

# “And Phibbus’ car shall shine from far”: the Sun, a ‘green’ Mummer’s Play and *hieros gamos* in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Marianne KIMURA

## Abstract

Using the idea that Shakespeare hid the identity of Juliet in the sentence “Juliet is the sun”, I could find a secret play about Mankind and the Sun. But Shakespeare didn’t leave the matter there. Instead, he used the comedic twin of *Romeo and Juliet* to play out another brighter scenario with another Sun figure. The Sun figure is Bottom the Weaver, and he is united with Titania, who is experiencing troubles. These troubles are, if examined closely, Hermetically disguised effects of coal use. For example there are “rheumatic diseases” which could be caused by coal smoke. There is a loss of merriment and play as a fossil-fuel based economy drew everyone in to cities, and land was enclosed for profit. Fortunately, Bottom, the sun “cures” Titania in a Mummer’s play-style “cure” that owes much to the concept of *hieros gamos*. And following from the cosmic allegory, the identity of the “changeling boy” is revealed and a new source for the play, *The Birds* by Aristophanes, is identified.

## I. Introduction: “Juliet is the sun” and the twin play of *Romeo and Juliet*

That Juliet in William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* is actually in allegory the sun, the source of sustenance for all creatures on earth, while the tragedy conceals a secret cosmic, scientific, and historical drama about the sun and mankind<sup>1</sup> is a radical<sup>2</sup> notion. It is nevertheless a unique and revolutionary critical idea, and an interested scholar is therefore attracted to seek out how far and

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1 Please see my article entitled “Juliet is the Sun’: The Secret Anti-Coal Play in *Romeo and Juliet* and the Cosmic Heliocentrism of Giordano Bruno” in *The Area Studies Journal*, Tsukuba University, April 2012, vol. 33, pp. 61-88.

how wide---and in what particular guises and renditions--- the theme is found in Shakespeare's other plays.

I venture here to offer a new reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one which also draws on what I believe is the "secret of Shakespeare" (Yates 1966: 353), an elusive concept coined in 1966 by the late scholar of Renaissance thought Dame Frances Yates in her artful and deep *The Art of Memory*. Yates pointed out that "the secret of Shakespeare has been missed", but the passive construction leaves open the interesting possibility that Yates *herself* had not missed it, and had simply desired to leave this notion undisclosed<sup>3</sup>. If the "secret of Shakespeare" is indeed that he addressed heliocentrism (and supported Giordano Bruno's heliocentric vision) head-on but in code (as I believe the hidden identity of Juliet as our nearest and very most useful star, is both revealed and concealed in the magnificent line "Juliet is the sun") then the line "Juliet is the sun" functions like a key, unlocking the ancient Renaissance puzzle of the secret play in *Romeo and Juliet*, and opening a new world of exciting readings based on Giordano Bruno's philosophical and scientific legacy in Shakespeare's other plays.

The arrangements of cosmic allegorical forces hidden in Shakespeare's plays that depict the architecture and functions of the cosmos and grand actors within it (the Sun, Man, and a few other key figures) owes much to Giordano Bruno's conception of the Art of Memory, where "thoughts singled out for attention could be put into what Bruno called, 'a distilled and developed order of conceivable species, arranged as statues, or a microcosm, or some other kind of architecture.....'" (Bruno, quoted in Rowland, 2008:123) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, like *Romeo and Juliet*, reveals the studied and mannered, but also cascading and resonating, interplay between the hidden (cosmic) and the openly presented layers of dramatic action. Through correctly understanding which characters are also such cosmic "statues", or presences, functioning subtly within the heliocentric cosmic microcosm, we can appreciate the magical and stunning cosmic operation of this comedy.

## II. The Ideas of Giordano Bruno

Giordano Bruno addressed Copernican theory, still not widely accepted, in *Cena de le Ceneri*,(1584) and accepted Copernicus' heliocentric theory, but Bruno added a few more ideas:

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- 2 Dr. Satoshi Fujikawa, a Professor of Aesthetics and Western Art History at Yamaguchi University in Yamaguchi, Japan, used the word "radical" to describe my theory about *Romeo and Juliet* in a conversation I had with him in October, 2011.
  - 3 In another book of hers, *Majesty and Magic in Shakespeare's Last Plays*, Frances Yates writes in the Introduction: "...Bruno's Hermetic vision of the art of memory seemed to raise the question of whether here might be a clue to the vast powers of Shakespeare's imagination. But the time for writing a book on 'Shakespeare and the Hermetic Tradition' had not come, *nor has it yet come*, though this book might be an 'approach' to it'. (3) (my emphasis).

removing the spheres that had formerly formed the outer edges and limits of the sky (which Copernicus had retained), Bruno said the universe is infinite, with an infinite number of stars and planets. Bruno also denied the existence of the “quintessence”, the out-of-this-world matter Aristotle had proposed as the material of stars and other planets (though not the earth): “That is, all bodies are composed of the same basic, infinite substance, and no essential difference exists between sublunar and heavenly bodies” (Gatti 1999: 58). In addition, Bruno proposed a thermodynamic basis for the movement of the earth around the sun: “Bruno sees the need for heat on the part of the earths, and a corresponding need to communicate heat on the part of the suns, as the principal cause of the celestial motions.” (Gatti 1999: 58). A few years later, in *De Immenso*(1591), Bruno wrote:

The Earth, in the infinite universe, is not at the centre, except in so far as everything can be said to be at the center.’ In this chapter it is explained that the Earth is not central amongst the planets. That place is reserved for the Sun, for it is natural for the planets to turn towards its heat and light and accept its law. (*De Immenso III,iii*,qtd. in Michel, 1973: 181)

The scientific knowledge that there was only one source of heat and light near us (the sun), that we revolved around it and that all matter throughout the universe was the same, implied a material connectedness, with light as a functioning piece of the action, among solar bodies, and indeed, a dependence on the part of the earth on the sun. Slowly, Bruno’s novel, revolutionary ideas were incorporated, assimilated, and taken up by other scientists, and in 1600, the year that Bruno was executed by the Catholic Church in Rome for the heretical nature of his ideas, a scientist in England named William Gilbert, influenced by Bruno’s writings, wrote:

The earth therefore rotates, and by a certain law of necessity, and by an energy that is innate, manifest, conspicuous, revolves in a circle toward the sun; through this motion it also shares in the solar energies and influences; and its verticity holds it in this motion lest it stray into every region of the sky. The sun (chief inciter of action in nature), as he causes the planets to advance in their courses, so, too, doth bring about this revolution of the globe by sending forth the energies of his spheres---his light being effused. (Gatti 1999: 89)

The new way of looking at the world included this modern word “energy”, a concept that had not yet been characterized by physics (a nascent field in itself), but which had recently emerged vaguely out of necessity in light of the new still emergent cosmic paradigm. It was only a small step, then, for William Shakespeare, who wrote *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 1596 or 1597, to take in the new scientific model, understand the forces and influences at work, and conclude that the black lumps of coal he saw every day, powerful and valuable though they might be in commerce, were, by virtue of not being generated any longer, qualitatively totally different from the sun. In other words, it was, thanks to Bruno’s basic ideas, which included a mental map of the tiny earth revolving around

an important, large, hot sun, now possible to *distinguish between various streams and flows of fuel, and to trace their origins, actions and effects*. By achieving an accurate picture of man's place in the firmament, mentally picturing the cosmic relationships, and knowing what powered the earth and kept it revolving, the future could be known, or predicted in a rough way. Man's collective and purposeful action of using flows of different fuels, perhaps not always with an outcome that was the desired or intended one, could also, in a general outline, be ascertained. That is, actually, both the methodology and the achievement of *Romeo and Juliet*. But that brilliant and tragic play, for all that it accomplished, was only half of the story. There could not be any death in nature without also a rebirth. The genre of Theater itself underpinned by this idea of cycles, is also thus an art form which actively yet implicitly promotes this idea:

Theater originates in the agricultural festival and the rituals there celebrated. ...they are rituals which seek to promote, by what is still part magic, the renewal of all life after its winter death. They do so through the presentation of definite myths, of agricultural gods or heroes, of vegetable, animal, or human aspect, which triumph and die and come back to life, which disappear and reappear, are expelled or captured, or confront one another in an *agon*, or combat, normally together with a *komos* of followers or companions. At this point, mimesis arises. Some individual, masked or no, feels himself to be the incarnation of the god or hero or one of his companions. (Adrados 1975: 14)

In London, Shakespeare had access to new and heretical ideas of science, to the literature and drama of antiquity, and to new technologies such as the widespread use, in houses, of narrower chimneys to make coal burning possible. Scholars are used to seeing his work as an integration of mainly literary 'sources' such as works from antiquity, the works of other playwrights, and folk plays. But that view needs to be widened beyond literary sources to include the science of his day, technologies of his day, the economic conditions of his day, and the religious ideas of his day, including non-Christian ones such as the Renaissance cult of the sun.

The very act of writing *Romeo and Juliet* at the same time as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is actually, as I will show, an integrative Renaissance exploration, and exposition, of science, economics, history, religion, and theater. Up until now, critics have focused on the superficial similarities between the plays:

.....and the tragedy they (i.e., the Athenian artisans of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) perform, of star-crossed lovers, fatal errors, and suicides, is one in which the playwright himself was deeply interested. In the period he was writing the "Pyramus and Thisby" parody, Shakespeare was also writing the strikingly similar *Romeo and Juliet*; they may well have been on his writing table at the same time. (Greenblatt 2004: 52) (my emphasis)

Many critics besides Stephen Greenblatt have pointed vaguely to the “striking” similarities between *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but, without the useful knowledge of “the secret of Shakespeare”, that is to say, the specific thermodynamic<sup>4</sup> and cosmic nature of his metaphysical and scientific inquiries, part of Renaissance scientific discussions of his day, the focus has been on superficial things such as star-crossed lovers and fatal errors. I hope this paper will show another path forward.

### III. Mummer’s Plays

Within all the folk traditions, “it was the “rowdy, uncontrolled, free-to-all comers character of the mumming that recalled the ‘democratic’ character of the more ancient pagan festivals noted by E.K. Chambers” (Weimann 1987: 26). Glynne Wickham notes that “Mumming was the prerogative of those without claim to noble birth” (Wickham quoted in Weimann 1987: 26). It is important to note that professional actors were not the performers, but ordinary people, who joined in if they wished. In Mumming,

processions of disguised persons demanded tribute or forced their way into private houses. Once within, the mummers treated the house as “public property”----- another *libertas decembris* by which the sanctity of private property was temporarily suspended. It is therefore not surprising that Tudor legislation imposed harsh punishments on masqueraders, especially if they entered the houses of noblemen or other substantial persons. (Weimann 1987: 26)

Weimann goes onto assert that

There was, of course, no political ideology underlying the boisterous revelry of the masqueraders; unlike the Roman Saturnalia, these modern conventions did not retain any justification in myth and there was no direct connection with any of the defensive functions of ritual. At best, only a playful kind of resistance to the division of social classes can be found in the variously disguised inversions of rank and authority. (Weimann 1987: 26)

Weimann is able to trace the lineage of Mummer’s plays back to when they did “retain justification in myth”. Roman Saturnalias would have been underpinned by the pantheon of Greek

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4 I want specifically to say that just because Giordano Bruno and William Shakespeare lacked a modern vocabulary of thermodynamics does not mean that the operations of thermodynamics did not exist materially in the universe of the Elizabethan era (of course we know their universe was materially and physically bound by the same laws as ours today), and also I wish to posit that a scientific understanding, though vague by our standards, of the concepts of thermodynamics could be accessed ---and correctly so---in their era.

Gods, including Apollo, the sun god, (and the only Greek god whose Greek name was retained by the Romans). The rise of Christianity, with the official discrediting of Apollo, meant that seasonal and natural mythic forces in the Mummer's plays became weakened, invisible, or went underground. For example, Mummer's plays were particularly performed (and still are performed) in the Christmas season in England, the time of year of the winter solstice.

It is very natural for Weimann to talk about---and therefore implicitly to link--- both this underground connection to seasonal ritual, a manifestation of "myth" and the "resistance to the division of social classes" implied by Mumming in the same paragraph. Yet, the connection is not at all made clear by him. Why should it be assumed, without inspection or inquiry that history will just 'naturally' progress away from seasonal myths and the direct influence of nature gods? And why should such a progression away from direct nature myths of the sacred be linked with more, or more noticeable, hierarchical divisions in social classes, divisions that are resisted or regretted, at least by some? To leave these issues unexamined is to miss exactly the fundamental problem that so interested Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a play with 1) sharp class divisions; 2) a pre-Christian setting in Athens, the home of the mythical Greek Pantheon; 3) a set of supernatural fairy beings more at home in pre-Christian English folklore; and 4) A title which makes specific reference to the summer solstice (midsummer).

#### **IV. State Authority, Class Hierarchy and the Sacred: Connected to Energy**

A well-known scholar in anthropology, Joseph Tainter, discusses in detail the connection between changes in the sacred myths a society may have and changes in its social hierarchy. The first point Tainter suggests is that in general, in both simple societies or complex ones, rulers or chiefs, "share....the need to establish and constantly reinforce legitimacy.....hierarchy and complexity, as noted, are rare in human history, and where present require constant reinforcement". (Tainter 1990: 27) Reinforcement of legitimacy produced through coercion, Tainter writes, is costly and ineffective, while "establishing moral validity is less costly and more effective" (Tainter 1990: 27). Tainter makes the point that complex societies are focused around a center, which he calls "the symbolic source of the framework of society" (Tainter 1990: 27). Tied to legitimacy of the rulers, the center, is not only the location of legal and governmental institutions, but is the source of order, and the symbol of moral authority and social continuity. The center partakes of the nature of the sacred. In this sense, every complex society has an official religion. (Shils, 1975, Eisenstadt, 1978; Apter: 1968).....The moral authority and the sacred aura of the center not only are essential in maintaining complex societies, but were crucial in their emergence. One critical impediment to the development of complexity in stateless societies was the need to integrate many localized, autonomous

units, which would each have their own peculiar interests, feuds, and jealousies. A ruler drawn from any one of these units is automatically suspect by the others, who rightly fear favoritism toward his/her natal group and locality, particularly in dispute resolution. (Netting: 1972).....

*The solution to this structural limitation was to explicitly link leadership in early complex societies to the supernatural.....*An early complex society is likely to have an avowedly sacred basis of legitimacy, in which disparate, formerly independent groups are united by an overarching level of shared ideology, symbols, and cosmology. (Netting: 1972; Claessen, 1978; Skalnik, 1978) *Supernatural sanctions are then a response to the stresses of change from a kin-based society to a class-structured one.* (Tainter 1990: 27-28) (my emphasis)

The broader outlines of English history are well-known: a movement of wider and more central consolidations of power: over a few centuries spanning roughly 1000 until 1500, Concurrently, Christianity achieved greater and greater influence and power. Local authorities of all kinds, not just major 'regional powers' such as Scotland, Ireland and Wales, were also subsumed, and there began a general climb to the modern era.

It is totally beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the spread of Christianity over Europe and England as a phenomenon that developed out of the rise of more centralized and more complex states in response to the compelling needs of the rulers to legitimize their own power. Yet, keeping this idea in mind, we can traverse the landscape of the secret play<sup>5</sup> in *Romeo and Juliet* to find evidence that Shakespeare himself must have thought just along such lines. When the lovers meet at the party, Romeo speaks of himself as a "pilgrim" and of Juliet as a "shrine". Their real names are not known to each other. Here are all nature-based pre-Christian religions with a sun god artistically and neatly inscribed in a symbolic microcosmic style so in harmony with formalist Renaissance aesthetic ideals.

In the balcony scene, the language of worship has been replaced by the language of love, coupled with a sense of insecurity as the lovers seek frantically and excruciatingly, to make promises or "vows" to guarantee their union. The sun is no longer a god, but it is important, central, of course in agriculture (Juliet speaks of her "bounty"), and a constant presence, but as a result of being no longer divine, it is crucially, *now also out of Man's reach*. This explains why Juliet is on the balcony, and accounts for the fraught, tormented situation expressed allegorically in the lovers' language where they constantly seek for resolution. In practical, historical terms, by putting the locus of sacred

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5 See my paper entitled "'Juliet is the sun; the Secret Anti-coal Play in *Romeo and Juliet* and the Cosmic Heliocentrism of Giordano Bruno" *Area Studies Tsukuba*, April 2012, for details.

celebrations into central buildings (called churches or cathedrals) Christianity brought more rural direct nature worship away from its participants and simultaneously removed what Weimann calls the older “mythic justification” from folk rituals.

Along with complexity in religion, complexity in science is also alluded to in this extremely topical play. Renaissance scientific ideas about the sun, such as the Copernican thesis that the earth actually circled the sun, coupled also with Shakespeare’s secret Hermetic expression statement of support for Giordano Bruno, is inscribed in the statement of Romeo when he says, just before making his way back to Juliet, in the Capulet’s garden, “Can I go forward when my heart is here? Turn back dull earth, and find thy centre out” (II.i.1-2)

I have made the radical claim that the first two lines of *Romeo and Juliet* (“Gregory, on my word, we won’t carry coals”/”No, for then we should be colliers”) are important Hermetic signs both revealing and concealing Shakespeare’s awareness of the important role of coal. The phrase seems to indicate a subtle or eventual rejection of coal, perhaps because Shakespeare was already somewhat aware of the real eventual price, a price which modern historians, (the following excerpt is from a book published in 2004), have only just now started to discuss:

*Coal offered select societies the power of millions of years of solar income that had been stored away in a solar savings account of unimaginable size. Coal would give them the power to change fundamental aspects of their relationship with nature, including their relationship with the sun, but it would offer that power at a price.*  
(Freese 2003: 6-7) (my emphasis)

The power of coal has long been recognized, and perhaps the era preceding our current oil age, where coal was dominant in transportation and industry, is where people made the most eloquent defenses of it: “Every basket (of coal) is power and civilization”, wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson in the mid 1800s (Freese 2003: 10).

In modern scholarship, Tainter validates this idea, of available energy resources being a natural game-changer in the area of sociopolitical complexity, in a more general way when he writes: Human societies and political organizations, like all living systems, are maintained by a continuous flow of energy. From the simplest familial unit to the most complex regional hierarchy, the institutions and patterned interactions that comprise a human society are dependent on energy. At the same time, the mechanisms by which human groups acquire and distribute basic resources are conditioned by, and integrated within, sociopolitical institutions. Energy flow and sociopolitical organization are opposite sides of an equation. Neither can exist, in a human group, without the other, nor can either undergo substantial change without altering both the opposite member and the balance of the equation. Energy flow and sociopolitical organization must evolve in harmony. (Tainter 1990: 91)



The task, now, is to understand how the Hermetically-presented topic of the oppositional coal-sun issue as it affected Britain's society is addressed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the twin play of *Romeo and Juliet*. In Act III of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Helena says to Hermia:

So we grew together, like a double cherry, seeming parted,  
 But yet an union in partition,  
 Two lovely berries moulded on one stem,  
 So with two seeming bodies, but one heart,  
 Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,  
 Due but to one, and crowned with one crest. (III. ii. 208-214)

These lines are a playful Hermetic, and microcosmic, exposition of the relationship of the two plays to each other: they address a similar theme ("crowned with one crest"). "An union in partition" alludes to the importance of walls, the way the secret plays are divided from the overt plays, and the hidden uses of allegory. It should be noted that in the comedy, there is a character called "Wall", while in the tragedy, Juliet says that "the orchard walls are high and hard to climb" (II.ii.63), and Romeo responds immediately with, "With love's light wings did I ov'er perch these walls" (II.ii.66); all are subtle allusions to the many *partitions*, invisible and visible, in both plays.

## V. The Mummer's Play Structure in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

That Shakespeare used a Mummer's play as a structural pattern or vague formal source for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been recognized on-and-off again, especially by earlier critics such as H. Coote Lake (Lake 141) and William Montgomerie (Montgomerie 1956: 214). A 1916 study entitled "An Essay on Shakespeare's Relation to Tradition" by Janet Spens points out:

.....Shakespeare learned to mix his literary matter with the old folk dramas which had the vitality of countless generations in them, and their roots in the far-off mysterious kinship between man and the dumb earth with which his dust mingles in death. The debt is no mere suggestion of the plot, but extends in many cases to most of the situations on the stage. (Spens 1916: 3)

But beyond vaguely identifying a Mummer's play pattern, no critic has seriously tried to connect any deeper theme of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with its folkplay template, and with the enactment of a cure. (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* also recollects the Hock Tuesday play, a festive yearly series of amateur performances by artisans at Coventry for the visiting queen, and the May Day festival, where lovers ran into the woods to dance and sing, as well as the yearly summer solstice, "Midsummer", when various local agricultural festivals took place, so the sheer number of older forms present in the play has also made it difficult to see which is the older form that informs the play's meaning most significantly.)

A first playful consideration is: did Shakespeare choose the title *A Midsummer Night's Dream* because "Midsummer" rhymes with "Mummer"?---(In fact, it is worth noting that the title also conceals the word "Mummer" by containing it.) Formally, then, here are the structural elements of the play that owe their existence to the English folk Mummer's play. Robert Weimann characterizes the Mummer's play as having ritual origins "in the fertility rites and agrarian festivals of pre-feudal and pre-Christian village communities" (Weimann 1987: 17). He goes on to describe the interior structure of the Mummer's Play as follows:

The basic four-part structure of the play begins with an introduction in which one of the actors addresses the surrounding audience asking for room to play and requesting, sometimes, their attention as well. This is followed by the hero-combat, in which two protagonists (often St. George and the Turkish Knight) appear to boast of their strength and engage in battle; the defeated player is subsequently wounded or killed. A doctor, usually assisted by an impudent young servant, is then summoned to heal the fighter's wounds or resurrect him from the dead. A number of comic characters appear in the last part of the play, which ends finally with a collection and another address to the audience. (Weimann 1987: 15-6)

Shakespeare has modified and disguised the Mummer's play in an experimental and novel way, but the basic structure (and its older ritual purpose of enacting a cure) remains. In addition, all four of the parts of a Mummer's play that Weimann identifies are strictly and formally retained in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Shakespeare adapts them smoothly for his sophisticated Elizabethan audience. The central and most important piece of action is the "cure" of the situation (nature is out of order) involving Titania. The 'doctor' who enacts the cure is her husband, Oberon, with the love-in-idleness flower (a kind of magic drug); the 'impudent young servant' is Puck, who says to the fairy he is talking to, as Oberon first enters the scene, "But room, fairy! Here comes Oberon" (II.i.58), thus "asking for room to play" (Weimann's first criteria). The last criteria ("a collection and another address to the audience") is retained in Puck's last long speech, and especially in the penultimate line "Give me your hands, if we be friends" (V.i.437). (The "collection" here isn't a request for money, but has been adapted into a request for applause.)

## **VI. What Needs to Be "Cured" by this Mummer's Play?**

Although critics have vaguely found a Mummer's play pattern, there has not been any attempt to examine formally and methodically what needs to be "cured" and who the "doctor" and the "doctor's assistant" are, and why. In other words, the system behind Shakespeare's choices hasn't been understood. Like its organic mythic predecessors, the resulting art, an "artificial god" in the words of Helena in her "double-cherry speech", calls up a "defensive function". And with

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare secretly expels coal, and with it, the new incipient industrialization, the new stratifying social class divisions, and the reigning new Puritan spirit, whose power derived from the new social and economic structures that coal made possible. Shakespeare was---and obviously, in what is still a fossil-fuel-based economy, still is--- very subversive. It has not been realized just to what extent this is true, and Shakespeare continues to be seen historically, and above all, in economic terms as bourgeois, self-made, and a successful business man, who is widely assumed not to have questioned too closely the status quo. Yet, one scholar of Bruno who has noted many connections between major parts of *Hamlet* and Giordano Bruno's heretical ideas has alluded to this subversive side of Shakespeare: "For had (Shakespeare's) dramas been fully understood by his public, it is unlikely that he would have been able to pass those years of prosperous retirement at Stratford...".(Gatti 1989: 116)

## VII. Titania, the Puritans and Coal

The cure that is carried out by the play goes to the heart of Shakespeare's environmental concerns because it relates critically to the issue of coal. In this play, we see the effects of coal Hermetically depicted in the long important 'complaint' speech of Titania, who represents the earth or the land or physical nature. We can associate her with the earth, land, or nature from this long and significant speech, which catalogues the many troubles that have befallen the country since her quarrel with Oberon started. The two are fighting over who should have a "little changeling boy" (II.1.120), and because of this conflict, wide-ranging effects on the land are seen:

Titania: These are the forgeries of jealousy  
 And never, since the middle-summer's spring,  
 Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,  
 By paved fountain or by rushy brook,  
 Or in the beached margent of the sea,  
 To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,  
 But with thy brawls thy hast disturbed our sport.  
 Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,  
 As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea  
 Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land,  
 Hath every pelting river made so proud  
 That they have overborne their continents.  
 The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,  
 The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn  
 Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard.

The fold stands empty in the drowned field,  
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock,  
The nine men's morris is filled up with mud,  
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,  
For lack of tread, are undistinguishable.  
The human mortals want their winter here;  
No night is now with hymn or carol blest.  
Therefore the moon (the governess of floods),  
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,  
That rheumatic diseases do abound,  
And thorough this distemperature, we see  
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts  
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,  
And on old Hiem's thin and icy crown  
And odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds  
Is, as in mockery, set; the spring, the summer  
The chiding autumn, angry winter change  
Their wonted liveries; and the mazed world,  
By their increase, now knows not which is which.  
And this same progeny of evils comes  
From our debate, from our dissension;  
We are their parents, and original. (II.i.81-117)

In order to understand how this list of troubles is a poetic and disguised description of problems associated with using coal, it will be necessary to understand some esoteric facts about coal smoke and coal in Elizabethan London. First, coal was delivered by sailing ship to London. The coal was loaded in the north of England where the mines were, and delivered to London:

Moving the coal from where it lies to where it's needed is a problem that has plagued the coal trade from the beginning. Until the advent of railways, coal was either moved by water or not moved much at all. Once you got the coal to the water, though, shipping it the three hundred miles or so from Newcastle to London cost about the same as carrying it three or four miles overland. In this respect, conditions near Newcastle and in England were ideal....the link between 'sea coal' and water was by no means superficial...England's broad use of coal was possible only because the nation had plenty of water to float the coal to market. (Freese 2003: 21-2)

The "contagious fogs" that are "suck'd up by the sea" are then a metaphorical way of describing the process of delivering sea coal by sea (all coal was called 'sea coal' until the middle

1600s); then when it was burned it produced coal smoke, which is dark and looks like a fog, particularly in a damp climate such as England's.

In Elizabethan times and earlier, coal smoke was disliked and there were many complaints recorded against businesses that used coal as fuel because of the smoke (Brimblecombe 1987: 33). In general, coal use and dependency increased over time. As London grew, and by the late 1500s, coal became a necessary cooking and heating fuel not just for many businesses, but for households, starting with the poorer ones. Coal smoke was widely disliked, but by then wood was too scarce and expensive, and the government granted one early experimenter, the Duke of York in 1590 a "seven-year privilege to 'correcte the sulphurous nature of coal'" (Brimblecombe 1987: 32). In 1603 Hugh Platt published a tract, *A Fire of Cole-Balles*, expressing concern that coal smoke was damaging the plants, buildings and clothes of London. (Brimblecombe 1987: 40) And by 1620, King James I was "moved by compassion for the decayed fabric of St. Paul's Cathedral near approaching ruin by the corroding quality of coal smoke to which it had long been subjected". (Brimblecombe 1987: 39)

These problems that resulted from coal use are allegorically presented in Titania's speech. For example, the "rheumatic diseases" and also the "Contagious fogs" and "distemperature" she mentions may be a secretive reference to the ill effects of coal soot and smoke on health. The deleterious effects of coal smoke on buildings, clothes and plants were documented in Shakespeare's time, but the similar effects on human health, while no doubt experienced and recognized in his era, would be recorded in detail a few decades later. "It was argued that more than half those who died in the metropolis did so from 'ptisicall and pulmonary distempers, spitting blood from their ulcerated lungs'" (Digby, 1657 qtd in Brimblecombe 1987: 46). Writing in 1661, early environmentalist John Evelyn blamed coal for Londoners "blackened expectorations, and for the incessant, 'Coughing and Snuffing' and the 'Barking and the Spitting' in the churches." (Freese 2003: 37)

Titania cites also the "hoary-headed frosts (that) fall in the fresh lap of the rose" (II.i.107-8) which allegorizes the blighting effects of coal smoke on plants in London: in *A Fire of Coal-Balles* (1603), Hugh Platt mentions damage to gardens resulting from coal smoke and soot (Brimblecombe 1987: 31). The "hoary-headed frosts" would be caused by sulfur dioxide (released when coal is burned), which ravages plants and trees: "at higher concentrations of sulfur dioxide, the leaf can no longer cope....the cells of the mesophyll collapse and the leaf takes on a dull green water-soaked look. On drying, these damaged areas appear *whitish*" (Brimblecombe 1987: 69) (my emphasis). This whitish appearance can be poetically allegorized as a "frost". Furthermore, the lines "And on old Hiem's thin and icy crown/ And odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds/ Is, as in mockery, set; the spring, the summer/ The chiding autumn, angry winter change" possibly refer to the way that a more urban environment, such as Elizabethan London compared to countryside, can produce earlier blooming of flowers and warmer temperatures.

Londoners would have been able to see the air quality getting worse every year: estimates

are that the rate of increase in coal importation to London from 1580 to 1680 was twenty-fold (Brimblecombe 34). More specifically, from 1583 to 1597 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* was probably written in 1596), coal shipments from Newcastle to London went from 33,000 tons to 163,000 tons (Weimann 1987:164), about a five-fold increase.

The broader impression in Titania's speech, moreover, is of village life as dysfunctional: "the ploughman lost his sweat"; "the quaint mazes in the wanton green/For lack of tread, are undistinguishable". Here Shakespeare describes the reverberating effects of enclosing land, which was one indirect effect of coal burning, since coal burning allowed greater concentrations of people in cities, who could burn coal for fuel and did not need wood. These cities then could become viable markets for agricultural goods, and thus would make the strategy of further enclosure economically attractive, further disrupting the traditional economic structures that had been purely solar-based, and in turn, perpetuating more coal dependency, and removing rural traditions:

(Enclosure and related economic changes) profoundly affected the ancient cultural traditions and customs which the shared land of the medieval village had immemorially fostered. Once the land was enclosed and made an object of speculation, traditions associated with it were, when not completely destroyed, severely threatened. (Weimann 1987: 162)

Playful country traditions, nine men's morris or making mazes in fields, have vanished with the old solar-based economy; also freely singing is not appropriate in an urban place: "no night is now with hymn or carol blest".

It is worth elucidating the loss of play and festivity in England at this time as the Puritans "saw no need to relax a sense of duty" (Sommerville 1992: 37). "Puritanism was an experiment in seriousness" (Somerville 1992: 36), and Puritans opposed the "play element of culture" (Huizinga qtd in Sommerville 1992: 36). The Puritans' campaigns against festivals, play, and the comic seem, on the surface, to be arbitrary or capricious. However, in a world where getting a livelihood depends on maintaining an overall economic level of commerce (the supply of and demand for goods flowing) that can generate enough economic value to maintain coal production (the resource is ever harder to reach since it is depleting and easier deposits are drained first), seriousness and industry would naturally be the new reigning principles. Festivals, days spent in singing and practicing or performing dramas, would be obstacles to the progress of the new more specialized, competitive, complex and less local economy. New or changing underlying energetic exigencies are encountered materially as new technologies (like chimneys for coal fires), political ideas, social trends, or new economic developments.

Titania's speech includes what editors have called a "controversial passage" (Evans 227): "The human mortals want their winter here" (II.i.101), (which has been so difficult to parse that it has been "amended in some editions to 'The human mortals want their winter cheer'" (Evan 227)).

Evans speculates that this line means that humans “lack under these circumstances their proper winter season” (Evans 227), but the line makes perfect sense in its original form when we understand the secret implication of coal. In other words: the human mortals are, by selecting coal, making winter happen in London; they *want* their winter *here* (i.e. in London). By developing a more urban environment and by producing coal smoke that damaged plants Londoners were removing their direct contact with the sun-based economy (based on photosynthesis), and the harvest; in effect, they were getting a perpetual winter. It is the only phrase that implicates humans in the litany of troubles, and therefore it also points to coal.

Finally the use of the image of the “flood” in Titania’s speech as a secret allegory for “coal” becomes more clear: coal was like a massive (but unseen) flood in its impact and power to change everything in England: plants, games, songs, agriculture, health, and the way humans experienced the seasons.

The political climate and mood of Elizabethan England was heavily influenced by the consolidation and increase of wealth and power in the cities as the Puritans gained control. Rural festivals, seasonal rites, and so forth were banned and criticized:

As the bourgeoisie and the landed gentry became more respectable and aspired to positions of power, and as Puritanism raised its head, the traditional ceremonies of the village, long since dissociated from their original functions (and now in the “wildheds of the Parish”), seemed less and less tolerable. (Weimann 1987: 23)

The Fool, whose identity derived from these festivals, therefore can be seen to embody a subtle and subversive political counterpoint to the complex, consolidating, and hierarchically burgeoning English society of the late 1500s:

the processional topsy-turveydom and the attitudes of festive release were not at all incompatible with some sort of communal consciousness and some elements of social criticism. In fact, the traditions of popular myth ritual, and disguise seemed to provide a favorable vehicle for a naively rebellious expression of the common man’s sense of the world and his position in it. (Weimann 1987: 24).

Shakespeare understood how the Fool figure, as an atavistic figure from old folk plays and seasonal rituals could be also used as an avatar of the sun, the solar body which most gave old folk plays and seasonal rituals their force and power. His calculation was both new and old: Bruno and Copernicus had lately revealed a science that reinforced and reintroduced the power of the sun again to the Renaissance, where so much from antiquity was already being rediscovered and reprocessed, but with a new and more modern outlook. In a sense, Phoebus Apollo is being rediscovered, or perhaps ‘reimagined’. When Helena begins her ‘double cherry’ speech, she compares herself and Hermia to “two artificial gods”(III.ii.203), as though Shakespeare were aware of the somewhat ‘artificial’ nature of his dramatic project: to recreate what had been lost forever, to expel what could

not really be expelled except by the natural passage of centuries of human toil.

### VIII. A Sun Figure in A Midsummer Night's Dream

To understand how the cure of the coal-affected land is brought about, we need to look for a character that, like Juliet, represents the sun in the allegory in the play. Imagery throughout the play quickly reveals the answer: *the sun figure is Bottom the Weaver*. His first long speech includes a comic parody of a tyrant, in this case 'Ercles':

Bottom: That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes. I will move storms; I will condole in some measure. To the rest--- yet my chief humor is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely. Or any part to tear a cat in, to make all split.

The raging rocks  
And shivering shocks  
Shall break the locks  
Of prison gates  
And Phibbus' car  
Shall shine from far,  
And make or mar  
The foolish Fates.  
That was lofty!... (I.ii.25-38)

Shakespeare has secretly conveyed Bottom's true identity as the sun by using words that are an atavistic repository of the past—and also a sort of invocation of a divine solar spirit--- in two ways: "Phibbus" recalls a time when the sun was a god; and a more recent past is recalled in the fact that the speech belongs to "Ercles", a Vice figure from an older dramatic form that belonged to a more rural and sun-based economy<sup>6</sup>. Bottom's critical hidden identity is passed along, unobserved,

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6 Where did Shakespeare get the idea for the extravagant lines of "Ercles" that Bottom quotes so proudly and pompously? Commentary from 1841 supplies one convincing candidate:

In 1581 a translation of one of Seneca's plays, entitled Hercules, by John Studley, was published. It is so bombastically rendered, that we are inclined to think it may be the original (of Bottom's "Ercles" lines)...For instance:

O Lorde of ghostes! Whose fyrye flashe  
That forth thy hande doth shake  
Doth cause the trembling lodges twayne,  
Of *Phoebus' carre to shake*....  
The roing rocks have quaking sturd,  
And none thereat hath pusht..." (Halliwell-Phillips 22) (my emphasis)



in a seemingly incidental moment of play and self-importance. Another image that connects the sun with Bottom, this time one that inscribes the sun's traditional beneficent, seasonal dimension is found in the same scene a little later. Peter Quince (the director of the "rude mechanicals", and a stand-in for Shakespeare, who also told actors what to say and do) necessarily provides his voice of authority (i.e. he has the access to this esoteric knowledge about Bottom since he is really Shakespeare) to the thematically critical description:

Peter Quince: You (Bottom) can play no part but Pyramus: for Pyramus is a sweet-fac'd man, a proper man as one shall see on a summer's day; a most gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus. (I.ii.85-9)

The sun can be said to have a "face", a round flat-seeming surface. Furthermore, the description, "a proper man as one shall see on a summer's day", inscribes in Bottom's character, (like Juliet, born on Lammas Eve in August), a season when the shining sun is most in evidence. Later, Peter Quince (in on the secret, of course) again addresses Bottom (after Bottom reappears after he has changed back into human form), "Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!" (V.i.28) Days and hours mark the time, along with the passage of the sun. Peter Quince's words seem, again, incidental, the clumsy efforts of a "rude mechanical" at noble rhetoric. It is just through such comedic dynamism and indirections that Shakespeare delivers fatefully important imagery but without conscious impact.

Finally, while playing the part of Pyramus, Bottom uses more sun imagery, this time comically---through mistake and nonsense patter---to briefly conjure up the ancient role of the fool or clown (whose speech was "non-sensical" and made use of "topsy-turvy patter" (Weimann 1987: 31)) in the older dramatic forms, whose festive and ritual origins also recall the sun:

Bottom: Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;  
I thank thee for shining so bright;  
For thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams  
I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight. (V.i.272-4)

Once again, the "sunny beams" 'mistake' gets registered as a silly comedic device and nothing more. Subtly, then, is Bottom's real identity as the sun in the cure allegory transmitted by his repeated use of words related to the sun, (or by a few significant characters directing such words at him) though this is hidden from conscious view.

## IX. The Cure Itself

How is Bottom, the sun, put in touch with Titania, the troubled land? The whole action, with sexual and romantic overtones, to unify them is the comic climax of the play: when Titania awakens to find herself 'enamored of an ass', while Bottom is singing a song:

Bottom (*sings*): The woosel cock so black of hue,  
With tawny-orange bill,  
The throstle with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill----  
Titania (*awakening*): What angel wakes me from my flow'ry bed?  
Bottom (*sings*): The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
The plain-song cuckoo gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
And dares not answer nay....

The audience is sure to be laughing so hard that the deep Hermetic techniques to stage a religious moment will be only vaguely sensed. Yet the fairy-magician Oberon has basically set up the whole situation---a secret religious ritual ---- and Peter Quince, before exiting, has bestowed a religious consecration upon the scene a few lines earlier: "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated". (III.i.118)

Shakespeare's play is not a Greek Comedy, but its setting in pre-Christian Athens means that Shakespeare was consciously using the freeing parameters of another space and an earlier time to bring in 'other' background cultural ideas, while implicitly excising the ones from his own time. Peter Quince's blessing may not be purely Christian (within the play, spatially and temporally, actually, it *cannot* be so), therefore, and it seems to be more along the lines of one that would have been bestowed in ancient Greek drama at a certain set place. In *Festival, Comedy and Tragedy*, Francisco Adrados points to a common element in Greek Comedy he calls the "hymn or prayer", which "may be followed by a *ritual action*" (Adrados 1975: 91) (my emphasis). Thus Titania and Bottom's union, so comical on the surface, is disguising a deep moment of "ritual action", (following Peter Quince's ritual prayer), that involves communion with the sun.

The "hymn" continues, right from Peter Quince's ritual blessing and through to the end of Bottom's song about birds. "I will sing that they will hear I am not afraid" (III.i.124) says Bottom in explanation of why he sings. But that is another device to deliberately lead the audience astray, as in fact Puck later does lead the Athenian nobles astray, Shakespeare's amusing microcosmic signal that he, too, is quite capable of this trick.

To understand this important song, seemingly nonsense gibberish that has been ignored by critics and scholars, it is necessary to look at the Greek comedy *The Birds* by Arisophanes, where several interesting pieces of dialogue and song, as well as theme, point to the strong likelihood that the famous Greek comedy is one significant source for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The topic of birds in Bottom's song seems incidental and unremarkable. Yet, significantly, Bottom has mentioned birds before. Were he to play the Lion's part, he says, in Act I, "I would roar you as gently as any *sucking dove*, I will roar you and 'twere any *nightingale*" (I.ii.82-3). (my

emphasis) This early association of Bottom with birds is one signal that there is something special about birds in relation to him. Indeed, a brief examination of Aristophanes' play will reveal the religious reasons that explain both how why Shakespeare used *The Birds* as a source.

First of all, of course, *The Birds* is set in Athens, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Second, in Aristophanes' comedy, two characters, Euelpides and Pithetaerus, are looking for a better place to live than Athens ("not a greater (city), but one more pleasant to live in"<sup>7</sup>), recalling the miseries with land and place that Titania has listed in her 'complaint' speech. They are shocked to meet a large Hoopoe, a type of crested bird, named Epops who used to be a man (like Bottom, he has been transformed into an animal) and who says, "I have been a man". Pithetaeus says, "When we see a thoughtless man, we ask, "What sort of bird is this?" And Teleas answers, 'It is a man who has no brain, a bird that has lost his head....'" In an apparent echo of this way of creating a creature half man and half beast, in Act IV of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Oberon says, "Robin, take off this head" (IV.i.80)

But the most serious, resonant, and vital similarity occurs after Epops, Pithetaeus, and Euelpides decide they will "found a city" in the air. Then Epops flies into a thicket to wake his wife, a nightingale named Procne. Just as Bottom awakens Titania with his song, so too does Epops' song wake the sleeping Procne. Epops' song is much longer and more complicated than Bottom's song. It has two parts, though, like Bottom's song. The first stanza of Epops' song goes like this:

"Chase off sleep, dear companion. Let the sacred hymn gush from thy divine throat in melodious strains; roll forth in soft cadence.....right up to the throne of Zeus, where Phoebus listens to you, Phoebus with his golden hair. And his ivory lyre responds to your plaintive accents; he gathers the choir of the gods and from their immortal lips pours forth a sacred chant of blessed voices."

Procne wakes up after this first stanza, like Titania in *her* play. However, Procne (unlike Titania) is not seen; instead, to show that she awakens, "the flute is played behind the scene, imitating the song of a nightingale." Then, after this important invocation of Apollo, the sun god, Epops sings the second and last stanza (I provide basic parts to show the main idea, but not the entirety):

Epopopoi popoi popopopoi popoi, here, here, quick, quick, my comrades in the air.... the mountain birds. Who feed on the wild olive....you, also, who snap up the sharp-stinging gnats....and you who dwell in the fine plane of Marathon....and you, the francolin with speckled wings; you too, the halcyons...(etc.)

These two stanzas, from Epops' song in *The Birds*, constitute an important core of meaning, some of it religious, which has been preserved, in disguise, and in a briefer, more symbolic format,

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7 All lines from *The Birds* are from [classics.mit.edu/Aristophanes/birds.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Aristophanes/birds.html)

in Bottom's song. Especially, Shakespeare excised the first stanza, with its invocation to Phoebus. But Bottom has already declaimed about "Phibbus' car" earlier in the play. Shakespeare has wished to disguise the role of Bottom as a medium to call forth a Sun God, even while having Bottom do just this. The second stanza of Epop's song, with its invocation of many different kinds of birds, a powerful summons which works immediately (many birds instantly arrive in the Greek comedy) is, adapted, yet its power is preserved by Shakespeare (in that the "cure" is successfully enacted later).

Shakespeare catalogued bird varieties for the purpose, to give Bottom metaphorical 'wings' and let him soar up, along with his song and his associations with the sun, and create a moment where magic will take place and the negative forces expelled. When Titania wakes to say, so comically, "What angel wakes me from my flow'ry bed?", then, actually, on the hidden level, it is true: Bottom is a winged angel who, with her (she is now awake) will join the gods, the ones, like Apollo, who are strictly associated with natural rituals and older myths and who pre-date Christianity. Soaring up to the sky gods<sup>8</sup>, metaphorically speaking, he joins with her in love, and she is cured, which is to say that she later hands over the "little changeling boy", the source of her argument with Oberon.

Looking at the important scene in its entirety, we can compare it to this passage below, the description of the religious heart of an agricultural festival, by the historian of drama Francisco Adrados:

The (agricultural festival) is a time out of time in which man puts himself in communication with the divine. All the limitations of the present disappear. Tears and laughter are free, foods are different and unlimited, clothes are different, sexual taboos and other kinds of restriction are abolished. Power and sanctity may be parodied...it is the mythical time, conceived of at once as chaos and happiness, from which other time emerges. The future is conceived as a happy past, the way is open to all ideas of reform, utopia, breaking of bounds. (Adrados 1975: 254-5)

Certainly, critics have seen the "topsy-turvy" elements of the scene: Bottom, usually at the 'bottom' of the social ladder, is now given sublime fairy food, and waited on, like a king, by the fairies. He wears an ass's head, recollecting older Fool figures; his song recollects the Phallus (in that it ends by referring to cuckoo, which is to say the cuckold, an obscene reference), and so on. But by

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8 This paper, with its space limitations, cannot go into details about the important role that birds (or bird-winged creatures from myths), soaring up into the sky, play or have played in various mythologies as either gods or messengers to the gods. Notably, Horus, the Egyptian God of the Sun was portrayed as a falcon, and Juliet specifically mentions falcons ("O, for a falc'ner's voice") and even is called a "niesse" (a nestling hawk) by Romeo. Egyptian religion was one element of Renaissance Hermeticism, and its basic pantheon and mythology was known in the Renaissance. Yet a falcon, associated with noblemen hunting, would be a startling and inappropriate bird for a mild-mannered person of the working class, like Bottom, to be associated with.

missing the allegorical identities (based on Giordano Bruno's technique of the Art of Memory) of Bottom as the sun, even a solar deity, and Titania as the troubled land, critics have missed also the amazing, vital, and mystical attempt by Shakespeare to create a scene that comes near to containing, or actually does contain, the power of an authentic and religious, agricultural festival, necessarily and intrinsically bound up with the power of the sun. The divine one, the "sun god", is Bottom, and it is Titania, so in need, who is placed in communication with him. This is the route that leads to reform, to utopia, or rather, a bit later, to the resolution of the important problem at hand: that is, who will get the little changeling boy.

### **X. Peter Quince, Oberon, and the "little changeling boy": unmasked**

Besides Shakespeare's "self-made businessman" image, another half-truth left sadly unexamined for centuries is that Shakespeare's art reveals no personal agenda and no personal preferences, that he has removed himself and sterilized his art so that it cannot reflect any 'bias' or polarizing prescriptions. "Shakespeare refuses to legislate or even to take sides", (Evans 166) is a common example of commentary from this genre. Expressing slightly more allowance for an authorial presence, Stephen Greenblatt writes:

Shakespeare's plays are rarely overtly self-reflexive: he wrote as though he thought that there were more interesting (or at least more dramatic) things in life to do than write plays. Though from time to time, (Shakespeare) seems to peer out, somewhere within Richard III or Iago or Autolycus or Pauline, for the most part, he keeps himself hidden. (Greenblatt 2004: 372-3)

If the premise of this paper is accepted, which is to say that if the secret play showing the history of mankind and the sun in *Romeo and Juliet* is real, then it instantly becomes clear that Shakespeare did, in fact, have a clear personal agenda, though it was always disguised through being allegorized in one or more characters in a play. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare is revealed to be Friar Lawrence, whose letter is the play in an allegorical form: (an urgent message about Man's situation in the cosmos) from Shakespeare to Man.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* shows another way the playwright could organize and conceal structures and characters to express his personal views. Peter Quince's role as a stand-in for Shakespeare I have introduced a bit, but the issue is underlined when Bottom says:

Bottom: I will get Peter Quince to write a ballet of this dream. It will be call'd "Bottom's Dream," because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of the play....  
(IV.i.214-6)

The drama showing the sun uniting with the earth is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Peter Quince's future effort may be seen as a parallel, or an allegory, of the larger play.

Peter Quince is not, however, the only stand-in for Shakespeare. This play has three distinct social groups, and, in an example of perfect Renaissance symmetry, one stand-in for Shakespeare is present in each one. In the fairy group, Oberon is the character who represents Shakespeare's views and opinions. Oberon is good at spells, very eloquent, and the "doctor" figure of the cure. The whole play, prescribing a sun-cure for the earth and ritually enacting it, is therefore also a (much longer) spell, also eloquent, the 'medicine' created by the 'doctor' playwright. Oberon also gives himself this erotic and passionate speech, which seems merely decorative on its surface:

I with Morning's love have oft made sport,  
And like a forester, the groves may tread  
Even till the Eastern gate, all fiery red,  
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,  
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams. (III.ii.389-93)

Looking more closely, we can see Oberon expressing his joy and his erotic and sexual pleasure ("with Morning's love have oft made sport", "fiery red") in communing and uniting with the sun, implied to be a woman's body with an entrance, ("the Eastern gate", "opening"), and even a natural ending with a male (through the association of Neptune) sexual climax ("salt green streams"). Yet the erotic scene, with the word "blessed" also implies a sacred union, and calls up the interesting possibility of a poetically masked *hieros gamos*, a sacred sexual rite<sup>9</sup>.

Who is the "little changeling boy" whom Oberon wants to be his "henchman"? Critics have never seemed to wonder about this much. However, Stephen Greenblatt at least made a refreshing (because it was so rare) effort to consider two basic possibilities. In 1996, at a panel discussion, Greenblatt gave a talk which included the following passage;

And we still do not know what Oberon and Titania want with the changeling boy. There are two alternatives: a) They don't want anything. The boy is just a cipher.... The sign is empty; or b) The boy is actually incredibly important, but the interest of the adults in that boy can't be fully expressed or articulated or acknowledged. The sign is full but its meaning is hidden. (Greenblatt, 1996)

Knowing that Shakespeare could and did hide his real intentions, then Greenblatt's second option ---"the meaning is hidden" ---is the winner.

If we know that Oberon is Shakespeare (behind a mask), then, another figure of the allegory can be identified: the changeling boy's hidden role is Man. His mother was (and presumably he is also) a "mortal" (II.i.135), and that word is the only major clue to his secret identity. Man is

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9 The critic F.M. Cornford in *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, sees the weddings that commonly end Greek comedies as a "fixed element, a ceremony of *hieros gamos* thus introduced into Comedy." (Cornford:23, quoted in Adrados : 1975:87)

allegorized as a creature dependent on nature, like a child on his or her mother, and is subject to the broader unseen, misunderstood and larger forces of nature. Titania has been doting on the boy, Puck explains to a Fairy before Oberon and Titania make their first appearances:

She never had so sweet a changeling,  
And jealous Oberon would have the child  
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;  
But she, perforce, withholds the loved boy,  
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy. (II.i. 23-27)

Man, given bountiful pleasures by a doting, coddling, Nature, is Shakespeare's indirect way of casting aspersions at and allegorizing Man's 'easy' or pleasurable life with rich resources. Shakespeare wants Man to join him (Oberon), metaphorically, becoming his "henchman" in the "forests wild" (echoing the *hieros gamos* passage where Oberon is also a "forester"). It is, no doubt, a place without any coal at hand.

The most interesting point in the play is therefore how to understand and interpret the symbolic handing over of the boy by Titania to Oberon, a character who maintains a passionate attachment to and identification with the sun. After Titania has fallen under the spell of the drug, which causes her, also, to be symbolically unified with the sun (Bottom), she does indeed hand the boy over. It is the land now influenced by the sun only, (implying that coal has been driven out, through natural depletion). Actually, she also, by uniting with Bottom, also goes through the *hieros gamos* that Oberon describes for himself so erotically.

The basic idea is that when only the sun once again prevails as the main force in the landscape and nature, instead of coal, then Man will philosophically go over to Oberon's (i.e. Shakespeare's) way of thinking about the central relationships that underpin Man's ties to the earth and the cosmos.

Perhaps Shakespeare realized that many centuries would pass before his "spell" might actually completely take effect through the inevitable depletion of fossil fuels. Puck calls the play a "weak and idle theme" (V.i.427) perhaps in recognition of its slow-acting agency. The passage of centuries, if not millennia, would mark its progress, and there is no 'defeat' or 'death' of the antagonist, nor is one needed. As the scholar of Greek comedy Francisco Adrados explains, "And not even the antagonist dies in Comedy, he is simply expelled, from a city reconciled and at peace, when he is not persuaded to change his attitude" (Adrados 1975: 86). But, then, similarly, a long cosmic time frame is also considered in *Romeo and Juliet*: "I shall be much in years/Ere I again behold my Romeo!" (III.v.46-7)

## XI. Theseus

In the group of nobles there is also one character who is Shakespeare behind a mask, and this is Theseus. Theseus opens the play with the line “Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour/Draws on apace” (I.1.1-2). In the intricate mechanism of Renaissance microcosmic and macrocosmic treatments, this opening line, (like the opening line of *Romeo and Juliet*), is an immensely important announcement or expression of the main concern, which is to say unions, or “nuptials”, and, as we shall see, even the main philosophy, of the play. There many unions, and a partial list includes the two pairs of Athenian lovers, Titania and Bottom, Titania and Oberon, Oberon and the changeling boy, Oberon and “the Morning’s love”, Hippolyta and Theseus, the double cherry, and of course, the two plays, *Romeo and Juliet* and its comedic twin.

The idea to combine or unite two things, or many things, into one is seen in a more universal characterization in two passages near the end of the play, one first spoken by Hippolyta and then one, a response, by Theseus,

Hippolyta: I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,  
When in a wood of Crete they bay’d the bear  
With hounds of Sparta. Never did I hear  
Such gallant chiding; for besides the groves,  
The skies, the fountains, every region near  
Seem all one mutual cry. I never heard such  
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

Theseus: My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,  
So flew’d, so sanded; and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew,  
Crook-knee’d and dew-lapp’d like Thessalian bulls;  
Slow in pursuit; but match’d in mouth like bells,  
Each under each. A cry more tuneable  
Was never hollow’d to, nor cheer’d with horn,  
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly,  
Judge when you hear. (IV.i.119-123)

“All one mutual cry”, Hippolyta’s phrase used to show unification (likely a reference to Bruno’s idea of the universe as a unity), is then matched (in another example of a union) by Theseus’ use of the same word, ‘cry’: “A cry more tuneable”, which shows another example of union. The couple has been joined through their mutual use of imagery.

Later, in Act V, Theseus’ most famous speech of the play returns again to “the heavens”:. The speech seems to be about writing poetry, but closer examination reveals that it is really about *writing*



about the new scientific concept of heliocentrism, whereby the sun (the “bringer of that joy”) powers the earth:

The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to aery nothing  
A local habitation and a name.  
Such tricks hath strong imagination,  
That if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some *bringer of that joy*; (V.i.12-20)

These lines can now be seen, with new knowledge of the hidden sun play, as literal. That is, Shakespeare sees the sun as “the bringer of that joy”. He implies a series of interconnected relationships and entities, beings (“joys”)---including man--- that owe their existence to the sun.

## XII. Giulio Camillo and L’idea dell teatro

Many critics have pointed to St. Paul’s *Epistle to the Corinthians* as Shakespeare’s source for Bottom’s lines, “The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen,…” (V.i.204) (Evans 241, Rosenbaum 16) (Greenblatt 2004: 35). However, probably a more direct lineage for this line is the opening sentence of Giulio Camillo’s *L’idea del Teatro* (1550). This line, belonging to another Hermetic Renaissance work on the Art of Memory (preceding Giordano Bruno by a few decades) explains how writers veil their works esoterically so that only the initiated can understand them:

The most ancient and wisest of writers have always been accustomed to recommending to their writings the secrets of God under obscure veils, so that they not be intended, unless by those who (as says Christ) *have ears to hear*---i.e. who by God are elected to his own most saintly mysteries. And Melissus of Samos say that the eyes of vulgar wills cannot suffer the rays of divinity. (Camillo 5) (my emphasis)

“Obscure veils” describes Shakespeare’s hidden plays. Bottom even puts it into the vernacular, “Man is but an ass if he go about t’ expound this dream” (V.i.205).

*L’idea dell Teatro* (1550) describes a plan to construct “a Hermetic art of memory in a memory building stored with…….talismanic, astralized mythological imagery” (Yates 1966: 163). The whole of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* represents something rather similar---a cosmogony---dramatically and mnemonically oriented. Through performance, it generates a ritual reenactment and becomes a talisman functioning inside the mind where it ritually unites astral bodies (the sun and the earth). In this way, it combats or expels or counters the tragic forces of *Romeo and Juliet*.

The sun character’s fate rules and influences the entire play. Bottom, we can note, is the only human character who enters the fairy world. (As Pyramus, he also enters the world of the Athenian

court.) Therefore Bottom is the only character to penetrate all three social realms. He also unifies animal and man, the world of the player and the ordinary world, the mythology of the classical Greek past (as Pyramus) with English fairy lore, by uniting with Titania. He crosses many boundaries: temporal, spatial, cultural, ontological. His boundless abilities mirror the new idea of the sun's importance:

The Sun series of the Theater shows within the mind and memory of a man of the Renaissance the Sun looming with a new importance, mystical, emotional, magical, the Sun becoming of central significance. It shows an inner movement of the imagination towards the Sun which must be taken into account as one of the factors in the Heliocentric revolution. (Yates 1966: 156-7)

Yates writes of Camillo's work, "...the relationship between man, the microcosm and the world, the macrocosm, takes on a new significance. The microcosm can fully understand and fully remember the macrocosm, can hold it within his divine *mens* or memory" (Yates 1966: 152). We could apply this idea to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Bottom is in many ways a microcosm: he is the sun in the allegorical play within the play and the character who talks about the writing of a "dream"; in other words, he *grasps and experiences* the larger whole even while he *is* the smaller whole.

Shakespeare, also, through his boundary-transcending ways of understanding and using the Renaissance sun: as seasonal sponsor of agricultural festivals and therefore of theatrical origins, as a god in the past or the present, as an economic "inciter of action" or fuel, as a locus of the sacral and as a scientifically contested astral body, aimed, in secret, at a similar integrative, unifying vision, harmonizing tragedy and comedy to create an inventive and rich vision of the world where the comic power ultimately would prevail because it was, like the sun itself, more *inclusive and unifying*. *Romeo and Juliet*, so devastating on its own, is carefully deactivated and reduced to harmless nonsense (as "Pyramus and Thisbe"), dismissed when it is joined with the comedy and captured by it, overpowered by the artful and stronger medicine of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

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i Giulio Camillo's work was found in the library of John Dee, one of Queen Elizabeth's court astrologers, so it is possible that Shakespeare had access to it.