

An early quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*

William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. London: Thomas Pavier, 1619. 7 1/16 inches x 5 1/4 inches (179 mm x 133 mm), [64] pages, A–H4.

[ornament] | A | Midsommer nights | dreame. | As it hath beene sundry times pub-
| *likely acted, by the Right Honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants.* |
Written by William Shakespeare. | [device] | *Printed by Iames Roberts, 1600*
[1619].

Shakespeare's quartos, so named because of their format (a single sheet folded twice, creating four leaves or eight pages), are the first printed representations of his plays and, as none of the plays survives in manuscript, of great importance to Shakespeare scholarship. Only twenty-one of Shakespeare's plays were published in quarto before the closure of the theaters and outbreak of civil war in 1642. These quartos were printed from either Shakespeare's "foul papers" (a draft with notations and changes that was given in sections to actors for their respective roles); from "fair copies" created from foul papers that presented the entire action of the play; from promptbooks, essentially fair copies annotated and expanded by the author and acting company to clarify stage directions, sound effects, etc.; or from a previously published quarto edition. The quartos were inexpensive to produce and were published for various reasons, including to secure the acting company's rights to the material and to bring in money during the plague years in London when the theaters were closed.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is set in Athens on the eve of the marriage between Theseus, duke of Athens, and Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. Theseus has declared that Hermia must marry Demetrius, the choice of her father Egeus, despite Hermia's love of Lysander. Hermia and Lysander defy the edict and run

off into the forest together. Demetrius and Hermia's friend Helena, who loves Demetrius, follow the fleeing lovers. Oberon and Titania, king and queen of the fairies, are in the midst of a marital dispute, and Oberon, seeking to punish her, sprinkles a love potion in Titania's eyes while she sleeps that will cause her to fall in love with the first person she sees upon waking. When Oberon hears of Helena's unrequited love for Demetrius, he instructs his servant Puck to give Demetrius the love potion and be sure Helena is the first person he sees; Puck accidentally gives it to Lysander, who falls for Helena. Afterward, the mischievous Puck puts a spell on Bottom, who is rehearsing a play for the wedding celebration of Theseus, that gives him the head of a donkey. Titania is awakened by Bottom's singing and seeing him, falls in love. Oberon learns of Puck's mistake and orders him use the potion to make Demetrius love Helena. In her distraction, Titania relinquishes control of her page to Oberon, eliminating the source of their quarrel. Oberon puts the four lovers to sleep and administers the antidote to Lysander. He then gives Titania the antidote and they reconcile. Theseus and Hippolyta come upon the sleeping lovers who awake from what they think an odd dream, their allegiances now sorted out. They all return to Athens for the wedding festivities.

This second quarto of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, now at the National Library of Scotland, is bound in green straight-grained morocco with elaborate gold-tooled ornamentation on the front and back covers and the spine; the gold-tooled red morocco doublures are blind embossed. In gold in the second spine compartment: "A | MIDSOMMER | NIGHTS | DREAM" and at the foot of the spine, "SHAKESPEARE | 1600". The initials of Edward Capell, "E. C." are inscribed on the top left corner of the title page. The bookplate of John Patrick Crichton Stuart, the third Marquis of Bute is on the front pastedown; the bookplate for the Bute Collection of English Plays is on the back pastedown.

This quarto of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was formerly owned by Edward Capell (1713–1781), who was appointed in 1737 as deputy-inspector of plays and

was author of a ten-volume edition of Shakespeare. It was then acquired by William Fillingham, an English collector whose books were sold in 1805. The quarto was purchased by John Stuart, the first Marquis of Bute (1744–1814). Stuart added it to the Bute Collection of early English plays that was initially formed by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762) and expanded by her son-in-law John Stuart, third Earl of Bute. The first Marquis of Bute notably acquired 39 Shakespeare quartos. The collection contains 1,266 English plays and includes seventeenth- and eighteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare's plays and examples of the foremost dramatists from Elizabethan, Jacobean, Caroline, and Restoration periods; also included are a number of promptbooks. The Bute Collection is now in the National Library of Scotland, which purchased it from Major Michael Crichton Stuart on April 3, 1956.

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