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Picturing Gender in Film Adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the Twentieth Century

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INTRODUCTION

In *Shakespeare and Feminist Performance*, Sarah Werner uses a scene from the film *Clueless*, which is an adaptation of Jane Austen's novel *Emma*, to illustrate how adaptations are perceived by other generations:

Josh: It's just like Hamlet said: to thine own self, be true.

Cher: Ah, no, Hamlet didn't say that.

Josh: I think that I remember *Hamlet* accurately.

Cher: Well, I remember Mel Gibson accurately, and he didn't say that. That Polonius guy did. (*Clueless*)

Here, Franco Zeffirelli made “[t]hat Polonius guy” say Hamlet’s line in order to match his own adaptation of *Hamlet* (Werner 7). To Cher, it is the Mel Gibson’s *Hamlet*, and not Shakespeare’s. This scene allows us to see how “the extra-academic Shakespeare can trump the academic one because it is cooler” (Burt qtd. in Werner 7). Werner indicates that:

[r]ather than understanding Shakespeare as a figure of universal interest and performance as a revelation of text, this view recognizes that the performance of Shakespeare serves different purposes for different people. [...] This plethora of Shakespeares, Hamlets and Gibsons reveals what classroom videos do not: that the plays are made up of more than words in a text and mean more than the text might attest to. (Werner 8)

Werner, thus, moves away from analyzing solely the urtext and focuses on the surplus of aspects that constitute an adaptation of Shakespeare’s plays. She shows that Shakespeare’s

works are understood differently in the course of time, and that the urtext is not of as much importance as people initially considered it to be.

Shakespeare's works have inspired countless interpretations that often contradict each other, but are still grounded in the urtext. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, has had many different interpretations. I intend to move away from New Criticism, which states that the meaning of a text lies solely "within the text itself" (Werner 17), and focus on those theories that indicate that texts, in whatever form, are historical and can therefore be studied as separate entities from the urtext. As James Bulman states: "Shakespeare's texts are stable and authoritative, [...] meaning is immanent in them, and [...] actors and directors are therefore *interpreters* rather than *makers* of meaning" (Bulman 1).

This paper focuses on gender theory in a series of film adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The plot of this comedy, namely, revolves around gender roles in society and the relationship between men and women. There is much debate on how gender is depicted in the original play, and its film adaptations are also part of the debate. However, does each film interpret the play differently? This paper will investigate the portrayal of gender in film adaptations of Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from 1935 to 1999 to deduce whether this correlates with ideologies that stemmed from gender and feminist movements over time.

Studying gender in film adaptations of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is relevant for a number of reasons: (1) these films are a product of the twentieth century, which means they are linked to the values of the twentieth century¹, and (2) the original plays of Shakespeare were produced in the Early Modern period, and often set in a time before this, which makes their gender values and hierarchies differ from those in the twentieth century.

¹ Works that are produced in the twentieth century are undoubtedly 'linked' to values in the twentieth century, as there was a reason why this particular work was produced at this time and place. This, however, does not mean that the same work actually demonstrates these values, as it could easily contest them as well. There is always a reason why a certain work was released in a certain time and place, and those values are what the work is linked to.

The reasons and outcome of adapting such an outdated play are relevant when studying how gender portrayal in popular media has changed over time. In *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*, Diana Henderson stresses the importance of the questions that are raised when “reiterating centuries-old and often dated political or moral assumptions” (Henderson 2-3). When investigating gender in film adaptations of Shakespeare, the question of why the director chose to adapt the play in such a way and why, sheds light on the values of gender during the period when the adaptation is made. An adaptation is not just a reinterpretation of the original work, but also a product of the time in which it was made.

The first chapter, “Theatrical Adaptations, Film Adaptations and Their Differences”, will draw upon film theory, theatre theory and adaptation theory to indicate what the differences between theatre and films are, and what an adaptation is. Chapter 2 summarizes and analyzes existing gender criticism of the play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by Shakespeare. Chapter 3 analyzes how male and female characters are portrayed in three film adaptations of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, namely those by Michael Hoffman (1999), Peter Hall (1969) and Max Reinhardt (1935) and analyzes these works from a Marxist literary theorist perspective, placing them in the time in which they were made and analyzing the historical, political and social events that transpired at that time to conclude how these adaptations are, in fact, a product of their time. This chapter is divided into three subchapters which explore first of all if there is a shift in the portrayal of Hippolyta and Theseus, secondly if there is a shift in the portrayal of homoeroticism and lastly it explores if there is a shift in the portrayal of bestiality and nature, and how each of these three shifts correlates with gender and feminist movements.

CHAPTER 1

Theatrical Adaptations, Film Adaptations and Their Differences

Translating is an inexact art, carrying responsibilities to respect the author's ends, even as you willfully tamper with the means. (McKellen 15)

Film and theatre, although they are both performance media, differ greatly. When analyzing film adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* it is relevant to look at these differences to see what medium specific qualities affect how gender is portrayed in Michael Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Peter Hall's *Dream* (1968) and Max Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935). Before discussing the difference between film and theatre adaptations, however, it is necessary to establish first what an adaptation exactly is. As Ian McKellen indicates, adaptations are translations: "creative attempts 'to recast and reimagine a work conceived in a different language and for a different culture'" (Jörgens 14). Adaptations exist in all different kinds and forms: for example, an adaptation can be a novel rewritten as another novel, or a story retold in another medium (Hutcheon 2). Film and theatre adaptations are merely an aspect of all the possible adaptations. Directors, scriptwriters and screenplay writers become interpreters of Shakespeare's original play, often leaving out, adding, or rephrasing lines from the original, and dramatizing, nullifying or adding actions in order to make the adaptation fit to portray their interpretation of the original text. For example, as Peter Pears demonstrated in his version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "paring down the plot can have a coherent and powerful dramatic effect" (Hutcheon 45).

Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier introduce the interesting issue that the term adaptation is, in fact, wrong because "there is no right name" for the concept (Fischlin 2). The

term adaptation is merely another label “with more or less currency, connection to history and connotations [that are] both helpful and misleading” (2-3). Fischlin and Fortier argue that, even though there is no correct name for the concept, the connotations that accompany the term “adaptation” are what makes it the best term so far: its link to natural adaptation “implies that adaptations are better than originals”, but its link to Latin implies “recontextualization” (3). Either way, Fischlin and Fortier argue that the word adaptation stands for a “process” rather than a work with a beginning and an end, implying that “as ongoing objects of adaptation all Shakespeare’s plays remain in process” (3). Adaptations have been called “alterations”, “imitations”, “abridgement[s]”, and “spinoffs” (3), but Fischlin and Fortier argue that none of these terms grasp the concept as well as “adaptation”.

Linda Hutcheon agrees and argues that an adaptation is an “extensive transposition of a particular work or works” (Hutcheon 7), although at the same time it is a process of creation which involves “both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation” (8). Although this varies with the intention of the adaptor, “this has been called both appropriation and salvaging, depending on [the adaptor’s] perspective” (8). In addition, Hutcheon argues that an adaptation is “[a]n extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (8). This last point is what haunts every adaptation: “we experience adaptations [...] as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation” (8).

Shakespeare’s plays as they were performed in sixteenth century England could also be considered stage adaptations of the original play. Hutcheon argues that “it is when adaptations make the move across modes of engagement and thus across media, especially [...] from the printed page to performance in stage and radio plays, dance, opera, musical, film, or television, that they find themselves most enmeshed in the intricacies of the medium-specificity debates” (Hutcheon 35). Translating the written play of Shakespeare to a film or stage play proves to be similarly difficult, as it is still a translation from one medium to

another. Shakespeare's plays were initially adapted as stage plays but were adapted in many different ways later, such as film.

In the sixteenth century in England, a "public secular drama" emerged aside of the dramatized biblical stories that "were performed for the amusement and instruction of citizens at certain festive times of year in many major English cities" (Bate and Jackson 1). After this, "purpose-built theatres" emerged that performed "a wide repertory of plays" (1). This is where Shakespeare's plays started, as Shakespeare himself "was the age's most successful all-round man of the theatre" (1). Around the 1660s, the issue of "authenticity" started to become a problem: "illegitimate theatres had found ways round [the licensing system] by performing Shakespeare in adapted form, mimed, sung, or danced" (4). These adapted forms were not considered "authentic" plays at the time. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* inspired numerous "musical adaptations and settings, along with famously lavish productions" and instead of the "bare" stage plays, the play was often accompanied by "gorgeous sets, with twinkling lights, fairies rising on midnight mushrooms, the moon shining over the Acropolis, and live rabbits hopping across carpets of flowers" (Greenblatt 805). The matter of authenticity is always a tricky concept when discussing an adaptation of a text. After the play is over, the text is all that is left, but the performance is just as important when looking at the adaptation.

When studying adaptations, the matter of "fidelity" to the original work tends to come up as a major factor of measurement (Fischlin 4). In McKellen's film adaptation of *Richard III*, he "[reduced] the play's verbal impact" and shortened it, but managed to use "its casting, costumes, locations and incidents" (Hindle xv) in such a way that "authenticity [became] subordinate to argument" (Holland 19). Although this film updated and translated Shakespeare's play to the medium of motion pictures, it was done in such a way that whether it was authentic was no longer the main factor, but rather the message and the way in which it was updated. For example, in *Richard III* the characters who smoke "do so in ways that

indicate and enhance character” (Hindle xv). For many, the story is the most important factor that needs to be conveyed in the adaptation. According to Hutcheon “either a story can exist independently of any embodiment in any particular signifying system or, on the contrary, it cannot be considered separately from its material mode of mediation” (Hutcheon 10). While some critics argue that a story can indeed not be separated from its medium, Jonathan Bate argues that “Shakespeare’s ‘classic’ status has been created by the very processes of adaptation and mutation. It is these which keep him alive. A so-called ‘authentic’ production is just another new mutation” (Bate and Jackson 4).

Hutcheon indicates that “[t]o deal with adaptations *as adaptations* is to think of them as [...] inherently ‘palimpsestuous’ works, haunted at all times by their adapted texts” (Alexander qtd. in Hutcheon 6). However, adaptations can also be studied autonomously, as works on their own. Walter Benjamin mentions that an adaptation has its own “presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (Benjamin 214). Yet, at the same time an “adaptation includes almost any act of alteration performed upon specific cultural works of the past and dovetails with a general process of cultural recreation” (Hutcheon 9). There are few critics who still believe that “representations can be vehicles for universal truths divorced from the time and culture that created them” (Boose and Burt 1), and instead now adaptations are often studied as “part of a continuum that encompasses all subsequent versions” (1).

Since this paper investigates the shift in portrayal of gender in film adaptations over time, it will focus on the works as adaptations of the original, but also study them in their own time and place, as both autonomous works and as subsequent versions of earlier adaptations. When studying gender in adaptations, the matter of “fidelity” to the original work matters greatly when looking at how the story has evolved over time, but not as much as the way in which the adaptations have portrayed certain scenes, back stories and characters that inspired

gender criticism in the original play, as it was the case with McKellen's *Richard III*. This paper examines adaptations as part of their larger cultural contexts. It is therefore important to view each of the film adaptations as processes of cultural recreation. After all, *Richard III* was already inspired by an earlier theatrical production "which had already 'updated' the play by relocating it to a 1930s Britain where a dictatorship like Richard's might plausibly have assumed power" (Hindle xv) and Elizabeth Taylor's performance of Katherina Minola in Franco Zeffirelli's *The Taming of the Shrew* was based on Mary Pickford's performance as Katherina in Sam Taylor's *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Hutcheon argues in *A Theory of Adaptation* that in performance media, like film and theatre, which appear to be alike, there are still significant differences (Hutcheon 128). Performance on stage and screen are both an art of time and space (Greenberg qtd. in Hutcheon 35), but Robert Stam argues that films include something more than theatre, namely: "the visuals of photography and painting, the movement of dance, the décor of architecture, and the performance of theatre" (Stam 61). Important aspects in theatre and film are sets, lighting, sound, costume and performance, yet, for both these media these aspects are used for different means. Since this paper will focus on the portrayal of gender in film adaptations, it is relevant to discuss only those aspects of film theory that link to these portrayals. This is why this chapter will focus on the use of camera, film-editing and setting since these are the medium specific qualities that portray gender in Hoffman's, Hall's and Reinhardt's adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The use of camera is one of the most important factors that make films differ from theatre. The camera, by zooming in and out, may decide what the audience gets to see. While in theatre, the whole scene is always visible, and the audience can decide who or what to look at, and, thus, change their experience with the story, in films, the experience is largely decided for them. Although theatre can also create a selective view of what the audience can see, the

audience can never get closer to the actors. By zooming in on one character, its emotions and reactions are emphasized. Although theatre can do this with lighting and performance, the use of camera creates a vast difference in reception. So-called “reaction shots” allow the audience to jump from one character to another in a scene, the one the director wants them to see (Hindle 11). When Hermia and Lysander tell Helena of their plan to flee Athens and go into the forest in Michael Hoffman’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Helena’s face is shown when Hermia speaks, indicating her reaction to what she says. In Peter Hall’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, there are many close-ups of Hermia’s face while her father Egeus urges king Theseus to make Hermia marry Demetrius. Here, the emphasis on Hermia’s looks of distress makes the audience sympathetic towards Hermia and not towards Egeus, therefore deepening the audience’s engagement into her character’s misery (Bays). At the same time, the camera films Lysander when he tells the company that Demetrius “made love to Nedar’s daughter, Helena” (Hall), and in the shot, an out-of-focus Helena is seen wandering in the background and disappearing behind a column. This is a very useful exposition that subtly introduces Helena into the story. Here, the use of camera limits the audience’s view to what the director wants them to see (Hindle 4), namely: Helena wandering aimlessly outside of the courthouse while Demetrius tries to win Hermia’s heart through her father.

The use of camera is what creates a different experience for the audience, because their *engagement* with film is different from theatre (Hindle 5). Diana Henderson indicates that “screen images evoke powerful emotional responses” (Henderson 2) that are different in theatre. According to Maurice Hindle “moviegoers will be in quite another form of relationship to what they are watching to that of the theatergoer” (5) because “they are physically ‘detached’ from what has been filmed and edited in another time and place” (5). Filmgoers therefore need to be “appealed to as ‘self-contained’ perceiving *individuals*” and “screen images and sounds [should be] geared to producing an emotionally and

psychologically engaging *private* experience” (6). The experience of filmgoers appears to be more intimate than that of theatergoers, which is “collective” and “interactive” (6) due to the grand scale of the theatre.

Since a film is a ‘fixed’ medium, it is possible to use various film-editing techniques to make the audience’s experience what the director wants them to experience. In the theatre, the experience depends on the actors’ performance at that moment, and any mistake is incorporated into the experience as well. In film, however, the director can choose the best “take” that conveys the best meaning (Hindle 4) before making the performance that is “fixed” (4). Hindle indicates that “[i]n the theatre we accept theatricality; in the cinema we demand actuality” (Manvell 266), and that this need for “reality” is coupled with the fact that “film is a *recorded* medium of performance, a completed ‘product’ that is played back to cinema/video/DVD audiences watching in a space and time entirely remote from the original performance” (Hindle 3). Malcolm LeGrice argues that theatre and motion pictures are different because the performance and scene setting in theatre “required a suspension of disbelief”, while films need a “suppression of disbelief” (LeGrice 230). There is no interaction between audience and performance, such as there is in theatre, and therefore films need to create a story as ‘realistic’ as possible in order to communicate with its audience. Otherwise, the story is not plausible to the audience.

The use of camera creates this ‘realistic’ value by creating a setting that is similar to everyday life. Actors, for example, do not enter the stage, but are always revealed to the audience as “*already* being within the space of the film frame we focus on” (Hindle 9). Due to this technique, it is “as if we are being given a ‘window’ in to a realistic world of events which really seem to be happening” (9). This creates a greater ‘realistic’ value, but at the same time this ‘realism’ is expected: if we somehow experience these events as appearing to be actually happening, they need to conform to our vision of what is ‘realistic’ in that world

that is represented. Although the world and story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are not necessarily 'realistic' since it is a fantastic story about fairies and magic, the sense of 'realism' that film produces has to do with how much the audience is immersed into the story. A number of camera techniques create a 'realism' that makes the actions of actors and actresses conform to the real world: it helps immerse the audience into the film's world and thereby accept the suggested 'realism' that is represented in this world.

Camera allows the audience to jump from one location to another in the blink of an eye, and accept it as a fact. Film audience is skilled at jumping in time and place within the 'reality' of the story. In the case of Helena in Hall's *Dream* (1968), the cutting was off-putting due to the fact that it seems like Helena is moving between one side of the pillar and the other in less than a second. This is unbelievable for the audience, as Helena is introduced as a human, and not a fairy. The scene cutting needs to occur in time and space: either move the audience from one moment in time to one in the future, or move the audience to another location. In Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999), the play easily shifts from the courthouse in Athens to the forest without any explanation; yet, it makes complete sense for the audience. This is due to the fact that in film, our experience with the work is characterized by what Christian Metz calls the "constant impulse to invest" the "ghostly creatures moving on the screen" into the "'reality' of fiction" (Metz 10). The world of the story that is portrayed in films is constituted in our minds. According to Maurice Hindle, this is also called "diegesis" (Hindle 7): the audience takes every explicit aspect that is presented as well as the "unseen" components and adds this in the so-called "into the 'fictional mix'" (7) in order to create a story that is understandable for each personal individually. A shift from one location to the other is easier for the audience to incorporate than incorrect cuts, because we expect that through the "frame" we can see multiple locations and multiple characters. While in theatre "our impressions are overwhelmingly defined by the strong presence of

actors communicating with us through the mutually accepted pretence of *stage performance*” (6), in films, we shape the story by constructing and internalizing what we have seen in a way that makes sense to us (7).

However, in order to achieve this, the setting needs to contribute to the realism already enabled by camerawork. First of all, the perspective on the setting of both media is different. In theatre the audience experiences the setting differently due to its actual size. For example, if the theatre set has “high walls that soar into the flyspace”, the audience is liable to become “overwhelm[ed]” because of their proximity to the stage itself” (Stanton and Banham 377). Theatre sets do not need to be as realistic as film sets because they are not inside the “frame” that a film is in. In theatre, the stage setting is part of the stage experience, while in film the setting needs to be as realistic as it would be in the ‘realism’ of the film. The set in both film and theatre needs to contribute to the atmosphere the film wants to convey. When looking at adaptations of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* from 1935 and 1968, it becomes clear that each film utilizes their set differently according to what they want to convey. Both films use a real, or seemingly real, forest for the scenes with the lovers and Titania and Oberon, but every film does this in a different manner. Reinhardt depicts a forest lit with twinkling lights and blurry effects, which give a very magical feeling to Titania and Oberon, who are represented likewise, in long black and white gowns. However, Hall’s forest is depicted as a swamp with mud and is set in foggy weather, as the environment in the countryside of the United Kingdom. Titania and Oberon, in this work, are painted green and almost entirely nude except for their private parts, which happen to be covered by strategically placed leaves. Due to their green color and attributes, they and the fairies look goblin-like, as if they actually belonged to the forest’s own eco-system. The difference between these, while both filmed in seemingly real forests, is stark. In both cases, the forest set adds to the atmosphere of the story.

In the case of Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935) the twinkling lights and magical forest are part of the world of Titania and Oberon, but because they are magical beings, their setting can be magical to enhance their magic. Athens, on the other hand, needs to look like an actual city and cannot simply be the same as on stage. Films have the ability to shoot on location, where, for example, actual forests can be used to represent a forest. In addition, films usually have a bigger budget and need to succeed for a larger audience, thereby making it possible to put additional money in sets and thereby making them look realistic compared to theatre sets, which often need to be able to be moved around and are only used for as long as the play runs. Films not only recycle sets by using them in multiple films, but also have the ability to simply shoot on site. In film, instead of using light to emphasize where the action is, or to evoke emotions in the audience, as is often the case with theatre, light can be used to emphasize realism. Directors can simply ask for a scene to be set in daylight, in which a rainy day or a sunny day makes a great difference in perception, but can easily be achieved mechanically. This technique usually works together with filtering, which is when editors add another layer to the recorded scenes of a film to make them look darker, colorful, black-and-white, etc. either to make them seem realistic or to make them enticing to the audience.

To sum up, there are many differences between cinema and theatre, but the most important ones are created by the use of camera, film-editing and setting. These aspects, in films, lead to a 'realistic' performance, a realistic background and with this an engaging experience. Especially close-ups and camera movements create a distinct emphasis on certain aspects, which, for example, allow the audience to be more invested in one character or another. Overall, film enables a realism, which is necessary for the audience to experience in a recorded medium because it is very intimate compared to theatre.

CHAPTER 2

Gender Criticism of the Play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

For many people, “gender” and “sex” are interchangeable terms; however, in *Sex, Gender and Society* Ann Oakley indicates that “[s]ex” is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function”, while gender “is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’” (Oakley 16) and “gender” is a “psychological” term. She continues to state that “[t]he distinction between ‘male’ and ‘female’ on the one hand, and ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ on the other, makes it possible to clarify much of the argument about sex differences”, because “male” and “female” is something that can usually be determined with “biological evidence”, while “masculine” and “feminine” are subjected to cultural criteria that differ “with time and place” (16). In “ordinary usage” ‘sex’ refers to “the differences between individuals that make them male and female, and also to a type of behaviour—the ‘mating behaviour that begins sexual reproduction” (Oakley 18). ‘Sex’ is a constant factor, while ‘gender’ is a term that varies over time. While ‘[c]ommon sense” would suggest that the words ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are just “two ways of looking at the same division”, and that, for example, “the female sex automatically [belongs] to the corresponding (feminine) gender” (158), this is not so in reality. Oakley indicates that “every society believes that its own definitions of gender correspond to the biological duality of sex” (158).

In this paper, it is relevant to state the differences between the two terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’. While I will look primarily at the difference of how male and female characters are depicted in Michael Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999), Peter Hall’s *Dream* (1969) and Max Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935), this includes how ‘sex’ as well as ‘gender’ is portrayed: a female character may be played by an actress, but it is how she acts that defines her ‘gender’.

Over the years, there has been much criticism on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Most notable is its criticism on the portrayal of male and female characters. Harold Brooks, in a recent edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* says that “[l]ove and marriage is the [play’s] central theme: love aspiring to and consummated in marriage, or to a harmonious partnership within it” (Brooks qtd. in Montrose 61), Paul Olson suggests that “the harmonious marital unions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*” only comply with the “doctrines of Tudor apologists for the patriarchal family: marital union implies a domestic hierarchy; marital harmony is predicated upon the wife’s obedience to her husband” (Olson 95). Relationships are central to the plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and most criticism is based on the gender hierarchy that exists within the play.

First of all, many scholars criticize the attitude of the male characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* towards women and argue that they fear the power of women. According to Montrose and Gohlke, women in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are actually viewed as powerful and the men actually need the possession of women’s bodies to preserve their authority (Montrose 66; Gohlke 161). In addition, Montrose argues that the Amazonian sisterly bond between female characters breaks due to the introduction of male characters. For example, Hermia and Helena’s friendship is challenged by the desire for Lysander and Demetrius and Titania’s adoption of the changeling because her love for his mother is broken due to Oberon (Montrose 68). Valerie Traub, in regard to this, argues that Hermia’s limited option to die, obey or become a nun, in fact, opens a world in which homoerotic bonds between women can flourish without the influence of patriarchal values (Traub 65). In response to this, Mary Beth Rose argues that the absent mother, such as the mother of the changeling, is a recurrent theme in Shakespeare’s works and indicates a similar fear of women that Montrose and Gohlke demonstrated (Rose 292).

Others disagree, arguing that not every woman in this play is suppressed, and it is impossible to read this play as merely stemming from male anxiety for women. Titania's votaress, Traub argues, the mother who exists outside of the play, but is never actually depicted, is actually the most powerful woman in the play who eventually allows the play to unfold (Traub 69). Jeanne Addison Roberts proposes a link between the female and the wild, but indicates that some women in this play are not suppressed (Roberts 26). Sanchez adds that Helena's unusual pursuit of Demetrius, along with the ambiguous genders of Puck and Hippolyta, are actually threatening the ideals of "normal" sexuality (Sanchez 506). She argues that this play actually blurs the lines between masculine and feminine and does not only reflect male anxiety.

Another important point of discussion is Calderwood's indication that Titania and Oberon most likely doubled Hippolyta and Theseus. He argues that this means that Titania and Oberon's actions, thus, reflected Theseus and Hippolyta's unspoken desires (Calderwood 410). This would mean Hippolyta and Theseus's relationship is acted out by Oberon and Titania (410).

First of all, Montrose argues that the relationship between Hippolyta and Theseus symbolizes the male anxiety of women's power in society. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* starts with Theseus' victory over the Amazon warrior Hippolyta. Both these characters have a mythological background. Theseus is most famous for the story of the Minotaur, in which he has to enter a maze and kill the Minotaur, a creature that is half-bull and half-human. During this quest, Theseus falls in love with Ariadne, who helps him. However, he is told by Athena to leave her and her sister behind on the beach. In his distress, he forgets to put up the white sails, which were the sails he would put up if he had survived, so his father commits suicide. This is how Theseus becomes the king of Athens (Graves 122).

Subsequently, there are many contradictory stories about Theseus, Heracles and the Amazons. Robert Graves argues that Hippolyta was most likely a few different characters in one (Graves 451). When looking at Shakespeare's depiction of Hippolyta, it is possible to give her two interpretations: either she is a doting fiancée, who is playfully disagreeing with Theseus, or she is captive in a tense relationship and resents her husband-to-be. As her lines are not abundant, this interpretation is left for the performer to choose. These two interpretations call for two different myths: in one, Theseus abducted Hippolyta and in another she fell in love with him and willingly went with him, abandoning her Amazon sisters (455). James L. Calderwood argues that "[f]rom one perspective [Amazons] appeared as noble, valiant, beautiful, and chaste as their Diana" (Calderwood 413), but in William Painter's "Novel of the Amazones" from *The Palace of Pleasure*, Amazons are described as "most excellent warriors" who "murdred certaine of their husbands" and trained their daughters, but exiled, murdered or mutilated their sons so they were only strong enough to do "feminine labour" (Painter 159). Amazons appeared to "delight in subjecting powerful heroes to their will", such as the hero Artegall, who was defeated by the Amazon Radigund "in personal combat" and had to "undergo degradation and effeminization of the kind endured by Hercules and by the Amazon's maimed sons" (Montrose 66). In addition, the Amazon queen is described by a Portuguese trader as "a witch and a cannibal who daily feeds on the flesh of boys. She ever remains unmarried, but she has intercourse with a great number of men by whom she begets offspring. The kingdom, however, remains hereditary to the daughters, not to the sons" (Montrose 66). This "inverts European norms of political authority, sexual license, marriage practices, and inheritance rules" (66). Adrian Montrose argues that "Amazonian mythology seems symbolically to embody and to control a collective anxiety about the power of the female not only to dominate or reject the male but to create and destroy him" (66). This anxiety for a different sort of woman, that cannot be found in

patriarchal society and who exerts power over men, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* appears to be a kind of central theme in most Shakespearean plays.

According to Calderwood, it is unsure from the text whether Theseus fears Hippolyta in their marriage and that Hippolyta's point of view cannot be fully attained due to the fact that she keeps her counsel to herself. Her response to Theseus's "show of masculine force" when confronted with Egeus and Hermia (Calderwood 413) is not revealed in the text itself. Calderwood claims that, regarding the Amazons' practices, Theseus should have every reason to fear his marriage with Hippolyta, as well as Hippolyta should fear her marriage with Theseus because of his "man-woman['s]" desires (414). I find that Hippolyta, in all aspects, becomes an ambiguous character, because she never voices her pains, while that is all that Hermia and Helena do.

Madelon Gohlke, in her article "I wooed thee with my sword': Shakespeare's Tragic Paradigms" raises the issue that, in Shakespeare's plays, women are often conceived as "radically untrustworthy" as lovers, but more importantly as mothers (Gohlke 161). According to Gohlke, women "are regarded as powerful and men strive to avoid awareness of their vulnerability in relation to women, a vulnerability in which they regard themselves as 'feminine'" (161). This "feminine" quality, however, is created by the "masculine consciousness" (162). The "masculine consciousness" defines "feminine" as a weakness and "institutes the structures of male dominance designed to defend against such an awareness" (162). Gohlke claims that "[i]t is for the male hero, however, that femininity signifies weakness, while actual women are perceived by him as enormously powerful, specifically in their maternal functions" (162).

This view accompanies Montrose's view on the male characters' attitude towards female characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The biological influence of men on the making of children was in Shakespeare's time still a guess, because they were unable to prove

it (Montrose 72). This is why, in Shakespearean drama, the validation of paternity is often called into question. I observed the latter in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*:

DON PEDRO: I think this is your daughter.

LEONATO: Her mother hath many times told me so.

BENEDICK: Were you in doubt sir, that you asked her? (*Much Ado* 1.1.70-72)

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, this brief encounter indicates Leonato's inability to deduce whether Hero is really his daughter or not. After all, he has no proof but her mother's word that she really is his daughter. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, just after Theseus has tamed one "unruly" Hippolyta by conquering her, he is faced with another: Hermia. Hermia refuses to marry Demetrius against her father's will. Egeus, her father, gives her the right to either obey him because "he has *made* her" or choose death (Montrose 70). Theseus proposes another alternative: Hermia can either choose "to die the death or to abjure // Forever the society of men" (*Midsummer Dream* 1.1.65-66). This way, "Theseus expands Hermia's options only in order to clarify her constraints" (Montrose 67). Hermia is surrounded by men, "father, lover, or lord" who "[claim] a kind of property in her", but Hermia wants to claim "property in herself" by wishing "the limited privilege of giving herself" (67). Theseus, consequently, denies her this use of her body by forcing her to become a nun if she does not obey her father. According to Montrose, "[Hermia's] own words suggest that the female body is a supreme form of property and a locus for the contestation of authority" (68). As Theseus needs to bring Hippolyta into the patriarchal relationship and Egeus needs to have Hermia obey him so he can give her to the man he wants, men in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* need the property of female bodies to retain their authority. Montrose argues that "[i]t is an ironic acknowledgment by an androcentric culture of the degree to which men are in fact dependent

upon women: upon mothers and nurses, for their birth and nurture; upon mistresses and wives, for the validation of their manhood” (66).

Montrose also argues that the Amazonian bond between female characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is contested by patriarchal values and relationships. First of all, the relationship between Helena and Hermia, which is a “delicate repudiation of youthful homophilia” (Montrose 68) is disrupted by Hermia’s heterosexual desire for Lysander, and the pressure of a patriarchal relationship. Montrose indicates that the “counsel” “shared by Hermia and Helena, their ‘sisters’ vows [...] school-days’ friendship, childhood innocence’ [...] have all been torn asunder, to be replaced at the end of the play by the primary demands and loyalties of wedlock” (Montrose 68). Lysander and Demetrius, however, were only enemies because of their desire for the same “object”: “first for Hermia, and then for Helena”, but forge a friendship at the end, when “each male [accepts] his own female” (69). Hermia and Helena, however, remain constant to their love, even “at the cost of inconstancy to each other” (69). The youths’ behavior indicates that women abjure their sisterly love in a patriarchal society because of their desire for a male. Montrose argues that, the same as at the end of *As You Like It*, “the marital couplings dissolve the bonds of sisterhood at the same time that they forge the bonds of brotherhood” (69).

The homoerotic subtext of Hermia and Helena’s relationship is discussed in Valerie Traub’s *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*. When Theseus limits Hermia’s option to death, obedience and the convent, she replies: “So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord”, indicating that there is a “possibility of growth and life within a religious sisterhood” (Traub 65). Hermia does not want to enter the convent, but “Shakespeare permits Hermia to imagine a kind of life” which “undoubtedly meant that their most generative and sustaining bonds were found in the company of other women” (65). This non-reproductive life echoes that of the Amazons, who chose to live with their sisters and did not marry and

reproduce. Sylvia Gimenez indicates that “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* associates female intimacies with all-female spaces that in various ways elude patriarchal control” (Gimenez qtd. in Traub 65). This includes both monasteries, but also the Amazons’ life.

Furthermore, Titania and her votaress shared a similar kind of bond that has been broken by the influence of male characters. Montrose argues that the absence of the “relationship between mother and daughter” in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is linked to it being “the kinship bond through which Amazonian society reproduces itself” (Montrose 70). Hermia and Helena only have fathers, but mothers are not mentioned. Mary Beth Rose argues that the absence of mothers is a concept that is common for Shakespeare’s plays, as it occurs in all of his six most famous comedies: “*Love’s Labor’s Lost*, *The Taming of the shrew*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *As You Like it*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*” (M. Rose 292). Rose argues that this lack of women could have been caused by the “limiting conditions of theatrical production”, but also declares that this alone could not be the reason why there are almost no mothers in Shakespeare. If men can play women, as was the case in English Renaissance theater, they can also play mothers or “a wide variety of other female roles designed to impersonate women both young and old, natural and supernatural” (292). Montrose mentions that “[t]he central female characters of Shakespeare’s comedies are not mothers but mothers-to-be, maidens who are passing from fathers to husbands in a world made and governed by men (Montrose 70). Mothers, in fact, by English Renaissance law, “had no legal rights over the guardianship of her children” (M. Rose 293), yet, as more recent studies indicate, mothers were indeed “important presences in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English life” (294). Rose argues therefore that mothers are absent in Shakespeare’s works because Shakespeare “participates overwhelmingly” in only one construction of representing mothers in which motherhood is “dramatized only as dangerous or as peripheral to adult, public life” (313).

Titania is the character in this play that takes on the role of a mother to the Indian changeling child. The child's biological mother, however, has died "giving birth to a *son*" (Montrose 70). Titania took the boy in her care because of her love for her "votaress", who had often "gossip'd by [her] side; // And sat with [her] on Neptune's yellow sands" (*Midsummer Night's Dream* 2.1.125-126) and Titania claims that: "for her sake do I rear up her boy; // And for her sake I will not part with him" (2.1.136-137). According to Montrose, Titania's "attachment to the changeling boy embodies her attachment to the memory of his mother". Her description of their relationship is

as idyllic as that enjoyed by Hermia and Helena or [...] by Hippolyta in her Amazonian past—a feminine world rich with all the mysteries of fertility, conception, pregnancy, and birth that women can treat with easy familiarity but that can be conveyed to Oberon only through imperfect analogies to masculine trade and moneymaking. (Calderwood 416)

However, Titania's "solemn vow" is broken when Oberon substitutes Bottom for the changeling boy (Montrose 71). The boy, namely, becomes a rival of Oberon as they both want Titania's love, but Titania has "forsworn his bed and company" (*Midsummer Dream* 2.1.63). Here, as with Hermia and Helena, both Calderwood and Montrose argue that male characters again disrupt the "intimate bond between women": both Oberon and the boy turn Titania away from her votaress (Montrose 71). Titania, however, "links the biological and social aspects of parenthood together within a wholly maternal world, a world in which the relationship between women has displaced the relationship between wife and husband" (72). At the end of the play, however, Titania has been disproven by Oberon, and Shakespeare's notions remain "distinctly phallogentric: the mother is represented as a *vessel*, as a container

for her son; she is not his *maker*” (72). The “fairyland dispute”, according to Calderwood, “like that in Athens in the opening scene, is a displaced version of the oedipal crisis” (Calderwood 416). Instead of the “no” that Hermia received from Egeus, Titania becomes symbolically castrated because she has to “surrender not only a desire for the phallus of masculine privilege but also her symbolic association with her beloved votaress” (416). In addition, “Theseus’s description of paternity is that the male is the only begetter; a daughter is merely a token of her father’s potency” (Montrose 72), as is the case with Hermia and Egeus. Montrose therefore argues that this play proposes “men make women, and make themselves through the medium of women” (72). This is exactly the opposite of what Amazonian society standardized, because they used men just for procreation (72). However, more importantly, he argues that

[the male attitude] seems an overcompensation for the *natural* fact that men do indeed come from women; an overcompensation for the *cultural* facts that consanguineal and affinal ties *between* men are established through mothers, wives, and daughters. (72)

Montrose argues that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* “in its intermittent ironies, dissonances, and contradictions” reveals “that patriarchal norms are compensatory for the vulnerability of men to the powers of women” (75).

Traub argues that the votaress, who exists entirely “behind the seen”, is the “most provocative figure of female erotic autonomy and resistance to patriarchal affiliation in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*” (Traub 69). Puck says that “Cupid’s fiery shaft // [was] Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat’ry moon; // And the imperial votress passed on, // In maiden meditation, fancy-free” (*Midsummer Dream* 2.1.161-164). The fact that this girl was “unpenetrated by Cupid’s ‘fiery shaft’” liberates “a principle of uncontrolled libido” (69) into

the world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is, in fact, her flight that “leads to the ‘wounding’ of the ‘little western flower’ whose magic nectar becomes the faerie potion Puck uses to wreak havoc among Titania and the Athenian lovers” (69). Even though she is not physically present in the play, her “ghostly” presence is a catalyst for the unfolding of the marriage plot between Titania, Oberon, Hermia, Helena, Lysander and Demetrius (69). Female characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* appear to have more authority over circumstances than male characters. It appears that male characters have the most control over the circumstances, as it is Puck and Oberon who make the four Athenian lovers fall in and out of love, and Theseus who forbids Hermia and Lysander to marry, which leads them into the woods. However, Traub argues that the woman who does not even speak at all is actually the cause of all the events that transpired in the play.

Calderwood argues that the roles of Hippolyta and Theseus were most likely played by the same actors that played Titania and Oberon and that “the forest world [...] is a kind of crazed mirror of the Athenian world” (Calderwood 410). According to him, the doubling reveals a dream by both Theseus and Hippolyta and illustrates their thoughts. Calderwood argues that just as the audience asked itself “Isn’t that Theseus, and isn’t that Hippolyta?” they are simultaneously asking the question: “Isn’t this the same subversion of hierarchical and patriarchal order that we just saw so ruthlessly dealt with in Athens?” (411). Since “Theseus has won Hippolyta’s love ‘doing [her] injuries’”, and “Egeus, Demetrius, and the law” try to win Hermia’s love by “doing her injuries” as well, Oberon is attempting “to win Titania’s love [by] doing her injuries” as well (411). By suggesting “an erotic connection between the rulers of the fairy world and the rulers of Athens”, the fairies are transformed into “spiritual manifestations of the sexual drives of Theseus and Hippolyta” (Krieger qtd. in Calderwood 412). Here, Titania would represent “in the realm of spirit Theseus’s physical desire, held in abeyance during the four-day interval before the wedding”, and Oberon would

represent “Hippolyta’s desire for Theseus” (412). In this case, “[t]he destructive jealousy with which Oberon and Titania confront each other replaces, then, the injury, the actual martial opposition between their two races, with which Theseus ‘woo’d’ Hippolyta (Krieger qtd. in Calderwood 412). Although Calderwood indicates that Theseus and Hippolyta’s thoughts are not expressed in the play, this way, their relationship is illustrated, and it is tempestuous.

On a completely different note, Jeanne Addison Roberts in *Shakespearean Wild* argues that female characters in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are often linked to nature and animals (Roberts 26). Rebecca Ann Bach says that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* “often categorizes women as nonhuman animals” and “presents men who work with their hands, whose work marks their bodies, as even further away than some women from a noble humanity that could be categorically separable from animality” (Bach 126). For example, Snug and Starveling are often referred to as “beasts”, Bottom literally becomes an ass in the play (127), and Helena calls herself Demetrius’s “spaniel” (*Midsummer Dream* 2.1.203). Pyramus, in addition, is compared to a horse, which Bach argues, is something that women were often compared to in Shakespeare’s plays (Bach 129). Roberts argues that “[i]n addition to the association of horses with women, it is a Renaissance commonplace that horses represent the passions that must be reined by the national rider for a harmonious and moderate life” (Roberts 68). The fact that women were often compared to horses places them not only lower in hierarchy because they are compared to animals, but also indicates they need to be tamed, as Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, to fit a “patriarchal” marriage (Sanchez 501). Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and with her other Amazons, are a “‘hidden hybrid’ form in Elizabethan literature, being female in appearance but male in behavior” (Thompson 940).

In addition, Roberts claims that women are also frequently compared to nature and the wild in Shakespeare’s works. In fact, she claims that “[t]he equation of women and Nature is so ancient and so ubiquitous as hardly to need documentation” (Roberts 25). As the forest is

the main setting of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it becomes the locus of the play. Roberts argues that this forest is the “site of male-female confrontation” (Roberts 46), as it is where Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius, and Titania, Oberon and Bottom struggle with love and desire. Unlike in Shakespeare’s tragedies, “the wild” in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has power (Thompson 940). “[W]omen” Roberts adds, “were repeatedly linked by tradition and specifically by Shakespeare with the earth” (Roberts 26). Women were compared to nature, because “[l]ike Nature, the female was fixed and given, if chaotic and shapeless” (26). She adds, “whatever is not encompassed by the central male vision of Culture, frequently manifests itself metaphorically in terms of Natural landscape” (23). As women, and, more specifically, the homoerotic relationship between women, such as mothers, sisters and friends, does not fit within the patriarchal view of society, it becomes clear that the women in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are linked with nature as well. However, as much as Roberts argues for the lower position of women in the hierarchy, because they are so often represented as wild nature and animals, she also indicates that “[r]eading Shakespeare with two ears, one attuned to archaic resonances, may not always simply alert us to the suppression of women; it may also appall us at the power of women who need so much suppressing” (182).

By looking at the criticism on *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* gender issues, it becomes clear that most critics feel that the play embodies a kind of male anxiety for the female. However, Melissa Sanchez, as Roberts, argues against this: “although [*A Midsummer Night's Dream*] overtly endorse[s] cultural ideals of chastity, friendship, marriage, and procreation”, “the prevalence of perverse and undignified sex in [...] *A Midsummer Night's Dream* cannot be dismissed as a mere expression of misogyny or male anxiety” (Sanchez 494). Many critics indicate that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* denotes a homoerotic bond between women and appeals to a heteroerotic marriage instituted by patriarchy, but Sanchez

argues that this homoerotic bond is not all that this play demonstrates and that this play actually challenges sexual norms (506). Although Sanchez indicates “[i]t has long been a critical commonplace that Shakespearean comedy works to restrain libidinal impulses by directing them into stable and productive—‘normal’—marital unions” (501), she claims that “a pleasure in domination or abjection may challenge hetero- and homonormative ideas of proper and healthy female sexuality” (502). Sanchez argues that “rather than dwell on what Judith Butler has lampooned as ‘the eternally victimized position of women,’ we might take seriously the possibility that fantasies of pain, domination and the rupture of boundaries appeal to women as well as men” (Butler qtd. in Sanchez 504). Sanchez uses the example of Helena’s speech to Demetrius to illustrate this:

I am your spaniel, and, Demetrius,
 The more you beat me I will fawn on you.
 Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me,
 Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
 Unworthy as I am, to follow you. (*Midsummer Night’s Dream* 2.1.203-207)

Here, Sanchez argues, the use of spaniel can also be a reference to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in which Proteus portrays his love for Silvia as “spaniel-like” (505). This indicates that a similar kind of masochism as often argued exists within the female characters in Shakespeare, also exists within the male characters. In fact, because of Helena’s “obsessive pursuit of an unresponsive object [she] co-opts the male role of lover and the male prerogative of refusing to take no for an answer [...] and thereby blurs the boundaries between masculinity and femininity” (505). It even “tests the limits of ‘normal’ human desire as well as ‘natural’ female love” (505) and demonstrates that “women’s unapologetically perverse

desires—whether for women or for men—can threaten ideals of proper, ‘normal’ sexuality” (506). Titania’s desire for “everything in sight, including a woman, a boy, and an ass” (Neely (Sanchez 114) and even Oberon, indicates the same contestation of regular sexuality. In addition, Sanchez argues that this same “normal” sexuality is contested by others factors in this play as well (Sanchez 506). The “Amazonian Hippolyta and the ambiguously sexualized Puck conspicuously fuse masculinity and femininity” (506). As Ariel in *The Tempest*, Puck’s gender and that of the fairies is rather ambiguous; this indicates a different kind of sexuality than the heteroerotic sexuality.

Shakespeare’s play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, as it is set in ancient Athens but created in the United Kingdom around 1590, plays with different sexualities combined. The general difference between these two times is that “Christianity associated [the sexual act itself] with evil, sin, the Fall, and death, whereas antiquity invested it with positive symbolic values” (Foucault 14). Although Foucault indicates that these “anxieties” and “exigencies” no doubt dominated the Christian culture, they were present “at the core of Greek and Greco-Roman thought” (15). They were not, however, so vastly influencing as in Christianity, as, for example, “Socrates is not a desert Father struggling against temptation, and Nicocles is not a Christian husband” (21). The homoerotic subtext in Shakespeare’s *Dream* between the women, therefore, seems explained. David Halperin indicates that, in Athens, in ancient Greece, “sexual partners were not understood as males or females but rather as dominant and submissive; active and passive; penetrator and penetrated. These were not taken as signs of some sort of sexual identity” (S. Rose 26). However, in ancient Greece, sexual relationships were not mutual in the sense that they are now: “[m]ale citizens of Athens could penetrate those who were of lesser status, including boys, women, slaves, and foreigners” (S. Rose 26). However, Foucault also notes that even in antiquity, “women were generally subjected [...] to extremely strict constraints” and “women figured only as objects or, at most, as partners that

one had best train, educate, and watch over when one had them under one's power, but stay away when they were under the power of someone else (father, husband, tutor)" (22). This, however, is indeed what happens: Hermia, under the power of her father, is given to the power of Demetrius, but wants Lysander. Although she eventually ends up with Lysander, this only happens because an even greater power decides so, and because Demetrius no longer has interest in her. Hermia, Helena, Hippolyta and Titania are all "unruly" women (Montrose 66) that, in the end, come to be happy with their male counterparts, instead of choosing for each other. The homoerotic relationships between Hermia, Helena, Hippolyta, Titania and her votaress are but follies that are eventually solved by Oberon to become the 'real' relationship.

To conclude, as demonstrated, gender criticism of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is rather extensive. Although in general, critics argue that the play indicates a kind of male anxiety for the power of women, both Sanchez and Roberts have also argued against this. Montrose and Gohlke argue that men retain their authority in patriarchal society with female bodies, yet fear them because he views them as powerful. As Traub illustrates, this is true: it is Titania's votaress who finally allows the play to unfold. In addition, the homoerotic bond between Amazons, Hermia and Helena, and Titania and her votaress create a place outside of patriarchal society in which women forge a deep friendship and live without the use of men. However, according to Roberts and Sanchez, the link between the wild and the female is present in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but this does not necessarily put women lower in the hierarchy, but rather, as Sanchez argues, this "wild" and "unusual" activity of women, such as Titania and Helena, rather combines masculine and feminine and challenges the traditional heterosexuality which seems to be so present in this play.

CHAPTER 3

The Shift of Gender Portrayal in Film Adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

But you don't mean to say that you seriously believe that Life imitates Art, that Life in fact is the mirror, and Art the reality? (Wilde 9)

Oscar Wilde argued in *The Decay of Lying* that: "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life" (Wilde 9). He opined that anti-mimesis "results not merely from Life's imitative instinct, but from the fact that the self-conscious aim of Life is to find expression, and that Art offers it certain beautiful forms through which it may realize that energy" (Wilde 16). For example, a cloudy sky may not be perceived as beautiful until a poet describes its beauty in a way no-one had ever thought of before. Eric Auerbach, on the other hand, indicates in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* that Western writers over time often represent everyday life in their works.

This paper aims to explain the changes in Shakespeare's film adaptations. While this may seem to follow Auerbach's idea of mimesis, this paper actually intends to explain the films in light of "Life" as well as "Art" (Wilde 9). The following chapters will analyze how adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* were influenced by real life events, such as ideologies, historical events and political movements, but also by each other and other art forms.

The three film adaptations of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999), Peter Hall's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1968), and Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935), use screen images to tell the story of Shakespeare's *Dream* in a different way. They differ greatly from the original play, but more importantly, they differ from each other. These works are only about sixty

years apart, yet their depiction of gender has shifted quite drastically. The way in which these films portray gender over time is a construct of how the ideologies of gender have changed over the years.

According to Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan “Marxist literary criticism has traditionally been concerned with studying the embeddedness of a work within its historical, social, and economic contexts” (Rivkin 644). This is a rather “reflectionist” method of studying literature that “has been supplanted by critical approaches that emphasize the complexity of relationships between literature and its ambient context” (645). Although Marxist approaches to literature tend to focus on how literature reproduces social division between the higher and lower class, “others look for ways in which literature undermines or subverts the dominant ideologies of culture” (645). As Carol Smart indicates, however, Marxist schools of thought often leave out women altogether and focus only on men (Smart 13). Sexual divisions, however, are also a relevant topic when considering society. This paper will therefore draw upon Marxist literary theory to research the shift in the portrayal of male and female characters in film adaptations of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but will focus on sexual divisions and those events that could have affected the portrayal in these works.

First of all, the relationship between Hippolyta and Theseus is portrayed differently in each work, which correlates with ideologies of marriage and relationships. Secondly, the Amazonian bond between Hermia and Helena, as opposed to the rivalry bond between Demetrius and Lysander, is portrayed differently across these works as well. This correlates with how ideologies of homosexuality and sexuality have changed. In addition, the struggle between Titania and Oberon is portrayed differently due to how humanly Nick Bottom is portrayed as an ass and how nature is presented, which correlates with the view on sexuality over time. When looking at the shifts in these works, it becomes clear that, the history of

marriage, newly constituted laws, and feminist movements correlate with the shift of the portrayal of gender in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Hall's *Dream* (1968) and Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935).

CHAPTER 3.1

Ideologies of Marriage and Relationships in Film Adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

When looking at how Hippolyta's and Theseus's relationship is portrayed, a few important ideological aspects come forward. How these two characters were portrayed over time correlates with the ideology behind marriage and relationships both in society but also in popular media, gender and feminist movements and subsequently reformed laws in between the early twentieth century until the twenty-first century. It is also linked to the ideas of male and female sexuality over time, which I will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter about the prevalent homoeroticism between *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* female characters. As Ancient Greek writers discuss Hippolyta and Theseus' marriage union, its existence is hard to debate (Daly and Rengel 140). What can be debated, however, is which interpretation the directors of the films have decided to pursue. The way in which Michael Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Peter Hall's *Dream* (1968) and Max Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) portray Hippolyta and Theseus's relationship correlates with the way in which the film's contemporary society viewed relationships between men and women, especially in the form of marriage.

First of all, the idea of marriage changed drastically in American and British society between 1900 and 2000. In the film adaptations, a distinctly different attitude towards marriage is portrayed. In Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), marriage appears to be decidedly instituted compared to Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) and Hall's *Dream* (1968), in which it is considered a union based on love. As these three films are both from American and British production, this chapter will briefly elaborate on marriage ideals in both countries around the time of the films' release and link them to the portrayals in the films.

Andrew J. Cherlin indicates that, around 1890, the age of marriage in the United States was around twenty-six years old for men, and twenty-two years old for women. Right after World War II, there was a dip, in which a “historic low” was achieved: men married around twenty-three years old, while women married around twenty years old (Cherlin 39). In the time between 1900 and 2000, living situations for both men and women changed considerably. This had to do with the economic growth: “both economic and cultural forces have been driving the changes of American family life over the past half-century” (Cherlin 39). First of all, “demand for workers increased in the service sector”, this urged women to get a better education and caused many married women to become part of “the work force” (39). In addition, “1996 major welfare reform legislation further encouraged work by setting limits on how long a parent could receive public assistance” (39). According to Cherlin, “[a]ccompanying the economic changes was a broad cultural shift among Americans that eroded the norms both of marriage before childbearing and of stable, lifelong bonds after marriage” (40). American marriage went “from institution to companionship” (Burgess 1), which meant it went from being “held together by the forces of law, tradition, and religious belief” to “the emotional ties between wife and husband” (Cherlin 40). Until the late nineteenth century, in the United States, “husband and wife became one legal person when they married—and that person was the husband” (40). A wife had little rights as her own person, and “her husband could dispose of her property as he wished” (40). Until women were allowed to vote in 1920 in the United States and in the United Kingdom in 1918, it was widely regarded that when a woman married, her political views became her husband’s (40).

In Reinhardt’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1935), released early in the 1900s, the relationship between Hippolyta and Theseus appears to be interpreted as an unwanted one from Hippolyta’s side. As indicated before, the story of how Theseus married an Amazon is not entirely clear, but when looking at Shakespeare’s portrayal of the relationship in the

‘original’ or source play, there are roughly two ways of looking at it: they are in love and Hippolyta left her Amazon sisters to pursue a marriage with Theseus, or Hippolyta was conquered and stolen by Theseus and is now to be his wife (Graves 455). Reinhardt seems to have chosen to adapt their relationship in the latter way. The film starts with a brief text that narrates what happened before the film starts: Theseus conquered the Amazons and will now marry Hippolyta, “Queen of the Amazons, with pomp, with triumph, and with reveling” (Reinhardt). The film shows Theseus and Hippolyta walking down a road surrounded by people who are cheering. Theseus is dressed in an extravagant Greek armor, with a Greek helmet, as if they have just arrived from the aforementioned battle. When the camera zooms in on Hippolyta, she is seen clenching her left shoulder as if she is indeed physically hurt and looks down rather embarrassed and in distress. When Theseus says “Hippolyta, I wooed you with my sword, and won your love doing you injuries”, he says it with a rather scornful laugh while Hippolyta looks away (Reinhardt).

On Hippolyta’s dress there is a snake made from cloth that reaches to her right arm and goes from her hand to her right shoulder (Figure 1). Hippolyta is zoomed in so that the audience sees only her, which makes the audience more invested in her misery (Bays). To the snake, many symbolic properties have been assigned. In *A Dictionary of Symbols*, Juan Eduardo Cirlot explains the multiple symbolic meanings a snake has in different cultures. While snakes are viewed as “guardians of the springs of life and immortality, and also of those superior riches of the spirit that are symbolized by hidden treasure” (Cirlot 286), snakes are also “forces of destruction, afflicting all those who have succeeded in crossing the Red Sea and leaving Egypt” (Cirlot 286). The snake, however, is also the symbol of “wisdom of the deeps and of great mysteries” (286). These symbolic properties illustrate Reinhardt’s Hippolyta’s status as an Amazon according to James Calderwood: on the one hand, “noble,

valiant and chaste” (Calderwood 413), but on the other hand a “most excellent [warrior]” (Painter 159).



Figure 1: Hippiolyta (Verree Teasdale) after being conquered by Theseus (Ian Hunter) in battle in Max Reinhardt’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1935).

According to Blavatsky, on the other hand, the snake is “connected with the ‘temptations’ facing those who have overcome the limitations of matter and have entered into the realm of the ‘dryness’ of the spirit” (Blavatsky qtd. in Cirlot 286) and “symbolizes the seduction of strength by matter” (286). This refers to the story of Hercules and Omphale. In this story, Hercules is forced to be a slave by the Delphic Oracle Xenoclea to Omphale for the period of a year (*Diodorus Siculus* IV.20.4.31.6). This story is a comic reversal of gender roles, in which Hercules has to do women’s work and wear women’s clothing (Ovid 2.305). This story is reminiscent of the story about how the Amazons made their male offspring do feminine labor, while women were trained to fight, and correlates with how Hippiolyta is

portrayed in the film adaptation. The theme of the reversal of inferior and superior is evident here.

In addition, in the Bible there is a link between the feminine and the snake. The snake seduces Eve in the Garden of Eden to eat from the forbidden fruit: the apple (Genesis 3.2). Mircea Eliade “regarded Eve as an archaic Phoenician goddess of the underworld who is personified in the serpent (although a better interpretation would be to identify it with the allegorical figure of Lilith, the enemy and temptress of Eve)” (Eliade qtd. in Cirlot 17). This not only indicates the feminine, but also attributes a kind of sexual dominance to Hippolyta.

Eliade also indicates that there are several Ancient Greek and Roman deities that “are represented carrying a snake in one or both of their hands”, such as the Greek Artemis, Hecate and Persephone (17). Eliade links these to the “finely sculpted Cretan priestesses in gold or ivory, and to the mythic figures with snakes for hair”, such as Medusa the Gorgon and the Erinyes (17). This, in addition, probably inspired the Central European belief that “hairs pulled out from the head of a woman under the influence of the moon will be turned into snakes” (17).

Max Reinhardt was born in Baden, Austria (McPeak) in Central Europe, but his film’s environment is set in Ancient Athens. This is why it is likely that it called for an Ancient Greek interpretation in which the snake often symbolized strong female goddesses and vile female creatures. Amazons were said to be the daughters of Ares in Ancient Greek mythology (Just 172), and Artemis, Ares’s sister, who was often categorized as the goddess of hunting, pictured with bow and arrow, also bears close resemblance to the Amazons, who were often depicted with a bow and spear (Matheson 241). The fact that the snake can also be linked to Medusa and the Erinyes could explain why it is only put on Hippolyta at the beginning of the film (after the four lovers are united, her dress has a heart, indicating love): she is no longer a threat to Theseus as a vile feminine creature, but has lost her serpent influence. As Eve

became the companion of Adam, who was made “from” him (“Genesis” 3.2), so does Hippolyta eventually become Theseus’s companion. This would also explain why she shows such looks of dismay towards Theseus in the beginning, but seems happier to be with him in the end.

In an extra scene, Hippolyta is depicted standing next to a pillar in a sky-high castle wearing a similar dress with another snake. She stands there majestically, as the queen of the Amazons, when Theseus approaches wearing traditional clothing from the Early Modern period, with a high collar and puffed shoulders, and touches her, but Hippolyta does not seem to enjoy his presence. Later on, she posits herself on the throne next to Theseus with a content smile. This depiction, as in Shakespeare’s *Dream*, leaves Hippolyta as a rather ambiguous character: although she seems to enjoy the power of being a queen in Athens, she also looks discontent when speaking of their wedding night and humiliated by being defeated in combat by Theseus. At the end of the film, Hippolyta’s discontent appears to have changed, however, and she looks happier to be with Theseus. She smiles at Theseus as he pronounces the marriage between the lovers and walks off with him. Although she has grown fonder of Theseus and their marriage, most likely because he is portrayed in such a benevolent manner, she retains most of her initial attitude. This film appears to be indicating very strongly that there was a dispute in the beginning, but as Titania and Oberon solved their argument, so did Theseus and Hippolyta, and they are now happy together.

In Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) Hippolyta and Theseus’s marriage is indeed something held together by “law, tradition, and religious belief”, as it showed a very unhappy Hippolyta who is not looking forward to marrying Theseus, who conquered her by “law” (Cherlin 40). She is eventually depicted as a happy wife to Theseus, as if she ultimately did grow fond of him. Although Shakespeare’s *Dream* is essentially about love overruling the law, as Hermia finally does get to marry Lysander even though her father, by law, wanted her to marry

another man, this does nothing for Hippolyta's marriage: Hippolyta was still "wooded" "with [Theseus's] sword" and her "love" was "won" "doing [her] injuries" (*Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.1.17-18). She was won in battle, and, whether she really loved Theseus or not, she had no right to refuse him.

In Peter Hall's *Dream* (1968), Hippolyta's portrayal has shifted drastically from Reinhardt's, while Theseus has remained largely the same. In this film adaptation, Hippolyta's unhappiness to be conquered and her looks of discontent are replaced by warm smiles of love. What is most interesting about this depiction is that she seems exceedingly happy to be with Theseus and looks as if she cannot wait to be married to him. Although she is still wearing a leather outfit with long boots and a snake arm bracelet, which indicate some kind of armor, and her hair is tied in a long braid, she does not have the same remorseful attitude that Reinhardt's Hippolyta has. Reviewers have condemned Hippolyta's costume as something that was "clearly not what Shakespeare intended the Queen of the Amazons to wear", and that her whole persona no longer resembles that of an Amazon (Zarafshar). Upon speaking of the "night of our solemnities", she does not look discontent, but instead looks far off into the distance with a slight smile, as if she is imagining it (Hall). Where Reinhardt's Hippolyta and Theseus lack in physical contact, so do Hall's Hippolyta and Theseus stand very close together and constantly gaze into each other's eyes. In Hall's *Dream* (1968), although she is the conquered Amazon, she looks at him lovingly and as if she cannot wait until their wedding night.

The shift from unwanted love to a marriage done exactly for love² appears to correlate with how the marriage ideology changed between 1935 and 1968. Around the 1960s, education often came before marriage, women continued to do paid work until after they were married, and "[c]ohabitation outside marriage became much more acceptable", in addition,

² As indicated before in Chapter 2, in Peter Hall's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1968), Hippolyta appears to have gone with Theseus because she was in love with him, thereby deserting her fellow sisters.

“[c]hildbearing outside marriage became less stigmatized” (40). Divorce also rose and “same-sex partnerships” became acceptable (40). In this time, the individual became progressively more important than the idea of family, and people in unhappy marriages started looking for emotional fulfillment rather than economic stability (40-41).

Hippolyta’s shift from a woman reluctant to marry in Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) to a woman looking forward to it in Hall’s *Dream* (1969) correlates with the rise of the women’s movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The ideology of marriage depended largely on gender criticism that had started emerging around this time. In both the United States and the United Kingdom, a similar movement emerged that called for the rights of women. The Western women’s movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s focused on “women’s experience under patriarchy, the long tradition of male rule in society which silenced women’s voices, distorted their lives, and treated their concerns as peripheral” (Rivkin and Ryan 765). It was due to the women’s movement that the living situation and marriage conditions changed. The very idea that Hippolyta was conquered in battle by Theseus and therefore has to marry him because he literally won her over, as Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) indicates, is something that perfectly denotes the “patriarchy” in which women’s opinions were muted. Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935), although filmed after the law for women’s suffrage was passed in 1920 in the United States, still perceived Hippolyta’s marriage as an unhappy one that needed to be ‘fixed’. It was still acceptable that she was “wooned” by sword and her punishment was that she had to marry Theseus. In the United Kingdom, there were similar calls for gender equality as there were in the United States. Many women’s rights organizations emerged, such as Women’s Social and Political Union, Women’s Freedom League, and the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (Smith xviii, 3, 44). There were rather violent protests that called for women’s suffrage in the early 1900s, and eventually the United Kingdom agreed on a law that gave suffrage to women over 30, and

later on extended this to all men and women (88). Hall's *Dream* (1935), which was right in the middle of the height of the feminist movements, could no longer depict Hippolyta as a warrior woman who was humiliated in battle because she was conquered by a man and therefore had to marry him. Instead, she became a loving woman who left with Theseus.

The 1960s marked the beginning of what is known as Second Wave Feminism. Second Wave Feminism started in the United States, but gradually spread to the Western World as well. In the 1960s women, such as writers, urged women to reach for economic independence (Nicholson 17). Most importantly, however, because of this, changes in the law occurred in both the United States and the United Kingdom: (1) the Equal Pay Act, which took effect in 1964 in the United States and 1970 in the United Kingdom, established fairness of salary for men and women who did the same work (Herman 51; Machin and Manning 321), (2) the additional Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the United States caused it to be illegal to discriminate on the grounds of sex for employment (Loevy 29).

Feminist movements also fought for the right to abort. Abortion contributed to the idea that women needed to be in control of their own bodies: it was their body and therefore they had the right to do with it as they wanted. In the United Kingdom, the Abortion Act 1967 made abortion officially legal by registered practitioners (Keown 84). In the United States, however, the right to abort was and still remains a complex issue. In 1973, the United States government decided to legalize abortion, but also gave each individual state the right to put various restrictions on the law, such as restricting late term abortions ("World Abortion Policies 2013"). The general idea that women needed to become autonomous and no longer rely on men for economic sustenance is reflected in Hall's Hippolyta and Theseus because, even though they marry by law, they do so because they are in love, thus removing Hippolyta's *need* to get married. This autonomy is also reflected in how Hermia and Helena are portrayed, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

In Michael Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Hippolyta appears to be happy to wed Theseus just like Hall's Hippolyta, but rejects him nevertheless because she wants to maintain her purity. Here, the allusion towards Hippolyta as an Amazon appears to have almost completely disappeared. The lines "Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword, // And won thy love doing thee injuries" (*Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.1.17-18) that are so apparent in Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) and are the only allusion in the play to the fact that Theseus conquered Hippolyta in battle and thereby won her as a bride, are left out in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999). Instead, Hippolyta and Theseus are happy lovers about to be wed, who cannot wait until "the night of [their] solemnities" (Hoffman). In this film adaptation, the dispute between Theseus and Hippolyta is only centered on Hermia's fate. Although Hippolyta is initially not present at the trial, she comes in when Theseus pronounces Hermia's options. When Theseus bids her to come, she looks angry and walks off into a different direction. At the end of the movie, it is ultimately her voice that urges Theseus to allow the lovers to be wed. When they are riding towards the forest together, they stumble upon the lovers, who explain their story. When Demetrius speaks of how his love for Hermia has completely faded, and he now only loves Helena, Theseus and Hippolyta exchange looks, after which they consult quietly aside of the rest. Hippolyta appears angry, but when Theseus agrees to have the lovers wed, she smiles. Hippolyta has convinced Theseus to overrule the existing law and let Hermia and Lysander, and Demetrius and Helena marry. Instead of their dispute being solved as Titania and Oberon solved theirs, as in Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), their dispute is not solved until the Athenian law has been overruled by love. Instead of a dispute caused by supernatural means such as Titania and Oberon, a tangible issue causes their dispute: the law. Hoffman's Hippolyta expresses her happiness about the fact that true love has conquered, but her smile disappears when she sees Egeus getting up angrily. Love has conquered the law, but at the cost of someone else: Egeus.

In Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Hippolyta's autonomy has increased. Hoffman's Theseus and Hippolyta seem in love and they want to get married soon, just as in Hall's *Dream* (1968). However, Hippolyta has not been "wooed" by Theseus with his "sword", and instead they are just lovers who are looking forward to being wed. Although Hoffman's Hippolyta behaves as a girl not willing to give up her chastity, her later defiance in Hermia's case does leave its mark on Theseus. Although she does not have the power to pronounce Hermia's sentence herself, her opinion does have a great effect on Theseus, as their relationship is not happy again until Hermia and Lysander are wed. The removal of the idea that Hippolyta was captured or slain in battle makes Hippolyta's marriage to Theseus correlate with marriage for love instead of economy.

This autonomy correlates with how Hermia and Helena are portrayed as well. In Shakespeare's *Dream*, Adrian Montrose argues that Hermia attempts to retain her autonomy by choosing who to give her body to, thereby taking it away from her lord and father (Montrose 67). This is also represented the same way in the film adaptations. In Hoffman's *Dream*, the emphasis on Hermia's free choice to give her body to whom she wants is even enhanced due to Hippolyta's interest. In this film adaptation, the male characters fail to retain property over female bodies and thereby fail to retain their authority. This is in accordance with feminist movements that wanted women to pursue female autonomy and thereby delayed marriage due to education and work: women called for possession of their own bodies.

On the other hand, the introduction of Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) clearly stated that "[p]arents are rigid" and "[m]arriage is seldom a matter of love", which makes Hermia's case a very common one. Hippolyta's interest in having her case have a good outcome for Hermia makes her then ahead of her time as she fights for the rights of her female comrades. Hippolyta, having scored a marriage based on mutual love, wants the same for Hermia, and fights to get it done. In this way, her Amazon warrior-like status still comes forth.

Hippolyta and Theseus's relationship has changed drastically over the years, and this correlates with marriage ideologies that stemmed from both economic and feminist changes. The greatest changes over the years were the depictions of Hippolyta. In Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), Hippolyta is a conquered Amazon and a humiliated female warrior, but in Hall's *Dream* (1968) she has abandoned her Amazon sisters to pursue her love for Theseus, and in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) she is no longer an Amazon and just in love with Theseus, while insisting the Athenian law needs to be altered. This is in accordance with how the view on marriage changed over the years: emotional bonds became increasingly more important in marriage as marriage for economic reasons became less important, and people became gradually more independent in their living situations. These changing marriage conditions appear to be due to feminist movements, which urged women to be autonomous and frequently demonstrated against laws that promoted the inequality of gender. The result of these movements, the shift in marriage ideologies, correlates with how gender is portrayed in the film adaptations, as Hippolyta and Theseus's relationship allows Hippolyta to marry for love, and even makes Theseus defy the existing law because the woman he loves wants him to, and he can then allow Hermia to marry the man she loves. Although these film adaptations correlate with historical, economic and political movements, it also reflects the trend in marriage and love portrayed in popular media: films, despite the increasing autonomy of women towards marriage, still depicted marriage as the desired final outcome.

In addition, when looking at the trend in film adaptations of Shakespeare from the 1990s onward, it becomes clear that Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) is a reflection of a cultural trend that eliminated gender offensiveness. Stephen Buhler argues that Hoffman, like Kenneth Branagh, has a "keen desire not to offend, especially where gender is concerned" (Buhler 49). According to Buhler, the shift in portrayal of male and female characters is in accord with a trend to which both Hoffman and Branagh contribute:

I would argue that both directors would rather be dully inoffensive than controversial: they want to forestall possible criticism of the plays and of their films not for being dull, but for being sexist, for perpetuating unenlightened views of women. They are anxious, first and foremost, that women in the potential audience will not be alienated from seeing their motion pictures; to avoid this, they take pains to present the principal male characters of the play—and, by extension, the plays themselves and their playwright—as exceptionally nice, sensitive guys. (49-50)

Buhler claims Branagh and Hoffman “seek to take ‘the rage out of feminism’ preemptively by eliminating from the plays male attitudes and behavior that could provoke justifiable outrage” (50). Hoffman’s portrayal of Hippolyta and Theseus indeed shows that, as Shakespeare’s original text was rather denigrating towards women as it put Hippolyta in a patriarchal marriage she did not want, he “rewrites the play with an eye toward gender inoffensiveness from the very beginning” (51). Branagh does this in a similar manner when depicting Claudio and Don Pedro in his film adaptation *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993). Other film adaptations of Shakespeare’s works in the 1990s have sought to remove gender offensiveness as well. For example, the high school film adaptation *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), directed by Gil Junger and based on Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, is about Katherina Stratford, a young feminist, who is cruel to her fellow students and refuses to go out on a date, and Bianca Stratford, Kat’s younger sister who desperately wants to go out on a date. Their father comes up with a plan: “Bianca can date, if [Katherina] does”, after which Bianca’s suitor Cameron James urges Bianca’s other suitor, Joey Donner, to pay Patrick Verona, an individual with a notorious reputation, to seduce Katherina. In this film adaptation, Patrick Verona agrees to take out Katherina for the money, but eventually falls in love with her and refuses to accept more money. Katherina finds out that Joey Donner has been paying Patrick to take her out on

dates, and harshly rejects him for it. Eventually, Patrick spends the money he made by going out on dates with her on a present for Katherina, and she forgives him. As in Branagh's *Much Ado* (1991) and Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Junger's *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) removes any gender offensiveness that critics have argued is present in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, and replaced it with a genuinely likable Petruchio (Patrick) who somehow repents for his actions towards Katherina at the end of the film by giving her a present. Another film adaptation that sought to eliminate gender offensiveness is Julie Taymor's *The Tempest* (2010), which cast Helen Mirren as Prospero, or Prospera, thus adding another female character aside of Miranda. Prospera and Miranda then form a kind of feminine alliance against the men who visit their island, in order to get revenge. Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) is clearly part of a cultural movement from the 1990s onward in which film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays change outdated cultural values for fear of overly sexist portrayals.

However, despite changes of marriage ideology in real life, the ideal remained largely the same in the course of film history. At the moment, the Disney films *Frozen* (2013) and *Brave* (2012), for example, have received much praise regarding their unconventional endings that do not end with a wedding or a couple about to be wed, but on the whole, the silver screen posited marriage as the desired final chapter in a love story or the desired next chapter to a film that ends with a happy relationship. Virginia Wexman indicates that "romantic love in Hollywood has traditionally been seen as properly culminating in marriage; thus, these films are overwhelmingly preoccupied with what received Hollywood wisdom knows as its most reliable formula: boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl" (Wexman 3-4). In addition, Raymond Bellour has identified this pattern which he calls "the creation of the couple" and has found that it "constitutes, the classical American cinema as a whole" (Bellour qtd. in Bergstrom 88). Disney's famous line: "And they lived happily ever after" (Du Plessis

2) remained the ending most films wanted to achieve. Most of the romantic comedies produced by Hollywood, ranging between 1900 and 2000, such as for example *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), *Runaway Bride* (1999), and *Pretty Woman* (1990) all end in couplings that implicate a “happily ever after”, even though actual marriage numbers indicate that marriage became increasingly less important. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* indicates that around 85 per cent of Hollywood films released before 1960 are centered on a romantic story, and around 95 per cent have at least a minor plot involving romance (Wexman 3).

All three adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, even Hoffman's, in which the four young Athenian lovers are still ultimately wed in order to celebrate their newfound love for each other, appear to be part of this trend. As in many Hollywood films, the film does not end with their actual wedding, but instead with an implied “happily ever after”. As relationships between men and women became centered on love instead of a financial issue, so did this shift occur in the portrayal of Hippolyta and Theseus's marriage. However, although society's marriage behavior became increasingly individualistic, its portrayal in films remained rather centered on achieving a happy marriage in the end. What is very strongly present in Hoffman's *Dream*, however, is the fact that love overrules the law. Not only does the coupling of Helena and Demetrius overrule Egeus's will of Hermia to marry Demetrius, Hippolyta's plight for Hermia to marry who she wants overrules Theseus's earlier decision. It is partly Theseus's love for Hippolyta that allows Hermia's will to overrule the law. Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) and Hall's *Dream* (1968), thereby, even though they were released at a time when marriage became less desirable in society and people became increasingly individualistic, are a reflection of the Hollywood trend that depicted romantic marriage as the preferred conclusion to a film.

When looking at the film trends briefly, and the historical events that transpired before and after, it becomes clear that the idea of marriage for love, which is indicated in Hall's

Dream (1968) and Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) correlates with feminist movements that called for the autonomy of women. Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) still portrays marriage as an instituted union, but the portrayal of marriage in Hoffman's and Hall's *Dream* correlates with marriage ideologies that stemmed from feminist and gender movements. The shift in the portrayal of Hippolyta and Theseus's marriage in these three film adaptations correlates with how ideologies about marriage and relationships changed over time. In addition, as Virginia Wexman indicates, "movies define and demonstrate socially sanctioned ways of falling in love" (Wexman ix). Film trends, therefore, affect ideologies, such as those of marriage and the idea of love, in a similar way as films are affected by these gender movements. Hall's *Dream* (1968) is a product of gender movements that called for autonomy and marriage for love, but Hall's *Dream* (1968) was similarly an advocate of marriage for love by portraying it in this manner, thereby affecting how Hippolyta is portrayed in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) and even the Hollywood trend that called for films ending in happy love and subsequent marriage.

CHAPTER 3.2

Sexuality and Homoeroticism in Film Adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

As indicated in Chapter 2, critics have found a distinct homoerotic subtext in the relationships between Hermia and Helena, Titania and her votaress, and Hippolyta and her Amazon sisters in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Michael Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Peter Hall's *Dream* (1968) and Max Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) translate this homoeroticism differently. These representations of homoeroticism have changed drastically over the years, from almost nonexistent homoerotic exchanges in Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), to physical displays of affection in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999). Along with the increased homoeroticism is also the increased display of nudity: Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) shows little exposed skin compared to Hoffman's and Hall's *Dream* (1968). When looking at historical, political and economic events, there is a correlation between the shift of the portrayal of homoeroticism and the history of sexuality, with the emphasis on homosexuality. In addition, these shifts appear to be a reflection of trends in cinema concerning homosexual and sexual behavior.

Homoeroticism stems from the Greek word *homo* and the Latin word *eros*, which loosely translate to "same" and "love", whereas homosexuality comes from *homo* and the Latin word *sexus*, which means "sex" (*Oxford Dictionaries*). This direct translation, however, proves problematic, as both homoeroticism and homosexuality indicate both a sexual and romantic desire. The main difference between homoeroticism and homosexuality is that homoeroticism "[c]oncerns or arous[es] sexual desire centred on a person of the same sex", while homosexuality implies a lasting sexual condition (*Oxford Dictionaries*). Upon exploring the homoeroticism between female characters in film adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I will therefore focus not on the idea of homosexuality, which would imply the female characters' sexual orientation is to that of the same sex, but instead focus on a

moment encounter between the female characters or a brief period of time in which they were exceptionally close. Although homoeroticism can be considered less permanent, its existence is linked to homosexuality: showing homoeroticism on screen, as in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), calls for an open attitude towards homosexuality. It is relevant to look at how homosexuality developed over the years to understand the presence of homoeroticism in popular media better.

According to Sonya Rose, the “contemporary field of the history of sexuality was influenced by developments in women’s history and feminist history more generally as well as the rise of gay and lesbian rights movements” (S. Rose 24-25). As indicated in the previous essay, the idea of marriage had changed over the years in both the United Kingdom and the United States mostly due to feminist movements that emerged between 1900 and 2000. The ideologies behind marriage changed, because the idea about male and female sexuality changed as well. In the 1960s, the idea of a “same-sex partnership” became acceptable (Cherlin 40), which was because over the years there had been great debate regarding same sex relationships.

The term “sexuality” only appeared at the start of the nineteenth century, however “it does not mark the sudden emergence of that to which ‘sexuality’ refers” (*History of Sexuality Volume 2, 3*). According to Michel Foucault,

[t]he use of the word [sexuality] was established in connection with other phenomena: the development of diverse fields of knowledge (embracing the biological mechanisms of reproduction as well as the individual or social variants of behavior); the establishment of a set of rules and norms—in part traditional, in part new—which found support in religious, judicial, pedagogical and medical institutions; and changes

the way individuals were led to assign meaning and value to their conduct, their duties, their pleasures, their feelings and sensations, their dreams. (3-4)

This indicated that sexuality was not “a constant” (4), and that it could not be viewed as such. The portrayal of sexuality in media stems from how men and women were portrayed in biological science, which is influenced by political and cultural ideas of “gender” (S. Rose 18-19). In medical texts from ancient Greece, Thomas Laqueur found that male and female bodies were regarded as similar, and science and philosophy were dominated by a “one-sex” model that was used for both male and female bodies (Laqueur 8). This body, however, was that of a male body, and women were considered to have the same genitalia, but theirs were simply inside their bodies rather than on the outside. According to Sonya Rose, “[t]his view of sex was in accord with the idea that women were but inferior versions of men” (S. Rose 19).

“[F]rom the sixteenth through the eighteenth century” discourse on sexuality focused mainly on sexual relations outside of marriage, such as homosexuality (S. Rose 27). From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, sexual relations became limited, posing marriage as the desired sexual relation and sodomy as the evil contrast to this (26). Randolph Trumbach researched a shift in sexual identities of men in England in the period between 1680 to 1790, which proved that “[d]uring the first decades of the eighteenth century, [...], male sexual practices came to be seen as either exclusively heterosexual activity or sodomy” (Trumbach qtd. in S. Rose 27). Here, “sodomites” became something similar to a third gender, next to women and men (27). During this time, an “increasing emphasis on heterosexuality as a crucial component of manliness” emerged, which was compared to the “sodomites” who were the others (28).

For women, this distinction was not made as clear as for men. Martha Vicinus indicated that women’s sexualities have been fluid and that there is a kind of “continuum of women’s sexual behaviors, in which lesbian sexuality can be both a part of and apart from

normative heterosexual marriage and child-bearing” (Vicinus 2). Vicinus used letters, diaries and court testimonies to illustrate how women’s sexual identities can be comprehended between 1778 to 1928.

At this time, the term ‘homosexual’ emerged, and a man who would previously be condemned as a “perpetrator” of “sodomy”, would now become a new species: a “homosexual” (Foucault 43). Rose argues that “homosexuality as it is understood today, as a presumed state of being that defines the identities of people who engage in same-sex intimacies, would have made no sense in the past” because past interest in sexual relations were only to regulate for the sake of “reproduction and inheritance” (S. Rose 25). In the 1890s the gay subculture emerged in New York. This was when the terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” were officially coined (Foucault 43, 45). Although the process of its codification began earlier:

[v]arious Victorian public discourses, notably the psychiatric and the legal, fostered a designation or invention of the ‘homosexual’ as a distinct category of individuals, a category solidified by the publications of sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebin (1840-1902) and Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), sexologists who provided an almost-pathological interpretation of the phenomenon in rather Essentialist terms, an interpretation that led, before 1910, to hundreds of articles on the subject in the Netherlands, Germany, and elsewhere. (Kaylor 33)

Around this time, the Criminal Law Amendment Act was created, which criminalized “any act of gross indecency with another male person” (Johnson and Vanderbeck 36-37). Although many people defended homosexuality, they did so with a secret identity for fear of prosecution. The Order of Chaeronea, founded in 1897 by George Cecil Ives, campaigned for the legalization of homosexuality (Penczak 24).

In the 1910s and 1920s, the phenomenon of “fairy culture” emerged in Greenwich Village and Harlem (S. Rose 28). However, in 1931 *The Repeal of Prohibition*, which fought for the prohibition of the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages, started a “crusade of repression against gays and lesbians, who were now seen as degenerate” (28).

Reinhardt’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1935) was released right in the middle of the hate against homosexuals, which correlates with why there is no reference to Hermia and Helena’s intimate friendship: in a society in which homosexuality was widely regarded as “degenerate” and “sodomy”, portraying it in a playful manner could tarnish the director and cast’s reputation. Just before Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) was released, the Motion Picture Production Code, also known as the Hays Code, was enforced (Jeff 285). This code contained many guidelines for the release of a film in Hollywood that was adopted by the Motion Picture Association of America, such as what was acceptable and unacceptable content for films for the public in the United States (285). It was essentially a code for directors to follow in order to prevent their works from becoming censored. A few key points of this code are directly linked to Reinhardt’s adaptation. The Production Code contained strict constraints for the showing of nudity, ‘devious’ sexual behavior and sexual gestures. The Production Code stated, first of all, that “[t]he sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld” and that “[p]ictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing” (Jeff 287). It indicated some specific censure for “[a]dultery”, “[s]cenes of [p]assion” and “[s]eduction or [r]ape”: “[a]dultery” should not be “explicitly treated, or justified, or presented attractively”, while “[s]cenes of passion” should always be “essential to the plot” and should not include “[e]xcessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive posture and gestures”, and “[s]eduction or [r]ape” should never be shown explicitly (287).

Scenes containing “[a]dultery”, “[s]cenes of [p]assion” and scenes with “[s]eduction or [r]ape” vary greatly between Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) and Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935),

both produced in Hollywood. As Melissa Sanchez argues, sexual desires in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are rather ambiguous, and especially Helena aggressively pursues a sexuality that is not considered "normal" (Sanchez 494). Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), as opposed to Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) has a scene in which Helena aggressively pursues Demetrius until he finally nearly physically assaults her.



Figure 2: Helena (Calista Flockhart) pursues Demetrius (Christian Bale) into the forest in Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999).

The adulterous scene, or perhaps even rape scene, between Demetrius and Helena is not depicted explicitly in Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), but in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) Helena and Demetrius almost kiss when Demetrius says he will do her "mischief in the woods" (Figure 2). Demetrius approaches Helena threateningly and she backs away as he speaks of how she should not "impeach her modesty" by committing herself "into the hands of one that loves [her] not" (Hoffman). However, when the two are eventually close together, Helena speaks and actually tries to kiss Demetrius, indicating that she seeks out sexual acts outside of marriage with Demetrius. In Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), although Demetrius speaks that he will do Helena "mischief in the woods", he states it with a chuckle, like it is his last resort to make her stop following him. He also does not touch her. When Helena then continues how

she “should be woo’ed”, Demetrius makes a loud grunting noise and runs off with his hands above his head. The notion of Helena’s “modesty” or “virginity” is not mentioned in Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935). Hoffman’s film adaptation has been said to have a display a distinct erotic sensation and shows a great amount of physical intimacy compared to both Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) and Halls’ *Dream* (1968). According to Peter Stack, “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* [(1999)] is a playful, sexy piece of work-just what the Bard might have conjured up for a film adaptation of his beloved spring-fever comedy. The film is over the top-and willfully so” (Stack). When looking at the previously discussed and the following scenes, it becomes clear in what way Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) portrays “[s]cenes of [p]assion” and scenes containing “[s]eduction or [r]ape” as compared to Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935).

During Lysander and Hermia’s first night in the forest in Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999), Lysander seems annoyed at Hermia’s decision to sleep in another place as him. The camera zooms in on Hermia as she is taking her overcoat off and sits in only her undergarments. Lysander’s face piques interest and in the next scene he is seen touching her bosom until Hermia pushes him away. Here, Lysander is naked while Hermia is still not overly exposed (Figure 3 and 4). When Lysander says “Oh, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence”, Hermia chuckles shyly and looks at Lysander’s exposed penis, after which he covers it up and laughs. Here, there is a joke on the word “innocence”, indicating that Lysander’s intentions are not at all innocent, but rather clearly sexual.



Figure 3: Lysander (Dominic West) touches Hermia's (Anna Friel) bosom during their first night in the forest in Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999).



Figure 4: Lysander (Dominic West) approaches Hermia (Anna Friel) during their first night in the forest in Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999).

In Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), Lysander also approaches Hermia when she has found her bed, but does not do this so boldly as Hoffman's Lysander, who posits herself on top of Hermia and touches her breasts. Reinhardt's Lysander places his head on Hermia's shoulder as he indicates that they could sleep together, but otherwise remains at a distance (Figure 5 and 6). This shift of portrayal of physical intimacy in “[s]cenes of [p]assion” and scenes containing “[s]eduction or [r]ape” in Reinhardt's and Hoffman's adaptation, correlates with the

establishment and abolition of the Production Code. It is, in addition, also linked to the Production Code's restrictions on showing nudity.



Figure 5 and 6: Hermia and Lysander (Olivia de Havilland and Dick Powell) in the forest in Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935)



Figure 7 and 8: Lysander's (Dominic West) exposed body parts in Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999).

The Production Code contained restrictions for nudity, and suggested that “[c]omplete nudity is never permitted”, which included “nudity in fact or in silhouette, or any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other character in the picture”, and that “[i]ndecent or undue exposure is forbidden” (Jeff 288). Nudity “has been inseparable from sex and sexuality” in western culture and it has “been located adjacent to the indecent, the obscene and the immoral” (55). When looking at figure 3-6, the difference in the display of nudity between Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) and Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) is clear: Hoffman’s Lysander is nude and Hermia is in her undergarments, while Reinhardt’s Lysander and Hermia are fully clothed. By looking at the following examples, this chapter will show how the nudity in Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) can be comical, but most of it is erotically charged, compared to Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935). First of all, Hoffman’s Lysander is only covered by a loin cloth after his first night with Hermia in the forest, and remains this way for the rest of the film (Figure 7 and 8). Critics have argued that Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) is not “taking any chances” and tries to incorporate “bare-chested” actors as often as possible (Maslin 69) and showed the “most nubile actors [...] discreetly naked in the woods the morning after” (70). Lysander’s constantly exposed skin makes him vulnerable compared to the rest of the characters, and makes his actions more comic as he tries to pursue Helena.

At the end of Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999), the four lovers are found completely nude at the side of the forest (Figure 9 and 10), each one coupled with their love and lying close together. Helena’s breasts are covered only by poppy flower petals and Hermia’s breasts are covered by her arm (Figure 9 and 10). The genitalia of the four lovers are also covered by arms or legs. However, even though the film does not show the actual genitalia of the lovers, the lovers are completely nude and only due to the angle of the camera does the audience not see their nipples and genitalia. Figure 9 and 10 show the nude lovers in intimate and erotic positions, as Helena and Demetrius are ‘spooning’ and Hermia is sleeping on top of

Lysander's exposed chest. In addition, figure 3 shows Lysander and Hermia in a rather erotic position as well, as Lysander is on top of her and touching her breasts. The fact that the lovers are naked at the end of the film gives the line "I pray you all stand up" uttered by Theseus a distinctly more comic effect (*Midsummer Night's Dream* 4.1.134). After Theseus says it, the lovers look around uncertain what to do, but eventually get up, trying to cover their genitalia and breasts with their clothes. The camera then switches to show the backsides of the characters, which are covered incidentally by flowers and grass.



Figure 9 and 10: Hermia, Lysander, Helena and Demetrius (Anna Friel, Dominic West, Calista Flockhart and Christian Bale) are found nude at the side of the woods by Hippolyta, Theseus and Egeus in Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999).



Figure 11 and 12: Helena, Hermia, Lysander and Demetrius (Calista Flockhart, Anna Friel, Dominic West and Christian Bale) standing up in front of Theseus, Hippolyta and Egeus and trying to cover their genitalia with their clothes in Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999).

Aside from the four lovers's nudity, Titania and Bottom also appear nude in erotic positions in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999). When Titania seduces Bottom, she is completely nude, but her breasts are covered by her long, blond hair (Figure 13), and Bottom's chest is exposed as well. The two are subsequently together in a sexual position after their wedding, in which Bottom is lying on top of Titania (Figure 14). This same scene is depicted rather different in Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), in which both Titania and Bottom are fully clothed (Figure 15) and Titania is cradling Bottom lovingly like a child and singing to him (Figure 16).



Figure 13: Titania (Michelle Pfeiffer) seducing Bottom (Kevin Kline) in Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999)



Figure 14: Titania and Bottom (Michelle Pfeiffer and Kevin Kline) in an erotic position in Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999).



Figure 15 and 16: Titania (Anita Louise) cradling Bottom (James Cagney) in her arms and singing to him after their wedding in Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935).

While Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) is not completely devoid of nudity, as Puck runs around bare-chested, the nudity is not as erotic as in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999). Reinhardt's Puck is a child and is not found in sexual positions, like the four young lovers or Titania and Bottom in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), so this does not display the same kind of erotic nudity. The only nudity connected with sexual desire in Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) is Hermia and Helena's bosoms, which, compared to Hoffman's Hermia, are only barely exposed (Figure 17 and 18). When Lysander is chasing Helena, he is wearing only a loin cloth, and while some consider this kind of nudity "harmless amusement", like Rob Cover argues is also present in *Lost and Found* (1999), it can also easily be considered "an inappropriate display of sexuality or [...] a prompt for masturbatory fantasy" (Cover 54). Nudity in films has been the basis of much outrage and aggravation, yet around the 1980s the media started depicting nudity in scenes that required it, such as in *The Blue Lagoon* (1980), in which two young people who are shipwrecked on an island discover their sexuality, or *La Belle Noiseuse* (1991), and *Titanic* (1997). Although the 1960s sparked a number of films that depicted graphic nudity, these were considered to be films of lower quality that were frequently played at "grindhouse" theatres (Sconce 42). The use of excessive nudity made a film less certain of success, due to the sexual connotations that accompany it.

There is less nudity in Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) because of the Production Code, but this code, in turn, was created due to ideas about sexuality. Tanya Krzywinska, in addition, argues in *Sex and the Cinema* that

[i]t is clear from the ubiquitous presence of sex in cinema that it has a strong seductive power and it may well provide images and ideas that affect our own expectations and fantasies about sex, sexuality and desire. Representations of sex and sexuality in

cinema have therefore been regarded as having the potential to destabilise dominant mores about sex and desire. (Krzywinska 2)

Cinema is a means to shape people's ideas about sex and sexuality. The establishment of the Production Code, therefore, aside of being a product of society, has a distinct effect on how society's idea of sex and sexuality are shaped.

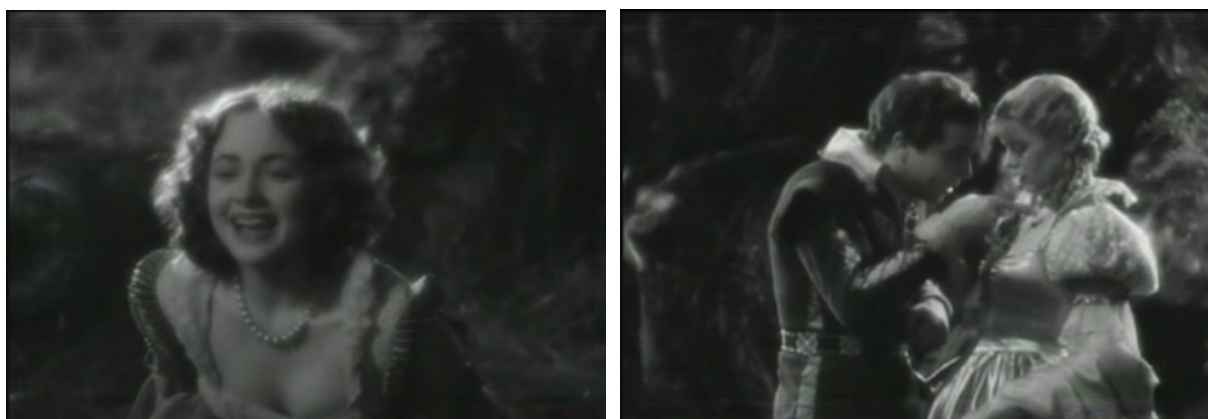


Figure 17: Hermia's (Olivia de Havilland) slightly exposed bosom in Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935).

Figure 18: Lysander (Dick Powell) pointing at Helena's bosom (Jean Muir) in Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935).

A form of sexuality that was censored by the Production Code was homosexual acts. The Production Code stated that “[s]ex perversion or any inference to it is forbidden” (Jeff 287). Films were urged to hint at sexual relations within the desired heterosexual marriage union, but any allusions to adultery or “[s]ex perversions” were illegal. These sex perversions link to any kind of sex acts that were considered perverted. As indicated before, a homosexual act was considered “gross indecency” and generally perverted around the time in which Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) was released (Johnson and Vanderbeck 36-37). The Production Code made portraying homosexuality in a motion picture obscene, and, thus, had an

immediate effect on the portrayal of homosexuality and sexuality in Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935).

When comparing Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) and Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), it becomes clear that Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) has a distinct homoerotic undertone, while Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) has removed the allusions towards homoeroticism that were found by many critics in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), clearly references a homoerotic relationship between Hippolyta and the two young lovers, Hermia and Helena, while also subsequently paying attention to the homoerotic relationship between Hermia and Helena, and Titania and her votaress.

Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) does not pay attention to Hippolyta's homoerotic relationship with other women in the play, but Hoffman's Hippolyta shows a distinct interest in Hermia and Helena. She not only physically expresses her love for Helena at the end of the film, when Helena tells her of how the events of the forest came to pass, but also spends the whole film fighting with Theseus for Hermia's right to marry who she loves. During Hermia's trial, she arrives when Lysander starts speaking of how Demetrius had "made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena" and how Helena is now devoutly in love with him because of this (Hoffman). After hearing Hermia's choices, the camera shows Hippolyta looking concerned, and she walks off when Theseus bids her to come. When looking at how homoeroticism in the film adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is portrayed, Hippolyta's presence as a sexual entity contributes to Hermia and Helena's bond as well as Titania and her votaress's. While Hippolyta is not depicted as an Amazon in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), her Amazon-like bond with Hermia and Helena is implied much stronger than in Reinhardt's, making her mentally an Amazon woman in the sense that she is progressive and cares for her female comrades. Hoffman's Hippolyta exercises power over Theseus by making him overrule the "ancient law" of Athens (Hoffman) and thereby shows her strength. At the end of the film it is

Hippolyta who speaks first upon finding the lovers, as she says Theseus's line: "But soft. What nymphs are these?" (Hoffman, *Midsummer Dream* 4.1.119), and who later on speaks with the lovers about how they found their love:

DEMETRIUS: These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds. (*Midsummer Dream* 4.1.180-181)

HELENA: And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
Mine own and not mine own. (*Midsummer Dream* 4.1.185-186)

Here, no extra lines were added. Instead, Hoffman used the lines uttered after Egeus, Hippolyta and Theseus leave the lovers, and removed those parts that indicated the fact that the lovers are not sure what really just happened. Now, Helena and Demetrius happily say the above lines to Hippolyta at the feast, while Lysander stands behind them and listens with a smile. The lines now indicate how they have found each other, and that how it came to pass does not matter, if it concerns love. Hippolyta then embraces Helena and kisses her on her cheek. She stands up and holds Lysander happily before going to Hermia and embracing her and kissing her on the cheek as well. Here, although the homoeroticism is implied in the fact that she kisses the girls and not the boys, she appears to act as Hermia and Helena's mother. As indicated before, both Hermia and Helena's mothers are not mentioned in Shakespeare's *Dream* (M. Rose 292). Adrian Montrose, in turn, links the mother-daughter relationship to the "kinship bond" between Amazons (Montrose 70), as Amazons passed on their heritage to their daughters and not their sons. Here, Hippolyta functions as a mother figure to both Hermia and Helena to compensate for their missing mother.

In Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), prior to their first meeting, Helena is depicted standing outside Demetrius's window, shouting his name to make him come outside. He hears the shouts and looks out the window, but closes the window when he sees it is Helena. Helena, scorned by this, enters the soliloquy of self-pity that in Shakespeare's and Hall's *Dream* (1968), she starts after meeting Hermia and Lysander. She is therefore already angry before Hermia and Lysander tell her of their plan to escape Athens to get married. Here, Helena utters the words "Call you me fair?" in an angry and mocking way, as if Hermia is ridiculous for calling her "fair" (Hoffman). Hoffman's Helena comes across as desperate and therefore aggressive. When she continues "Demetrius loves your fair!", she seems to act as a spoiled child who is not given what she wants and blames Hermia for it (Hoffman). She seems angry with Hermia but at the same time admires her. Hoffman's Helena appears to be torn between hating Hermia because she is loved by Demetrius and loving her because she is her friend.

Helena's response to Hermia's claim that Demetrius's love is "no folly of mine", "[n]one but your beauty", results in a lingering look to Hermia, indicating a definite appreciation for Hermia's physique. This is the same appreciation that Hippolyta appears to be expressing at the end of the play as well. Here, she kisses Hermia on her cheek, but their faces remain close together and Hippolyta's glance shifts to Hermia's body. As indicated by Adrian Montrose, Hermia wishes the small privilege of giving her body to whom she wants, and therefore wants to be married before doing so. Lysander, however, keeps kissing and touching Hermia until she tells him to lie further off, "for love and courtesy" (Hoffman). In Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Hermia's body becomes an object of eroticism for male and female characters. While Egeus and Demetrius want it to enhance their authority, Demetrius, Helena and Lysander also desire it for its beauty.

As one critic puts it, due to the fact that Hoffman's Helena and Hermia are portrayed in such a different acting method, where Helena is desperate and angry, and Hermia is calm

and distant, it is difficult to “really believe for a second that this Helena and Hermia are close friends” (Cabat 2). What is decidedly present in Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) is a distinct homoerotic feeling stemming mostly from Helena, which cannot be found in the same physical way as in Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1968).

What has the most homoerotic subtext in Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) is the kiss between Hermia and Helena. In the film, Egeus starts calling Hermia when she is talking with Helena and Lysander. Hermia quickly says goodbye to Helena by placing a hand on her cheek and kissing her on the lips. After this, she kisses Lysander goodbye in a slightly longer kiss, but in which she also similarly places her hand on his cheek. She quickly leaves, and so does Lysander after showing Helena a picture Hermia gave of herself. Helena pulls a face upon seeing the image and starts crying when Lysander leaves her alone, stating “[a]s you on him, Demetrius dote on you” (Hoffman) after which Helena exclaims “Oh spite!”. This interaction between these three characters can definitely be interpreted as homoerotic. While Helena and Hermia’s kiss seems a kiss out of friendship at first, it is Helena who grabs for Hermia’s waist right before Hermia turns away to say goodbye to Lysander so she can answer to her father. This, the way Helena rolls her eyes upon seeing how in love Lysander and Hermia are, and her lingering look when admiring Hermia’s beauty, makes Helena’s feelings for Hermia appear more than just friendly. Although it is Helena’s role to be jealous of Hermia, and jealous of the relationship she has, it almost seems as if Helena wants the possession of Hermia’s physique just as Egeus and Demetrius desire it. In Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999), the homoeroticism becomes explicit and physical. The fact that the girls seem less close friends only enhances the homosexual desire. This is a good example of how films tend to “show” interpretation: by having Helena and Hermia engage in physical contact, the implied homoeroticism in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is shown, instead of hinted at.

In Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), there is no homoeroticism between the girls. Lysander and Demetrius hit each other to see who gets to wave at Hermia. Here, Helena does not meet Hermia and Lysander before they go into the woods, so there is no indication towards their friendship. When Lysander and Demetrius indicate that they love Helena, Helena does not think for a moment that it is true. In this film, the only allusion towards Hermia and Helena being friends is that Helena says she should not scorn her "friend" in this way (Reinhardt). There is no further comment about their time together and their love for each other is not expressed.

In addition, in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) there is a distinct reference to the homoerotic relationship between Titania and her votaress, while this is not emphasized in Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935). As soon as Hoffman's Titania starts speaking of her votaress, a soft melody starts playing that accompanies her story in a melancholic manner. Upon remembering their time together, Titania smiles and laughs and looks out into the distance, indicating that it was indeed a happy time. Her expression turns cold when she speaks of her death because she was "mortal" and she turns to Oberon to tell him "for her sake do I rear up her boy" (Hoffman). The tears in her eyes and the long pause between "and for her sake" and "I will not part with him" emphasizes the severity of the votaress's death and what it meant to her. In Reinhardt's *Dream*, on the other hand, Titania says "his mother was a votaress of my order, and for her sake I will not part with him", but says it in a happy way only to defy Oberon.

On a different note, in Peter Hall's *Dream* (1968), the portrayal of homoeroticism, nudity and sex is different from both Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) and Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935). Hall's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1968) was released at the start of the more radical Gay Liberation movements in the United Kingdom. As it was released after the Sexual Offences Bill had been passed, it could indicate a more liberal approach towards the homoeroticism in Shakespeare's play. According to Sarah Hatchuel, Hall's *Dream* (1968)

“emerges out of the stormy 1960s when a whole phalanx of ‘angry young men’ felt that society had cheated and deprived them of their proper place in the world” (Hatchuel 22) and “David Warner’s Lysander in a Nehru jacket stamps him as a grumpy young man, unlikely to trust anyone over thirty” (22). There was stress on the position of men in society because of World War II and the debates on homosexuality for the individual, which was reflected in Hall’s *Dream* (1968).

While this film was not produced in Hollywood, it had similar censorship from other instances. In 1912, the British Board of Film Classification was founded, which began operating in 1913. This was an organization that rated films based on their content and decided whether or not they needed to be censored. It was linked to the Cinematograph Act 1909, which was originally established after a series of fatal fires that erupted in temporary venues which functioned as cinemas (“The 1960s”). The Cinematograph Act 1909 originally only regulated cinemas for health concerns, but eventually became a legal way for local authorities to refuse films on the basis of their content (“The 1960s”). To prevent cinema owners from suffering economic losses from this law, the British Board of Film Classification was established, which qualified films according to criteria which were nationally agreed upon. The censorship from the British Board of Film Classification focused mainly on political messages in films, but also, like the Hays Code, applied censorship for homosexuality and sexual matters (“The 1960s”). During the “sweeping social change of the sixties”, the British Board of Film Classification “still requested cuts, usually to verbal and visual ‘indecentness’” (“The 1960s”). A few examples are Ingmar Bergman’s *The Silence* (1964) and Ken Loach’s *Poor Cow* (1967), which were both rated X because of their discussion of sexual matters (“The 1960s”). The British Board of Film Classification claims they “had never banned the subject of homosexuality from the screen”, but that they did make cuts that involved “nudity and violence” in films such as *Goldfinger* (1963), *Thunderball*

(1965) and the controversial *If...* (1968) (“The 1960s”). The British Board of Film Classification were quicker to censor films from the United Kingdom, than foreign films (“The 1960s”) and therefore Hall’s *Dream* (1968) was subjected to their censorship.



Figure 19 (top left): Titania and Oberon (Judi Dench and Ian Richardson) nude, covered in green paint in Peter Hall’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1968).

Figure 20 (top right): Helena (Diana Rigg) in a mini-dress, sitting in a tree in Peter Hall’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1968).

Figure 21 (bottom left): Titania and Bottom (Judi Dench and Paul Rogers) engaging in what appears to be a sexual act in Peter Hall’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1968).

Figure 22 (bottom right): Titania (Judi Dench) cradling Bottom’s head (Paul Rogers) lovingly in Peter Hall’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1968).

The combination of the censorship by the British Board of Film Classification but the gay liberation movements is reflected in Hall’s *Dream* (1968) as it shows a distinct leap forward in the portrayal of nudity, sex and homoeroticism compared to Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935). First of all, in Hall’s *Dream* (1968), there is an increased amount of nudity compared to Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) as Hall’s Titania and Oberon walk around naked and are painted

green (Figure 19), and Helena and Hermia walk around in mini-dresses, with their long legs exposed (Figure 20). Hall's Titania and Bottom also engage in what appears to be a sexual act, in which Titania places herself over Bottom and appears to be kissing him (Figure 21) and cradles him lovingly while nude (Figure 22). This scene is reminiscent of Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) in which Hoffman's Titania seduces Bottom.

In Hall's *Dream* (1968) it is only Titania and Bottom who engage in a sexual encounter. The only intimate moment Hermia and Lysander have is when Hermia kisses Lysander on his cheek after asking him to lie further off (Figure 23) and Demetrius does not approach Helena when he follows him into the woods. Hall's Demetrius does not seductively approach Helena as he does in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), but instead bluntly states that she should not "impeach" her "modesty" while they stand together in the forest. The scene does not have the same seductive quality as Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) has, as Demetrius makes no attempt to kiss or touch Helena (Figure 24).



Figure 23: Hermia (Helen Mirren) kisses Lysander (David Warner) on his cheek after refusing to sleep close to him in Peter Hall's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1968).

Figure 24: Helena (Diana Rigg) pursuits Demetrius (Michael Jayston) into the forest in Peter Hall's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1968).

What is distinctly present in Hall's *Dream* (1968), however, is a subtle homoeroticism between Hermia and Helena, and Titania and her votaress. In Hall's *Dream* (1968), Helena and Hermia's relationship is an emotionally close one. Upon Hermia and Helena's first

encounter in the film, there is no resentment between either of them. Helena does not seem angry with Hermia because Demetrius is in love with her, but instead endearingly asks her: “teach me how you look” (Hall) as if she understands how much more beautiful Hermia is compared to her, and wishes she looked like her too. The camera zooms in mostly on Helena’s face, emphasizing her sadness but also her love for Hermia and making the audience feel more sympathetic towards her character (Bays). Hermia, in turn, comforts Helena by stroking her hair and holding her neck and pushes her face close to hers (Figure 25). When Lysander and Hermia tell Helena of their plan to flee, she looks surprised, but when Hermia speaks of the “primrose beds” where the girls “were wont to lie”, she looks sad (Hall). While the thought of being alone with Demetrius delights Helena, the idea that Hermia is leaving her for good upsets her because they spent so much of their time together when they were younger. When Helena says “[c]all you me fair?” she says it with a certain skeptical and sarcastic undertone, as if Helena finds it ridiculous of Hermia that she thinks that Helena is indeed fair. She continues, sadly, that: “Demetrius loves your fair”, as if she wishes she were as Hermia, and exhales “Oh happy fair!” (Hall). It should be noted that, in this film, Helena in no way speaks in a negative manner of Hermia even though she is her rival for Demetrius’s love, and that Hermia only feels for Helena because Demetrius loves her and not Helena. This depiction portrays Helena and Hermia without any negative feelings towards one another, making the shift later in the film when they turn on each other even stronger.

When Helena and Hermia meet again after Demetrius and Lysander have been affected by Puck and Oberon, Helena calls Hermia an “ungrateful maid” as soon as Hermia tries to convince herself that Lysander is only joking (Hall). The two sit together while Helena speaks in awe about their time together and Hermia listens intently (Figure 26). They sit closely together, as at their first encounter, and Hermia smiles and rests her head on Helena’s as she ponders Helena’s words (Figure 16). When Helena calls Hermia out on her behavior,

she is still not really angry, but appears to be pleading for Hermia's behavior to stop. Helena presents herself truly as the victim who only pleads and does not fight back. Hermia, on the other hand, starts to get angry because she does not understand what is going on. She retreats from Helena's side saying "I understand not what you mean by this" and walks off to stand next to Lysander.



Figure 25: Hermia and Helena (Helen Mirren and Diana Rigg) speak of Hermia's beauty in Peter Hall's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1968).

Figure 26: Hermia and Helena (Helen Mirren and Diana Rigg) speak of their time together as young girls in Peter Hall's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1968).

This is the crucial moment when the girls are separated by Hermia's heterosexual love: Hermia walks away because she does not understand why Helena is upset and simply wants Lysander's love, while Helena thinks Hermia scorns her. It is at this moment that Helena stops trying to appeal to Hermia, while Hermia only has eyes for Lysander. It is not until Lysander admits he hates her that Hermia turns on Helena. Here, Hermia and Helena's closeness instantly becomes a rivalry: Hermia puts herself close to Helena, but calls her a "juggler" and "canker-blossom" and "painted maypole" (Hall). While Helena suspects Hermia's scorn, she does not get angry. Hermia, on the other hand, gets angry almost instantly when she realizes Lysander hates her and draws her hand up to Helena's face ready to "scratch" (Hall). In their struggle, Helena and Hermia never actually touch each other in a

violent manner, but it is Hermia who chases Helena, while Helena climbs into trees, behind Lysander and Demetrius, or runs away.

Hall's Hermia and Helena's remembrance of their youth together is the same as Titania and her votaress's. In Hall's *Dream* (1968), Titania speaks of her votaress, the lighting on her face becomes warm and she speaks of the time with great happiness. However, their relationship is not as emotional as it is in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999).

In a 2010 interview with Peter Hall, he states that he was "startled by the homosexual streak in [a recent play of *Twelfth Night*]", and indicates that "if [he] didn't bring all this out in [his stage production in] 1958, it's because times were very different" (Hall qtd. in Billington). He continues that his *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958) was "officially banned by the Lord Chamberlain precisely because of its homosexual content" (Hall qtd. in Billington). As indicated before, Hall's Hermia and Helena were close, but their relationship seems still overly friendly as opposed to homoerotic. This correlates, however, with Hall's referral to censorship on his *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* from 1958. Although directed ten years after this play, James Joseph Dean indicates that "the history of gay and lesbian characters in films was a story of invisibility, virulent stereotype, or innuendo, from the time of the silent pictures and talkies in the early 1900s" (Dean 363-364). Dean shows that, in Hollywood, "up to the end of the 1980s, film scholarship shows that when homosexual characters were featured in films, they were typically presented as deviant and pathological human types, from murderers and sociopaths, to victims of psychological sickness" (364). Although the British Board of Film Classification noted that they had never censored homosexuality, the issue remained a sensitive issue in the United Kingdom as well until the 1980s. This correlates with how these relations were supposed to be kept indoors: Hermia and Helena do express their homoeroticism less physically and obvious than Hoffman's Hermia and Helena. After all, what happens between them behind closed doors is not of importance to the viewer, but it can

be subtly hinted at by the director. According to Dean, “by making gay and lesbian sub-cultural life invisible at worst or rendering it as symbolic and tangential at best”, like Hall does when hinting at Hermia and Helena’s homoeroticism, but not showing it explicitly “normalizing films are able to avoid images that challenge social norms that privilege heterosexuality (e.g. marriage and monogamy) or contest sexual and gender conventions (e.g. the norm of compulsory heterosexuality and males as masculine and females as feminine women)” (Dean 368).

Subsequently, in June 1969, the Stonewall riots sparked the modern gay rights movement in the United States, where homosexuality was still punishable (Dean 370). Between 1970 and 1980, this movement resulted in many positive developments for homosexual rights and in many states homosexual decriminalization laws and ordinances were passed. In 1977, Harvey Milk was elected into the Board of Supervisors in San Francisco, but he was assassinated in 1978 (Armstrong 126). According to Elizabeth Armstrong, Harvey Milk’s assassin, Dan White “received a verdict of voluntary manslaughter instead of murder in 1979” and “gays responded with outrage in what came to be known as the ‘White Night riots’ (130).

In 1979 approximately 100.000 people marched to Washington, D.C. (Young 1), which was the greatest gay rights demonstration up to this time. After this, the gay rights community started gaining more support and many laws were passed, until, finally in October 1989 Denmark became the first country to officially recognize same-sex partnerships. Hoffman’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1999) was released just before many countries legalized same-sex marriage (Gerstmann 5) and after many rights for gay people had been accomplished. The increased openness towards gay people and the formation of many pro-gay rights between the 1980s and 2000 correlates with why Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) is the only film adaptation of the three to strongly hint at Hermia and Helena’s homosexuality. The

increased openness towards homosexuality also correlates with the relationship between Titania and her votaress: although Hall's Titania speaks of her votaress with love and warmth, it is not until Hoffman's Titania that their relationship becomes increasingly emotional, as Titania cries when she speaks of the woman. It makes it seem as if Titania's relationship with her votaress is more emotional than her relationship with Oberon. According to Dean, "beginning in the 1980s, but more significantly in the 1990s, film and media scholars noted a salient increase in the number of gay and lesbian images, as well as changes from the dominant stereotypes of the past" (Dean 364). Hollywood cinema, to which both Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) and Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) inevitably belonged to, began presenting homosexuality in their films. Many mainstream Hollywood films from the 1990s picture homosexuality lavishly: 1990s Hollywood cinema moved away "from stigmatized representations of homosexuality" and started portraying homosexual characters as, what Dean terms, "good" and "normal" (366). Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) becomes a reflection of the Hollywood trend that "follows the logic of normative heterosexuality that makes homosexuality into a minority identity while maintaining heterosexuality as the normative identity of the majority" (366), because, although Hoffman strongly hints at homoeroticism between Hermia and Helena, Titania and her votaress and Hippolyta and the girls, the film adaptation still ultimately combines every character and their heterosexual partner.

In addition, Hoffman's Hippolyta kissing Hermia and Helena on the cheek correlates with a trend in Hollywood that calls for parents and children to kiss on their cheeks instead of their mouths. Even though Hermia and Helena's kiss might be just as innocent even though it is on the lips, it designates a homoeroticism that the mother-daughter relationship does not fully encompass. In the recent Disney film *Maleficent* (2014), it is interesting to note that the "true love's kiss" that prince Philip gives to princess Aurora is on her lips, but that Maleficent kisses her on her forehead (Stromberg). Maleficent, who functions as a "fairy godmother" to

Aurora, cannot kiss her on her lips, just as Hippolyta kisses Hermia and Helena on their cheek, while they kiss each other and their lovers on their mouth. Hermia also kisses Theseus on his cheek at the end of Hoffman's *Dream*, which indicates a kind of father-daughter relationship as well.

In the previous chapter I noted that marriage remained the desired final chapter of many of the films over time, even though marriage ideals, also concerning homosexual marriage, changed over time. This trend is also reflected in the homoeroticism that is portrayed in the film adaptations. Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) and Hall's *Dream* (1968) depict homoeroticism between Hermia and Helena, Titania and her votaress and Hippolyta and other female characters, but each character still ends up engaged with their male counterpart. Although marriage partner choices became freer due to laws that stemmed from feminist and gender movements, the patterns were still influenced largely by "cultural institutions" (Wexman 5), such as popular media. Films still depicted male-female marriage combinations as the desired outcome, even though "theoretically" the choice of partner was freer due to many laws, and Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) and Hall's *Dream* (1968) take part in this trend. Films, as an affecter of history as well as affected by it, chose to influence partner choices by depicting heterosexual marriage as the proper ending.

When looking at the three film adaptations of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it becomes clear that there is a distinct shift in the portrayal of homoeroticism between the female characters. Hippolyta is an Amazon in both Hall's *Dream* (1968) and Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), but loses her Amazon references in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999). Here, however, her bond with Hermia and Helena is a very close one, as she spends the whole film fighting with Theseus in order to let Hermia marry who she wants, and she functions as a surrogate mother to the girls. Hermia and Helena, in addition, have a homoerotic relationship in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), and a very friendly relationship in Hall's *Dream* (1968). In

Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), the girls kiss each other and Helena longs for Hermia's beauty in a similar way that Demetrius and Lysander do. Here, however, the girls do not appear to be as close as they are in Hall's *Dream* (1968), in which the two girls initially choose each other before choosing Lysander or Demetrius. Hermia and Helena sit together and ponder the past before they get angry at each other for scorning. In Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), there is little allusion to the fact that the girls were friends in the first place. Titania and her votaress's relationship is also mostly emphasized in Hoffman's *Dream*. Here, Titania speaks with melancholy and sadness of the passing of her votaress, as the music in the film emphasizes the strength of her emotions towards her.

The shifts of homoeroticism in these films correlate with how sexuality was viewed over time, with the emphasis on the openness towards homosexuality. As the attitude towards homosexuality became positive, so did the films show more homoerotic allusions between the female characters. However, Virginia Wexman argues that "[t]he models of courtship and marriage put forward in Hollywood cinema make a significant contribution to the process of structuring the modern social *habitus* regarding romantic love" (Wexman 8). Thus, films reflect ideologies that stem from political, economic and social events, but at the same time portray ideologies of sexuality and marriage in response to this. While popular media correlate with how marriage and sexuality ideals changed over time, it is, just as those events, also a factor in creating new ideals. When looking at cultural trends regarding marriage, sexuality and nudity, it becomes clear that romantic notions of marriage and sexuality are the ideologies portrayed mostly in films. Wexman indicates that "classical Hollywood film has been largely taken up with stories of heterosexual romance" (Wexman 191), which Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) and the Production Code of 1934 reflect. Even though society became tolerant to homosexual love and marriage, the media still depicted heterosexuality as the desired conclusion.

CHAPTER 3.3

Bestiality and Nature in Film Adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In addition to this shift in the portrayal of homoeroticism, sex and nudity, the portrayal of sexuality linked to bestiality and nature has also shifted in these film adaptations and correlates with ideologies about marriage, sexuality and homosexuality. Michael Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) in particular, attempts to create a distinct sensuality in the magical forest not just by making the setting "Bacchic" (Bloom 149), but by also incorporating this same decoration into Titania and Oberon's fairies. As opposed to Peter Hall's *Dream* (1968), in which the fairies are children painted green and resemble some kind of goblins, the fairies in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), are depicted as lecherous and drunk, like humans. The portrayal of Nick Bottom, in addition, has also shifted over the years from a man with the head of a donkey to a man with ears of a donkey and some extended facial hair. This, along with the change in depiction of the forest scenes, distinctly removes any kind of bestiality linked to sexuality in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) as opposed to Hall's and Reinhardt's *Dream*.

As with the homoerotic portrayal between the female characters in the film adaptations, the portrayal of Bottom and the world of the fairies correlates with how sexuality is viewed over time. In a broad sense, it could be said that Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) and Hall's *Dream* (1968) both called for an open attitude towards sexuality that correlated with how feminist and gender movements fought for rights for homosexuals and sexuality in general.

In Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935), much attention is paid to creating a magical setting in the forest. A white, almost ghostly fog accompanies Titania's fairies, and the forest is embedded with twinkling lights that resemble fireflies. Upon the

encounter of Titania's Fairy and Robin Goodfellow, or Puck, the contrast between Titania and Oberon's followers is starkly noticeable. The Fairy's dress is completely white, and she seems to almost merge with the environment as her clothes have similar twinkling lights. She wears her long white gown as if it gives her wings and she dances around like a ballet dancer. Very graciously, with something that resembles white wings on her head, she fast approaches Puck hovering above the ground. Compared to Puck, the fairy is gracious and otherworldly, as Puck is depicted as a young boy wearing leaves. The two tickle each other while talking, before the shot moves to the Indian Changeling that Titania and Oberon are fighting about.

In the following scene, Titania's fairies are seen flying around, dancing and playing with the Changeling. Titania's fairies consist out of young girls and young adolescent girls, and they are accompanied by a group of male gnomes playing instruments. The fairies subsequently lift the Changeling on a unicorn. Chapter 2 explained that Jeanne Addison Roberts argues that nature and animals are often linked to female characters in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Roberts 26), and Rebecca Ann Bach specifically mentions horses as something female characters were often compared to in plays of Shakespeare (Bach 126). This is why the addition of a unicorn along with Titania's fairies indicates Titania's link with the wild and animals. Although the fairies are depicted as gracious girls and women in long white dresses, they behave childlike as they dance around and play with each other. They act very free, indeed, as animals would, and the unicorn appears to live among them and it is almost as if it is actually playing with them as it rides with the Changeling on its back. A unicorn is, naturally, not a horse, but a magical horse, thereby making the link between Titania and the unicorn even stronger if regular women are compared to horses, then magical women, such as Titania, are compared to magical horses.

It is interesting to note that, aside from the Changeling, no fairy rides the unicorn. This appears to indicate not only Roberts' observation that women were compared to horses, but

also that the “passions” of women needed to be “reined by the national rider for a harmonious and moderate life” (Roberts 68). “[U]nruly” female characters are central in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Montrose 66), and Titania is perhaps the most important one, as her argument with Oberon is affecting the normal world as well as the fairy world. Oberon, dressed in all black with a crown that looks like the antlers of a deer, comes into the scene riding a horse, accompanied by Puck on a smaller horse. The fact that they are riding the horses means they wish to tame the “unruly” women, Titania and her fairies, (Montrose 66) so they fit “patriarchal” life (Sanchez 501). Oberon, here, comes to solve the dispute between him and Titania by having Titania give the Changeling boy to him. She, however, refuses because of her homoerotic bond with her votaress. Instead, the Changeling boy reins Titania because she lets him ride her unicorn, and not Oberon. Reinhardt’s Titania embodies the magical wild and animals in every sense: she and the fairies live with a unicorn instead of riding it, indicating they can be considered on the same level as him, and fly around, sleeping, playing and blending in with the forest.

Although Oberon is also presented as somewhat animalistic, with his crown of deer antlers, this signifies a different kind of animal. Horses need to be reined, while a deer, and especially the male deer, with its strong antlers, can be considered the king of the forest. Oberon, therefore, becomes a masculine depiction of a strong wild animal that reins.

In Peter Hall’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1968), the fairies are depicted as small green goblins. Fairy, who meets Puck, is just a little girl painted green with leaves for clothes. She looks remarkably like Puck. Upon their first meeting, Oberon and Titania are both accompanied by green children: Titania is accompanied by a group of green girls and Oberon by a group of green boys and Puck. Oberon and Titania’s fight is thereby portrayed as a battle between the sexes, where Titania represents the females and Oberon the males. These fairies look alike, which is why it gives the illusion that Titania and Oberon are equals. When

Oberon leaves later on, though, the boys mix with the girls and sing with Titania. Titania finds herself constantly surrounded by her fairies, while Oberon walks in the forest alone.

In Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), the fairies are represented as different from both Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) and Hall's *Dream* (1968). Hoffman's Fairy and Puck meet each other in a bar for elves and fairies, which is set in what looks like a cave decorated with flowers and moss. Here, the fairies are portrayed in a "Bacchic" manner (Bloom 149): the male fairies have horns and drink wine, while in the fairy bar there are male and female fairies kissing and dancing together. There is also an abundance of grapes and gallons of wine. Overall, the atmosphere is Bacchic. Titania's Fairy has flowers in her hair and fairy wings, but looks as a lady who is over thirty years old. Puck and the Fairy drunkenly move out of the bar in what looks like a future sexual encounter when they accidentally run into Titania and Oberon's meeting. Because these fairies are older, there is a distinct sexual tension between them. According to Desson Howe, "Hoffman introduces a memorable sensuality to the movie" and that "the fairy world has a definite whiff of passion, lust and Bacchanalia about it, while lustrous tresses of hair seem to have a magical sense of decency, falling in all the right, tactful places" (Howe). However, this depiction has also been described as portraying the fairies as "sniveling, petty, irritable party animals" and Puck as "a crass, middle-aged lounge lizard who revels in peeing in the woods after drinking too much wine" (Jacobson 74). Michael Hoffman indicated that he specifically decided to set the film in Tuscany, Italy, because it would remove any "Celtic notion of the forest, with leprechauns crouching under toadstools" (Hoffman qtd. in Calhoun), and instead chose to focus on "the world of Ovid, of nymphs and satyrs and naiads and dryads and centaurs: creatures from classical mythology" (Hoffman qtd. in Calhoun). Hoffman specifically chose to portray Titania's fairies not as "pretty and ethereal", but instead have her world "peopled by feminine archetypes, which means everything from Tinkerbell to Medusa, and from a child to a grandmother" (Hoffman

qtd. in Calhoun). This way, the film would “have beauty and ugliness, age and youth, weight and airiness” (Hoffman qtd. in Calhoun).

In addition, as punishment for Titania’s disobedience, and because she gives her love to another male, the Changeling boy, Oberon decides to let Titania fall in love with Bottom the donkey. In Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) and Hall’s *Dream* (1968), Nick Bottom is portrayed as a man with the head of a donkey, complete with extended snout, donkey eyes and ears (Figure 27 and 28). However, in Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999), Bottom is portrayed as a man with extra facial hair and donkey ears, who retains the complexion of a human face (Figure 29).



Figure 27: Nick Bottom (James Cagney) and Titania (Anita Louise) in Max Reinhardt’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1935).



Figure 28: Nick Bottom (Paul Rogers), Oberon (Ian Richardson) and Titania (Judi Dench) in Peter Hall’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1968).



Figure 29: Nick Bottom (Kevin Kline) and Titania (Michelle Pfeiffer) in Michael Hoffman’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1999).

Although his beard has grown and his hair is wilder, Hoffman’s Bottom, aside of his ears, does not resemble an actual ass. The between these two depictions is that in Hall’s *Dream* (1968) and Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935), Titania falls in love with a man who is equal to an animal, whereas in Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) she falls in love with a human man who only has strange ears and laughs in a manner similar to a donkey. In both Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) and Hall’s *Dream* (1968), Nick Bottom is a regularly attractive man, but upon his

transformation into a donkey, he gains the head of a donkey on top of his regular body. This mask is shaped by all means as a donkey's head, with a long nose and donkey teeth. However, in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Bottom is regularly attractive, but merely gains the ears of a donkey, makeup and excess hair to make him look feral. While this may not seem of much importance, it has a distinct effect on how the relationship between Titania, Oberon and Bottom is perceived. Although it is still cruel of Oberon to make Titania fall in love with a man with donkey ears, Bottom is, by all means, still a human. He makes laughing noises like a donkey and from time to time makes loud uncontrollable noises like one, but he has not, as in Hall's and Reinhardt's *Dream*, lost his face. Hoffman's Bottom, instead, has been argued to be "the embodiment of amiability, as he bashfully parries the passionate advances of Titania (Ebert).

As Bottom is also linked to homosexuality, Hoffman's depiction of him as less of an animal, correlates with the increased openness towards homosexuality over time which is discussed in the previous chapter. According to Lisa Walters, Bottom "could be designated a sodomite or at least as causing sodomy" according to early modern regulation (Walters 158). The "detestable and abhominable vice of buggery commytid with mankynde or beaste" (Goldberg 3) was punishable according to the "English sodomy law" (Walters 158). Walters argues that "the definition of buggery in the Renaissance does not provide specification about a particular sexual act, nor does it specify whether same-sex erotic behavior would fall under this category" (158), yet it was Oberon's intention to make Titania fall in love with a "lion, bear or wolf, or bull, // On meddling monkey, or on busy ape" (*Midsummer Night's Dream* 2.1.180-81), and when she is about to fall in love with the human Bottom, he is given the head of an ass (Walters 158).

The portrayal of the relationship between Bottom and Titania, and subsequently Oberon's involvement is also linked to how women became autonomous over time, and is

seemingly part of the trend which Stephen Buhler refers to. Harold Bloom in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, indicates that “the notion that sexual violence and bestiality are at the center of this humane and wise drama” is something that modern adaptations have inspired (Bloom 148). Roger Ebert indicates that Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) does not represent Bottom as the ass he is in other versions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, such as Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) and Hall’s *Dream* (1968), but instead presents it as “a nice enough fellow who has had the misfortune to wake up with donkey’s ears” (Ebert). Aside of the donkey mask, Bottom’s portrayal in Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) was widely criticized: “fans who felt he was overreaching, Shakespeareans who felt he didn’t fit their perceptions of the clownish oaf” (Minton). The shift in depiction of Bottom is linked to the trend Buhler indicates in which directors alter or remove certain pieces from Shakespeare to avoid coming across as sexist. Whereas Bottom is depicted as a donkey in Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) and Hall’s *Dream* (1968), the nature of Titania and Bottom’s relationship shifts in Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) in which Bottom remains largely human. Portraying Bottom as simply a, perhaps hairier and uglier than usual, man, removes much of the humiliation that Titania otherwise endures at the hand of her lover Oberon. Titania and Oberon appear to be engaged in a romantic relationship, but seem to have both committed adultery many times. Oberon wants the Changeling boy that Titania is giving all her attention to, either because he wants her attention for himself, or because he feels that it is not right that Titania is keeping a human boy with her, and therefore decides to make Titania become infatuated with someone. He wants to prove that her love can so easily shift from the boy to someone else. While in Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) this is manifested as Titania actually pushing away the Changeling boy when he approaches her and Bottom, in Hall’s *Dream* (1968) and Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) this has not been depicted. The premise of this story can be considered rather sexist, therefore this

shift becomes part of what Buhler has noted a fear of portraying Shakespeare wholly, and removing or altering certain pieces that provoke a possible sexist reading.

One critic argued that in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Titania and Bottom's love story is more endearing than in Shakespeare's play. Sarah Mayo claims that "Bottom the weaver is reimagined in this film as a hopeless dreamer who spends his spare time dressing up in an immaculate white linen suit and straw boater, and going out to drink coffee at the local café", but at the same time, this is the only suit he owns (Mayo 298). According to Michael Hoffman, Titania is "a woman who want[s] to love simply, unconditionally, in a way the politics of her relationship with Oberon [make] impossible" (Hoffman qtd. in Mayo 298). Because these characters are interpreted like this, the audience is "encouraged to believe that a couple of nasty pranks played by Oberon and Robin Goodfellow have turned into a love-story remarkable for its beauty and simplicity" (Mayo 298). Although Bottom parries Titania's advances at first, and does not seem interested in Titania, he eventually accepts her advances and goes along with it. The scene in which they are lying together in Titania's bed is very sensual, and it indeed does seem like Titania and Bottom are somehow in love (Figure 14). This goes against how Bloom argues Bottom should be depicted, but creates a love story between Bottom and Titania and makes their endeavors endearing.

The reduced animal metaphors in Bottom's portrayal as well as the forest setting and fairies, shows that later on in time, linking the feminine with animals became less acceptable. Although Hall's and Hoffman's Titanias are still linked to nature, they do not contain the animal metaphors as in Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), which indicated that Oberon and the Changeling reined Titania as if she was a wild horse. Hoffman's Titania is not even infatuated with an ass anymore, but merely falls in love with an unattractive man.

This depiction of Titania is linked to how Helena pursues her love for Demetrius, and the depiction of the fairies' sexuality. Melissa Sanchez's reading of Shakespeare's *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream indicates that Helena pursues a different kind of sexuality than is “normal” (Sanchez 506). While in Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) Hermia is trying to protect her body, even from the man she loves, because she wants to preserve the virtue that is valued in her society, Helena has little regard for this and even pursues it with Demetrius. When Demetrius, later on, speaks of Helena’s lips, he touches them before trying to kiss her. The sexual connotations that can be found in Shakespeare’s original text are made explicit in this film, in which the actors and actresses engage in physical contact, and their bodies are very exposed compared to earlier film adaptations, such as Hall’s and Reinhardt’s. Helena, just like Titania, pursues a sexuality that is not “normal” (506): Helena pursues a man who does not love her, and who is supposed to pursue *her*, while Titania pursues a man who is not even completely human, who also does not love her. Both these women pursue a different kind of sexuality. The increased openness towards sexuality that is demonstrated in the previous chapter indicates why Helena is seen so aggressively pursuing Demetrius in Hall’s *Dream* (1968) and Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999).

The sexuality in Hoffman’s *Dream* (1999) as compared to Hall’s *Dream* (1968) and Reinhardt’s *Dream* (1935) is very evident in the setting of the film, the costumes and the way the actors act. This increased freedom of expressing sexuality correlates with how gender movements fought to express their sexuality from the 1960s onwards, as I depicted in the previous chapter. The changed sexuality of Titania, however, in which it no longer corresponds with bestiality, is linked to a trend in Hollywood in which adaptors of Shakespeare remove or alter pieces of Shakespeare’s play to prevent sexism in their film adaptation. How Bottom, the fairies and Titania are portrayed has shifted over the years, and this correlates with the views on sexuality and homosexuality that correlate with gender and feminist movements mentioned in the previous chapters.

CONCLUSION

Since the invention of the cinema, the depiction of gender in film adaptations of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has shifted drastically. This paper has shown that three adaptations of Shakespeare's *Dream* from the United States and the United Kingdom, Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935), Peter Hall's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1968) and Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999), portray gender differently in correlation with feminist and gender movements that fought for the rights of women, sexuality and homosexuality.

Film adaptations are interpretations of the original text and use their medium-specific qualities to do so. Although film and theatre are both performance media, both use different means of conveying a story to the audience. Films use a combination of camera, scene setting, and film-editing to convey the story to the audience. These medium-specific qualities of film have been considered to make the medium more 'realistic' and more individually engaging compared to theatre.

Many scholars have debated the gender issues in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and many of their points of criticism or similar issues can be found in the film adaptations. This paper has demonstrated that critics found that there was a distinct fear of women in Shakespeare's *Dream*, and male characters attempt to retain their authority by using female bodies, yet that the female characters, such as Helena, showed sexuality outside of the social norms. Most importantly, critics have argued that this play, despite its heterosexual ending, challenged traditional heterosexuality and strongly introduces the idea of female homoeroticism.

The portrayal of Hippolyta and Theseus's relationship has shifted over the years. In Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), Hippolyta is a defiant Amazon, who had just been conquered in

battle and still bears the marks of being wounded. She does not show any affection for Theseus until the end of the film, when all disputes have been solved. Here, she is symbolically linked to an Amazon as a powerful female warrior, whereas in Hall's *Dream* (1968), she is still presented as a strong Amazon warrior due to her short leather outfit and high leather boots, but no longer shows the behavior of an Amazon. Hall, as opposed to Reinhardt, appears to have chosen a different version of the myth involving Hercules and Theseus and the Queen of Amazons: where Reinhardt has chosen to adapt Hippolyta as a warrior forced to marry Theseus because he conquered her in battle and stole her, Hall chose to adapt Hippolyta as a woman who abandoned her Amazon sisters because she loved Theseus. In Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), all allusions to Hippolyta as an Amazon have been removed, but Hippolyta is still happy to marry Theseus. However, she spends the entire film arguing with Theseus over Hermia's fate, until Theseus finally agrees with her and lets Hermia marry Lysander and lets Helena marry Demetrius.

These depictions clearly show a change of Hippolyta as a character within the story. This change is mostly linked to the fact that she becomes happier in marriage and that she is no longer humiliated by being defeated in battle by men. These changes correlate with how the ideology of marriage has changed over the years and with the ideologies behind many feminist movements that emerged between 1935 and 1999. It most notably correlates with the idea that women needed to be autonomous and that marriage should be something that happens out of love, and not economy.

Secondly, a shift in the portrayal of homoeroticism between Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), Hall's *Dream* (1968) and Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) can be discovered. In Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), there is no allusion towards Hermia and Helena being friends, and any kind of homoeroticism between the female characters that is hinted at by Shakespeare has been removed from the spoken lines. Hall's *Dream* (1968), however, portrays Hermia and Helena

as close friends, and combines Shakespeare's lines with soft and tender behavior between the girls as they speak of their past. Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) portrays homoeroticism between these girls, Hippolyta and Titania and her votaress in an increasingly physical manner that emphasizes the bodies of the characters. Hermia and Helena display physical affection for each other by kissing and Helena appears to be physically longing for Hermia, while Titania speaks with emotional distress about the death of her votaress with whom she was so close. Hoffman's Hippolyta displays a kind of homoeroticism for the girls, because she shows extraordinary concern for Hermia and Helena, and because she displays her affection by kissing them on the cheek. However, her role can also be considered that of their surrogate mother, as neither of them have one in the film.

Furthermore, the physical display of nudity has also increased over time and follows a similar pattern as the display of homoeroticism. Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) shows little nudity, with the exception of Puck's bare-chest, which is not considered nudity connected with desire, and Hermia and Helena's slightly exposed bosoms. Compared to Hall's *Dream* (1968) and Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), however, Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) is incredibly low on nudity. Hall's *Dream* (1968) consistently portrays the female characters Hermia, Helena and Hippolyta in short dresses, and Titania and Oberon are nude except for green paint and strategically-placed leaves. Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) has Lysander walk around in only a loin cloth for most of the film, has Hermia in her undergarments and finally depicts the young Athenian lovers all completely naked at the end. In addition, Hoffman's Titania spends most of her time covered only by her hair and Oberon walks around bare-chested.

These depictions clearly show a correlation with how homosexuality became increasingly more acceptable over time, due to gender movements that called for equal rights for gay people and transsexuals. The increased openness towards homosexual love in society correlates with how homoeroticism is portrayed in these film adaptations. Moreover, the shift

in these portrayals is a reflection of the censorship that was sanctioned in 1934 in the United States, which called for less nudity, eroticism and deviant sexual portrayal, and that was subsequently abolished in 1966, and the British Board of Film Classification which censored films in the United Kingdom that contained nudity and sexuality.

Combined with this shift in sexuality, is also how Bottom and the fairies are portrayed. In Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935) the forest setting is magical, but strongly relates Titania and her fairies as being on the same level as animals. The men in this film adaptation, Oberon and the Changeling, ride horses, while Titania and her fairies live with a unicorn. The forest, the fairies and Titania become increasingly less associated with animals in the later adaptations by Hall and Hoffman. In Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), Bottom does not even become an ass, but merely gains the ears and some characteristics of a donkey. This makes Titania's infatuation with Bottom less humiliating, as she is not engaging in bestial behavior, but rather loves an unattractive man. This correlates similarly with the increased openness towards the expression of sexuality that was seen from 1960 onwards. The sexuality of the forest and fairies is similarly linked to the Production Code from 1934, which was abolished before Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) was released.

These films are reflections of trends in the films, most notably Hollywood. Hippolyta's changed relationship with Theseus is part of the Hollywood trend that Stephen Buhler argues, in which directors have become afraid to use Shakespeare's original lines and cut or alter them to prevent critics from regarding their film adaptation as sexist. In addition, the fact that Titania falls in love with a human being, rather than a man with the head of an animal, is part of this trend as well. Here, the fact that Titania falls in love with an animal because of Oberon can be considered overly sexist. Aside from Bottom, any allusions towards women and animals have also been removed in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999).

The fact that the films still end in betrothals correlates with a trend in Hollywood that still calls for characters to fall in love and stay together at the end. Hippolyta's status as an angry, conquered Amazon has been changed to that of a loving wife in Hall's *Dream* (1968) and Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), and Hippolyta is not even an Amazon anymore in Hoffman's film. This is part of the trend in films that the plot of a film needs to end in a happy marriage. Although Hall's *Dream* (1968) indirectly notes homoeroticism between Titania and her votaress and even more between Hermia and Helena, and Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) strongly indicates homoerotic relationships between Hermia and Helena through physical contact and Titania and her votaress through emotional responses, all these characters still fall in love and are engaged to, or married to, their male counterparts. Reinhardt's *Dream* (1935), Hall's *Dream* (1968) and Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), despite their shifts that correlate with historical, political and economic events, are still a part of this cultural trend.

These shifts of portrayal are also part of other trends in film history: the fact that Hermia and Helena kiss each other on the mouth, but do not kiss Hippolyta on the mouth in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999) is part of the trend that exists in Hollywood films where mothers, or those that function as mothers do not kiss their daughters.

While this paper has close-read these three film adaptations on the basis of their portrayal of gender and demonstrated how the depictions of gender correlates with social, political and economic events over time, I have also linked the shift in these works to cultural trends in cinema. What is interesting is that the trends in cinema to which these works contribute would seem to correlate to social, political and economic events, but do not always reflect these. For example, the ideology of marriage shifted from marriage for economic reasons to marriage for love, which is reflected in the difference of the portrayal of Hippolyta in these three *Dreams*. However, the ideology of marriage also became increasingly focused on the individual, which is not reflected in the shift of these three adaptations, or in the

cinematic trend. This is because popular media, such as cinema, is both a reflection of real life as well as an affecter of real life.

In what way have these film adaptations specifically affected gender movements?

While it seems clear that Hall's *Dream* (1968) has indirectly affected the portrayal of Hippolyta in Hoffman's *Dream* (1999), in what way has this portrayal affected the subsequent attitude towards female and male characters in Shakespearean adaptations? According to Wexman, media is used to constitute models of relationships, and therefore do these three film adaptations not only correlate with gender and feminist movements, but also affect them and other works (Wexman ix). Hoffman's portrayal of homoeroticism correlates with gender movements, but in what way has this portrayal of homoerotic physical affection between the female characters affected subsequent Shakespearean adaptations? Investigating these issues will require a broader study of a multitude of Shakespearean adaptations while investigating how each of these portrays gender over time.

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