Early modern intertextuality: post structuralism, narrative systems and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Abstract

Central to both early modern critical study and the theory of intertextuality are concepts such as the plurality of discourse, the mutually informing relationship between cultural ideologies and texts, and the instability of texts. Following revised critical approaches, this essay argues that there is potential in the direct application and exploration of the theory of intertextuality in early modern literature, particularly in the sense of engagement with and the extensive refiguring of elements from available narrative systems including classical mythology, folklore, and contemporary continental writing through allegory, allusion and translation. Critical consideration of reading, creative imitation, and interpretative variety are central to both fields. This essay argues that these central aspects of early modern creative writing constitute a valid application of intertextual theory, which can be used to generate detailed and multilayered critical readings. It outlines an understanding of intertextuality, demonstrates how the theory is illustrated both in the period and in inherited classical textual theory, and offers a brief applied case study, reading Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595) as an overtly intertextual text.

Early modern intertextuality: post structuralism, narrative systems and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In criticism of early modern British texts concepts such as the plurality of discourse, the mutually informing relationship between cultural ideologies and texts, the pervasive use of classical models and mythology, and the instability of texts, are taken as established. These concepts are anticipated by the originally semiotic theory of intertextuality, though such theorists of intertextuality rarely, if at all, consider early modern texts as their examples. As concepts of intertextuality have developed, more relatively recent work has emerged with a less structuralist and 'theorised' understanding of intertextuality, as an almost catch-all term for source, influence, or referent. In this essay I want to introduce and explore the importance of intertextuality in the early modern period, particularly in the context of engagement with classical literature and the extensive refiguring of elements from available narrative systems including mythology, folklore, and contemporary continental writing, and go beyond a 'soft' interpretation of intertextuality as source-hunting. I suggest that the theory of intertextuality can be applied to early modern literature in a variety of specific ways that surpass the identification of classical reference: in the exploration of mythology as a system of meaning; in the allegorical works of 'explication'; in the manipulation and imitation of narrative models and forms; and in satire and parody. The essay argues that these central aspects of early modern creative writing constitute a valid application of intertextual theory as understood in part as that developed through structuralism and poststructuralism, and an intertextual approach can provide both an analytical method and illuminating readings. It will outline an understanding of intertextuality, note how the theory is illustrated in classical textual theory inherited in the early modern period, and offer an applied case study reading specific elements of a selected early modern text, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595).

Initially, though, we should consider how an intertextual approach can be claimed to be especially relevant in contemporary literary studies. Peter Barry recently identified the contemporary critical position as 'beyond' theory, strongly arguing for a refocus on the literary text that also moves beyond historic approaches of close reading. This "textual reading", which "is distinct from both close reading and theorised reading, but [...] draws elements from both" (Barry 999), posits intertextuality as a central component, one of the interrelated "five poles" of textual reading (1000). Indeed, two other poles, "co-textuality" and "multitextuality" could also arguably be aspects of intertextuality in that they are concerned with authorial intertexts.

Barry's focus on context as part of textual reading, which places "the text in contact with its relevant documentary and cultural materials, and reads across them all" (1005), complies with David Scott Kastan's review of contemporary early modern studies that also looks beyond 'theory' to refocus on historical context, progressing from its deployment by critics of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, both of which Kastan charges with being overly influenced by their theoretical position at the expense of historical rigour (12-13). Though Kastan does not consider intertextuality specifically, his emphasis on the 'text', with its structuralist roots, situates intertextuality as an integral part of a contextually-informed reading:

> "Text" [...] replaced the common sense words, "book" or "work," with the structuralist term that exploited its etymology from the Latin for "web" or "woven" to suggest its existence, in Barthes's phrase, as a "triumphant plural," always complexly implicated in the multiple linguistic and discursive contexts that it intersects and is intersected by. [...] Theory's suggestive claim, however, cannot be demonstrated *at the level of theory*. Only historically does the claim become compelling and reveal the way in which the very idea of a text's integrity and autonomy depends upon an impossible idealization of the processes of composition and publication [...] evidence that historical scholarship can at least partially recover and restore to view. (25)

As such, Kastan is, to an extent, reclaiming the concept of the plurality of text from poststructuralist theory. Similarly, though Barry is careful to demarcate his 'finite' understanding of intertextuality from Julia Kristeva's conception as an infinite network of signification as, "A definition so broad places the phenomenon almost beyond human ken – no conceivable reading technique could cope with an intertextuality thus defined" (1002), he also asserts that intertextuality "throws light upon a whole co-textual cluster of texts" (1003), and, assuming these texts have their own intertexts, the infinite, or at least expansive and open-ended, nature of intertextual theory is thereby acknowledged and implicitly verified.[1] Both Barry and Kastan, whilst distancing themselves from theory, also acknowledge the necessity of considering it as part of a contextually and historically informed reading, and as such, I suggest that the roots of intertextuality in semiotic theory are a vital starting point in the deployment of it as a tool for reading early modern texts.

Initially, Kristeva and Roland Barthes, following Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of subversive dialogic novels, did not restrict the theory to written texts, but used it "to designate the way in which a culture is structured as a complex network of codes with heterogeneous and dispersed forms of textual realisation" (Frow 47). Kristeva found in Bakhtin a "dynamic dimension to structuralism" in the concept of a literary word as an "*intersection of textual surface* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning)" (Moi 36). Kristeva later states that:

> every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an inter-textuality) [...] its 'place' of enunciation and its denoted 'object' are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered (Kristeva 60).

The concept of intertextuality as simply referring to influence and source overlooks its derivation from semiotics and the semiotic theory of the circulation of signs in culture. As in the previous citation, Kristeva later uses the term "transposition" again to articulate this concept:

> The term *inter-textuality* denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of 'study of sources,' we prefer the term *transposition* because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic – of enunciative and denotative positionality. (Kristeva 59-60).

In Kristeva's conception, intertextuality is not citation but the recognition of a sign, or set of signs, from one culture (or literary text) in another text. The subject, or written work, "is composed of discourses, is a signifying system, a text, understood in a dynamic sense" (Worton & Still 16). This is crucial in our understanding that 'text' does not necessarily mean a written work of literature. As Graham Allen summarises:

> Works of literature, after all, are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature. The systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general are also crucial to the meaning of a work of literature [...] Reading thus becomes a *process of moving between texts*. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a *network of textual relations*. The text becomes the intertext (Allen 1. My emphasis).

Barthes continues the conception of text as a methodological field, which "fissures the sign" and holds no intrinsic "truth" (Young 31). In addition, he stresses that the sign refers to the system, rather than to 'reality'. Barthes also introduced the importance of the reader in intertextuality, which culminated in his assertion of 'The Death of the Author' (1968):

> a text is made up of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader […] a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination (118).

Kastan demonstrates how this seemingly purely theoretical poststructuralist concept can be reclaimed by his contextual focus, by stating that

> The notorious phrase becomes intelligible rather than merely provocative in the recovery of the actual discourses that circulate around and through the text as well as the historically specific conditions of its writing and circulation, both of which must inevitably compromise and disperse any simple notion of authorial intention (25).

Such a reading complies with an assertion of the value of using intertextuality to read early modern texts.

Theories that can, in retrospect, be reclaimed as intertextuality can be found wherever there is discourse about text. Plato identified the theory of imitation, in that the poet always copies an earlier act of creation from reality or from other literary representations, the interdependence of this in all arts, the "passionate" poet and reader, and the notion of texts as subliminal purveyors of ideology.[2] In addition, Bakhtin finds in the multiple discourses of the Socratic dialogues heteroglossia and dialogism, the very concepts that Kristeva defines and elaborates as intertextuality. Aristotle's theory of imitation differs from Plato's in that he sees literary creativity as based in imitation of existing styles, repetitions of known stories and advocates the use of models and conventions in tragic and comic writing. Horace, some three hundred years later, also refers to conventional theories of style, familiar story lines, and beliefs about dialects spoken by certain "types" and advises following models of characters.[3] Like Horace and Aristotle, Quintilian, in his *Institutio Oratoria* of the first century AD, advises overt intertextuality in the imitation of established writers, and recommends appropriating only the admirable qualities from many models. Like Cicero of the previous century, while discussing the earlier stages of humanist scholarship, Quintilian emphasises that stylistic imitation is not only a means of creating one's own discourse but is a consciously intertextual practice which relies heavily on reading. He advocates paraphrase rather than direct translation, and writes, "its duty […] is to rival and vie with the original in the expression of the same thoughts"

(Quintilian X.v.5, 115).[4] Here we can see the roots of the Renaissance humanist education that practised multiple translation (i.e. from Latin to English, then from the English translation back into Latin in order to assess accuracy) and creative imitation of prime models of rhetoric, tropes or poetic passages. In turn these serve as the roots for the tradition of imitation; by 1603 Samuel Daniel refers to what he terms "emulation" as "the strongest pulse that beats in high minds" (Sig. H3r).

It is also evident that sixteenth-century European literature is important in the history of intertextuality as writers actively engaged dynamically with the textual past. As Jonathan Bate writes,

> both the practice of humanist imitation and Renaissance hermeneutics more generally draw strength from a belief in the readability of the world: myths, classical texts, nature itself are books in which moral truths may be read (11).

Early modern writers read classical texts in a plurality of forms: original Latin, direct translation, collections of mythic fables, mythological encyclopaedias, histories. The contemporary understanding of allegory offers some tantalising phrasing here as the decoding of moral truths to be read in texts. Sir Francis Bacon, in his *De Sapientia Veterum* ('The Wisdom of the Ancients') (1609), states that his aim is to remove the "veil of fiction" and reveal "the thing *signified*" (Sig. a6r), the "Authors intent and meaning […] purposely shadowed" (Sig. a7r). The displacement of meaning in allegorical writing (a typical earlier approach to interpreting classical mythology) is likened here to the deferment of meaning in structuralism. The inheritance of signs from another culture, with meaning deferred; something standing in for something else (as in metaphorical constructs) is essentially intertextual in the structuralist understanding.

However, the possibility of tracing concepts of intertextual theory to classical literary theorists rather suggests that intertextuality reproduces theories long in existence, and thereby that it is not doing anything particularly original or meaningful. I suggest that though certain humanist conceptualisations regarding creative writing can be traced to such classical literary theory, writing in the early modern period expands upon the rather bloodless identifications and recommendations of Quintilian etc. regarding imitation and source, and, indeed, progresses beyond allegorical 'readings'. Early modern creative writers both were demonstrably concerned with the figurative and expansive potentiality of writing and their texts reveal the cultural circulation of recurring intertextual elements. As the aforementioned proposed focus on both classical mythology and domestic folkloric narratives implies, and as recent critics have stressed, the lack of demarcation between 'high' and 'low' culture in the period conveys the potential for a rich combination of narrative systems which goes beyond techniques of imitation and models.[5] As Adam Fox identifies, arguing against the common separation of oral and literate culture,

> England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries [...] was a society in which the three media of speech, script, and print infused and interacted with each other in a myriad ways. [...] There was no necessary antithesis between oral and literate forms of communication and preservation; the one did not have to destroy or undermine the other. If anything, the written word tended to augment the spoken, reinventing it and making it anew, propagating its contents, heightening its exposure, and ensuring its continued vitality, albeit sometimes in different forms. (5)

This assertion of interplay between and circulation of the subject matter of oral and literate texts is essentially considering the practice of intertextuality manifest in early modern writers' combining of narratives from various traditions or systems, as considered below regarding *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White suggest, new combinations

in a semiotic system create the potential to shift "*the very terms of the system itself*, by erasing and interrogating the relationships which constitute it." (58)

Additionally, Stephen Greenblatt's seminal focus on the circulation of social 'energy' and the concept of a cultural subconscious can be read as an articulation of intertextuality which stresses that "there is very little pure invention in culture" (13) and refers to "textual traces" (7), using the language of intertextual theory to describe how "the protective isolation of those texts gives way to a sense of their interaction with other texts and hence of the permeability of their boundaries" (95). This understanding attempts to offer "insight into the half-hidden cultural transactions through which great works of art are empowered" (4) and sees the early modern theatre especially as exemplifying the product of collective or social endeavour: "This is particularly clear with Shakespeare, who does not conceal his indebtedness to literary sources, but it is also true for less obviously collaborative authors, all of whom depend upon collective genres, narrative patterns, and linguistic conventions" (Greenblatt 5). This slightly intangible theory can be grounded through Greenblatt's acknowledgment of the importance of historical context, thus providing a link to Kastan's emphasis on historical rigour, "these refigurations [...] are signs of the inescapability of a historical process, a structured negotiation and exchange, already evident in the initial moments of empowerment" (Greenblatt 6): both stress the intertextual nature of early modern creative writing.

I have mentioned some of the more pervasive and expansive intertextual practices of early modern writing, but also evident are more concrete examples of intertextual practice, in allegory, satire, and parody, all forms evidently popular across all genres in the period. Following the suggestions by both Barry and Kastan regarding the importance of historical context and the awareness of earlier theoretical concepts, this approach to intertextual theory should perhaps be described as a specifically 'materialist' intertextuality in order to locate the textual interplay and pervasive resonance in contemporary culture, rather than in, for example,

the psychoanalytic response of Bloom's 'anxiety of influence' and of Kristeva's semiotic theory. However, the concept of social 'energy' and a cultural subconscious also offers a metaphor for the repeatedly resurfacing intertexts located in early modern writing; the challenge is unpicking these in a way which provides meaningful analysis of a given text.

Case study: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a particularly intertextual example of early modern creative writing and its classical, mythological and native folkloric intertexts have been explored by critics, though usually not using that specific term.[6] Here we find a combination of Neoplatonic philosophy (via Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*); Ovidian metamorphosis, character, and narrative; English folklore, in certain fairies (for example, Robin Goodfellow / Puck) and in echoes of the traditional cultural practices of Maying and Midsummer celebration; Biblical paraphrasing; Medieval French Romance (*Huon of Bordeaux*); theological practices (Greenblatt points out the 'consecration' of the marriage beds, 11); and metatheatrical deployment of parodic imitation in the Mechanicals' comic tragedy of 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. Such conflation of 'high' and 'low' culture, as described by Fox in imagining early modern authors consciously or subconsciously revisiting the folktales of their youth (Reginald Scot in particular recalls being reared on 'old wives tales' of Robin Goodfellow and others, and freely conflates domestic and classical figures, 194),[7] offers a wealth of possibility in intertextual analysis. This moves away from the mere identification of the aforementioned intertexts as 'sources', rather analysing the interplay and ramifications of their deployment in the text and as manifested in performance.

A straightforward exercise in applying intertextual theory to an early modern text is in focusing, initially, on character names. A single word suggests a single referent, but actually

offers an "*intersection of textual surface*" (Moi 36) and Shakespeare's 'fairies' are accurately described as "intertextual composites", in source, function and name (Belsey 96). For example, Titania's name is a feminised version of the classical Titans, taken from the *Metamorphoses* where it is used patronymically to indicate the genealogy of various goddesses as descendants of the Titans.[8] Initially, one superficial effect of this intertextual choice (where the sign refers to an alternative 'system') is that it suggests a greater power than a folkloric fairy queen, and therefore Titania's ultimate humiliation is all the more for that.[9] Simultaneously, Mary Ellen Lamb argues that this blurring of 'high' (classical) and 'low' (popular) culture "suggests an equivalence in their social value" and raises the domestic fairies to the status of aristocrats, a move evidenced in their "courtly manners even in domestic quarrels" (307), though this does somewhat ignore the fairy characters' continued subversive ambivalence, a trait realised in both English fairies and the classical gods. Furthermore, Ovid's most frequent use of the name is to Diana, or to her celestial incarnation as the moon, and this link is emphasised by frequent textual allusion in the play to the moon and the deployment of lunar imagery. This leads to a consideration of the representation of Diana as the 'triple goddess' (of the heavens, earth, and hell) and thereby to both Titania's divine heritage and universal significance, as well perhaps to facets of domestic witch lore and her capriciousness. This composite draws together common (subconscious?) cultural anxieties regarding the supposed danger of the supernatural, or at least the unsettling apparent indifference to human suffering, as well as entrenched gender stereotypes.

Accordingly, Shakespeare's choice of Theseus also refers beyond the text of the play to alternative narrative systems. As well as his multiple defeats of the Amazons, as described in Plutarch, Theseus's classical past includes the rape and abandonment of various female characters, for example Ariadne, Perigouna, and the Amazon Antiope, and this mythical history complies with the thematic undercurrent of male control pervasive throughout the play. Such

associations again go beyond the single point of reference of a name. As identified by M.E. Lamb, "The manner of Theseus's desertion of Ariadne is recalled by Lysander's desertion of Hermia" (482). The subjugation of Hippolyta, as representative of the race of martial women, in marriage recalls this phallocentric dominance implied by 'Theseus': as he says to her, he "won thy love doing thee injuries" (1.1.16-17), and the phallic sword and feminised 'wound' is a repeated motif throughout.[10] As A.B. Taylor points out,

> Shakespeare's marriage play [...] ironically opens in the wake of a full-scale war between the sexes in which women, the legendary Amazons, have been beaten by the men of the Athenian army [...] forced to submit to the 'natural' order (49).

David Ormerod elaborates the context:

> For an Elizabethan audience, Theseus was a figure with specific overtones and associations. Plutarch describes him as the founder of Athens [...] His gravity and dignity and, above all, his rationality, thus receive great stress. Similarly, he is an image of a correct sexual hierarchy with reference to his conquest of Hippolyta and his assertion of the dominance of the male principle in amorous relationships (40).

In terms of a cultural subconscious, then, the signifier of 'Theseus' conveys a pervasive reactionary phallocentric dominance and anxiety concerning challenges to this.

'Theseus', however, conveys a further mythological intertext in his mythic defeat of the Minotaur, the episode which leads to the relationship with and abandonment of Ariadne. Critics read this intertext as being comically recast and 'mistranslated' in Bottom's ass's head.[11] Read allegorically, the Minotaur conveyed "a compressed image of love's passion reduced to bestiality" (Ormerod, 40) or the monstrous product of bestial-like lust, and this, along with the animal imagery throughout a play concerned, amongst other things, with the rationality and irrationality of love and lust, supports and strengthens this reading with classical and allegorical intertexts. Similarly, as both Ormerod and Lamb argue, the wood in which the lovers lose themselves so easily is comparable to the mythical labyrinth, itself read

contemporarily as representing moral confusion, or the difficulty of extricating oneself from an immoral lifestyle.[12] The repression of bestial lust, or other immoral pleasures, is also implied via the conflation of intertexts here.

Theseus also killed the Cretan bull, establishing a heroic connection of the name to monstrous bovines. As we have the bull replaced by the ass, arguably there is an aim here to recast and re-enact the heroic with the comic. The ass has long been a symbol of foolishness and boorishness; in classical tradition Silenus rides an ass and in European popular culture asses are proverbially gullible; both in contrast to the ancient sacred status of bulls. As Lamb writes, "The substitution of Bottom for a minotaur represents the transmutation of the elements of tragedy into comedy" (486). We have here a move from one signifying system to another: from the conventions of tragedy to those of comedy. Bottom's name also conveys, as well as his profession, his lowly status, which is crucial in his role as the consort of the fairy queen / goddess, as recounted in various folktales concerning the abduction of mortal men. The unification of the divine and "mortal grossness" (3.1.142) in the ambiguous pairing of Bottom and Titania is an intertextual joke, the typical Ovidian depiction of male deity disguised as an animal both inverted and domesticated; the Neoplatonic communion of divine and mortal mocked in Titania's blindness and Bottom's monstrosity. This latter narrative system also refers to the intertext in the most concrete sense, in the novel *The Golden Asse*, the story of a man transformed into an ass until his spiritual understanding develops sufficiently to be returned to human form.

Indeed, the knowing intertextual substitution of Bottom for the Minotaur offers further multilayered readings of the text. Bottom's potentially sexual encounter with Titania recalls, via intertextual stepping stones, the Roman matron of Apuleius' text who wants to copulate with the ass (much to his horror), and the mythical union of Pasiphae and the bull which results

in the creation of the Minotaur. Furthermore, as pointed out by A.D. Nuttall, Apuleius explicitly draws a comparison between these two events:

> Here Adlington [the 1566 translator of *The Golden Asse*] says, simply 'as Pasiphae had with a Bull', eliding the note of comic incongruity, essential to the Shakespearian version, which is present in the Latin, *instar asinariae Pasiphaae* 'like some *asinine* Pasiphae' (56).

The incongruity here is emphasised by Shakespeare, as Bottom seems largely oblivious to Titania's desires or desirability. Bottom's emergence unscathed from his potentially scandalous experience leads us back to the labyrinthine metaphor introduced by Theseus's presence and the temporary monster. It is established that 'Bottom' refers to a skein of thread, but it is this

> household item that played a crucial role in delivering Theseus from the labyrinth. In fact, Caxton's translation of the *Aeneid* uses the exact phrase "a botom of threde" in the description of Theseus's adventure with the Minotaur. (Lamb 480)

This leads Lamb to conclude that Bottom is "both the monster of this labyrinth and the thread leading the way out of it" (481). Bottom's explication of his 'dream' encourages this reading of his enlightened return from the forest. In the Neoplatonic *Golden Asse*, the ass is finally returned to human shape by Isis, to whom asses were sacred, because of his enlightened state. The Christian tradition of the ass as a symbol of humility complies here: allegorically, humility and enlightenment leads the way out of the sinful labyrinth and away from the bestial monsters within.

In the most evident sense then, the play is a dynamic composite, "built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature" (Allen 1), and such intertextual narrative models include the narrative of Pyramus and Thisbe, also from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (4. 55-168). The parodic 'Pyramus and Thisbe' performed by the 'Mechanicals', as well as the intertextual references to Ovid and, perhaps, *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), works by also referring to the contemporary understanding of drama, and 'playing'.[13]

The title of the play-within-the-play, "*The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*" (1.2.9-10) mocks the dated paradoxical and extended titles of older and contemporary tragic-comic plays (plays which Sir Philip Sidney terms "mungrell Tragy-Comedie" [37]), such as Thomas Preston's *Cambyses: A Lamentable Tragedy Mixed Full of Pleasant Mirth* (c. 1570). Parody works only if the 'reader' is aware of the intertext; in this case the preceding dramatic tradition. Similarly, Bottom's bombastic approach to acting, as well as his query, "What is Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?" (1.2.17) is comic because it refers to an intertextual knowledge of performance, as well as to a simplified, epithetical or stereotypical approach to stock characters.

Furthermore, this metatheatrical representation, both in its planning and performance, focuses upon the suspension of disbelief crucial in theatrical entertainment. The issue of representation and symbolism is negated, as the dual audience are informed in both preface and in the action that the wall is indeed, a wall: "This man with lime and roughcast doth present / Wall" (5.1.120-31) and that Starveling represents "Moonshine": "This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn, / Presenteth Moonshine." (5.1.134-35); "All that I have to say is to tell you that the lantern is the moon, I the man i'th' moon, this thorn bush my thorn bush, and this dog my dog." (5.1.247-49). Here the separate elements are literal: the man is a man, the dog is a dog, the thorn bush is just that, but the composite is representational, it stands in for something else. The representation of the wall becomes a proper noun, 'Wall', in distancing it from a non-dramatic, non-representative, literal wall. Therefore, the concept of things standing in for, or signifying, something else is highlighted here in an anxiety over representation and verisimilitude. Here, the actors "seem to believe that the translation from one medium to another might be only *too* successful, with the consequence that they feel obliged to dismantle the very illusion they are intent upon fabricating" (Lucking, 140). The word 'Wall' signifies the presence of an alternative signifying system; an intertext (that is, the Mechanicals' version

of ‘Pyramus and Thisbe’; a dramatic representation of reality), in a scene which relies for its comedy on a further intertextual awareness of acting tradition and dramatic representation. We can potentially draw parallels here with the previous mention of allegory, in the symbolic (or supposed symbolic) standing in for an alternative meaning.

In both these cases, however, the representational aspect is negated by the characters drawing attention to its very status *as* representational. The players are also anxious that their representation of a lion should not be taken as reality, therefore Bottom advises:

> Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion’s neck, and he himself must speak through, saying thus [...] [‘]If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such thing. I am a man, as other men are’ – and there, indeed, let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner. (3.1.32-40)

Bottom comically destroys the implicit barrier between drama and reality again in addressing the audience whilst in character, “No, in truth, sir, [...] ‘Deceiving me’ is Thisbe’s cue. She is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you” (5.1.181-84). This conceptual gap between reality and imagination is a thematic concern of the whole play, as demonstrated by Theseus’s dismissal of imagination (“I never may believe / These antique fables, nor these fairy toys”, 5.1.2-3), Bottom’s enlightened deployment of Corinthians I in relation to dreams, and Puck’s Epilogue concerning, as does much of the play, ‘shadows’, dreams, magic, and imagination.

Parodic imitation is itself intertextual: the parody here only works because an audience would have a fore-knowledge of some aspect of the intertexts: the narrative of Pyramus and Thisbe (or if not specifically, then of narratives of doomed lovers), of tragi-comedy, and of the mythology that is referenced through malapropism throughout. Similarly, we could posit the pairing of Titania and Bottom as a parody of the rapacious god and female mortal, which relies on knowledge of the original trope in order to be considered parodic. David Lucking explores a further layer here, of translation, and suggests that Shakespeare parodies Arthur Golding’s

seminal 1567 translation of *Metamorphoses*, knowing that "to translate is to metamorphose", especially when the translator is also moralising (i.e. via allegory) (148). This exploitation of the variety of early modern definitions of 'translate' offers some interesting cross comparison with several aspects previously discussed, for example the movement between signifying systems in allegory and Bottom's famous 'translation' in metamorphosis ("Thou are translated", 3.1.105), both of which comprise a movement between alternative signifying systems. In addition, Kristeva's preference for the term "transposition", "because it specifies [...] the passage from one signifying system to another" (60), is invoked here, highlighting such movement as explicitly intertextual.

In conclusion, intertextuality is demonstrably more than textual allusion. A text does not function as a closed system, and early modern writers are likewise committed to an open discourse; they believed in the readability of the world and the textual and cultural past is presented implicitly and explicitly in a generally discursive structure and the deployment of cultural codes. This is demonstrated in a multitude of ways, in humanist creative imitation, in the cultural circulation of figures, tropes, and genres from various narrative systems (for example, mythological referents, classical forms and genres, domestic folklore) as well as in generic convention and culturally-bound production of parody, satire and allegory. Evidently crucial in all these aspects is the importance of writers being readers; reading, interpreting, imitating and emulating, and nowhere is this evidenced more clearly than in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where intertexts establish significance reaching far beyond the surface of the text, harnessing, potentially, what Greenblatt calls cultural subconscious or social energy. I argue that the preceding analysis has provided a framework that highlights the *importance* of the comparative narrative systems in the construction and meaning of the play. I suggest that, returning to Barry's concept of 'textual reading', that the combination of contextual awareness

and the theoretical framework of a 'materialist' intertextuality constitute a valid and fertile approach to reading early modern texts.

Works Cited

Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Apuleius. *The Golden Asse*. Trans. William Adlington. London, 1566.

Aristotle. *On the Art of Poetry* in *Classical Literary Criticism*. Trans. and ed. T. S. Dorsch. London: Penguin, 1965. 29-75.

Bacon, Sir Francis. *De Sapientia Veterum*. London: 1609. Trans. Arthur Gorges as *The Wisedome of the Ancients*. London: 1619.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Barry, Peter. 'Re-thinking Textuality in Literary Studies Today.' *Literature Compass* 7 (2010). 999-1008.

Barthes, Roland. 'The Death of the Author.' (1968) *Literary Theory: A Reader*. Ed. P. Rice & P. Waugh. London: Arnold, 1981. 114-118.

--- . 'Theory of the Text: Text, Discourse, Ideology.' (1973) *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*. Ed. Robert Young. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981. 31-47.

Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespeare and Ovid*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Belsey, Catherine. *Why Shakespeare?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Daniel, Samuel. *A Defence of Rhyme*. *A panegyrike congratulatorie delivered to the Kings most excellent Maiestie at Burleigh Harrington in Rutlandshire*. London, 1603.

Fox, Adam. *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Frow, John. 'Intertextuality and ontology.' *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*. Ed. Michael Worton & Judith Still. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990. 45-55.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Horace. *On the Art of Poetry*. *Classical Literary Criticism*. 79-95.

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

Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. (1974). Trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

Lamb, M.E. '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur.' *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 2 (1979). 478-91.

Lamb, Mary Ellen. 'Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practises and the Production of Popular Culture in A Midsummer Night's Dream.' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51.3 (2000). 277-312.

Lucking, David. 'Translation and Metamorphosis in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.' *Essays in Criticism* 61 (2011). 137-54.

Moi, Toril. 'Introduction.' *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Moi. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986. 34-61.

Nuttall, A.D. '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Comedy as *Apotrope* of Myth.' *Shakespeare Survey* 53 (2000). 49-59.

Ormerod, David. '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: The Monster in the Labyrinth.' *Shakespeare Studies* 11 (1978). 39-52.

Plato. *The Republic*. Ed. and Trans. Desmond Lee. London: Penguin, 1987.

Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria, Vol. IV*. Trans. H. E. Butler. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1922. X.ii.

Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. *The Norton Shakespeare*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997. 805-63.

Sidney, Sir Philip. *An Apology for Poetry*. London: 1595.

Stallybrass, Peter & White, Allon. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Taylor, A.B. 'Ovid's myths and the unsmooth course of love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.' *Shakespeare and the Classics*. Ed. Charles Martindale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 49-65.

Worton, Michael & Still, Judith. 'Introduction.' *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*. Ed. Worton & Still. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990. 1-44.

[1] In addition, Barry also raises the potential of hypertexts as illustrative of 'textual reading', suggesting that Kristevan intertextuality is the "metaphorical", or theoretical, articulation of hypertextuality (1007). The creation of hypertexts as digital models to illustrate intertextuality is an intriguing concept and a future point perhaps where digital texts and intertextual theory can combine. Kastan also mentions hypertexts, 59-60.

[2] See Part III 'Education: The First Stage' for concepts of literature as a transmitter of ideology, and Part X 'Theory of Art' for theories of imitation and representation.

[3] "If in your play you happen to be representing the illustrious Achilles, let him be energetic, passionate, ruthless, and implacable; let him say that laws are not meant for him, and think that everything must yield to the force of arms. See to it that Medea is fierce and indomitable, Ino tearful, Ixion faithless, Io a wanderer, and Orestes sorrowful" (Horace, 83).

[4] See X.v.5-7 for discussion of paraphrase.

[5] See also, for example, Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing the Popular', *People's History and Socialist Theory* ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1981); Peter Stallybrass & Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Tim Harris, 'The Problem of Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century London' *History of European Ideas* 10 (1989) 43-58; Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practises and the Production of Popular Culture in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51.3 (2000) 277-312.

[6] See, for example, Sister M. Generosa, 'Apuleius and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Analogue or Source, Which?' *Studies in Philology* 42 (1945), 198-204; K. M. Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck: An Examination of Fairy Beliefs among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Successors* (London: Routledge, 1959); Walter F. Staton, 'Ovidian Elements in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*' *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 26 (1963), 165-178; James A.S. McPeek, 'The Psyche Myth and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 23 (1972), 69-79; David Ormerod, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: The Monster in the Labyrinth' *Shakespeare Studies* 11 (1978) 39-52; M. E. Lamb, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur' *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 2 (1979) 478-91; Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Peter Holland, 'Theseus' Shadows in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*' *Shakespeare Survey* 47 (1994), 139-51; Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practises and the Production of Popular Culture in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51.3 (2000) 277-312; A.D. Nuttall, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Comedy as *Apotrope* of Myth' *Shakespeare Survey* 53 (2000) 49-59; A.B. Taylor, 'Ovid's myths and the unsmooth course of love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*' in *Shakespeare and the Classics* ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge: C.U.P, 2004), pp. 49-65; Sarah Carter, 'From the ridiculous to the sublime: Ovidian and Neoplatonic registers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *EMLS* 12.1 (2006); Steven J. Doloff, 'Bottom's Greek Audience: 1 Corinthians 1.21-25 and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*' *The Explicator* 65 (2007) 200-201; David Lucking, 'Translation and Metamorphosis in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*' *Essays in Criticism* 61 (2011) 137-54.

[7] See also Catherine Belsey, *Why Shakespeare?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): "The fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* derive characteristics from Spenser and Lyly, from medieval narrative and Chaucer. And in their construction, the sophisticated Latin poetry of Ovid meets vernacular fireside tales to compose a fairy land [...] In 1594 Thomas Nashe affirmed the figures of pagan mythology were no more than English spirits under Greek names [...] the classical satyrs, pans, fauns, tritons, centaurs and nymphs mingle apparently at random with native figures from the oral tradition. In the popular chapbook, Richard Johnson's fairy queen assists at the birth of Tom Thumb, accompanied by 'her attendants, the elves and dryads'" (95).

[8] See *Metamorphoses* 1. 395-6; 3. 173; 6. 346-7; 7. 207-8; 14. 14-15, 382.

[9] Similarly, Puck's actions throughout the text figure him as a version of Cupid, as well as his clear native folkloric referents.

[10] An excellent reading of this is Taylor, 'Ovid's myths and the unsmooth course of love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'.

[11] See Ormerod, Lamb, Holland, and Nuttall.

[12] Ormerod cites, amongst myriad examples, *Metamorphoses* translator George Sandys, "In 1632 George Sandys, as one might expect, doggedly underwrites the moral significance of Minos' labyrinth as we encounter it in the emblem writers: 'Nor possible to get out of that intricate / Labyrinth of Vice, without the counsel and wisdom of *Dedalus*'..." (41-2). See Lamb also, 479.

[13] George Pettie overtly aligns the narratives of Pyramus and Thisbe and Romeo and Juliet in *A Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure Contayning Many Pretie Hystories* (1576), 100. See also Janice Valls-Russell, 'Erotic Perspectives: When Pyramus and Thisbe Meet Hero and Leander in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare's Erotic Mythology and Ovidian Renaissance Culture* ed. Agnès Lafont (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013) 76-90.