Shakespeare’s habits of the 1590s than with those of any other playwright, including Monday.

An additional detail: in Timberlake’s table, the ‘later draft’ of More, IV.v.68 ff. is given a strict count of 2.0 per cent within 50 lines. This is Addition I in Hand A, identified by Tannenbaum and Greg as Henry Chettle’s.16 The Oxford Shakespeare dates the additions to More 1603–4. It is surprising that Chettle, whose collaborative authorship of the original manuscript of the play (Hand S or M) is accepted by the editors of the Oxford Shakespeare, should have reverted in 1603–4 to a paucity of feminine endings characteristic of 1590 or before (2 per cent), – and in marked contrast to the habits of the earlier original and the later additions by others (14–27 per cent). Timberlake noted that no scene of the original manuscript with 50 lines or more has, by strict count, fewer than 14.5 percent feminine endings.

Neither this fact nor the anomalous high proportion of feminine endings in Sir Thomas More has earned a place in the critical literature of the play to date.

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16 ‘Hand A is Henry Chettle’s, . . .’, Gabrieli and Melchiori, 21.

GOLDING AND THE MYTH UNDERLYING HERMIA’S DREAM

In A Midsummer Night’s Dream when on the first night in the woods after they have run away from Athens, Lysander tries to ‘lie with’ Hermia, he is firmly but politely repulsed. But the girl must have been deeply disturbed by the incident for it gives rise to the dream from which she wakes in fear, calling out to the lover who has already deserted her:

Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!
Ay me, for pity. What a dream was here?
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.
Methought a serpent ate my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.

(2.i.151–6; italics mine)1

Hermia’s dream has been discussed by critics and editors2 but there has been no remark of the debt it contains to Arthur Golding’s translation of a key moment from Ovid’s myth of Juno and Ino.

In Book 4 of the Metamorphoses when Juno descends to the underworld to enlist the aid of the furies in punishing Ino, it is Tisiphone who answers her call and ascends to the world above to confront the unfortunate woman who is found in her palace with her husband Athamas. At the appearance of the fury ‘splayth forth hir filthie armes beknit with Snakes about’, the royal couple would have fled but ‘there stooede the Fiend, and stopt their passage out’ (4.605); and then Tisiphone,

from amyd hir haire twoo snakes with venymed hand she drew
Of which she one at Athamas and one at Ino threw.
The snakes did craule about their breasts, inspiring in their heart

Most grievous motion of the minde: the bodie had no smart
Of any wound: it was the minde that felt the cruel stings.

(4.611–15; italics mine)3

The power and drama of Golding’s translation of this episode impressed Shakespeare: he used it in Othello’s ‘Arise black vengeance from thy hollow cell’;4 and here he takes from it the nightmarish image of snakes ‘crawling’5 over a


Inde duos mediis abruptiss crinis angues
Pestiferaque manu raptos inimis at illi
Inosque sinus, Athamanteoque pererrant
Inspirantique graves animos, nec vulnera membris
Ulla ferunt. mens est quae diros sentiat ictus.

(iv.495–9)

(Reference is to a standard sixteenth-century text of the Metamorphoses containing the notes of Regius, Micyllus, and Petrus Lavinius, Metamorphoseon Publìi Ovidii Nasonis (Venice, 1545))


5 Golding’s translation of Ovid’s verb describing the snakes’ movement, pererrant (497), as ‘did craule’ is distinctive but slightly inaccurate. According to the standard Latin-English dictionary of the day, Thomas Cooper’s Thesaurus, the verb meant ‘to wander over and over’; George Sandys more accurately conveys the snakes’ movement with ‘[they] up and down about their bosoms roule’. (Reference is to

1 Reference is to A Midsummer Night’s Dream, ed. Peter Holland (Oxford University Press, 1995).
person’s ‘breast’ doing no actual physical harm but leaving them in intense mental anguish.

Primarily, of course, Hermia’s dream expresses a virginal young girl’s natural fear and dread of a man entering her body, feelings exacerbated by Lysander’s having tried to do so against her will and before marriage. But by recalling the myth Shakespeare is also able to implicitly emphasize and deepen the dream’s significance as a rite of passage. The reason Juno takes action against Ino is that she is furious that here is a mortal woman who had been so blessed by fortune that she ‘has known nothing of grief’ (expers . . . doloris erat iv.418–19). The snake that crawls about Ino’s breast thus signals her entry to a world of woe; and by implication, the ‘crawling’ serpent on Hermia, while it clearly has phallic connotations, in addition signals the girl’s own entry into the realm of grief and suffering. To this point Hermia has been a child knowing only comfort and happiness in the security of her father’s house, but the serpent crawling over her breast symbolizes both a threat to her virginal innocence and also her imminent transition to the flawed, imperfect world of experience. The implication is that as a woman, the girl will be confronted not only by sexuality but also by suffering, pain, grief, and all the other ills and trials flesh and humanity are heir to.

Finally, the sense of a loss of innocence and of an entry into a harsher world gives Hermia’s dream one further dimension. The medieval tradition of seeing Biblical truths in the myths of the Metamorphoses was still in evidence in the Elizabethan Age. The standard sixteenth-century text of the poem, for example, besides containing the heavily philological notes of Regius and Micyllus, also contained in Book One the notes of Petrus Lavinius emphasizing the resemblance of Ovid’s story of the Creation and the Flood to events in Genesis. And

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8 It is significant that what had been a ‘snake’ in Golding becomes a ‘serpent’ in Shakespeare, a word which as the opening chapters of The Geneva Bible confirm had established Biblical connotations for the Elizabethans. (Reference is to The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 edition (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969)).

HAVE WITH YOU TO ATHENS’ WOOD

BECAUSE it is well-known that Shakespeare incorporated elements from Nashe’s Have with You to Saffron-Walden (1596) in the texture of Romeo and Juliet, we are not surprised to find other elements from the same pamphlet in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, a play composed probably just after the romantic tragedy and certainly at roughly the same time. What is a bit surprising is the large number of such elements, rivalling the contributions to the comedy made by that earlier work of Nashe’s to A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Terrors of the Night (1594). Most but not all of the Saffron-Walden material is involved with Bottom and his adventures. Certainly, many of the proper

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