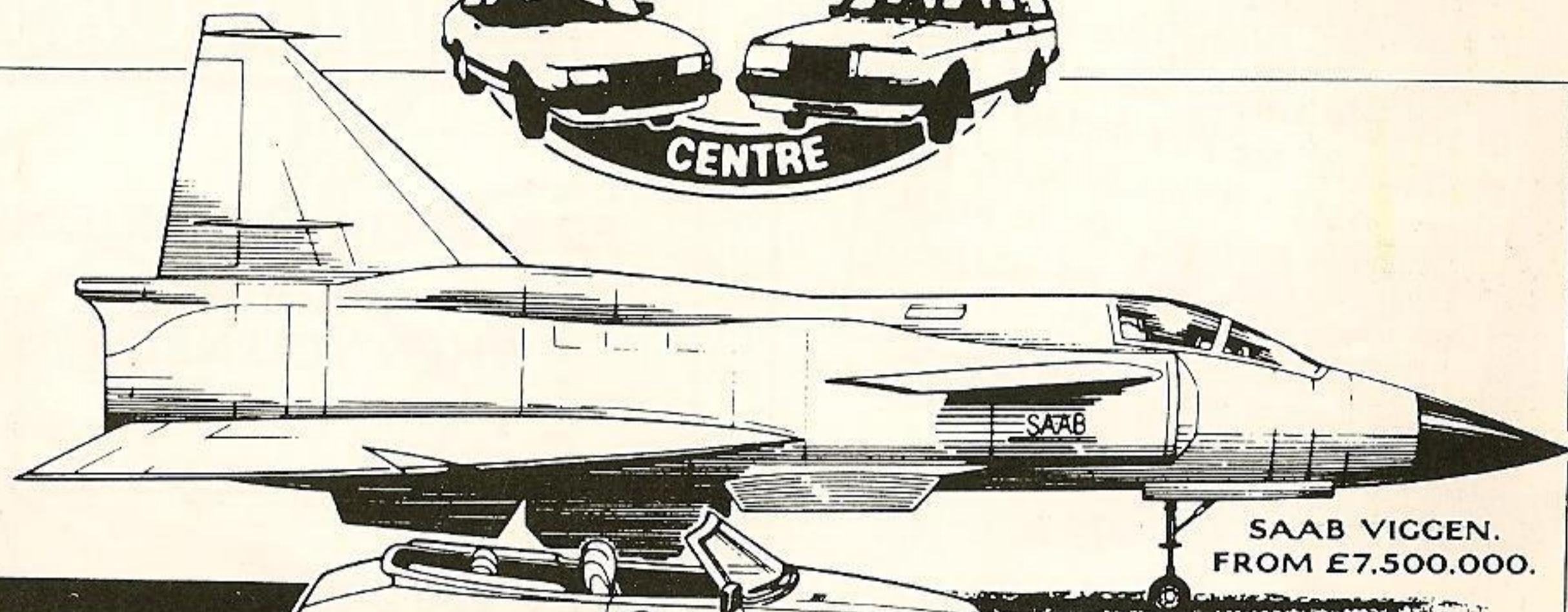
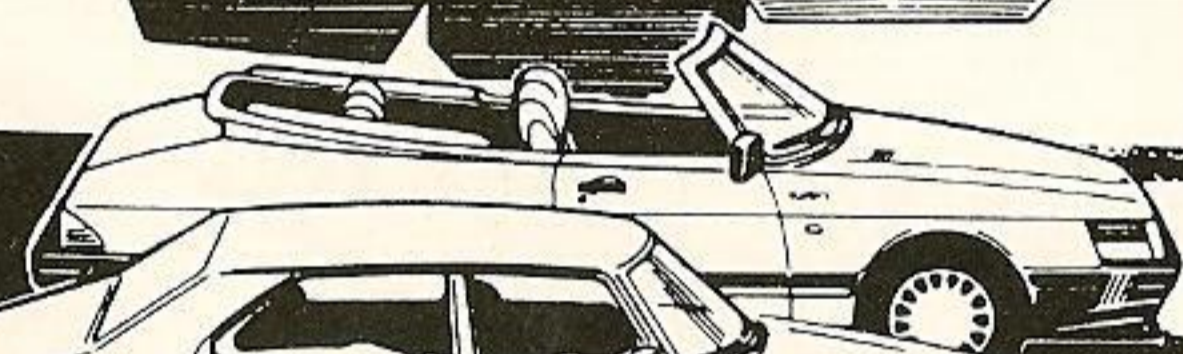


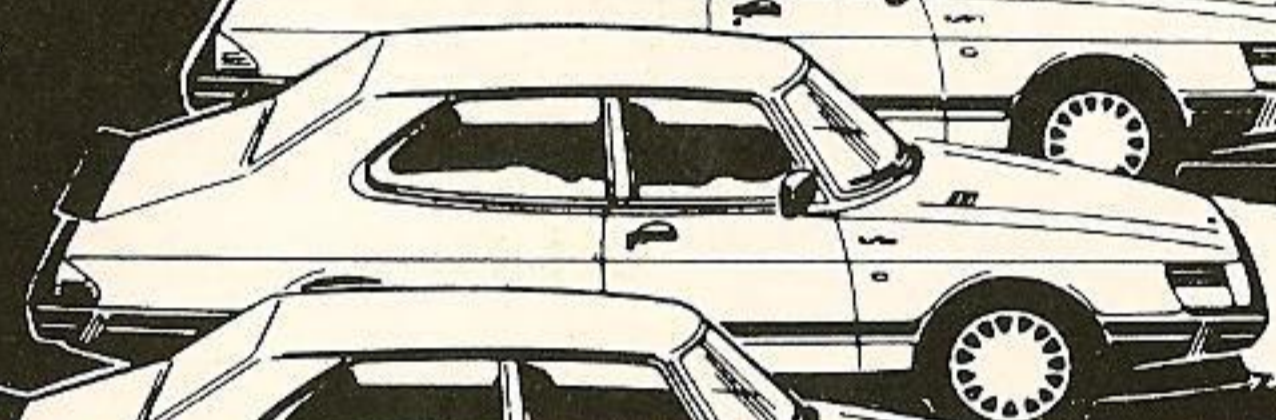
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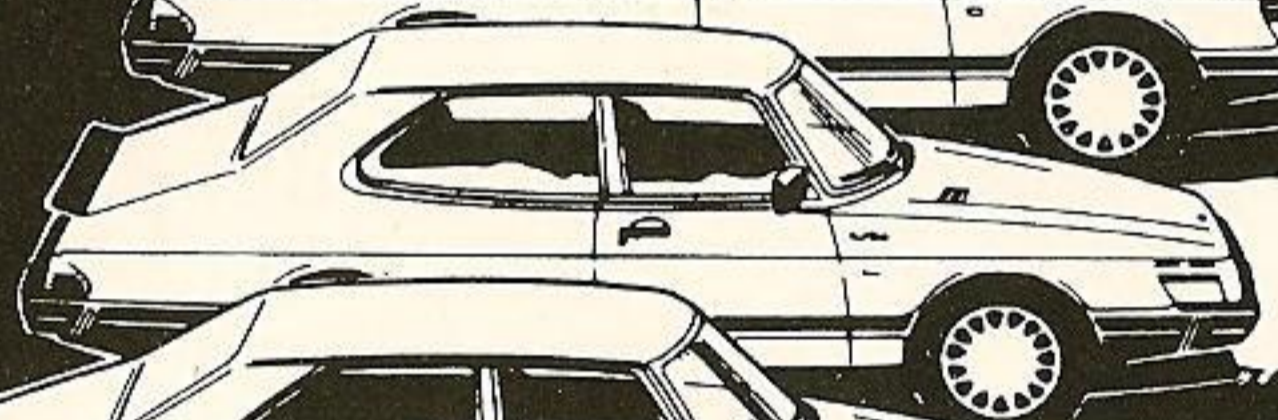
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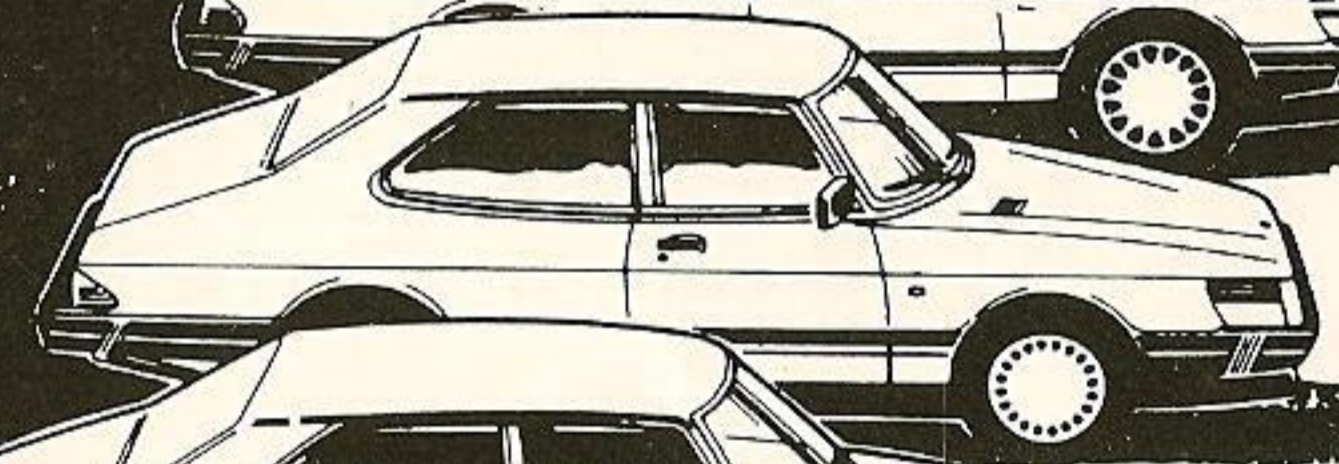
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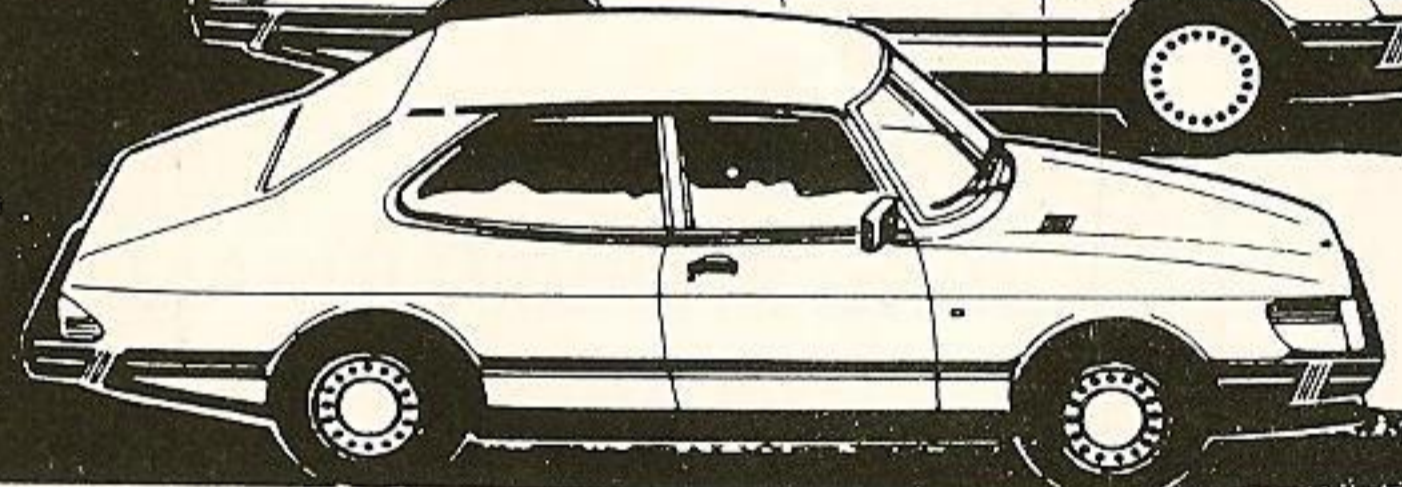
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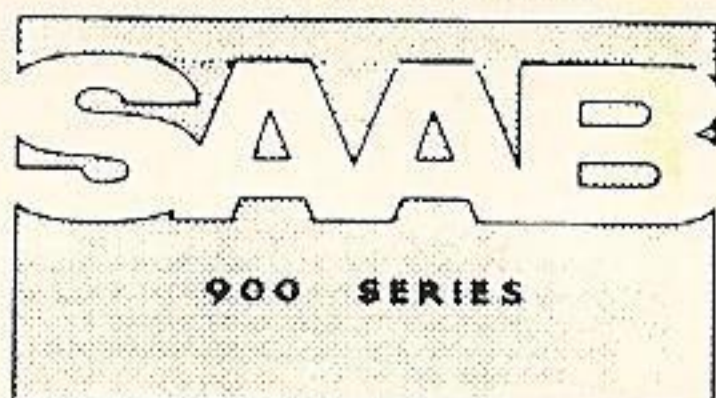
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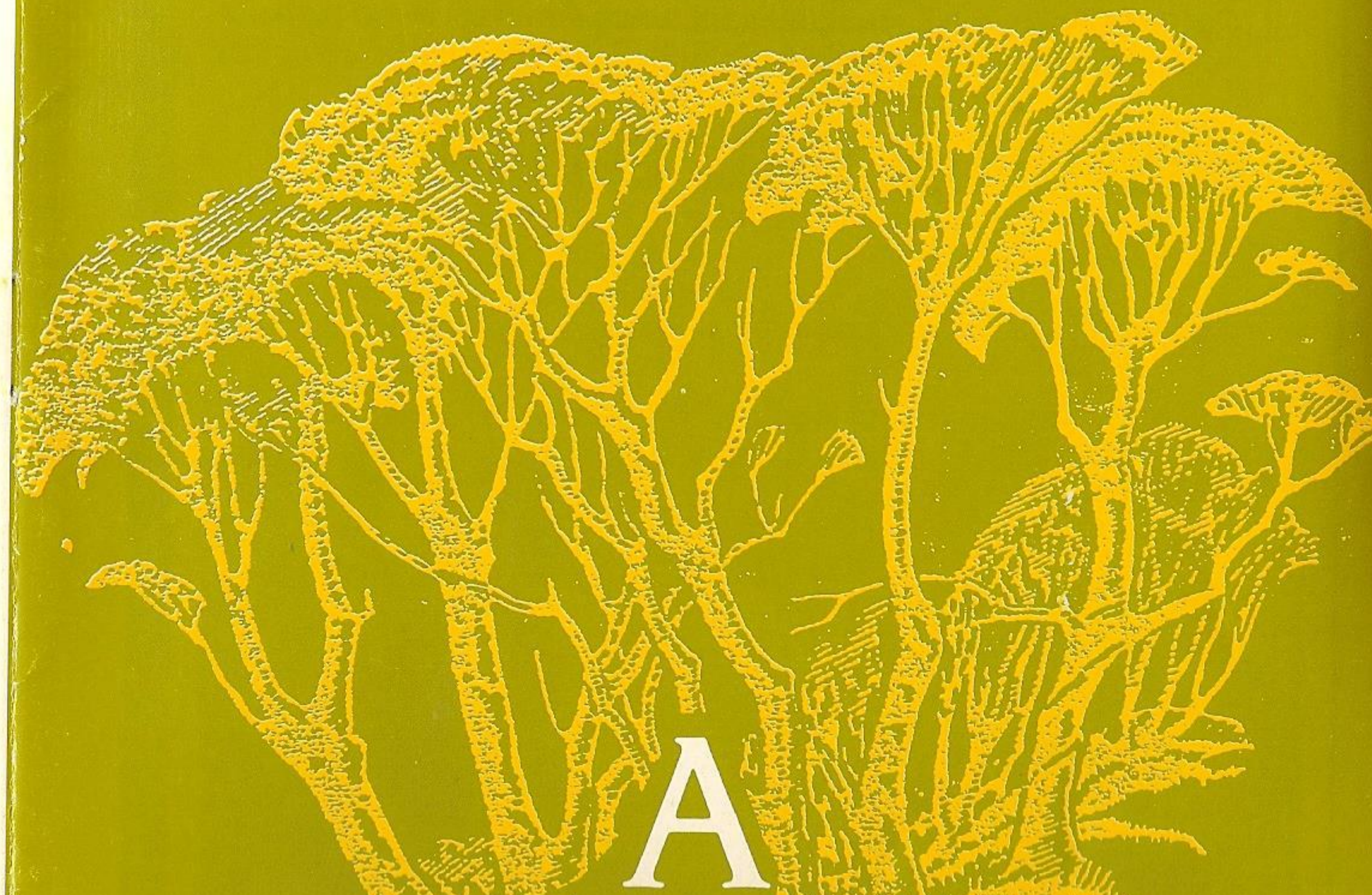
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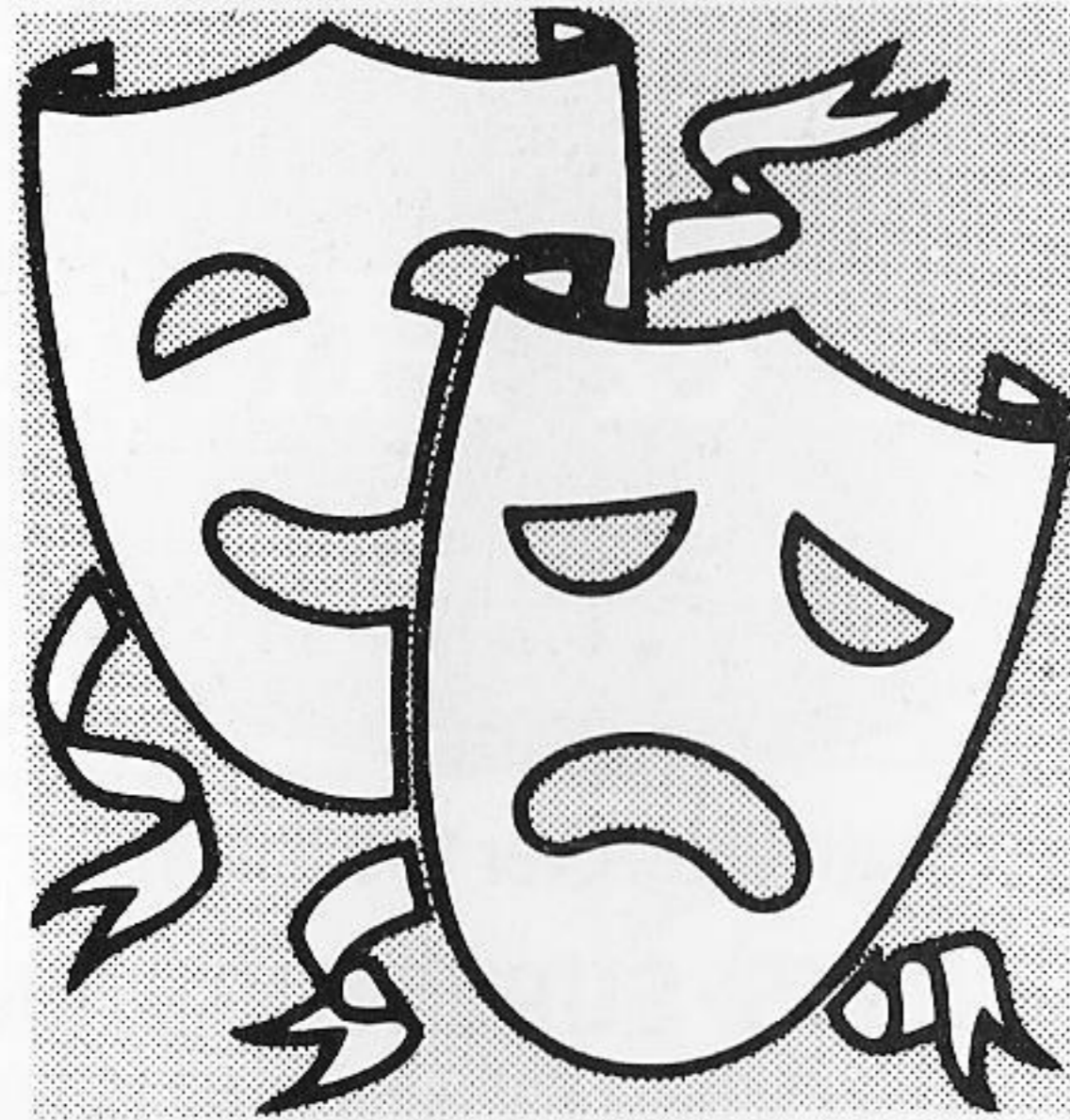


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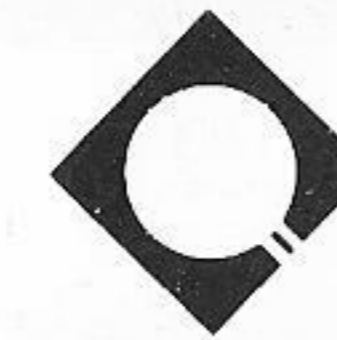
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A Midsummer Night's Dream.

The plot is Shakespeare's invention. Each of its various elements had a separate source. The cross-wooing and the confused allegiance of two pairs of lovers was a convention of Italian comedy, which the poet had exploited in **The Two Gentlemen of Verona**. It is also a development of the errors motif of **The Comedy of Errors**. His knowledge of Theseus and the Amazon Queen Hippolyta, he derived from CHAUCER'S **The Knight's Tale**, in which Chaucer refers to a great feast at their wedding. Shakespeare seems also to have read "The Life of Theseus" in North's translation (1579) of Plutarch's **Lives**, a work of which he later made extensive use when writing his Roman plays.

For the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, he had only to recall his reading in school of the tale in Ovid's METAMORPHOSES. The folklore about fairies, Puck, and Robin Goodfellow he could have learned from old wives' tales circulating in Stratford during his childhood. Midsummer Day was a joyously celebrated holiday in all parts of Merry England; and Midsummer Night was the time for a roundup of all sorts of fairies, witches, and spirits walking by night. Oberon and Titania are names unknown to English folklore. In Ovid, Titania is a name for Circe. Oberon first was presented in English literature as king of the fairies in Robert Greene's **James IV** (c.1591). Shakespeare, however, may have derived the names from the French romance **Huon of Bordeaux**, translated by Lord Berners in 1534. "Puck" as the name of a mischievous sprite goes back to Anglo-Saxon times. (He is also Kipling's "Puck of Pook's Hill.") Shakespeare may have read accounts of Robin Goodfellow, Puck's alternate name, in Reginald Scot's **Discoverie of Witchcraft** (1584). The names of all the labourers are related to their callings. Bottom was the bottom, or core, of the skein upon which a weaver's yarn was wound. Quince or quines were blocks of wood, an appropriate name for a carpenter. Snout meant the nozzle of a kettle, the mending of which was a tinker's principal business. Snug still means "close-fitting," a good name for a joiner. Flute was a bellows mender, whose principal job was to repair the fluted stops of church organs. Starveling is a natural descriptive word for tailors, who were supposed to be undersized and skinny. The last role may originally have been played by the actor JOHN SINCKLO, who was noted for his "thin man" roles.

Many critics, the most recent of whom is J. Dover Wilson, believe that Titania's wooing of Bottom when he is sporting an ass' head is based on some details of the story of **Cupid and Psyche**, as told by a character in **The Golden Ass** of Lucius Apuleius (c. 125-192). The romance recounts the adventures of Lucius, a Greek youth, whom a witch transforms into an ass. Shakespeare could have read **The Golden Ass** in William Adlington's English translation (1566) of the Latin version of the Greek original. The lascivious matron who in Apuleius makes love to an ass Shakespeare transforms into Titania, who delicately woos Bottom.

Into this world of gossamer-like texture, bully Bottom and his fellow artisans drop with a thud. Their performance of the "most lamentable comedy" is ridicule of the plays that the villagers in Shakespeare's day used to delight in acting. Among the entertainments offered to Queen Elizabeth when she went on a progress was a rustic show given by the folk of the countryside near the lord's estate where she was visiting. Bottom is the star of the troupe. Like most conceited amateurs, he feels competent to act all of the parts being assigned by the director. Having designed the part for Will Kempe, the company's low-comedy actor, Shakespeare expected Bottom to be a lout in the tradition of Launce in the **The Two Gentlemen of Verona**. But he has progressed far beyond Launce's malapropisms and rural stupidity to become the comic embodiment of John Bull; like him he is firmly rooted to the earth and feels completely at home in every spot on its broad surface. Nothing abashes him or disturbs his colossal self-assurance. His experiences in fairyland do not give him an instant of wonder or perplexity. He is one of the funniest characters in all dramatic literature, the first of Shakespeare's comic characters to maintain through every change of taste and of literary fashion his irresistible appeal to laughter.

The only existing text is the version of the comedy designed to be presented in the great hall of an Elizabethan gentleman's country house, or possibly at the court, on an occasion at which Queen Elizabeth may have been present. Certain textual inconsistencies indicate that the play as we have it has been revised and that the lines which deal with the fantasy form only one of two textual layers. It has been suggested that the lower and older level largely consists of the dialogue of the lovers and other passages of wooden rhymed verse that Shakespeare must have written near the beginning of his career as a dramatist. The later and upper level would thus contain the lines written in celebration of the allegorically described wedding. It is filled with bursts of verbal music that Shakespeare hoped would charm the cultivated wedding guests. The upper level of the text may also have contained the half-buried tropical allusions and personal satire.

Theseus and Hippolyta, having completed the ritual of courtship, are staid and serious and ready for marriage. They are the bride and groom for whose nuptials Philostrate has prepared the revels. Theseus is no Greek tyrant, but a thoroughly English gentleman, who has his ears attuned to the musical baying of his hounds in full cry.

Oberon's verses recited at the end of the play indicate that the play formed an important part of the celebration of the wedding. In these lines Oberon dispatches one of his minions to bless the marriage beds of all three couples, but in particular, the "best bride-bed"

To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be;
And the issue these create
Ever shall be fortunate.

(V,i, 410-413)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

CAST

Theseus, Duke of Athens Oberon, King of the Fairies	} }	MICHAEL HEALY
Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons Titania, Queen of the Fairies	} }	JO COPE
Egeus, Hermia's Father		DEREK BULLOCK
Hermia, Egeus's Daughter, in love with Lysander Lysander, loved by Hermia Demetrius, suitor of Hermia Helena, in love with Demetrius		BRONWEN JAMES PHILLIP CLAYTON ROGER LEWIS MARI KING
Philostrate, Theseus's Master of the Revels Puck or Robin Goodfellow	} }	JOHN DOBSON
Peaseblossom Cobweb Moth Mustardseed	} } } Fairies	EDDY DUFF BRIAN MOORHOUSE MARTIN HANCOCK TERRY MORRIS
Fairy Musicians		ROBERT MOORE, ANDREW ONYEMERE, PAUL WHITING
First Fairy		ANNETTE SHEPPARD
Oberon's Fairy Band		JULIE WILLIAMS, FAY RUSLING, PHILIPPA GATTY, CLARE HOCTER, HARJINDER KAHN, AMY LAKE
Peter Quince, a carpenter Prologue in the Interlude	} }	MIKE GREEN
Nick Bottom, a weaver Pyramus in the Interlude	} }	ANDY HAYNES
Francis Flute, a bellows-mender Thisbe in the Interlude	} }	STEPHEN GRAY
Tom Snout, a tinker Wall in the Interlude	} }	EDDIE CULLEN
Snug, a joiner Lion in the Interlude	} }	GLYN BACKSHALL
Robin Starveling, a tailor Moonshine in the Interlude	} }	DAVID EVANS

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Director Assisted by	GEOFF WEBB CHRISTINE GARLAND
Music Devised by	ANDREW BRIXEY
Set and Costumes designed by Assisted by	SUE FERGUSON HARRIET BOWES
Stage Managers	PETER TERRY, LUCILLE TERRY
Deputy Stage Manager	DEBORAH WARD
Assistant Stage Managers	SUE BOYD HARRY PUCKERING MAGGIE PEAK NICKY POLLOCK INGRID BENTLEY
Wardrobe Assisted by	SYLVIA WALL JEAN DERBY VAL MORAN
Construction Team	ANDREW BENTLEY PETER TERRY NORMAN HILL ROBIN THOMPSON
Sound Diffusion by	ANDREW BRIXEY
Sound	JOHN GREAVES, MARY KERRIGAN
Props	MARTIN SCHILLER
Prompt	LESLEY HARRIS
Make-up	JULIE CRUTTENDEN
Assisted by	SUSAN SHAMASH, ALEXANDRA CAWDRON, KATE JAY, CATHERINE HARRIS, JENNIFER EADES, CHARLIE BRADLEY, VALERIE WEINHARD CATHERINE BASSETT
Instruments made by	ANDREW BRIXEY HARRY PUCKERING MAGGIE PEAKE
Thanks to:	THE RICHMOND SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY, NIGEL WORSLEY, STEVE HAMES, RICHARD HETHERINGTON and BRIAN MOORHOUSE

DIRECTED by GEOFF WEBB

Many weddings of the nobility solemnized about the years 1594-1596 have been suggested as the occasion for which the play was written. One considered most likely by many historians is that of Elizabeth de Vere, the daughter of the earl of Oxford, to the earl of Derby, which took place on January 26, 1595. Another suggested wedding is that of Sir Thomas Heneage and the widowed countess of Southampton, the mother of Shakespeare's patron. This ceremony took place on May 2, 1594. Still another possible occasion was the wedding of Thomas Berkeley and Elizabeth Carey, the granddaughter of Lord Hunsdon, the patron of Shakespeare's company, on February 19, 1596.

The poet superficially differentiates the lovers involved in the imbroglio. Helena is the conventional rejected lovelorn maiden of romances, the incarnation of staunch fidelity to an inconstant man. Hermia is a more original creation; she is small, dark, and self-willed. She was accounted a vixen when she went to school. Bitterly resenting Helena's flings at her short stature, she returns her taunts with interest, applying to her epithets like "painted May-pole."

The two **amorosos** are not so sharply distinguished, though Demetrius is more like the traditional, sighing, rejected lover, Lysander bolder and more resourceful. All four lovers religiously observe the rites of romantic worship — the moonlight serenade and the exchange of bracelets made of hair, of nosegays, of sweetmeats, and of rings. Love-making to them is an elaborate, fully prescribed ritual.

Shakespeare must have introduced Puck and the fairies into his first version of the confused lovers, for some of the couplets written for them are as mechanical and perfunctory as those in many of the exchanges of the lovers. Since other lines in their parts evoke magic as surely as any other verses that Shakespeare ever wrote, they are obviously a part of his final working over of his revised and expanded text.

Puck is the official jester at the court of Oberon, king of the faires. He "jests to Oberon and makes him smile." He is also Oberon's confidential messenger. He is a tiny, insubstantial elf, like the other fairies. In all the legends he is bent on mischief, delighted to confuse and bewilder hapless mortals.

To this Ariel-like creature Shakespeare has given some of the traits of Robin Goodfellow, a loutish rustic and friendly sprite. One of his good deeds is to enter the kitchen and help with the housework in return for a bowl of cream and a mess of bread set out on the kitchen doorstep for him. The malicious tricks of which he boasts are cruder and more farcical than those that Puck displays in his own right. The other fairies, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed, are almost wholly the figments of the poet's imagination.

About the fairies the poet has woven a delicate charm delightfully translated by Mendelssohn into his famous incidental music to the play. Shakespeare evokes his magic by identifying the beauty of Oberon's realm with the flowers of the English countryside when drenched with moonlight. Titania sleeps in a bower on

a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxslips and the nodding violet grows.

(II, i, 249-250)

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Selected Criticism

GEORG BRANDES. How is one to speak adequately of **A Midsummer Night's Dream**? It is idle to dwell upon the slightness of the character-drawing, for the poet's effort is not after characterisation; and, whatever its weak points, the poem as a whole is one of the tenderest, most original, and the most perfect Shakespeare ever produced.

It is Spenser's fairy-poetry developed and condensed; it is Shelley's spirit-poetry anticipated by more than two centuries. And the airy dream is shot with whimsical parody. The frontiers of Elf-land and Clown-land meet and mingle.

We have here an element of aristocratic distinction in the princely couple, Theseus and Hippolyta, and their court. We have here an element of sprightly burlesque in the artisans' performance of Pyramus and Thisbe, treated with genial irony and divinely felicitous humour. And here, finally, we have the element of supernatural poetry, which soon after flashes forth again in **Romeo and Juliet**, where Mercutio describes the doings of Queen Mab.

We have here no pathos. The hurricane of passion does not as yet sweep through Shakespeare's work. No; it is only the romantic and imaginative side of love that is here displayed, the magic whereby longing transmutes and idealises its object, the element of folly, infatuation, and illusion in desire, with its consequent variability and transitoriness. Man is by nature a being with no inward compass, led astray by his instincts and dreams, and for ever deceived either by himself or by others. This Shakespeare realises, but does not, as yet, take the matter very tragically. Thus the characters whom he here presents, even, or rather especially, in their love-affairs, appear as anything but reasonable beings. The lovers seek and avoid each other by turns, they love and are not loved again; the couples attract each other at cross-purposes; the youth runs after the maiden who shrinks from him, the maiden flees from the man who adores her; and the poet's delicate irony makes the confusion reach its height and find its symbolic expression when the Queen of the Faies, in the intoxication of a love-dream, recognizes her ideal in a journeyman weaver with an ass's head.

JOHN RUSSELL BROWN. If one wished to describe the judgement which informs **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, one might do so very simply: the play suggests that lovers, like lunatics, poets, and actors, have their own "truth" which is established as they see the beauty of their beloved, and that they are confident in this truth for, although it seems the "silliest stuff" to an outsider, to them it is quite reasonable; it also suggests that lovers, like actors, need, and sometimes ask for, our belief, and that this belief can only be given if we have the generosity and imagination to think "no worse of them than they of themselves"

The play's greatest triumph is the manner in which our wavering acceptance of the illusion of drama is used as a kind of flesh-and-blood image of the acceptance which is appropriate to the strange and private "truth" of those who enact the play of love. By using this living image, Shakespeare has gone beyond direct statement in words or action and has presented his judgment in terms of a mode of being, a relationship, in which we, the audience, are actually involved. And he has ensured that this image is experienced at first hand for the audience of the play-within-the-play does not make the perfect reaction; one of them describes what this entails but it is left for us to make that description good. The success of the play will, finally, depend upon our reaction to its shadows.

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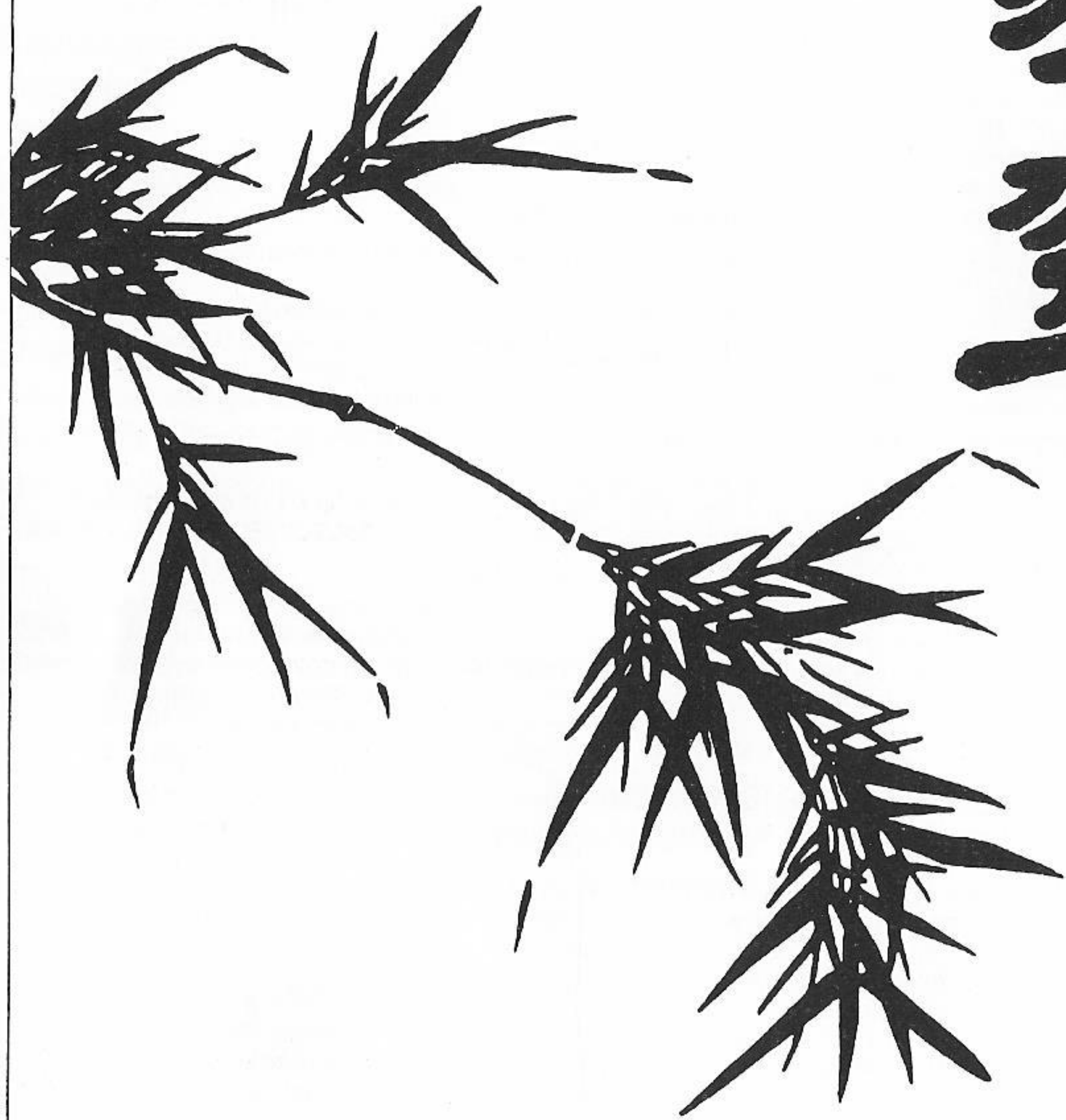
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