

Unification with Renaissance & Reformation in England  
Focusing on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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I. Overview

Reformation is the central ideal in Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies, but Shakespeare was not a priest or pastor. Nor was he a religious playwright. Religion provides Shakespeare with fundamental language of Elizabethan Compromise to reconcile the conflict between Catholic and Protestant Church. The treatment of this subject has used the available critical and scholarly discourses to make sense of supporting Tudor Dynasty with Reformation to unify the divisions of kingdom in England. Reformation made Luther's translation of the Bible into German enhance the central importance of Christ, looking for Solar Scriptura.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a psychological and social reality that reflects as a form, rather than a kind of Catechism dialogue that registers as his belief to coincide with Elizabethan Compromise. He might be cautious to create his characters and their dialogue, minding the Catholics. It is clear that Shakespeare must be aware of the inescapability of religion in his England to reconcile their communities in England and Scotland. Protestant reformers to be interested in the social dimension of both confession and communion to absorb in the Catholic believers. Shakespeare's sacramental language and its dramatic uses, specifically of the playwright's transformation of the inherited languages of forgiveness to reconcile the communities within the territory of England. Shakespeare would show the various classes and cultures in the community of England suggests how to communicate and reconcile the mood in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

It consists of dialectal harmonization between paganism and Christianity. Reformation would have the intellectual basis of the Renaissance which was its own invented version of, derived from the concept of Roman and the rediscovery of classical Greek philosophy. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Fairy-Mythology, from Greece, whereas, the fairies speak the human language from Roman Humanitas. The fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which have the feature of Paganism might indicate the disordered world of a midsummer night in contrast of Christmas Eve. It describes the chaos as the supernatural world, not Holy Spiritual. It consists of Renaissance and Reformation with a double vision of its exorcism and Christian elements. It shows two parts: the positive religious program to the Protestant readers who supporting Reformation, the other hand, the positive humanistic program to the practical readers who being absent God, making use of Renaissance. It tells us how to harmonize two great histories in the occidental world and how to establish the Protestant Church in Tudor Dynasty. It is sure that Shakespeare is one of historical playwrights in the readers' minds to keep the historical Shakespeare which is studying why Tudor Dynasty would concentrate on his relevance to our own time and his greatest mystery of his literature. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on giving a clear view of the unification pushing through Renaissance and Reformation in England with Shakespeare's creative writing in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

## **II. Paganism in Renaissance and Christianity in Reformation: A Midsummer Night vs A Christmas Eve in *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

In *Northorpe Frye on Shakespeare* edited by Robert Sandlered, the Christian calendar finally established the celebration of the birth of Christ at the winter solstice and made a summer solstice date (June 24) the feast day of John the Baptist. This arrangement, according to the Fathers symbolized John's remark in the Gospels on beholding Christ: "He must increase, but I must decrease." Christmas eve was a beneficent time, when evil spirits had no power. The paganism and supernatural in a midsummer night was entangled and related to the story of the Bible, ironically. Early modern society was patriarchal, indeed patriarch was the most social attitudes of the

period, dictating that fathers should rule. We have considered differently Oberon's mind depending on the view points and focused on it to the little boy with the equivocal perspective: Puck's shoe and Titania's. Puck feels Oberon jealous in the supernatural world like Zeus from Greek Mythology. Titania would feel much more maternal toward the little boy rather than rebuking Oberon's jealousy to him. (II, i,143-146)

Titania should get away from Oberon's control going into the refugee to protect from the child : 'The War of the Children Light Against children of Darkness,' which is similar to the accident according to Jewish history.

Their document, known to us 'The war of the Children Light Against children of Darkness,' was not just vaguely apocalyptic but constituted a detailed training guide to a battle they believed imminent. Their camp was defensive in layout and provided with a watchtower, and indeed it seems to have been attacked and destroyed by the Romans when the 'end of days' came in 66-70. A.D.. In Shakespeare's imagination, the Roman Empire was the Roman Catholic which controlled oppressively the England. When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. (Matthew 2:16). The Conversation with Titania and Oberon has caused the effect of illocutionary force consisting of rhetoric discourse from Biblical allegory.

*Obe.* Do you amend it then: it lies in you. Why should Titania cross her Oberon?  
I do not but beg a little changeling boy. To be henchman.

*Titania.* Set your heart at rest: The fairy land buys not the child of me. His mother was a votress of my order; And in the spiced Indian air, by night, Full often hath she gossip'd by my side; And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands, Making th'embarked traders on the flood: When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive/ And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind; . . . But she, being mortal, of that boy did die; And for her sake do I rear up her boy; And for her sake I will not part with him.

*Obe.* How long within this wood intend you stay? . . .

*Obe.* Gve me that boy, and I will go with thee.

*Titnia*. Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!

In the inorganic world of a midsummer night, the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* should produce quarreling among themselves. The fairies' appearance makes the Renaissance: Greek and Roman Mythology be clear and the dialogues between Titania and Oberon leads the readers to be excited and to be amazed in chaotic world. The general moral ideology of audience would be Christian in origin. In addition to, they say that the differences in doctrine between Catholics and Protestants, don't get into the plays to avoid the conflict between the religious parts. Shakespeare would make use of Renaissance: some speeches with the background of the Continental Europe for Roman Catholic believer's mind, some conversations with the Protestant part of Shakespeare's audience.

Shakespeare seems to have been popular and well liked both as a person and as a dramatist. He never engaged in personal feuds, as many of his contemporaries did, and his instinct for keeping out of trouble was ver agile. He had to contend with a vigilant and by no means stupid censorship, and references to contemporary politics, or anything that looked like such references, would probably be pounced on before the play reached the stage. We have some of a censor's comments on what seems to us an utterly harmless play, Sir Thomas More, which exists in a manuscript of several different hands, one of which is said by hand-writing experts to be Shakespeare's. The censor regards it al most as a revolutionary manifesto, and insists on drastic and extensive changes " and not otherwise at your peril." (Sandler, p.9)

In accordance with Elizabethan Compromise, Shakespeare thought for the models for the Italian-Renaissance and put into practicing creative writing including drama, motivated in Greek or Latin Literature. Tudor and Stuart Dynasty would try to reconcile, largely, two parts of conflicts: Scotland and England.

Fortunately, the two reigning sovereigns, Elizabeth and James, seem to have been fairly liberal-minded in such matters, and English drama was never strait-jacketed in the way that French drama was in Louis XIV's time. (*Ibid*, p. 11)

Shakespeare could not help being conscious of Roman Catholic Country, Scotland and France. They say that we call Elizabethan literature Tudor Literature which began as a provincial development of an Italian-Renaissance as a Continental literature. It would imitate the European-continental literature, Greek, French style. However, the playwrights created cultural etic from cultural emic. The another Cultural Variants of Renaissance recreates and reproduces British own style Renaissance. For example, Puck is Oberon's jester and lieutenant and also Robin Goodfellow in England. The fairies of Scotland are similar to those of England. Robin Goodfellow in England is Brownie in Scotland.

We can see the differences and the similarities between Puck and Robin Goodfellow. There is the feature of Brownie as follows:

The Scottish Brownie formed a class of beings distinct in habit and disposition from the freakish and mischievous Elves. (Scottish folk Tales, The Scottish Brownie, p. 291)

As we can tell Robin Goodfellow from Brownie, Shakespeare didn't appear two fairies, but Puck who doesn't represent Scottish fairy, nor English fairy.

Puck, in medieval English folklore, a malicious fairy or demon. In Old and Middle English the word meant simply "demon." In Elizabethan lore he was a mischievous, brownielike fairy also called Robin Goodfellow, or Hobgoblin. As one of the leading characters in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Puck boasts of his pranks of changing shapes, misleading travelers at night, spoiling milk, frightening young girls, and tripping venerable old dames. The Irish pooka, or púca, and the Welsh pwcca are similar household spirits. Puck, in medieval English folklore, a malicious fairy or demon. In Old and Middle English the word meant simply "demon." In Elizabethan lore he was a mischievous, brownielike fairy also called Robin Goodfellow, or Hobgoblin. As one of the leading characters in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, (English folklore, Pp., 1~2)<sup>1)</sup>

Puck is the hybrid space in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Puck is not faithful servant of Oberon.

Puck's mischievous, quick-witted sprite sets many of the play's events in

motion with his magic, by means of both elaborate pranks on the human characters (transformed Bottom's head into that of an ass) and unfortunate mistakes (smearing the love potion on Lysander's eyelids instead of Demetrius's)<sup>2)</sup>

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* has the general appearance of a play designed for a special festive occasion like Carnavalesque, picturesque and grotesque in a midsummer night. If the readers keep more closely to a Medieval period being filled with Age of Darkness, they absorb in the incredible or mysterious, such as fairies or magical trick in contrast of Christmas Eve. It is clear for us to explain that the midsummer night is a kind of a chaotic, disordered and carnivalesque world.

### **III. Renaissance Humanism and Reformation: A Midsummer Night's Dream in *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

We have no idea of dream coming true in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the reality. In Tudor Dynasty or Shakespeare's day, they say that an upper-class audience is enjoying the favour romance and fantastic play because the idealizing element in such romance confirms its own image of itself and the upper-class would like to come true the course of true love which ran toughly .

And whatever an upper-class audience likes is probably going to be what a middle-class audience will like too. If this play was adapted to, or commissioned for, a special court performance, it would be the kind of thing. Theseus is looking for at the very beginning of the play, when he tells his master of revels, Philostrate, to draw up a list of possible entertainments. (Sandler, p.36).

However, it is Hermia who would subvert her father, Egeus and go out of control of Duke of Athens although Philostrate is good at preparing the revels. All of upper and middle class audience could not but focus on Hermia's rebellious court.

Shakespeare introduces Hermia to us as the disobedient daughter of Egeus. She's supposed to marry Demetrius, but she's fallen in love with Lysander. Hermia could be mistaken for being young and foolish in love, but actually the whole thing is put in perspective by the fact that her father wants her killed (a standard punishment under Athenian law for disobeying one's father, apparently). She's been brought before Duke Theseus because of her father's complaint, and under these circumstances, she's pretty bold to stand up for herself. Hermia doesn't want to marry Demetrius because she's true

to her love. Her boldness is a little reminiscent of that favorite Shakespeare heroine, Rosalind in *As You Like It*. Like Rosalind, Hermia is no fool, and though she realizes that men break promises, she's willing to take a chance and run off with Lysander anyway. (<https://www.shmoop.com/midsummer-nights-dream/hermia.html>)

Hermia's free will is related to Renaissance Humanism which was a return to texts depending on individual critical judgement from authority of Roman Catholic to the power of each national monarchy.

As an intellectual and academic movement, humanism became closely associated with the Protestant Reformation, which placed great emphasis on the dissemination of Scripture in vernacular languages, and with the development of the printing press, which was the technological advance that rapidly spread the effects of humanism and reformation thought throughout Europe. (p.23.)

Hermia's intellectual decision is a revolutionary and a distinguishable action those days. Shakespeare described the heroine, Hermia as the cutting edge with creating a character of avant-garde in accordance with Renaissance and Reformation. It shows us that Shakespeare depicted the rapid transmission of humanist with Reformation idea. [Act 1, Scen1, 60-85]

Although Bottom seems to be foolish, in fact he makes brilliant and insightful points. He is an important character for the link between the humans and the fairies suffering from Puck's moving in and out of both worlds) with his reason and love keeping on the carnivalesque space (Act 3, Scence. 1, 145-146.)

Shakespeare created Bottom who is the most ridiculous of the Mechanicals and is on an ambiguous boundaries of social hierarchy. It is only character that can travel and lead to the supernatural world and the human society on the stage. Bottom's conversion is also key to the play's theme of transformation, a concept Shakespeared borrowed from Ovid's (<https://www.shmoop.com>)

When we hear a line like "The course of true love never did run smooth" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, familiar to many people who don't know the play, we can see that the same tradition is still going strong. And later on, when we hear Bottom mangling references to Paul's epistles, we may feel that we're going around in a circle. (p.35)

Bottom's role is like Paul's epistles because he suffered from ordeal with Puck's mischevous. However, Bottom is a waver and is good at weaving the net between disorder and order like Gospels in New Testament.

In human society, Arden woods, according to J.R. Brown, loves order may be a principal branch of its central theme, there are by his account two other's 'social disorder'. in a midsummer night. Hermia and Bottom have the key of the locked door and are solving the entangled and mingled problem. I

#### IV. Conclusion

Titania, Oberon and Puck don't live in the real world, however Hermia's speeches tell us the significant messages in a midsummer night with her visionary fancy. A midsummer night is opposed to Christmas Eve. It was just dream. They dreamed a dream. They might expect to come true and expecting Christmas Eve in Shakespeare's imagination. They are harmonized in cultural variants through human's speech. Love and Wedding between Hermia and Lysander and around them are appearing and assembling various pieces from carnival sounds on the stage .

Therefore, Shakespeare pictures which Elizabethan Compromise harmonized the Renaissance Humanism from Greek and Rome. There is Titania against Oberon's illegal power in Shakespeare's romantic play. They are heroines to solve the problems to resist and reconcile the Roman Catholic in England. Each role of them represents the validity of Reformation derived from Individualism Renaissance respecting God's rule and Jesus Christ's epiphany. The Shakespeare's romances begin with the ancient liberties, freedom of speech from mid-sixteenth century, together, woman, including the women's speech. Ancient liberties would harmonize Protestantism which respects individualism and free-will from Herod in Matthew (2:16). In ancestor's situation in his comedies, their past days were hopeless, their descendants might face the dreadful prospect of an eternity of separation from God. Titania resists Oberon who commits a guilty, rejecting God's ruler from the Biblical analogy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* countering the evil's spirits' midnight party into the summer. Turning to the Bible in literary, Shakespeare's own style is dramatic whereas the bible is non-dramatic context. He would make the people community of the society in England with the Biblical allusion to harmonize or reconcile the polarized culture or class. It reveals the richness and importance of Shakespeare's biblical allusion in his imaginative writing. The power of the Bible made the England unify those days.



*Solar Scriptura* is the common feature of England and Catholic Kingdom, Scotland. There were various cultures: the Greek Mythology, paganisms, the Fairy-mythology of modern Europe. It seems that Shakespeare's drama has the characteristic of a hybridized religion with elements of the paganisms, however, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, there was a chaotic world. It is a just vain dream. In the new faiths, Christianity, Christmas eve is really starting cosmos and universal order. Shakespeare's readers assumed that they should find out the final reconciliations. In Tudor Dynasty, there were many disruption of religious problem, Shakespeare would make use of Reformation and Renaissance, creating the various characters. It shows us that the various characters should try to harmonized and unify the conflicts and divisions in England.

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황인경 교수의 발표문은 윌리엄 셰익스피어(William Shakespeare)의 낭만희극『한여름 밤의 꿈(A Midsummer Night's Dream)』을 분석하면서, 작가가 종교개혁 이후 변화와 개혁의 소용돌이 가운데에서 요동하던 영국 사회의 신교와 구교 간의 갈등을 해결하는 방식을 소위 “엘리자베스 시대의 타협(Elizabethan Compromise)”이라는 키워드를 동원하여 설명하고 있다. 그리고 그러한 타협의 실례로 신교와 구교, 기독교와 이교도, 그리고 고전주의적 요소와 르네상스의 인문주의적 요소 등 혼용을 들고 있다.

실제로 이 작품은 종교개혁 이후 영국사회를 지배했던 개혁과 변화의 열망과 그에 따른 갈등을 당시의 국가와 종교, 극장, 또는 개인적인 맥락 속에서 다층적으로 그리고 복합적으로 전개하면서 축제의 웃음과 해학 속에서 실감나게 구현하고 있다고 평가되고 있다. 즉 젊은 연인들의 낭만적 사랑의 주제를 극중극이나, 요청으로 대변되는 판타지적 요소 등에 버무린 한 편의 흥미로운 연극작품으로서의『한여름 밤의 꿈』은 그 이면에 이 극이 처음 공연되었던 당시의 역사적 정황, 즉 종교개혁 이후(Post-Reformation Period)에 영국인들이 경험하던 삶과 존재의 양상을 다양한 방식으로 전개하고 있다.

셰익스피어가 구교와 신교 또는 고전과 르네상스, 그리고 기독교와 이교주의의 공존이라고 하는 역사적/사회문화적 현상들을 “엘리자베스 시대의 타협”이라는 문체적 특징을 통해 엮어내면서 영국 내의 문화적 통일을 도모했다고 주장하는 황 교수의 논지는 매우 흥미롭고 의미심장한 연구의 가능성을 보여주고 있다.

그럼에도 불구하고 황 교수의 발표문은 본인의 의도와는 다르게 여러 가지 측면에서 재고의 여지를 드러내어 주고 있으며, 향후 좀 더 구체적인 논거를 바탕으로 재구성해야 할 필요성이 있는 것으로 사료된다. 발표문에 대한 이해의 범위 내에서 몇 가지 우문(愚問)을 드러본다.

1. 제목과 본문에서 밝힌 “Reformation”이 단순한 “개혁”인지 아니면 “종교개혁(The Reformation)”인지?
2. 셰익스피어가 구교와 신교의 화해를 위해 종교라는 담론을 사용할 만큼 종교적이었는지?
3. 위의 질문과 관련하여, 작품에 사용된 다양한 성경적, 신화적, 우화적 요소들을 “영국의 종교적, 문화적 통일”이 아닌 작가의 상호텍스트적 영향의 표현으로 해석할 수는 없는지?
4. 성탄절이 동시에, 세례요한의 축일이 하지에 설정된 것은 본 발표의 논지와 어떤 관련이 있는지?