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The Dark Side of the Moon: Semiramis and Titania

Lisa Hopkins

The accession of first Mary Tudor and then her younger sister Elizabeth to the throne of England brought with it iconographic and mythopoeic problems as well as political ones. The only previous women who had attempted to rule England in their own right, the twelfth-century Empress Matilda and the nine days' queen Lady Jane Grey, offered such unfortunate precedents that neither could be used for this purpose, and the mythical Queen Cordelia, though much drawn on by apologists for Elizabeth's reign, was hardly more helpful, because she had met such an unhappy end. As has been much discussed,¹ the abolition of Catholicism had to some extent made it possible to cannibalise some of the iconography of the Virgin Mary for use in representations of Elizabeth, but this could only be hinted at. As a result, it was the classical world which tended to be most extensively plundered for modes of imaging and figuring the queen. However, though the classical world certainly afforded many memorable female rulers, most notably Cleopatra, Dido, and Semiramis, these too presented difficulties because all these queens were as notorious for the extravagance of their love-lives as famous for the fact of their rule. Nevertheless, the association with Elizabeth stuck and prospered, particularly in the case of Semiramis, and my aim here is to explore some of the reasons and ways for this,² and some of the tensions it generated, with particular reference to a group of texts, starting with Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Robert Greene's *The Scottish History of James the Fourth*, moving through the anonymous *Lochrine* and Shakespeare's *Titus*

Andronicus and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and culminating in Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*, which associate Semiramis with fairy lore (although the Empress of Babylon in *The Whore of Babylon* is never named, I shall suggest that the strong association between Semiramis and Titania invites us to read Dekker's Empress as a Semiramis figure). This connection, I shall argue, allows a figure ostensibly associated with praise of Elizabeth to activate some of the darker aspects of her reign, most notably her wars in Ireland, which I shall suggest form a crucial subtext of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* allusions to Semiramis.

Semiramis provided a particularly problematic precedent, because her story included so many elements and encompassed such extremes. She was said variously to be the epitome of valour and discretion and a woman crazed with lust, whose passions allegedly extended even to bulls and horses; to have been transformed into a dove;³ to have dressed as a man; to have built the walls of Babylon, 'constructed from brick baked with sulphur and iron',⁴ which were sometimes counted as one of the seven wonders of the world;⁵ to have slept with her own son; to have invented castration;⁶ and to be responsible for the Babylonian captivity of the Jews.⁷ Because of the alleged infatuation for a bull, she was sometimes coupled with Pasiphaë or Lais,⁸ other emblems of female lust, but equally she was frequently presented as a nonpareil,⁹ and figured positively in mediaeval royal entries.

Despite this instability in her rôle, references to her are frequent in writing of the earlier part of Elizabeth's reign. Richard Rainolde, in 'An Oracion historicall, howe Semiramis

came to bee Queene of Babilon' (part of his textbook *The Foundation of Rhetoric*, 1563), gives perhaps the period's standard account of her career:

Semiramis wife to Ninus the firste, feared the tender age of her sonne, wherupon the thought that those mightie nacions and kyngdomes, would not obaie so young and weake a Prince. Wherefore, she kept her sonne from the gouernmente: and moste of all she fered, that thei would not obaie a woman, forthwith she fained her self, to be the soonne of Ninus, and bicause she would not be knowen to bee a woman, this Quene inuented a newe kinde of tire, the whiche all the Babilonians that were men, vsed by her commaundement. By this straunge disguised tire and apparell, she not knowen to bee a woman, ruled as a man, for the space of twoo and fourtie yeres: she did mareuilous actes, for she enlarged the mightie kyngdome of Babilon, and builded thesame citee. Many other regions subdued, and valiauntlie ouerthrowen, she entered India, to the whiche neuer Prince came, sauing Alexander the greate: she passed not onely men in vertue, counsaill, and valiaunt stomacke, but also the famous counsailours of Assiria, might not contende with her in Maiestie, pollicie, and roialnes, For, at what tyme as thei knewe her a woman, thei enuied not her state, but mareuiled at her wisdom, pollicie, and moderacion of life, at the last she desiryng the vnnaturall lust, and loue of her soonne Ninus, was murthered of hym.¹⁰

Rainolde makes no mention of the alleged passion for a horse, which would indeed have been a highly risky strategy for him because the work is dedicated to 'My Lorde Robert Dudley, Master of the Queenes Maiesties Horse', so he cannot afford even the faintest suggestion of slandering a potential Elizabeth-figure (let alone horses!). In his account,

Semiramis achieves what even Marlowe's all-conquering Tamburlaine does not, the conquest of India, which makes her a particularly appropriate model for Elizabeth and the growing Empire over which she hoped to preside. In short, Rainolde's Semiramis had a generally distinguished career slightly tarnished by its end.

So spectacular was that end, however, that often that emphasis is reversed. Thus Anthony Munday speaks of how '*Semiramis*, honored and extolled for her noblenesse of minde, and vertue in her deedes: by looue brought her name into eternall infamie',¹¹ and in Book I, Canto V of *The Faerie Queene*, not published until 1590 but certainly circulating in manuscript before that, Semiramis is listed as the first of the 'Proud wemen, vaine, forgetfull of their yoke' whom Duessa and Night see when they visit Hell.¹² Marlowe, who appears to have read *The Faerie Queene* in manuscript and to borrow from it in his *Tamburlaine the Great* (acted in 1587 though also not published until 1590), also mentions Semiramis but, typically, sounds a note of far less moral indignation than Spenser, when Orcanes speaks of how

So from Arabia Desert, and the bounds
Of that sweet land whose brave metropolis
Re-edified the fair Semiramis,
Came forty thousand warlike foot and horse,
Since last we number'd to your majesty.¹³

Though Marlowe does not condemn Semiramis, however, he equally does not take her seriously. Tamburlaine himself declares,

Now in the place, where fair Semiramis,

Courted by kings and peers of Asia,
Hath trod the measures, do my soldiers march.

(V.i.73-5)

Tamburlaine the Great, first performed in the year England expected the imminent arrival of the Spanish Armada (although that was in fact delayed until the following year), is above all interested in military power, and might therefore have been expected to admire this even when embodied in a female. But for Marlowe, Semiramis is not primarily a leader but a builder and a dancer. I have argued elsewhere that Marlowe seems to be generally scathing about queens,¹⁴ and this seems to be another instance of the phenomenon, but it is notable that he is merely dismissive rather than actually denigratory.

The poet William Warner, author of *Albion's England*, who may have been the 'Warner' whom Thomas Kyd named as a friend of Marlowe's, also speaks of Semiramis in admiring rather than shocked tones:

Staurobates at his homecoming found his country invaded by that armipotent
Virago Semiramis, whom (which never happened her elsewhere) he encountered,
wounded, and lastly chased her mighty troops from out his territories, wholly
delivering himself in a short time of the *Assyrians*.¹⁵

Raleigh, another probable acquaintance of Marlowe, praised her in his *History of the World*. Nashe, who was certainly a friend of Marlowe, is more overtly comic when he writes that '*We read that Semiramis was in loue with a Horse, but for a Gentlewoman to bee in loue with an Asse is such a tricke as neuer was*',¹⁶ and says of Hero in the parody

of the Hero and Leander story in *Lenten Stuff*: ‘Down she ran in her loose nightgown, and her hair about her ears (even as Semiramis ran out with her lie-pot in her hand, and her black dangling tresses about her shoulders with her ivory comb ensnarled in them, when she heard that Babylon was taken)’.¹⁷ Again, however, there is no moral outrage here, merely an urbanely comic tone.

What Nashe does do, however, is, like Marlowe, belittle Semiramis by the simple tactic of insisting on her gender. As a woman, she has long hair and an ivory comb, and these trappings of femininity trivialise her. This brings us to the heart of the representation of both Semiramis and Elizabeth. Like her fellow queens of exotic lands Cleopatra, who puts her own clothes on Antony and wears his, and Dido, who dressed Aeneas in what her husband Sychaeus had worn, Semiramis is associated with undermining men’s independence and masculinity (in her case literally, since she is supposed to have invented castration). In turn (again like Cleopatra, and as Elizabeth herself was alleged to do at Tilbury),¹⁸ she herself cross-dresses as a means (perhaps *the* means) of asserting her authority as a ruler. The ease with which Nashe can demean her by reference to her clothes shows the riskiness of this strategy and the precariousness of both queens’ positions. To put it crudely, Semiramis can be either vilified or sillified - and both are equally effective.

Presumably the story of a warrior queen looked rather different in the wake of Elizabeth’s appearance in armour at Tilbury in 1588, and it is certainly notable that a number of works certainly written after that date are not at all troubled by either the lewder or the

more frivolous aspects of the story of Semiramis and do regard her primarily as a military figure. Thus Robert Greene's *The Scottish History of James the Fourth*, almost certainly written in 1590, makes no mention of either sexuality or comedy in its reference to Semiramis, when Oberon speaks of how

Semiramis, the proud Assyrian queen,
When Ninus died, did levy in her wars
Three millions of footmen to the fight,
Five hundred thousand horse, of armèd chars
A hundred thousand more; yet in her pride
Was hurt and conquered by Stabrobates.
Then what is pomp?¹⁹

Here Semiramis functions just as a male figure might, as an emblem of military greatness brought low. Even more positively, Lodowick Lloyd, in 'A Dittie to the tune of Welshe Sydanen, made to the Queenes maj. Eliz. by Lodov. Lloyd', writes of how 'Though Afrike spredd Zenobias name; all Asia range Semiramis fame',²⁰ while still later Barnabe Barnes calls Caterina Sforza a Semiramis in *The Devil's Charter* (1607).²¹

Most notably, in the anonymous *Locrine* (printed in 1595 in a revised form although probably first written before 1586), Semiramis is not only a successful military figure but closely paralleled with Elizabeth, when Humber says:

For we'll receive them at the lances points,
And massacre their bodies with our blades:
Yea though they were in number infinite,

More then the mighty *Babylonian* Queen,
Semiramis the ruler of [the] West,
Brought 'gainst the Emperour of the *Scythians*²²

The phrase 'the ruler of the West' here – by no means an obvious description of an Assyrian queen – may recall Shakespeare's description in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of Elizabeth as 'a fair vestal thronèd by the west',²³ and in the last lines of *Locrine* Elizabeth is openly referred to, in Atey's

And as a woman was the onely cause
That civil discord was then stirred up,
So let us pray for that renowned maid,
That eight and thirty years the Scepter sway'd
In quiet peace and sweet felicitie,
And every wight that seekes her graces smart,
Would that this sword were pierced in his heart.

The reference in *Locrine* is particularly interesting because the version of the play published in 1595 contains material which seems close to Shakespeare (it might also be worth noting that Trompart, whose name is borrowed for the clown in *Locrine*, is mentioned in Book Five of *The Faerie Queene* [5, 3, 17], which I shall be suggesting as a source for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).²⁴

Strumbo in *Locrine* concludes his report of events with a tragicomic song:

And that which greeues me most,
My louing wife,

(O cruell strife!)

The wicked flames did roast.

And therefore, captaine crust,

We will continuallie crie,

Except you seeke a remedie

Our houses to reedifie

Which now are burnt to dust.

(II.iv.67-75)

Both the mixture of tragic content and jiggling verse and the specific rhythmical pattern here are strongly reminiscent of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

But stay, O spite!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here?

Eyes, do you see?

How can it be?

O dainty duck, O dear!

(V.i.264-70)

The parallel with *Dream* is suggestive because Semiramis is implicitly alluded to in that play's reference to the tomb of Ninus, her husband.²⁵ She may also be evoked in *Dream*'s many references to doves: her emblem, with which she was often associated in medieval royal entries, was a dove,²⁶ and in *Dream* we have Bottom saying 'I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove' (I.2.77), Lysander asking 'Who will not change a raven for a dove?' (II.2.120), and Thisbe crying 'What, dead, my dove?' (V.1.317). It is

a neat irony that Pyrrhus is played by Bottom, who had been partially transformed to an ass, and that Semiramis was reputed to lust after animals, an idea which Thisbe may glance at when she praises Pyramus as being ‘As true as truest horse that yet would never tire’ (III.1.89) in the line before she says that she will meet him ‘at Ninny’s tomb’. It is also, of course, noteworthy that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* features Theseus, whose most famous exploit had been to destroy the Minotaur which was the alleged offspring of Pasiphaë’s unnatural coupling with a bull.

Moreover, another play with strong linguistic and allusional connections with *Dream* also mentions Semiramis. This is *Titus Andronicus*, in which Aaron says of Tamora, ‘this queen, / This goddess, this Semiramis, this nymph’,²⁷ and in which the Clown enters bearing doves, traditional symbol of Semiramis (though they might, of course, also have many other meanings). Like *Dream*, *Titus Andronicus* is heavily indebted to Ovid: Lavinia uses the *Metamorphosis* to tell her story (4.i.42), Jonathan Bate relates Marcus’ comparison of Lavinia to a conduit (2.iii.30) to the description of Pyramus in Golding’s Ovid, and Martius says of the dead Bassianus,

So pale did shine the moon on Pyramus

When he by night lay bathed in maiden blood.

(2.ii.231-2)

In both plays there is the image of a man associated with or embodied as a threatening snake: Hermia dreams that a snake ate her heart while Lysander looked on and smiled (2.ii.148-9), while Aaron refers to

My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls

Even as an adder when she doth unroll

To do some fatal execution

(2.ii.34-6)

Perhaps most suggestively, the names of Tamora's two sons, Chiron and Demetrius, both relate to *Dream*. Chiron was a centaur, as is recalled by Titus' words,

Come, come, be everyone officious

To make this banquet, which I wish may prove

More stern and bloody than the Centaurs' feast.

(5.iii.201-3)

Demetrius is the name of one of the two lovers in *Dream*, and the rivalry between Chiron and Demetrius in *Titus Andronicus* parallels that between Demetrius and Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and hunting scenes are prominent in both plays; indeed Robert S. Miola implies a further link between the imaginative worlds of the two plays when he argues that 'The dichotomy between Rome and the forest so crucial to this play descends directly from the Ovidian dichotomy between Athens, civilized home of Philomela, and the wild woods in Thrace, scene of the rape'.²⁸ *Titus Andronicus*, too, glances at the iconography of Elizabeth: Heather James points to '*Titus Andronicus*' sustained abuse of classical models favored by the Tudors. His critique of Elizabethan political iconography begins with the figure of Lavinia and ends with Tamora, who parodies the guises that Queen Elizabeth appropriated from Vergil – Dido, Astraea, and the *Venus armata*'.²⁹ This may well suggest that the submerged references to Semiramis in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are no accident but a sustained and ironic glance at the

use of Semiramis in Elizabeth's iconography and indeed at the mythmaking process that surrounded the queen in general.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is certainly a complex and multifaceted play, not least because of the ambiguities and multivalency of the fairy queen tradition on which it draws. As Matthew Woodcock points out, the fairy queen topos has a long and rather troubled history. Woodcock traces its origins to the 1570s:

the ambiguity surrounding the exact “meaning” or signification of the fairy queen in the Woodstock entertainment of 1575 establishes the foundations for the more problematic – potentially negative – representations of Elizabeth as the fairy queen during the 1590s.

Woodcock compares the way in which the fairy queen motif functioned at Woodstock to its use in a second, rather more celebrated entertainment of the same year, that held by the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth, where ‘the queen refused to play the part of the fairy queen..., preferring instead a narrative that allowed her to unequivocally assert and display her sovereign authority’.³⁰ Woodcock also discusses the use of the fairy queen figure in Sir Henry Lee's entertainment for the queen at Ditchley in 1592, three years before the probable date of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Most famously, of course, the figure of the fairy queen formed the central plank of the iconographical programme of Edmund Spenser's epic of that name.³¹

As Elizabeth's unwillingness to play the rôle allotted to her at Kenilworth suggests, and as Woodcock's analysis of the uses of the motif confirms, the figure of the fairy queen

was one which was not necessarily always perceived as flattering to the actual queen. Even Spenser, whose interests were so closely bound up with achieving a tone of unequivocally fulsome panegyric, struggled with it, since he was essentially unable to find anything very much for the fairy queen to *do*. Shakespeare, who was rarely unequivocal about anything, may have been more deliberately playing with the tensions and ambiguities inherent in the figure. Louis Montrose has influentially argued that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is more an attack on the values and image of the Tudor queen than a celebration of them, and Elizabeth would certainly have been less than happy about sentiments such as

But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness.

(I.i.76-78)

Particularly troubling to the queen's agendas might have been the fact that fairy lore of the kind found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was often associated with Catholicism, something that might be particularly pertinent because as Richard Wilson observes of the love-in-idleness passage,

Oberon's inset has been tied to the Elvetham Entertainment, which, Philippa Berry has shown, certainly celebrated the Armada's defeat. So, when the "arm'd" god misfires on the "little western flower", "love's wound" might signify the stigmata of England's Catholic community, penalised for its innocent part in an international conspiracy.³²

‘Mary, fary, fary, Mary’ went the old rhyme associating the Virgin Mary with the fairy legends, and although Alison Shell in her forthcoming book notes that ‘fairy lore was used by Protestants for a number of imaginative purposes, negative and positive’,³³ nevertheless Pamela Allen Brown remarks that in the late sixteenth century ‘Rome and Faerie may have seemed plausibly contiguous realms. In *Daemonologie* (1597), James associated Rome and Fairyland’,³⁴ and Reginald Scot declared in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) that ‘Divers writers report, that in Germanie, since Luthers time, spirits and divels have not personallie appeared, as in times past they were wont to doo [...] but now that the work of GOD hath appeared, those sights, spirits, and mockeries of images are ceased’.³⁵ Regina Buccola points out that ‘Published writings and court documents from the late sixteenth century make it clear that connections were made between fairy belief and Catholicism by religious reformers even in Spenser’s day’.³⁶ In some sense, therefore, to write a play centring on fairies innately had the potential to articulate a perspective directly opposed to that which dictated the policy of the queen and her ministers. Moreover, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is heavily dependent on the idea of flower-magic, and as Alison Shell points out, ‘flowers have often been the inspiration for Catholic-inspired imaginative nomenclature’. Particularly notable is *Dream*’s mention of the hawthorn brake as a setting (III.i.4), since Shell observes that ‘[t]he hawthorn often occurs as a lone bush, called in Ireland “Monument bushes” or “Mass bushes”, and reputed to have marked the places where Mass was said in penal times...the tree has traditionally been associated with both fairies and Catholics’.³⁷ Another possible connection between the play and Catholicism arises from the fact that the author of the 1590 pamphlet *Tarltons Newes out of Purgatorie* (who was possibly Thomas Nashe)³⁸

gave his name as ‘Robin Goodfellow’; since Purgatory was an exclusively Roman Catholic concept, there may be a suggestion here that the Robin Goodfellow figure is perceived as linked to Catholicism, while Regina Buccola points out that ‘There is a decidedly Catholic savor, that sounds remarkably like the Catholic sisterhood, to Theseus’s menacing order that the intractable Hemia adopt a life of chastity if she continues to defy her father’s wish that she marry Demetrius’.³⁹

Further evidence that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* could be read as reflecting on Catholicism, and doing so in the context of Elizabeth’s iconography, can be found in Dekker’s *The Whore of Babylon* (1607),⁴⁰ whose *Dramatis personae* includes ‘*Titania the Fairie Queene: vnder whom is figured our late Queen Elizabeth*’ and ‘*Th’Empresse of Babylon: vnder whom is figured Rome*’.⁴¹ The Empress of Babylon is never named, but Semiramis’ strong association with both Babylon and the Titania / Oberon story may well make her implicitly a Semiramis figure. The play is also notable for its numerous references to the two creatures most closely associated with Semiramis, doves and bulls. The Prologue promises that its project is to ‘lay the Dragon at a Dove’s soft feet’;⁴² Florimell advises Titania ‘Be, as the serpent, wise, then, though a dove’ (1.2.214); the Third King vows that ‘here I’ll lurk / And in a dovelike shape raven upon doves’ (I.2.297-8); Titania compares corrupted churchmen to ‘doves / That have eat carrion’ (III.1.128-9), while Truth says ‘in mine eyes / Doves sit, not sparrows’ (III.3.8-9); and Time tells Truth to ‘sit like a dove / Upon the horseman’s helm’ (V.3.19-20). As for bulls, the play repeatedly exploits the standard play on papal bulls when the Third King hopes for ‘Whole herds of bulls loaden with hallowed curses’ (I.2.287), when Elfiron

defies mad bulls (II.1.16), and when Time refers to ‘a bull that roars / To fright allegiance from true subjects’ bosoms’ (IV.1.21-2) – a metaphor with which Plain Dealing subsequently plays. The Empress also recalls Semiramis in the confusion over whether the kings are her lovers, her sons, or both, and she, like Semiramis, is ultimately defeated when these sons turn against her, with the Second King threatening her with having ‘thrust / A ring into thy nostrils!’ (V.6.152-3). There seems little doubt, then, whom we are meant to see lying behind the figure of ‘That mannish woman-devil, / That lustful bloody Queen of Babylon’ (V.2.4-5).

The Empress certainly exemplifies the double-edgedness of the figure of Semiramis when used in conjunction with Elizabeth. Dekker clearly remembers Shakespeare in this play: the Empress complains of ‘The Fairie Queene’ because, owing to her actions,

Five summers have scarce drawn their glimmering nights
Through the moon’s silver bow since the crownd heads
Of that adored beast on which we ride
Were struck and wounded

(I.1.53-7)

The measuring of time by a bow-like moon, while a common enough topos, seems more particularly reminiscent of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The Empress also speaks of a spider (I.1.75) and adders (I.1.89) in connection with the fairy queen, echoing the fairies’ lullaby. Meanwhile, Titania herself demands,

How many plots were laid to bar us hence,
Even from our cradle! but our innocence,

Your wisdom, Fairie Peers, and above all
That Arm that cannot let a white soul fall
Hath held us up and lifted us thus high
Even when the arrows did most thickly fly
Of that bad woman, Babylon's proud Queen

(I.2.3-9)

Babylon's proud queen clearly suggests Semiramis, at whose husband Ninus' tomb Pyramus and Thisbe plan to meet in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; the idea of the arrows which quasi-miraculously miss the fairy queen looks like another nod to *Dream*, where Cupid's arrow fails to hit the 'fair vestal thronèd by the west' (and where Titania too lies in a cradle). Finally, Florimell speaks of 'our rounds' (I.2.24), and Fideli uses another image familiar from *Dream*: 'He swears the winds have got the sails with child, / With such big bellies' (V.2.16-18). The Empress too echoes this language with her

let our galleons feel even childbirth pangs
Till their great bellies be delivered
On the soft Fairie shores.

(IV.4.123-5)

In short, *The Whore of Babylon* looks very like a direct reflection on Shakespeare's play which reframes its apparently fairytale events within an explicit and insistent religio-political context.

I want, in particular, to suggest that *The Whore of Babylon* can be used to help us home in on the specific area of discontent that lies at the heart of what I am suggesting is *Dream's*

critique of the image created by the queen's iconography. I think it is of considerable interest that in Dekker's play Ireland is cast as Elizabeth's unruly foster-child, squabbled over by the Fairy Queen and the Empress just as the changeling child is by the fairy king and queen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and is described in terms strongly reminiscent of the earlier play:

The darts he shoots are his; the winged messenger
That runs on all the errands of the gods
Teaches him swiftness: he'll outstrip the winds.
This child of yours is by adoption
Our mother's now; her blessing he receives.
And though, as men did in the golden age,
He live i'th'open fields, hiding his head
In dampish caves and woods...

(I.2.151-158)

Ireland is a surprising and apparently previously unnoticed subtext of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is most strongly associated with the character of Puck, unsurprisingly since Puck seems clearly to be derived from the malign Irish spirit known as the Pooka.⁴³

Puck introduces himself by announcing that

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough briar,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander every where,

Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the Fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be,
In their gold coats spots you see.

(II.i.1-11)

The word 'pale' here points us straight in the direction of the area around Dublin, known as the Pale; the mention of the Fairy Queen so soon afterwards reminds us of Spenser, who wrote his incomplete epic in Ireland, and so too indeed may the choice of the name Puck, since Thomas Herron points out that Spenser 'add[s] a "Pouke" to the local list of horrors in his "Epithalamion"', and suggests that he may have done so in honour of Castlepook Cave, near his home.⁴⁴ The reference to 'Pensioners' – the gentlemen pensioners were Elizabeth's ceremonial guard – and their uniforms takes us out of the fairy world to remind us of the realities of the Elizabethan military machine. And Ireland continues to be evoked in the play when Puck declares that

I'll follow you: I'll lead you about a round!
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through briar.

(III.i.101-2)

Bogs were arguably the most notorious feature of the Irish landscape; Puck's self-proclaimed association with them here thus strongly hints at an Irish subtext for the play, while the injunction in the fairies' song that snakes should be banished (II.ii.9-10) also seems to point in the same direction. Indeed the wood can be seen as the Other of Athens in much the same way as the dystopic Ireland lay threateningly just offshore from the

self-proclaimed orderliness of England. Not for nothing, I think, does the play direct our gaze so insistently westwards in its references to ‘a fair vestal throned by the west’ (II.i.158) and ‘a little western flower’ (II.i.166): one might indeed say that ‘This green plot shall be our stage’ (III.i.3).

In particular there are a number of elements of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* which may owe something to one of the most famous accounts of sixteenth-century Ireland, Edmund Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. Shakespeare certainly seems to have read this at some stage, since the reference in *Hamlet* to the Irish habit of swearing on swords is so close to Spenser’s observation that ‘So doe the Irish at this day, when they goe to any battayle, say certayne prayers or charmes to ther swordes, making a crosse therewith upon the earth’⁴⁵, while Edmund’s dismissal of astrology in *King Lear* might seem to echo the assertion in *View* that ‘it is the manner of men, that when they are fallen into any absurdity, or theyre actions succeede not as they would, they are ready alwayes to impute the blame therof unto the heavens, so as to excuse their own folly and imperfections’ (*View* Part I, p. 2). (One might also note the similarity between Caliban’s resolve at the end of *The Tempest* to ‘be wise hereafter / And seek for grace’⁴⁶ and Irenius’ declaration that after a defeat the Irish ‘creepe a little perhaps, and sewe for grace’ (*View* Part I, p. 8).

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, there is a clear parallel between the lawlessness of the wood and the Ireland described by Irenius in *View*:

ther are many wide countries in Ireland, in which the lawes of England were never established, nor any acknowledgement of subjection made: and also even in those which are subdued and seme to acknowledg subjection, yet the same Brehon law is privily practised amongst them selves, by reason that dwelling as they do, whole nations and septs of the Irish together, without any Englishman amongst them, they may do what they list, and compound or altogether conceale amongst them selves ther owne crimes, of which no notice can be had by them which would and might amend the same, by the rule of the lawes of England.

(*View Part I*, p. 4)

Ireland is a country at odds with the ‘more sharpe restraints’ (*View Part I*, p. 15) of English law just as the wood is with ‘the sharp Athenian law’ (*MND* I.i.162). Notably, too, Spenser describes the unruliness of the Irish in specifically equine terms when he has Irenius say,

so were this people at first well handled, and wisely brought to acknowledg allegiance to the King of England: but being straight left unto them selves, and ther owne inordinate life and manners, they eftsones forgot what before they were taught, and so sone as they were out of sight by them selves, shooke of their bridles, and began to colt anew, more licentiously than before.

(*View Part I*, p. 5)

In this context, one might perhaps want to look in a new light at both the ass’s head which Puck inflicts on Bottom and also Puck’s self description as one who makes Oberon smile ‘When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile, / Neighing in likeness of a filly foal’ (*MND* II.i.44-46). In this context, the glorious English queen, empress of all she surveys,

might well begin to look like Semiramis indeed, with the image of power she seeks to project besmirched and tainted by the intrusion of equine passions.

In contrast to the supposed freedoms of Ireland and the wood, Spenser's English believe in a strict form of patriarchy, just as Shakespeare's Athenians do: Eudoxus asks

doth not the act of the parent, in any lawfull grant or conveyance, bind his heires
forever therunto? Sith then the ancestors of thes that now live yeilded them selves
their subjects and liege men, shall it not ty their children to the same subjection?

(View Part I, p. 5)

Along similar lines, Theseus declares that Egeus should be as a god to his daughter (I.i.47). Spenser himself explicitly uses the difference between the Athenians and their Others to figure that between the English and the Irish when he has Irenius say,

he that would transfer the lawes of the Lacedemonians to the people of Athens
should find a great absurdity and inconvenience: for those lawes of Lacedemon
were devised by Licurgus, as most proper and best agreeing with that people,
whom he knew to be inclined altogether to warrs, and therefore wholly trayned
them up even from ther cradles in armes and military exercises, clean contrary to
the institution of Solon, who, in his lawes to the Athenians labored by all means
to temper ther warlike courages with swete delights of learning and sciences, so
that as much as the one excelled in arms, the other exceded in knowledg: the like
regard and moderation ought to be had in tempering and managing of this
stubburn nation of the Irish, to bring them from their delight of licious
barbarisme unto the love of goodnesse and civillity.

(Part I, p. 8)

Since Oxford was often compared with Athens – the Swiss visitor Paul Hentzner, for instance, calls Oxford ‘the famed Athens of England’⁴⁷ – it might be of particular interest that Annabel Patterson suggests relating *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* ‘to the abortive Oxfordshire rising of November 1596’,⁴⁸ and that the play seems to allude to Oxfordshire in that the fairy queen motif had also appeared in the Ditchley entertainment of 1592 (usually attributed to Richard Eedes, a figure in whom Shakespeare is likely to have taken an interest, since he was commended by Meres in *Palladis Tamia* and since his now lost Latin play *Caesar Interfectus* was on the same theme as *Julius Caesar* and is sometimes suggested as a source for it).⁴⁹ Such parallels suggestively invite us to read Shakespeare’s Athens in openly English terms.

While Athens is clearly identified with the civic, Spenser specifically associates Ireland with wood-lore when he has Irenius speak of a time when

England was very like to Irland, as nowe it standes: for it was, I tould you,
annoyed greatly with robbers and outlawes, which trobled the whole realme,
every corner havinge in it a Robyn Hoode, that kept all woodes, and spoiled all
passengers and inhabitants, as Irland nowe haith.

(View Part III, p. 21)

(In *Dream*, the Robin Hood legends seem to be directly glanced at in the exchange between Quince and Bottom, ‘At the Duke’s oak we meet. / Enough: hold, or cut bow-strings’ [I.ii.103-4]). It is therefore not surprising that the experiences of the Athenians in the woods come so close to what Spenser says of the experiences of the English in

Ireland: certainly Demetrius and Lysander, chasing each other in vain, come close to Irenius' declaration that the Irishman

is a flying enimye, hidyng himself in woodes and bogges, from whence he will not draw forth, but into some straight passage or perilous forde where he knowes the armye most needes passe; there will he lye in wait, and, if hee finde advantage owte that still flyeth, and folow him that cann hardlye be found, were vaine and bootlesse.

(Part II, p. 23)

One could too compare what Irenius says about the degeneration of the English in Ireland (Part II, p. 20) with the worsening behaviour of the Athenians in the wood, and the possible 'doubling' of Oberon and Theseus. Spenser's *Shepheards Calendar* certainly contributed to the imaginary of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*;⁵⁰ perhaps *A View of the Present State of Ireland* did too.

There also seem to be traces in the play of some recollections of another Irish-influenced Spenserian text, Book Five of *The Faerie Queene*. There, Radigund is an Amazon queen, and the fight between her and Britomart might parallel that between Hermia and Helena, while that between her and Artegall is similar to that between Theseus and Hippolyta. There is also much reference to the moon, which is both a general symbol of Elizabeth and one used with particular emphasis in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is evoked in the description of Radigund's shield:

And on her shoulder hung her shield, bedeckt

Vppon the bosse with stones, that shined wide,

As the faire Moone in her most full aspect,
That to the Moone it mote be like in each respect.⁵¹
And it recurs again when Artegall unlaces Radigund's helmet and sees her face,
Which in the rudenesse of that euill plight,
Bewrayd the signes of feature excellent:
Like as the Moone in foggie winters night,
Doth seeme to be her selfe, though darkned be her light.

(V.v.12)

Additionally, the priests of Isis 'wore rich Mitres shaped like the Moone' (V.vii.3); Talus watches Britomart 'Like to a Spaniell wayting carefully' (V.vi.26), while Helena calls herself Demetrius' spaniel (II.i.203); and if one concurs with A. C. Hamilton in construing the crocodile of Britomart's dream as a serpent lover (V.vii.16), it might well seem close to the suggestively phallic-seeming serpent of Hermia's dream. The two texts also share the same pun: Demetrius complains that he is 'wood within this wood' (II.i.192), while the Pagan in *The Faerie Queene* raves

like to a Lyon wood,
Which being wounded of the huntsmans hand
Can not come neare him in the couert wood

(V.iii.35)

Moreover, *The Faerie Queene* contains a reference to a character whose fate, Louis Montrose has persuasively argued,⁵² is proleptically glanced at in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hippolytus:

Like as the cursed sonne of *Theseus*,

That following his chace in dewy morne,
To fly his stepdames loues outrageous,
Of his owne steedes was all to peeces torne,
And his faire limbs left in the woods forlorne;
That for his sake *Diana* did lament,
And all the wooddy Nymphes did wayle and mourne.
So was this Souldan rapt and all to rent,
That of his shape appear'd no little moniment.

(V.viii.43)

Another suggestive parallel comes between Shakespeare's reference to how 'earthlier happy is the rose distill'd / Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn...' (I.i.76-7) and Spenser's

Like as a tender Rose in open plaine,
That with vntimely drought nigh withered was,
And hung the head, soone as few drops of raine
Thereon distill, and deaw her daintie face,
Gins to looke vp, and with fresh wonted grace
Dispreds the glorie of her leaues gay.

(V.xii.13)

Here, too, the words 'distill' and 'withered' occur in close collocation. Finally, both texts draw to a close with a scene of hunting, with the noise of Theseus' dogs echoing that of the Blatant beast, and with a return to fairyland. Shakespeare, it seems, is recalling both Spenser and Ireland on multiple levels in the creation of his wood.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, then, takes a place which seems full of danger and which is figured as Irish and as inhabited by beings associated with Catholicism, the two greatest fears of the Elizabethan establishment – and it presents that place as entirely benevolent and therapeutic in its effects. Particularly suggestive is the contrast between the stereotypical insult that Ireland was a country where things were ‘soon ripe, soon rotten’ and Lysander’s remark that ‘Things growing are not ripe until their season’ (II.ii.116), which looks almost like a direct rebuttal. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a complex network of ideas associated with the figure of Semiramis is used to critique rather than celebrate the agendas of Elizabeth.

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Notes

¹ See for instance Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995).

² I have found at http://www.assyriansocietycanada.org/legend_of_semiramis.htm the assertion that Queen Margaret of Denmark was compared with Semiramis in the fourteenth century, but I do not know of any confirmation of this.

³ George Sandys, in the argument of the Fourth Book of his *Ovid's Metamorphosis* (1632), ll. 1-2, declares 'Derceta, a Fish. Semiramis a Doue. / Transforming Nais equall Fate doth proue'.

⁴ Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern Peoples* [1555], translated by Peter Fisher and Humphrey Higgens (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1996), 3 vols, vol. 1, p. 3. Magnus opens his account of the north by noting how Democritus 'directed his steps to Babylon, the capital of Assyria, perhaps to gaze on its walls, which had been constructed from brick baked with sulphur and iron at the expense and command of Queen Semiramis'. Magnus also speaks of how 'A temple...famous since the time of Ninus...stood by the River Sala, where today the seat of the primate and archbishop of the Swedes and Götar lies' (p. 156), and in vol. 3 he writes how in her arrangements for her tomb, 'with sophisticated mockery this excellent woman reviled the sin of greed' (p. 819).

⁵ Magnus, *Description of the Northern Peoples*, vol. 2, p. 583.

⁶ Samuel Butler writes in *Hudibras* that

Loss of *Virilit[y's]* averr'd
To be the cause of loss of *Beard*,
That does (like *Embryo* in the womb)
Abortive on the Chin become.
This first a *Woman* did invent,

In envy of *Mans* ornament.

Semiramis of *Babylon*,

Who first of all cut men o'th' *Stone*:

To mar their *Beards*, and laid foundation

Of *Sow-geldering* operation.

(Second Part, Canto 1, ll. 709-18)

⁷ Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 303.

⁸ Thus John Taylor, in 'Bull, Beare, and Horse, Cuts, Curtols, and Longtailes' (*Works not in the volume of 1630* [1870], ll. 21-2, follows a discussion of Pasiphaë with the remark that "'Tis said *Semiramis* (King *Ninus* Mother) / Did love a Bull, which is as true as 'tother', while Laurence Ramsey, in *The practise of the Divell* (1577?), ll. 409-13, writes of how

Many a mynsing Nunne, and many a noble Dame,

In hell is nowe resident, which dines and suppes with me:

As *Semiramis* and *Cleopatra*, which liued in all glorie,

Flora and Lais, gyrles of such report,

That since their time, the proudest may come short.

Semiramis is also coupled with *Lais* in Marlowe's *Elegy 5*, 'On *Corinna* Going to Bed', from *All Ovids Elegies*:

Then came *Corinna* in a long loose gowne,

Her white neck hid with tresses hanging downe.

Resembling fayre *Semiramis* going to bed,

Or *Layis* of a thousand woers sped.

(ll. 9-12)

⁹ Thus George Whetstone, in *An Heptameron of Ciuill Discourses* (1582), writes of how in the course of discussing ‘The Question that arose at Supper vpon the fourth Dayes exercise’,

Aluisa vechio, tooke vpon her, to mayntaine a woman, to be a creature euery way, as excellent and perfecte as Man...For naturall shape (quoth she) they are more beautifull, of a better temperature, and complection then men. In valiaunt exploytes, what difference was there betweene *Semiramis* and her Husbande *Ninus*?

Similarly George Pettie in *A petite Pallace* (1576), writing on *Alexius*, asks ‘what man was euer more couragious then *Semiramis*, who in the habite & apparell of a man gouerned ye *Assirians*, most couragiously?’ (p. [228] 221, sig. Ffijj), and William Warner in *Pan his Syrinx* (1584) describes how

Staurobates at his home comming, found his country inuaded by ye armipotent *Virago Semiramis*, whom (which neuer hapned her else-where) he incountred, wounded, & lastly chased her mighty troupes fro out his Territories. wholly deliuering himself in a short time of ye *Assrians*.

(Pheone. Calamus quartus. Cap. 20, p. 65, sig. 12)

¹⁰ Richard Rainolde, *The Foundation of Rhetoric*, 1563 (Menston: Scolar Press, 1972), folios xiiv – xiiir.

¹¹ Anthony Munday, *Zelavto* (1580), Part 3., p. [129], 125, sig. Qiiij.

¹² Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, edited by A. C. Hamilton (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1997), Book I, Canto V, stanza 50.

¹³ Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine, Part Two*, in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, edited by J.B. Steane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), III.v.35-9.

¹⁴ Lisa Hopkins, *Christopher Marlowe: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 107-16.

¹⁵ William Warner, *Syrinx: or a sevenfold history*, edited by Wallace A. Bacon [1584] (New York: AMS Press, 1950), p. 74.

¹⁶ Ronald B. McKerrow, ed., *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 5 vols, revised by F. P. Wilson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), III, 112.

¹⁷ Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, edited by J. B. Steane. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 428.

¹⁸ For the events at Tilbury, see Ben Spiller's essay in this collection.

¹⁹ Robert Greene, *James the Fourth*, edited by Norman Sanders (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), Additional Chorus VI, 7-13.

²⁰ Lloyd's work has recently been extensively explored by Sally Harper, "'A Dittie to the tune of Welsh Sydannen': a Welsh image of Queen Elizabeth", *Renaissance Studies* 19.2 (April, 2005): 201-228.

²¹ Barnabe Barnes, *The Devil's Charter* [1607], edited by Nick de Somogyi (London: Globe Quartos, 1999), IV.iv.

²² W.S., *The Lamentable Tragedy of Locrine* (London: Thomas Creede, 1595), 2.2. The authorship of *Locrine* is uncertain, but the play in its revised form is generally attributed wholly or partly to Greene (see C. F. Tucker Brooke, *The Shakespeare Apocrypha: Being a collection of fourteen plays which have been ascribed to Shakespeare* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1908), preface, p. xiii; Peter Berek, 'Locrine Revised, *Selimus*, and Early Responses to *Tamburlaine*', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 23 [1980], pp. 33-54, p. 35; Baldwin Maxwell, *Studies in the Shakespearean Apocrypha* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1956), p. 62; and Kay B. Michael, 'The Lamentable Tragedy of *Locrine*: An Edition', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Maryland, 1972, introduction, p. 46.

²³ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus (London: W. W. Norton, 1997), II.i.158. All further quotations will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

²⁴ For comment on the links between *The Faerie Queene* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, see Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 145.

²⁵ There are also references to Semiramis in *Titus Andronicus*, where Aaron the Moor compares his lustful mistress Tamora with Semiramis, and in *The Taming of the Shrew*, where the Lord promises Christopher Sly 'a couch / Softer and sweeter than the lustful bed / On purpose trimmed up for Semiramis' (William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, edited by G. R. Hibbard [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968], Induction 2.36-38).

²⁶ Kipling, *Enter the King*, p. 303.

²⁷ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, edited by Jonathan Bate (London: Routledge, 1995), 2.i.21-2. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

²⁸ Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 60.

²⁹ Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, politics, and the translation of empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 48.

³⁰ Matthew Woodcock, 'The Fairy Queen Figure in Elizabethan Entertainments', in *Elizabeth I: Always Her Own Free Woman*, edited by Carole Levin, Jo Eldridge Carney and Debra Barrett-Graves (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 97-115, pp. 98 and 100.

³¹ Marion A. Taylor, who suggests Alençon as source for Bottom, proposes a link between *Dream* and *The Faerie Queene* on the grounds that 'Alençon appears at least two times in *The Faerie Queene* and is symbolized as two disreputable villains, Braggadochio and the witch's son' (Marion A. Taylor, *Bottom, Thou Art Translated. Political Allegory in A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1973), pp. 31 and 73.

³² Richard Wilson, 'A World Elsewhere: Shakespeare's Sense of an Exit', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 117 (2002), pp. 165-99, pp. 182-3.

³³ See Alison Shell, *Orality and the Old Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

³⁴ Pamela Allen Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 161.

³⁵ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Rev. Montague Summers (John Rodker, 1930; repr. New York: Dover, 1972), p. 87.

³⁶ Regina Buccola, 'Virgin Fairies and Imperial Whores: The Unstable Ground of Religious Iconography in Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*', forthcoming in *Marianl Moments in Early Modern Drama*, edited by Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006).

³⁷ Shell, *Orality and the Old Religion*.

³⁸ Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 81.

³⁹ Regina M. Buccola, 'Shakespeare's Fairy Dance with Religio-Political Controversy in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*', in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*, edited by Dennis Taylor (Fordham University Press, 2003), pp. 195-219, p. 163.

⁴⁰ Writing of *Macbeth*, Richard Wilson says of *The Whore of Babylon* that 'Dekker's text reads like an X-ray of Shakespeare's intentions' (*Secret Shakespeare: Studies in theatre, religion and resistance* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004], p. 193).

⁴¹ On the connections between *Dream* and *The Whore of Babylon*, see also Taylor, *Bottom, Thou Art Translated*, p. 153.

⁴² Thomas Dekker, *The Whore of Babylon*, edited by Marianne Gateson Riely (London: Garland, 1980), Prologue, l. 19. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

⁴³ See for instance K. M. Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 44.

⁴⁴ Thomas Herron, 'Irish Den of Thieves: Souterrains (and a Crannog?) in Books V and VI of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*', *Spenser Studies* 14 (2000), pp. 303-317, p. 303.

⁴⁵ Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. Online: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/veue1.html>, Part I, p. 35. All further references to the text will be taken from this edition and will be given in the text.

⁴⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, edited by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 5.1.295-6.

⁴⁷ See for instance Paul Hentzner, *Travels in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth*. Online: <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/h/hentzner-travels/>, p. 30. Online: accessed 28.4.04.

⁴⁸ Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 55.

⁴⁹ On the relationship between the two plays, see Ernest Schanzer, 'A Neglected Source of "Julius Caesar"', *Notes and Queries* (May, 1954), pp. 196-7, and William Poole, 'Julius Caesar and Caesars Revenge Again', *Notes and Queries* 49.2 (June 2002), pp. 226-228; also of interest is René Weis, 'Caesar's Revenge: A Neglected Elizabethan Source of *Antony and Cleopatra*', *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (1983), pp. 178-86.

⁵⁰ The Arden 2 editor points out the many debts of Titania's speech about the weather (II.i.85-102) to *The Shepheards Calendar*, which might indeed seem to be directly glanced at in the call for 'A calendar, a calendar!' (III.i.49). See William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, edited by Harold Brooks (London: Methuen, 1979).

⁵¹ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, edited by A. C. Hamilton (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), 5, 5, 3. All further quotations from the poem will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

⁵² Louis Montrose, 'A *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form', *Representations* 2 (1983), pp. 65-87,

reprinted in *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama*, edited by Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 109-130, pp. 120-1.