girls needed to be protected from perceived improper passages. Third, girls needed a prose adaptation in order to understand Shakespeare’s plays.

The value Georgians placed on gender roles and capabilities are reflected in Mary’s adaptation. She promotes the view that women were physically not as capable as men when she mentions that Helena had tried to keep up with Demetrius when “he ran away so rudely” but she is unable to “continue this unequal race long, men being always better in a long race than ladies”. The care that a good Georgian man would take of his lady is emphasized by Mary, as she remarks that Lysander persuaded Hermia to sleep because he “was very careful of this dear lady, who had proved her affection for him even by hazarding her life for his sake”, and she omits the fact that Lysander had lost the way in the woods. Mary’s lenient treatment of Egeus in Act 1 of *MND* possibly reflects the attitude of Georgian society to fathers. While Egeus is being cruel and unreasonable, Mary hastens to point out, almost jokingly, that most “fathers do not often desire the death of their own daughters, even though they do happen to prove a little refractory” (136). In Mary’s version when Hermia is brought before the Duke, she is given only one alternative - obey or be put to death. The vow of single life is omitted – possibly indicating that only the threat of death would be an acceptable reason for a young woman to disobey her father, and run away with her lover. Mary also has Egeus (instead of Theseus) find the lovers and “bless the wedding” at the end of the tale. Adney (2008)

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<sup>1</sup> “For young ladies, too, it has been the intention chiefly to write; because boys being generally permitted the use of their father’s libraries at a much earlier age than girls are, they frequently have the best scene of Shakespeare by heart, before their sisters are permitted to look into this manly book” (Lambs, 60).

suggests that the Lambs were responding to the expectations placed on women in their time:

Their collection would teach girl readers what it means to be a ‘good Georgian female’ and, simultaneously, about great literature. Their collection, then, also supplied their female readers with a topic (Shakespeare) they might discuss with future educated husbands, in turns making them “good companions” for their men. (41)

According to Maria Edgeworth in *Practical Education* (1798) a woman in Georgian society needed to be calm and rational: “...a woman in a passion, is disgusting to her friends; she loses the respect due to her sex” (149). So, Mary Lamb condemns Helena’s actions in betraying Hermia to Demetrius “as maidens will do foolish things for love” and, in keeping with the ideals of a proper Georgian woman, also changes Helena’s character into one that is more controlled. When following Demetrius in the woods Helena makes “gentle expostulations” and reminds Demetrius “of his former love and professions of true faith to her” which is contrary to Shakespeare’s more spirited depiction of Helena. The quarrel between Helena and Hermia is abbreviated and downplayed as Mary merely writes that they “fell into high words together” and they did not embroil the men in their disagreement. Mary furthers the idea of rationality in the end of her retelling. The couples wake up and “calmly [consult] together” before they decide that Demetrius should return to Athens to ask her father to “revoke the cruel sentence of death” as he had “given up his pretensions to Hermia”. As Darlene Ciraulo (1999) observes, Mary’s major changes to the text are designed to ‘[reinterpret] Hermia’s and Helena’s emotional dispositions’. She observes that in Mary Lamb’s adaptation “the imaginative faculty (constitutive of fairies, dreams, and midnight folly) is [shown to be rightly] counterpoised by the rational faculty or utilitarian and practical thinking” (5) of the lovers. In the Shakespeare original Lysander tells the Duke of Athens that Demetrius had previously “made love to ... Helena” (1.1.107), whereas in *Tales of Shakespeare* it is

Hermia who mentions it to the Duke. Ciraulo rightly suggests that Mary “puts this information into the mouth of Hermia in order to stress her good judgment” (6).

The emphasis that Mary places on logic and good judgement can also be seen in her portrayal of the fairy antics. She focuses on the humorous behaviour of the fairies rather than on them as products of the imagination, because, as Ciraulo points out, she believes that “young women need to develop good judgement, as well as exercise the fancy” (5). In Mary’s adaptation, *MND* is referred to as a “story of fairies and their pranks”(72) and her depiction of the fairies as small and non-threatening can be seen by her use of adjectives such as “little beings” (84), “tiny train of followers” (84), “little king and queen of sprites” (84) and ‘little merry wanderer of the night” (90). Mary’s agenda to encourage good judgement can further be seen in the final paragraph, where she apologises if she has caused offence with her adaptation – both mirroring Puck's usual apology to the audience at the end of the original and appealing to the good judgement of her readers. She writes: “I hope none of my readers will be so unreasonable as to be offended with a pretty harmless Midsummer Night’s Dream” (72). In addition, she is self-effacingly proposing that the tale is small and non-threatening like the fairies.

Since its first publication, *Tales from Shakespeare* has never been out of print and has influenced many succeeding adaptations. It has been translated into many languages, including Chinese and Japanese. As Dame Judi Dench writes in the introduction to the Puffin Classic (2010) version of *Tales of Shakespeare*, “One could say that *Tales from Shakespeare* has become a classic book in its own right”. Charles’ and Mary’s retellings, she claims, “have inspired generations of young readers to embrace Shakespeare”. *Tales from Shakespeare* has been the source of a wide-range of adaptations of Shakespeare-for-children genre that have withstood the test of time (Skinner 121).

Even two hundred years ago, Shakespeare was commercially marketed by the publishing industry as a suitable gift for children, but when it was first published *Tales from Shakespeare* was not without its critics. The first reviews in the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or, Monthly Political & Literary Censor* objected to the Lambs' ideals, as the reviewers felt that not only should children's innocence be protected by keeping them ignorant, but that children should also be ignorant of the fact that they were being kept ignorant:

We certainly object to the language of the preface, where girls are told, that there are parts in Shakespeare *improper* for them to read at one age, though they may be allowed to read them at another. This only serves as a stimulus to juvenile curiosity, which requires a *bridle* rather than a *spur*. (qtd. in Wolfson preface)

When the second issue of *Tales from Shakespeare* came out in 1809, the publishers, Godwin and Co, in response to the first negative reviews, marketed the book as an “acceptable and improving present for young ladies advancing to the state of womanhood” now in an edition “prepared with suitable elegance”, and they made reference to the criticised Preface as being “not exactly applicable on the present occasion” (qtd. in Wolfson preface).

*The Family Shakespeare* and *Tales from Shakespeare* were the start of the Shakespeare-for-children genre, and I agree with Skinner's suggestion that they “represent the unprecedented convergence of the various developments, debates, and trends of both children's literature and Shakespeare adaptations” (68). Both the Bowdlers and the Lambs reflect the writer's predilection to adapt content in a way that reflects the values of the market they are writing for, as well as starting the trend of heralding Shakespeare as a moral writer. Although it would be a number of years before new adaptations of Shakespeare for children were to appear, *Tales from Shakespeare*, in particular, set the benchmark for authors in following generations. Mary Lamb's method

of adapting Shakespeare for children, by adjusting language and plot, and deleting content and characters were techniques that were to be used by a number of writers in the next two hundred years.

## Chapter 3 – 1850 to 1910 – The Golden Age

Three main areas for the years 1850 to 1910 will be explored: The roots of Shakespeare as a cultural heritage icon and a form of cultural capital as England's greatest writer, his development into a moral writer (because writers believed his work had enduring characters with universal values that define our humanity), and adapting *MND* for young children (by including illustrations and focussing on the fairies).

The Victorian and Edwardian eras (1850 to 1910) embrace what is often referred to as the “Golden Age of Children’s Literature”, when children’s literature took great strides forward in both England and North America with a wider variety and an increased quality of publications. The squat books of the 1830s were replaced with colourful and illustrated children’s books, including adaptations of Shakespeare for children. These changes in children’s literature mirrored changing values where, with the emergence of a Romantic interest in childhood, the imagination, emotions and play of children were encouraged rather than repressed (Butts 22). This idea of a perfect childhood led to writers having, as Kimberley Reynolds (2011) puts it, a “cultural romance with the idea of childhood (as distinct from real children)” (19). The idealised childhood was a stark contrast to the plight of real working children in the cities, and writers used the contrast to drive the change for improved conditions for these children.

The seven adaptations of *MND* in this era cover four different categories of the Shakespeare-for-children genre. First, there were four retellings: Mary Seymour’s *Shakespeare Stories Simply Told* (1883), Adelaide Sim’s *Phoebe’s Shakespeare* (1894), Edith Nesbit’s *The Children’s Shakespeare* (1897) – later published as *Beautiful Stories*



from *Shakespeare* (1900) – and M. Surtees Townesend’s *Stories from Shakespeare* (1899). Second, there was an illustrated version with a preface – Lucy Fitch Perkins’ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream for Young Persons* (1907) . Third, there is a picture book – Herbert Sydney’s *Scenes from Shakespeare for the Young* (1885). Finally, there is what might be denoted as an “appropriation” – Rudyard Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906).

As Reynolds (2011) notes “until the late twentieth century, there was an unwritten agreement that children’s books would not include sex, bad language or gratuitous violence, on the grounds that writing for children is part of the socialising process” (27). On the basis of this, publishers refined their markets and aimed their products at boys *or* girls. Shakespeare was divided along gender lines: Boys' magazines, such as *Boys of England*, portrayed Shakespeare as the perfect resolute Englishman and girls’ magazines like *The Girl's Own Paper* focused on Shakespearean heroines as examples of proper behaviour (McPherson 238). Mary Cowden Clarke’s *The Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Heroine* (1851), which Seth Lerer has suggested was “the first work of literature (not simply advice) designed for readers in their girlhood” (233), is a prequel to Shakespeare’s plays in which Cowden Clarke “sought to explain [Shakespeare’s heroines,] motives and their actions in the plays as the culminations of their growth” (233). Cowden Clarke offered Shakespeare’s heroines to girls as the ideal of Victorian womanhood, thereby, reinventing Shakespeare as a moral writer. Cowden Clarke presented Shakespeare as a “helping friend” to a young girl, and suggested that he offered “warning, guidance, kindest monition, and wisest counsel” (562) in his pages. Clarke also recommends the Lambs’ *Tales of Shakespeare*, as a stepping stone to reading Shakespeare’s plays: “Happy is she who at eight or nine years old has a copy of *Lamb’s Tales from Shakespeare* given to her, opening a vista of even then understandable interest

and enjoyment! Happy she who at twelve or thirteen has Shakespeare's works themselves read to her by her mother, with loving selection of fittest plays and passages" (369).

During the Victorian era, the concept of childhood was redefined both socially and politically. As Dieter Petzold (1992) has suggested, the mid-Victorian debate "was about the child as a moral being: the child was regarded as essentially sinful (and, hence, in need of moral education) or as essentially innocent (and therefore to be protected and adored)" while the Edwardians overlaid it "by another view: the essential difference between the child and the adult is the former's freedom from social obligations and his amoral status" (33). I propose that adaptors of Shakespeare for children in this era responded to this debate by editing Shakespeare in a way they considered would keep children innocent, and at the same time presenting Shakespeare as a moral writer for children to protect them from losing their innocence. Ironically, the idea of Shakespeare as a moral writer also served the interests of those who believed that children were essentially sinful and in need of moral education, which perhaps, explains his popularity during this time.

The focus of writers of this period was on writing an adaptation suitable for children younger than those the Lambs had in mind with *Tales of Shakespeare*. Furthermore, whereas in the Georgian period the aim was to provide adaptations suitable for girls, writers in this period are aiming to present Shakespeare as a moral writer for both boys and girls. Seymour alludes to the Lambs' book in the Preface of *Shakespeare Stories Simply Told* (1883), but explains that her purpose is to write for younger children. She writes: "Although the stories of many of Shakespeare's plays were ably told by a writer of a long-past day, the favourable reception rewarded to a simpler rendering of them has proved that it was not unnecessary to produce a volume suitable to the youngest readers of these later times". *Phoebe's Shakespeare* (1894) by Adelaide Sim is a retelling

for children of Shakespeare stories, from “Aunt Addie” to her niece Phoebe. She writes the stories as a Christmas present for her niece because, as she puts it: “I want you to learn to know them, and love them, while you are still a little girl.” Nesbit’s *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare* (1900) is one of two adaptations for this era that has remained in print.<sup>2</sup> It starts with an “Introduction to Shakespeare” in which Nesbit writes that Shakespeare’s stories are “the richest, the purest, [and] the fairest” as he instructs by “delighting” (2). Nesbit then explains that Shakespeare was written for adults and she has rewritten his stories in a simple form that children can understand and enjoy. In her introduction to *The Children’s Shakespeare* (1897), Nesbit explains that she wrote the stories on the instigation of her daughters, Rosamund and Iris, who found the original too complex to understand.

It can be noted that the role of Shakespeare mediator has passed from a male mediator in the Lambs to an aunt in Sim and a mother in Nesbit. Laura Tosi (2010) suggests that these female mediators exemplify the “protofeminist agenda that was at work in many Victorian fairytale writers” (136), and it can also be noted that five of the seven adaptors for this period are women.

Adney (2009) suggests that “in comparison to the Lambs who wrote for girls (expecting that the material would first be filtered by or read to them by their elder brothers) Nesbit assumes the girls who read her work will do so on their own” (104), particularly as education for children had improved in the almost hundred years that separate the two adaptations. When the Education Act of 1870 was passed in England, the State assumed responsibility for education – previously the domain of the rich (who ran charity schools for the poor). Between 1870 and 1880, about 3500 schools were taken over or started by the government’s School Board, and in 1880 attendance was made

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<sup>2</sup> The other adaptation still in print is Rudyard Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, possibly because Kipling and Nesbit are popular authors, each with successful books to their name.

compulsory for children until the age of 10. More children were exposed to Shakespeare, as one of the compulsory school subjects was English – with a focus on the Classics in general and Shakespeare in particular. As Tracy Irish in the *History of Shakespeare in Schools* (2008) observes: “The Victorians believed that exposure to high culture like Shakespeare made you a better person” (3). Nesbit ends *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare* (1900) with a collection of quotations that she believes illustrate Shakespeare’s wisdom and offer life lessons to children, if they heed the advice he offers. She included two quotations from *MND* in this list – “LOVE - the course of true love never did run smooth” (1.1.134) and “SILENCE - out of this silence, yet I picked a welcome; /And in the modesty of fearful duty /I read as much, as from the rattling tongue /Of saucy and audacious eloquence (5.1.103).

The classic status of the tales of Hans Christian Anderson and the brothers Grimm meant that readers at the end of the nineteenth century understood the basic precepts of the fairy-tale genre. Nesbit ends her version of *MND* in *The Children’s Shakespeare* (1897) with a happy-ever-after ending “So the four mortal lovers went back to Athens and were married; and the fairy King and Queen live happily together in that very wood at this very day” (32). This fairy tale model was taken a step further by M. Surtees Townesend when she rewrote “Puck; or, A Midsummer Night Dream” in *Stories from Shakespeare* (1899) in a fairy-tale style starting with “once upon a time” and ending with “they lived happily ever after”. Her version features her own handsome prince and maidens in distress, as well as all of Shakespeare’s characters and storylines. When it was published, as an attractive hardback with gold embossed title and featuring a court jester in bright colours on the cover, the author was slated by book critic, Warne (1899), for overly simplifying Shakespeare’s characters and, thereby, diminishing their greatness:

It may be laid down as an axiom that a book which has been written well should not be written again. Hence, Charles and Mary Lamb having retold Shakespeare’s

dramas in a manner perfectly suited to children, there was no call for the present volume. ... It is no fit preparation of a child for these dramas to serve them up in the style of an “Aunt Jane’s Gift-book”. (682)

The moralizing Victorians changed the fairy-tales to teach lessons. An example of the way Townesend offers her readers a moral lesson can be seen in Titania’s behaviour when Oberon is taunting her for falling in love with a donkey. Even though Oberon is at fault, Titania pacifies him by pandering to his whims. Thereby, she is set free, as Sim writes:

But he put on a stern face and began to taunt her ... which was really hard upon her when he himself had caused her folly by putting the spell upon her. ... Nevertheless when she gently begged his patience, and, upon his demand, straightaway promised to send her fairies to bear the changeling boy to his bower, he did repent him of the charm and resolved to set her free. (103-4)

In Victorian England a popular form of entertainment for all classes of society was *tableaux vivants* (or living pictures), where performers held frozen positions portraying a particular scene. The *Scenes from Shakespeare for the Young* (1885) was written to give both ideas for tableaux and recitation. In the preface E. L. Hubbard notes that the scenes have been “carefully adapted to the capacity of youthful interpreters”. Hubbard also claims that reciting Shakespeare’s lines will not only help the “proper management of the voice” but “the mind will become at the same time expanded and exalted by the influence of lofty thoughts, developed from the Poet’s text”. Hubbard’s hope that the book “may be confidently expected to secure a favourable reception from all who value the profound philosophy contained in the writing of the great dramatist” was not entirely realised as the book was criticized by one writer as having “large and pretentious pictures of feeble design and workmanship, enclosed in a gaudy and vulgar cover” (*Athenaeum* 705). Although the pictures were criticized, it is more the writing that should have been of concern as *MND* is rather disjointedly summarised in one page. Act

1 and 2 are covered in five paragraphs, while the final paragraph is devoted to the rest of the play with Act 3.2, 4 and 5 being summarised in one (overly long) sentence:

Both girls think they are being made the objects of scorn, until the charm is lifted from the lovers by Oberon, when they all repair to the palace of Theseus, where, after explanations, matters are happily adjusted, the lovers united, and Bottom and his party perform their play, called “The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby,” before Theseus, Hippolyta, and their court. (15)

The coloured frontispiece depicts Shakespeare as a boy, with a feather in hand and a scroll at his feet bowing slightly to a queen dressed in Elizabethan garb, and, therefore, presumably Elizabeth I, but resembling Victoria in posture and stature . The attractive colour border is heavily decorated with Tudor roses, garlands and curlicues and features the Tudor Coat of Arms at the top. The same picture (embossed on the red cover in gold and black) emphasizes Shakespeare’s importance as it associates him with royalty – both in the past (Elizabeth I) and in the present (Queen Victoria). The suggested tableau illustration (Fig 1) features Titania, clad in a white gown with gold stars, seated on a hammock of roses; Bottom wearing a donkey head standing apart from her; Oberon in a tree looking down at Titania; winged Puck in a running pose behind Titania and a host of winged fairies at Titania’s feet. The scene of Titania and Oberon is one that will be most commonly reproduced in adaptations for children – as we shall see.

*Scenes from Shakespeare for the Young* was followed by other publications of portraits of Shakespearean heroines, as these illustrations helped the “idealization of girlhood featured prominently in sections of Victorian society” (Greenhalgh 123).<sup>3</sup> The illustrations in Perkins’ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream for Young Persons* (1907)

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<sup>3</sup> In 1888 *The Graphic* weekly magazine capitalised on its reputation for publishing images of female beauty in the ‘keepsake’ tradition designed for private collection and display, by commissioning a selection of portrayals of Shakespeare’s women. Available as expensive colour editions, they were also published in black-and-white versions, which could be coloured by children at home (Greenhalgh 123).

contribute to this idealization of girlhood.<sup>4</sup> The Victorians and Edwardians had particular interest in “the language of flowers” where flowers had special hidden meanings (Marsh and Greenaway).<sup>5</sup> Perkins’ use of flowers in her illustrations reflects this, while also positioning Shakespeare as a moral writer – albeit subtly. The frontispiece (Fig 4) depicts Titania dressed in a white flowing gown, with butterfly wings and jewelled headpiece leaning protectively over the kneeling changeling child, also dressed in white with a peony headpiece and holding a pink rosebud. According to Marsh and Greenaway (1884), peonies signified compassion and bashfulness, the rosebud meant youth and innocence and the pink meant perfect happiness, grace and sweetness. The pink daisy plants in the foreground also symbolise innocence and purity. Perkins’ use of these flowers enhances Titania’s good qualities and shows her devoted love to the innocent child, as well as complementing the caption “She never had so sweet a changeling” (n.pag.). This illustration serves two purposes: it once again highlights the book’s appeal to younger children, (featuring the only actual child in the play) and it possibly offers a moral lesson by highlighting the child as an example of perfect innocence and sweetness.

Another illustration is captioned “Helena – O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent / To set against me for your merriment”. In the foreground of the illustration Helena, with her back to the reader, is trapped between the pleading Lysander and Demetrius on their knees and a bush of red chrysanthemums – the flowers of love. In the illustration of a tired Hermia (captioned “never so weary, never so in woe: ... Act 3, Scene 2”), sitting with her eyes closed against a tree, a bushel of daisies is prominent in the foreground – apart from purity, innocence and beauty, daisies also symbolised loyal love and the traditional game of plucking daisy petals to the tune of “he loves me, he loves me not”

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<sup>4</sup> Lucy Fitch Perkins was the author and illustrator of the popular *Twins* series.

<sup>5</sup> Marsh, Jean and Kate Greenaway wrote the definitive guide to floriography, called *The Language of Flowers in 1884*. Charlotte de La Tour wrote *Le Langage Des Fleurs* in 1858.

was popular.<sup>6</sup> The flower used here emphasizes Lysander's temporary desertion of Hermia, as well as Hermia's virtue (providing another moral lesson).

*A Midsummer Night's Dream for Young Persons* features the full length original play (and so is not an adaptation) but it is accompanied by illustrations and prefaced with a short stand-alone story entitled 'In Shakespeare's Day', where Shakespeare is depicted as a kind and loving brother, well respected by his peers and the Queen. It tells how Gilbert and Edmund, Shakespeare's two brothers visit him in London at a time when *MND* is making its debut performance in front of Queen Elizabeth 1. The youngest fairy is ill and fifteen-year-old Edmund takes his place, thus launching his career as an actor. The performance of *MND* is thoroughly enjoyed by the audience, who laugh at the antics of Bottom and Puck. It is thus evident that the Perkins not only respects Shakespeare as a playwright and actor, but she is following the Victorian trend of recommending Shakespeare as a model of good character for children into the twentieth century. She encourages her readers to view Shakespeare as an exemplary man, as well as a renowned playwright, referring to him as "William Shakespeare, whose plays delight the Queen herself" (xx) and "her Majesty's most distinguished playwright" (xxv).

During the last part of the nineteenth century, authors continued the Lambs' agenda of attributing to Shakespeare both the ability to write wonderful stories and a personally virtuous character, and by doing so, increased Shakespeare's prestige. Seymour refers to Shakespeare as the "great Dramatist" and suggests that her book will encourage children to read Shakespeare when they are older. In the Preface, she outlines her approach to adapting *Shakespeare Stories Simply Told*:

It will be noticed that no more than the outline of the story has been given in each case. The appreciation of the Plays themselves and of their detailed beauties

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<sup>6</sup> Goethe's *Faust* part one (1806) records the tradition of daisy-divination. Malcolm Jones' *The Secret Middle Ages* notes that "The Daisy Oracle" was included by Clara Hätzlerin (1471) in her *Liederhandschrift* (songbook).



belongs to more mature years; but that will not be less keen because the appetite has been whetted and the curiosity aroused in early youth. (n.pag.)

In the Preface to *Phoebe's Shakespeare*, Sim lauds Shakespeare for his originality:

“There lived a most wonderful man called Mr. William Shakespeare. No one before he lived ever made up such beautiful stories”. She also depicts Shakespeare as a quintessential romantic poet:

Mr. William Shakespeare was a poet, and a poet is a person who *can* see fairies, and one lovely summer nights, when he was lying under the trees on the soft moss in the woods, he heard and saw some wonderful things, and wrote them down and made this story. (14)

Nesbit continues the trend set by the Lambs, Seymour and Sim – affirming that

Shakespeare's body of works is wiser than the whole body of English learning:

He is the teacher of all good-- pity, generosity, true courage, love. His bright wit is cut out "into little stars." His solid masses of knowledge are meted out in morsels and proverbs, and thus distributed, there is scarcely a corner of the English-speaking world to-day which he does not illuminate, or a cottage which he does not enrich. (2)

She agrees with Ben Jonson that "he was not of an age but for all time" and she admires the way Shakespeare enabled his readers to laugh at their foolishness and despise their crimes while “he still preserves our love for our fellow-beings, and our reverence for ourselves” (2). In view of these strengths she does not find it unusual that Shakespeare is, with the Bible, the “most highly esteemed of all the classics of English literature” (14). She alludes to the appropriation of Shakespeare in literature and emphasizes that knowing Shakespeare is an important social skill that you would be mortified to lack (thus applying a form of peer pressure): “So interwoven are these characters in the great body of English literature, that to be ignorant of the plot of these dramas is often a cause of

embarrassment” (15). Her intention to improve children’s knowledge of Shakespeare coincides with that of the Lambs.

One of the common adaptation techniques used by the authors of the Victorian period to aim their writing at a younger audience was to concentrate on the fairy sub-plot in *MND* (in both the writing and the illustrations), and to include Shakespearean quotations relating to the fairies. For example, Seymour quotes in her adaptation Oberon’s speech, which Mary Lamb, Townesend and Nesbit had paraphrased: “I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,/ ... /And make her full of hateful fantasies” (2.1.248-58). Following Lamb’s example, Seymour, Sim and Townesend also quote Shakespeare’s fairy song: “You spotted snakes with double tongue/ ... /So, good night, with lullaby” (2.2.9-19). As will be seen in later chapters of this thesis, Oberon’s speech and the fairy song were often used in adaptations of *MND* for children,

The Victorians were “obsessed” with fairies and they often appeared in all forms of art, music and literature (Susina 230). In the original *MND*, the minor fairy characters are described as small, but Oberon and Titania are human size – (Titania did, after all, “wind” Bottom in her arms (4.1.43). In keeping with the Victorian style, Seymour describes all the fairies as small (including Titania and Oberon), winged and associated with flowers. She describes the fairy king and queen as the “tiny royal pair” (87), “the little queen”, “his little queen” (91) and “good little fairies” (98). When Titania and Oberon quarrel, the fairies “creep into their flower-bells and acorn-cups trembling with fear” (87). Shakespeare did not have flower-bells in his original version.

In Seymour’s *Shakespeare Stories Simply Told*, the page headings (designed to outline the action) focus on *MND* from the fairies’ point of view – “The Haunt of the Fairies” (86), “The Mischievous Sprite” (87), “A Magic Flower” (88), “An Unfortunate Mistake” (89), “Helena’s Reproaches” (90), “Oberon Interferes” (91), “Peace Restored”

(92) and "The Fairies' Revelry" (93). The storyline relating to the Duke's marriage and the mechanicals sub-plot are omitted, and Bottom is briefly referenced as a "poor foolish clown" (91). In fact, Seymour reduces the scenes between Titania and Bottom to one sentence in which Titania "called the clown with his ass's head beautiful, and talked to him as if she loved him dearly" (91). In addition, all Seymour's illustrations either feature or reference the fairies, even where they do not appear in the original. The first of the four black ink illustrations features Helena and Demetrius standing on a hilltop in front of a stone building, looking over stone walls to a wood in the distance. Helena has her hand on Demetrius's shoulder and she is pointing to the woods. The caption reads: "I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight" (86). The paragraph under the illustration mentions that the "wood in which Lysander and Hermia planned to meet was a favourite haunt of Oberon and Titania" and the page heading is "The Haunt of the Fairies" thus firmly positioning the emphasis on the fairies in the first scene, even when they were not prominent in Shakespeare's original. The second (rather confusing) illustration entitled "After a while sleep fell upon him" (90) features the lovers, Puck and Oberon. The third illustration captioned "For mischief's sake put the head of an ass over the clown's head", depicts Bottom with a donkey's head lying in the foreground, surrounded by seven fairies. Oberon and Titania (embracing each other) look down at him and the lovers can be seen sleeping separate from one another. The last illustration entitled "They held high festival" (93) is on the page "The Fairies' Revelry" and depicts Oberon and Titania dancing, a small Puck sweeping and a group of little fairies. This picture once again places the fairies (instead of the humans) at the forefront of the story.

In keeping with Victorian fairy art, Sim describes the fairies in *Phoebe's Shakespeare* as beautiful creatures with "dresses made of the petals of flowers and the wings of butterflies, with great shining dewdrops instead of diamonds for jewels" (17).

Titania wears robes made from moonbeams, has “delicate, transparent wings like the wings of a dragon-fly”, and white roses in her hair. As with Seymour and Sim, Townesend’s descriptions of the fairies are in keeping with Victorian conceptions of beautiful winged and flower fairies. Oberon is described as having “beautiful pearly wings and dreamy dark eyes, and [he] wore a golden crown on his dusky brown hair” (76) while Titania is “as fair as a lily and not very much taller” with “blue eyes that shone like the stars and long fair hair. She too has a golden crown and her wings were of opal-tinted gossamer, and she wore a new flower dress every day” (76). Even Puck’s ugliness is excused because he is clever and funny and he is depicted as mischievous rather than malevolent – he was “just a love of a fairy, the merriest, naughtiest, brightest little fellow you ever saw” (76) with a “kind heart” (77). The fairies can be found “resting in their little swing-beds under the cool green shade of the leaves” (75) and “the elves are very tiny fairies, so small that they can creep into acorn-cups and hid in the foxglove flowers” (76). Their antics are fancifully described by the author as “fairies dancing in rings in the moonlight, playing hide-and-seek among the flowers, climbing up the cobwebs to catch the long-legged spiders, blowing malicious trumpets, ringing the bluebells – fairies here, there and everywhere” (75). Cobweb is described as a “little fairy daintily dressed in silver grey with wings of rainbow gauze” (93). These descriptions of the fairies are supported by all eight black and white charcoal illustrations, which depict the fairies as winged creatures in a pastoral setting.

In contrast to Seymour, Sim covers the scene between Titania and Bottom comprehensively, although in a different order – she gives the Indian child to Oberon before she goes to sleep and not when she awakes. She uses Shakespeare’s language in her sentences, and delineates quotations: “Titania chattered to him, and stuck musk roses on his sleek head, kissing his long soft ears, and calling him lovingly her ‘gentle joy’”

(104) and “when they had gone she wound her arms about him and petted him, and, murmuring softly over him, ‘Oh, how I love thee, how I dote on thee! Oh, how I love thee, how I dote on thee!’ she, too, very soon fell asleep” (108). The author ends the adaptation in a fairy-tale fashion with Puck vigorously sweeping “so well that the duke and his wife, and Lysander and Hermia and Demetrius and Helena, had nothing left to trouble them, and they all lived happily together ever after” (117).

Nesbit adheres to Mary Lamb’s narrative and follows Sim’s and Seymour’s examples by emphasizing the fairies’ role and omitting the mechanicals from her plot. The actions of the fairies, Moth, Mustardseed, Cobweb and Peaseblossom are explained, whereas Theseus is referred to as the Duke of Athens and Egeus is only mentioned as Hermia’s father. In a similar fashion to Sim, the lovers’ tale is abbreviated. The fracas between the lovers is shortened to “The end of it was that Helena and Hermia began to quarrel, and Demetrius and Lysander went off to fight” (26). In the scene between Titania and Bottom, Nesbit (in a similar fashion to Mary Lamb) writes: “He did not care much about the Queen’s affection, but he was very proud of having fairies to wait on him” (27). Unlike Lamb, Townesend and Sim, however, Nesbit’s Titania does not sleep with Bottom, as Oberon finds “his beautiful Queen lavishing kisses and endearments on a clown” (28). Nesbit sentimentalizes the role of the fairies – she writes that Titania and her train “rode off down the moonbeams” (23). She explains Oberon and Titania’s behaviour as “fairies are very wise people, but now and then, they can be quite as foolish as mortal folk” (21).

In a similar fashion to Seymour, Sim and Townesend, Nesbit supports her writing in *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare* with illustrations that conform to the Victorian ideal of fairies. The colour frontispiece (Fig3), captioned “Titania and the Clown” shows Titania as a sweet young girl cuddling her pet donkey. The black and white black ink

drawings in the text are captioned “Titania Queen of the Fairies”, “The Quarrel”, “Helena in the Wood”, “Titania placed under a Spell” and “Titania Awakes”. In these illustrations, Titania is drawn as a winged young woman and Oberon is a curly haired toddler with a loin cloth and wings. By depicting the fairy characters as cute children and emphasizing the fun, playful nature of the fairies, Nesbit is targeting her book at young children (and appealing to the parents of younger readers).

In Nesbit’s adaptations of *MND* Puck claps an ass’s head on Bottom shoulders (as in Shakespeare’s original). This incident would have appealed to the Victorians, with their taste for magicians. Townesend writes that Puck – in the style of Victorian magicians and mesmerists – “waved his hands over Bottom's head and muttered a fairy charm” (87), and to remove the head he waved “his hands to the measure of the music over the weaver’s head” (87). Sim writes that “the mischievous fairy suddenly waved his wand over the Bottom the weaver” (22).

Some socially conscious and romantic Victorians stressed the (albeit age-old) equation of goodness with beauty (a trait not uncommon in imaginative literature in any period). As Giles Fraser (2002) notes “Victorian social reformers saw beauty, truth and goodness as one” (45) and this is reflected in Sim’s *Phoebe’s Shakespeare*. She cautions her readers that “Fairies have tempers, like other people, and if good beautiful fairies get cross and passionate, and give way to bad feelings, they grown by degrees into wicked fairies, and lose their looks and get hump-backed, and wrinkled and ugly” (15). Sim describes Hermia as “tall and fair with sweet blue eyes, and the gentlest, softest voice and manner possible” – contrary to Shakespeare’s depiction of her as spirited. Any of Helena’s character traits that Sim considers to be contrary to an ideal Victorian girl, are omitted in her retelling. She writes “Demetrius had found out somehow that the lovers were running away” (17), not mentioning that Helena told him, and downplays Hermia

and Helena's fierce argument, noting merely that "these two gentle ladies began to quarrel" (29). Similarly, Seymour's depiction of the friendship between Helena and Hermia is in keeping with the values of the Victorian period. In the original *MND*, it is Lysander who points out Demetrius' perfidy, but Seymour follows Mary Lamb's lead in having Hermia offering the excuse that Demetrius "had won the love of her dear friend Helena". In Seymour's version Helena's passionate pleas to Demetrius are toned down to "she reminded him how dearly he had once loved her" (88). Townesend, like Seymour before her, preserves Shakespeare's emphasis on the search for true love. The quotation "the course of true love never did run smooth" (71) is included in Townesend's adaptation, and Hermia's lines about love in the original, "If then true lovers have been ever crossed" (1.1.150) and Lysander's "So quick bring things come to confusion" (1.1.149) are combined, paraphrased and attributed to Lysander in the adaptation – "from of old true lovers were ever crossed in love and their bright love-dreams brought to confusion" (71).

The Victorians' concern with goodness and beauty is also reflected in Townesend's adaptation. Theseus is referred to as a "handsome young prince" and "a very great duke" who had "fought and conquered in many battles in defence of his country" (69). Because Hippolyta was "as beautiful as she was brave" Theseus "fell deeply in love with her" (69). Theseus was sorry for "poor little Hermia" (71) and "thought it a sad pity that so beautiful a maiden should have to choose between death or life with a man she did not love" (70), implying that it was Hermia's beauty that made her fate so tragic. Egeus, cast in the role of the villain, is described as a hobbling "little bent old man with a very red-face" (70). In keeping with the ideal of the perfect, frail, submissive Victorian woman, Hermia is described as a "beautiful, dark-eyed maiden, whose pale cheeks were wet with tears" (70) and Helena is "tall and slender" with

‘beautiful fair hair and dark blue eyes’ (72) with a “tall and graceful form” (99). Hermia greets Helena kindly and answers her gently. They are both lachrymose and weep throughout the adaptation, as can be seen by the following quotations: “Hermia has “pale cheeks wet with tears” (70), “Little Hermia buried her face in her hands and wept, for all hope seemed gone” (71), “Lysander sprang eagerly to Hermia’s side, and kissing away her tears” (71), and “They were now swollen with weeping, for she was very unhappy because Demetrius no longer loved her” (72). In addition, “Then Hermia cried, and wrung her hands,” (79), “But Helena heeded him not, and flew after him, calling in a wailing voice” (79), “She [Helena] stumbled as she ran, for her eyes were blinded by tears” (96) and “Hermia stood as still as a stone for some minutes, the burning tears streaming down her cheeks ... and crying “What shall I do? What shall I do?” (103). When Theseus wakes the sleeping lovers at the end, they “became aware of the stained and dew-drenched state of their garments from their wanderings in the woods all night, “and “were full of fear and shame” (112). As Anthony Wohl (1990) points out, it was cleanliness that “separated the working classes from respectability, especially in an age when smell was associated with dirt and disease” (web).

Townesend is the first author to include the workmen’s contribution in the retelling, appealing perhaps to lower class children attending compulsory schooling. Act 1, Scene 2 is mentioned in the third paragraph of the story as the workmen “were busy learning their parts, and had arranged to hold their next rehearsal on Midsummer’s, by moonlight, in the Palace Wood” (69). Their names are mentioned and they are described as “six great big mortals” (84) and “six heavy mortals” (85). The emphasis that Townesend places on their size and mortality provides a contrast to the delicate fairies. They sit in “solemn silence” as “they were somehow feeling a little awesome at the ghostly stillness of the forest, and at the weird shadows of the trees cast by the moon”



(85). They discuss and rehearse the play – and Townesend intertwines Shakespeare’s words with her own, including “‘I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream,’ said he, ‘and it shall be called Bottom’s Dream, because it hath no bottom’” (170). In future years, adaptors were either to exclude Bottom’s Dream as part of an abridgement (considering it unimportant), or to make Bottom’s Dream a stand-alone excerpt from the play (emphasizing its importance).

It was thought by many that the Edwardian era from 1901 to 1914 was an idyllic time of long summers and an “ordered, ritualised world: a corridor of peace, sunlit and pastoral” (Lerer 253). This nostalgic perception was created in 1920, after the horrors of the First World War but, as J. B. Priestley (1970) notes, “the Edwardian was never a golden age, but seen across the dark years afterwards it could easily be mistaken for one” (57). In reference to Edward VII, “perpetual Prince of Wales” and Theodore Roosevelt, youngest US president, Lerer points out that “these years, in both Britain and America, were ruled by men who were perceived never to have grown up” (254). The opening scene of *Puck of Pook’s Hill* by Kipling, exemplifies this nostalgic view of pastoral Edwardian England. Kipling’s daughter Elsie records an anecdote:

One summer in the early 1900s we children and my father acted scenes from A Midsummer Night's Dream. Our stage was an old grass-grown quarry and there my brother as Puck, myself as Titania, and my father as Bottom, rehearsed and acted happily. A most realistic cardboard donkey's head had been donned by Bottom for his part, and the village policeman, passing along the lane, was amazed to see the familiar tweed-clad figure of my father topped by this extraordinary headgear. (qtd. in Carrington 588)

This anecdote would later become the first chapter of Rudyard Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1907), which is an original work that uses a scene from *MND* as a metatheatrical device as well as the character Puck. The adaptation is set at Bateman’s, Kipling’s family home in Sussex. Dan and Una, who are based on Kipling’s own children, are performing

Bottom's Dream - "the small play" their father had made out of the "big Shakespeare one" (7). Dan plays the comical Bottom, wearing a paper donkey's head out of a Christmas cracker. Una is Titania, who in keeping with the Victorian and Edwardian view of correct fairy attire has a 'wreath of columbines and a foxglove wand" (14). When Puck is conjured, he is wearing a cap of a "big columbine flower" (8). They act the scene three times on Midsummer's Eve, sitting in a fairy ring under Pook's Hill and accidentally summon up Puck, the last of the fairies - or "People of the Hills" (14). Puck then takes the children on a journey through English history. (The book has a sequel, *Rewards and Fairies* [1910], set chronologically one year later, which follows the same premise as the first book.)

By imbuing a character from *MND* (Puck) with historical expertise needed to guide children through history, Kipling is building on the cultural prestige of Shakespeare. He is also suggesting that the performance of *MND* is magical as it can conjure up an opening in time, and summon magical characters, like Puck. It also intimates that children might have the power to control their own education, thus questioning the view held by many Victorians that knowledge is passed by parent to child. The idea of empowering children to take charge of their own education is more in keeping with adaptations toward the end of the century.

Kipling initiated new trends in children's literature in a number of areas with *Puck of Pook's Hill*. He is the first adaptor of Shakespeare for children to use the performance of the play by children in his retelling, and the second to focus on Bottom's dream.<sup>7</sup> Both these threads were to become common themes in adapting *MND* for children – Kipling was breaking new ground in the Shakespeare-for-children genre. He invented the timeslip genre with this book, as Puck summons characters from the past to appear before the

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<sup>7</sup> *Phoebe's Shakespeare* appears to be the first

children.<sup>8</sup> Kipling rejects the classic Victorian portrayal of fairies (that other adaptors of the period are so fond of) – Puck of Pook’s Hill is contemptuous of the “little buzzflies with butterfly wings and gauze petticoats, and shiny stars in their hair, and a wand like a schoolteacher’s cane for punishing bad boys and rewarding good ones” (14) and tells Dan and Una that they are “painty-winged, wand-waving, sugar-and-shake-your-head set of imposters” (14). Kipling’s fairies are powerful beings that “in the old days” used magic not wings to fly “in the teeth of a sou’-westerly gale” (14) – this is more in keeping with portrayal of fairies in literature hundred years later, than in Kipling’s own time.

Although not all the adaptations of Shakespeare for children in the Victorian and Edwardian era were seen as successes at the time, it can be seen that adaptors did manage to make Shakespeare more accessible to children, by offering illustrated and abridged versions of the story and to increase Shakespeare’s reputation by praising his worth as both a gentleman and a writer. In addition, by the end of the Edwardian period Shakespeare was firmly entrenched as a moral writer.

The most common theme of this time period is the focus on the fairy storyline in *MND* and the depiction of the fairy folk as small, charming and helpful, albeit a little mischievous at times. The illustrations tend to have a common theme of winged fairies associated with flowers. The human characters reflect the behavioural norms of the day, with clearly defined gender roles. Hermia and Helena are shown by Nesbit, Seymour, Sim and Townesend as decorous and feminine young women as befitted Victorian and Edwardian girls of the time. In addition, Seymour, Sim, Nesbit, Townesend, Sydney and Perkins position Shakespeare as moral writer and role model for children, in both their writing and illustration. They demonstrate the roots of the cultural investment in

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<sup>8</sup> Kipling in *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906) and E. Nesbit in *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) came almost simultaneously, but independently, and were the first two timeslip stories.

Shakespeare that future generations of adaptors will develop further. Kipling is the innovative adaptor of the time, starting trends that will be seen in later chapters.

## Chapter 4 – 1919 to 1939 – Between the Wars

Two trends for the time between the two World Wars will be explored. The first is the view that children could have their own opinions on Shakespeare and his characters and the second is the modernisation of the fairies in *MND*.

Although the expansion of public libraries in Canada and the USA, in the period between the First and Second World Wars, resulted in a growth in children's literature in North America, especially with the establishment of reading rooms and storytelling hours for children in libraries, this did not result in a corresponding increase in adaptations of Shakespeare for children. This could be, as Butts (2010) has suggested, that children's literature in the thirties in Britain reflected "a kind of quietism in reaction to the horrors of World War 1 (1914-1918) and the violent class-conflict of the great Strike of 1926" (118). Two trends from this era would have an effect on children's literature in future years: First, publishing companies started specialist departments for juvenile books.<sup>9</sup> Second, awards were established for children's writing.<sup>10</sup> As Seth Lerer (2008) notes, "prize culture has informed literary publishing for more than a century, and in America it has helped shape the canon of children's books since the 1920s" (274).

The three adaptations of *MND* for this interwar era include an outline, a retelling and an appropriation. *Outlines of Shakespeare's Play* (1934) by Homer Watt *et al* is a summary of Shakespeare's plays including *MND*, and although more an explanation of

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<sup>9</sup> Macmillan in 1919, followed by Doubleday in 1922 and Scribner and Sons in 1934

<sup>10</sup> The first award for children's writing was the Newberry Medal presented by the American Library Association from 1922, followed in 1936 by the Library Associations of Great Britain's Carnegie Medal (104). The Caldecott Medal for illustration followed in 1938.

the play than an adaption for pleasure reading *per se*, it has been included in this era due to scarcity of texts.<sup>11</sup> The vocabulary and sentence construction is scholarly and pedantic, capturing the essence of each action in the play without any of its humour and rhythm, using for the most part long, complex sentences. In stark contrast to *Outlines*, with its didactic tone and intent, Anne Terry White's *Three Children and Shakespeare* (1938) offers a fresh approach.<sup>12</sup> A mother introduces the plays to her son and two daughters, and intersperses her storytelling with explanations of why they were written, as well as contextualising their performance in the Elizabethan period. Terry writes in the Foreword that she uses this technique "to give insight into character incident, and idea, and to make understandable the language of the text" and to give readers "a sense of the craftsman behind the scenes" (v). The conversational way she inserts these comments into the story makes for easy reading.

Somewhat surprisingly, Watt *et al* states in the Preface of *Outlines* that Shakespeare's stories need to "be read carefully in full - not in the dilution of outlines or abridgements" (ii). They present the book as a "convenient device" for revising a play previously read, keeping the action in the acts the same, but sometimes re-arranging scenes in the acts to aid understanding. They believe that there is no substitute for "the reading the dramas themselves" (iv). Terry agrees with Watt *et al* of *Outlines* that stories from Shakespeare are a poor substitute for Shakespeare, and so, in *Three Children and Shakespeare* she attempts to "present the plays as plays, and, so far as possible, in Shakespeare's own language" (v). When she has had to omit, paraphrase or substitute words, she emphasizes her attempt to retain the meaning and the spirit of the original.

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<sup>11</sup> Written by Homer Watt, Karl Holzknicht and Raymond Ross

<sup>12</sup> Anne Terry White, married to controversial economist, Harry Dexter White, has two daughters, Ruth and Joan. She uses the names of her husband and daughters in *Three children and Shakespeare*. She has been a teacher, social worker, and adaptor of myths and legends for children.

The authors of both these adaptations preserve Shakespeare's reputation as they emphasize the skill that Shakespeare exhibited in creating his plays, his influence and the longevity of his popularity. Watt and his colleagues write that "the influence of Shakespeare's work in the theatre and in literature, as everyone knows, is both widespread and important" (190), thus assuming the belief that Shakespeare is widely read and that the readers know of his importance. Terry points out that Shakespeare was "a very great writer" (7), a "real genius" (64), "very smart" (266) with "a gift for words" that surpassed any other writers in "all the world" (65). She writes: "'Shakespeare ... could wind the audience around his little finger. After three hundred years,' said Mother, laying the book on the table, 'he can still do it. And that's a pretty long test of a playwright's skill'" (266). Terry inevitably uses the mother character to praise Shakespeare's vocabulary and offers the scholarly writings about him as proof that he is "the greatest writer in the world" (65), and worth studying.

In *Three Children and Shakespeare* Mother explains that Shakespeare was not an original writer, but one who skilfully composed his own stories from a number of different sources. She accentuates the fact that Shakespeare was a craftsman in her analogy: "A story is like a piece of cloth, Ruth. Anyone may use the material, but each will cut it to a different pattern" (61). This analogy also explains Terry's concept of the difference between plot and narrative – defined by the Russian formalist theorists (prominent during this time period) as the *fabula* and *sjuzet*, which I discussed in Chapter One. Marchitello referred to the work done by Burdett and Williams in the 1990s as responding in "new and powerful ways" to the challenge of adapting Shakespeare and establishing what he termed "the new ethics of adaptation". I propose, however, that *Three Children and Shakespeare* appears to be the first adaptation to explore the idea that children's responses to Shakespeare can create a secondary story line – albeit the fictional

children characters in the story (as opposed to real children at the end of the century). The discussions between the Mother and Ruth, Joan and Harry relate to the children's responses after hearing the story read to them and also provide glimpses into the prevailing attitudes of the 1930s. The children, for example, give their opinions on the characters – Ruth says “I didn't think Hermia was ... [a] vixen, scratching and all that. I had an idea she was sweet” (100), and Joan says “I know why Puck put the ass's head on Bottom. He put it on 'cause Bottom really was an ass” (103). This is a departure from previous eras where children were depicted as listening to Shakespeare's stories, rather than engaging in a conversation about them.

Terry insists that it is her aim to make Shakespeare “pleasurable reading” and has “most earnestly refrained from all such discussion as might seem to smack of scholarship” (vi). The prefatory material moves away from the idea of Shakespeare as a moral writer, in that it encourages children to read his plays for pleasure and not for education. The discussions, however, between the mother and children, do convey a number of moral lessons, and Terry highlights this point when she writes: “‘Talent, Harry, doesn't develop without effort,’ Mother moralised, ‘and even genius, they say, is ninety-nine per cent hard work’” (68). Furthermore, although Terry indicates she does not have a didactic purpose, she does have a political agenda in two respects. First, by the 1930s, the anti-war movement had grown, and the discussion between Mother and the children around the quarrel between the lovers in the woods is in keeping with the anti-war sentiment: “It's my opinion that people ought to be civilized, and use their heads, and settle things reasonably” (101). Second, the women's suffragette movement was strong during the 1930s and the period between the two world wars was more open as far as sexuality and equality of women was concerned. These principles of tolerance are reflected when Mother says: “So don't cast Hermia out of your heart just because you've



seen the woman under the lady. You've heard perhaps that 'the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady are sisters under their skins' (101).<sup>13</sup> This implication of the similarity between a lady and a common army follower is indicative of the change in social equality between high and low born that occurred after the First World War.

The technique Terry uses to change the play into a narrative form is to change Shakespeare's verse into narrative prose, and with the addition of verbs and adverbs to explain characters' motivations. In the scene between Titania and Bottom, Terry uses phrases like "Titania is saying to the ass head" (102), "Titania breaks in sweetly" (102), "Titania suggests" (102) and "Titania murmurs" (103) to link Titania's lines, which are taken from the original Shakespeare. Terry explains Bottom's feelings as "Bully Bottom is by this time quite at home and thoroughly enjoyed being fussed over. In fact, he is beginning, in his usual manner, to take things pretty much into his own hands" (102). In the next sentence, Terry then covers the interaction between Bottom and Peaseblossom, linking Shakespeare's lines with verbs: "'Where's Peaseblossom?' he asks. 'Ready,' the elf replies" (102). Terry also continued the trend from previous eras of including the fairies song (2.2.9-30) in her adaptation.

The portrayal of the fairies by Watt and Terry in *MND* continues the idea of small delicately winged creatures, as depicted by the Victorians. In *Outlines* Titania is described as "tiny enough to wrap herself in the enamelled skin of the snake" (50) and although this is paraphrased from Shakespeare's original "And there the snakes throws her enamelled skin /Wide enough to wrap a fairy in" (2.1.255-6), Oberon does not specify, as Watt does, that the fairy is Titania. Terry writes that the "dainty little" (81) fairies had "gauzy wings" (84), "butterfly wings" (84) and "delicate wings" (92). Noel Streatfield creates a significant break in this clichéd tradition, as the fairies in her *Ballet Shoes* (1936) refer to

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<sup>13</sup> Mother is quoting a ballad by Rudyard Kipling about a prostitute in the army barracks, Judy O'Grady.

butterfly-winged fairies as old-fashioned. Two sisters, Pauline and Petrova Fossil perform as Peaseblossom and Mustardseed in a production of *MND*. Pauline had hoped “their dresses would be the real fairy sort, with wings sticking up behind” (165) but the fairies are dressed in skin tights and “queer turned-up-toed shoes” with Peaseblossom wearing flowers on one shoulder and head and Mustardseed wearing a “funny little hat” (165). They both have a floor length train of silk wings tied to their shoulders and wrists. Their nanny is not impressed with the costumes and says:

‘Fairies! Might just as well send them on the stage in their combies!’

The dressmaker laughed. ‘Would you have liked frills, and tinsels and wired wings, with wands?’

“Combies of a nasty yellow shade is not what a fairy would wear.”

“They are modern fairies,” the dressmaker explained. (166)

Dressing the fairies in simple outfits is far removed from the romanticism and butterfly winged fairies of the previous eras. It is reflective of modernism in the twenties and thirties, with the move away from traditional ways and toward practicality in art, architecture and fashion. In *Ballet Shoes* the production of *MND* is on a grand scale. The fairies fly on harnesses, and there are “various traps and springboards for Puck” (174) and there are “over a hundred fairies in the ballet” (166). *MND* had, in fact, been staged as a spectacle since at least 1840 and Max Reinhardt had introduced a revolving set (along with lavish scenery) in his early twentieth century productions of *MND*.<sup>14</sup>

The Fossil children in *Ballet Shoes* also act and dance in other plays reflecting the popularity of dancing and theatre, which had increased in reaction to the horrors of the First World War. The economic struggles of the Fossils in the book also reflect the hard times families experienced during the Great Depression (1929-1938). As Claudia Nelson (2006) has observed a standard figure in Streatfield’s fiction is “the orphaned and/or

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<sup>14</sup> Madame Vestris staged *MND* at Covent Garden in 1840, adding music and ballet. Thereafter, the play was often staged as spectacle, using the music of Felix Mendelssohn.

displaced child”. Nelson notes that “one common plot is the search for validation through public achievement” (55). Perhaps it is unsurprising that Streatfield opted for *MND* as an appropriation as it features a displaced, orphaned child (the changeling).

In summary, although not many new adaptations of Shakespeare for children were published during the twenties and thirties, this fact reflects the general state of children’s literature in Britain at the time. Authors continued the trend of previous adaptors by promoting Shakespeare as the greatest writer who ever lived, and thereby increasing his reputation. Streatfield followed Kipling’s example of including a production of *MND* in her appropriation but has moved in a new direction for the depiction of the fairies. Terry moved adaptations in a new direction, by including a discourse with children in her book, thereby indicating that children could have their own opinion about Shakespeare and his characters.

## Chapter 5 – 1940 to 1959 – Post War Recovery

The exploitation of Shakespeare's reputation in commercial enterprises and the use of adaptations as a shortcut to the original for reluctant Shakespeare readers are investigated in this chapter. The expansion of the Shakespeare-for-children genre into visual literacy (picture books and graphic novels) is also covered. There are a number of firsts linked to the five adaptations of Shakespeare for children that will be discussed for this era – the first picture book of *MND* (Jo Manton and Phyllis Bray's *The story of Titania and Oberon* [1945]), the first retelling aimed at teenage boys (R C. Peat's *Presenting Shakespeare* [1947]), and the first graphic novel (Sam Willinsky and Alex Blum's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* [1951]). In addition two retellings are discussed – *A Shakespeare Tapestry* (1951) by Andrew Scotland and *Stories from Shakespeare* (1959) by Marchette Chute.

The publishing industry experienced a boom period in the 1950s: people recovered from the aftermath of two world wars and began to rediscover the recreational side of life and main-line publishers in Britain improved their standards in response to the educational industry. Families in children's literature showed children living in stable communities where, as Donna Norton (2007) phrases it, "most children are happy and secure, the older generations are wise and respected, and the generations follow one another into traditional social roles in an orderly way." The traditional family model of a working father, stay-at-home mother with children, in a stable home, is prevalent, but in late 1950s children in literature were depicted as more opinionated and judgemental of

adults (Norton 69). When the school-leaving age was raised in both the UK and USA, a longer childhood seemed to result (as children stayed at home with their parents for longer) contributing to an emerging teen culture (Reynolds 20).

Unsurprisingly, adaptors of Shakespeare in the post-war period continued to praise Shakespeare – perhaps, partly at least, as a result of post-war patriotism and in reaction to Britain’s diminishing political role in the post-war world. Peat, Scotland and Chute all refer to Shakespeare as the world’s greatest writer, indicating that his reputation has expanded internationally. Peat explains that his purpose in writing *Presenting Shakespeare* is to introduce readers to "the work of William Shakespeare, the greatest poet and dramatist ever born in England - perhaps, indeed, the greatest ever born anywhere" (13). In the Preface to *A Shakespeare Tapestry*, Scotland proposes that every English child should read Shakespeare as his impact on English national life is “outstanding” (v). Scotland outlines Shakespeare’s contribution to the English language and the influence of Shakespeare on the national character of Englishmen, as he writes: “No one can read the plays and poems of Shakespeare without carrying away the impression that Shakespeare was indeed humorous, tolerant and human; and these qualities of humour, tolerance and humanity are the virtues which in the eyes of the world chiefly distinguish the English-speaking peoples” (v).<sup>15</sup> In his Introduction, Scotland continues his effusive praises of Shakespeare as “the greatest man of the English-speaking peoples” (4). He admires his handsome visage, his “truly noble brow”, his “mastery of the English language” and his “genius” (5). Scotland explains why Shakespeare should be read:

His writings are shot through with an outlook on life that almost eludes description. He has a lofty idealism and a heroic conception of man’s destiny. Yet his characters are real people. He described mankind with insight, sympathy and

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<sup>15</sup> English-speaking peoples usually referred to UK, USA and countries of the Commonwealth

reverence ... the man who knows and loves the plays of Shakespeare will never be lonely, for he is always surrounded by hosts of unseen friends ever present to hearten, encourage and sustain. (5-6)

In her introduction to *Stories of Shakespeare* (1959), Chute starts with the phrase:

"William Shakespeare was the most remarkable storyteller that the world has ever known .... But Shakespeare told every kind of story - comedy, tragedy, history, melodrama, adventure, love stories and fairy tales - and each of them so well that they have become immortal. In all the world of storytelling, his is the greatest name. (11)

Chute, like Peat and Scotland, extols the virtues of Shakespeare's poetry and his plays, as she refers to Shakespeare as "England's greatest poet", a "genius" who has given more joy "than any other writer in the world's history" and "not only one of the greatest of poets and storytellers, but ... also one of the greatest of playwrights" (12).

By the end of the 1950s, adaptors of Shakespeare had been praising his works for 140 years and using him as an example of upright morality for almost a century. No doubt his reputation by this time period was so firmly entrenched that associating Shakespeare with a commercial undertaking added an element of cultural legitimacy to the project, as can be seen in the "Classics Illustrated" phenomenon of the 1950s. The "Classics Illustrated" version of *MND* started the graphic novel tradition in the Shakespeare-for-children genre. Comics were very popular during the 1950s, particularly amongst teenagers, as William Jones (2002) points out: "For literary pursuits, every teenager stocked his own stash of comic books, those ten-cent purchases that provided untold enjoyment and faraway dreaming. ... Batman, Archie, The Phantom, Wonder Woman, Superman—these comic book characters provided a visual education and, coupled with pride in ownership, formed the basis of a youngster's first library" (306). "Classic Comics" was renamed "Classics Illustrated" in 1947 to make it appear more prestigious, and the series "become as much a part of growing-up in post war America as

baseball cards, hula-hoops, Barbie dolls, or rock'n'roll” (Jones 1). The series adapted many novels, myths, legends and Shakespeare stories in a comic format, and Jones writes that “for Albert Kanter [the publisher], the inclusion of Shakespeare in the line offered incontrovertible evidence of the seriousness of his publication’s purpose” (89). The series added the tagline in April 1950 of “Now that you have read the *Classics Illustrated*, don’t miss the added enjoyment of reading the original, obtainable at your school or public library” and with that sort of promotion it was not unexpected that American schools accepted the series (Jones 90). Jones writes that the series created a library for its readers similar to “the canon endorsed by high school and college English departments and [one] that reflect[ed] the cultural assumptions of the period” (48). Shakespeare’s reputation appears to have been used to connect the perceived low-brow comics with high culture and, thereby, add mana by association, to the series. In addition, adapting Shakespeare gave the series an element of credibility and eventually, made it acceptable for use in schools and colleges, eventually resulting in thousands of schools across North America used it as an educational aid. The use of graphic novels to bring the classics to the masses has continued into the twenty first century.

In the Georgian era, the Lambs created their adaptation for girls; the Victorians aimed their adaptations at younger children; and in 1940s and 1950s, the wheel continued to turn as two adaptors turned their attention to boys. Shakespeare was one of the “immortal authors” that the publishers of “Classics Illustrated” selected to adapt, as they believed comic books were read by boys who only enjoyed male authors. Albert Kanter insisted that the series had an educational role to play and informative articles, aimed at a male audience were added at the end of each book. This supplementary material in *MND*, for example, included a biography of Shakespeare, an article on Robert Wilhelm Bunsen, inventor of the Bunsen burner and a report on dog heroes. The other adaptation that was

aimed at a male audience is *Presenting Shakespeare*, the first adaptation of Shakespeare for children that is specifically aimed at teenage boys. In his Preface, Peat argues that there is a right age to present Shakespeare to boys:

In my own school, a city school of nearly seven hundred boys of widely varying types, it was the custom some years ago to read one of Shakespeare's plays ... with the Third Forms, composed of boys about twelve years old. This was considered a failure and was abandoned. Our experience with boys a year older was similar; we found that many of them still took less interest in Shakespeare than in their other texts. This introduction to Shakespeare, therefore, is intended for pupils about fourteen years of age (5).

Peat's observation is in stark contrast to the Lambs' exhortation to boys to introduce the joys of Shakespeare to their sisters or adaptors of the Victorian and Edwardian era, who aimed their adaptations at younger children – Peat is very specific with the age that boys should be introduced to Shakespeare (fourteen years) and he asserts that *MND* is a good place to start. It is typical of the time that the lack of interest in Shakespeare is blamed on the age of the child, rather than the teaching of Shakespeare, whereas later adaptors look at presenting Shakespeare in a fashion that would appeal to a child of any age.

Another evidential point that can be seen from Peat's Preface, is that children from the forties and fifties were beginning to show a resistance to reading Shakespeare: the idea was entrenched that reading Shakespeare is hard and a homework chore. Marchette Chute alludes to this resistance in the Preface to *Stories from Shakespeare*, as she writes:

A further difficulty lies in the fact that so many of Shakespeare's plays are taught in the school as 'required reading'... The average person does not like to be told what to do, and he might begin to study a play. ... with the conviction already formed in his mind that he is not going to enjoy himself ... So he puts the book down, convinced that Shakespeare is much too difficult to be read for pleasure and that the whole subject is overrated. (14)



She admits that her adaptation would not give readers “much conception of Shakespeare's vastness, his wisdom, or his profound knowledge of people.... But it may open a door that to some people is closed and give a glimpse, however slight, of what lies beyond” (14). It seems to me that Peat and Chute are symptomatic of a subtle shift in emphasis. Whereas authors from previous centuries wrote adaptations because children were eager (or assumed to be eager) to read Shakespeare but did not understand the plays, the children from this century needed adaptations because they were not eager to read Shakespeare, and needed an adaptation as a shortcut to the original.

The writers of the 1940s and '50s utilised the various tools in the adaptors' toolbox: abridgment, rephrasing, retelling and illustration. Peat's *Presenting Shakespeare* (1947) is an abridgement, where the author assures the reader that "very few scenes of dramatic interest or literary worth have been left out". He replaced the parts left out with summaries taken from Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare*. However, when the Lambs have left out scenes that Peat feels would be interesting to children, such as the comic interlude in *MND*, he has added additional explanations. For example, in Act 1 Scene 2 of *MND*, Peat's summarized scene is taken from *Tales from Shakespeare*, and an explanation that the Duke is to be married to Hippolyta and a "group of Athenian artisans" will present a short play at the wedding is added.

In *Stories from Shakespeare* (1959) Chute follows previous adaptors' example by rewriting the play in narrative prose. Chute calls *MND* “one of the most magical plays ever written” (51) but she attributes this to “Shakespeare's magic and the power he had over words” (52) rather than the magical elements in the play. This might explain why she doesn't actually emphasize the magical or fairy aspect of the play, concentrating a disproportionate amount of her energies on the plot of the workmen, including both their rehearsals and the Pyramus and Thisbe play, while including only cursory summaries of

the lovers. It can be noted that although Chute extols the virtues of Shakespeare's poetry she includes only five quotations, such as "Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook" (3.2.347), and she does not use any of the more popular quotations such as the fairy song. The longest single quotation from the original is Titania's eleven lines: "Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.... Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies" (2.1.66-77). Chute tells the story in the present tense, as though she is describing the action happening on stage. For example, she describes Bottom's conduct in his meeting with Titania as "the elves and the ass bow graciously to one another, and Bottom, always the master of any situation he finds himself in, conducts a polite conversation with them until Titania leads him away" (55). She writes that it is the 'workmen's intense earnestness' (52) that makes them so comical – that although they think they are good, they are "actually the worst group of amateur actors who ever choked an audience with laughter" (54). She is, thereby, instructing her readers as to the appropriate responses.

Chute believes that Shakespeare would approve of her work as Shakespeare has "never confused his own public, and he would not wish anyone to be confused today" (15). The reception of Chute's adaptation amongst reviewers also reflects the change in adaptations for children over the past fifty years, and perhaps, the higher standards that adaptations are held to in the present day. In 1956, *Stories from Shakespeare* was praised in *Kirkus Reviews* for "the contagious enthusiasm of Marchette Chute's guidance" in encouraging the reader to reread the original with "the joy, the delight of discovery, ... [and] understanding and appreciation" (web), while Douglas King (2003) criticised Chute's adaptation as being a "plot summary devoid of narrative eloquence or linguistic suppleness" as she focussed on the "narratives over [the] poetics" (129). It is worthwhile to note that these two quotations sum up the fundamental conflict in arguments about the

value of Shakespeare for children – by offering adaptations as shortcuts to Shakespeare, should adaptors focus on the language or the plot?

Jo Manton's adaptation is the first picture book featuring *MND* and the first adaptation to focus solely on the role of Titania and Oberon, as these scenes, according to the book cover "appeal particularly to a child's imagination". Manton retells the story in simple language, describing the quarrel, Oberon's trick, the rehearsal of the mechanicals, Bottom's transformation and the wedding in the end. She incorporates Shakespeare's language by using direct quotations when the characters are speaking: "'Come sit thee down upon this flowery bed,' said Titania /'While I thy amiable cheeks do coy /And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy /And stick musk roses in thy sleek smooth head'" (22). Manton uses paraphrasing to both summarise and explain scenes: "[Titania] twisted garlands of flowers round his long grey ears ... she offered him music to hear and anything he like to eat, though like a donkey all he wanted was oats and hay" (22). By writing, for example, as "a fairy come running and dancing" (2), "they never met to dance in the moonlight" (4), "Puck went whirling away" (6) and "[t]hey danced in and out of the patches of moonlight" (26), Manton emphasizes that *MND* is a play with dance scenes. The text is set in panels with illustrated borders on the left hand page and full page colour illustrations on the right. The first illustration features a backdrop of the Parthenon and is bordered by ornate red curtains, indicating that the story is set on a stage – a technique that was to be used six-years later by Eric Fraser in his illustrations. Another indication that this story is a performance can be seen in the illustrations of the fairies, as Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed are shown as *en-pointe* ballerinas in classical ballet poses, each with a different style tutu and matching wings. Titania is portrayed with large butterfly wings while Oberon has feathered wings more typical of a bird or angel – Bray is the first illustrator to use bird wings in the portrayal of

the fairies. Titania carries a star-tipped sceptre and wears a wide-skirted, full-sleeved dress in vogue during the 1940s.

Sam Willinsky follows Shakespeare narrative in adapting the text for the “Classics Illustrated” version of *MND*. In a similar fashion to Manton, he uses Shakespeare’s language when the characters speak (often truncating sentences) and separate explanations to explain scenes. Although all the scenes are included, the focus is more on the human characters than the fairies. Only one panel is devoted to the scene between Titania and Bottom: an explanation reads “Meanwhile, the fairy queen still under the spell of the magic flower ...”, the speech bubble over Titania’s head reads “Come, sit down upon this flowery bed while I thy cheeks do coy\* and kiss thy fair large ears my gentle joy” and a caption “caress” explains the meaning of coy. Interpreting the “Classics Illustrated” adaption of *MND* into visual form fell to Alex Blum, a trained etcher who had illustrated more than twenty titles of the series, and was admired for his “clean, uncluttered style of linework” (Jones 61). As the first illustrator of a comic book version of *MND* Blum had to help the reader connect with Shakespeare as a playwright, and help the reader “fill in what happens between panels, hear printed words as sounds, set still pictures of action into motion” (Perret 9). Blum used a number of graphic techniques to help the reader see the action as it might have been when performed on stage. His clever use of panelling helps the reader define time frames. If the action is in the past (flashback) – as when Oberon and Puck are reminiscing about the mermaid in Act 1, Scene 2 – he uses a scalloped border around the panel instead of a broad white border. Blum also uses colours to provide visual clues for the reader. Thus, when Puck is leading the lovers astray, the pictures have a white wash to depict the fog. To keep the love pairings together, Blum portrays Hermia and Lysander as blondes wearing cool colours – Hermia is dressed in green chiton and Lysander wears a blue tunic – whilst Helena and

Demetrius are brunettes wearing red clothes. The women have Barbie-doll features, with small rosebud mouths, large eyes and perfectly manicured high eyebrows, typical of women's fashions in the late 1940s and the Disney movies of the same period. Blum portrays Titania in a style of clothing and colouring similar to that of Bray's illustration of a fair-haired Titania, but it can be noted that Blum's brunette Titania on the cover is different to the blonde Titania inside the book.

*A Shakespeare Tapestry* (1951) written by Andrew Scotland and illustrated by Eric Fraser is a very similar book to *Presenting Shakespeare*. Scotland uses the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* to tell the story, interspersed with Shakespeare's words, as he believes it will help readers to understand what Shakespeare wrote. More interesting are the heavy pen and ink illustrations by Eric Fraser, in a neoclassic style, which accompanies *MND*. Neoclassicism was popular between the wars, and Fraser had achieved recognition for his work on *Radio Times*. John Taylor (1998) writes:

Back in the darkest days of the war, the *Radio Times* was a weekly lifeline connecting people at home with the great world of culture, ... this was an as yet unsung golden age of British illustration, and a whole school of black-and-white draughtsmen were kept constantly busy with the little headpieces and larger illustrations .... Among these Eric Fraser had the most distinctive style of all. His drawings disposed strong areas of black in such a way as to imply that they were wood-engravings. (42)

Fraser's pictures in *A Shakespeare Tapestry* incorporate curtains on either side of the illustration and square blocks at the bottom, indicating that *MND* is a play being performed on stage, in front of footlights, thereby paying homage to the original. One of the illustrations shows Puck as a prancing, winged cherub wearing a flying loin cloth and carrying a daffodil. Although Blum portrays Puck in *MND* as a sturdy winged elf dressed in a green tunic, he also depicts Puck carrying a daffodil when he is leading the lovers astray in the woods. According to Marsh and Greenaway (1885), the daffodil is the

symbol of high regard, thus by using this flower, both Scotland and Blum are referring to the quest for true love in *MND*. Fraser draws the fairy as a winged woman, carrying a star-tipped wand that is reminiscent of the fairy godmother's wand in the Disney animated film, *Cinderella* (1951). Another illustration portrays Titania as a winged young woman rising to her feet, surrounded by four smaller fairies (of whom two appear naked), facing Bottom who is striding toward them – the white space of the sky in this illustrations forms a frame around Bottom, emphasizing his separation from the magical world of the fairies. Titania's dress is reminiscent of peplum style evening dresses in fashion in the late 1940s (and similar to that worn by Cinderella in the 1951 Disney movie).

A pattern emerges in the introductions to the adaptations published during the forties and fifties. Like earlier adaptors, these authors are generous in their praise of Shakespeare's works and they are effusively acclaiming the greatness of the man. This is creating a secondary story in the adaption that did not exist before – not only is *MND* worth reading because it is interesting, it is worth reading because it was created by *Shakespeare*! Shakespeare has achieved sufficient prestige to add credibility to commercial enterprises, but at the same time he needs transmission via popular comics to be acceptable to teenagers. Shakespeare is being adapted as a shortcut to the original because there is a developing resistance to reading his plays, as they are perceived by teenagers – a new emerging market of readers – to be a homework chore. Whilst in previous eras, Shakespeare was adapted for girls, then for younger children, his work is now being adapted for teenagers, particularly boys.

## Chapter 6 – 1960 to 1979 – Performance Adaptations

The 1960s and 70s saw further growth in children's literature (especially picture books and books aimed at teenagers), influenced by the social and economic changes in the UK and the USA, as well as the increased availability of government funding for educational resources. This growth is reflected in the Shakespeare-for-children genre. The trend of adaptations of *MND* on the performance rather than the reading of the play is examined in this section. As Barbara Elleman (1987) notes, the influences of the socio-political changes "became keenly felt in the 1960s when upheavals in life-styles, traditions, mores, and language, as well as protests against sexism and racism, brought a new realism to children's books" (416). This chapter also focusses on how these socio-political changes are manifested in adaptations of *MND*.

The passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the USA in 1965 meant that generous funding (under Title II) was made available to schools for improving their libraries and increasing their stock of library books, which led to, what Connie Epstein (1996) describes as a "buying frenzy": "Book inventories were sold out, new printings were delayed at overloaded printers; and some publishers reported as much as a third of their backlist temporarily out of stock" (482). Publishers scrambled for a share in the educational market and established children's book departments – if they did not already have them – which saw a change in the organisation of the publishing industry. However, toward the end of the 1970s, the demand for hardbacks declined when library budgets were cut and publishers had a conservative approach to marketing (Hunt 127).

Publishers were inclined to repackage popular authors, and this can be seen in the reprinting of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* and the inclusion of their version of *MND* in a series of classic books for children.<sup>16</sup>

By the 1960s and 70s the study of Shakespeare in schools was firmly entrenched in the school syllabi in both the UK and the USA. Clifton Fadiman, in his Afterword to the Lambs' *Tales of Shakespeare* (1963) stresses the educational importance of Shakespeare:

Let us suppose that an American has reached middle age without ever having heard of Shakespeare or the Bible. He might be kind, he might be sensible, he might be law-abiding. But, no matter what else he might know, if he knew nothing whatsoever about either Shakespeare or the Bible, it would be hard to call him an educated human being. (355)

Fadiman also suggested that adaptations were a “gateway” to the “vast, magnificent, complicated structure” that forms Shakespeare’s works (356). The gap between the educators who wanted to teach Shakespeare and the students who wanted to learn Shakespeare, evidenced in the previous decade, is alluded to in the cover blurb of Miles’ *Favourite Tales from Shakespeare*: “Most children who creep unwillingly to school, creep just as unwillingly to Shakespeare because the plays, which were written nearly four hundred years ago, are not always easy to read and understand” (n.pag.). There was, evidently, a trend towards highlighting the performance and, thereby, featuring Shakespeare the playwright – rather than Shakespeare the man, or Shakespeare the poet. In these adaptations there is a return to studying *MND* as drama rather than literature, possibly in an effort to make Shakespeare more interesting to schoolchildren.

Adaptations of *MND* for 1960-1979 that will be discussed are two prose retellings, three picture books and four adapted plays. One commonality amongst these adaptations

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<sup>16</sup> *The Bookshelf for Boys and Girls* Volume VIII, Bookland Classics, 1963



is a focus on the performance of the *MND*, either by encouraging children to act in the play or by an emphasis on the performance of the sub-plot of Pyramus and Thisbe, (where many of the previous adaptors omitted this subplot).

The decade also coincided with the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, and this may also have influenced the trend toward performance. On 28 April 1964, to celebrate Shakespeare's 400<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Beatles performed the Pyramus and Thisbe play from *MND* as part of a television special "Around the Beatles".<sup>17</sup> Their performance was at the time of "Beatlemania" and the huge popularity of this pop group no doubt sparked an interest in *MND*. In addition, it possibly contributed to the increased interest in adapted play versions of *MND* and the focus on Bottom's dream in many of the adaptations.

Katherine Millar's *Five Plays from Shakespeare* (1964) contains an abridgement of *MND* adapted for a one-hour performance especially for children, as Miller puts it, to "bring quicker understanding and enjoyment".<sup>18</sup> In the Preface, Miller points out that as Shakespeare tells his stories in dramatic form, readers have to use their imagination to ascertain the characters' feelings and thoughts because 'plays tell only what people say,' and "everything they do or think or feel you must imagine for yourself". To overcome this difficulty, Miller explains, she has "inserted explanations here and there about what is going on" (preface). Shakespeare's habit of combining a number of plots "in a delightful but difficult pattern" can prove a challenge for children. For this reason, Miller has added, what she describes as, "occasional comments to help the reader understand the thread of the story". Conversations and sub-plots have been edited to focus on action and quicken the pace of the story. Miller assures readers that although they may have a

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<sup>17</sup> It starred Paul McCartney as Pyramus, John Lennon as Thisbe, Ringo Starr as the Lion and George Harrison as Moonshine.

<sup>18</sup> Illustrated by Lynd Ward

“little” difficulty in understanding Shakespeare's archaic expressions and an unfamiliar style, they will experience the "greatest pleasure" from reading it. To understand the plays, Miller suggests, the reader should read the scene through without stopping, and then reread the scene and look up unfamiliar words in the glossary.

A similar adaptation to Miller's book is Gertrude Kerman's *Shakespeare for Young Players from Tens to Teens* (1964), a collection of abridged plays with details on Shakespeare and his times, a glossary and notes on the productions.<sup>19</sup> Kerman had used Shakespeare's words in a routine speech lesson, which (coupled with improvisations) proved so popular that she wrote *Shakespeare for Young Players*. It appears that the idea of children performing Shakespeare was unusual in the 1960s, as Kerman writes in the Foreword:

Shakespeare for young players? On first thought, the idea that the tens to teens may enjoy performing his plays seems incongruous, even absurd. Yet Shakespeare and young players are compatible. Dramatic leaders [teachers and directors] have revealed this compatibility time and again.

Kerman claims that children's performance of her adaptation of *MND* have been “enchanted” and that the “best, most spontaneous performance was that given by a group of ten- and eleven-year old girls” (43), thereby offering proof to readers that younger children can perform Shakespeare. She also found that play adaptations encouraged reading of the full length play as she writes in the Preface;

After performance, boys and girls, players and spectators alike, sought out recordings of the full length script. Some of the young people went further and read the original play ... I also hope that they [scholars] will understand my desire to introduce young people to Shakespeare.

To shorten the play for a performance of an hour, Kerman omitted the mechanicals' plot: Bottom is introduced, through a conversation with Puck, as an actor rehearsing his lines

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<sup>19</sup> Illustrated by Anne Lewis

alone in the wood. Kerman comments that “many of the poet's lyrical love passages, beautiful though they are, have been omitted” and “embraces” have been kept to a minimum as “[r]omance is generally an embarrassing topic for children” (43). She includes some of Shakespeare’s most well-known lines from *MND*, such as “The course of true love never did run smooth” (26), “Lord what fools these mortals be!” (36), “My Oberon, what visions have I seen! Methought I was enamour'd of an ass” (40), as well as the fairies’ song “You spotted snakes” (30).

Aurand Harris is another adaptor who wanted to introduce children to the performance of Shakespeare. Harris suggests that the best way introduce children to classical literature and Shakespeare is through a production, as he writes:

I tried to retain the feeling, the fun, the fantasy, the poetry and the picturesque speech of Shakespeare. I hope the play will prove enjoyable and rewarding entertainment for American children. I also hope that it will be a good way to introduce them to classical literature by SEEING and enjoying a play in A THEATRE -- the proper way to meet Mr. Shakespeare so that he may become an enduring favorite friend. (6)

In his Introduction to *Robin Goodfellow* (1977), Harris writes that during his research on fairies he was attracted to Puck from *MND*, and decided to adapt the character in much the same way as Shakespeare had adapted stories of other authors. Harris combined the folk tales of Robin Goodfellow with Shakespeare’s representation of Puck to write a play on Robin’s audition on Midsummer Night to be an elf jester to Oberon. Harris retains Shakespeare’s language where he can fit it into his storyline (either condensing or changing the tense) and attempts to mimic Shakespeare in added scenes. In the opening scene Robin introduces himself in rhyming couplets: “I have walked up a hill and down a hill, /Betwixt a hill, and thither I walk still. /If perchance you wonder whither and why, /‘Tm out find my fortune, ‘answer I” (8). These lines are paraphrased from “Over hill, over dale, /Thorough bush, thorough brier /Over park, over pale, /thorough flood,

thorough fire; /I do wander everywhere” (2.1.2-6), spoken by the Fairy in the original. Harris featured only two mechanicals (Bottom and Quince) but added three fairies – Moonbeam, Thistlepoint and Ticklefeather, thus emphasizing the fairies in his adaptation.

The three picture books written during this era also have their roots in the production of *MND*, as they are all adaptations of an original performance (a film, music score and ballet respectively), which in their turn were adapted from Shakespeare’s original *MND*. In 1959, Jiri Trnka, the renowned Czechoslovakian puppeteer and film director, produced a puppet film version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which won a Grand Prix award at the Cannes Film Festival. A picture book adaptation of the play by Eduard Petiska (translated by Jean Layton) with illustrations and designs from the film was published in 1960, celebrating the commercial success of the movie. Petiska’s story is told in the present tense as though narrating a film – “While Hermia leans from the window and whispers to Lysander, stern father Egeus is drawing nigh” (4). The focus is placed on the lovers’ story with extensive description of Theseus’ wedding and the lover’s quarrel, whereas the fairy story is briefly covered, with the scene between Bottom and Titania reduced to one sentence: “While fair Titania gently strokes the long ass’s ears and admires the ass’s song of Bottom the weaver, Puck hastens to carry out his other task” (22). The performance of the Pyramus and Thisbe play is also covered, emphasizing the performance aspect of the adaptation. The characterisation of each puppet is detailed and vibrant. Oberon is shown in a variety of costumes, a cloak and crown of fruit in one, and an elaborate cloak of leaves and stag headdress in another. Demetrius is a bearded soldier with sword and pink fustanella; while Lysander wears a peasant hat and fights with a staff. The duelling pair features on the cover and the puppets move on tip toes – in the original film version, the puppets dance to a strong musical score in smooth pirouettes, much as the ballet dancers do in Swope’s adaptation

of the *MND* ballet. The left-hand pages of the book feature two pastel drawings, usually of the characters featured in the large illustration on the right, which shows a scene from the original puppet movie. This was the first time that a film and a book version of *MND* were to be commercially linked.

The second picture book is Nancy Lassalle's *A Midsummer Night's Dream; The Story of the New York City Ballet's Production* (1977). Illustrated in captioned photographs by Martha Swope, this book is similar to Trnka's adaptation in its evocation of a performance.<sup>20</sup> The preface introduces the play and selected quotations from the original *MND* are included on every page, but the ballet by George Balanchine is based more on Felix Mendelssohn's music to Shakespeare's play than on the play itself. As a result the captioned photographs essentially follow the same narrative as Shakespeare with some rearrangement and additions to scenes. The fairies and Helena, for example, are introduced on stage before Hermia, Lysander and Demetrius appear before Theseus and a scene of Hippolyta hunting occurs while Puck is leading the lovers astray in the fog.

The third picture book of the era, *Bottom's Dream* (1969), is also based on Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is one of a series of "music books" that are based on famous pieces of music. John Updike and Warren Chappell were hired by Alfred Knoffe, the publisher to work collaboratively on the project, and they created the book on the line, "I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream; it shall be called Bottom's dream, because it hath no bottom" (4.1.200-1). The text includes direct quotations from the original Shakespeare play, particularly where it has a link to Mendelssohn's music. Significantly, the first picture book *Titania and Oberon* (1945) focussed on the fairies, while Updike and Chappell's picture book (1969) – written during the decade when social realism was prominent – while covering the same scenes,

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<sup>20</sup>Martha Swope was the official photographer of the New York City Ballet. Although the book was published in 1977, the ballet of *MND* was first performed on 17 January 1962.

focussed in its illustrations on the mechanicals rather than the fairies. Chappell's black pen and watercolour illustrations (Fig 8) fill seven full page plates and one double page spread with black pen sketches on the other pages. Generally, Bottom is the focal point in the illustrations that he appears in. Sometimes Updike and Chappell are not consistent with their characterisation – Titania and Oberon are depicted human size and fairies half their size, in opposition to “the ring of tiny dancers” as mentioned in the text (12).

Ian Serraillier's *The Enchanted Island* (1964) includes a prose retelling of *MND* entitled “Bottom the Actor”, focusing on the mechanicals' rehearsals and their performance of the Pyramus and Thisbe play for the Duke's wedding.<sup>21</sup> The lovers' plot is omitted and the role of the fairies is included when it relates to Bottom. Zena Sutherland (1964) found Serraillier's adaptation too difficult for young readers:

The prose is adequate, but the use of small print and the level of vocabulary difficulty demand readers old enough to enjoy the original version. Even if the young reader does not understand all of the allusive or obsolete language of Shakespeare, he can get as much of the plot from the original as he does here, and can enjoy the power and the poetry of Shakespeare's style (31).

Interestingly, it can be noted that during this time critics of Shakespeare (while still admiring the “power and poetry” of his writing), are beginning to refer to his language as “obsolete” as opposed to being (merely) difficult to understand. Serraillier includes quotations from the original (such as the fairy song). He also paraphrases Shakespeare's verse in prose: “He lay down on the flowery bank beside her and allowed her to wreath his head with roses, to kiss his long ears and stroke his hairy cheeks” (25). The lines that this sentence is derived from are spoken by Titania to Bottom but Serraillier changes the focus onto Bottom in his rewrite.

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<sup>21</sup> Ian Serraillier is best known for his wartime story, *The Silver Sword* (1956). In 1948 he and his wife founded the New Windmill Series, published by Heinemann, with the aim of providing good stories at a low cost. He wrote *The Enchanted Island* as part of this series.

In a similar fashion to Serrailier, the second prose retelling – Miles’ *Favourite Tales from Shakespeare* (1976) – focusses on the mechanicals and their performance. Miles demonstrates how telling a story can be turned into performing a play, thus showing the reader both the connection, and the difference, between the two: Quince tells the story of Pyramus and Thisbe to his neighbours, and then later writes a script for the mechanicals to perform. Miles focusses on the action of the play and character descriptions and motivations, but makes no attempt to include Shakespeare’s language, which he claims is “pages and pages of talk in beautiful but rather difficult and old-fashioned language” (8). The story is told by a narrator from Quince’s and Bottom’s point of view, with *MND* plot featuring as Bottom’s dream. The narrator draws in the reader with phrases like “You must remember that ...” (36), “In this long-time-ago that I am telling you about” (38), “But you and I know don’t we?” (58). Miles uses long, conversational sentences and provides additional details on the characters’ backgrounds, families and interests. He describes Bottom as “tall and strong [with] ...red hair and a big flat nose and a very loud voice, but his hands were like a lady’s, with fine gentle fingers” (36), a “big strong fellow” (50). Bottom is married to a “Mrs Nick” (50).

It can be noted that Serrailier’s, Miles’ and Updike’s versions – although they are prose retellings – focus on the performance of the Pyramus and Thisbe play. Another adaptor to use the same focus is Ed Graczyk in his version of Bottom’s dream, *The Rude Mechanicals: A Play for Young People* (1970). Puck plays the role of facetious narrator, Robin Goodfellow – a trickster who will appear and disappear at will. In *The Rude Mechanicals*, out-of-work Peter Quince is competing for the prize to present a play at the Duke’s wedding and Starveling is making the Duke’s wedding suit. Graczyk follows the same adaptation technique as Miller and Kerman by interlacing Shakespeare’s words with his own. He also silently replaces some Shakespearean phrases. For example, where

Shakespeare wrote: “Have you the lion’s part written? Pray you, if it be, give it to me; for I am slow of study” (1.2.59-60), Graczyk’s adaptation reads: “Have you the lion’s part written? If you do, give it to me now, for I’ll need all the time I can to learn the lines” (21).

A social revolution led by youth started in the 1960s, demonstrated by changes in attitudes and values, an increase in the generation gap, the sexual revolution and a disregard for the formal rules of society. The social changes of the sixties affected Shakespeare productions, as Elizabeth Schafer writes, “directors felt increasingly free to open up radical new outlooks on the bard” (230,) and productions of Shakespeare were relocated “in terms of settings, character sympathies and politics” (230). Miles’ version is set in Warwickshire, instead of Greece, and Chappell’s depiction of the fairies seems to reflect the sixties’ satirising of the establishment. Chappell rejects the sentimental depiction of fairies by showing them as unattractive goblins with long noses, large ears and faintly malicious expressions. The cover jacket of *Bottom’s Dream* claims “Warren Chappell’s illustrations evoke a romantic dream mood” but his depiction of the fairies have more of a nightmarish flavour. Puck is drawn as ugly gargoyle with bat-shaped wings extending from his arms, and although the caption reads, “I am that merry wanderer of the night” (14), his expression suggests more malevolence than mischievousness. The “shimmering fairies” (22) are clumsy and insect-like, with wings shaped like flies, dragonflies, butterflies and bees.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s resulted in a relaxation in the traditional codes of behaviour and a freedom in sexual expression. This sexual liberation is reflected in the combination of Shakespeare’s quotations, Updike’s text, Chappell’s illustration and Mendelssohn’s music *Bottom’s Dream*. As Hateley (2003) suggests:



Updike ... emphasises the transformative and sexual nature of Bottom's experience: "Thus began for Bottom a strange and wonderful new existence. The fairies crowned him with flowers, and Titania cradled his heavy donkey head on her lap, and kissed his tremendous hairy ears" (Updike n.p.) On this page appears a six bar excerpt from Mendelssohn's Nocturne, linking peaceful sleep with maternal/sexual comfort. Though these elements are clearly present in Shakespeare's play, it is unusual to find them deployed so obviously in children's literature. (129)

Miles also alludes to the effects of sexual pleasure in the scene between Titania and Bottom in *Favourite Tales from Shakespeare*, on which adaptors from previous eras have not focussed:

In fact, she was so much in love with him that she invited him into her bower and kissed his soft wet nose and stroked his ears. And she cuddled him and fondled him and made such a fuss of him that he hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. (56)

The sensual elements in Lynd Ward's illustration (Fig 7) of Titania and Bottom in *Five Plays from Shakespeare* could also be a reflection of the sexual revolution. Titania is wearing a floral flowing gown that clings suggestively to her curves. With her legs to one side, she is leaning into Bottom, stroking his face – her eyes are closed and she is smiling faintly. Her butterfly wings are extended and she has flowers in her loose flowing hair. Bottom, in contrast, is sitting with his legs folded, his hands are crossed and he is holding onto his ankles. His ears are pulled back, his eye is peering down at Titania and he appears disapproving of her overt attentions.

In *The Rude Mechanicals*, Hippolyta (functioning as a combination of Hermia, Hippolyta and Titania) hides in the wood to avoid marriage to a man she has never met and believes to be "ugly and mean" (35). Robin (Puck) charms her into falling in love with Bottom (transformed into an ass) and she promises to obey Bottom's "every wish" and clean "the entire house and every dish" (32). Robin shows Hippolyta a vision of the

handsome Duke and counteracts the effect of the love potion by using reason and flattery "A better match you could never ask ... for a beautiful intelligent lass" (35). Hippolyta weighs up the Duke's needing her for fulfilment and love ("Sweet Hippolyta, I need you for a thousand things, to give me life ... to give me love ...and to be with me every evening" [36]) versus Bottom needing her for food and cleaning his house – a choice between being a lover and companion versus being homemaker. These sentiments appear to be in line with the aims of the feminist movement of the 1960s where Betty Friedan (1963) encouraged women to emancipate themselves from being housewives, as she writes:<sup>22</sup>

Housework, no matter how it is expanded to fill the time available, can hardly use the abilities of a woman of average or normal human intelligence, much less the fifty per cent of the female population whose intelligence, in childhood, was above average. (244)

This idea of seeking fulfilment occurs again at the end of the play – Robin reminds the audience if they have a loving heart and follow their dreams, things "have a way of turning out right in the end" (46).

It can be seen that adaptations of the sixties and seventies were not as effusive with their praise of Shakespeare – it appears that his greatness is almost assumed. There is more emphasis on his work – particularly the production of the plays (more about the performance rather than the reading of *MND*). Earlier writers had adapted Shakespeare for girls (early nineteenth century), younger children (later nineteenth century) and then teenagers and boys (early to mid-twentieth century), whereas adaptors from the 1960s and 70s are focussed on enabling children to experience *MND* as Shakespeare wrote it – as a play. This may be an attempt to make the Shakespeare more appealing to schoolchildren, who are forced to study his plays at school. Texts are starting to reflect feminist social

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<sup>22</sup> *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan was designated by the Library of Congress as one of the "books that shaped America,"

issues and changing sexual values – a trend that will become more prevalent in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

## Chapter 7 – 1980 to 1989 – Shakespeare in Schools

The study of Shakespeare in United Kingdom schools in the 1980s was largely confined to independent educational institutions and the higher ability stream, but where it was studied “performance-orientated pedagogy” was considered the best way to teach Shakespeare’s plays (Irish 5). During the 1980s, new critical theories, particularly the Feminist and Cultural Materialist movements, influenced the teaching of Shakespeare, by providing a theoretical foundation for teachers who were already practising these concepts. As Tracy Irish notes, “Cultural Materialism strongly attacked the ‘bardolatry’ that had built up around a Shakespeare taken out of time and place to be a repository of ‘universal truth’, and as a result Shakespeare textbooks from the 1980s “gave the plays some context” (5). The influence of teaching Shakespeare at school on adaptations for children is examined in this section, as is the impact of changing sexual mores and contemporary social issues.

The 1980s was a difficult time for the printing industry in Britain thanks to worldwide economic recession with more than 350 businesses ceasing to trade.<sup>23</sup> The 1988 Educational Reform Act and the introduction of Local Management of Schools forced school libraries to reduce or restructure their services to survive, and this reduction in funds to purchase books affected British publishers.<sup>24</sup> In the USA, federal funds for education were also reduced and, as library budgets were tightened, librarians had less

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<sup>23</sup> Margaret Clark (1996, 476)

<sup>24</sup> Ray Lonsdale (1996, 631)

influence on book purchases leading to a decline in the hardback market. The public still demanded new titles and this led to the rise of the children's bookstore and an opening of the retail market (Epstein 482). During this boom period in the 1980s, publishing houses reopened their juvenile departments and educational and mass market companies brought out trade and paperback lists. There was intensive adult interest in children's literature, which Jerry Griswold (1996) attributes to "the disappearance of childhood" (880) as the distinction between adults and children lessened; and the desire of anxious middle-aged people for "rejuvenation" as they nostalgically reviewed their childhood. *Booklist* editor, Barbara Elleman (1987) wrote that parents made children's books the fastest growing market in publishing in 1986 with expected sales of over \$462 million (424).<sup>25</sup>

Publishing trends included reprinting classics and reissuing popular stories and picture books in paperback, as well as the resurgence of the series books and the emergence of sophisticated picture books. Technology in the form of high-speed presses, computers and advanced cameras enabled publishers to provide full-colour picture books with a varying range of content for older and younger readers. Publishing houses also brought out illustrated single editions of both traditional and fairy tales – a low cost option as one source collection could be republished as a series. Some adaptations of Shakespeare fell into this category as Elleman (1987) observes: "Talented illustrators with minimal writing talents can realize higher royalties by circumventing the contribution of an author by using texts in the public domain"(421). The trend started in the 1950s of using Shakespeare's reputation to give legitimacy to commercial enterprises continued, as Garfield (1990) points out, "If the mere name, Shakespeare, can be

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<sup>25</sup> "The Wall Street Journal, 13 January 1986, in an article entitled 'Children's Books, Selling Like Hotcakes, Tell Kids All About the Cold, Cruel World'

legitimately utilised on the cover of a book, then that book will be assured of a respectable sale" (92).

The 1980s versions of *MND* for children that will be discussed cover three genres of adaptations for Shakespeare. First, there were two appropriations involving school productions of *MND*: Stephen Krensky's *The Wilder Plot* (1982) and Marilyn Singer's *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth* (1983).<sup>26</sup> Second, there were two collections: Leon Garfield and Michael Foreman's *Shakespeare Stories* (1985) and Beverley Birch's almost identically titled *Shakespeare's Stories* (1988). Third, there were two single titles of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, both published in 1988: Naomi Lewis and Sylvie Monti's picture book and Jennifer Mulherin and Norman Bancroft-Hunt's illustrated book.<sup>27</sup>

The 1980s saw a resurgence of praising Shakespeare and his stories. The cover of Leon Garfield's *Shakespeare Stories* (1985) pays homage to Shakespeare calling him "our greatest dramatist" and explains that Garfield's stories will serve as "reminder of Shakespeare's genius as poet and dramatist". The blurb also commends Garfield's writing as "true to the essential spirit of the original version", capturing "all the richness of character, plot, mood, and setting in Shakespeare's works, without resorting to simplification". In the Author's Note of *MND*, Mulherin points out that "there is no substitute for seeing the plays of Shakespeare performed" as only "then can you really understand why Shakespeare is England's greatest dramatist and poet" (2). The back cover mentions that "Shakespeare is for everyone: you don't have to be a genius!", implying that it was thought (though incorrectly) in the 1980s that only highly intelligent people read Shakespeare.

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<sup>26</sup> *The Course of True Love* won an American Library Association Best Book award in 1983.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis, a renowned British poet and children's author, received the Eleanor Farjeon Award for services to children's literature in 1975 and was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1981. Mulherin is a published author and an editor of children's books, young adult books and magazines.

It can also be seen in the 1980s that writers began to use their own experiences of Shakespeare at school to write adaptations for a new generation of schoolchildren.

Stephen Krensky grew up in Lexington, Massachusetts – a town “where annual school plays could be found on every corner” (book jacket). Shakespeare was performed during Krensky’s own seventh and eighth grades (although he managed to get himself elected as lighting director and did not appear onstage). He has used elements of these experiences in *The Wilder Plot* for inspiration. Krensky (2012) chose *MND* for its intricate plot and many character interactions as well as the romances, which he believed would be comical to layer over a typical eighth grade class. The plot features a group of schoolchildren who have to survive the election of a new class president and the performance of *MND* for their annual school play. *Kirkus Reviews* (1982) deemed the book “accessible Shakespeare perhaps, but still unlikely to ring responsive bells in Krensky’s readers” (web). The book jacket of *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth* promotes Singer as a ““fan of Shakespeare” who had seen *MND* five times. Singer was inspired to write the book after she had a dream, as she describes in an online interview:

In one dream, I was best friends with Paul Simon, the singer/songwriter. We both liked two other people and made a pact that we would help each other win their hearts. Then Paul and I decided we really loved each other, and the dream ended with our passionate embrace. When I woke up, I knew I had the basis for a book. I combined my dream with my love of Shakespeare and acting, in this case a school production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the result was *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth*.

In a 2007 interview, Beverley Birch explained her work: “When in 1981 I left editing to write full-time. I resurrected my memories of growing up in Kenya ... drawing on the political and emotional responses to those years that I hadn't been able to make sense of when I was younger. I generated a large and varied backlist, including picture books and retellings of Shakespeare” (Jacobus web).

The condition of the education system in the 1980s influenced the type of adaption of *MND*. Adney (2009) suggests the “wealth of detail” in the adaptations of both Garfield and Birch were designed to help compensate for the poor state of education in the 1980s, as well as “to teach their readers implicitly about important contemporary cultural issues ... while explicitly teaching them about Shakespeare” (143). Mulherin’s adaptation – by design and layout – is clearly aimed at the education market. Janet Bottoms (1996) quotes Garfield’s aims in his adaptation: “At every step of the way I tried not to depart from my first intention, which was to be true to the play, and always seek to bring my readers to Shakespeare, rather than Shakespeare to my readers” (77). Garfield describes the characters’ states-of mind and explains their actions. For example, he is not particularly sympathetic to Helena, highlighting the fact that she was to blame for her own troubles - “So Hermia was in despair, Lysander was in torment, Demetrius was triumphant, and Helena, loving and unloved, wept like a willow over a stream of her own making” (253). Although writing for older readers, Garfield has an easy to read style - he colludes with the use of rhetorical questions which draws the reader into the story. When referring to the lovers, for example, he comments: “But Demetrius did not love Helena. Instead he, too, loved Hermia... who did not love him. What could have been worse than that?” (253).

Birch follows the Shakespearean structure of *MND* in her adaptation but, like the adaptors of the 1960s and 70s focusses her story on the humans (both the mechanicals and the lovers) and includes the Pyramus and Thisbe play. In a similar fashion to Garfield, she describes the appearance of the characters – as when she portrays Hermia as “small and strong and dark with deep brown eyes and raven hair” (83). She also intimates their emotions, indicating that Hermia, “though much irritated by the persistence of this unwanted youth was more concerned by the disappearance of her love,



Lysander” (93) and “Demetrius gave up. He was growing a little weary of this chase, for it gave so few rewards” (93). Birch paraphrases Shakespeare’s language while still attempting to retain his imagery. Her comment, “When he saw Hermia these vows vanished like the dew before the rising sun, and left poor Helena trailing like a discarded pet” (83), explains Demetrius lines “And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt, /So he dissolv’d, and show’rs of oaths did melt (1.1.244-5), and Hermia’s lines in the original “Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me, /Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave, /Unworthy as I am, to follow you” (2.1.205-7). Mulherin’s adaptation is another example of a retelling designed to supplement the school curriculum. She explains the plot in one chapter, following with a character description and details about Shakespeare’s life and times.

Any adaptor of Shakespeare faces the challenge of how to incorporate his language into their writing. Garfield meets this challenge by confining himself to the best-known lines from *MND*, including Titania’s “Methought I was enamoured of an ass” (268), Puck’s “Lord, what fools these mortals be” (265), and Oberon’s “I know a bank where the wild thyme blows” (257), and he intersperses Shakespeare’s words with his own “It was a pitiable state of affairs, and it could not have been better put than by Lysander, who declared: ‘The course of true love never did run smooth’”(253). Bottoms (1996) notes that Garfield was keen to include some of Shakespeare’s original poetry in his adaption, and quotes him to the effect that the prose that surrounds the poetry “should approximate to it, if not in quality, then at least in cadence and vocabulary” (76). To achieve this, Garfield uses terms such as “donkey-doting Titania” (266), “his loud snores made a thunderous lullaby” (268) and “those dear lovers in perfect accord” (258). Garfield uses quotations from the play but turns them into prose “typically by taking a single line of the dialogue and breaking it in two in order to lose the meter” (Bottoms,

76). Bottoms claims that Garfield's method of adapting Shakespeare's language "leads to a self-consciously heightened style that can seem to be drawing attention to itself" (76), particularly when he gives "only the first line of the speech, indicating by a row of dots that more was said"(76). Although Bottoms is scathing of Garfield's use of a row of dots, claiming it "jolt[ed] the reader by a sudden descent in tone" (76) it was not uncommon in adaptations of the 1980s where authors appeared to be more scrupulous when quoting Shakespeare. Garfield writes: "Come sit thee down upon this flowery bed," begged the Fairy Queen, marvellous in the moonlight, "while I thy amiable cheeks do coy . . . and kiss thy fair large ears . . ." (267). Birch similarly writes: 'Thou shalt remain here for I do love thee . . . Therefore go with me,' the lady whispered in his ear" (93). In addition to including direct quotations from Shakespeare, Birch modernises Shakespeare's language: "Methought I was enamoured of an ass" becomes "I thought I loved an ass" (98).

The back cover of Mulherin's adaptation points out that as reading the original plays is "difficult" her adaptation will "help explain the difficult language", thereby perpetuating the idea that Shakespeare's language needs an intermediary to be understood. Mulherin is effusive in her praises of Shakespeare's language in *MND*, calling it "one of the most poetic of Shakespeare's plays" and writes it is "full of beautiful sounds and rhythms - so that, even when you do not understand all that Shakespeare is saying, you can still hear the music in the lines and speeches" (11). In view of these statements it seems incongruous that so little of Shakespeare's "wonderful poetry and music" (11) is woven into Mulherin's didactic retelling. She tells the story of *MND* in third person prose. Quotations appear in separate boxes around the page. These include Oberon's "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows" (16), the fairies song "You spotted snakes with double tongues... weaving spiders, come not here" (17) and Puck's epilogue "If we shadows have offended..." (25). Interestingly, the layout of the text in boxes on

the page has the effect of visually separating Shakespeare's "difficult language" (cover) from Shakespeare's story.

Lewis follows the plot structure of Shakespeare and starts with an introduction to "four groups of people" whose "paths cross strangely". She tells the story in the present tense, addressing the reader directly – "First four lovers, in a terrible tangle, as you will find ... Next, some simple village craftsmen... This royal pair and their followers are the third group ... Fourth are the real woodland spirits, the fairies" (3). Lewis includes quotations from Shakespeare in her prose, and these are delineated by italics, for example: "But Helena sees the news as a chance to speak to Demetrius. *I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight: Then to the wood will he tomorrow night*" (4).

The contrast of attitudes between schoolchildren who find Shakespeare's language frustrating and those who learn to appreciate his poetry can be seen in the two appropriations for the 1980s. Krensky's *The Wilder Plot* contains direct quotations from the original play only when characters are rehearsing for their school play, whereas Shakespeare's lines are quoted throughout Singer's *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth*, by various characters as they are "all infected with the Quoting Disease" (91). Krensky's lukewarm attitude to the teaching Shakespeare in the classroom, particularly in relation to Shakespeare's language, can be seen in his adaptation. The teacher has a "fondness for the Immortal Bard" but the students find Shakespeare dreary: "even when Shakespeare was being funny, translating the jokes took the fun out of them" (15). In one scene, the teacher is trying to explain what is happening in the play and Charlie keeps interrupting to ask questions: "What's a wicked and dissembling glass?" ... "Why doesn't she just call it a mirror? Then people couldn't get confused." And the teacher replies "You'd have to ask Shakespeare that, Charlie. I'm sure he had his reasons" (50). In contrast, Singer's enthusiasm for Shakespeare's plot and language is broadcast

through the characters in her book. The drama teacher in the book, a self-confessed “Shakespeare freak”, says “I chose it [*MND*] because not only is it one of the – if not *the* – most enjoyable and understandable of Shakespeare’s comedies, but also because it has twenty-one speaking parts – good ones” (37). Robert Chan, a fictional actor tells the students, during a lecture on performing Shakespeare, that although many people think Shakespeare is out of date with two dimensional characters, this is untrue. He says:

The poetry is constructed to reflect real people who are involved in dramatic situations. Most of the characters are fully realized, too. .... True, you must also do some delving to understand the language. And you should enjoy it. Shakespeare is very musical; it is for the ear and the tongue. When Shakespeare was writing, language was a thing to be relished. (178-179)

A number of socio-political issues became prominent during the 1980s including the growth and fear of AIDS, the fight for gay and lesbian civil rights and lack of equality in the workplace for women. As Linda Salem (2006) writes: “Literature in the 1980s introduced books about gay parents, AIDS and falling in love. ... authors demonstrated the universal experiences of teenage gay and lesbians” (105). Singer’s *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth* is an example of one such book that reflects the first love experiences of both homosexual and heterosexual teenagers. The cover illustration features the main protagonists standing back-to-back with their respective love interests facing them, but situated further back. Although a harmonious semi-circle is created by the line of heads (cradling the title of the book), the juxtaposition of the characters creates an element of tension and conflict, which foreshadows what lies between the covers. The plot features best friends and 11<sup>th</sup> graders, Becky and Nemi, who are playing the parts of Helena and Puck respectively in a high school production of *MND*. They are infatuated with attractive newcomer siblings, Blake and Leila (Titania), and plan a movie to bring

them all together. As Zena Sutherland (1983) argues, the plot and characters are not unique but the writing is “better than most”:

Not an unusual plot, but unusual treatment makes this a strong novel; the minor characters are sharply defined, the familial relationships are strongly drawn, with perceptive treatment of the dynamics of the acting group and especially of its gay members; the writing style has a smooth flow, natural dialogue, and good pace. (179)

Becky is the first person narrator, who realises that lust is not strong as love, and she and Nemi belong together. As Hateley (2009) points out, “as the novel progresses, she learns that physical attractiveness, the hallmark of her first lover, Blake, does not ensure romantic compatibility and friendship is a more valuable basis for a romantic relationship” (136). In addition, the love affairs of Marissa (Hippolyta) and Carlos (Theseus), and a gay couple, Richie (Demetrius) and Craig (Oberon) are covered. Shakespeare is presented as a relationship guru in *The Course of True Love*, with lessons to teach in his *MND*. After analysing the actions of the characters in *MND*, Becky realises the difference between love and lust:

“I wonder if even Theseus and Hippolyta learn something through what they hear about what the others experienced,” I said haltingly.

“Like what?” asked Carlos.

“Like how their marriage can’t work if it’s based on jealousy anger or just lust.”

The word “lust” cracked everyone up.

“I mean infatuation,” I said. “Hermia and Lysander and Demetrius and Helena have to learn that real love is not infatuation. And Hippolyta and Theseus have to have real love, too, to make a good marriage.” (69)

When Becky discovers she does not want Blake she asks herself, “So Helena, now you’ve got your Demetrius and you don’t want him. What would Shakespeare have to say about that?” (207).

Apart from first love, other aspects of puberty are dealt with openly in the book, as the characters discuss their emotions, for example, menstruation – “‘Maybe, I’m getting my period,’ I said” (72); virginity – “Wouldn’t it be nice if we could just get it all over with, the virginity crap?” (106); and erections – “That I’m a stupid little wimp who can’t even get a hard-on” (234).

Another sign that this adaptation was for the 1980s is the open way that homosexuality is dealt with, reflecting the conflicting views of society on this issue. Craig, playing the role of Oberon, King of the Fairies is in a relationship with Richie, who plays Demetrius. Although the term “fairy” has been a derogatory euphemism for a homosexual man since the late nineteenth century, it is the first time the fairies in *MND* for children are used in association with homosexuality, as can be noted in the following quotation:

“A good man is hard to find.” He turned his head back to the road, but he reached out his hand and squeezed Richie’s leg.

“Thus speaketh Oberon, King of the Fairies,” Richie said.

“Fairy jokes are verboten,” Craig replied. (169)

Sensitivity around homosexual terms is also encouraged, as can be seen by the conversations between Nemi and Becky:

‘You laugh. I’m telling you it’s hard to be a fairy.’

“I thought the Gay Activists Alliance was fighting that image,” I said.

“Now who’s telling homophobic jokes!”

“I apologize,” I said. (82)

Singer alludes to other forms of sexual experiences that had not usually been included in children’s books in previous eras. Leila’s portrayal of Titania is so overtly sexual that Becky describes it as sexually arousing: “Titania went into the most erotic,

slow-motion yawning, stretching and sinking down into her ‘bower’ that I’d ever seen. ... Even I found it a turn-on” (172). The drama teacher comments that the scene is “sexy” and will get them R-rated. Richie points out that the play is rated R because of the “Bestiality. Teenage sex. Sado-masochism” and flippantly questions what “an Amazon and a war hero do on their wedding night” (172). Pre-marital sex is also dealt with – whereas versions of *MND* from the previous century had the lovers lying apart in the woods, Singer’s adaptation is updated to reflect the mores of the 1980s. When Nemi invites Becky to share his sleeping bag for the night, she climbs inside, and the cast-off Blake shares a tent with someone else. It can be noted that in contrast to Singer’s adaptation, Garfield, Birch and Mulherin’s versions (aimed at the educational market) are more conventional in the depiction of this scene. The virtues of Hermia and Lysander are emphasized – as Birch explains that the tired couple “settled down together in that dappled glade (but not too close together, till the bonds of marriage were tied up)” (88), and Garfield writes that the lovers are “united in spirit though divided in flesh” (258). Mulherin advocates modesty, and writes of Hermia and Lysander, “They are weary and exhausted and decide to go to sleep for a little while – lying apart from each other out of modesty because they are not yet married” (17).

While much was written on adolescent sex in the 1980s, the problems of single-parent families and the domestic violence also received attention (Adney 190). Both family violence and the difficulties facing a single parent in this decade can be seen through the actions of Singer’s Mr. Nikos (who, as a ‘strict father’, echoes Egeus). Mr. Nikos is divorced (his wife ran away with another man) and he disapproves of his daughter, Marisa dating. When he finds out she has been seen kissing Carlos, he hits her and calls her names, causing her to run away from home to live with her aunt. Mr. Nikos’ violent attitude is not condoned and his sister and Carlos’ parents confront him on his

behaviour. After a long discussion with Carlos' mother it emerges that his unreasonable attitude came from a desire to protect his daughter and he relents and reconciles with Marisa. In the original *MND* Egeus had the legal right to have his daughter killed if she did not obey him, but in the 1980s family violence is neither legal nor condoned, and this is reflected in Mr. Nikos' repentance of his behaviour toward his daughter, and the disapproval of society of his actions.

As Adney (2009) claims, the “dominant British cultural ideology that placed women firmly in the home” in the 1980s emphasized the importance of a husband, and Birch's adaptation includes a number of references that place marriage and weddings in a favourable light. She suggests that it was Demetrius' wealth and good looks that made him a suitable suitor – “Demetrius, a rich and handsome youth most suitable as a husband” (82). Furthermore, she associates the wedding day with “dreams of pleasure” (82), “jovial entertainment” (101) and “magic” (104), and describes it as a “most important event” (83) and “most glorious” (99). Garfield following Shakespeare's example emphasizes that love is what is important in marriage. He describes Lysander and Demetrius as “both young, handsome and rich, so that, to the untouched heart and uncomplicated eye, there was nothing to choose between them” (253) and speaks of “married lovers” (270).

The plot of *MND* is discussed throughout *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth* as the rehearsals progress and the parallels between Shakespeare's play and Singer's version resonate. Becky (Helena) and Gerry (Hermia) are not amicable and Becky carries this resentment onto the stage in their scene together, by attacking Gerry with intent. Becky realises that her actions stem from jealousy and her own insecurities, when she is chastised by the drama teacher: “I expect you to apologize to Gerry as soon as possible. We are doing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* not the Saturday Night Fights”



(193). Singer uses Shakespeare's characters to help her characters explore their emotions and beliefs. Leila (Titania) tells her fellow actors that *MND* is "about growth through trial". She says, "After all, a dream is a trip into the unconscious. ... But if we allow ourselves to look at our dream – to experience them – we can learn a lot" (68), thus explaining the lessons that Titania learnt in the original play. Hateley (2009) claims although Becky and Nemi are passionate about Shakespeare, "their differing abilities to perform Shakespeare introduce a clearly gendered discourse of cultural authority to the novel" and states that the "women who perform are shown as struggling to understand their characters, whereas the male actors are constructed as naturally talented" (136). I would point out that this statement is not applicable to Leila, who is masterful at playing Titania and explaining character motivations, or Harold (Flute) and Randy (Bottom) who forget their lines.

The depiction of the fairies by adaptors in the 1980s is a further move away from the flower fairies of the previous century. In his adaptation of *MND*, Garfield consistently links Oberon to darkness, suggesting to the reader that Oberon is to be feared and respected, using terms such as "Oberon, dread King of the night" (254), "shadowy lord" (255), "brooding King drew the night about him, like a cloak, and became no more than the shadow of a shadow" (256) and "king of shadows" (265). This embodiment of Oberon's sinister qualities is a departure from the innocuous depiction of his character by authors of the twentieth century, like Lamb, Seymour and Nesbitt. Birch follows Garfield's example by consistently describing Oberon as powerful, revengeful and dark, using phrases such as "powerful lord of the dark place" (86), "dark thunder of her husband's eyes" (86), "He brooded on her disobedience, and the brooding filled his soul" (86), "Oberon brooded on his plan" (87), "dark king" (93) and "his look was like the thunder before it erupts from a glowering sky" (96). James Mayhew's illustration of

Oberon complements Birch's description, showing him as a tall, saturnine figure with sharp features and bony fingers. Contrary to Birch and Garfield, Mulherin portrays the fairy king and queen as benevolent and emphasizes their good qualities. She stipulates that Oberon and Titania are "good fairies" (27), "Oberon ... uses the magic love juices to help the lovers" (27) and "Titania and her fairies look after Bottom in a tender and thoughtful way" (28). Mulherin describes Puck as "a different kind of fairy from Oberon and Titania...more like the goblins that appeared in fairy stories when Shakespeare was a boy" (29). Interestingly, the illustration of Puck as a green man wearing Eastern style pointy shoes and pixie ears – reminiscent of a genie from a magic lamp – could be an attempt to be inclusive of the ethnic minorities, as according to Adney (2009) "classrooms in 1980s Britain, ... , were quite ethnically diverse" (152). Although the association of the fairies with the East is in the original – Oberon had "come from the furthest steppe of India" (1.1.69), and Titania had "in the spiced Indian air ... gossip'd" (1.1.124-5) with the mother of the changeling child – Bancroft-Hunt is the first illustrator to reflect the Asian associations.

The illustrations by Michael Foreman (Fig 9) also emphasize the changing attitude to the fairies in the 1980s. His black and white ink depiction of Titania and Bottom in *Shakespeare Stories* (page 267) could also have served as an illustration for Marilyn Singer's "sexy" depiction of Titania in *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth*. In this picture Titania is lying practically naked on her back with her hands to her hair and her head thrown back, eyes closed in a sensual pose, appearing to be in the throes of pleasure. Bottom is seated at her side, legs tucked to one side, leaning over her holding flowers and leering down at her. Foreman's colour illustration, however, is more in keeping with the historical depiction of Titania. Bottom is depicted as a sweet but slightly goofy looking donkey-headed man, wearing a garland around his neck and a

starry cloak. He is followed by Titania (portrayed as a young girl, with garland of flowers in her hair and snail on her head), Puck (an ugly hobgoblin with horns), a frog with fairy wings, and little fairy creatures. The characterisation of both Bottom and Titania, therefore, are not consistent.

Norman Bancroft-Hunt's illustrations also incorporate conflicting depictions of Titania. The illustration of Titania and Bottom inside the book has a romantic seventies' hippie feel. Titania has auburn straight hair blowing in the wind, with a garland of flowers on her head and wrist, and she wears a white draped chiton with sporty black stripe at the hem. She is sitting in profile on a grassy bank and hugging Bottom facing the reader. Bottom is drawn more like a foal than a donkey with sharply defined flaring nostrils, large eyes and large ears set on a large head. He is wearing a white shirt and brown knickerbockers. The four fairies are human teenage size girls with large butterfly-shaped white wings, wearing white chitons and flower garlands around their ankles. Their hair is also blowing in the breeze - overall the picture evokes a very natural innocent ambience. The picture of Titania and Bottom on the cover (Fig 10), however, is very different from the one inside the book. Here Titania is lying on her back and appears to be pulling the sitting Bottom to lie down next to her. She is depicted as a mature woman wearing an elaborate crown, spangled ball-gown and small, jewelled wings. Her black coiffed hair, thick blue eye-shadow and red lips are in keeping with 1980s fashion. Her eyes are closed and she appears to be the sexual aggressor. Bottom is a muscular man draped in brown cloth with a small donkey head and small shifty eyes. The feel of the cover is sensual and opulent like the illustration in Birch's version, and has been selected to appeal to a 1980s audience. Monti's cover illustration features a soft, romantic watercolour of Bottom and Titania, setting the tone for the book. Bottom and Titania are seated side-by-side, asleep on each other's shoulder, with Bottom's large arm protectively

around Titania. Titania's hand is in her hair, but unlike Foreman and Bancroft-Hunt's illustration of the same scene, her body language is childlike repose rather than sultry siren and has a floating dream-like quality exhibited by fluidity of line and surrealistic elements.

It can be seen that the adaptations of the 1980s were influenced by education in one way or another – Garfield, Birch, Mulherin and Lewis supplemented their retellings with rich detail and contextual information to make them suitable for classroom use, while Singer and Krensky used a school for their setting. The difference that the teacher makes to the student's enjoyment of Shakespeare in their style of presentation is also implied in the appropriations of Singer and Krensky. The 1960s roots of performance pedagogy blossom in the 1980s and the fruits of this method of teaching Shakespeare will be seen in the next decade. Singer's appropriation, in particular, echoes the values of the 1980s and her treatment of issues such as homosexuality, premarital sex, and family violence are in keeping with children's literature trends of the time. Adaptors are more true to the original Shakespeare in their portrayal of the capricious fairies. Titania is portrayed in a number of the adaptations as sexually aggressive and Oberon is portrayed as dark and powerful – a trend that continues into the 1990s.

## Chapter 8 – 1990 to 1999 – End of a Millennium

The 1990s heralded the end of both a century and a millennium – it was a decade of change in politics, technology and culture in the United Kingdom and United States, when two trends in the Shakespeare-for-children genre were highlighted. The first was the mandatory teaching of Shakespeare in schools (which led to a resurgence of interest in Shakespeare as teachers looked for ways to engage children in learning his works). The second was the diverging treatment of the fairies in *MND*.

The 1980s saw the formation of publishing conglomerates with a strong focus on profits, mainly from retail outlets, and the trend continued in the 1990s. Publishers could “no longer afford to back editorial ‘hunches’” and instead commissioned books that met market needs (Clark 476). Education reforms once again drove the publishing market as the National Curriculum (progressively introduced in the UK from autumn 1989) made both the teaching and assessment of Shakespeare in schools mandatory, with the aim of enabling students to appreciate their literary heritage (Irish 11).<sup>28</sup> Children’s publishers analysed classroom demographics, aligned with film producers, and looked for manuscripts to satisfy a market more familiar with computer games than the books. New technology had an effect on the publishing industry as authors produced their work on a disc format allowing electronic changes to be made quickly and inexpensively. As the link between text and illustrations is an important aspect of children’s picture books, the

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<sup>28</sup> *MND* was one of the required texts for the 1993/4 Paper 2 of the first Key Stage 3 SATs examination – a paper that the majority of schools boycotted on the basis that teachers had lacked enough time for preparation.

ability of the publisher, author and the illustrator to view and manipulate page layouts on a computer screen meant that picture and information books (including those on Shakespeare) could be produced more economically than ever before. The influence of this accessible technology can be seen in the increase of single-title versions of Shakespeare's plays towards the end of the century. In 1996, Connie Epstein proposed that the publishing industry appeared "to be pausing and catching its breath while reckoning with the effects of a persistent global recession" (484). Once again cuts in public education funds meant a reduction in school libraries' purchases, but Epstein predicted that population growth in the nineties would drive an "upward spurt". This appears to be true for adaptations of *MND* as most of the texts for the nineties were published after 1996.

Shakespeare also returned to popularity towards the end of the decade with a plethora of movies, including block-buster offerings such as Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* (1996) and John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) – which won seven Academy Awards – as well as Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999). An article in *Time Magazine* of 19 March 2006 noted: "Few are huge hits, but some prove just how bankable the Bard can be ... In 1623, Condell and Heminges practically had to beg people to buy a book of Shakespeare's work; today, he sells himself — and he sells well". Shakespeare became popular in the children's media market in both the US and the UK, including the *Baby Shakespeare* videos aimed at toddlers and the *Animated Shakespeare* television series. Shakespearean products began to appear on retail shelves, such as a Shakespeare action figure (with quill and book), a Shakespeare biography pop-up book, Shakespeare beanie dolls; and a Romeo and Juliet version of Mickey and Minnie Mouse and Barbie and Ken dolls (Burt 218).

Another change that came about in the 1990s was the study of Shakespeare in schools by a younger age group than in previous decades, particularly in the US. As Burt (2000) notes, primary and intermediate level school children are appointed as junior keepers of the Western canon:

At the same time that children's Shakespeare has unquestionably become part of the Shakespeare industry, the political right in the United States has mobilized a public relations campaign around a civic Shakespeare centre on the education not of college students (the terrain of the 1980s culture wars) but of elementary and middle-school children. (218)

This drive to empower primary school children with the ability to learn Shakespeare is in keeping with the 1990s' educational philosophy of not limiting children's learning potential, evidenced by the switch to Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in many schools in the United States. OBE focusses on outcome of student learning (student performance) rather than the resources available to students, and often includes project-based learning which allowed teachers to explore Shakespeare in their classrooms in different ways to previous eras. It can also be noted that when the study of Shakespeare involves assessments (at a secondary school level), it is usually more prescriptive in content and allows less freedom for teachers to explore alternative styles of delivery. This could be another reason that younger children are learning Shakespeare – in an effort to prepare them for later studies and to enable teachers to explore innovative lessons.

The adoption by and popularity of Shakespeare in the popular media, as well as the shift to the study of Shakespeare by primary school children, can be seen in the interesting variety of adaptations of *MND* aimed at children during the 1990s. First, three appropriations aimed at, or at least read by, young adults used portions of the plot and characters of *MND* - Neil Gaiman's graphic novel, *The Sandman: Dream Country*

(1990),<sup>29</sup> Terry Pratchett's *Lords and Ladies* (1996)<sup>30</sup> and Susan Cooper's *King of Shadows* (1999).<sup>31</sup> (Both Pratchett and Gaiman are cross-over authors whose books appeal to both teenagers and adults). Second, authors explored various new ways of presenting Shakespeare in a fashion that would appeal to younger children, and five picture books – all part of their own individual series – were published: Leon Garfield and Elena Prorokova's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1992), part of the "Shakespeare: The Animated Tales" series, was published to tie in with animated films televised on BBC and Channel 4 Wales; Bruce Coville and Dennis Nolan's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1996) is part of the "William Shakespeare's" picture book series;<sup>32</sup> Lois Burdett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1997) is part of the "Shakespeare Can Be Fun" series;<sup>33</sup> Marcia Williams' *Mr William Shakespeare's Plays* (1998) is a retelling of seven of Shakespeare's plays, including *MND*, in comic strip format;<sup>34</sup> Hilary Burningham and Zara Slattery's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999) is part of the "Graphic Shakespeare" series; and Terry Deary's *Shakespeare Stories* (1998) is a retelling published as part of the "Top Ten" series.<sup>35</sup> Third, a prose retelling, Geraldine McCaughrean and Anthony Maitland's *Stories from Shakespeare* (1994) will be discussed.<sup>36</sup>

For an appropriation to be successfully appreciated, the original Shakespearean play must be sufficiently known by the readership to be recognisable, which implies that the author deemed the original of sufficient cultural value to be appropriated. Gaiman's,

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<sup>29</sup> *The Sandman: Dream Country* issue was the only comic ever awarded the World Fantasy Award

<sup>30</sup> Terry Pratchett was the UK's best-selling author of the 1990s.

<sup>31</sup> *King of Shadows* was shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal, is a Horn Book Award Honor book, and was adapted for the New York State Theatre in 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Coville published over 100 books and received critical acclaim for his Shakespeare retellings.

<sup>33</sup> Burdett received Canada's Meritorious Service Medal, the Canadian Teachers' Federation's Hilroy Fellowship, and two writers' awards.

<sup>34</sup> Followed by *Bravo, Mr William Shakespeare* (2000).

<sup>35</sup> Deary has written 247 books, including 60 from the "Horrible Histories" series., and is one of Britain's best-selling authors.

<sup>36</sup> McCaughrean received the 1987 Whitbread Award and the 1988 Guardian Children's Fiction Award. Anthony Maitland won the Kate Greenaway Medal in 1961.



Pratchett's and Cooper's stories (without spelling out the point explicitly) allude to the importance of knowing Shakespeare's original works in order to appreciate their adaptations. In addition, although the performance of *MND* features in the work of Gaiman and Cooper, they explore Shakespeare as a cultural icon – and they take different approaches to him. In separate interviews, Cooper has said "I *loved* writing Shakespeare!" and Gaiman has said "I love mythology. .... One of the things that I wanted to do when I started *Sandman* was to do a comic that was self-consciously mythological" (web). These different approaches can be seen as Cooper sympathetically portrays Shakespeare as a man who is tempered by his loss, whereas Gaiman treats him as almost a tragic figure who is doomed by his ambition. In the "A Midsummer Night's Dream" chapter of Gaiman's *The Sandman: Dream Country*, *MND* is performed for Oberon and Titania as Morpheus, the God of Dreams (The Sandman), has given Shakespeare genius in return for two commissioned plays. As such it acts as a prequel for other adaptations of *MND* as Gaiman is explaining the source of Shakespeare's inspiration. Morpheus feels guilty for the price that Shakespeare unwittingly will pay and ruminates over the bargain:

I wonder, Titania. I wonder if I have done right. And I wonder why I wonder. Will is a willing vehicle for the great stories. Through him they will live for an age of man; and his words will echo down through time. It is what he wanted. /But he did not understand the price. Mortals never do. They only see the prize, their hearts desire, their dream.. But the price of getting what you want, is getting what you once wanted. And had I told him? Had he understood? What then? It would have made no difference. ("MND" 19)

Titania doesn't pay attention to Morpheus as she is too engrossed in the play, thus accentuating Shakespeare's success in achieving his dream of being the greatest playwright. McCaughrean echoes this sentiment as she writes in the Introduction to *Stories from Shakespeare*: "So his greatest pleasure ... would come from seeing how, in

the end, he tricked death – bought immortality with his extraordinary wealth of words” (7). An explanation for Shakespeare’s enduring popularity through the ages can be seen in Morpheus’ statement: “Things need not have happened to be true. Tales and dreams are the shadow-truth that will endure when mere facts are dust and ashes, and forgot” (“MND” 21). Interestingly, Gaiman’s “shadow-truth” is echoed in the title of Cooper’s *King of Shadows*. If one considers that “shadows” refers to actors (“If we shadows have offended” [5.1.430]); fairies (“Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook” [3.2.345]); and the imagination (“The best in this kind are but shadows; ... if imagination amend them” [5.1.215-6]), then it can be seen that both these authors use the same image for the kind of imaginative truth Shakespeare creates. As Shakespeare creates these shadows so masterfully, he is able to turn imagination into reality, and Cooper and Gaiman are suggesting that the readers can learn real-life lessons from Shakespeare’s imaginary stories.

*King of Shadows* features a production of *MND* and adds Shakespeare as a character in the novel. The plot follows an orphan Nat Field as he travels to London in 1999 with an all-boy acting troupe to perform Puck in *MND* at the reconstructed Globe Theatre. He is switched in time with another Nat Field (incidentally a real historical actor and playwright), who has caught the Bubonic Plague. In 1599, he performs as Puck with Shakespeare as Oberon. When Nat returns to his own time he discovers that the time slip had occurred to save Shakespeare from catching the plague and dying an untimely death.

*King of Shadows* explores the importance of Shakespeare to literature and Western culture in the 1990s. Shakespeare is revered almost as a deity, as can be seen by Nat’s thoughts when he is first introduced to the man: “’Greet Master Shakespeare, boy.’ Shakespeare. *William Shakespeare*. It was as if he had said, ‘Say hello to God’” (47). A key theme of *King of Shadows* is the cultural value of Shakespeare as history’s greatest

playwright, as can be seen when the main character, Nat is told the reason for his time travel:

‘It was 1599, Nat,’ Rachel said. ‘Shakespeare was only in his thirties, he wrote most of his greatest plays after that. If he’d acted with Nat Field instead of with you, he’d have caught the plague and died.’

‘We wouldn’t have had *Hamlet* or *Othello* or *King Lear* or a dozen others,’ Gil said. ‘We’d have lost the best playwright that ever lived. You may feel you’ve lost him, Nat, but you saved him. If you hadn’t gone back in time, William Shakespeare would have died.’ (169)

In the Introduction to *MND: Animated Shakespeare*, Garfield argues that by the 1990s Shakespeare’s stories have “become known and loved in every land; they are no longer the property of one country and one people, they are the priceless possession of the world” and writes that “next to God ... Shakespeare created the most” (7). This suggests that Garfield, in a similar fashion to Cooper, deifies Shakespeare. McCaughrean has a similar respect for Shakespeare, pointing out in the Introduction to *Stories from Shakespeare* that “everywhere his works [are] revered like a second Bible” (6).

Shakespeare had by the 1990s developed into an idealised parental figure in some adaptations. Shakespeare becomes a surrogate father to Nat and helps him deal with the pain of his father’s suicide, and he in turn is a surrogate son to Shakespeare after the death of Shakespeare’s own son, Hamnet. Although Nat could not save his father by preventing his suicide, he is able to save his surrogate father Shakespeare. “‘*Will Shakespeare had to be saved*,’ Arby said./ ... ‘Nat Field was made well, Will Shakespeare lived to give us his plays’” (179-80). Kate Chedgzoy (2007) points out that in *King of Shadows* “the fiction of the Shakespearean theatre company as surrogate family combines with the emotional investment of Western culture in the fantasy of Shakespeare himself as idealized father figure” (197). Gaiman’s portrayal of Shakespeare as a father figure is much less idealised than Cooper’s. His portrayal of Shakespeare in *The Sandman*, set in 1593, as a

neglectful father whose obsession with his dream of being a great playwright has distanced him from his family could be a precursor to *King of Shadows*, set six years later, where Shakespeare pines for his dead son. Hamnet in Gaiman's story says "I'm less real to him than any of the characters in his plays ... Mother ordered him to have me for this summer. It's the first time I've seen him for more than a week at a time, that I remember" ("MND" 13). In *King of Shadows*, Shakespeare tells Nat: "A man so caught and held – men will destroy much for love, even the lives of their children, even their own lives" (75).

The cultural value of Shakespeare in the 1990s is also seen by the attitude of actors toward their performance of *MND* in *King of Shadows*. The players' quest for perfection in 1999 is contrasted against the actors' nonchalance in 1599:

I was worn out by all the emotion, not to mention the rehearsing. They had it all down pat, it was a very smooth production by now. Things weren't like that in my day – in Shakespeare day, I mean – when there simply wasn't time to rehearse so much. Every performance had its awkwardnesses and thribblings.... This *Dream* was going to look and sound gorgeous; (173)

Another reference to the lack of respect for the integrity of Shakespeare's lines in his own time is made by Gaiman's and Cooper's character Will Kempe (an actor in Shakespeare's original company). Both Gaiman and Cooper note that Kempe would *ad lib* lines for comic relief. In *Sandman* Kempe suggests a comic skit and Shakespeare replies "It would also make them laugh if you broke wind loudly, Kemp. Please ... Just the lines and jests I have writ for you" ("MND" 1). In his speech to the players before the performance, Shakespeare again reminds his players, "Let this our first performance be our best, my friends. Will Kemp .. no business we have not rehearsed" ("MND" 6). In *King of Shadows*, Nat is told "Master Shakespeare was not pleased when people put in words that were not his own. Thomas said this had been the main reason for Shakespeare's row with

Will Kempe, who was inclined to make winking asides to the audience in the hope of getting an extra laugh” (88).

Cooper endows Shakespeare with wisdom and understanding of human nature, as he is able to see into the source of Nat’s emotional pain, and helps him to emotional closure:

In a little while he said quietly, "There is more here than persecution by a nasty boy. What ails thee, Nat? What is it, this terrible buried sorrow? Dost miss thy parents? -Where are they?

How did he know, to go to it so fast and direct, through four hundred years? He thought he was coping with lonely Nathan Field of 1599, but his instinct took him ahead through centuries, to a truth that he couldn't possibly have sensed. Like an arrow he went to my haunting, that I had tried so hard and so long to hide from everyone, and most of all from myself. With a small innocent question, he made me dig myself out of a grave. (70)

Shakespeare perception of human nature and knowledge of what would resonate with the common people can also be seen when *MND* is acted on stage in 1599 in *King of Shadows*. Shakespeare costumes Hippolyta to imitate Queen Elizabeth I and his fellow actors are afraid that she will be offended if she is not popular with the groundlings. However, the spectators recognise the connection and cheer the queen. Thomas, the actor who plays Hippolyta tells Shakespeare, "You knew they would not hiss her. You always know what they will do, always" (126). Cooper recalls in an anecdote that Shakespeare is her “greatest possible hero” and that she wrote *King of Shadows* as “it gave [her] a chance to meet him: “Shakespeare was such an astounding writer; I was soaked in his plays and poems at school and university and have loved them ever since” (Devereaux, 1999 web).

By the mid-1990s, the combination of Shakespeare’s sterling reputation and his position in the new English curriculum in the UK made publishers wary of adaptations. When Shakespeare became an exam question to be answered instead of a play to be

enjoyed, children were possibly reluctant to read him or express an opinion on his work that would achieve a fail mark on an assessment. Writers such as Colville, Williams, Burdett and Deary addressed this issue in their adaptations. In the author's note at the end of *MND*, Coville points out that children will be culturally literate if they know characters such as Bottom, Tuck, Titania and Oberon, and they will be "richer" if they are introduced to them early in life. He also points out that in the 1990s "young readers need even more help and encouragement to find their way to the treasure trove awaiting them in Shakespeare's work", and he suggests that "early exposure to a tale as delightful as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can do much to defuse the fear of Shakespeare that is an unfortunate side effect of the poet's towering reputation". As Colville (2003) points out, if the story is well told, children will want to hear it repeatedly and in different forms. He compellingly argues that his retellings will be a pleasant experience of Shakespeare for children so they can move past what he calls "the 'curse of greatness' -- the bizarre idea generated by our culture that because Shakespeare's plays are great that they are also too hard for the average mortal to understand and there is more work than pleasure involved in experiencing them, whether on the page or on the stage" (60). Burdett had the same aim as Colville, to lessen the fear of Shakespeare by empowering the primary school children in her Canadian classroom, as she explains:

I have found the study of Shakespeare to be a tremendously powerful medium, which has resulted in dramatic changes for my students. Shakespeare became not an end in itself but a means to an end, and the study went far beyond the plot line of a Shakespeare play. Shakespeare became a friend, not someone to be feared, and language took on a whole new dimension. (45)

According to Colville, the idea of publishing a series of picture books came from editor Diane Arico, although it took her three years before she could convince a publisher to approve the project, as they were concerned that they would receive "imagined criticism

... for daring to tamper with greatness" (56). This intimidation by Shakespeare's reputation was not unique in the publishing industry, as Williams (2003) records in an anecdote:

"You don't mess with the great Bard, Marcia." This was the response of my editor when I first proposed a Shakespeare retelling. But children's authors have been messing with "the great Bard" since 1807 when Charles and Mary Lamb published *Tales from Shakespeare Designed for the Use of Young Persons*. ... It is the book that drove me to beg my editor to allow me to do my own retelling. The fact that I was finally given the go-ahead to "try it, Marcia," showed great courage on the part of the publisher. (29)

In a similar fashion to Williams, Deary attempts to make Shakespeare accessible to a wider audience, by demystifying Shakespeare's writing and emphasising the comic aspects of the play. In the Introduction to *Shakespeare Stories*, Deary's disdain of reducing Shakespeare to a school subject can be seen, and his appreciation for Shakespeare's work shines through, as he explains:

(The bold, italics and Capital letters are Deary's emphasis)

William Shakespeare wrote plays. He didn't write them just for pupils to read in school or for teachers to use for impossible exam questions. Let's get this straight:

***Shakespeare wrote plays so people would be entertained. He wanted people to have FUN***" (7)

... Remember:

***This book has been written so you will be entertained.***

***When you read it you should have FUN!*** (8)

Deary points out Shakespeare's relevance to his 1990s readers as Shakespeare's plays are "every bit as entertaining as today's television soap operas" with "death and destruction, jokes and jests, weird witchcraft, rogues and royals, hatred and heartache, blood and butchery" (7). Deary also praises Shakespeare's narratives and "terrific characters" (7) as well as his ability to move an audience: "There are scenes to make you laugh and scenes

to make you cry... often within the same play” (7). In the Epilogue, Deary emphasizes that Shakespeare’s longevity is a result of his superb writing skill:

The sign of a great writer is that their work survives beyond their lifetime. Shakespeare has not only survived four hundred years but he has survived so many attempts to make him *boring*. Academics have taken him so seriously that they almost made us forget that Shakespeare wrote to *entertain*. (191)

Deary encourages his reader to experience different Shakespeare adaptations such as stories, plays, videos, movies and “(best of all) try to see them live on stage” (192).

When Colville’s picture book was published in 1996 it received considerable acclaim from critics with Elizabeth Devereaux and Diane Roback (1996) calling it a “first-rate entree to the Bard” (81); Sally Margolis (1996) suggesting it is “verbally and visually true to the spirit of the play, [and] will reach a new audience while delighting the old” (112); Hazel Rochman (1996) from *Booklist* writing that the book will prepare children for “a fresh performance of the play” (133) and *Kirkus Reviews* (1996) stipulating that Coville “gracefully retells this famous comedy, retaining just enough of Shakespeare’s language to lend a sense of the world of the play without overwhelming picture-book readers” (web). The success of the adaptation can be attributed to the five stage process that the author uses to compose his adaptation: According to Colville (2003), the first stage is the selection of the play to adapt which “involves a delicate dance between author, editor, and (alas) the marketing department” (60), and he suggest that *MND* is often adapted as it contains magic and is a well-known title. The second stage in the adaptation process is selection, which Coville refers to as “pure pleasure, since as soon as the editor and I have agreed on a title, I have an excuse to wallow in the most gorgeous language ever written” (63). He rereads a number of times at least three editions of the play, as well as a number of commentaries to further his understanding and to locate themes, which he may use for his writing. He also listens to audiotapes,



watching videos and sees the play acted live but he does not read other adaptations. In the third stage, which Coville terms analysis, he charts the acts and scenes to establish the number of lines in each part of the play. He notes a sentence to explain the main action and highlights any direct quotations he wants to include in his adaptation. Coville then starts to write the retelling in stage four. The final stage Coville terms “plunder and prune” (65). He looks to see what of the original language he “can smoothly massage into the story”, while still keeping to the storybook format, which is 4000 to 4500 words for a 48 page book. As by this stage the story is usually too long, Coville edits the book and negotiates with the editor re length and content. The manuscript is then handed over to the illustrator – in the case of *MND* – Dennis Nolan. Coville covers the lovers’ plot, the craftsmen’s antics and the role of the fairies and omits the Pyramus and Thisbe play at the end because “it does not add to the plot so much as comment on it” (Author’s Note). Colville smoothly incorporates Shakespeare’s language into his text, with quotations: “Dry your eyes, my sweet,” said Lysander soothingly. “The course of true love never did run smooth. Besides---I have a plan” (6), or imagery: “Thus did Oberon find his queen slumbering on a bed of wild thyme bowered over with musk roses and eglantine” (18). The watercolour illustrations by Dennis Nolan are designed to both complement and supplement the story, as he, for example, links the lovers to each other (and to the text) by colouring their hair – Hermia (“dark-haired girl”), and Lysander (“dreamy poet”) are brunettes and Helena (“tall, fair-haired”) and Demetrius are blond. The lovers, Oberon and Titania, are drawn as teenagers, and, as Margolis (1996) suggests, the “cast of characters (except for Oberon's and Titania's elf-sized bands) look to be straight out of a high-school drama club production” (112).

In a similar fashion to Colville, McCaughrean’s version of *MND* is in prose, and she also incorporates Shakespeare’s language into her retelling. Some of the more

popular quotations from the play are placed in the margin of the page – which serves to visually highlight Shakespeare’s language in the plot. “What fools these mortals are!” he whispered to the Fairy King” (41) is included in the text and “Lord, what fools these mortal be!” (3.2.115) is in the margin. The girls are described as “big, buxom Helena” (33) and “little dark-haired Hermia” (33) which is a similar characterisation to that of Colville.

Whereas Colville’s and McCaughrean’s adaptations are written in prose, Burdett takes a different approach to her adaption. When the Lambs and Bowdlers first began adapting Shakespeare for children they simplified the plot and language so that children could both understand and be protected from unsavoury elements – following the ‘ignorance is bliss’ route. Burdett takes another path – perhaps one which might be called “the knowledge is power route” as she delves into the world of Shakespeare. She rewrites the play in rhyming couplets, and the book is illustrated with letters and drawings from the children in her class. In this way the response of the children to the *MND for Kids* creates a second narrative to the story that Burdett is telling, and for the first time an adaptation of *MND* for children is created by children themselves. In the scene in the wood where Hermia arrives and is scorned by Lysander, thus leading to a quarrel between her and Helena, the children’s letters explain the motivations of the characters.

Shakespeare’s original *MND* reads:

O me, you juggler, you canker-blossom,  
 You thief of love! What, have you come by night  
 And stol’n my love’s heart from him . . . .  
 How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak! (3.2.282-4,296)

Burdett incorporates Shakespeare’s language into her own verse, but with a different metre and style. Burdett uses rhyming couplets instead of Shakespeare iambic

pentameter and intertwines Shakespeare's original words with her own, so the reader doesn't know the difference between Burdett and Shakespeare's lines:

Hermia was shocked, "you are the thief!  
Your accusation defies belief!"  
Lysander is mine. You stole him by night.  
You canker-blossom! You parasite!"  
She lunged at Helena, "You painted maypole!"  
The whole situation was soon out of control (49)

(It can be noted that Burdett quotes rhyming couplets when they appear in the original, such as "When thou wak'st, it is thy dear. /Wake when some vile thing is near" [2.2.33-4].) Kate Carroll (age 8) interprets this scene in a letter from "your much annoyed ex-best friend Hermia" to Helena: "Helena you listen up good, you double-crossing boyfriend snatcher! Lysander is mine so hands off, as in don't tuch! You have lots of guys to pick from so why steal mine?" (49) On the same page is a drawing of Helena by Ashley Kropf (age 10) depicting Helena in Elizabethan style dress (rather than Athenian) indicating her understanding of the way it would have been performed on stage during Elizabethan times. Burdett's work brings children and Shakespeare together and assumes that children are more capable of processing complicated concepts than is often assumed (Prindle 144). Burdett's down-to-earth and enthusiastic style is focussed on the action of the play rather than lengthy descriptions, which keeps the reader involved in the story. She follows the same narrative as in the original *MND* – the only scene she omits is Act 4, Scene 2 where the workmen wait for Bottom's return. By closely following Shakespeare's story and organisation, Burdett shows that she considers the original is as important as the retelling, and "invites her reader to truly enjoy the intricacies of Shakespeare's writing" (Mathur 150). She introduces Shakespeare's language as the story is told and points out that "the children come to understand the story so well that

they are able to predict the meaning from the context and are held spellbound by the beauty of Shakespeare's images" (Burdett 49). The language has been simplified: for example "I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow" (1.1.169) is changed to "I vow by Cupid's bow" (13). Well-known quotations from *MND* have been included, such as: "For the course of true love never did run smooth" (12) and "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows, /Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows" (30).

Burningham's *MND* is the first version of the tale designed to be read by young children as opposed to having the story read to them. Whereas Burdett's adaptation is designed to inspire and engage children in Shakespeare's writing, Burningham's adaptation is intended to allow young readers to experience *MND* on their own. In a similar fashion to Burdett, Burningham follows the same narrative as the original play but because she feels the need to write very simply for her young audience, the story is very stilted. Burningham describes the argument between Hermia and Helena: "Once again, Hermia asked Lysander how he could have changed so quickly. She became angry with Helena. Helena had stolen Lysander's love. Helena was taller than Hermia. Perhaps Lysander loved Helena because she was tall. Hermia wanted to scratch Helena's eyes out" (54). An attempt has been made to include Shakespeare's language as the illustrations by Zara Slattery are captioned with a quotation from the original and are intended to complement the text on the opposite page. The illustration of Hermia and Helena's argument (55), which portrays the two girls being held apart by Lysander and Demetrius is captioned "And are you grown so high in his esteem /Because I am so dwarfish and so low? ... But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes (2.1.294-8). The graphics, designed to give visual clues to the young reader, are dynamic if examined closely but unfortunately the black and white watercolours fade into a bland grey hue and are unlikely to appeal to children.

Whereas Burningham's *MND* is marketed directly to schools for use in the classroom (accompanied by a teacher's book) and Burdett's adaptation has its origins in her classroom, Deary is concerned that if his books are too widely used in schools, children will stop reading them.<sup>37</sup> For his *Top Ten Shakespeare's Stories*, Deary selected the ten plays that have been most performed over the past 150 years. In the Introduction, Deary describes his adaptation method: "They've been re-told in a way you are familiar with, using modern language and modern styles from a photo-love story to a newspaper report". *MND* is written under a subheading – "Nightmare in Elm Trees" – which is a pun on the 1984 *Nightmare on Elm Street* horror movie, and the story is told in the first person from Puck's point of view. Deary's characterisation of Puck as the slightly menacing narrator is an interesting choice designed to emphasize what Deary considers will appeal to children – the magical aspects of *MND*. Puck questions the reader directly, using phrases such as "Did I mention that" (15) "Did I tell you that" (18) and "Am I to blame, I ask you?" (19), thereby drawing the reader into his retelling. Deary incorporates the occasional direct quotation from Shakespeare in speech bubbles in the illustrations, such as "I do but beg a little changeling boy to be my henchman" (2.1.120-1) and "Anoint his eyes. But do it when the next thing he espies may be the lady. Thou shalt know the man by the Athenian garment he hath on" (2.2.261-4). Deary sacrifices accuracy for the sake of humour, when he explains Bottom's nature, "How would you like to be called Bottom? Imagine the jokes... Nick suffered all that nonsense at school. No wonder he grew up a bit strange" (17). Deary presumably knows that in Shakespeare's time "bottom" referred not to the buttocks but to the core on which the weaver's skein of yarn was wound, but he ignores this for the sake of a joke that will appeal to the 1990s child.

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<sup>37</sup> Deary claims that "if teachers use them [Horrible Histories] and they are perceived as the establishment text, then kids will stop reading them" (web).

Williams found Shakespeare productions as a child “hard going” but she found *Tales of Shakespeare* by the Lambs, which was her introduction to Shakespeare’s plays, “truly boring”.<sup>38</sup> She felt that the book discouraged children from seeking out Shakespeare and an adaptation with “a visual experience” was needed, so in her version of *MND* from *Mr William Shakespeare’s Plays*, the narrative is told on four levels. The first is the comic strip panels where the characters speak with Shakespeare’s words. The second is a prose narrative of the story in a box beneath each comic strip. A third narrative is added by the theatregoers’ comments (on the side and bottom border) as the author speaks to the reader by using an imaginary audience. The fourth narrative is added by the illustrations. By reading the play from more than one perspective the reader is immersed in the production of *MND* and the reader is able to explore various possible ways of relating to Shakespeare, as the comic strip replaces the play’s content and offers the reader more than one way into the story which aids understanding of the play (Marchitello 186). This polyvocality enables the plot of the workmen, lovers and fairies to be told in six pages. Both watching a play and reading a comic strip require a skill in visual literacy, which primary school children may be better at than adults in the multimedia society of the 1990s (Williams, 2003 35).

Analysis of any of the comic panels in *MND* demonstrates the visual literacy required to read the polyvocality of William’s work. In the opening panel, the story told on the stage is of Egeus dragging Hermia by the arm before the Duke. Demetrius is bowing and has a sign hanging around his neck with the words "WORTHY SUITOR DEMETRIUS". Hermia blows kisses at Demetrius (indicating her love for him) and carries a posy of flowers in one hand and a sign reading “Lysander and Hermia” in the other, thereby showing her support for their romance. Hippolyta is sitting on the Duke’s

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<sup>38</sup> Williams (2003,29)

lap, her arms around his neck and hearts flying between them, to indicate their romantic connection. All the characters are dressed in Greek costume. Williams includes Shakespeare's language in this scene with two quotations: "Full of vexation come I, with complaint, against my child" (Egeus, 1.1.21-23) and "What say you, Hermia? Your father should be as a god" (Theseus, 1.1.46-7). The prose retelling beneath the panel notes: "Once, in Athens, the law decreed that a daughter must marry the man of her father's choice or be punished. Consequently, Egeus had brought his daughter, Hermia, to the court of Theseus, Duke of Athens, for refusing Demetrius, the man of his choice. Hermia actually loves Lysander". The musician on the left of the stage is saying "Hey, I don't know any Greek music", indicating to the reader that Athens is situated in Greece. The spectator on the right is dressed in Elizabethan clothes, indicating Shakespeare's time. He answers the musician "Just play our usual star-crossed lovers theme", implying not only that many of Shakespeare's plays feature unfortunate lovers but also inviting the sophisticated reader to consider the technical elements of presenting a play. By combining all four narratives, the reader is able to get the full picture, as each illustration and quotation has been selected to enhance the narrative, and to provide the reader with additional information such as the setting of the play – both on-stage and off-stage.

There are many advantages to using an audience in retellings. As Williams (2003) argues they "not only lend atmosphere, but they can also inform and support the text and the actor's words" as they "can bring modern humour, anarchy, and idioms that might seem out of place in the main body text" (34). The audience speech bubbles are Williams' conversations with her reader while the rest of the narrative is Williams' "retellings of Shakespeare's conversation with his readers" (34). The sophisticated reader can appreciate the back stories that are told by the audience. One of the groundlings asks "Is this one of Will's comedies" and Shakespeare, quill in hand answers "Actually yes."

Elizabeth I, looking down from her balcony seat says "We find you groundlings very stinky". Walter Raleigh notes "I wish my wife was as obedient as a spaniel" – this is amusing as his wife, Bess Throckmorton was known to be domineering and their marriage cause them to fall out of favour with the queen. Williams includes an ironical comment about the inclusion of Shakespeare in the school curriculum, as one groundling asks, "Is this good for my education?" and a motherly figure replies "I doubt it, dear".

In contrast to Williams, Gaiman's audience in *The Sandman* adds an element of ominous mystery as well as humour to his tale, as the audience is Oberon and Titania and their retinue, and they are commenting on themselves. In one frame, Puck the actor says "Thou speak'st aright. I **am** that merry wanderer of the night". In the next frame Peaseblossom the audience member comments "I am that merry wanderer of the night"? I am that giggling..dangerous..totally-bloody-psychotic-menace-to-life-and-limb, more like it" (10) thus providing the reader with more information on the true character of Puck as well as a note of black humour.

The major source of Pratchett's humour is his incorporation of and parodic play with characters from history, popular culture and classic literature, including Shakespeare. *Lords and Ladies* is not a retelling of the Shakespeare for children *per se*, but a comic fantasy novel (marketed for adults but also accessible and popular with teenagers) which includes a parody of the plot of *MND*. In the story, the three witches Granny Weatherwax, Nancy Ogg and Magrat Garlick have returned to the kingdom of Lancre, where Magrat (who functions as a combination of Hippolyta and Hermia) is to wed the new king, Verence II (the equivalent of Theseus). She is resentful and reluctant because Verence has made all the wedding arrangements without her input, and she runs away to the forest. The Morris dancers (the equivalent of the rude mechanicals) are preparing a play for the wedding and three new witches are calling up the race of



malevolent elves known as the Lords and Ladies (fairies). *Lords and Ladies* has several other allusions to *MND* and Shakespeare. The entertainment for the wedding will take place on Midsummer's Eve. The eight members of the Lancre Morris Men are all craftsmen and are billed on the wedding programme as "a humourus (*sic*) interlude with Comic Artisans" (74). The play they are to perform is "a beautiful love story of the love of the Queen of the Fairies ... for a mortal man" (74), written by Hwel the playsmith. Verence says that the play is "Something even rustics can't muck up" (17). This is both a reference to the Pyramus and Thisbe play in *MND* performed by the craftsmen and "Bottom's Dream" that featured Titania and Bottom. Baker's question, "Why's there got to be a lion in it?" (75), is also a reference to the Pyramus and Thisbe play. Jason's reply is a comical stab at Shakespeare, insinuating he wasn't a real playwright if he put donkeys in his play: "Cos it's a play!' said Jason. "No-one'd want to see it if it had a ... a *donkey* in it! ... This play was written by a real playsmith. Hah, I can just see a real playsmith putting donkeys in a play!'" (75). A footnote at the end of *Lords and Ladies* parodies Bottom's Dream and Shakespeare again. It reads:

When Hwel the playwright turned up with the rest of the troupe the next day they told him all about it, and he wrote it down. But he left out all the bits that wouldn't fit on a stage, or were too expensive, or which he didn't believe. In any case, he called it *The Taming of the Vole*, because no-one would be interested in a play called *Things that Happened on a Midsummer's Night*. (281)

This is a reference to the *Taming of the Shrew* (a shrew being a kind of vole) and *MND*. The Morris Men also refer to themselves as rude mechanicals and stress that they don't usually speak like the characters in the play or understand the humour, which is a satirical comment on both plays and Shakespeare's language:

"Well we certainly don't talk like these buggers in the writing," said Carter the baker. "I never said 'fol-de'rol' in my life. And I can't understand any of the jokes."

‘You ain’t supposed to understand the jokes, this is a *play*,’ said Jason. (124)

The quarrel between Oberon and Titania is alluded to: "The King held out a hand, and said something ... about meeting by moonlight" (257). This is a reference to "Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania" (2.1.60). In one scene, Nanny Ogg can’t outfly the elves as “They can put a girdle round the world in forty minutes” (220) which is a reference to Puck’s line in the original “I’ll put a girdle round about the earth /In forty minutes (2.1.175-6).

Pratchett’s portrayal of the fairies as comic monsters is echoed in the way other 1990s retellings portray them as mysterious. The depiction of the fairies by Deary, Gaiman (illustrated by Charles Vess) and Pratchett as powerful and enigmatic satirise earlier adaptors’ portrayals of the fairies as cute and sweet. Vess’ Oberon is a striking, horned man in red battle armour and long blond hair while his black-haired queen is beautiful, regal and dressed in medieval costume. Their retinue, however, consists of monstrous and weird looking creatures more typical of a nightmare than a dream. Puck is a grinning, malevolent, sharp-toothed goblin, while Peaseblossom looks as though he has been carved from the bark of a tree. Pratchett’s fairies are malicious elves that use glamour to trick humans and hide their true nature and appearance. Pratchett describes them as “untrustworthy and cruel and arrogant parasites” (230) whose “strength lay in persuading others they were weak” (256). Intriguingly in Gaiman’s and Deary’s version the fairies have the power over the hapless mortals but Pratchett’s humans are more in control of their destiny. One of Pratchett’s characters, Granny Weatherwax, warns the Queen of the Fairies that although the Queen doesn’t age she can be “reduced”. “‘You meddled in a play,’ said Granny. ‘I believe you don’t realize what you’ve done. Plays and books... you’ve got to keep an eye on the buggers. They’ll turn on you. I mean to see that they do.’ ... ‘Ain’t that so, Fairy Pease-blossom?’” (251). This statement is an

interesting comment on the power that an author wields over the characters he creates – by devoting more words to a character, the importance of the character is emphasized. Granny Weatherwax implies the Queen's part in the book could be abridged thereby decreasing her power over the readers. By calling upon a fairy, who is also a character in *MND* (Peaseblossom) to agree with her, Granny Weatherwax is implying that the roles of minor characters in *MND*, such as Peaseblossom, can be (and often are) cut or minimised in retellings.

Deary is particularly satirical in his depiction of Puck as a muscular man with a curl on the top of his head, small wings and a surly expression. Deary's Puck introduces himself as a "faerie" and draws attention to the spelling of the word, in order to distance himself from the traditional perception of "fairies as little girls with half a frock, a wand and a pair of wings" (11). He warns that faeries are not "midget moppets in mini-skirts" (11) and that he has "power to do good or power to do mischief", cautioning the reader that when they fall asleep they enter his world, they become his slaves. Deary assigns the role of "lord of the dream world" (12) to Puck, rather than Oberon and portrays the King and Queen of the fairies as vain and greedy. Deary's contempt of people in power and overt consumerism can be seen from the narrator's voice – "If she were honest, Titania would admit that she stole the boy from a rich Indian king" (13). In the accompanying illustration Titania, dressed like a quintessential beauty queen with big curly hair, crown, tight evening dress and swirling scarf, is leading a child by the hand. Large-nosed, supercilious looking Oberon is pointing at her and thinking "Typical!!... always has to have the latest thing" (13). Deary also points out that Oberon "likes to dress up like a human king. You know the sort of thing – silk robes in rainbow colours dripping with jewels and a big gold crown" (14).

Both Gaiman and Pratchett describe their fairies as entering the human world through a portal that must be opened from the human side, in a similar fashion to Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906). In Gaiman's adaptation, Oberon (Oberon) and Titania are only summoned to the human world on special occasions, such as the first performance of *MND*, but find the world so changed they resolve not to return – Oberon tells Morpheus “This must be our last visit to this earth, Shaper. Things have changed and will change **more**; Gaia no longer welcomes us as once she did” (17). This statement provides a reason for Kipling's Puck being the last fairy and the opening of the portal foreshadows Dan and Una's action in *Puck of Pook's Hills* of calling up the last fairy, Puck, as they are playing on the same Sussex hillside where Gaiman's version is set.

In contrast to Deary, Gaiman and Pratchett, Colville's fairies are described as “tiny creatures”, “tiny helpers” who make “coats for the tiniest elves” from batwings. Puck is described as a “mischief-loving hobgoblin” (10) and a “wicked sprite” (22) and Nolan portrays him as a mischievous pre-schooler, a giggling boy with bark pants and leaves in his hair. Nolan's interpretation of the scene between Bottom and Titania is sexually more subtle than 1980s depictions. Bottom is snoring on his back with one arm around Titania who is resting her head on his shoulder. The overall impression is sweetly romantic, but closer inspection reveals that Titania's breast can be seen through her sheer off-the-shoulder dress. The slender sylph-like fairies are sleeping at the bottom of the page in free abandon upon each other. Oberon is portrayed with a crown of gnarled roots and wearing midnight blue flowing robes and his attendants are excitable young boys wearing loincloths. They are very underweight, with ribs showing, concave chests and one has a pot-belly reminiscent of news photographs of children in the Sudan famine of mid-1990s. Nolan's depiction of the scene is in keeping with the original where Oberon comes upon Titania and Bottom sleeping, but Colville's description in the text has Oberon entering the

scene when Titania is awake: “He found his queen fondling Bottom’s long ears, while the four tiny fairies wound flowers in his hair and scratched his chin” (35).

In contrast to Nolan’s pictures, Prorokova’s illustrations (Fig 11) of *MND: Animated Shakespeare* are bright, colourful and childlike. Titania is depicted as a tall young woman wearing a ball-gown and large flower crown; Oberon wears an Elizabethan style tunic made from green leaves and a crown of green leaves and Puck is a comical, chubby little page-boy wearing a long purple cloak. The scene with Titania and Bottom features Titania sleeping chastely alongside a startled looking Bottom. The fairies are shown as little winged creatures – some with human faces and some with animal faces. In a similar fashion to Oberon and Titania’s leaves and flowers theme clothing, the fairies’ wings are made from leaves and seed pods – this is different from earlier representations of insect or bird wings. Williams’ illustrations of the fairies are similarly cheerful and quirky. The full-page of Bottom and Titania has the pair sitting side by side on a bank, arms linked with Bottom’s large head resting on Titania’s head. Titania is unusually depicted as a winged, chubby, motherly woman wearing a short yellow frock, blue pantaloons and flower garland and crown. There are a myriad of fairies cleaning Bottom’s shoes, offering him flowers, weaving flowers, rubbing his head – each one playing a cameo role and adding to the complex visual narrative. The entire picture is covered with stars that are being poured from top right hand corner by a fairy – the overall effect is magical in a fun and comical way.

Anthony Maitland’s depiction of Titania and Bottom is an interesting mix of the two approaches (comical and mystical). The illustration has a comical feel as Bottom is a rotund, muscular figure leaning back on a grass bank, with Titania at arm’s length scratching his head, and prancing fairies around them. Titania, however, is more reminiscent of the Bride of Frankenstein than Queen of the Fairies. She is dressed in a

white Elizabethan style gown, while her long black-and-white striped hair projects straight out from her head. Closer examination reveals that that one of the fairies is a winged ballerina in a pink tutu, while another is a goggle-eyed insect, and Bottom has a slightly malicious expression. I believe that when Adney (2009) claimed the 1990s adaptations contained “little description”, she failed to take into account the visual literacy of the 1990s reader and the wealth of information – particularly around description of scene and character – that can be imparted by illustrations.

As can be seen by the variety of approaches to adapting Shakespeare for children in the 1990s, the genre experienced a growth period and a resurgence of interest in Shakespeare. There are two particularly striking trends in the 1990s. One is a new interest in empowering children to lead the way in the study of Shakespeare by engaging with Shakespeare in a personal way – by reading the play themselves (Burningham), by leading the way in visual literacy (Williams) and by providing thoughtful responses which forms a secondary text (Burdett). Adaptors hope that by allowing children to have a relationship with Shakespeare, it will dispel the fear of his towering reputation, build by adaptors (and scholars) over the previous 200 years. Interestingly, in doing so, they not only allow other adaptors to look at fresh and original ways to adapt Shakespeare for children, they add to his – by now international – literary prestige and enhance his reputation. The other trend is a new approach to the fairies in *MND*, which in this decade has taken two paths – Gaiman, Pratchett and Deary portray them as malevolent, powerful “fae” and Burdett, Williams, Prorokova, Colville and Nolan depict them as more approachable and comic. It can be noted that at the beginning of the century it was a given that Shakespeare’s plays were entertaining, but by the end of the century the perception of children, who are forced to study Shakespeare as school, is that his plays are boring. All the adaptors attempt to dispel this perception by emphasizing, in one way

or another, Shakespeare's desire to produce an entertaining play, and they encourage the reading of Shakespeare for pleasure rather than education.

## Chapter 9 – Conclusions

The purpose of my thesis has been to discover the principles behind the adaptations for children in the modern age. From my analyses of forty-two adaptations for children of *MND*, covering a period of almost two hundred years, three distinct trends have emerged. First, the prestige of Shakespeare has been reinforced by each generation until he reached international icon status. Second, adaptations have become more various. Finally, (and not surprisingly), adaptations tend to reflect the period in which they were written.

### Literary heritage of Shakespeare

From the outset the adaptors of *MND* for children have been as much concerned with promoting Shakespeare as a playwright and a model of good character, as they have been with the play itself. Adaptors have invested in Shakespeare as a form of cultural capital by praising Shakespeare's genius (as most do – in authors' notes, introductions or prefaces), starting with the first adaptation by the Lambs in 1807. The Victorian adaptors – Seymour, Sim, Nesbit, Townesend, Sydney and Perkins – extend their admiration to Shakespeare as a moral writer and a personal role model for children. In addition, by imbuing Puck with expertise of history, Kipling introduced the notion of Shakespeare's educational value. Subsequent generations continued these same trends. In the post-war period Peats, Scotland and Chute unanimously refer to Shakespeare as the world's greatest writer. By the end of the 1950s, Shakespeare's prestige by this time period was so firmly entrenched that associating Shakespeare with a commercial undertaking added an element of cultural legitimacy to the project, as can be seen in the



“Classics Illustrated” phenomenon of the 1950s. In the 1960s and 1970s, adaptors focussed on the performance of *MND* rather than Shakespeare. However, the 1980s saw a resurgence of praising Shakespeare and his stories, as well as the rise of appropriations – a trend which carried through into the nineties. By the end of the twentieth century, Shakespeare is an international cultural icon, and a firmly stitched thread in the tapestry of modern society.

Throughout the eras, the adaptations of Shakespeare tend to echo the trends that can be found in children’s literature generally, and the adaptors are often prominent writers of their time – the Lambs, Nesbit, Kipling, Perkin, Streatfield, Serrailier, Singh, Garfield, Lewis, Birch, Gaiman, Garfield, Pratchett, Colville, Deary and Cooper have all received critical acclaim and/or commercial success for their writing (independently of their Shakespeare adaptations). This seems to indicate that many authors have the desire to invest in the cultural value of Shakespeare, by including him or his work in their canon.

### **Adaptation Methods**

For the past two centuries writers have adapted *MND* for children by adjusting language and plot, deleting content and characters, or (in later years) appropriating the plot and characters for new stories. Generally, choices seem to have been determined by the reigning view at the time of what a child should know about life. Although Shakespeare was promoted for his morality, early adaptors felt the need to protect children from the sexual content of Shakespeare’s stories. This is in stark contrast to the end of the twentieth century when writers wanted to empower children, and introduced new ways of presenting Shakespeare. I have termed the contrast as the “ignorance is bliss” versus “knowledge is power” approach to adapting Shakespeare for children.

Whereas early writers wrote adaptations because children were eager to read Shakespeare but did not understand the plays, children from the 1940s onwards were

thought to need adaptations because they were not eager to read Shakespeare, thanks to his difficulty. In both these cases it was Shakespeare's language that was adapted – either by rewriting or paraphrasing. Some adaptors chose to quote Shakespeare, while others retained the imagery but modernised the words. By the 1960s critics of Shakespeare were referring to his language as “obsolete”, as opposed to being merely difficult to understand. The contrast of attitudes between schoolchildren who find Shakespeare language frustrating and those who learn to appreciate his poetry can be seen in the two appropriations for the 1980s – Krensky's *The Wilder Plot* and Singer's *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth*. There are a number of popular lines from *MND* that adaptors have consistently included, including “The course of true love never did run smooth” (1.1.134), the fairy song and Oberon's speech “I know a bank where the wild thyme grows”(2.1.248).

In terms of plot, adaptors of *MND* have, depending on their agenda, highlighted either the lovers', the mechanicals' or the fairies' subplots. Although the scene between Titania and Bottom was used as a *tableau vivant* for children in the late nineteenth century, Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) is the first appropriation that uses *MND* as a metatheatrical device. In the 1960s and 70s, performance was stressed featuring Shakespeare primarily as playwright. From the 1980s onwards, several texts discuss the performance of the play in school or by schoolchildren with the onstage characters reflected in the characterisation of the offstage characters.

Adaptations for the first 130 years showed children as listening to Shakespeare's stories, rather than engaging in a conversation about them. *Three Children and Shakespeare* (1938) was the first adaptation to explore the idea that children's responses to Shakespeare can create a secondary story line. This trend was left largely dormant until the 1990s, when adaptors focussed on empowering children to lead the way in the study

of Shakespeare by engaging with Shakespeare in a personal way – by reading the play themselves (Burningham), by leading the way in visual literacy (Williams) and by providing thoughtful responses which forms a secondary text (Burdett). This resulted in fresh ways to adapt Shakespeare for children – graphic novels, picture books and appropriations.

### **Adaptive emphasis of *MND***

The depiction of the fairies in *MND* is an element in the play that has changed with the times over the past two hundred years. It started with Mary Lamb's depiction of them as mischievous but essentially innocuous. The Victorians continued this characterisation but, in addition, depicted them as winged fairies associated with flowers, often carrying star-tipped sceptres. The portrayal of the fairies as small delicately winged creatures continued until the late twentieth century – with the exception of Kipling's fairies, who are portrayed as powerful beings that are more in keeping with portrayal of fairies in literature 100 years later, than in Kipling's own time. Titania is portrayed in a number of the adaptations as sexually aggressive and Oberon is portrayed as dark and powerful. The approach to the fairies in *MND* in the 1990s took two paths – Gaiman, Pratchett and Deary portrayed them as vindictive, powerful "fae" and Burdett, Williams, Prorokova, Colville and Nolan depicted them as more approachable, cheerful and comic. In addition, Deary, Gaiman (illustrated by Charles Vess) and Pratchett's depiction of the fairies as powerful and mysterious satirise earlier adaptors' portrayals, of the fairies as cute and sweet.

I believe that the dominant or desirable values expected of the society (at the time the adaption was written) are upheld and reinforced in the adaptations of *MND*. Mary Lamb was adapting for girls in 1807 and portrays Hermia and Helena as acting rationally and calmly as befitting Georgian woman. The late nineteenth century adaptors, Seymour,

Sim, Townesend, Nesbit and Sim were writing for younger children. They highlighted the fairy plot, as they believed it to be more appropriate to the innocent and playful nature of children. Their human characters (Theseus, Hippolyta, Hermia, Helena, Demetrius and Lysander) reflect the behavioural norms of the day, with clearly defined gender roles. The mid-twentieth century adaptors were writing for teenagers and boys, and so focussed on the mechanicals. The 1960s' roots of performance pedagogy blossomed in the 1980s as appropriations of *MND* reflected the prevailing conflicting attitudes to teaching Shakespeare. Singer's appropriation, in particular, echoes the values of the 1980s and her treatment of issues such as homosexuality, premarital sex, and family violence are in keeping with children's literature trends of the time. While in the nineteenth century it was a given that Shakespeare's plays were entertaining, by the end of the twentieth century it was assumed that children, forced to study Shakespeare at school, found his plays difficult to understand and boring. Later adaptors have attempted to dispel this perception by emphasizing, in one way or another, the entertainment value of Shakespeare.

### **Future developments**

The twenty-first century is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, further study can be made of the relevance of Shakespeare to children of the new millennium. It can be noted that almost as many (if not more) adaptations of *MND* have been written since 2000 than in the two hundred years before (*MND* is appropriated in thirteen texts and the 35 retellings include one written by a fifteen-year-old). It would be worthwhile to explore why this might be, but that would be another project.

## Appendix – Illustrations of Fairies

The way illustrators depict the scene between Titania and Bottom is a good example of how adaptations of Shakespeare reflect the times in which they were published. The comparative table below is an interesting walk through history:

<p>Fig. 1 Herbert Sydney (1885)</p> 	<p>Fig. 2 M Surtees Townesend (1899)</p> 
<p>Fig. 3 Edith Nesbit (1900)</p> 	<p>Fig. 4 Lucy Fitch Perkins (1907)</p> 
<p>Fig. 5 Phyllis Bray (1945)</p> 	<p>Fig. 6 Alex Blum cover (1951)</p> 



Fig. 7 Lynd Ward (1964)



Fig. 8 Warren Chappell (1969)



Fig. 9 Michael Foreman (1985)



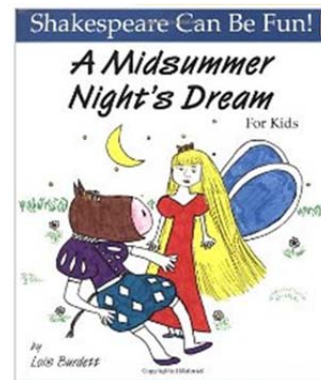
Fig. 10 Norman Bancroft-Hunt? (1988)



Fig. 11 Elena Prorokova (1992)



Fig. 12 Ashley Kropf (1997)



The first three illustrations are aimed at young children: Fig. 1 (1885) is a tableau for performance with Titania seated a distance from Bottom; Fig. 2 (1899) depicts Titania as a small winged fairy touching heads with a much larger Bottom; and Fig. 3 (1900) portrays Titania as a child cuddling her pet donkey in an adaptation. Fig. 4 (1907) shows Titania as a romantic winged fairy sitting beside Bottom (but not touching him), in a time

when Shakespeare's heroines are used as examples of good behaviour for young women. Fig. 5 (1945) depicts Titania as a butterfly-winged woman, wearing a 1945 ball frock, and touching the chin of burly Bottom. Fig. 6 features the cover (1951) of "Animated Classics", which shows Titania is a young woman (no wings) placing flowers on the head of a sheepish Bottom, which is a reflection of the 1950s woman who took care of her man. The sensual elements in Fig. 7 (1964) and Fig. 8 (1968) are a reflection of the sexual revolution of the sixties. Fig. 9 (1985) and Fig. 10 (1988) emphasize the changing attitude to the fairies in the 1980s, emphasizing the sexual aspects of Titania. Fig. 11 (1992) emphasizes the comic aspects of the play. Fig. 12 (1997) is a cover illustration by a child, showing the 1990s trend of empowering children.

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