ARCANA IN SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO 'THE COMEDY OF ERRORS' AND 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

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The procedure I follow in these two chapters is to first discuss general aspects of the play, including any reputed problems which have characterised the play's interpretation and give an account of any meanings of the names of the play's characters. I then divide the play's story into sections of which I give a full account, not omitting any details which might be significant to an interpretation of the arcana, which in this chapter I discuss in this order: theurgy, alchemy, Renaissance Platonism and the Bible. Constant reference is made to the relevant material on the arcana in previous chapters which is crucial to an understanding of the work in this. As the chapters on the arcana have been designed to serve as reference for the interpretation of the arcana in The Comedy of Errors and A Midsummer Night's Dream, I do not repeat explanatory material from them in Chapters Eight and Nine, assuming absorption of their content, only referring the reader where specific information might be required (such as in the exact stages of alchemy), to the relevant previous page numbers. For clarity I have placed the discussion of the arcana which I find in each section of the story under headings following those sections. There is no equality in the importance of the arcana under these headings, some arcana bearing more relationship to certain areas of plot than to others. Any relevant literary criticism applicable to any of the sections is mentioned in context.

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Finally I discuss the way in which the exploration of the texts in the light of these arcana have affected Theatre Set-Up productions of these plays.

Geoffrey Bullough confirms the general opinion that the main source of the play is the Menaechmi of Plautus with one scene drawing on material from his Amphitruo. [1] He posits that Shakespeare knew enough Latin to read the plays in the original, pointing out that the only English translation, the William Warner edition, did not come out until 1595, several years after the supposed writing of the play, and citing from the Folio edition of the play, Shakespeare's application to the names of the 'Antipholis' twins the distinguishing epithets, 'Sereptus' and 'Erotes', terms used in the Plautus text. However, Bullough speculates that Shakespeare could have had access to a MS of the Warner translation, circulated before publication. He indicates a possible connection between Shakespeare and Warner in the shared patronage of Henry Carey, the Lord Hunsdon, Lord Chamberlain from 1585 to 1596, of whose players, formed in 1594, Shakespeare was part, and who were presumed to have performed The Comedy of Errors at the lawyers' revels at Grays Inn on 28th December 1594. Lord Hunsdon was also patron to Warner in the writing of his prose tales, Pan his Syrinx or Pipe of 1585 and his epic, Albion's England of 1586, so presumably moved within Shakespeare's range of professional acquaintances. Verbal references in the Warner version of

the Menaechmi such as 'much pleasant error' which might have suggested Shakespeare's title to the play, and the wife's reference to herself as a 'stale', echoed by Shakespeare in II.i.101 also indicate to Bullough possible source material (p.4).

Bullough estimates the compositional date of the play, suggested by verbal references in Nashe and Arden of Feversham to be 1592. He observes that the differences between it and the Plautus original created a necessary expansion of the text to a length acceptable to Elizabethan audiences (p.3). Dover Wilson names these differences to be: the names of the twin sons of Emilia and Egeon are changed from Menaechmus to Antipholus; the twin boys are given the twin Dromio servants (who replace the Parasite); the father of the Menaechmi twins has died before the opening of the play, but in The Comedy of Errors not only does he remain alive, but his situation is made the dramatic frame of the play and he is given a wife with whom the reconciliation at the end of the play binds together the whole family; and the wife of one of the twins is given a sister (pp.39-40). Bullough also notes the increased role of the wife who supplants the courtesan in much of the stage action (p.6).

Dover Wilson also comments on the elements of the play drawn from the Plautus Amphitruo, the servants and the scenario of III.i. where Eph. Antipholus is locked out of his own house. He observes that in the Plautus play

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Jupiter had disguised himself as Amphitryon, the husband of Alcmena with whom he wished to make love, that Mercury was disguised as the servant, turning away the real husband from the door, and that the result of Jupiter's sexual encounter with Alcmena was the birth of twins, one of whom was Hercules (p.39). The characters of Mercury and Hercules have alchemic resonances, but I think it might be too far-fetched to assume that this bears any relevance to the arcane content of the resulting Shakespearean play.

I hope to demonstrate, however, that his selection of deviant elements from the source plays served the allegory of the arcana in the play. The selection of the name Antipholus, which means 'the one who returns love', and the creation of the sister whose name, 'Luciana' implies 'light', (see below pp.338-339), heighten the Platonic meanings of the play. The creation of the family drama, with the story of the two sets of twins, especially the 'cloned' Dromios, divided by the storm, actualises the Platonic myth of the divided soul, creates the framework for the alchemy of the play and provides an analogue for theurgy. The re-emphasis upon the wife rather than the courtesan and the creation of Emilia as the mother of the twins and Lady Abbess of the Priory, gives a moral Christian dimension within which the issues of love and marriage can be treated. I claim that the resultant play is thereby one which has serious underlying meanings, a

judgement which challenges the majority critical view.

There is a considerable range of opinions on the nature of The Comedy of Errors, from regarding it as a farce, to appreciating it as a comedy with underlying serious intent (such as this thesis posits), and from condemning it as inferior writing, to praising its skilful plot and dialogue. (The OED definition of farce is 'a dramatic work (usually short), which has for its sole object to excite laughter').

In the introduction to his edition of the play, Stanley Wells summarises the critical problems the play has suffered in spite of its excellent craftsmanship:

> It is a fully formed work of art, completely successful in its own terms...It has nevertheless been held in low critical esteem, accused of being an over-derivative farce scarcely redeemed by any pretensions to literary merit. [2]

He points out that the category of farce attracts less respect than comedy, thus detracting from the play's reputation:

> Criticism of the play has been bedevilled especially by the question of whether it is a farce or a comedy, and by the assumption that farce is less respectable than comedy (p.8).

His own conclusion is that the play has a degree of farcical elements, especially in the violence of its action, (although this is logically motivated, and the most violent scene (V.i.169-83) takes place off stage and is narrated), but it has sufficient other qualities of characterisation and plot to warrant respect (p.9).

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Samuel Taylor Coleridge described The Comedy of Errors as a farce, a category of drama which he differentiated from comedy in its employment of license in the story to make 'strange and laughable situations'. He considers that the identical Antipholus twins stretch credulity to the bounds of plausible comedy, but the additional unlikely duplication of the Dromios place the piece in the category of farce. [3] E.C. Pettet also dubbs the two sets of twins as 'gross fiction', and finds the spirit of the story 'boisterous' and 'farcical', but he considers it plausible enough to warrant the classification of comedy, although diferentiated from other Shakespearean 'romantic' comedy in its stylistic imitation of classic models. He perceives the love-story of Syr. Antipholus and Luciana and the near tragic theme of Egeon as seeds of the kinds of romantic themes that would dominate Shakespeare's later comedies. [4] Parrott not only regards the complications of the plot to be 'absurdly incredible', (although he concedes that this absurdity heightens the comic effect of the play) but he damns the dramatic dialogue:

> There is little in the spoken dialogue of this play either to amuse or to delight (p.105).

He allows the play some interesting characterisation in the creation of Adriana, and, like Pettet, observes the budding romantic elements of theme, but classifies it as a 'farce comedy', and although one of the best in English of

this genre, an unpromising work that gives little indication of the great dramas that Shakespeare was later to develop (pp.106-107).

By contrast, G.R. Elliott perceives the weird romantic and comic elements of the play to be harmoniously blended, one modifying the other:

> An initial mood of swift and strange, almost weird, romance is saturated as the play proceeds, with fun that is swift, strange, weird. Thus the romance and the fun are congruent. And they are humanized by pathos at the first and last, and in the central phase of the action, by touches of high comedy (comedy of character) involving pathos. [5]

Charlton also notes the importance of the emotional themes of Egeon and in particular the Syr. Antipholus/ Luciana courtship, feeling that their presence in the play places it in the category of romantic comedy, sharply differentiating it from the style of its source material in the Latin comedy of Plautus. He attributes this to the traditions of courtly love, particularly as adumbrated by Dante, in the years intervening between the classic period, when a young man's interaction with women was expected to be an educative dalliance, and the Renaissance, when young romantic love was in vogue, inspiring audience interest and involvement (pp.20-22). He says of Roman comedy, 'whilst it is full of sex, it is almost entirely devoid of love', while all of Shakespeare's comedies exemplify true love (pp.52-53).

Bradbrook praises Shakespeare's adaptation of the Plautus original and notes his retention of the Roman

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setting:

> Nothing could be more skilful than the refashioning of Plautus to the Italian model in The Comedy of Errors. It was a professional job; the Italianate setting with the three mansions of Antipholus, the courtesan and the abbess followed the fashionable model (p.81).

She regards the play, as an example of an Italianate 'simple pattern of farce' (p.81).

Bertrand Evans considers that the comedy in the play depends on a discrepancy in the awareness between the audience and the protagonists. He observes that the audience is made aware of the true situation as early as I.ii.41, when the entrance of Eph. Dromio makes it clear that both sets of twins and the father whose story has set the scenario of the play are living in the same city, but the protagonists do not learn the truth until V.i.339. Evans posits that Shakespeare introduced certain features to the story to make it credible, even allowing for the licence of farce (pp.3-5.). I mention these in context below.

Finding the serious theme of the proper value of love, which must be contrasted with commercial wealth, and an understanding of generosity of behaviour to be at the core of the play, John Russell Brown also considers its action is 'not merely that of a merry-go-round' (p.57).

However, like Coleridge, Francis Fergusson assumes that by presenting the improbable two sets of twins, Shakespeare signals an intent that the play is to be

regarded as a farce with no underlying serious meaning:

> This initial absurdity sets the key of the farce to follow. The audience must accept the silly postulate at once; so it is warned to expect, not a fable purporting 'truth', but a joke and a tall story. [6]

Dover Wilson attributes any farcical elements in the play to the Roman source material, elaborated by Shakespeare with 'Christian, Elizabethan and romantic' elements and contained in a domestic scenario:

> Thus the rollicking farce inherited from Plautus is, as it were, framed within a moving little domestic drama (p.40).

Traversi finds depth in the play, well beyond the scope of the Roman original;

> The Comedy of Errors, then, shows us a dramatist already intent upon giving a greater scope, more variety of human content, to the cynical realism of Roman farce. The play's emotional range is notably greater than any which Plautus could have contemplated (p.12).

He considers that the apprentice-playwright Shakespeare added the two Dromios and Luciana to add intricacy to the plot, thus making it 'an exercise in plot-making to his developing art' (p.9).

Tillyard states that the core of the play is farce, modelled in its plot on the Roman original, but deserving through the quality of its rhetoric, to be judged as something more (p.46, 49-52). He discusses the origins of the Egeon /Emilia story in the Greek romance, Apollonius of Tyre, extant in its Latin version, and in its English translation by Gower, also used by Shakespeare in his later play Pericles, and claims that this romantic element

and the details of psychological realism in characterisation, dialogue and story give a dimension to the play which contrasts with the farce (pp.48, 54-62).

Michel Grivelet, writing on the selection of the Plautus Amphitryon by both Shakespeare and Molière as source material, indicates mythic psychological depths in the theme of this play which might have influenced both writers in their resultant works. He refers to ancient superstitions relating to the phenomenon of twins, so that they were either killed as something unnatural and evil, or revered and lauded as founders of cities. He feels that this psychic theme is compounded by the similarity of the Oedipus myth to the incestuous triangle of love created by one brother being intimately entertained by the wife of his twin as in III.i., where Adriana entertains Syr. Antipholus at dinner, mistaking him for her husband. Grivelet believes that the implied mythic depth of these themes embedded within the play creates a genre of comedy which he calls 'the comedy of ambiguity'. [7] It may be possible that these cultural motifs had an echo for Shakespeare, especially considering that he had fathered twins himself, and that indeed the spectre of incest haunts the events of III.i.

William C. Carroll comes near to the hypotheses of this thesis in his observation that the phenomenon of metamorphosis operates overtly through the terms and rhetoric of this play. However he does not consider that

physical transformations occur, only the effect of them being wrought through the doubling and the manipulation of situations. [8] I discuss his specific references in context below.

Barbara Freedman exposes the flaws in the OED definition of farce when applied to this play. She redefines the genre herself, expanding the definition to accommodate illogicalities of cause and effect upon vigorous stage action in a 'functional dislocation of meaning through which the absurd becomes meaningful':

> farce is a dramatic genre deriving laughter chiefly from the denial of the cause (through absurdity) and the effect (through surrealism) of aggressive action upon an object. [9]

She finds considerable meaning in the dislocated theme of debt in the play, observing that the financial debt which threatens Egeon with death might represent the larger debt of married love owing to his wife Emilia, from whom he has been separated for so many years through no attempt on his part to find her. He is only accidentally reunited with her at the end of the play through his attempts to find his younger son, Syr. Antipholus. Freedman considers this situation of the father to be reflected in the Antipholus twins. The elder, Eph. Antipholus, demonstrates in his marriage the previous married state of Egeon, and, in his unwillingness to return home to his wife, the willing separation from her that characterises Egeon's separation from Emilia, while the younger represents Egeon's more

recent quasi-single state (pp.240-242). Thus she concludes that the twins in the main plot are 'symbolic representatives' of Egeon, their father, and that the theme of the divided and reunited family holds the potential for a deeper level of meaning in the play: a hypothesis which suggests that the protagonists of the play represent different aspects of a personality which has suffered pyschic division, and which becomes reintegrated with the long-denied part of itself through appropriate psychological payment (p.242).

This understanding of the play, wherein the members of Egeon's family represent different elements in a flawed composite personality which becomes the subject for improvement and redemption, is similar to my interpretation, which posits that the family represents a composite neophypte in the processes of theurgy, and a composite compound of alchemy, as described below.

Gary Waller, citing 'The Comedy of Errors': A Different Kind of Comedy, by W. Thomas MacCary, points out that this play differs from others in its romantic nature and its resolution in centring on the family. This view of the play detects in Syr. Antipholus a 'primitive' psychological drive, in his wish, manifest at an unconscious level, to find 'a complete and idealized self'. [10] This view links with the ideas in this thesis of the twins as the Platonic divided soul, and, in its resolution with the united family, in the integrated

personality which is the goal of the psychological aspect of alchemy.

I consider that the route Shakespeare may have taken to encoding arcana in this, as in other of his plays, may have been through the example of John Lyly (see above p.91). R.A. Foakes, in his introduction to the Arden edition of The Comedy of Errors notes verbal correspondences between it and Lyly's Mother Bombie, including the name 'Dromio'. Foakes also attributes to the influence of Lyly a general tone of the comic dialogue, and the style of the repartee between masters and servants. [11] Foakes addresses the dangers of taking the joy out of the comedies by over-analysis of them, but defends the need to appreciate their serious content (pp. xl-xliii).

MEANINGS IN NAMES OF THE PLAY'S CHARACTERS

Murray J. Levith has deciphered the meanings of some of the play's characters and suggested possible sources and implications of others. He established that 'Antipholus' takes its sense, 'one who returns another's love' from the Greek, as does 'Dromio' from the Greek 'dromos', meaning 'to run', while Latin provides 'Adriana' ('dark one'), 'Luciana' and 'Luce' ('light'), and 'Aemilia' ('flattering or winning one'). He suggests that Egeon's name imitates the Aegean sea upon which he voyaged, and that the names

of the merchants imply appropriate wealth, 'Angelo' as the gold coin 'with Saint Michael stamped on it' and 'Balthasar' as one of the 'wealthy wise kings of the Nativity story'. He observes that the name of Dr. Pinch suggests his appearance as described at V.I.238-242 and that 'Solinus' was a real person, a geographer publishing his works in 1587. [12] I also observe that 'Solinus' suggests 'sun' from the Latin, 'sol'. All these meanings add significance to the characterisation of the parts they describe, and occasionally give clues to the interpretation of arcana in the play, as mentioned below.

ANALYSIS OF 'THE COMEDY OF ERRORS' IN TERMS OF THE ARCANA: THEURGY, ALCHEMY, RENAISSANCE PLATONISM AND THE BIBLE, APPLIED TO THE RELEVANT SECTIONS INTO WHICH THE STORY OF THE PLAY IS DIVIDED.

Story [13]

1. First Section

Following a law of exclusion existing between Ephesus and Syracuse whereby, unless a levy of a thousand marks can be raised, citizens of one city are condemned to die for trespass in the other, Solinus, Duke of Ephesus, condemns to death Egeon, a man from Syracuse.

Egeon explains that he has come to Ephesus in search

of his son Antipholus and his servant, Dromio, who left Syracuse in search of their twin brothers from whom, along with Egeon's wife, Emilia, they became separated as children during a storm. [14] Egeon relates the story of how his family became parted from each other. The ship in which he and his wife with their twin sons (both called Antipholus) and their attendant twin boys (both called Dromio) had been travelling from Epidamnum to Syracuse, had been wrecked in a storm. His wife bound herself, the elder Antipholus and the elder Dromio to a small spare mast, while Egeon likewise bound himself to the other end of the mast with the younger Antipholus and Dromio. When the ship split up the family was saved by this device as the mast floated away from the wreck, and as the seas calmed, travelled towards two ships, one from Corinth, one from Epidaurus, who were making their way to them. However, the mast was broken in two by being cast against an intervening rock, and the family were divided and picked up by different ships whose disparate speeds made reunion impossible.

G. Wilson Knight interprets Shakespeare's storms and storm-imagery as always implying tragedy. He notes that in this play the storm has tragically dispersed those whom the action of the play will reunite. [15] Northrop Frye writes in similar vein of the mythic symbolism of water as death:

> The world of water is the water of death, often

identified with spilled blood. [16]

At eighteen years of age the younger Antipholus twin and his servant, the younger Dromio twin, set out in quest of their twin brothers, and Egeon, in search of them, has roamed for five years throughout the Levant, Greece and now Ephesus.

The Duke, in sympathy for Egeon's hapless fate, defers sentence of death until evening, in the hope that a ransom can be found (I.i). Gamini Salgado observes the importance of time to the ideas of the play, this initial passage of time within which Egeon exists in a limbo until the fixed time of his execution, providing the frame of real time within which the two sets of twins seem to suffer dislocated time as their identities become confused. [17]

1.a. Theurgy

The family of Egeon and Emilia, comprising their twin sons and their attendant twin servants, form a composite soul-initiate, of which Egeon and Syr. Antipholus are the main neophytes. A frame for this initiation is suggested by their home in Syracuse, which was a Doric city in Sicily, the home in Greek legendry for Ceres/Demeter, Goddess of corn, fertility, marriage, law and order, the prevailing diety of the rites of Eleusis (see above p.175), which imitate the winter descent of her daughter Persephone into the underworld and her spring re-ascent to the light and

her mother, and the quest of Ceres/Demeter for her daughter, a scenario represented by Egeon's quest for his son. [18]

Like the journey described by Apuleius in the rites of Isis, (see above p.174), Egeon undertakes a journey which he knows will expose him to the margins of death, a risk he is prepared to undertake in the quest for his son. An awareness of the sentence of death imposed upon him for his trespass in Ephesus is always present in the play, even in the most farcical scenes, just as in all mystery rites (see above p.174). The trials of his initiation began with the storm which separated him from half his family, and have increased with further separation from his son and his subsequent isolated wanderings, like a neophyte in a labyrinth, until he enters the nadir of his trials in his threatened execution in Ephesus. He proves himself a successful initiate in the stoicism with which, in the first words of the play, he faces up to his death:

> Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall,
> And by the doom of death end woes and all. (I.i.1-2.)

Coghill observes the phenomenon of the continuing sentence of death upon Egeon throughout the play:

> Execution on Egeon is deferred; but it is not remitted. He remains (albeit offstage) in anticipation of immediate death until the last scene. (p.9) 19

The 'sun' that the neophyte experiences, as Apuleius describes for us, (see above p.174) is suggested by 'Solinus', the name of the Duke. However, not until his

identity is completed by his reunion with his family so that, like the successful neophyte, he truly knows himself, can this 'sun' illuminate his life by sparing it (V.i.390).

Tillyard finds the 'romantic framework' of this section of the story to have 'no profound significance'. Without perception of its metaphorical meaning it can suffer the accusation of superfluity. Viewing this scenario from the perspective of every-day life and psychological reality, far from appreciating the function Egeon and his family perform as neophytes, Tillyard considers that neither the father nor son 'has surmounted an ordeal through the successful issue of his long wanderings', (p.53). I claim that their long wanderings represent part of their trials from which they will emerge as successful initiates.

1 b.Alchemy

The alchemical process of the play is begun with the stage of Calcination (see above p.224) in which the Stone is purged, first by the joining of 'sophic sulphur', the 'red', (represented by Egeon) and 'sophic mercury', the 'white', (represented by Emilia), to make, after the course of one year, the 'Calx', a new generation of substances (represented by the Antipholus twins) and then 'mortified' (as the family divided during the storm and now as Egeon condemned to death). This signals the

beginning of the black stage of the process.

Elliott complains of the heaviness of this scene, and its lack of appreciation of the weirdness of the story it tells (p.23). I believe that any implausibility of plot in the extraordinary story Egeon tells can be rationalised by the metaphor of alchemic calcination that the story represents. Bertrand Evans notes that during the whole of the comic action of the play the audience holds this tragic situation of Egeon in mind, and that this is a structural technique which Shakespeare was to repeat in all his comedies, tragedies and mature histories (p.8). I posit that this was done to provide an alchemic framework for them similar to that of this play.

Salingar observes the plot pattern of storms separating a family in the story of this play to be repeated in Twelfth Night, Pericles, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest. He thinks that the subsequent flight or exile of the protagonists involved represents a 'break in the social order'. He also notes that their flight 'leads to recovery' and that they all end up better off than they were before (p.23). I attribute these characteristics to the alchemic processes of the plays.

1.c. Renaissance Platonism

This story presents a classic blueprint of the Platonic scenario: in which Love is described as originating from Chaos, represented by the storm and ship-wreck; in which

the twin-born Love is characterised into two kinds, the heavenly, (the Antipholus twins), and the earthly, (the Dromio twins); in which the divided soul, when it reaches early maturity, (Antipholus at the age of eighteen), seeks its other half; and in which, through Love, (implied by the meaning of Antipholus' name, see above p.338) the soul seeks to be re-united with the divinity from which it fell into a human body (see p.270). Just as the divine soul is imprisoned in the human body, so Egeon is imprisoned for the course of the play.

Egeon seeking Antipholus, and Antipholus seeking his twin, can also be interpreted as an analogue for the creation myth of Mind creating order from Chaos in turning towards the divinity in the quest for the loved one. In this metaphor, the Dromios reflect the consequent process of the Body of the world turning through an impulse of love towards God and the World-Soul (see above p.xxx)

I believe that Shakespeare constructed the story of the twins divided by the split mast in order to actualise the metaphor of the divided soul, not as Tillyard asserts, to invent an interesting fantasy (see p.53).

1.d. <u>The Bible</u>

Syracuse and Ephesus were both associated with St. Paul. In Acts 19.1, St. Paul is reported travelling to Ephesus where, as a result of his Christian ministry, so many conversions took place that much of the witchcraft

practised there was abandoned and silver statuettes of the goddess Diana no longer required. The vast Temple of Diana at Ephesus, one of the wonders of the ancient world, made the city a centre of the worship of this deity, and was so magnificent as to be considered the source of the architectural imagery in the Epistles St.Paul wrote while there: Ephesians 2.19-22, 1 Timothy 3.15, 6.19, and 2 Timothy 2.19-20. [20]

It is connected with St. John in being the scene in Revelations 1.11, and 2.1 of the most important of the churches of the Apocalypse, as the location of the latter part of his life, and in being the site of his tomb. It is possible that his contributions to the Bible were written there.

Syracuse was also associated with St. Paul as reported in Acts 28. 11-12, when he spent three days there while on board a ship named after the legendary twins Castor and Pollux, en route from Malta where he had been shipwrecked, to Rome.

It could have been the thematic Biblical associations with these places that determined their inclusion by Shakespeare in the play to give us clues to intended interpretations. The opening verses of St. John are significant to those people, amongst whom I consider Shakespeare might be included, who link Christ with theurgy (see above p.174) and St. Paul makes a similar statement in Ephesians 3.9 on Christ's existence at the

heart of creation from the beginning of time. Speaking of his purpose in preaching the mystery of Christ to gentiles, he says:

> And to make cleare unto all men what the fellowship of the mysterie is, which from the beginning of the world hath bene hid in God, who hath created all things by Jesus Christ.

He also expresses the view that divinity is immanent (see above p.297) in Ephesians 4. 6. Maintaining the monotheism of the Christian faith, he declares there to be:

> One God and Father of all, which is above all, and through all, and in you all.

The Tomson marginal comment glosses the statement that God is 'in you all' as, 'Who onely is joyned together with us in Christ'. St. Paul also preached extensively on morality and marriage, a dominant theme of this play, in Ephesians 5. 22-33 and in 1 Corinthians 7. Other themes are shared between the play and Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Resistance to temptations of the flesh, a key issue relating to Eph. Antipholus, is tackled in Ephesians 5. 3-21 and 6. 10-17 when St.Paul applies a metaphor of wearing the armour of God to successful resistance to the temptations of evil powers. The atmosphere of the Epistle itself is charge with a sense of bonds and imprisonment as St. Paul was himself imprisoned in Rome at the time of writing it. He refers to this not with resentment, but with the same sense of benefit that is applied to the restricting of Eph. Antipholus in the play:

> For this cause, I Paul am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. 3.1)
> Therefore being prisoner in the Lord, pray you that yee walke worthy of the vocation whereunto ye are called. (4.1)

However at the end of the Epistle he asks the Ephesians to pray for his release, a condition secured in the play for Eph. Antipholus.

Shaheen observes a reference in this first scene of the play to Genesis 3.16 in Egeon's description of Emilia's pregnancy with twins, 'The pleasing punishment that women bear' (I.1.46). [21]

2. Second Section

Egeon's son, Antipholus of Syracuse and his servant, Dromio of Syracuse, have also landed in Ephesus and are advised by a merchant to disguise their origin in order to escape the law of exclusion. [22] Syr. Antipholus gives Syr. Dromio gold to the value of one thousand marks to take to the inn, the Centaur, where he must wait until his master's return from sight-seeing in the town. The merchant leaves him and he laments his unhappiness in the loss of his brother and mother, in whose quest he feels as a drop of water lost in the ocean:

> I to the world am like a drop of water
> That in the ocean seeks another drop
> Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
> (Unseen, inquisitive) confounds himself.
> So I, to find a mother and a brother,
> In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself (I.ii.35-40).

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His servant's twin, Dromio of Ephesus, the servant to his own twin, Antipholus of Ephesus, where he has lived under the protection of Duke Solinus for the past twenty years, and with whose blessing he has married Adriana, a wealthy woman of Ephesus, enters, and mistaking Syr. Antipholus for his master, upbraids him for being late for his dinner which awaits him at his house, the Phoenix. [23] Syr. Antipholus, mistaking Eph. Dromio for Syr. Dromio, rebukes him for the folly of attributing to him a wife which he denies having, and asks where he has disposed of the gold and why he has returned from the Centaur. Eph. Dromio denies any knowledge of the gold, insisting that Syr. Antipholus should return home for his dinner, and is beaten by Syr. Antipholus who concludes that Dromio has been bewitched by one of the many sorcerers said to inhabit Ephesus (I.ii). Evans considers that Shakespeare introduced the idea of Ephesian witchcraft in order to provide a plausible explanation to Syr. Antipholus of the extraordinary events he encounters (pp.3-5).

2.a. Theurgy

The second neophyte, Syr. Antipholus, enters the final arena of his initiation. His initiation specialises not in the confrontation with death, undertaken by his father, but in his quest for his mother and his brother and thus for a knowledge of his full identity, as exemplified by

the motto of the Mysteries of Eleusis, 'Know thyself'. His initiatory journey began with his seven-year long wanderings between Syracuse and Ephesus to locate his brother and mother. Now that he has actually reached the place where they live, the further trials he will now undergo, in order to achieve that goal of initiation, to truly know oneself, will consist of confusions of that identity and of the false magic in which Ephesus was said to specialise, a fact he knows himself (I.ii.97-102) and which Pinch exemplifies (IV.iv.).[24]

His rank as a young initiate is suggested by the name of the inn he is staying at, the 'Centaur'. A centaur was a Greek mythical creature, half horse, half man, and one of these, Cheiron, had, along with Phoenix, been entrusted with the teaching of the legendary Greek hero, Achilles. This name might also intend a reference to Cheiron as one of the spiritual guides, the 'gods of the underworld', as Apuleius calls them, that assist the neophyte in initiation. He enters a metaphorical labyrinth of confused identity when Eph. Dromio mistakes him for Eph. Antipholus.

2.b. Alchemy

Syr. Antipholus represents the Stone, here in the process of Dissolution (see above p.225), where it is dissolved. He expresses the experience of this as if he were a droplet of water lost in the oceon. Carroll observes how

the imagery of I.ii.35-40 reinforces the sense of metamorphoses through a shifting sense of identity and loss of self in the play. He posits that Shakespeare reflects internal transformation through external circumstances of which the Odyssey which Syr. Antipholus undergoes is an example (p.67). I claim that the metamorphoses which Carroll observes represent the alchemic processes of the play.

The 'sister', referred to in this stage by Ripley, is represented by his sister-in-law, Adriana, who contacts him through the servant Eph. Dromio. Later, she will become as Ripley's 'agent' with her husband as the 'patient', (see above p.226).

The name which Shakespeare gives to the home of Adriana and Eph. Antipholus, the Phoenix, adds to the alchemic metaphor of the play. The phoenix, the legendary bird which is supposed to have risen anew from its own ashes, is a paradigm for the Philosopher's Stone, the goal of alchemy (see above p.217).

2.c. Renaissance Platonism

The love-quest of the soul continues. Syr. Antipholus, in comparing himself to a drop of water lost in the oceon, reinforces the idea of the individual soul's incorporation in the whole of divine creation, exemplified in this metaphor in which his identity is of the same substance as the chaos from which all creation was made. Thus mankind,

the microcosm, adumbrates the greater world, the macrocosm.

Although Syr. Antipholus and Syr. Dromio have located the goal of their quest, Shakespeare delays its revelation so that the Antipholus twins can learn to distinguish the 'divine light' from the 'natural light' (see above p.264). For Syr. Antipholus this will be Luciana, for Eph. Antipholus his wife Adriana whom he neglects, under the influence of his 'natural light', for the charms of the courtesan.

That the two sets of twins are so identical as to be mistaken, even by their masters or servants, indicates that they represent the cloned divided souls of Plato's imagery.

2.d. The Bible

Eph. Dromio, in reprimanding Syr. Antipholus for being late for the dinner at which Eph. Antipholus is expected, speculates that he may already have eaten while his household are obliged to undergo the kind of fast appropriate to religious devotion or penitence:

> You have no stomach having broke your fast;
> But we that know what 'tis to fast and pray,
> Are penitent for your fault to-day (I.ii.50-52).

There are many biblical references for this association of fasting and praying: Acts 13.3, 14.23, Luke 3.37, 5.33, 1 Corinthians 7.5, Matthew 17.21, Mark 9.29, Nehemiah 1.4.

24 This anticipates the theme of punishment for wrongful

indulgence of the flesh which pursues Eph. Antipholus throughout the play.

The Ephesian sorcerers mentioned at I.ii.97-102, an addition to the plot of Shakespeare's source, Plautus' Menaechmi, probably derives from their mention given in the account in Acts 19 of the effect of St. Paul's teaching on those practising witchcraft (named 'curious arts' in the Bible) in Ephesus. [25] Such was his power of conversion that they publicly burned their very valuable books on the subject:

> Many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books, and burned them before all men, & they counted the price of them, and found it fiftie thousand pieces of silver. (Acts 19. 19)

John Russell Brown notes that Shakespeare uses 'images of order and disorder' in the comedies to describe human relationships, a principle clearly illustrated in the relationships between the Antipholus twins and their servants (p.128). He observes that when the accustomed order disappears due to the confusion of their identities, they experience in the subsequent irrational occurrences a sense of 'nightmare disorder' (p.128). At the end of this scene Syr. Antipholus expresses this, believing that the ordered world of God is displaced in Ephesus, supplanted by the deceptive world of black magic and the devil:

> They say this town is full of cozenage,
> As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,
> Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
> Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
> Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks,

CHAPTER EIGHT: 'THE COMEDY OF ERRORS'

> And many such-like liberties of sin.
> (I.ii.97-102)

3. Third Section

Adriana, the over-jealous wife of Eph. Antipholus complains of his tardiness and is reproved by her sister, Luciana, for her impatience and lack of due obedience, (which she cites as part of a natural world order of hierarchies), to her husband. Adriana, whose riposte to Luciana's reproof has been that only 'asses will be bridled so', claims that it is Luciana's servile attitude that keeps her unwed. Luciana replies that her reluctance is due to 'troubles of the marriage bed' but she re-affirms her willingness, should she marry, to obey her husband. Adriana responds that experience like her own would teach Luciana otherwise.

Bertrand Evans believes that Shakespeare introduces the idea of Adriana's suspicion of her husband to add credibility to her acceptance of the extraordinary events surrounding the confusions of the play (p.6-7). Tillyard praises Shakespeare's interesting characterisation of these two sisters, noting the contrast in their natures and attributing Adriana's problems to 'stupidity' and 'lack of reflection and restraint' (p.58). He considers Luciana, on the other hand, to be 'observant', loyal to her sister and replete with 'worldly wisdom' (pp.61-62).

The willingness with which she avows that she would submit to the rule of a husband is a social custom which Salingar observes was the Elizabethan norm. He notes that love in Shakespeare's comedies always leads to a marriage in accordance with the Elizabethan governing principles of a free choice of suitable partners, and the acceptance of the husband's authority (p.17).

Eph. Dromio enters with the news of the extraordinary behaviour of his supposed master, who had beaten him and denied the existence of any wife. Adriana laments this denial and her continual unhappiness at the hands of her seemingly unfaithful husband. She reminds her sister that her husband promised her a gold chain which he has not brought her. However she would not regret the missing jewel if only he would keep faithful to her, as jewellery can be worn away whereas integrity can never be diminished. She claims that he neglects her because she has lost her beauty which, she protests, he himself has dissipated (II.ii).

3.a. Theurgy

Another otherworldly guide is suggested by the house-name of 'Phoenix', the home of Eph. Antipholus. The co-teachers of the hero Achilles, the centaur Cheiron and Phoenix are referred to in the residences of each twin, hinting at these locations as places of initiation.

The need for Eph. Antipholus to be engaged as co-

neophyte with his brother is suggested by his wife's unhappiness in the marriage. Moral instruction as well as mystical illumination is a key feature of all initiatory rites. He is introduced in his absence into the dark labyrinth of confusion by the mistaken report given to his wife by Eph. Dromio.

3.b. Alchemy

The gate of 'Seperation' (see above p.226) is entered as 'the subtle', or 'the soul', Adriana, is distanced from 'the grosse', or 'the body', (Eph. Antipholus), by the mistaken report of Eph. Dromio. The nature of Eph. Antipholus, here referred to by his wife and later explicated in his behaviour as an impatient, even unruly person, is most apt to become the subject of the alchemy, ripe for improvement. Tillyard notes the kind of differentiation in character between the twin Antipholi which I think singles out the Ephesian for much-needed alchemic transformation. Syr. Antipholus is more sensitive and melancholic, whereas Eph. Antipholus is 'the more energetic, the more practical, the more choleric' (pp.55-56).

Tillyard also remarks upon Shakespeare's use of gold in the play, the gold chain and gold ducats always finding their way into the possession of Syr. Antipholus and eluding Eph. Antipholus who is given instead rope and the imprisonment that it brings (pp.64-66). I believe that

the gold represents the metaphorical gold of alchemy which will never be attained by Eph. Antipholus, the main subject of the alchemy of the play, until all the stages of alchemy have been achieved. Also commenting on the significance of the gold chain, Richard Henze considers the play's themes to be two paradoxes in which goals are attained by engaging in action opposite to that of the desired effect:

> the finding of one's self by losing one's self and the freeing of one's self by binding one's self. (p.35) [26]

These paradoxical processes observed by Henze mirror the course of alchemy in its psychological application, during which the subject must be disintegrated and lost in the early separating stages of the work, and then fixed and reintegrated in the later stages in order to attain the ultimate benefits and the release of psychological integration. However Henze's interpretation of the chain is that it represents the principle of social cohesion, specifically of marriage and its associated bonds, that he claims the play upholds (pp.35-41).

In On the Compositional Genetics of the Comedy of Errors, T.W. Baldwin notes that the 1600 Golden Chaine of Perkins refers its readers to a metaphorical tangled chain of predestination which connects to the Christian Trinity. [27] Although this work pre-dates the play, Baldwin discusses the contemporary debate on the principles of pre-destination and fate, often symbolised

as a chain. He relates the Elizabethan understanding of the inevitable outcomes of predestination in the play to the acceptance by the Duke Solinus and Egeon of the latter's fate (pp.120-158). I think that the chain may well also symbolise this principle, effectively linking Egeon's fate with that of his sons.

3.c. Renaissance Platonism

Adriana as the 'divine light' whose love will lead his soul back to divinity, feels that she is diminishing in lustre as her husband persists in following his 'natural light'. However, some of this dimming seems self-inflicted, (as the meaning of her name, 'The Dark One' (see above p.338) implies), caused by the excessive jealousy and nagging of her husband which has blocked their love from developing into the transcendental state which Plato claims true love attains. She expresses an unwillingness to act her role of 'divine light' for her husband. John Russell Brown comments that in her disordered marriage, the proper norms of world hierarchy, reflected in marriage (as the macrocosmos appears in the microcosmos), are distorted, an example of disorder being used in the play to indicate relationships (p.128).

As Luciana's name and expressed sentiments imply, her potential as 'divine light' is high and the confusion

created by the twins' mistaken identities will ultimately bring about its realisation.

3.d. The Bible

Luciana demonstrates in her attitude to marriage a total belief in the strictures as laid down in Genesis. She takes at face value the curse laid by God on women as punishment for the sin of Eve in Genesis 3. 16, 'thy desire shalbe subject to thine husband and he shall rule over thee'. The latter edict she feels able to cope with (see II.i.15-25 and 29), but the former fills her with dread:

> Adriana: This servitude makes you to keep unwed.
> Luciana: Not this, but troubles of the marriage bed.
> (II.ii.26-27)

Her homily on submission to Adriana echoes Genesis 1.26-28 and Psalms 8.6-8, which lay down the superiority of men over all beasts and creation. Adriana's association with submission and beasts is, however, also biblical:

> Luciana: O, know he is the bridle of your will.
> Adriana: there's none but asses will be bridled so.
> (II.i.13-14)

This follows Proverbs 26.3, 'Unto the horse belongeth a whip, to the asse a bridle' and implies that Adriana considers submission to be merely bestial. [28] Luciana has additional biblical backing to lend authority to her views: St. Paul in Ephesians 5.22 claims wifely submission to be holy, ' Wives,submit your selves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord'; he asserts this in 1

Corinthians 11. 3, 'But I will that ye know, that as Christ is the head of every man: and the man is the womans head: and God is Christes head'; and again in Titus 2. 5, that wives be 'subject unto their husbands, that the word of God be not evill spoken of'. The Apostle St. Peter also advocates wifely submission so that this decorous behaviour may win converts to Christianity:

> Likewise let the wives bee subject to their husbands that even they which obey not the word, may without the word bee wonne by the conversation of the wives. (1 Peter. 3. 1.) [29]

This New Testament reinforcing of Genesis might imply Shakespeare's agreement with the princple of wifely submission, and is consistent with his sympathetic treatment of the character of Luciana throughout the play, validating her characterisation as the 'divine light' of Syr. Antipholus in the Platonic level of interpretation of the play.

4. Fourth Section

Syr. Antipholus is astonished to find that Dromio, his servant, has as instructed, taken the gold to the Centaur and is looking for him. Syr. Dromio, finding his master, is rebuked and beaten for the interchange Syr. Antipholus had in fact with Eph. Dromio. He tries to mollify his master by jesting on time and baldness:

> Syr. Antipholus: Why is Time such a niggard of hair, being (as it is) so plentiful an excrement?
> Syr Dromio: Because it is a blessing that he bestows

> on beasts, and what he hath scanted men in hair, he hath given them in wit. (II.ii.76-80)

Adriana and Luciana enter and mistaking him for Eph. Antipholus, Adriana reprimands Syr. Antipholus for the diminishing of his husbandly devotion to her. She delivers a homily to him on the unity of marriage:

> For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall
> A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
> And take unmingled thence that drop again
> Without addition or diminishing,
> As take from me thyself, and not me too. (II.ii.125-129)

She holds fast to Antipholus, claiming the bonds of marriage:

> Come I will fasten on this sleeve of thine;
> Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine,
> Whose weakness married to thy stronger state,
> Makes me with thy strength to communicate. (II.ii.173-176)

C. H. Herford comments on the unexpected intensity of expression concerning married love in this passage, which he finds surprising in the context of what he calls such an early bourgeois play. [30] I consider this intensity not to be surprising, but symptomatic of the play's underlying seriousness of intent. John Russell Brown observes that Adriana displays in this passage her possessive attitude towards her husband, lacking a proper understanding of the value of real love (p.54). She is punished for this in her mistaken appropriation of someone not her husband. Fergusson grants that Adriana's 'troubled adventures' break what he calls the 'mood of farce' of the play, but he considers the females in the play to be so

unsympathetic as characters that Shakespeare must intend that they also be laughed at:

> She and her sister and her maid, and eventually her real husband's mistress, form a dreary female procession through the quick twists of the plot. But I believe that Shakespeare expected us to laugh at them also (p.35).

I think this opinion to be wide of the mark and typical of the misunderstandings of the play that can occur when its hidden meanings are not appreciated.

The terrified Syr. Dromio thinks that he is in fairyland:

> This is the fairy land; O spite of spites,
> We talk with goblins, elves and sprites. (II.ii.190-191)

Luciana calls him a snail and a slug for not replying to them and for a moment Dromio believes himself to be transformed into an ape or the ass which his master then calls him. Syr. Antipholus, wondering if he is in a dream and doubting the truth of reality, and Syr. Dromio, convinced that Adriana and Luciana are supernatural and best-obeyed, follow them in to dinner. Adriana promises Syr. Antipholus special attention, commands the door to be locked and Syr. Dromio to guard the gate (II.ii.).

4.a. <u>Theurgy</u>

Syr. Antipholus is merged in his function as neophyte with Eph. Antipholus, exchanging identities with him through his wife. His trial of self-knowledge is tested as his own identity is temporarily subsumed in another's and as

he wrongly believes that negative black magic seems to prevail.

Carroll observes Shakespeare's skill in effecting 'transformation by doubling' in the dislocation and interchanging of the two brothers' roles (p.67), as demonstrated in their sharing of what I call the neophyte role here. He also notes that Syr. Antipholus appreciates that in the dream he imagines at II.ii 182 to be experiencing, revelation may be granted him (pp.68-69). This notion is commensurate with that of the neophyte's experiences in theurgy.

4.b. Alchemy

The time jested upon by Syr. Dromio refers to Saturn, the prevailing deity of alchemy. Salgādo links such references to the crisis of identity which the two sets of twins suffer in the play. He explains that a sense of one's own sense of identity is dependent on one's memory of one's life experiences within the normal passage of time which seems to become dislocated for the twins in the play (pp.81-82).

This section of the story presents the stage of Conjunctio, the alchemical wedding, in which the opposites of 'subtle' and 'grosse' that were separated in the previous stage are now joined together again, (see above p.227). The state of marriage is upheld by Adriana, but she ironically betrays it herself in mistakenly bestowing

her favours upon her husband's brother instead of her husband. Thus the 'grosse' with which she seeks to be joined has a dual identity.

Another conjunction is begun in the developing love between Syr. Antipholus and Luciana. The kind of conjunction that occurs in this play is 'Philosophers Diptative', that is, between male and female (see Ripley above p.228).

Carroll observes the literal sense of metamorphosis experienced by Syr. Dromio in this scene when he believes the women to be witches who have transformed him into an ass (ii.ii.196-202). He explains that the transformations effected by witches are superficial, achieving merely a disguise of the truth, an illusion that Syr. Dromio suffers in this instance (pp.65-66).

4.c. Renaissance Platonism

Adriana ironically reinforces Syr. Antipholus' metaphor of identity merged in a greater whole expressed in terms of a drop of water lost in the oceon. This recalls the Platonic idea and Hermetic principle of the microcosm linked to the macrocosm and links it to the Platonic concept of the merging of identities in love. Believing Syr. Antipholus to be her husband, she applies the image to the ideal condition of the married state, exemplifying the Platonic concept which she implies once existed between her and her husband (see above p.282). As Ficino

expresses it:

> When you love me, you contemplate me, and as I love you, I find myself in your contemplation of me; I recover myself, lost in the first place by my own neglect of myself, in you, who preserve me. [31]

The Renaissance association of descent from sanity with descent down the ladder of the hierarchy of being from humanity to animals, begins to be reflected in the constant references in the play to animals, especially when the mistaken identities create illogical action and speech. Hankins, in Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory, traces this insulting Renaissance attitude to animals to Aristotle, who describes bestiality as representing the lowest level of vice, when reason is absent and the senses and basic instincts rule. He also comments that the Bible sometimes calls the devil 'beast' (p.26.). John Russell Brown notes that the animal imagery used in the play as confusion increases, reflects the irrational disorder so distressing to the participants of the stage action (p.128). Maurice Charney observes the influence in the early Shakespearean plays of the Ovidian notion that transformation into animals represents a descent down the chain of being that stretches from divinity to angels and then to humans down through the animal world. [32] Shakespeare can be thus said to further extend this image by his introduction into the play of a golden chain, commissioned by Eph. Antipholus from Angelo for Adriana and causing, in its deviant passage from its

true recipient, such disorder. The entry of the chain into the play from the time it is mentioned by Adriana in II.i.106 seems to signal the confusions of the protagonists which are represented by animal associations culminating with the Duke's reference to Circe at V.i.271 (see below p.395).

4.d. The Bible

Syr. Antipholus recommends biblical propriety of behaviour to his servant with the lines:

> Learn to jest in good time- there's a time for all things (II.ii.64-65).

This imitates Ecclesiastes 3.1. which recommends, 'To all things there is an appointed time, and a time to every purpose under the heaven'. [33] This both underlines the limitations placed by the demands of time on the characters of the play, and provides a satirical comment on the constant mis-timings in the stage action which cause so much misunderstanding and the delay in the two sets of twins recognising each other.

A further biblical echo from Genesis 25. 25-34 links the twins Esau and Jacob with the twins of the play. In jesting on Time, hair and wit, reference is made to Esau's hairiness and lack of wit contrasting with Jacob, the 'plaine man'.[34] With the words, 'loe, I am almost dead, what is then this birthright to me? (Genesis 25. 32), Esau subsequently gave up his birthright to Jacob in exchange

for some 'bread and pottage of lentiles'. The marginal comment in the Geneva edition, citing a later passage in the New Testament book of Hebrews, moralises on this event, criticising Esau as one who lives only for the material things of the moment, thereby relinquishing God-given benefits:

> The reprobate esteeme not Gods benefits, except they feele them presently, & therefore they preferre present pleasures * Hebr. 12.16. Thus the wicked preferre their worldly commodities to Gods spirituall graces: but the children of God doe the contrarie.

This reference thus reinforces the prevailing moral tone of the play which punishes temporal material indulgence.

Although she defies the ruling of Genesis regarding man's supremacy over woman, Adriana invokes the edict of Genesis 2.24 decreeing that a man should leave his parents and 'cleave' to his wife with whom he 'shalbe one flesh' in admonition of Syr. Antipholus, in the mistaken belief that he is her husband (II.ii.119-42). [35] She also cites the biblical authority of Psalms 128. 3 in describing him as an elm around which she entwines as a vine (II.ii.174), and contradicting her earlier sentiments to Luciana, flatters him (in II.ii.175) with a claim to the feminine dependency advocated in 1 Peter 3.7, 'Likewise ye husbands... giving honour unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessell'. [36]

5. Fifth Section

Meanwhile Eph. Antipholus is reprimanding Eph. Dromio for

charging him with denying his wife and demanding of him the whereabouts of a thousand marks of gold, (an incident that had in fact occurred with Syr. Dromio). He negotiates the purchase of the promised gold chain for Adriana with the gold-smith, Angelo, accompanied by the merchant Balthasar both of whom he invites home to dinner. However he finds the door of his house locked with Syr. Dromio maintaining his guard at the door. Even the maid Luce whom he summons to let him in, refuses to believe that the person knocking at the door is the master of the house, as it seems to her that the master is already upstairs, dining with Adriana, who, disturbed by the noise, comes down to the door and sends her husband away in the belief that he is a 'knave'. During this scene much animal imagery is used associated with the confusion: 'mad as a buck' (III.i.72); 'when fowls have no feathers, and fish have no fin' (III.i.79); 'If a crow help us in, sirrah, we'll pluck a crow together' (III.i.83); Balthasar advises Eph. Antipholus to leave quietly until the situation resolves itself and to dine at the inn, the Tiger (III.i.85-105); however Eph. Antipholus decides to dine at the Porpentine where he will give the golden chain to the courtesan, the charming hostess there (III.i.107-121). [37]

5.a. Theurgy

Eph. Antipholus is engaged as a neophyte, his trials

beginning with his exclusion from his own home where he also suffers loss of his own identity which is supplanted by that of his brother. The bristling anger of his response is reflected in the names of the inns, the Tiger and Porpentine, his familiarity with the hostess of the latter suggesting his moral looseness. Alfred Harbage remarks on Shakespeare's sympathetic treatment of the courtesan in this play, claiming an exemption from his usual antagonism to prostitution, typical of the popular drama of the time. [38]

5.b. Alchemy

The violent stage of Putrefaction is enacted, (see above p.228), wherein the 'killing' of the substance, (the break-down of the marriage between Adriana, the 'subtle' and her husband, the 'grosse'), is graphically represented in the verbal abuse exchanged on both sides and in the attempts of Eph. Antipholus to beat down the door. He and his servant refer to the symbol of this stage, the crow.

5.c. Renaissance Platonism

The chain that Eph. Antipholus has commissioned from Angelo is a further symbol of the bonds of the flesh into which his soul has descended. It also symbolises false worldly values and will be the later cause of his actual arrest and imprisonment. John Russell Brown comments that the chain is a symbol of the theme of 'love as wealth' in

the play. He observes that Adriana's idea of love is of possession of her husband and the promised chain is a token of that, and typical of her lack of understanding of the difference between commercial wealth and the wealth of love (p.54-57). The chain, representing false values, will not find its rightful owner but will be cast about as much as the attentions of Eph. Antipholus.

His over-familiarity with the courtesan, the hostess of the Porpentine, indicates the degree to which he is descending down the ladder away from the love of his wife which would assist in his re-ascent back towards divinity. This is reinforced by his decision to give the chain to the courtesan. In this respect his actions exemplify the yielding of his will to temptation in the manner of the charioteer being misdirected by the black horse in the Platonic metaphor (see above p.270).

The name Angelo can be taken to refer to the coin, an angel, in the currency prevailing in Shakespeare's day. However, it can also represent the daemons, re-named as Angels by Dionysius the Areopagite (see above p.245) who, in the Platonic system, were thought to be 'governors of the lower world' (that is of earth) and who, as good Angels, protect people, but as bad Angels tempt them. 39 The circumstances surrounding the character Angelo in the play are consistent with this possible interpretation of his character. He is initially benevolent in terms of his Platonic function: he has made a golden chain for Eph.

Antipholus to give to his wife, thus increasing the bonding between them and assisting their Platonic ascent towards Divinity. However this is a material object and therefore an illusion or shadow, and it ultimately only serves to divide husband and wife when it is pledged to the courtesan and given to Syr. Antipholus. In this respect Angelo unwittingly becomes a bad, misleading Angel.

A characterisation of the lesser, 'natural light' is presented in the character of Luce, the servant, contrasting with Luciana, a 'divine light'.

The device of separating the two sets of twins at this point by a wall and door and Adriana's mistaking Syr. Antipholus for her husband, points to the illusory deception of the senses which Plato claimed only register, in the material world, the shadows of the true forms of all parts of creation in heaven. This can lead to moral deception as Adriana is unaware that the man she is entertaining is not her husband, so that her husband's accusations against her are, in fact, true.

5.d. <u>The Bible</u>

Eph. Antipholus is punished for his worldly values and the implied fleshly over-indulgence regarding the courtesan, by being prevented from entering his own house and thus being humiliated before his would-be guests. Adriana is punished for her hypocrisy in citing biblical authority

for her claims on her husband, when she has rejected the biblical authority for her own behaviour within her marriage, by being deceived into unfaithfulness to her husband with his brother.

6. Sixth Section

Syr. Antipholus has fallen in love with Luciana, who, embarrassed by the attentions of one she considers to be her sister's husband, reproves him for infidelity to his wife. That the love is returned is suggested by her advocating subtlety in the declaration of any false love:

> Teach sin the carriage of a holy saint,
> Be secret false; what need she be acquainted?
> (III.ii.14-15)

Syr. Antipholus denies any relationship with her sister, and protests his true love for her, his 'soul's pure truth' (III.ii.37), deeming her to be a transforming god, or a mermaid, whose singing should not drown him in Adriana's tears but lure him to herself:

> O, train me not, sweet mermaid, with thy note
> To drown me in thy sister's flood of tears;
> Sing, siren, for thyself, and I will dote;
> Spread o'er the silver waves thy golden hairs,
> And as a bed I'll take thee, and there lie.
> (III.ii.45-48)

He imagines a sublime death by drowning in such a light as hers, although his love is not light and can not be drowned (III.ii 50-52). She accuses him of madness, in a fault stemming from his eyes, which he affirms, claiming

that it is from gazing on her, the sun. He identifies her as his 'better part':

> Mine eye's clear eye, my dear heart's dearer heart,
> My food, my fortune, and my sweet hope's aim,
> My sole earth's heaven, and my heaven's claim.
> (III.ii.61-64)

Abashed, Luciana escapes, but Syr. Dromio enters with news of a courtship made to him by a kitchen wench, so beastly in appearance that her attachment to him makes him feel like a mounted ass. This woman, Nell, is so large and greasy that he imagines making a tallow lamp of her that could last forever:

> If she lives till doomsday she'll burn a week longer than the whole world (III.ii.97-98)

He continues her description in terms of these cosmic proportions: Even Noah's flood could not wash the grease from her; she is spherical, like a globe; Ireland stands in the bogs of her buttocks; Scotland in the barren palm of her hand; France in a growth in her forehead, warring against her heir; England in her chin, identified by the the salty 'rheum' dividing it from France; Spain in the heat of her breath; America and the West Indies in the eruptions on her nose like jewels, for the collection of which whole galleons were sent by the Spain in her breath; while Belgia and the Netherlands were too low in her person to allow notice. (III.ii.104-137) Syr. Dromio relates that this monstrous person lays claim to him, citing marks about his body as evidence of their relationship. He concludes that she must be a witch and

had he not been firm in his religious faith would have turned him into a dog. (III.ii.137-145) Syr. Antipholus concurs that they must escape from this seemingly enchanted place as soon as possible and dispatches Dromio to find a ship to take them thence. (III.ii)

Traversi comments that Nell's pursuit of Syr. Dromio presents a 'burlesque upon marriage' (p.12).

6.a. Theurgy

Syr. Antipholus makes contact with Luciana, the one who gives him the true illumination of self-knowledge through love. She functions as a component of the 'sun at noon' cited by Apuleius. Syr. Dromio undergoes a contrary experience with Nell.

Carroll observes that Syr. Antipholus identifies himself with Odysseus in his reference at III.ii.45-52 to Luciana as a siren, like those in the legend of Odysseus who strove to ship-wreck sailors by their seductive singing (p.71). This legend can be regarded as a paradigm for theurgy, a supposition which Syr. Antipholus reinforces in his assertion at (III.ii.51-52) that he is prepared to undergo a metaphorical death, (like the death-experience faced by neophytes), if his love be not considered genuine.

6.b. Alchemy

The moderate, sixth gate of Congelation, the white stage where the 'spirits' are fixed is entered (see above p.230). Within this allegory the 'spirits' are the women, Luciana, who Syr. Antipholus wishes to attach to himself, and the satirically-presented Nell, who wishes to fix herself to Syr. Dromio. The 'wax' nature of the compound at this stage is represented by the compliant manner (albeit furtive) of Luciana and the greasiness, of which Syr. Dromio claims he could make a candle, of Nell.

6.c. Renaissance Platonism

Syr. Antipholus has found, in Luciana, his 'divine light' and would be set on his ascent through mutual love with her back to his soul's divine source, but this is delayed by the confusion of the mistaken identities. He again speaks in terms of the water-metaphor, representing his identity as a drop of water in the ocean (Plato's image of the divine essence of which the individual is part) in associating her with waves of the ocean, a further identification of his recognition and loving of the divinity in her. In this he presents a classic example of the ideal Platonic love. T.W. Baldwin notes Shakespeare's application of the psychology of Platonic love to Syr. Antipholus and Adriana in this scene, noting the Platonic significance of Syr. Antipholus's reference to Luciana as his soul, with whom he has fallen in love through the

eyes, and for whom she is now his soul's food (p.164).

This whole idea is comically parodied (in an example of Shakespearean deconstruction) in the description by Syr. Dromio of Nell. She is posed by master and servant as a literal example of the microcosm represented in the macrocosm, her vastness equating the scale of the material world itself. The image of her as a tallow candle, burning for eternity, at once parodies the idea of her as an eternal 'divine light' and presents her literally as a 'natural light'. In fact she is the love of Eph. Dromio and as such presents the Socratic ideal of loving a person in spite of their ugly body. Stauffer considers that love is no more than a game throughout the whole play and its 'bewilderments', which he deems to be 'mechanically contrived', are generally laughable (p.35). [40]

T.W. Baldwin points out the skilful political satire incorporated in Syr. Dromio's description of Nell. For example, the legitimacy of Queen Elizabethan I depended on the assumption that the marriage of Prince Arthur had been consummated with his wife, Katharine of Aragon, whom Henry VIII later divorced on the grounds that his marriage to his brother's wife was not allowed in Christian law. Katharine claimed that the marriage had not been consummated, but the proof of the opposite truth rested on a joke told by Arthur's servants that after his wedding night with Katharine, he claimed to be inordinately thirsty after being, as he said, in the heat of Spain all

night. Dromio identifies the location of Spain in the supposed map of Nell in the heat of her breath (III.ii.129-130), a possible reference to that joke. Baldwin also refers to the intervention of Elizabeth in support of the Protestant Henry IV of Navarre in his claim, as legitimate heir, to the throne of France when challenged by Catholics. He supports the view that the Catholic attempt to dispossess the heir to the French throne is indicated by Dromio in his identification of France in Nell's forehead, 'armed and reverted, making war against her heir', (III.ii.121-122) (pp.1-5).

I believe that this double analysis of the imaging of Nell as a globe, incorporating Baldwin's suggested political satire and my suggestion above of the Platonic metaphor, provides an excellent example of the skill of Shakespeare's method. Both meanings could be considered to be controversial, and could be substituted one for the other if either were challenged as offensive, libellous, or blasphemous. By providing alternate levels of meaning for the play, the playwright secures himself from attack.

The identification by Nell of body marks on Syr. Dromio because they are identical to those on Eph. Dromio distinguishes their twinship as the kind of cloning described in the Platonic divided soul. They are a mirror-image of each other and as such provide a reference for another Platonic image connected with lovers in which love imprints the reflection of one soul upon the soul of

the other. Thus the loved one recognises himself in the soul of the lover and returns that love (see Jayne on Ficino p.46).

6.d. The Bible

Syr. Dromio draws on biblical sources in his description of the cosmic proportions of Nell. In his description of her, 'If she lives till doomsday, she'll burn a week longer than the whole world' (III.ii.99-100) he invokes the account of the world's burning end in 2 Peter 3. 12:

> That day of God, by which the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with heat.

Her vastness is also invoked in his reference to Noah's flood of Genesis Chapters 6-8 being insufficient to wash the grease from her. [41] He uses St. Paul's metaphor in Ephesians 6. 13-17, (see above p.347) in a similar context (at III.ii.145), of employing Christian defences against evil powers and witchcraft.

7. Seventh Section

Angelo enters and gives the amazed Syr. Antipholus the gold chain ordered by Eph. Antipholus, deferring the offered payment until later that day, (III.ii.164-184). Angelo, however, immediately regrets deferring payment for the chain, as he is instantly accosted by another merchant for payment of an owed similar sum. Eph. Antipholus

enters from the Porpentine, commanding Eph. Dromio to buy a rope to give his wife in revenge for his treatment that day. Angelo requests from him payment for the chain of which Eph. Antipholus repeatedly denies receipt. As the merchant to whom Angelo owes money will arrest him for debt if he does not secure the money for the chain, he has Eph. Antipholus arrested for avoidance of due payment in his stead. (IV.i.1-85)

7.a. Theurgy

In the depths of the confused labyrinth of the stage action, Eph. Antipholus undergoes the trials he needs as a correction for his intemperate behaviour. His arrest and restraining bonds provide a corresponding punishment for the inappropriate humiliation he plans for his wife, to be inflicted by the rope he ordered Dromio to purchase.

7.b. Alchemy

Eph. Antipholus, finishing his dinner in the Porpentine, signals the seventh gate of Cibation, during which the substance is fed (see above p.232). This has not, presumably, been to the degree of moderation advocated by Ripley, so the 'diet' which should be imposed is suggested by the arrest of Eph. Antipholus, here representing the substance of the alchemy, the 'grosse' body of the process.

7.c. Renaissance Platonism

The chain now begins to imprison Syr. Antipholus in the bonds of the flesh. It is for this that his brother is arrested and he is mistaken for his brother by the courtesan. It will increase confusion for other people in further linking his identity with that of his brother and will distance him from Luciana, the real gold.

Within the Platonic metaphor of the play, the nominal arrest of Eph. Antipholus for the chain of gold, imitates his imprisonment in flesh in his continuing descent from divinity. This is further represented by the rope with which he seeks to thrash his wife and household.

7.d. The Bible

Shaheen oberves that the reference by Angelo to Pentecost is not so much a textual biblical reference as the fixing of a date.

The imprisonment of St. Paul during his writing of his Epistle to the Ephesians is imitated in the arrest of Eph. Antipholus.

8. Eighth Section

Syr. Dromio, entering with news for his master that a ship from Epidamnum is waiting to take them away from the port, is ordered by Eph. Antipholus to go to Adriana to get bail for him, which will be provided by a sum of ducats in a purse contained in a chest covered with a Turkish

tapistry. (IV.i.86-107)

Luciana is telling Adriana of her supposed husband's illicit courtship of her when Syr. Dromio enters in search of the purse. In answer to Adriana's asking of his master, he replies that he has been taken prisoner and is in 'Tartar limbo, worse than hell', taken by 'a devil', 'a wolf', 'a hound', 'one that, before the judgement carries poor souls to hell'. (IV.ii.32-40) He riddles about the chain that binds his master and about time. (IV.ii.52-62)

8.a. Theurgy

Eph. Antipholus is kept in the imprisonment he needs to test him as an initiate by the dispatch of the wrong Dromio for his ransom. Adriana is engaged as part of the process of his initiation. She will drive him further into the correcting labyrinth.

8.b. Alchemy

The eighth gate of sublimation, (see above p.233), a violent stage, signified by the violence of the stage action, that forces the 'spirit' to descend to the 'body' is entered. The information Luciana and Eph. Antipholus give Adriana will force her to 'descend' to the street to interact with her husband. One of the symbols for this stage, a wolf, is named by Syr. Dromio.

8.c. Renaissance Platonism

The effects of the imprisonment of the soul in the flesh are increased. The riddling of Syr. Antipholus on time whose restricting limitations are another image of temporality, reflects this Platonic idea patterned throughout the play: Eph. Antipholus should be home for dinner time; when Syr. Dromio experiences pressure from the mixed identities confusions he riddles on time (see also II.ii.63-107); and all events move towards the inexorable hour of five o'clock, the time fixed for Egeon's execution.

8.d. The Bible

Shaheen explains that the 'Tartar limbo, worse than hell' that Syr. Dromio tells Adriana her husband is in, has several meanings. 'Limbo' itself has the Christian meaning of a place where the good souls reside of people who were born before Christ or have died without baptism (p.60). It is therefore a place of technical non-redemption where souls who have inadvertently missed out on salvation wait until their situation changes. Christian doctrine promises this after the second coming of Christ to earth. A Tartar limbo would be worse than the Christian limbo or hell as it is not even in the Christian sphere.

9. Ninth Section

Syr. Antipholus enters, commenting that everyone in the town seems to know him, giving him money, inviting him, thanking him, offering him things to buy and bespoke clothes to such an extent that he concludes that 'Lapland sorcerers inhabit here'. (IV.iii.1-11) Syr. Dromio enters, offering him the bail-bond money and expressing amazement that he is no longer restrained by the officer/ executioner whom he refers to as 'old Adam', 'he that goes in the calf's skin that was killed for the prodigal', 'he that came behind you, sir, like an evil angel, and bid you forsake your liberty'. (IV.iii. 13-19).

The conviction that they are in a place of illusory witchcraft is reinforced by the over-familiar approach of the courtesan, hostess of the Porpentine, who claims as promised to herself, the chain she sees around the neck of Syr. Antipholus. He charges her with being the devil, which Syr. Dromio qualifies by saying that she is worse, being the 'devil's dam', disguised as a 'light wench' (a pun on the meaning of 'light' as 'immoral') against whom he cautions, as the devil can appear to men disguised as angels of light (IV.iii.49-54, and see above p.347). The courtesan, believing them both to be jesting, invites them to supper. Syr. Antipholus conjures her, as the sorceress he takes her to be, to be gone. She agrees to do this if he will return the diamond ring she claims that she gave him in expected exchange for the chain he is now refusing

to give her. With cries of 'avaunt thou witch' and 'fly pride says the peacock', both men escape the place (IV.iii.76-77). The courtesan concludes that Antipholus must be mad, else he would not dishonestly disclaim the exchange of the ring, worth forty ducats, for the chain. She plans to go to his home and try to reclaim the ring by telling his wife that in a lunatic fit, he ran into her house and stole the ring. (IV.iii.42-93)

9.a. Theurgy

In the depths of the metaphorical labyrinth, Syr. Antipholus suffers the loss of all sense of reality, mistaking a very worldly courtesan for an evil sorceress. He is being presented with trials from which he emerges successful although confused. He does not succumb to the charms of the courtesan as does his brother.

Carroll comments that Shakespeare has here created a world for Syr. Antipholus and Syr. Dromio in which even language itself, through the doubling of the names as well as the persons of the twins, is deceptive and thus all sense is dislocated (pp. 69-70). The two men seem suspended, believing either that they or everyone else is transformed, (p.70), like a neophyte mid-initiation.

9.b. Alchemy

The stage of Sublimation continues with Syr. Antipholus as the compound, suffering a similar torment to that of his

brother. However, whereas his brother is threatened by a physical power, Syr. Antipholus imagines black magic to be the enemy attacking him. This provides a reference for the black colour of the water resulting from the purging of the compound, (see above p.233). Syr. Dromio mentions a peacock, the symbol, through its rainbow of colours, for the changing states and colours of alchemy.

The number of days required to achieve this stage was forty, the quantity of ducats the courtesan claims as the value of the ring she has exchanged with Eph. Antipholus for the promised golden chain. The number forty also has significance as the number of weeks of human gestation, a fact which indicates the extent to which alchemy was considered to be a living process.

9.c. Renaissance Platonism

The exchange of a ring in promise for a chain with the courtesan further indicates the bonds of the flesh into which Eph. Antipholus is descending. Syr. Antipholus is embroiled in this by his wearing of the chain and he suffers, through his acceptance of the chain, the same fate as his brother, taking him further from the 'divine light' of Luciana.

9.d. The Bible

Syr. Dromio makes use of a series of biblical references to express his confusion in seeing his master free instead

of imprisoned. In the same metaphor he cites Old and New Testament stories and preaching that refer to mankind's temptation by the devil, thus implying that they are encircled by evil witchcraft. He inquires of the arresting officer with whom he last saw his master as 'the picture of old Adam new-apparelled' paraphrasing and combining Genesis 3.7, 'They sewed figge tree leauves together, and made them selves breeches', Genesis 3.21, 'unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coates of skinnes, and clothed them', and the reference in Ephesians 4.22-24 to the sinning Adam as 'olde man' which must be shed to be replaced by the redeemed 'newe man' in Christ. [42] This also puns on the double meaning of 'suit' as clothes and law-suit.

He then merges the image of Adam, symbol of man's original sin, keeper of the garden of Eden (see above p.294) with the idea of an evil angel dressed in a buff jacket of a skin from a calf like that killed to celebrate the return of the prodigal son to his father (Luke 15.23.). This juxtaposition of biblical stories adds to the sense of confusion in the scene as Syr. Dromio and his master are themselves the victims of contradictory stage action. Further anomalies are implied in the image of the officer as an evil angel arresting Antipholus in contrast to the biblical account of the imprisoned St. Peter being released by an angel of God (Acts 12.5,7,11). [43] Syr. Dromio offers Syr. Antipholus the bail money intended for

Eph. Antipholus with the words, 'Here are the angels that you sent for to deliver you', (IV.iii.39), in terms of a distorted biblical quotation from Acts 12.11: 'The Lord hath sent his Angell, and hath delivered me'. In response, Syr. Antipholus seemingly invokes heavenly protection by quoting directly from Acts 12.9, 'we wander in illusions' (IV.iii.41).

The atmosphere associating evil with chaos and confusion (see above p.295) is heightened at the entrance of the courtesan. Syr. Antipholus again tries to protect himself against apparent evil incarnated as the courtesan, by citing the Bible directly as 'Satan avoid' (IV.iii.46), the words used by Christ in his resistance to Satan in the wilderness, 'Avoide Satan' (Matthew 4.10). [41] This biblical scene is later recalled by Syr. Dromio with the prefix to the words applied to the courtesan as Satan, 'it is written' (IV.iii.53) which cite Christ's response to Satan in Matthew 4.4,7,10 and Luke 4.4,8,10. The imagery associated with angels, sin and evil becomes a reality for the two men as they truly believe the courtesan to be a disguised devil. Syr. Dromio (at IV.iii.51-56) refers to St. Paul's warning in 2 Corinthians 11.14 that 'Satan him selfe is transformed into an Angel of Light'. Christ's admonition of Satan is again invoked by the terrified men as protection against the supposed evil of the courtesan in IV.ii.65 and IV.iii.48, before they escape from the scene.

10. Tenth Section

Promising the officer that he will be freed by the money he sent for from his home, Eph. Antipholus appears with the officer. However it is Eph. Dromio who enters with the rope that he had been asked to purchase for the humiliation of Adriana, and it is this rope, instead of the expected gold ducats, that he offers to his master who beats him with it. The officer advises Eph. Antipholus to be patient which Eph. Dromio claims is relevant to him, as he is the one in a state of adversity, for which his master calls him an ass. Dromio accepts the validity of this epithet, as his tolerance of the beatings he continually receives from Eph. Antipholus is asinine. (IV.iv.1-37)

Adriana enters with Luciana and Pinch, a schoolmaster and a proclaimed conjurer of spirits, to exorcise Eph. Antipholus of the evil spirits that they consider are causing the supposed lunacy of his extraordinary behaviour. All the self-contradictions of the action caused by the mistaken identity of the two sets of twins are exposed by the verbal exchange of the ensuing scene which is resolved in a diagnosis by Pinch of lunacy in both Eph. Antipholus and Eph. Dromio, requiring them both to be bound and kept in a dark room. Adriana pays the fine owed by her husband, and has both him and his servant taken, bound together, to a dark room in their house. (IV.iv.38-141)

CHAPTER EIGHT: 'THE COMEDY OF ERRORS'

To the consternation of all, who flee, thinking Eph. Antipholus and Eph. Dromio to be so possessed that they have escaped their bonds and escaped, Syr. Antipholus and Syr. Dromio enter, swords drawn against the witchcraft they presume to prevail in the town which they resolve to escape from as soon as possible. (IV.iv.142-156)

10.a. Theurgy

Eph. Antipholus encounters further trials in the confrontation with his wife and the attempted exorcism by Pinch which is resolved by his and his servant's imprisonment in a dark room. This provides an analogue for the dark labyrinth into which neophytes, in mystery initiations, were committed for trials designed to throw them into 'a state of painful suspense and expectation' before being exposed to almost-blinding light and mystic revelation. [44] T. W. Baldwin poses another significance of Pinch in the context of what he sees as the play's politico-religious satire. He explains that during the 1580s the Catholic church claimed to have the exclusive ability to exorcise, a fact that they used in self-justifying propaganda. Opponents of Catholicism characterised exorcists in the style of Pinch. [45]

The aggressive appearance of the alter-neophyte of Eph. Antipholus, his twin brother, confounds the sense of security Adriana has experienced in appointing Pinch to be the rightful corrector for her husband and suggests that

Pinch is a charlatan and an inappropriate guide for the labyrinth, a meaning which also endorses Baldwin's theory.

10.b. Alchemy

The ninth gate of Firmentation, (see above p.233) is established in this action, during which Adriana and Luciana function as the two 'pure firments', while Eph. Antipholus is the 'lion', the compound of the alchemy, which must be given drink 'till his belly burst', action which is replicated in this scene by the exorcising, restraint and ultimately imprisonment to which he is subjected. The binding of Eph. Antipholus and Eph. Dromio together and their imprisonment also signifies the strengthening nature of this stage.

The gold with which the compound must be combined at this stage is symbolised by the bail-bond money Adriana pays to free her husband.

Tillyard comments on the association of the swords which Syr. Antipholus and his servant use with the trials which seem to assail them at this point in the story (p.67). Swords were often used to symbolise the alchemic furnace fire, an image which I consider to be here applied in the burst of heat needed for this process represented by the sword-wielding fury of Syr. Antipholus and Syr. Dromio.

10.c. Renaissance Platonism

The flesh-imprisonment of Eph. Antipholus becomes literal when he is bound together with Eph. Dromio and cast into a darkened room. That this will initiate the action that will release him and re-link him to Adriana so that his interrupted ascent can re-commence is symbolised by the entry of his alter-ego, his brother Syr. Antipholus.

The illusory nature and false value of material things is symbolised by the rope that is presented to Eph. Antipholus instead of the gold which he expected would procure his release. The implication is that a dependence on material gold may release the body but it increases the imprisonment of the soul.

Adriana is suffering a double illusion in having mistaken Syr. Antipholus for her husband, and in trying to employ witchcraft to cure him. She is not functioning as the 'divine light' in their relationship. It will take the advice and action of Emilia to correct this.

10.d. The Bible

Eph. Dromio cites the biblical doctrine of Job 2.10 prescribing patience in adversity, 'Nay, 'tis for me to be patient, I am in adversity' (IV.iv.19). The proverbial patience in adversity of Job is not a quality that has hitherto been displayed in his master and mistress and both must learn to practice it before their trials are accomplished.

CHAPTER EIGHT: 'THE COMEDY OF ERRORS'

The attempted exorcism by Pinch of Eph. Antipholus draws biblical authority from incidents described in the New Testament, wherein Christ cures people by driving out devils (Matthew 9.32-34, 17.18, Mark 23-26, 5.2-17, and Luke 4.33-35). Matthew 9.1. reports Christ conferring the power to cast out devils upon his disciples, an action that probably motivated subsequent exorcists. Pinch's reference to Satan being 'hous'd' in Eph. Antipholus (IV.iv.54), quotes a biblical incident in Matthew 12. 22, in which Christ is reported curing a man who was 'bothe blinde and dumbe' and 'possessed with a devil', healing the man so that he could see and hear. He warns the pharisees who challenge his actions, of the typical repossession of a person by a devil (whom he calls an 'uncleane spirit'), whose soul has become as an inviting 'house' to the devil who will enter it again, this time with seven more of his confederates. The 'state of darkness' to which Pinch exhorts Satan, assumed to be possessing Eph. Antipholus to return, is that set forth in Genesis associated with chaos and evil and re-appearing in that context throughout the Bible (see above p.295). [46]

Eph. Antipholus also employs a biblical reference against his wife in response to the attempted exorcism. Believing her to be colluding with Pinch to cover up her own misdeeds, he distorts in his threat to her, 'But with these nails I'll pluck out these false eyes' the sentiments of Matthew 5.29:

> Wherefore if thy right eie cause thee to offend,
> plucke it out and caste it from thee. [47]

Her responding order to bind him (IV.iv.104), and the observation of Pinch that it is the devil causing him to speak in that manner, 'the fiend is strong within him', reflect the futile restraining of the madman cured by Christ in Mark 5.3-4.

11. Eleventh Section

Angelo and the merchant to whom he owes the money due for the chain from Eph. Antipholus enter, wondering at his untypically dishonest behaviour in refusing payment for the chain which he claims not to have received. Syr. Antipholus, wearing the chain, and Syr. Dromio enter, and are accosted by Angelo who reprimands Syr, Antipholus for his shameful behaviour in denying receipt of the chain. Syr. Antipholus draws his sword against this insult, and the merchant draws his sword in reply, but they are prevented from fighting by the entrance of Luciana, the courtesan, and Adriana, who protests the lunacy of her husband and demands that the master and servant be bound and taken to her house. However they escape, taking sanctuary in a nearby priory. (V.i.1-37)

Emilia, the Lady Abbess of this priory emerges to quieten the disturbance. Adriana demands to be allowed entrance to the priory to take her mentally-ill husband from thence to a place of recovery. Emilia searches out

the reason for his supposed illness and draws from Adriana that her nagging jealousy may have driven her husband insane. The Abbess insists that she will cure him herself with approved means such as herbal medicines and prayers and, re-entering the priory, refuses to allow Adriana access to him. (V.i.38-112)

Adriana is advised to appeal against Emilia to Duke Solinus, imminently due to implement the execution of Egeon. On the arrival of the Duke, she appeals to him, giving an exaggerated account of the day's mishaps but succeeding in persuading the Duke to intervene with Emilia. They are interrupted by a messenger who comes to warn Adriana that her husband and his servant have escaped their bonds, tormented Pinch and his attendants with fire and threaten to do the same to his wife. All present claim this to be impossible as they have just seen the supposed pair enter the priory. However Eph. Antipholus and Eph. Dromio enter and appeal to the Duke, whose life, he reminds him, he once has saved during a battle. He accuses his wife, Angelo, Pinch, and all associated with them for gross mistreatment. On hearing the contradictory accounts of the day's events from the appellants, the Duke concludes that they have all become bewitched, as if drugged by Circe, who turned people into animals with a drinking draught, ' I think you all have drunk of Circe's cup'. (V.i.271)

Egeon, seeing one whom he presumes to be his son,

appeals to him for the money that will redeem him from death. Eph. Antipholus and Eph. Dromio, to the distress of Egeon, disclaim all knowledge of him, the necessary truth of which is verified by the Duke, who testifies that he has been patron to Eph. Antipholus for the past twenty years. (V.i.272-329)

11.a. Theurgy

Syr. Antipholus is about to escape from the darkness of the labyrinth, a fact that is heralded by the appearance of Luciana, the light of his initiation, preventing him from possible death at the hands of the merchant. This shift into the light is further symbolised by his entry into the sanctuary of the priory, whose abbess is his mother Emilia, functioning in this sense as a kind of Ceres/Demeter.

Egeon as neophyte is brought to the threshold of death in facing his planned execution.

That Pinch is a false guide is proved by the escape of Eph. Antipholus, who breaks free into the light shed by the Duke Solinus, who now guides the action. Carroll observes that the image of the enchantress with the power to transform, Circe, invoked by the Duke, presents the summation of the notion of metamorphosis which informs the play (p.72).

Egeon faces a further trial in his son's denial of him.

11.b. Alchemy

The stage of Exaltation is begun (see above p.233) with the action that brings Emilia into the process. In one sense, reinforced by her years in the pure environment of the priory, she is the 'spirit' of the compound, which is represented by the composite 'body' of the family. When Syr. Antipholus and Syr. Dromio escape to the sanctuary of her sphere, her integration back into her family is begun. She is the one who holds the key to the family's identity and to the reunion which will symbolise the achievement of the Stone. She demonstrates this by her effective chastisement of Adriana, which removes the barrier of jealousy obstructing her from being re-united with Eph. Antipholus. This realises in stage action, Ripley's description of the compound being 'crucified', echoing the torments undergone by Eph. Antipholus, and 'examinate' as Adriana is by Emilia, before being re-joined as husband and wife and then revived by 'the spirit of life' (Emilia).

Eph. Antipholus is brought out of his torments by the agency of the Duke Solinus, (as the sun in the process).

Egeon again enters the process as part of the corporate 'body' ready to be re-united as 'sophic sulphur', the 'red king' with his wife, 'sophic mercury', the 'white queen'.

11.c. Renaissance Platonism

Both Syr. Antipholus and his brother enter the state from which they will emerge with a full sense of their real identities and be united with their true loves as 'divine light'. In her function in this role Luciana prevents Syr. Antipholus from fighting with the merchant. In his escape into the abbey, an area of spiritual light itself, he inititates the discovery of his mother who, as Abbess, will become a guiding light to her sons, and as Emilia, will restore to Egeon the 'divine light' by which he will commence his own ascent to Divinity.

Ficino quotes Plato as denying envy a place in the 'chorus of the blessed'. [48] Emilia therefore begins to work on Adriana to rid her of this negative emotion, thus purifying the 'divine light' for one son, while she provides refuge for the other.

Ficino posits that the human soul finds bliss in Divinity along a route led in sequence by four virtues, 'Prudence, Courage, Justice and Temperance'. [49] I suggest that this scene presents these guiding virtues characterised as Luciana (Prudence), Egeon (Courage), Solinus (Justice), and Emilia (Temperance). Syr. Antipholus has been prudently rescued by Luciana; the general situation is contained by the exemplary courage in the face of adversity of Egeon; Eph. Antipholus relies on the justice of Solinus to extricate himself from the turmoil he finds himself in; and Emilia tempers the

pursuit of Syr. Antipholus and the jealous impatience of Adriana.

Solinus expresses the Renaissance view that a descent from sanity de-humanises people into animals by his reference to Circe. To him, the contradictory accounts of events given in this scene are lunatic. Hankins explains that the Renaissance imaged Circe as a metaphor for lust as libido, impressing men's souls with bestial vices (p.20).

11.d. The Bible

The Christian Church itself, with all its authority and mastery of biblical doctrine, asserts control over the confused protagonists through Emilia. With a firm assurance she calmly addresses the problems suddenly put upon her, offering Christian sanctuary to Syr. Antipholus and Syr, Dromio and wise advice to Adriana.

In the patient acceptance of his fate, her husband Egeon exemplifies the biblical patience in adversity lacking in his son.

12. Twelfth Section

Emilia enters with Syr. Antipholus and Syr. Dromio and the two sets of twins face each other for the first time in the play. Egeon is recognised, first by Syr. Antipholus and Syr. Dromio and then by Emilia, who proclaims herself as his lost wife and the mother of his sons, the

Antipholus twins. She describes how she had been separated from her son and his servant when Corinthian fishermen stole them from her, leaving her to proceed to Epidamnum and from thence to go to Ephesus and take up her life in the priory. All the problems of the day's mishaps are resolved, the Duke remits Egeon's death sentence, Eph. Antipholus is reconciled with Adriana, the courtship of Luciana for Syr Antipholus is allowed, the courtesan's diamond ring is returned to her, and the comedy of errors deciphered by Syr Antipholus:

> I see we still did meet each other's man
> And I was ta'en for him, and he for me,
> And thereupon these errors are arose. (V.i.386-388)

Evans observes that Shakespeare, in withholding Emilia's identity from the audience until the end of the play, has deceived the audience into thinking that they have the complete advantage of awareness over the protagonists (pp.7-9).

Waller observes that in the context of an interpretation of the play as a search to satisfy basic psychological drives, the ending of the play gives a sense of fulfilment as Syr. Antipholus finds again the security of childhood, in the bosom of his family (p.30).

Emilia invites all into the Priory to enjoy a feast during which they can exchange the stories of their separated lives. She rejoices at her reconciliation with her sons:

> Thirty-three years have I but gone in travail
> Of you, my sons, and till this present hour

> My heavy burden ne'er delivered. (V.i.400-402)

and the happy resolution of the family's tragic history:

> After so long grief, such felicity. (V.i.406).

The Dromio twins are left regarding each other with pleasure and amazement:

> Methinks you are my glass, and not my brother:
> I see by you that I am a sweet-fac'd youth. (V.i.418-419)

and they decide that no priority due to the elder of them shall prevail in their brotherhood:

> We came into the world like brother and brother,
> And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another. (V.i.426)

12.a. <u>Theurgy</u>

Egeon is withdrawn from the threshold of death by Emilia, who like Ceres/Demeter, finds her progeny as her son-neophytes emerge from the labyrinth of their confused identities.

It is the guide, the Duke Solinus, who first expresses the realisation of the confused identities and who subsequently pardons Egeon his life. Both the Antipholus and Dromio twins achieve a fulfilled sense of their real identity as the family is integrated.

Emilia, as the prevailing Demeter-like goddess of the rite, encloses the successful neophytes into her realm. As she does this she gives an account of her life's separation from them not according to the actual period of time already mentioned in the play, twenty five years, but

in terms of the thirty three years' life-span of the sun-logos at the heart of the mysteries, Jesus Christ.

12.b. Alchemy

The Stone is achieved with the re-union of the family, as the stage of exaltation is continued and achieved with Emilia's words, 'After so long grief, such felicity'. Their entry into the priory symbolises the Ripley description of the Stone as re-joined man and wife being exalted up to heaven (see above p.234) where it will influence 'other bodies'. The Stone comprises three couples, Egeon and Emilia, Eph. Antipholus and Adriana, and Syr. Antipholus and Luciana, signalling the play's magic content, (see above p.188). The Dromio twins, representing another aspect of the 'grosse' body, will enter the Priory later, thus duplicating the action of the others and suggesting the stage of Multiplication (see above p.234). The final stage of Projection (see above p.234) in which the Stone transforms base matter into gold is realised in the behaviour of the Dromio twins, courteous and considerate to each other, exemplifying the ideal priniciple of equal brotherhood among men.

12.c. Renaissance Platonism

A re-ascent is effected for the family as Emilia removes all the intervening barriers. The three pairs, Egeon and Emilia, Syr. Antipholus and Luciana, and Eph. Antipholus

and Adriana provide individual soul-ascents but there is also a corporate one for the re-united family, implying a sense of the benefits of their bliss being relaid to the macrocosm.

Ficino describes the summation of the bliss of souls who succeed in their ascent through love to Divinity as participation in a heavenly feast, for which the feast in the priory to which Emilia invites all, can be said to be a paradigm (see Jayne on Ficino p.162).

The twin Dromios express the image of the mirror in which they see themselves in the other (see above p.261), and affirm the effects of that reflection in the brotherly love with which the play concludes.

12.d. The Bible

Christian redemption is reflected in the happy conclusion of the play, symbolised by the entry of all the participants into the Christian embrace of the abbey.

This most Christian of endings supports the tenet of Northrop Frye, that New Comedy, especially in its Shakespearean form, tends to be idealised, with analogies to religion. [50]

Traversi comments that the part that the Abbess performs in the play confirms its serious framework, and anticipates in its nature the 'symbolic' and 'spiritual order' in Shakespeare's last plays. He claims that through her Shakespeare attains the kind of resolution

effected in all his comedies, 'marriage and the reconciliation of parents to their children' (p.13).

Salingar also notes the thematic link with the last plays, assessing this reunion of a family as a theme of importance to Shakespeare, introduced into this, one of his earliest plays and returned to again in the late plays such as The Winter's Tale and The Tempest:

> The cohesion of the family, as expressed through the dramatic motif of the separation and then reunion of parents and children, was clearly a second theme of emotional importance to Shakespeare; he introduces this motif in his first (or first surviving) comedy, The Comedy of Errors...and he brings it to the forefront again nearly twenty years later, in his last tragi-comedies or romances (p.17).

I consider that the theme adumbrates the arcana, that the family is a metaphor for a composite soul and that the family reunions at the ends of the mentioned plays represent an integrated personality and a redeemed soul.

THEATRE SET-UP'S PRESENTATION OF THE PLAY IN THE LIGHT OF SOME OF THE ABOVE MEANINGS IN 1986.

Theatre Set-Up took Ficino's image of four circles representing 'mind', 'soul', 'nature' and 'matter' on the circumference of which God was the centre, (see above p.256) as the model for their set. To actualise this metaphor, they constructed four circular plinths which were also used to represent objects within alternating

locations: plinths in the Duke's palace; a pillar, a fountain, a pedestal and a statue of Diana in the main street of Ephesus with the Courtesan's house, the 'Porpentine', to one side and the Priory on the other; a desk, a mirror and two cushions in two rooms divided by a curtain in the interior of the 'Phoenix', the home of Eph. Antipholus and Adriana; a table, a low stool, a well and a chariot-mounting post in another room within that house divided by a door from its immediate street exterior.

This minimalist set of four 'pills' as the actors called them, provided a convenient frame around which they could locate the action in realistic settings which they created by the use of mime, in imitation of the Italian comic style prevalent in Shakespeare's day of the Commedia Dell' Arte, which in its turn derived its skills from the very Roman theatre tradition for which Plautus, the original source of the play's story, was writing.

Our use of this tradition was not only artistically appropriate but expedient. Without interrupting the flow of stage action by the need to re-set staging and properties, the mime supplied the Theatre Set-Up actors with the material things they needed to flesh out their performances. For example: in I.ii. 35-40, Syr. Antipholus was able to give point to his imaging himself as a drop of water by his mime of flicking water from the imaginary fountain in the street; in II.i. 89-101 Adriana was able to mime herself examining her face in a mirror to

add a greater depth of meaning to her words; in III. ii. Luciana was able to try to hide her embarrassment at the love-making of Syr. Antipholus by miming drawing water from the imaginary well, and Syr. Antipholus used this imagined water to point his imagery of drowning in her love. The representing of the circles as seats (plinths in the Duke's palace, a pedestal and the foot of the statue of Diana in the street, and the cushions and the low stool in the 'Phoenix') provided the actors with another stage level to use, and somewhere to sit away from the costume-staining grass of which most of the stages of the season's venues consisted.

The custom of mimed action having been established, the actors were able to draw on mime to enhance comic action and in several instances to give point to an underlying meaning of the play. For example, in III.ii. 93-136, when Dromio is describing Nell in terms which not only suggest her mammoth proportions, but which refer to the Renaissance Platonic concept of the cosmos being reproduced in the microcosmos of an individual person, the actors created through mime an enormous image of her occupying the whole of the stage area and stretching to a height of at least thirty feet. Each country symbolising a part of her anatomy was precisely located in mime in this imagined monster and the resulting scene had excellent vigorous stage movement and was great fun. This miming convention also made it possible to locate the

outside door of the 'Phoenix' and thus the whole scene III.i., centre-stage, with the stage action of the two Dromios comically positioned only feet apart and employing some mirror-image comic business. For example, at the lines of Eph. Dromio:

> A man may break a word with you, sir, and words are but wind;
> Ay, and break it in your face, so he break it not behind. (III.1.75-76.)

the actor playing Eph. Dromio mimed directing a fart through the mimed key-hole. As repost, the actor playing Syr. Dromio imitated this action as accompaniment to the lines:

> It seems thou want'st breaking; out upon thee, hind. (III.1.77.)

Ironically then, the Platonic metaphor of the four circles supplied the production with the means to give enhanced reality, movement and comic action to the play, but an understanding of the deeper significance of the play's arcana gave the play a serious dimension in production and performance that it might have lacked otherwise. For example, the actors playing the parts of the two sets of twins were able to set the tone of their performances beyond that of mere farce by the assumption of their identities as the Platonic divided souls. Our interpretation of them as actualising that metaphor also influenced our casting of the actors to closely resemble each other, (see figure 9), a fact remarked upon by those members of the audience who consider it a received fact

that part of the joke of the mistaken identities lies in the fact that to the audience the actors should not look too similar.

My understanding of the alchemical significance of the play was considerably more limited when I directed the play for Theatre Set-Up in 1986 from my perspective ten years later at the writing of this chapter, but a comprehension of the main alchemical thrust of the play rationalised certain of its elements (such as the storm which had divided the family, and the roles of Egeon and Emilia as part-body and etherialised soul of the process). The actor playing the Duke Solinus appreciated the effect that the alchemical level of interpretation had on his characterisation of the part, considering the idea of the Duke as sun to rationalise what he called the stuffiness of the character. As I was playing Emilia myself, I was able to experience the character as both soul of the main alchemical process and as the one who, as the missing mother of the family and authoritative Abbess, resolves the problems of the characters and untangles the plot. The actor playing Egeon responded to the idea of Egeon as part of the compound, the main body of the alchemical process, and found that it made sense of his otherwise illogical death sentence and absence during most of the play while the Antipholus twins took on the transforming role of the compound. Our understanding of the arcana also made it possible for us to understand the references

to number and animals in the play (see the play's programme notes, Appendix A, 1.)

In 1986 I did not know about theurgy and its significance to the play, so that aspect was missing from the direction of the actors and the production of the play.

We found the biblical significance of the play helpful in understanding the play's moral content and were so fascinated by the references to St Paul and Ephesus that we decided to costume the play in the style of ancient Turkish dress, as Ephesus, once considered to be part of the Levant, is now located in that country. We drew our ideas from historic pictures of people in the Ottoman Turk city-palace of Topkapi, recorded at the end of the last century, but considered to represent fashions consistent with past centuries. We were very comfortable performing in these costumes, as they were easy to execute vigorous movement in, and they gave a colourful, exotic look to the play, lending it a sense of fantasy (see figures 10-13).

By a stretching of the Turkish theme to embrace Mozart's Rondo Alla Turka as a theme tune for the play, and by justifying the inclusion of Mozart's music in the play by the claim that his participation in Freemasonry which shares its ideas with theurgy, alchemy, Platonism and the Bible lent arcana to his operas (certainly to The Magic Flute), similar to those of Shakespeare, I made use

of tunes from Mozart's operas which I applied as appropriate leit-motifs to be played in accompaniment to the play. For example, the entry of each of the Dromio twins was heralded by the different tunes played by Papageno in The Magic Flute. Adriana's speeches at II.ii.87-101 and II.ii.110-145 were accompanied by the aria marking Donna Anna's complaint against Don Giovanni from Don Giovanni. The operas thus supplied leit-motifs for the main characters which not only heightened either the comic or serious content of the scenes but increased the Commedia Dell'Arte effect created by the mimed stage action. The music was played on an aeolian harp.

It was the first time we had understood the significance of the Platonic levels of the play, and found them crucial to our comprehension of our characters. From that time onwards we always looked for the Platonism in our interpretation of Shakespeare's plays in productions of subsequent seasons.

Audiences spoke of their interest in the 1986 programme notes (see Appendix A.1.), and commented that they found the style of production appropriate to the ideas of the research which had informed the direction of the play.

CHAPTER EIGHT: 'THE COMEDY OF ERRORS'

Figure 9: The two sets of twins in the 1986 Theatre Set-Up production of The Comedy of Errors.

CHAPTER EIGHT: 'THE COMEDY OF ERRORS'

Figure 10: Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus.

Theatre Set-Up 1986

CHAPTER EIGHT: 'THE COMEDY OF ERRORS'

Figure 11: Scenes IV.iv and IV.ii. Theatre Set-Up 1986

CHAPTER EIGHT: 'THE COMEDY OF ERRORS'

Figure 12: IV.i.86., IV.iv.123

Theatre Set-up, 1986

Figure 13: IV.i.104., IV.i.27. Theatre Set-Up, 1986

CHAPTER NINE: 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

The central theme of A Midsummer Night's Dream is transformation, physical, spiritual, psychological and theoretical, embodying all the arcana.

This chapter amplifies the programme notes which informed the direction of the 1983 and 1995 Theatre Set-Up productions of A Midsummer Night's Dream (see Appendix A, 2. and 3.), thus providing a more accurate record of the director's notes to the actors and audiences of those productions than Chapter Eight provides of the 1986 production of The Comedy of Errors. The 1983 and 1995 productions were totally dissimilar in style, the 1983 production drawing on alchemy and the Celtic Old Religion for inspiration, while the 1995 production assimilated those arcana into its ideas, but placed more emphasis on Platonism and theurgy, and set the play in the material style of 1895 in honour of the National Trust Centenary being celebrated at that time in six of the company's venues.

Both productions depended upon research into the arcana of the play for the thrust of its 'inner line' (see above p.16), and found that illogicalities of characterisation and stage action were solved by an understanding of the arcane meanings which were sometimes used as the basis of characterisation. I discuss this in more detail at the end of the chapter in the section which describes the effect of the research on the productions.

This chapter again assumes the reader's absorption of

the material in Chapters Four to Seven, but includes modified explanations of the arcana in Theatre Set-Up's 1995 programme notes in the analyses of the first section of the story, as they are particular to this production and relevant to the analyses of the arcana in this play. As in Chapter Eight, the story is divided into sections, numbered sequentially and appropriate to its arcane content, which is also numbered. In the analyses of the arcana which I suggest underlie each section of the story, Alchemy is signified by a., Celtic arcana by b., Christianity, combined with theurgy by c., and Platonism by d.

The play is so extraordinary in its characters and plot, so distant from the psychological reality of everyday life, that directors often find it necessary to find an inspiration for the 'inner line' of the production outside the script, with a resultant distortion of characterisation. Granville-Barker, producing the play in 1914, found little depth in the characterisation:

> This is less a play, in the sense that we call 'Rosmersholm' a play, than a musical symphony. The characterisation will not repay very prolonged analysis. [1]

G.K. Hunter also considers the characters to lack personality and self-determination:

> The play contains no personalities, no figures like Beatrice, Rosalind or Olivia, who, being self-aware, are also self-correcting. [2]

He perceives the protagonists as dancers who shift

positions through being 'lifted bodily' by the agency of someone else, as Titania is by Oberon, or as the lovers are by Puck and Oberon, without undergoing psychological change (p.120). In our two productions of this play we felt that we really benefited from understanding the arcana which enabled us to find sufficient internal evidence to fuel plausible characterisation for the actors.

Samuel Pepys probably leads the detractors of the play's extraordinary nature, calling it, 'the most insipid, ridiculous, play that ever I saw in my life'. [3] Part of the play's extraordinary nature, and to some, possibly including Pepys, its implausibility, is due to the presence of fairies in the stage action. Noel Purdon expresses the problems the play has suffered in being trivialised through having fairies among its characters:

> Because the fairies are delightful, as the sylphs in The Rape of the Lock or the Lilliputians in Gulliver's Travels are delightful, critics have been led into making a Christmas pantomime of A Midsummer Night's Dream as fatal to art as the children's book that has been made of Gulliver's Travels. None of Shakespeare's plays has suffered so constantly as this one from the refusal of critics to give it the same kind of attention as a work of art that they would give the others. [4]

However, Northrop Frye gives the fairies a historical perspective in plays of Shakespeare's dramatic forebears:

> A Midsummer Night's Dream takes us back to the folklore and fairy world of Peele's Old Wives Tale and Lyly's Endimion. [5]

The style of the romance is also considered to be

reductive. Even John Vyvyan, who finds within the play the parable of Platonism that the Theatre Set-Up 1995 actors playing the four lovers found so helpful in understanding their characters, (see below p.434), considers the romantic presentation of the philosophy in the play to be slight:

> A Midsummer Night's Dream ... presents a parable. The parable is based on Platonic ideas, but it is erected in a romantic shape that Socrates would have found trivial.[6]

In his casebook, Shakespeare: 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', which edits a range of critical opinion on the play, Antony Price notes the shift in opinion from the detraction of Pepys to its recent popularity, expressed typically by Frank Kermode in considering it to be Shakespeare's best comedy.[7]

In his introduction to the New Penguin edition of the play, Stanley Wells notes the reductive effect of the play's popularity in performance:

> The variety of appeal inherent in A Midsummer Night's Dream is part of the source of its popularity, but has also caused it often to be reduced from its true stature.[8]

Frank Kermode also acknowledges the need to evaluate the play more seriously, in terms of its sources and content:

> It is still probably too much to expect many people to believe that the theme of A Midsummer Night's Dream can be explained by references to Apuleius, to Macrobius and Bruno and so forth.[9]

He admits the validity of some mundane explanations of the sophistications of the plot:

> Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that it is a play of marked intellectual content; that the variety of the plot is a reflection of an elaborate and ingenious thematic development; and that simple and pedestrian explanations of such developments have some value (p.114).

However he traces the deep significance of Shakespeare's

treatment of the theme of the relationship between love, sight and blindness through the play, identifying important Platonic meanings in the use by Oberon and Puck of magic and transformation, giving the play a subsequent profundity which, he considers, must influence our assessment of its thematic seriousness (p.119).

In Something of Great Constancy: The Art of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', David P. Young notes the characteristics of change and metamorphosis in the play:

> A glance at the exposition of the play will reveal how thoroughly its atmosphere is permeated with figures of change and metamorphosis. [10]

Metamorphosis is the critical factor in the arcana, always signalling an ultimate change for the better in the subject of the metamorphosis. I refer in more detail to his examples of this in context below.

Ronald F. Miller, writing in A Midsummer Night's Dream: The Fairies, Bottom, and the Mystery of Things, believes that Shakespeare's introduction of the fairies into the play elevates the work into a 'study in the epistemology of the imagination', as its fusion of the fictional world of Ovid with English folk-lore intrudes into the world of the human protagonists. He justifies this opinion in the significance of the play as a source in the theory of the imagination, by reference to its treatment of intangibility as exemplied by Puck's speech at V.i.430-433, where it is suggested that the audience can regard the play itself as a dream, if the shadows that

are the actors and fairies have caused offence. Such a suggestion, he claims, throws up riddles regarding the reality and interaction of the play's protagonists, the actors, and the audience, challenging received opinion. [11]

James L. Calderwood observes that many critics have noted the influence of Ovidian metamorphosis on the play, a factor critical to my analysis of the play's alchemic levels of meaning. [12]

R.A. Zimbardo, in Regeneration and Reconciliation in A Midsummer Night's Dream, notes the theme (which I attribute to the alchemical reading of the play), of reconciliation through cosmic change. He considers that the four different kinds of characters, Theseus and Hippolyta, Titania and Oberon, the four lovers, and the workmen, which he calls 'planes of being', are thus:

> drawn into a larger harmony because they are all subject to an enactment of reconciliation through change that is occurring cosmically. [13]

It was probably the book by Jan Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, and the subsequent production based on its core ideas by Peter Brook for the RSC, which alerted us to the serious content in terms of contemporary relevance, and the possible political infrastructure of the play. [14]

In Bottom, Thou Art Translated, Marion Taylor defends the principle of interpreting Shakespeare's plays in terms of their political allegory, pointing out that it was a customary practice, carried out in plays, masques or offerings to the monarch in the Elizabethan period,

exemplified by Hamlet's use of The Murder of Gonzago in Hamlet. She finds reason to identify Bottom and his fellows with the grotesque but charming Hercule D'Alencon, heir to the throne of France and his retainers, in an allegory which portrays Elizabeth as Titania and refers to the long courtship which had existed between her and Alencon. [15] If this is the case, I think that it supports the view posed by this thesis that the plays are polysemous, and could hide in their different levels, meanings which might be considered risky to the well-being of the author, disguised by more politically acceptable readings of the text.

Louis Adrian Montrose writes of the social implications of the issues of gender domination in Elizabethan society that the play deals with, suggesting that tensions in this male/female struggle reflected in the opposition in the play by Hermia and Titania to the male dominance that Hippolyta has succumbed to, would be reasonable in a society run by men but ruled over by Queen Elizabeth. [16]

I maintain, however, that one of the main concerns of the play is with the arcana which deal with transformation, a view shared by Leah Scragg, who identifies correspondences between Ovid, Lyly's Gallathea and A Midsummer Night's Dream. She first indicates the similarities between elements of plot: the shifts of location in the two plays, moving from a 'daylight world'

to a forested location where confusion and disorder prevail; the governing presence of 'emotional deities', (p.126), whose passions create disorder in the human world but who have an ultimately benign effect; the 'wilful irrationality' of the mortal fathers and father-figures which projects the young into the forest locations; young lovers are victims of a 'mating game that is complicated by cross-affections', (p.126); and the workmen, who face unusual occupations with assurance but incompetence (p.127). It is, however, in the larger thematic issues of the plays that she finds the most striking similarities, observing a predominating concern in them both with a universe in a state of flux, of which the lovers are an example, 'an instance of a pervasive process of metamorphosis' (p.128). [17] This thesis proposes, and the Theatre Set-Up seasons of the play in 1983 and 1995 incorporated into their productions, the idea that this theme of eternal flux underlies the play, the essence of metamorphosis being structured in the alchemical reading of the play, with the four lovers as the elements, (see below in the alchemical analysis of the different sections of the play). I believe that John Lyly encoded his plays with arcana, and that Shakespeare could have had in them, a model for his own similar practice, (see above pp.91-95). Scragg supports her view that Shakespeare drew on the Lyly play in A Midsummer Night's Dream by establishing linguistic similarities between them. Finally, she goes

on to discuss the indebtedness of both authors to Ovid, a writer whose work stands up to alchemical readings.

Harold F. Brooks, introducing the Arden edition of the play, also notes its theme of metamorphosis, which he considers to be adumbrated through the shifts of identity experienced by its characters and embodied in its symbols. For example, he observes that Starveling's impersonation of the moon at V.i.231, represents in its shift of identity for the character and in its representation of one of the play's symbols of change and renewal, the theme of metamorphosis introduced through the changing moon imagery at the beginning of the play. [18]

In his introduction to the New Cambridge edition of the play, R.A. Foakes comments on the pervading theme of transformation in the play, which he claims transforms even its indirect sources and analogues. [19]

STORY [20]

1. First Section

Duke Theseus of Athens has led a war against the Amazon warrior-women, defeated them, taken captive their Queen Hippolyta with whom he subsequently has fallen in love and whom he is now about to marry. The play opens with his impatient complaint of the four days he must wait until

the wedding:

> Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
> Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
> Another moon: but O, methinks, how slow
> This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires,
> Like to a step-dame or a dowager
> Long withering out a young man's revenue. (I.1.1-5)

To Hippolyta's comforting response that the time will soon pass, signalled by the new moon, Theseus authorises wedding merriment and pledges to Hippolyta that his marriage to her will be pleasantly contrasted to his violent courtship:

> Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
> And won thy love doing thee injuries;
> But I will wed thee in another key,
> With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling. (I.1.16-19)

Paul N. Siegel, commenting in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and the Wedding Guests on the nature of the play as an epithalamium, notes the introduction of this theme at the very beginning of the play. He posits that the composure of Theseus and Hippolyta might have been intended as a compliment for the couple for whom the play was being presented as a wedding entertainment, providing a flattering contrast with the 'fond pageant' of the other lovers. [21]

To the court of Theseus comes Aegeus, demanding that the Duke support him in implementing a law of Athens that condemns a girl to death or to single life if she does not marry the man of her father's choice. Aegeus insists that his daughter Hermia should not marry the man she loves,

Lysander, but another Athenian, Demetrius, athough he was previously betrothed to Hermia's friend, Helena. He accuses Lysander of a false courtship of Hermia:

> Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
> With faining voice verses of feigning love,
> And stol'n the impression of her fantasy. (I.i.30-32)

Theseus advises Hermia to obey her father, of whom she is but an imprint:

> To you your father should be as a god:
> One that compos'd your beauties, yea, and one
> To whom you are but as a form in wax
> By him imprinted, and within his power
> To leave the figure, or disfigure it. (I.1.47-51)

Calderwood comments on the patristic system that regards a mother as only the wax upon which the father imprints the child. Hermia, as she is a woman, should become, in this imaging of the female role in society, but as wax herself, carrying the imprint of her father's wishes (pp.7-9).

Hermia, not complying with this convention, pleads that Lysander is as worthy a gentleman as Demetrius and dares to appeal to Theseus for knowledge of the state's punishment for her disobedience to her father's will. Theseus tells her the terms of the law:

> Either to die the death, or to abjure
> For ever the society of men (I.1.65-66).

He recommends her compliance to her father's dictates rather than the state of nun-hood which he presumes she would choose rather than death:

> Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires,
> Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
> Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,

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You can endure the livery of a nun (I.1.67-70).

He questions not only her ability to remain a virgin all her life, but the validity of the principle of eternal virginity itself:

> For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
> To live a barren sister all your life,
> Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
> Thrice blessed they that master so their blood
> To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
> But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd
> Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
> Grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness
> (I.1.71-78).

Hermia declares her willingness to remain a virgin rather than be forced into a union with Demetrius. Theseus, obliged to uphold the law in supporting Aegeus, allows her the four days' period until his wedding to give her final decision on the three options open to her, to marry Demetrius, be executed, or become a nun.:

> Upon that day either prepare to die
> For disobedience to your father's will,
> Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,
> Or on Diana's altar to protest,
> For aye, austerity and single life (I.1.86-90).

Lysander pleads to Theseus against the harshness of the sentence, claiming the rightness of his union with Hermia: in his equality with Demetrius in terms of status and fortune and moral superiority in terms of Hermia's love for him and Demetrius' unethical treatment of Helena. He points out the extreme unhappiness inflicted upon Helena by Demetrius's neglected courtship of her:

> Demetrius I'll avouch it to his head,
> Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
> And won her soul: and she, sweet lady, dotes,
> Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,

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Upon this spotted and inconstant man (I.1.106-110). Theseus allows these points, and condemns Demetrius for his behaviour towards Helena, but he re-affirms the necessity of upholding the law, 'Which by no means we may extenuate' (I.1. 120). Turning to the obviously concerned Hippolyta with the re-assuring words, 'Come, my Hippolyta; what cheer, my love?' (I.1.120), he collects her, and marshals Demetrius and Egeus away from the scene with an order which flatters them in his request for their participation in his wedding arrangements:

> Demetrius and Egeus, go along;
> I must employ you in some business
> Against our nuptial, and confer with you
> Of something nearly that concerns yourselves
> (I.1.122-126).

1.a. Alchemy

The alchemy represented by the allegory of this play does not, as in The Comedy of Errors, incorporate the rigid system of Ripley's twelve-stage process, but is certainly divided into four stages (as signified by the 1983 stage production, see below p.495). Separate alchemic processes are experienced by Hermia, Demetrius and Bottom combined with Titania, these all being contained within the frame of an implied cycle of alchemy successfully completed by Theseus and Hippolyta before the play opens. I include in the following long paragraph the explanation of alchemy that headed the alchemical analysis of the play in the 1995 programme notes, because, although

it reflects material written above in Chapter Five, it relates to the specific notes given to cast and audience for this production.

Alchemy was a practice wherein it was believed that due to a correspondence between all aspects of creation, transformation in a person's psyche and in the moral state of mankind could be effected by working with chemicals to change lead into gold. A 'base matter' (sometimes called a toad, or earth, or a serpent) would be processed by re-combining its constituent elements (called 'turning the wheel of the elements'), until its 'divinity', its distilled quintessence, (called 'The Philosopher's Stone' and considered to be synonymous with Christ) emerged and could 'turn lead into gold' (often symbolising humanity 'redeemed' by Christ or inspired by Divinity to goodness). This was sometimes known as finding the jewel in the brow of the toad. The alchemy would be carried out in a hermetically-sealed vessel (called the 'vase of Hermes') which was placed in a furnace, and the application of different chemicals to the 'base matter', would separate, in the violent black stage) its 'body', (in its dramatic form a woman was the 'soul' of man who was the 'body', and vice versa) from its 'soul', which would 'ascend' to collect astral influences from the 'heavens', (in the white stage), purge the body by heating, (trial by fire), washing, (trial by water), until it was fit to be re-united to its 'spirit' (in the red stage), and the

resulting 'philosopher's stone' (a red-purple powder) be multiplied, and projected on to 'lead' to create the gold. 22

Theseus and Hippolyta present in their own situation a successfully-completed cycle of alchemy. The male-female polarity which alchemists thought necessary to provide the process with energy, is symbolised by the violent war that has occurred between them, and their marriage represents an evolved, harmonious balance of polarities. The poise that Theseus exhibits throughout the play derives from his having 'come through' all the trials others suffer. Young notes that the theme of change is introduced into the play as Theseus and Hippolyta await the changing moon (p.155)

A new alchemical process is begun with the case brought by Aegeus against his daughter. Greek sources of the names of the lovers indicate their significance as the 'elements' of which the substance of the alchemy consists: fire in 'Helen', (torch of reeds); air in 'Hermia', (female of Hermes - the Greek for Mercury, whose element was air); water, in 'Lysander' (from the chemical loosening as in catalyst- hence the liquid vitriol and water); earth in 'Demetrius', (son of 'Demeter', earth-goddess) [23] The four lovers also have duplicate alchemical functions: Demetrius as earth and the 'spotted and inconstant' toad, is the main base matter which must be transformed; Helena will also become the furnace fire

of the process; Lysander the cleansing water; Hermia contains the alchemy within her situation (as in the 'vase of Hermes').

Young notes that Theseus points out the alternatives to Hermia in terms of the static life of a nun and the changing, fruitful world of a married woman, 'the rose 'distill'd', existing in a world of change and procreation' (p.155).

The problem for the lovers, and the fault which must be alchemically transformed by a process imposed upon them, is within themselves, although it is easy to blame Hermia's father and the law of Athens. In Comic Transformations in Shakespeare, Ruth Nevo observes that even if customs were different in Athens, and women were allowed to marry whom they pleased, the situation among these four lovers would not be solved due to the imbalance of their love affairs:

> Theseus adopts the patriarchal view, naturally enough. But suppose...the young people had been left to choose their own mates? This procedure would not have solved the problem any more satisfactorily than the first, since the predicament we are asked to take in consists precisely of the asymmetry in the feelings of these four young people.[24]

She defines this fault as wanting what their rival has (p.99).

1.b. Celtic

Although the play is set in Athens, many of its features and characters are British. The fairies are British,

characteristic of the 'Old Religion', which finds spirits in nature and in all aspects of domestic life. It continues to be practised now as a form of Paganism, the remnants of its domestic character still also with us in 'Bless this House' pictorial invocations. When the play was written, in the time of Queen Elizabeth I, belief in the supernatural in nature was prevalent and not considered to be incompatible with Christianity.

Theseus refers to the slow waning of the moon. He is waiting impatiently for the time of the new moon and his scheduled wedding. This is seen to be applied later to Titania (whose name means moon), who is disrupting nature by retaining the Indian boy and her mothering full-moonphase which wanes so long that the new moon cannot appear 'like to a silver bow new-bent in Heaven'.

Purdon considers that the dominant myth of the play embodies the contemporary motif of Queen Elizabeth I as Diana as the moon. He examines each different use of the play's moon references in the light of this theory (pp.171-204).

1.c. Christianity and Theurgy

In this chapter the analysis of Christianity and theurgy is combined as I consider the deepest secret of the play's arcana to lie in their symbiosis recorded at 10.c. In White Magic and English Renaissance Drama, David Woodman comments on the connections between these two

mysteries, linking the beneficent healing effect of Christ's ministry with white magic, and his resistance to the temptation by Satan in the wilderness with his rejection of black magic:

> Through his wonder-working and healing, the figure of Christ appears as the legendary white magician par excellence. In the New Testament Christ resists Satan's temptation to perform black magical tricks as a show of power. [25]

He describes how white magicians modelled the ethics of their practices on Christ's miraculous acts of healing:

> His miracles, however, may be associated with benevolent feats considered magical in later ages. Quite possibly, white magicians saw their own healing powers, though hardly equivalent, as having a goal similar to Christ's (p.43).

Orthodox Christianity informs the moral outcome of the play in spite of the ancient Greek setting. However, the woods subvert orthodoxy and present their own mystic forces. Theurgy takes initiates into its mysteries deep into the heart of a labyrinth, providing them with spiritual guides which lead them through trials including an experience of simulated death, until they are fit to have contact with the divine at the centre of the labyrinth. Then they return to the outer world, giving to others the benefits of their experience. Often Theurgy has addressed the issue of the identity and function of Christ outside his role familiar to us in his incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth.

Duke Theseus is bound to implement a harsh primitive law which gives little scope for mercy. That he would

like to be merciful to Hermia is indicated by his skilful ruse in contriving to leave her alone with her lover while he diverts Egeus and Demetrius. Theseus himself would have undergone a mystery initiation, like all high-born Athenians, in the rites of Eleusis and he presents us with the model of a graduate, an 'adept'.

The reading of the four lovers as the four elements is as important to the reading of the level of theurgy in the play as to its alchemical analysis. Caitlin and John Matthews write of the necessity for neophytes to master the elemental qualities within themselves:

> Early training in initiation to mysteries requires acquaintance and mastery of the elemental qualities within the student. Fire, Water, Earth, and Air is the four-square basis of magical competence, and without a complete understanding of the elements within the self the student will be as the Sorcerer's Apprentice (who could not control the element of water in inner or outer capacity). [26]

1.d. Platonism

The analysis of the Platonic reading of the play follows the material in Chapter Six as mediated by John Vyvyan, as that is how it was presented to the Theatre Set-Up actors and audience in the 1995 production of the play. The material in this form had a considerable impact on the actors, who found it easy to understand, illuminating, and extremely useful to their understanding of their characters and the plot. I also include the explanation of Platonism given in the programme notes at the head of

the column which analyses the Platonic reading in the play, as that presents the key to the particular interpretation upon which the production was based. I have, however, changed the term 'neo-Platonism' to 'Renaissance Platonism' due to the shift in my own perceptions since that time of what I consider to be the inaccuracies of that term (see above, Chapter Six).

Renaissance Platonism was a re-appraisal made by thinkers of Shakespeare's time of the ideas of Plato and other ancient philosophers, often reconciling them with Christian beliefs. Central to the philosophy was the concept of Platonic love, the idea of Divine Love which was thought to have inspired creation and made order out of chaos. This Divine Love is supposed to reside in all humans, so that 'love on earth is a recognition between companion souls, who may at last perceive in one another, if they have true love-sight, the beauty of their divine self-nature'. [27] If companion souls unite 'they will achieve more than their own happiness; for through them a part of 'celestial harmony' will be realized on earth' [28]

The setting of the play in Athens, the home of Plato, might indicate a tribute to this philosophy. The priest of Isis, Apuleius, living in the second century A.D. and initiated at Eleusis, studied Platonic philosophy at Athens. In his famous book The Golden Ass, he describes his pretended transformation into an ass in a story which can be said to be an allegory of all the secret levels of

meaning in this play.

Hermia's allegiance to her love in whom she recognises her companion soul, rather than to the law of the land and filial duty, is justified in the light of this philosophy. At the beginning of the play we see two sets of possible companion souls, Hermia and Lysander and Helena and Demetrius. Demetrius either does not recognise his predestined partner or is just inconstant, and constancy is an important feature of this kind of love. [29]

2. Second Section

Left alone, the lovers Lysander and Hermia lament their fate, Lysander observing that true love was always obstructed:

> Ay me! For aught that I could ever read,
> Could ever hear by tale or history,
> The course of true love never did run smooth
> (I.1.132-134).

Hermia agrees with this, adding to his examples of the crossing of love, and concluding that if fate rules that love must be tried in this way, they should bear their lot with patience:

> If then true lovers have been ever cross'd,
> It stands as an edict in destiny.
> Then let us teach our trial patience,
> Because it is a customary cross,
> As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
> Wishes and tears, (I.1.150-154).

She qualifies the latter accompaniments of love as, 'poor fancy's followers' (I.1.155).

Lysander concurs, but takes avoiding action from the 'sharp Athenian law' (I.1. 162) in suggesting that they should elope through the woods beyond Athens to start a new life in the country of Lysander's rich widowed aunt who regards him as her only son. Hermia pledges, by all the vows that women have kept and men have broken, to meet him the following night in the wood in a place where previously they have, with her friend Helena, now jilted by Demetrius, observed the rites of May.

Helena herself enters, and upon their greeting her, she falls to lamenting Demetrius' love of Hermia, and envying her those qualities which inspire his love:

> O teach me how you look, and with what art
> You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart (I.1.192-193).

Hermia protests that the very discouragement she gives to the courtship of Demetrius seems to further inflame his passions, Helena complaining of the contrast of his attitude to her:

> Hermia: I frown upon him; yet he loves me still.
> Helena: O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!
> Hermia: I give him curses; yet he gives me love.
> Helena: O that my prayers could such affection move! (I.1.194-197).

Hermia comforts Helena by telling her that Demetrius will no longer see her, as she is to elope with Lysander. The two lovers part from each other, and from Helena who bemoans her unhappy state and resolves to alert Demetrius to their escape plot so that she may have an excuse to see

him again and even gain some gratitude from him.

Meanwhile, a group of workmen, Peter Quince, the carpenter, Snug the joiner, Francis Flute, the bellows mender, Snout the tinker, Starveling the tailor, and Bottom the weaver, meet to plan the performance of a play, 'Pyramus and Thisbe', which they intend to offer to Theseus and Hippolyta as entertainment after their wedding feast. Quince has difficulty in allocating the different parts in the play to the artisans, as Bottom wants to perform them all, but Quince finally settles that Bottom should play Pyramus, Flute, Thisbe, Snug, the lion, and the others the parents of Pyramus and Thisbe. In order to avoid being observed by others, Quince and his fellows resolve to meet in the woods to rehearse the following night (I.ii.).

2.a. Alchemy

By jilting Helena, Demetrius has initiated the first 'turn of the wheel' of the elements to be made, in which each is turned into the other to perfect them. Lysander and Hermia's elopement sets this up and Helena puts this into motion by her planned pursuit of Demetrius, who pursues Lysander who seeks to marry Hermia. Thus the sequence occurs of fire-earth-water-air.

Calderwood puzzles over the changing spatial relationships between the lovers, which I analyse as the turning of the alchemic wheel. He perceives them in terms

of diagrams, which he finds so obtrusive that he thinks they obliterate characterisation:

> All of these figures and designs suggest that Shakespeare is less interested in characterisation in this play, at least with respect to the lovers, than with positioning (p.44).

Young observes the development of the theme of change in this section. Hermia and Lysander in their 'duet' on the catastrophes of love, refer to its 'fragility in this unstable world'. Helena wishes to be 'translated' into Hermia and soliloquises on fickleness (p.156). The latter is done with images from nature, implying a world order in this characteristic, thus pre-figuring Oberon and Titania as the 'embodiment of the power of mutation' (p.156).

Shakespeare sometimes laughs at or even subverts the structures he creates, and he here sets up, with the workmen's planned theatrical production of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', a parody of his own alchemical theme.

2.b. Celtic

In planning to escape to the woods, the lovers put themselves into the power of the nature spirits located there. In the city human laws prevail, but in the regions of untamed nature such as the woods, undisturbed spirits hold sway.

The workmen also will enter this magical sphere.

2.c. Christianity and Theurgy

Hermia adopts a Christian sense of martyrdom in facing the trial of her love for Lysander, 'Then let us teach our trial patience,/ Because it is a customary cross'.

Woods and forests can be paradigms for labyrinths of theurgy. In these scenes the lovers are set to enter the labyrinth of the woods as neophytes of theurgy. Helena's action in betraying Hermia and Lysander to Demetrius becomes less shameful and illogical in this context, as she, and particularly Demetrius, (whose inconstancy in love and selfish pursuit of Hermia demonstrate his need to be transformed), will also become neophytes.

The workmen prepare to enter the labyrinth of the woods but it is unlikely that they will be neophytes. It is Shakespeare's skill to prepare to involve them in a metaphor of the deepest secret of theurgy.

2.d. Platonism

Ficino relates that the mortal body can disguise the soul so that 'immortal companions do not always recognize each other when they meet on earth.' [30] Vyvyan explains that constancy in love brings self-knowledge, a difficult thing to attain, 'Love-sight', the recognition of one's companion soul:

> is supposed to pierce the disguise and reveal true identity, there is a necessary link between self-knowledge and love, and so we may readily understand the Shakespearean proposition that the way to the one is perfect constancy to the other. But this is far

> from easy: and therefore, 'The course of true love never did run smooth.'[30]

The tests of constancy have begun before the play with Helena and Hermia tried, tested and passed.[31] Helena displays her understanding of the difference between true love and its imitation, fancy, and the need for true love to be tested, when she names the superficial attributes of love as, 'poor fancy's followers' (I.1.155).[32]

Calderwood regards the closeness of the relationship between Hermia and Helena, later defined more precisely by Helena at II.ii.204-214 as signifying Plato's idea of the divided soul described by Ficino:

> So it seems to have been with Helena and Hermia. who in their 'ancient love' formed two halves of a single self that was subsequently divided, not by Zeus but by the distracting appearance of Lysander and Demetrius, to whom they transferred their love, as if seeking in displaced form the lost half that would make them complete again (p.17).

Helena defines the nature of love as she understands it: it looks with a 'mind' that does not respond to the real evidence of the senses. Thus Demetrius, now loving Hermia, does not perceive, as other people do, that she is as beautiful as Hermia is.

Kermode considers that the main theme of the play concerns the ill effects of what Plato called false love, the doting or 'Love-fancy as bred in the eye,' and that the theme is introduced in this scene through Helena's speech (p.115). He detects this theme also in the

projected performance of Pyramus and Thisbe (which illustrates 'the disastrous end of doting, of love brought to confusion') by Quince and his fellows. He considers that this is treated by Shakespeare in a manner which exemplifies the principles of this thesis, in giving, 'farcical treatment to an important thematic element' (p.115).

3. Third Section

In the woods where Hermia and Lysander will meet to elope, another conflict is revealed. The King and Queen of the fairies, Oberon and Titania, are disrupting nature itself in causing unseasonable weather by quarrelling over the possession of a little Indian changeling boy. Puck, (sometimes called Robin Goodfellow), in this play henchman to Oberon, discusses this and his own typical mischievous deeds with a fairy, attendant upon Titania.

Oberon and Titania, meeting by chance, confront each other in the woods, Titania refusing to yield the boy up to Oberon to be his henchman, and they taunt each other with infidelities. It would appear that Titania has been lover to Theseus, leading him from one human affair to another, and that Oberon has been enamoured of Hippolyta. Titania will not yield the Indian boy to Oberon as his mother, who had been her fond companion, and a votress with Titania in a religious order in India, died giving him birth (II,.1.1-145).

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In both the 1983 and 1995 Theatre Set-Up productions of the play, the parts of Oberon and Titania were doubled with Theseus and Hippolyta by two actors, thus creating the 'anamorphic' effect, that Calderwood detects in the different perspectives presented by variant aspects of basically the same personages in contrasting characterisations and locations (pp.51-54).

3.a. Alchemy

All wishing to find the philosopher's stone had to enter a dark abyss - either the depths of the sea or a forest. The Duke Theseus made this journey in legend to the depths of the ocean where he was rescued from a rock on to which he had grown. Here the 'abyss' is represented by the woods. Ruth Nevo comments on the psychological significance of the woods:

> Shakespeare's moonlit wood, alive with trolls, grotesques and ambivalence is a potent symbol for the creative subconscious (p.106).

All things in alchemy took place in the natural orbits of 'Sol', the sun, and 'Luna', the moon, here represented by Oberon and Titania.

The Philosopher's Stone was sometimes referred to as an orphan, often black, hence the Indian boy, wanted, as was the goal of alchemy, by everybody. This metaphor might solve the problem, posed in Unconformities in Shakespeare's Early Comedies by Kristian Smidt, of the seeming non-presence in the play of the Indian boy,

although he is the pivot of the quarrel between Oberon and Titania (p.123). [33]

3.b. Celtic

The essence of the 'Old Religion' is captured in the persons of Oberon and Titania and their situation. The events of the play take place on May day eve, the Celtic 'Beltane' sacred to a female deity in her 'bright aspect' as mistress of wild creatures and a male deity as 'Lord of the Forest', (these appear in our culture as 'Queen of the May' and 'The Green Man'). They are, as British fairies, 'heroic, trooping' fairies, possibly descended from gods, statuesque, amorous, vengeful, with power to manipulate nature and give fertility to mortals (with whom they have love affairs).

In Folk-Lore of Shakespeare, T.F. Thiselton Dyer writes that Oberon first appears in the French romance of 'Huon de Bourdeaux' and has the same identity as Elberich, the dwarf king in German legend. This name changed, passing through French into English, into Auberich, then Auberon, before becoming Oberon as King of the fairies in Spenser's Fairy Queen. [34] He attributes the name of Titania as queen of the fairies to Shakespeare's invention, tracing its derivation to Ovid who, in Metamorphoses, iii. 173, uses the name as a synonym for Diana, whose attendant nymphs were also regarded as fairies (p.4).

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Puck, which means 'fairy' or 'devil' in Celtic lore, is an old earth deity and, as Robin Goodfellow, is also a 'hobgoblin' fairy, a guardian spirit of the home (sweeping 'the dust behind the door'). He is capable of shape-changing himself and others, often into horses, is mischievous and misleads travellers. Lewis Spence, in British Fairy Origins: The Genesis and Development of Fairy Legends in British Tradition, discusses the ancestry in British Folk-lore of fairies such as Puck, relating how they were regarded as being rough and hairy. It was upon this evidence that in both 1983 and 1995, we presented Puck as a nuggety earth-creature. [35] Thiselton Dyer also describes how Puck is a figure of British folk-lore, and how Shakespeare reproduces all his traditional characteristics in the speeches by the fairy and himself about his doings. He relates how the name of Puck, an old word for devil, was once given to all fairies. As Puki or Puk, the name still survives as a domestic spirit in Iceland, Friesland and Jutland. In England the mischievous nature of Puck survives in the 'poake' of Worcestershire and in the 'pixey' of Devon, Cornwall and Hampshire. In Ireland a version of the name appears as 'Pooka', and in Wales as 'Pwcca', the latter country being considered to be Shakespeare's source not only of the name of Puck but of his knowledge of the fairies themselves (pp.5-6). Puck's alternative name, Robin Goodfellow, and his reputation as prankster survive from in the 1590 work

of Tarlton's News out of Purgatory. The term 'Hob', is the diminutive form of 'Robin', so that the term, 'Hobgoblin', as used by the fairy at II.i.40, refers to him in this domestic role of doing house-work for those who favour him, for which purpose he always carries a broom. The term 'lob', also applied to him by the fairy, (II.i.16) signifies a mischievous fairy (6-8).

Thiselton Dyer also gives an account of the traditional attributes of fairies as exemplified by Shakespeare. They are beautiful, powerful, immortal, can vanish at will, are generally beneficent to humans, take different forms and can be diminutive (pp.10-14. Their love of music and dancing is legendary and they are 'patrons of cleanliness and propriety' (pp.17-18).

3.c. Christianity and Theurgy

In the woods which present the metaphor of the labyrinth, the forces of nature that will be the unseen guides of the mortals are revealed. Oberon will take the lead as guide and Titania as the female embodiment of nature.

3.d. Platonism

We see the kind of disturbance in cosmic order that occurs when companion souls of the order of Titania and Oberon are in conflict.

4. Fourth Section

When Titania leaves, Oberon plans revenge:

> Well, go thy way; thou shalt not from this grove
> Till I torment thee for this injury (II.1.146-147).

He commands his servant, Puck, to fetch a white pansy flower whose purple centre is a wound made by Cupid's arrow and contains the essence of love. Thus the juice of this flower, applied on anyone's sleeping eyelids, will make them 'madly dote' on the 'next live creature' that is seen (II.1.171-172). Oberon challenges Puck to fetch the herb, before a whale can travel a league, 'Ere the leviathan can swim a league' (II.1.174). Puck responds with the promise that he will circle the earth in forty minutes.

Oberon plots to humiliate and subjugate Titania by using this flower-juice to cause her to fall in love with something vile:

> I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
> And drop the liquor of it in her eyes:
> The next thing then she waking looks upon
> (Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
> On meddling monkey, or on busy ape)
> She shall pursue it with the soul of love (II.1.177-182).

When he has thus humiliated her, he plans to obtain the Indian boy from her.

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4.a. Alchemy

The love-potion which Oberon is planning to use will have the effect of the transforming chemical vitriol (often symbolised as a green lion). Oberon is using it to sexually separate his wife Titania from him, thus initiating another alchemical process which will result in his accomplishment of the Philosopher's Stone as the Indian boy.

The colour-change of the flower from white to purple is alchemically significant, representing alchemy's progress from the white stage to the red. The whale is also an alchemic symbol, often representing the base matter of the process.

Young notes that it is reasonable that the fairies, as extensions of mutable nature, should shift and change (p.156).

4.b. Celtic

Here we see Puck being engaged in the action of the play and demonstrating some of his mythical powers, in contrast to his more domestic aspect as Robin Goodfellow, revealed earlier in the scene. The nature of Oberon is demonstrated. He is potent and vengeful.

4.c. Christianity and Theurgy

Oberon unwittingly initiates, in his plan for revenge,

Titania's participation in a wider issue reflecting the core belief linking Christ with Western theurgy.

4.d. Platonism

Constancy tests are also unwittingly set up for the lovers by Oberon through what will become Puck's future misuse of Cupid's flower. [36]

Kermode identifies Puck's identity as synonymous with blind Cupid's at this stage in the action. He observes that the characteristics of randomness and madness distinguish the love-potion (p.116). The effects of this drug will align the practice of love in the play with Platonic principles.

5. Fifth Section

Demetrius enters, pursued by the infatuated Helena. Helena protests, when Demetrius demands her leave him alone, that he draws her as an adamant draws iron although her heart is 'true as steel' (II.1.195-198). He denies attracting her, denying any love of her:

> Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
> Or rather do I not in plainest truth
> Tell you I do not, nor I cannot love you? (II.1.199-201).

She replies that she is as his dog, and would welcome being treated as such:

> And even for that do I love you the more.
> I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
> The more you beat me, I will fawn on you.

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> 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 (II.1.202-207).

He accuses her of immodesty in coming into the woods alone with him, but she protests that they are not alone, as for her, he is 'all the world' (II.1.224). He threatens to leave her to the mercy of the wild beasts, but she protests that even the wildest of them has not such a cruel heart as he. She accuses him of distorting the natural process of the man pursuing the woman:

> Run when you will; the story shall be chang'd:
> Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
> The dove pursues the griffin, the mild hind
> Makes speed to catch the tiger - bootless speed,
> When cowardice pursues and valour flies! (II.i.230-234).

Demetrius escapes from her and she follows, declaring her willingness to die at his hands.

Oberon, sympathetic to Helena, decides to use the flower love-potion to make Demetrius fall in love with her:

> Fare thee well, nymph; ere he do leave this grove
> Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love
> (II.1.245-246).

When Puck returns with the flower, Oberon relishes the prospect of anointing Titania's eyes with it. He speaks of the bank, overgrown with wildflowers, where Titania sleeps:

> And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin
> Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in (II.1.255-256).

Unaware that there is more that one Athenian couple in the woods, Oberon commands Puck to put some of the flower's

love-juice on the eyes of an Athenian youth whom he has seen in the wood, who is loved by a sweet lady whom he disdains.

5.a. Alchemy

The 'soul' of the alchemical process was often symbolised as a dog. When Demetrius as 'body', the compound or base matter which must be alchemically transformed enters the wood, his 'soul', as Helena, is following him. This is indicated by her words, 'I am your spaniel'. When Demetrius casts her from him he is separating himself from his soul and thus initiating his alchemical processing.

The snake is one of alchemy's symbols for base matter, here suggested in the reference to the snake's skin that enwraps Titania as she sleeps.

By not giving Puck sufficiently precise instructions in the dispensing of the love-potion, Oberon also unwittingly sets up another alchemical process which will take effect upon Hermia.

5.b. Celtic

The mischief that could be done with mis-applied love-potions had their firm place in Celtic legendry, as in the story of Tristan and Isolde, when a love-potion, intended for another purpose, was drunk by the protagonists, and thus the tragedy of Tristan and Isolde's illicit love begun.

5.c. Christianity and Theurgy

Oberon takes his place as guide of the lovers who have entered the labyrinth. That there is an even higher power involved who is directing the action, is indicated by Oberon's not knowing of the second couple in the woods. This indirectly causes the confusion which leads to the wrongful anointing of Lysander's eyes, which in turn leads to the trials that the lovers undergo as neophytes, and to their ultimate improvement as initiates.

In modern spiritualist movements, based on learning and principles inherited from past esoteric traditions, the entity directing Oberon would be known as a 'Master', a being from a higher spiritual plane than a spiritual guide. Religious leaders such as Christ, Buddha and Lao Tzu, (the writer of the sacred Chinese text, The Book of Lao Tzu) are categorized as 'Masters' [37]

5.d. Platonism

If Demetrius is indeed her soul companion, Helena is justified in pursuing him. [38] She reinforces this idea with the statement that to her, he is all the world, an echo of the Platonic concept of the microcosm of the person linked to the macrocosm of God through love. For the situation between them to be redeemed, Demetrius will need to recognise her as his soul's companion. The love-juice from Cupid's flower will be able to effect that.

The inadequate directions given to Puck will cause

him to mis-apply the love-juice, thus creating an erroneous love which will be offered to her by Lysander, her friend's soul companion. Thus here the action is initiated that will also test the love of Lysander and Hermia.

6. Sixth Section

Titania's attendants sing her to sleep with a lullaby which prohibits snakes, hedghogs, newts, blind-worms, spiders, beetles, worms and snails from coming near her. The chorus of this song enjoins Philomel as nightingale, to sing with them. She was the mythic character recorded in Ovid as metamorphosed into a bird after being raped and mutilated by Tereus, her sister's husband. [39]

When Titania is asleep and alone, Oberon puts the love-potion on her eyes, willing that when she awakes she will love something hideous:

> When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.
> Wake when some vile thing is near (II.11.32-33).

Lysander and Hermia, lost in the woods, enter and decide to rest for the night. When Lysander goes to lie beside Hermia she insists that modesty dictates that Lysander 'lie farther off' from her. Puck, searching through the forest for the Athenian youth whose eyes he must anoint with the love-potion, sees Lysander sleeping at such a distance from Hermia that it seems that he

disdains her, and thus mistaking him for Demetrius, anoints his eyes.

Helena enters with Demetrius who casts her off, leaving her alone in the dangerous woods. She discovers the sleeping Lysander and wakes him up. The love-potion takes effect and he declares undying love to Helena:

> Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
> That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart
> (II.ii.103-105)

He scorns the sleeping Hermia, declaring the transfer of his affections to Helena:

> Not Hermia, but Helena I love:
> Who will not change a raven for a dove?
> (II.ii.112-113)

Helena naturally thinks that he is mocking her and runs away, Lysander pursuing her, leaving the sleeping Hermia alone. Hermia awakes, terrified by a dream in which a serpent eats her heart while Lysander watches smilingly. She discovers that he has gone and leaves, looking for him.

6.a. <u>Alchemy</u>

The Titania-Oberon alchemy is begun, with Titania as the base-matter suggested by the snake-skin in which she is wrapped, the snakes that are commanded to keep away from her while she sleeps, and the reference to the transmuted Philomel. There is a more sinister resonance in the use the name of Philomel in the lullaby. Oberon is about to enact a species of abuse upon his wife, akin to that of

Tereus upon Philomel, but the effect will be beneficial. This imitates the process of alchemy, which incorporates violence to effect ultimate good.

Puck now inadvertently initiates a reverse turn of the wheel of the elements in causing Lysander to fall in love with Helena. Lysander, referring to her fairness, calls her a 'dove' and the darker Hermia a 'raven'. These terms also symbolised the white and black stages of alchemy. Thus when he says 'Who will not change a raven for a dove?' he also implies this alchemical progression.

In the separation of Lysander from Hermia, Hermia enters an alchemical process. That she is the 'base matter', the 'body' of the process is indicated by her dream of the serpent eating her heart. Lysander will later refer to this when he threatens to shake her from him 'like a serpent'.

Waller cites the work of Norman N. Holland on the psychological import of Hermia's dream. Holland first takes a wry look at what would be a kind of 'clinical study', with the 'classic' Freudian interpretation of the serpent as a symbol of a phallus, representing the sexual Lysander she demanded should lie further off, contrasting with the genial, courteous lover who smiles as she is eaten by the serpent. He posits that this interpretation would analyse that in her dream she is trying to reconcile these two opposites, having overheard through her sleep, the scenario of Puck's anointing of Lysander's eyes,

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Helena's entrance and Lysander falling in love with and pursuit of her. In Holland's amused 'classical' psychological interpretation, the serpent could take on a complex symbolism, its crawling suggesting repulsion in an excremental metaphor and emphasising the sexual imagery:

> Crawling suggests a desire for possession almost disembodied from the human, a desire that in life she has kept within 'humane modesty' but which in her dream she feels as overpowering (p.81).

Furthermore, Holland posits that such an analysis would diagnose that the mouth imagery, in the eating motion of the dreamt serpent and the smile of Lysander is significant, representing the desire for possession 'taking away a person's essence' (p.81). He goes on to reason that she displays a duality in her nature in which she always finds alternatives to given situations, and that in her dream the adolescent Hermia realises that she must unify her opposite perceptions of Lysander and accept the sexual version. Throughout all of this 'classic' interpretation, Holland detects a shadowy figure with whom Hermia is working out a relationship through Lysander: Hermia's mother. This interpretation, although presented smilingly by Holland, is typical of the sort of analyses to which Shakespeare's plays are subjected when the images are not read in terms of the symbols they represent within the metaphors of the arcana in the plays. The Theatre Set-Up actors have appreciated the understanding of the allegories which have removed the need for finding the

alternative kinds of psychological interpretations which Holland poses. I accept that alchemy adumbrates psychological symbolism and that this is likely to be applicable in this scene, and that it could embrace some of these 'classic' psychological views posed by Holland, but I think, as I think he does, that they go beyond the bounds of Shakespeare's intentions and would be confusing for an actress to incorporate in her profile of Hermia's characterisation.

This he also implies in classifying this analysis as a dated kind of psychoanalytic criticism, taking a second view of the dream as revealing a core of cruelty in the play. His next approach takes account of the feelings of the reader or audience of the play, using 'the text of the play or dream as an object to establish a self-structuring relation' (p.85). It takes account of the above analyses but from a contemporary perspective, rejecting for example that love has the right of exclusive possession, but incorporating that as it is Holland's favoured attitude in a relationship (88-89). The resultant Holland psychological analysis of Hermia's dream retains the basic snake sex symbolism as representing physical possession of her, adds the element of cruelty in Lysander's smile and categorises the whole as a nightmare, too awful to be finished (89-90).[40]

James A. S. McPeek, in The Psyche Myth and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' agrees with other critics in

considering that the story of Psyche as told by Apuleius in The Golden Ass, provides the matrix for much of the imagery in the play. He notes the similarity of the stories of Psyche and Hermia, observing that serpent imagery features in both scenarios, further commenting upon its constant use by Shakespeare throughout his plays.[41] I include the observations of other critics who attribute features in this play to source material in Apuleius in categories below relating also to theurgy and Platonism, in the belief that this demonstrates that Shakespeare had an example of polysemous encoding of arcana in The Golden Ass.

6.b. Celtic

Oberon is seen to take malicious but not harmful vengeance on Titania. He functions as a benevolent nature-spirit in his wish to assist Helena. In the wrong application of the love-potion, Puck makes a characteristic mistake which, although unintentional, he later relishes for the amusement it gives him.

6.c. Christianity and Theurgy

Lysander and Hermia are seen lost within the labyrinth. Puck as the instrument of Oberon also functions as guide. He will create the trials and then resolve them. Hermia enters the nadir of her initiation. Before this she had

Lysander's support, now she must face the essential solitude of the neophyte.

6.d. Platonism

From Lysander's reaction to Helena when he wakes up under the spell of the love-juice on his eyes we understand its properties. It gives him the instant power to perceive Helena's inner divinity which he indicates with the lines, 'Transparent Helena, nature shows art/ That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.' Vyvyan says of this revelation, 'What has been revealed is a shimmer of divinity, like sunlight under water' (p.86). The drug thus short-cuts the usual process of the hard work the soul usually has to put in to acquire this ability.

7. Seventh Section

The workmen meet in the woods to rehearse their play. They evolve stage conventions to represent aspects of the play they find difficult: the moon which must shine when Pyramus and Thisbe meet, will be represented by a man who carries a thorn-bush, a lantern, and dog; the wall will be represented by a man with 'some plaster, or some loam, or some roughcast about him' (III.1.64-66), and who will hold up his fingers to present the cranny through which the lovers can speak; and the lion, who might otherwise be thought to terrify the ladies, will identify himself to them as Snug the joiner. They begin their rehearsal.

Puck discovers them, and noticing that they are near the sleeping Titania, uses his power to transform the leading actor, Bottom, giving him an ass's head. This terrifies his fellow actors so that they flee, Puck in pursuit.

Titania awakes and falls in love with the transformed Bottom, declaring her love to him:

> Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;
> So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
> And thy fair virtue's force doth move me
> On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.
> (III.1.133-136)

Bottom, unphased by the situation he finds himself in, jests with her attendant fairies and submits to Titania's attentions:

> And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
> That thou shalt like an airy spirit go (III.1.153-154).

Titania, with her attendant fairies, leads him to her bower.

Miller comments that the cause of Bottom's equanimity is his reduction of all things to the same level. He considers that he lacks perception of the ambiguities and complexities of events and people (pp.260-261).

7.a. Alchemy

Puck makes Bottom enter the alchemy of the play. The name 'Bottom' (which Shakespeare is assumed to have taken from a number of sources), often indicated the bottom rung of a ladder which scaled grading metals and their associated

planets, from lead (associated with the planet Saturn at whose revels called 'Saturnalias' asses' heads were worn) to gold and its associated sun. As 'lead' Bottom is also the base-matter of an alchemical process. Titania, in hoping to 'purge his mortal grossness' seems to quote directly from George Ripley's Compound of Alchemy.

Young comments that the unlikely transformations Bottom wishes to attain, into a lover, a tyrant, heroine or lion, which he could never attain by his own efforts, are surpassed, though the agency of Puck, as he is metamorphosed into part-ass, enamoured of the queen of the fairies (p.157).

Puck, leading (and misleading) the mortals through the woods, applying the love-potion and its antidote to their eyes and effecting Bottom's transformation, functions as the agent of Alchemy, Mercury. In the psychological aspect of alchemy he is the 'psychopomp', leading the souls through their Hell, like Virgil in Dante's Inferno.

7.b. Celtic

Peter Quince, improvising stage areas in the woodland clearing where the workmen are to rehearse, (much in the same way that Theatre Set-Up decides upon their theatre spaces when they play in non-theatre settings), selects a hawthorn brake to be their tiring house, their green room. (In fact at Forty Hall, Enfield, Theatre Set-Up were able

to use a hawthorn brake whose branches, reaching down to the ground in a circle around the tree created a screened-off area from the sight of the public, as the quick-change dressing room stage right, until the council trimmed it back to stop the local youths from using it as a rallying point for devastating the grounds). In The Merlin Tarot, R.J. Stewart names the Celtic significance of the tree, explaining that it was regarded as a tree of sacrifice, associated with the Triple Goddess as crone, due to its nature, as it 'offers blossoms of great purity and beauty upon hard, painful, thorny branches'. He describes how it is known as a 'primal Tree of Life or Tree of all Worlds'.42

Puck exercises his shape-changing power in transforming Bottom and himself and takes delight in his mischief-making. He characteristically misleads the workmen through the woods.

The shape of ass/man given to Bottom was not extraordinary within Celtic lore which enjoyed the idea of mixed creatures and species, reflected in many of their artifacts.

In an understanding of a more mundane aspect of Celtic lore, Bottom instantly recognises Titania's attendant fairies as British herbal medicines. The significance of Titania's attendant fairies as representatives of folk medicine is expounded by Lou Agnes Reynolds and Paul Sawyer in Folk Medicine and the Four

Fairies of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. They explain that Bottom's greetings to Peaseblossom and Mustardseed refer to the Elizabethan medicinal uses of the pea and mustard plants, and that he suggests making use of Cobweb as bandaging for a small cut, but he tactfully does not refer to moth in this context as the medicinal uses of moths required their deaths. [43]

Jean Richer writes, in Prestiges De La Lune et Damnation Par Les Etoiles: Dans Le Theatre De Shakespeare, that he considers the play to be a sun-moon allegory and that the union of Titania and Bottom represents the unity of mankind with nature, like a marriage of earth with air or heaven. He reasons, that in this context, the ass, as well as symbolising the earthiness that is the essence of Bottom's nature, also represents the sun as it was pictured in ancient mythological representations, as the true symbol of the sun, only later to be replaced by the lion, and that resonances of this might have permeated the western mythologies that informed Shakespeare. [44]

7.c. Christianity and Theurgy

A parody of trials in the labyrinth is presented by Puck's mischievous pursuit of the workmen. Bottom shows that he is equal to anything, being totally un-phased by his inclusion in the fairy world. He enters his extraordinary role with aplomb.

Alexander Leggatt comments on the quality of

innocence in the comic dislocation of logic in the scene between Titania and Bottom, remarking that the reaction of neither character is appropriate to the audience's perception of them, yet such is the conviction with which each responds to the other that no parody seems evident. [45]

In Shakespeare's Favorite Novel: A study of The Golden Asse As Prime Source, J. J. M. Tobin points out the links between Shakespeare's play at this point and the book of Apuleius, not only in the scenario featuring a man being transformed into an ass, but in the similarity between Titania's courtship of Bottom and the love-making of Lucius transformed into an ass by a matron of Corinth. [46] He also notes the likeness of Puck to Cupid in their roles of carrying out vengeance on behalf of their superiors, Puck relating to Oberon as Cupid does to Venus (pp. 34-35). This possible link of the play to the work of Apuleius as source material is important to the theurgic analysis of the play, as The Golden Ass can be read as an allegory of initiation and Apuleius himself became a priest of the rites of Isis. Apuleius wrote his work as if he were the hero, turned into an ass for improper curiosity into magic arts and thereby forced into a series of trials from which he is redeemed by the goddess Queen Isis, who appears to him in a vision and effects his transformation back to human shape when, during a religious procession in her honour, he is given,

by one of her high priests, a rose-garland to eat. This priest addresses the now-human Lucius, giving an account of his trials in terms of the classic initiatory process:

> You have endured and performed many labours and withstood the buffetings of all the winds of ill luck. Now at last you have put into the harbour of peace and stand before the altar of loving-kindness [47]

Tobin also notes the 'importance of flowers, especially roses in the play and novel' (p.35). The rose, features in many mystic systems as a symbol of immortality. [48]

Robert Hunter West, in The Invisible World: A Study of Pneumatology in Elizabethan Drama, confirms the magical content of The Golden Ass, its myths constantly retold by other magical theorists. [49]

David Ormerod also detects elements in the play which derive from classical mythology relating to theurgy. In 'A Midsummer Night's Dream': The Monster in the Labyrinth, he establishes a link between another episode in the adventures of the legendary Theseus, besides that of his conquest of Hippolyta featured in the play. He poses a similarity between the labyrinth of the woods with its distressed young lovers, and that into which the Cretan young were committed as sacrifice to the man/bull Minotaur which roamed therein until Theseus killed it. He also suggests that Bottom can be compared to the Minotaur, further proposing that to make this connection between all these elements of the play provides a 'holistic' view of it, and neo-Platonic and magical readings. [50] The legend

of Theseus and the Minotaur in the labyrinth is a paradigm for the initiation of a neophyte in theurgy (see above p.172). Ormerod also suggests parallels between the play's themes and The Golden Ass, referring the reader to Apuleius references to the bestial passion of the Cretan Parsiphae for the Cretan bull with the resulting birth of the Minotaur.

7.d. Platonism

Titania's reaction to the drug is the same as Lysander's: she instantly perceives, through the 'mortal grossness' that she later identifies in Bottom, the 'virtue' that is his divine essence as she says to him:

> And thy fair virtue's force doth move me
> On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.
> (III.1.135-136)) [51]

Kermode notes the Platonic implications of The Golden Ass of Apuleius as source material of the Oberon-Bottom love affair. He attributes to this allusion his opinion that the play contains significant allegories:

> On this narrative of Apuleius, for the Renaissance half-hidden in the enveloping commentary of Beroaldus, great superstructures of Platonic and Christian allegory had been raised; and there is every reason to suppose that these mysteries are part of the flesh and bone of A Midsummer Night's Dream (p.117).

By contrast, Jan Kott considers that the relationship is typical of the play's eroticism. For him, Titania illustrates the principle of finding sexual attraction in one's opposite:

> The slender, tender and lyrical Titania longs for animal love. Puck and Oberon call the transformed Bottom a monster. The frail and sweet Titania drags

> the monster to bed, almost by force. This is the lover she wanted and dreamed of...The monstrous ass is being raped by the poetic Titania, while she still keeps on chattering about flowers (p.183).

Jeanne Addison Roberts observes that the Renaissance chain of being, representing a vertical hierarchy from God down through the angels and man to beasts, a view encouraged by Genesis and re-inforced by Aristotle, is made horizontal in this play by Bottom's metamorphosis as part ass, part human. She acknowledges that this is done for comic effect but still considers the effect to be a blurring of the orthodox hierarchy of creation, heralding a concept that the chain must be like a bridge, uniting 'earthly orders of being'. [52] This idea presents an interesting contrast with the metaphors connected with the chain in The Comedy of Errors, (see above pp.356).

8. Eighth Section

The triumphant Puck boasts to Oberon of his success in both causing Titania to fall in love 'with a monster' (III.ii.6), and in anointing the Athenian's eyes. However, his mistaking of Lysander for Demetrius is made obvious by the entry of Hermia attacking Demetrius for the supposed murder of her lover Lysander, who she can not believe would otherwise have left her alone in the woods. She rates the constancy of his love in cosmic proportions:

> The sun was not so true unto the day
> As he to me. Would he have stol'n away
> From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
> This whole earth may be bor'd, and that the moon
> May through the centre creep, and so displease

> Her brother's noon-tide with th'Antipodes.
> (III.ii.50-55)

Demetrius responds to her with corresponding astral imagery, saying that her bright looks are, 'As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere' (III.ii.61). Hermia attacks Demetrius for his supposed treachery:

> Out dog! Out cur! Thou driv'st me past the bounds
> Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?
> Henceforth be never number'd among men! (III.ii.66-67)

Believing Demetrius to have killed Lysander while he was sleeping, she accuses him of serpent-like behaviour:

> Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
> An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
> Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung!
> (III.ii.71-73)

She leaves the hated Demetrius who decides to remain and sleep. Oberon accuses Puck of deliberate mischief-making in turning a true love instead of remedying a false one. Puck is unrepentant, blaming fate, who thus demonstrates men's breaking of their vows:

> Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth,
> A million fail, confounding oath on oath.
> (III.ii.92-93)

Oberon dispatches Puck to find Helena, and anoints Demetrius' eyes with the juice of Cupid's flower, willing that he find Helena to be as glorious as the astral Venus:

> When his love he doth espy
> Let her shine as gloriously
> As the Venus of the sky (III.ii.105-107).

Helena enters pursued by the adoring Lysander, she accusing him of mocking her and he pleading a genuine

passsion for her. Demetrius awakes and falls in love with Helena, expressing his passion in terms of extreme praise:

> O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
> To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
> Crystal is muddy. O how ripe in show
> Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
> (III.ii.137-140)

Continuing this extravagant praise, he compares the whiteness of the snow on Mt. Taurus to a crow, in comparison with the whiteness of her hand, (II.ii.141-142).

Helena, however, is not impressed, believing the men to be mocking her, an impression that is reinforced when Hermia enters in pursuit of Lysander, and he claims no longer to love her but to adore Helena, who, he claims, shines more brightly than the stars:

> Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
> Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
> (III.ii.187-188)

Helena accuses Hermia of conspiracy with the men, and tries to shame her for betraying their own life-long friendship which she recalls in terms of its intimacy:

> We, Hermia,like two artificial gods,
> Have with our needles created both one flower,
> Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
> Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
> As if our hands, our sides, voices and minds,
> Had been incorporate (III.ii.203-208).

She claims that such was the 'ancient love' of the friendship that the two of them were as one person:

> ...So we grew together,
> Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
> But yet an union in partition,

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> 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)

The bemused Hermia protests, reprimanding Lysander for seeming to scorn Helena, but he spurns her, denying any love for her and calling her an 'Ethiope', and, when she clings to him, a 'Vile thing let loose' which he will shake from himself 'like a serpent' (III.ii.260,261). Unable to understand his changed attitude to her, which she finally accepts as his insults to her mount, she accuses Helena of stealing Lysander's love. This, Helena heatedly refutes, calling Hermia a 'counterfeit', and a 'puppet' (III.ii.288). The fight between the women is on, Hermia calling Helena a 'painted maypole', as she threatens to scratch out her eyes. Helena appeals to the men to defend her against Hermia to whom she presents her own innocence from any intended wrong to Hermia, (saving her betrayal to Demetrius of the planned elopement). Unconvinced, Hermia still threatens her, evincing from Helena the further justification of her need for protection from the men:

> O, when she is angry, she is keen and shrewd;
> She was a vixen when she went to school,
> And though she be but little, she is fierce.
> (III.ii.323-325)

Lysander responds to Helena by further insulting Hermia:

> ...Get you gone, you dwarf;
> You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
> You bead, you acorn (III.11.328-330).

This provokes an angry response from Demetrius who challenges the right of Lysander to defend Helena, and the two go out, 'cheek by jowl' to fight for the right to court her (III.ii.338). Left alone with the pugnacious Hermia, Helena resolves to take the advantage of her longer legs to escape:

> Yours hands than mine are quicker for a fray:
> My legs are longer though, to run away (III.ii.342-343)

8.a. Alchemy

The reverse turn of the 'wheel of the elements' is achieved when Lysander enters in pursuit of Demetrius who is caused to fall in love with Helena, and then Hermia enters in pursuit of Lysander. Thus a contrary circle rotates: air-water-earth-fire.

The process of alchemy was often referred to as 'the squared circle', beginning in a circle of chaos, forming into a triangle, and after fire has been at its greatest heat, resolving into a perfect square. This can be seen in the pattern of the lovers' changing affections and their subsequent quarrel. As the 'bodies' are tried and tested in this conflict the 'white' stage is achieved.

Symbols used in alchemy: serpents, a crow, the sun and moon under whose auspices the process took place, indicate the alchemical content of the scene.

8.b. Celtic

Puck demonstrates his traditional mischievous character in his description of his transformation of Bottom and his pursuit of the mechanicals through the woods. His enjoyment of the results of his mistaking Lysander for Demetrius are also appropriate within this tradition.

8.c. Christianity and Theurgy

The lovers are in the nadir of their trials in the labyrinth each isolated from the other by a separate anguish. Oberon acts as benevolent guide, ensuring that they come to no harm. Puck has functioned more as a hierophant, creating the trials which test them before he leads them out of the labyrinth.

8.d. Platonism

The lovers' conflict is an example of the kinds of confusion that result from the illusory pursuit of the wrong soul companions. This illusion is given 'a local habitation' by the moonlit wood.

The association of the planetary Venus recalls the importance in Platonic love of her influence.

9. Ninth Section

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Oberon turns on Puck, accusing him of deliberate negligence. Puck, however justifies his mistake, although he has relished the consequences. Oberon tells him to overcast the night with a 'drooping fog as black as Acheron' (III.ii.357), and to imitate the voices of Lysander and Demetrius so that they can be led apart from each other until, exhausted, they fall asleep. Oberon then gives Puck the herb, Dian's bud, which is the antidote to Cupid's flower, and commands him to put it on Lysander's eyes so that he will love Hermia again, and the lovers can return to Athens lovingly and correctly coupled (II.ii 354-376). Oberon, meanwhile, will obtain from Titania the Indian boy, cancel the spell placed upon her with the antidote, and 'all things shall be peace' (III.ii.377).

Puck warns Oberon that they must act quickly as dawn approaches, and along with the ghosts who must return to their graves, and the damned who, meriting punishment beyond the grave, are buried in liminal, threshold locations in water and at crossroads, they must escape daylight. Oberon qualifies this, as he and Puck are also spirits who rejoice in the dawn. However Puck hastens to obey Oberon's commands, leads the two men to exhausted sleep, brings in the two women who also fall asleep, and cancels the spell mistakenly put on Lysander with the wish that the lovers' problems be resolved:

> And the country proverb known,
> That every man should take his own,

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> In your waking shall be shown:
> Jack shall have Jill,
> Nought shall go ill;
> The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well (III.ii.458-463).

Titania and her attendant fairies are seen tending Bottom in his transmuted ass's head. The fairy queen is sleeping with him in her arms when Oberon enters. He, now ready to restore Titania to her former state as she has surrendered the Indian boy to him, puts the 'Dian's bud' juice on her eyes. She wakes and is instantly reconciled with Oberon as they dance together. Puck is ordered to remove the ass's head from Bottom.

9.a. Alchemy

Hermia, hitherto the pivot of both men's affections, has been subjected to the reverse experience, yet in spite of the unpleasantness of this, she remains loyal to Lysander, wishing, as she joins the other sleeping lovers gathered in by Puck, 'Heavens Shield Lysander if they mean a fray' (III.ii.447). Thus, as serpent, the base matter of a process of alchemy relating to her, she emerges from her trials redeemed and successful when Dian's bud restores Lysander to her.

Three symbolic 'marriages' or 'unions' of materials of opposite nature are claimed to take place in alchemy. One of these is the marriage of the four elements (which will occur at the end of this play); the second is of the body with the soul and the spirit (also represented by the

lovers' marriages); but the third, between male and female principles, (represented by the pairs of lovers, by Theseus and Hippolyta and by Oberon and Titania,) must take place in the correct sequence of stages, in the middle of the process. It is out of the question for the mortal lovers to enact any 'union' before their weddings at the end of the play as Shakespeare upholds the idea of chaste love in his plays and Oberon has divorced himself from Titania's bed, so Oberon has arranged an extraordinary 'alchemical marriage' between Titania and Bottom. This is also part of the alchemy that achieves his goal of the 'Indian boy Philosopher's Stone.'

The conjunctio that takes place in this play represents a true picture of the union of opposites that alchemy likes to effect in this stage of the process with the contrasting natures of Titania and Bottom. Bettina Knapp describes the unifying effect that such a union was supposed to create:

> Once opposing polarities were welded together, everything within the cosmos formed a cohesive whole, enabling a renovatio, a renewal, to take place (p.2).

This principle can be seen to take place in this play, as the union marks the turning point of the action, satisfying Oberon so that he obtains the Indian boy, and thus ending the nature-disturbing quarrel between Titania and himself and turning their combined benign attentions towards the pairs of lovers.

9.b. Celtic

Oberon persists in his intention to do good to the mortals and bring them within his beneficent power. He and Puck define this benevolence in terms of their ability to remain in the light of day while other tormented ghosts and evil spirits must return to their earthly graves when dawn appears.

Puck's observation that damned spirits are buried in locations which Celtic tradition considered to be thresholds between this and the spirit worlds, like waterways and crossroads, brings resonances of Celtic mythology where encounters took place between humans and spirits at such places. For example, the Celtic triple goddess, the Morrigan, in her threatening aspect as a hag, challenged Cuchulainn at a ford (see above p.188).

Puck reveals his ability to control the weather in creating the fog that diffuses the lovers' quarrel.

The diminutive aspect of the fairies attendant on Titania is thought to be Shakespeare's own invention and a contribution that he made with this play to the traditions of British lore. The 'round' dances that Titania dances with her fairies and which Oberon and Titania perform when reconciled, signify social cohesion and unity with nature.

9.c. Christianity and Theurgy

Oberon as guide takes control of the lovers so that they come to no harm. It is dangerous to enter the labyrinth

without a benevolent guide.

The essential movements of theurgy leading the neophyte into the labyrinth and then out again to take the benefits to the world, are signified in this scene by Oberon's instructions to Puck to resolve the conflicts so that the lovers can return, restored, to Athens. Puck also indicates this, in his citing of the homely 'country' proverb in his casting on the lovers of his final benevolent spell in the scene.

When Titania is released from the spell put upon her she is able to add her power to that of Oberon in giving benediction.

9.d. Platonism

The antidote to the love-juice destroys the illusions that have separated the lovers and Titania from true perceptions of their soul companions.

10. Tenth Section

As dawn breaks, Duke Theseus, Hippolyta and Aegeus enter on a hunting trip. They see and awake the two sets of lovers, Lysander with Hermia, Demetrius with Helena. The angered Aegeus threatens revenge on Lysander but Demetrius confesses that his love has returned to Helena:

> And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
> The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
> Is only Helena (IV.i.168-171).

CHAPTER NINE: 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

The Duke declares a general amnesty, suggesting a triple wedding:

> ...Three and three
> We'll hold a feast in great solemnity (IV.i.183-184).

He leaves the four lovers to gather their senses, scarce able to comprehend their changed circumstances, or how they came to be together, and so happily paired, in the woods at dawn. Helena rejoices in the return of Demetrius's love for her:

> And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
> Mine own, and not mine own (IV.i.190-191).

They leave, discussing their dreams. Evans observes that the audience is aware that Demetrius is still under the spell of Cupid's flower but that the characters in the play never realise this. He notes that this is unique in Shakespeare's comedies:

> This gap is unique in Shakespeare's comedies in that it remains open even at the end of the play. We alone know that an immortal spirit has manipulated human events and solved a mortal problem (p.35).

Bottom now awakes, remembering his sojourn among the fairies as a dream. His memories of himself with an ass's head among fairies are confused:

> Methought I was -there is no man can tell what. Methought I was - and methought I had - but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was (IV.i.206-212).

Resolving to ask Peter Quince to frame his dream as a ballad to be sung after the performance of 'Pyramus and

Thisbe' at the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta, he goes to seek his fellows. They are in despair at his disappearance as they consider him to be irreplaceable as Pyramus, and rejoice when he enters with the news that their play has been selected for performance. He hesitates to tell them what has been happening to him. They prepare to perform their play after the triple wedding feast.

10.a. Alchemy

Harmony is achieved in the red stage of the golden dawn as the marriage of the elements, air with water, and fire with earth is prepared. Gareth Knight writes of the colour significance of the golden colour that bathes the lovers in this alchemic stage of unification as a:

> manifestation of the divine spirit in the personality, marked by a yellowing (xanthosis or citrinitatis) which is the first foreshadowing of the distillation of the principle of bright, light, gold more precious than any found upon earth, and which is itself capable of making transformations. In religious terms - transfiguration (p.85).

Ripley's three alchemical marriages are symbolised in the triple wedding which Theseus proposes.

Helena refers to the alchemical transformation of Demetrius in referring to him as a 'jewel' like that which is extracted from the transmuted 'toad', (see the illustration of toad as the alchemical base-matter in the Theatre Set-Up 1995 programme notes, Appendix A,3.)

CHAPTER NINE: 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

Bottom's memory of his participation in the Oberon-Titania alchemy remains as a dream.

10.b. Celtic

Three is the most magical Celtic number. Shakespeare's use of a three-motif always indicates an intended magic. This occurs here as the three couples share the reconciliation that comes with the dawn.

10.c. Christianity and Theurgy

The lovers, as initiates, emerge from the labyrinth in harmony with each other and improved. The events in the woods have managed to subvert the primitive Athenian law so that Theseus can implement mercy. The Christian Trinity is echoed in the proposed triple wedding.

In remembering his experiences in the woods, Bottom misquotes a biblical quotation from 1 Corinthians 2.9. which is, in the Geneva-Tomson Bible:

> The things which eye hath not seene, neither eare hath heard, neither came into man's heart, are, which God hath prepared for them that love him.

as:

> The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive nor his heart to report (IV.i.209-212).

In its context in Corinthians, this passage discusses the hidden wisdom of God, stating that God prepares things revealed only by His Spirit and unperceivable by human eyes, ears and heart for those that love Him. Reference

is also made to the pre-ordination of Christ's incarnation in order to redeem mankind. This is glossed as a mysterie, 'Hid Wisdom', described in 1 Corinthians 2.7,8. as:

> 7. But we speake the wisedome of God in a mysterie, even the hid wisedom, which God had determined before the world, unto our glory.
>
> 8. Which none of the princes of this world hath knowen: for had they knowen it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

In all theurgy, whether practised by initiates in the ancient Greek rites of Eleusis, by Aborigines in the centre of Australia, or by followers of the mystery traditions of Britain, the Divinity hidden in the centre of the labyrinth is the same: the 'sun-word', identified in Christianity as Jesus. Before the incarnation of Christ as Jesus of Nazareth, initiates always had to undergo a three-day trance-sleep before they were able to have contact with the Divine. Theurgists claim that in the three days between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection he entered the depths of nature and overcame a female nature force. This action had such an effect that after that time the three-day trance was no longer necessary for initiates. In orthodox Christianity Christ is said during the three days to have 'conquered death'. Perhaps this event, is secretly referred to in the extraordinary interaction between Titania and Bottom, whose ass's head is reminiscent of the ass Christ rode.

Deborah Baker Wyrick, in <u>The Ass Motif in 'The Comedy</u>

of Errors' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', implies that this kind of association of the ass motif with Bottom is valid, as asses in the Bible are 'benign, even exemplary'. She gives the example of the biblical Balaam's ass in Numbers 22 who was granted a sight of an angel, was made a channel of communication for God, and sustained persecution for righteous action, which precipitated God's reproach and redeemed her master from sin. The ass can thus be regarded as a symbol of wisdom and suffering, characteristics which I consider it would not be blasphemous to attribute to an analogue of Christ. In fact Wyrick refers to the identification of the ass in the Folie of Erasmus with the kind of holy fool that Christ is said to have loved, to the extent that by the end of his book, Erasmus is identifying Christ himself with this kind of holy fool. Wyrick regards Bottom as the epitome of the play's themes of Ovidian-like metamorphosis, his wish for the transformation within dramatic roles fulfilled in his transformation as part ass, and lover of the Queen of the fairies, more than he could have hoped for. [53]

10.d. Platonism

Harmony is seen to prevail as, in the dawn of a new day, the lovers wake to find 'their vision restored'. [54]
'When the true beauty is rightly apprehended, concord comes to the world.' [55]

It is implied that in this play dream is the disguise

through which divine love must be perceived.

Kermode glosses the neo-Platonic significance of Bottom's dream. He links the memory of the love of the goddess Isis that Apuleius experienced when transformed by her from an ass to a human, with that experienced by Bottom when he awakes with his restored human head:

> What they have in common is transformation, and an experience of divine love. Bottom has known the love of the triple goddess in a vision (p.118).

He analyses this kind of dream as appropriate to the category defined by Macrobius as a 'phantasma', which can be called 'oneiros' or 'Somnium', 'ambiguous, enigmatic, of high import' (p.118). He explains that this kind of blind love, effected not through the eyes but with the mind was designated by Pico, Cornelius Agrippa and Bruno as an exaltation of love, 'both Christian and Orphic' (p.118). He finds that this experience of Bottom instructs us that blind love can lead, (as the Platonic principle would have us believe), to a state of grace:

> Bottom is there to tell us that the blindness of love, the dominance of the mind over the eye, can be interpreted as a means to grace as well as to irrational animalism; that the two aspects are, perhaps, inseparable (p.118).

Miller thinks that Bottom's dream 'hath no Bottom' because, for once, he has been lifted out of his mundane world (p.268).

In Dream and Imagination in Shakespeare, Jerome Mandel discusses the Elizabethan understanding of dreams. He writes that they had a tripartite classification of

dreams: of natural origin, from the matter of everyday life stored within their minds; diabolic, from outside malevolent forces with evil intent; and divine, including revelations, from outside benevolent powers.[56] I feel that Bottom is experiencing memories of his experiences as if they were a symbiosis of dreams from the first and third categories.

11. Eleventh Section

Theseus and Hippolyta discuss the strange events which the lovers have recounted that they experienced in the woods. Theseus doubts the truth of the accounts, as he considers that lovers, like madmen and poets, have 'such seething brains' that their imaginations create fantasies (V.i.4). He observes that imagination has such power that it can actualise thoughts:

> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes and gives to airy 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.14-20)

Stephen Fender observes that Shakespeare also presents the rational Theseus as having limited powers of observation on the play's theme of the ambivalent value of blind love:

> In Shakespeare's hands the very rationality of

> Theseus becomes ambivalent. However well it fits him for guiding the affairs of men in the world - of governing a city-state - it restricts his view of romantic love, of poetry, or of anything which is at least partly the product of imagination. 57

Anne Barton also comments on this limited perception of Theseus. She observes the fallibility of his scepticism. He does not believe in the stories of the lovers and in fantasies, which must include the fairies. Yet Oberon has related (at II.i. 77-80) that it was Titania who led him from one love-affair to the next. [58]

R. W. Dent believes that Shakespeare has a larger purpose in giving Theseus this speech. He considers the relationship of imagination to love and art to be an important theme in the play and observes that the speech provides a transition in the play from dealing with the effects of imagination on love to an exposition of imagination in art, exemplified by the workmen's performance of Pyramus and Thisbe. He points out that the exposition on the limited perceptions of the workmen on the relationship between an audience and drama takes place at III.1. when they fail to realise that an audience will view a drama imaginatively, not mistaking pretence for reality. He claims that the mechanicals, 'abuse their own imaginations by a failure to understand those of the audience'. Dent considers that the resulting play of Pyramus and Thisbe illustrates not abused love, but abused theatrical imagination. [59]

Mandel, taking the Elizabethan perspective, points

out that there are two realities, the world of the audience and the world of the characters of the play. Both have their separate realities. However, both have their dreams, and the Elizabethans observed less rigid distinctions between the real worlds, the phenomenon of dreams further blurring the boundaries. Dreams could reflect a disturbance in the imagination, or input from the spirit world, both resonating in drama. They represent a product of the imagination, creating a reality as distinct from the everyday real world as is the world of the play, and therefore similar to it. Whether they succeeded in deluding the dreamer or not was the dreamer's choice, dependent on their character (pp.61-62).

What is thus implied by the above reasoning is that the real issue to be examined in looking at imagination, dreams and the world of the play, is the propensity of the dreamer/audience to be deluded by the dream/play. In fact the lovers have not been dreaming, so their memory of what has happened to them is not a product of the disturbance of their imaginations which dreams might produce. The imagination applied to their situation is that of the playwright, within the reality of the play-world. However, Bottom and his fellows do not understand the extent to which the imaginative faculty of the audience is expected to be exercised, so that they are not deluded into thinking that the play is a reality.

The issue of exactly what audiences will accept, and

to what extent they will be prepared to exercise their imaginative faculties, is one which constantly teases theatre practitioners, determining exactly how they mount a production. It is one which constantly tests Theatre Set-Up. As the company is one with minimal financial resources, with a need to perform and travel uncluttered by a surfeit of material objects, we are grateful to Shakespeare for creating scripts, and a theatre convention, in which the material world is created by the script, 'bodied forth' by the imagination of the audience, and thus allowing for a minimalist style of production. We are constantly seeking to stretch our perceptions of the limits of this principle, and understand how the varied roles of Shakespeare as poet, playwright, actor, and sharer in a theatre company which needed to be able to succeed financially and create productions with the material flexibility to tour easily, motivated such an interest in this issue, examined so fully in this play.

Hippolyta refutes the scepticism of Theseus, observing that the accounts are all the same, which must provide witness of the truth of the events. When the lovers enter, 'full of joy and mirth', Theseus requests of Philostrate, the master of the revels, the selection of entertainments available to while away the time between supper and bed-time. Four entertainments have been short-listed, including the interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe, which, in spite of objections from Philostrate and

Hippolyta that they do not want the workmen's sincerity mocked, is selected. Theseus assures them that he appreciates the homage of such offerings as much as the 'saucy and audacious eloquence' of more learned men (V.i.103).

Quince presents the prologue in such a way that the sense is obscured by incorrect observation of the punctuation:

> If we offend, it is with our good will.
> That you should think, we come not to offend,
> But with good will. To show our simple skill,
> That is the true beginning of our end
> ...All for your delight,
> We are not here. That you should here repent you,
> The actors are at hand (V.i.108-116).

In spite of his previous protestations that he would not mock the offering of the workmen, Theseus and his fellow guests do so, observing the disorder of the speech:

> His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired but all disordered (V.i.124-125).

Quince as Prologue introduces the characters of the interlude, Bottom as Pyramus, Flute as Thisbe, Snout as Wall, Starveling as Moonshine and Snug as Lion and narrates their mime of the story which initially follows that of Hermia and Lysander but which has the unhappy ending that Shakespeare avoided in this play but incorporated in Romeo and Juliet: the love of Pyramus and Thisbe for each other is forbidden by their fathers whose adjoining properties are divided by a wall through a chink of which they whisper and plot to elope. Their plan to

meet by moonshine at Ninus' tomb near to a mulberry tree turns to tragedy when a lion scares away Thisbe. In her flight she drops her mantle which the lion stains with his bloodied mouth. Pyramus, coming upon the scene, finds this mantle and, assuming that Thisbe has been killed, draws his sword and kills himself. Thisbe, returning to the scene, finds the body of Pyramus and stabs herself with his sword.

In addition to their introduction by the Prologue, Wall, Moonshine and Lion also address the audience on their entrance cues, in order to make clear what they are representing, and in the Lion's case, to reassure the ladies that the lion is not real.

The lines written for Pyramus and Thisbe are in mock-heroic style:

> Pyramus: Thus die I, thus, thus, thus!
> Now am I dead,
> Now am I fled;
> My soul is in the sky.
> Tongue, lose thy light;
> Moon, take thy flight!
> Now die, die, die, die, die.
>
> Thisbe: Asleep, my love?
> What, dead, my dove?
> O Pyramus, arise!
> Speak, speak! Quite dumb
> Dead, dead? A tomb
> Must cover thy sweet eyes.

Kenneth Muir, in Pyramus and Thisbe: a Study in Shakespeare's Method, demonstrates how Shakespeare made use of a plurality of sources for the Pyramus and Thisbe performed by Bottom and his fellows. He presents a range

of absurd texts from which Shakespeare must have taken delight in borrowing the most comical elements. For example, he suggests that the doggerel may have been modelled on parts of the William Golding translation of Ovid, which, he claims, are 'unintentionally ludicrous'. In support of his theory he finds verbal parallels between both works, a technique also applied successfully in tracking down to Thomas Mouffet's poem Silkewormes and their Flies, elements of the play relating to Bottom, not only as Pyramus, but also to his metamorphosis. If this hypothesis is correct, it is certainly an interesting exploration into Shakespeare's method, and into the practice of hiding arcana in jokes, as the silkworm and the mulberry tree (under which Thisbe waited for Pyramus) they fed on, was indeed often used by alchemists as a symbol of transformation. [60]

The play finished, the performers are praised and several of them dance a Bergamask.

11.a. Alchemy

The triple weddings signal the achievement of The Philosophers' Stone. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe, which the workmen perform in their interlude is itself an alchemical allegory from Ovid's Metamorphosis, the Lion (representing the 'green lion', vitriol) (see illustration in the 1995 programme of the play, Appendix A, 3), the 'bloody mantle' and the blossom of the mulberry tree,

changing from white to red-purple, (as in the stages of alchemy), when drenched in the blood of the dying Pyramus, all significant. [61] Gareth Knight gives a further alchemical symbolism of the red and green lions as nature forces, 'indications of organic forces in course of growth' (p.85).

Mispractisers of alchemy were known as 'puffers' (represented by Flute the 'bellows mender'), in this parody of alchemy.

11.b Celtic

Bottom and his friends owe little in their style to Athens and much to those loyal artisans, subject to Queen Elizabeth, who made dramatic 'offerings' to her on many royal progresses through her realm.

When Theseus agrees to hear the workmen's play he refers to the kinds of incidents she experienced on these occasions and to her graciousness in her warm reception of the 'offerings' regardless of their quality. A possible reference to Queen Elizabeth as 'fair vestal enthroned by the West' is made by Oberon earlier in the play.

11.c. Christianity and Theurgy

Gareth Knight writes of the essential function of the imaginative faculty of which Theseus speaks in the practice of magic and alchemy. It is through the imagination that the neophyte makes the journey through

the labyrinth (p.85)

In the reception by Theseus of the workmen's offering, Theseus is charitable. However this is not sustained and seems hypocritical in the light of his rude and patronising comments during their performance. All the mortals are experiencing the benefits of the end of their trials.

11.d. Platonism

In this parody another pair of star-crossed lovers are seen to be constant to each other. Like the lovers in Romeo and Juliet which Shakespeare also wrote at this time, the disguise that the lovers must overcome to perceive their soul companions is the rivalry between their families, symbolised by the wall.

12. Twelfth Section

After the play the three couples retire. Puck, Titania and Oberon enter to bless them and their issue.

Puck precedes his master with an invocation to the night:

> Now the hungry lion roars
> And the wolf behowls the moon;
> Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
> All with weary task fordone (V.i.357-360).

He describes their fairy participation in the night:

> And we fairies, that do run

> By the triple Hecate's team
> From the presence of the sun,
> Following darkness like a dream,
> Now are frolic (V.i.369-373).

He relates his given role in the blessing:

> I am sent with broom before
> To sweep the dust behind the door (V.I.375-376).

Oberon instructs his and Titania's attendants to distribute 'glimmering light' through the house as they sing and dance, bestowing blessings on the three couples. He reserves for himself and his wife the privilege of blessing the 'best bride-bed' of Theseus and Hippolyta, whose issue, he claims, will subsequently be 'fortunate' (V.i.389, 392). The subsequent children of all three couples, he decrees, will benefit from the fairies' blessing, being free of disabilities and disfiguring birth marks. A final blessing of peace is bestowed on Theseus and his palace.

Siegel comments that the masque of the fairies, in which they dance and bless the couples, provides the complement to the anti-masque of the workmen (p.144).

12.a. Alchemy

The multiplication and projection of the Stone are implied in the blessing of Oberon and Titania upon the three couples and their future children. The alchemy of the play ends here, its twelve stages implied but not followed exactly in the twelve natural divisions of the play's story.

Young observes that the marriages being celebrated represent another change in the play, hopefully one that will fix the couples in constancy (p.157-158).

12.b. Celtic

Oberon and Titania fulfil their function of blessing couples and bestowing fertility. They have, however, a sense of status, 'To the best bride bed will we' says Oberon.

Puck is seen in his domestic role, in which he is sent 'to sweep the dust behind the door'. Calderwood remarks that this hovering on the threshold that the door represents is typical of the liminal aspect of locations in the play, where the hovering over boundaries and crossing from one area to another is suggestive of rites of passage (pp.72-116). This carries resonances of the Celtic sense of the magic that can occur on boundaries, where the fairy world can easily interface with the human.

12.c. Christianity and Theurgy

The forces of nature enter the realms of the mortals and continue their benediction into the future.

12.d. Platonism

'Celestial' harmony is seen to be created 'by the constancy of love to its ideal' which has been achieved by all the couples. [62]

CHAPTER NINE: 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

13. Thirteenth Section

Puck craves the indulgence of the audience to accept the substance of the play as a dream. He pledges, in the name of his honesty, and assuming that all escape 'the serpent's tongue', to make amends for any offence given by the players or fairies, and bids the audience goodnight.

13.a. Alchemy

The psychoanalyst, Carl Jung, observed the correlation between dreams of his patients and the images of alchemy which he profoundly examined, finding the process of alchemy and all its terms to be that of 'psychological individuation' and hence imagination (see above p.205). He discovered that contemporaries of Shakespeare had observed that functions of the psyche were 'projected' (like the 'shadows', the actors and fairies referred to by Puck,) on to alchemical practice in this way. In this play it seems that dreams, illusions of 'midsummer madness', imagination, poetry, theatre and the psyche are linked through the allegory of alchemy.

Puck implies, in his reference to the serpent's tongue, that the audience have been subject to the transmutations of alchemy through the catharsis of drama. This has been achieved without any effort on the part of the audience and the benefits are thus achieved through 'unearned luck'.

13.b. Celtic

The number thirteen was of special significance to the Celts. It is at this point that Puck directly addresses the audience.

13.c. Christianity and Theurgy

The play itself takes the audience into a labyrinth so that the audience undergoes a surrogate initiation. Puck releases them back into the world outside the theatre.

13.d. Platonism

Puck refers to the 'visions', of the 'shadows', (the actors and the fairies) and implies that the audience must find its own truths beyond these illusions.

THE 1983 AND 1995 THEATRE SET-UP PRODUCTIONS OF THE PLAY, DRAWING ON AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ABOVE ARCANA IN ITS DIRECTION.

In the 1983 production of the play, the company decided to emphasise the alchemic and Celtic symbolism of the play in its minimalistic set and its costumes. The set comprised a central square rostrum, coloured purple to symbolise the element of 'ether'. At the four edges of this rostrum were placed circular plinths, coloured green (for the element earth), red (for the element fire), blue (for the

element water, and white (for the element air) (see figure 14). These corresponded to the costume colours of the four characters representing these elements: Demetrius as earth, Helena as fire, Lysander as water and Hermia as air, and the plinths were used by each of the four characters as a kind of 'home base' in the stage movement (see figure 14).

On the centre front of the square rostrum we placed a wooden model of John Dee's Hieroglyphic Monad, representing, as we were instructed by Lynn Thorndike in A History of Magic and Experimental Science, 'a mystical representation of all truth' and symbolising, among other things the progression of the circling elements so that earth (our Demetrius), can progress though water (our Lysander) to fire (our Helena), a movement we felt reflected in the play. [63]

In addition, there was a central roundel in the centre of the square rostrum and this had material covers one on top of the other: gold at the base, then red, white and black in sequence on top of each other, which were taken off one by one by Puck at the points in the action when the stage in the alchemical process was achieved in the play corresponding with the colour of the cover underneath. Thus the play began with the black cover of the Nigredo stage; this was taken off at III.ii.121 to reveal the white cover representing the Albedo stage when both men love Helena; this was removed

at III.ii.463 to reveal the red cover representing the Rubedo stage when the four lovers are joined in appropriate pairs; this was removed to reveal the gold of alchemy achieved by the four lovers and Bottom and Titania after Bottom's exit at IV.i.217 (see figure 15), (for illustration of the four stages of alchemy as these four colours, see the programme notes to the 1995 Theatre Set-Up production, Appendix A,3).

Oberon and Titania were costumed as Sol and Luna, their long capes bearing relevant applique signs of the zodiac (see figure 16). In an additional attempt to incorporate symbolism relating to one of the possible sources of the play, Titania's costume was made in imitation of the description of the Goddess Isis in The Golden Ass of Apuleius. [64] The actors playing Titania and Oberon wore their costumes of Hippolyta and Theseus beneath their fairy costumes, which assisted the speed of the quick costume changes. We began the play with a mime of Sol and Luna out of phase with each other, representing the chaos in nature caused by the Oberon/Titania quarrel. With sweeping movements they took off the outer fairy costumes (which opened like coats) and began the play as Theseus and Hippolyta. We gave Oberon his male sun-role and Titania this female moon-role, as instructed by Louis MacNeice in Astrology:

> In contrast with the Moon who represents the female principle and the unconscious, the Sun stands for the the male principle and consciousness. [65]

CHAPTER NINE: 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

Puck's costume was a tunic and trousers in brown and green, presenting him as an gnomic earth spirit. The fairies were costumed with masks and flowing tunics, which represented them in terms of the objects their names designated, our intention being to present them as components of herbal medicines.

The period selected for the style of the costumes, properties and movement of the play was that of the Celtic Mabinogion, of around the twelfth century. This was very satisfactory for the actors, as the women's dresses and veils were attractive and easy to move in while the men could effect quick changes with tabards and tunics over tights. Peter Quince, Bottom and the other workmen were dressed in tights, tunics and hoods with jagged edging, all good for comic effect and useful in inclement weather!

We emphasised the Celtic theme with music from the Outer Hebrides of Scotland played on an Irish harp.

The actors appreciated the analysis of the script in terms of alchemy and the Celtic Old Religion (see the programme notes to the 1983 production, Appendix A.2.), and made use of the information in their characterisation. In particular the actors playing Puck, Hermia and Helena were able to build whole profiles for their characters from the research material. The actor playing Puck, rather than presenting the usual small boy image, chose to be a nuggety earth creature, swift but solid. The actresses performing Helena and Hermia based their

characterisation on their alchemical functions as elements (Helena being fiery and Hermia executing very light movements, especially during the lovers' quarrel when she was swung onto Lysander's shoulder and became virtually air-borne for much of the scene - see figure 17) and as body-soul composites with Demetrius and Lysander. Both felt able to build upon these 'inner lines' which they felt explained some anomalies in the script, such as Helena's dog-like devotion to the flawed Demetrius. There was a great difference between them in height which made for comic effect (see figure. 14).

There was considerable positive reaction from audiences to the information in the programme notes, and writers on the occult (such as Gareth Knight), contacted me and gave me advice on their field of work, its participants, and what was being recorded of it, so that I could continue more thoroughly with future research.

The 1995 Theatre Set-Up production of the play benefited from the ideas which had informed the 1983 one, from the research of the intervening years which had been incorporated into the 1984-1993 productions, and from our increased experience in simplifying our needs in terms of cast, and staging. Whereas the 1983 production had a cast of ten, plus company/stage manager who also performed Wall in the Pyramus and Thisbe, the 1995 production managed with eight cast plus one non-performing company/stage manager. The 1983 production had staging of a square

rostrum, four plinths and a roundel, while the 1995 production had only two inverted boxes (used for carrying the lighting cables), placed together and covered with artificial grass and flowers to create Titania's flowery bank, plus a small stool decorated as a toadstool for Puck to sit on. I was also obliged to perform major roles as well as playing the music.

In 1995 we did not symbolise the arcana in either the staging, costumes or stage action with the exception of one dance at IV.i.101, but found knowledge of them invaluable in profiling characterisation. For example, Hermia understood that although she was a victim of a cruel state law, and her situation was, like the vase of Hermes in alchemy, the plot-frame for the play, she herself must have been flawed in some way to warrant being subjected to an alchemic process herself. We decided that her flaw was a self-satisfied smugness and wilful determination, giving her an interesting characterisation which was appropriate to the script, made satisfactory complementary character profiles in the other lovers, and some good comic business. For example, such was her high self-esteem, reinforced by the fact that there were two men claiming her hand in marriage, one of them the lover of her close friend, that the ebullience of her confidence deflated others around her. Helena craved to imitate her, the actress playing the part trying to adopt her posture, attitudes and even her gestures . This made good comic

business. When Helena found herself in the reverse position of commanding the love of both men, she imitated Hermia's smugness as well, which so exasperated Hermia, that it exacerbated her fiendishness. Part of her smugness gave Hermia a worldly competence so that, for example, she had mastered the study of martial arts and had developed extraordinary strength for a person of her size by making sensible use of her time training in a gymnasium. Thus she wielded considerable physical power over the men, knowing exactly how to hurt them with kicks to the groin. Her lover Lysander was hen-pecked, made obvious by their entrance when lost in the woods at II.ii.34 when she entered first, a considerable distance ahead of Lysander (who was struggling to carry an enormous chest containing her trousseau which she was determined not to leave behind), with the map of 'The Environs of Athens', firmly gripped in her hand. Her reaction to her rejection by Lysander and the volte-face of her fortunes in love generally, was therefore, in the light of her previous self-satisfaction with her superior abilities and attractiveness, incredulous and comical. She reacted with skilled physical force, accurately kicking the men to free herself if temporarily vanquished. The characterisation provided the cornerstone of the production's presentation of the lovers which was much appreciated by audiences.

Making use of the knowledge of the arcana only in this way, and having the confidence not to be obvious in

our use of its material symbols, freed us to select a style of material presentation which gave us other advantages. Our choice of setting in the period 1895, with costumes all in white, silver and green, gave us the opportunity to make use of the Mendelssohn incidental music written for the play (which I transcribed for, and played on a dulcimer), to present the fairies in a romantic style with flower hats and stylised wings (see figure 18), and to work the stage fights without swords, thus making use of some interesting stage fight techniques. It also introduced the idea of Victorian prudery into the characterisation of the women's parts, which could be disregarded when their self-control slipped. This began early with Helena, her pursuit of Demetrius into the woods losing her hat, loosing her hair, and exposing her knickers (see figure 19). At a high point of the lovers' quarrel, when the two men were fighting over Helena, (III.ii.321-322), instead of protecting her from Hermia, they inadvertently stripped her skirt from her (see figure 20). This was wafted away by Puck so that Helena, exposed in blouse and knickers, had good comic business. The actress playing Hermia had very long hair which unwound during the quarrel scene, giving her a very wild appearance (see figure 21).

The actors playing the four lovers benefited considerably in the development of their characters and in the understanding of the play by the Platonic

interpretation of the different sections, mediated from the Ficino version of the Symposium by John Vyvyan. In fact the actors gave the most positive response there had ever been to the programme notes, and claimed that they found them very helpful.

We presented the play within a frame of Bottom dreaming it. He began the play by yawning and seeming to imagine the actors who came on to the stage and briefly mimed the events leading up to the commencement of the play. This was accompanied by the relevant Mendelssohn incidental music. Those not on the stage at the beginning of the scripted play left as part of Bottom's dream which continued with the play as written by Shakespeare. At the end of the play, at V.i.408, Puck's entry caused those on stage to 'freeze' their positions, held until Bottom had returned on to the stage and woken up, which signalled the end of the play with the lights taken out.

The presentations of Oberon and Titania as Celtic nature-spirits, reflected in their costumes, movements and gestures, was much favoured by the actors, and resulted in beautiful characterisations (see figures 22 and 23). I played Puck as a gnome-like earth creature, wearing a mask with attached red-orange hair, and creating a sense of Puck's flying movements by use of a broom. By dislocating the stage action, sitting Puck on his toadstool and miming to mirror the desired effect, we tried to project the illusion that Puck was gnat-sized, sitting on Oberon's

hand when communicating with him.

The workmen were dressed in grey trousers, white shirts and waistcoats with simplistic geometrical designs which gave a clown-like effect (see figure 24). The design on Bottom's waistcoat was of upturned red half-moons, to give the sense of a smile. As Snug I was dressed in a style which ultimately dubbed me 'Captain Birdseye'!

We were able to make use of the 1895 period in the performance of Pyramus and Thisbe by presenting the play as a melodrama, with the traditional accompanying gestures (see figures 25). The actor playing Thisbe, (costumed in a dress covered with frills and a flowery hat) added spice to that tradition in a characterisation that presented an over-enthusiastic apprentice boy, exaggerating actions and thus over-shooting movements and falling over in classic 'stage gags'.

Encouraged by the remarks of Samuel Pepys on the excellence of the dancing in the performance that he saw, and inspired by the article by Skiles Howard, Hands, Feet and Bottoms: Decentering the Cosmic Dance in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', in which he describes how the Elizabethan social hierarchy was reflected in their dancing, thus featured in the play, we decided to have additional dances, performed by the four lovers, conveniently placed to cover the costume changes of the actors playing Hippolyta/Titania and Theseus/Oberon at IV.i.102, and

V.i.356. [66] We had decided to place the interval after III.ii, so Puck had 'sleep-walked' the lovers off the stage after putting the spell upon Lysander's eyes. The lovers entered, trance-like, after IV.i.102, and, using coloured ribbons to symbolise the four elements they represented, mimed a 'dance' which recalled their re-combinations through the play, and leaving them in the positions Puck had placed them in during III.ii. It was the only stage action we used which made direct reference to the arcana. The dance at V.i. was an epithalamian-type celebration of the four lovers. The dances were very popular with both actors and audiences.

We felt more confident with the production than we had in previous years, the knowledge of the arcana freeing us to present a clear production with no attendant gimickry. It was very popular with audiences.

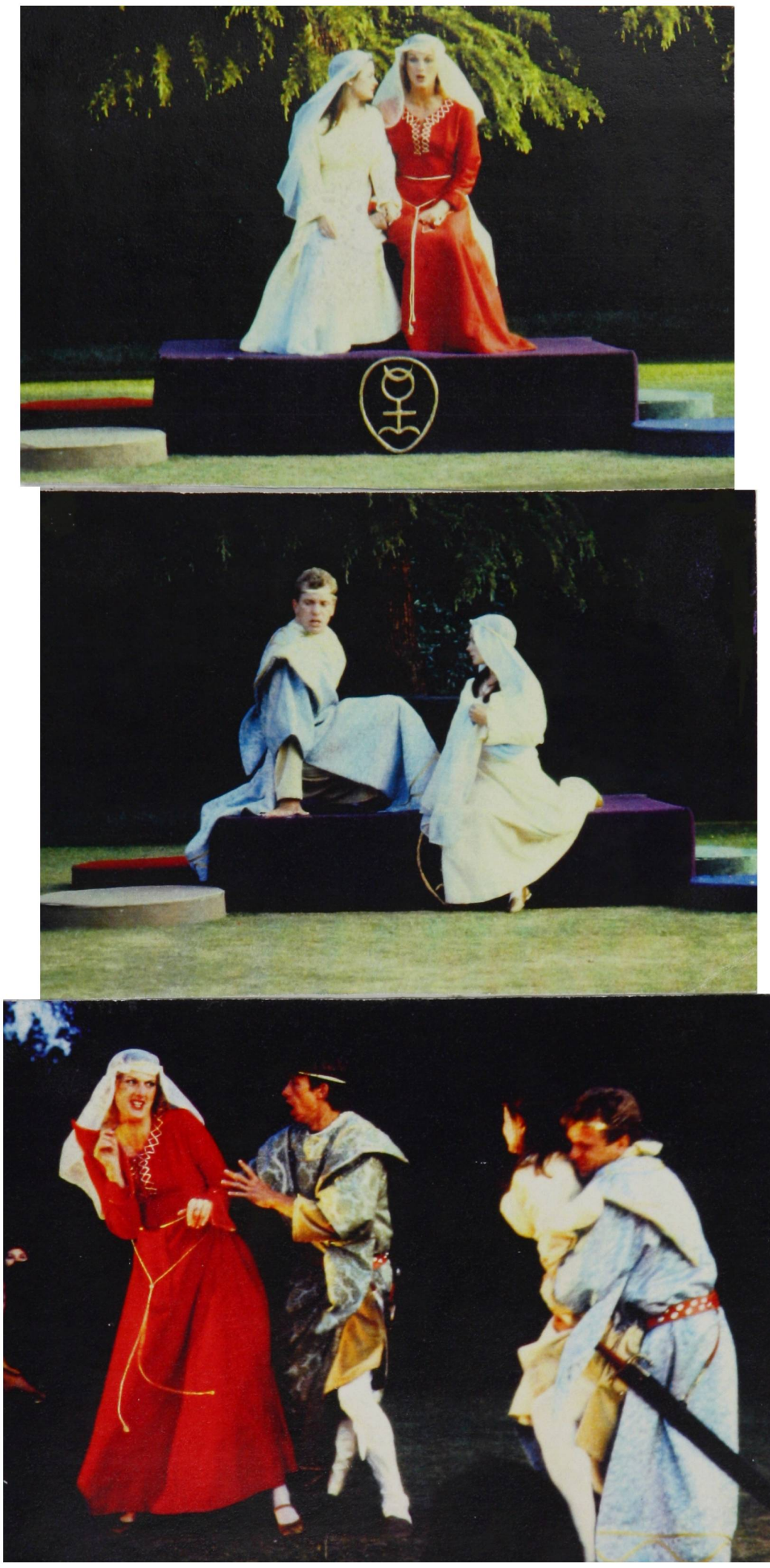

Figure 14: Set and costumes coloured to symbolise the lovers as the four elements. Theatre Set-Up 1983.

Figure 15: The roundel's colours changed to match the main phases of alchemy. Theatre Set-Up 1983.

Figure 16: Titania as Sun and Moon. Titania as Isis with her attendant fairies as herbal medicines.

Theatre Set-Up 1983

Figure 17: Hermia as air. Theatre Set-Up 1983.

Figure 18: Peaseblossom and Cobweb. Theatre Set-Up 1995.

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Figure 19: Helena in disarray. Theatre Set-Up 1995.

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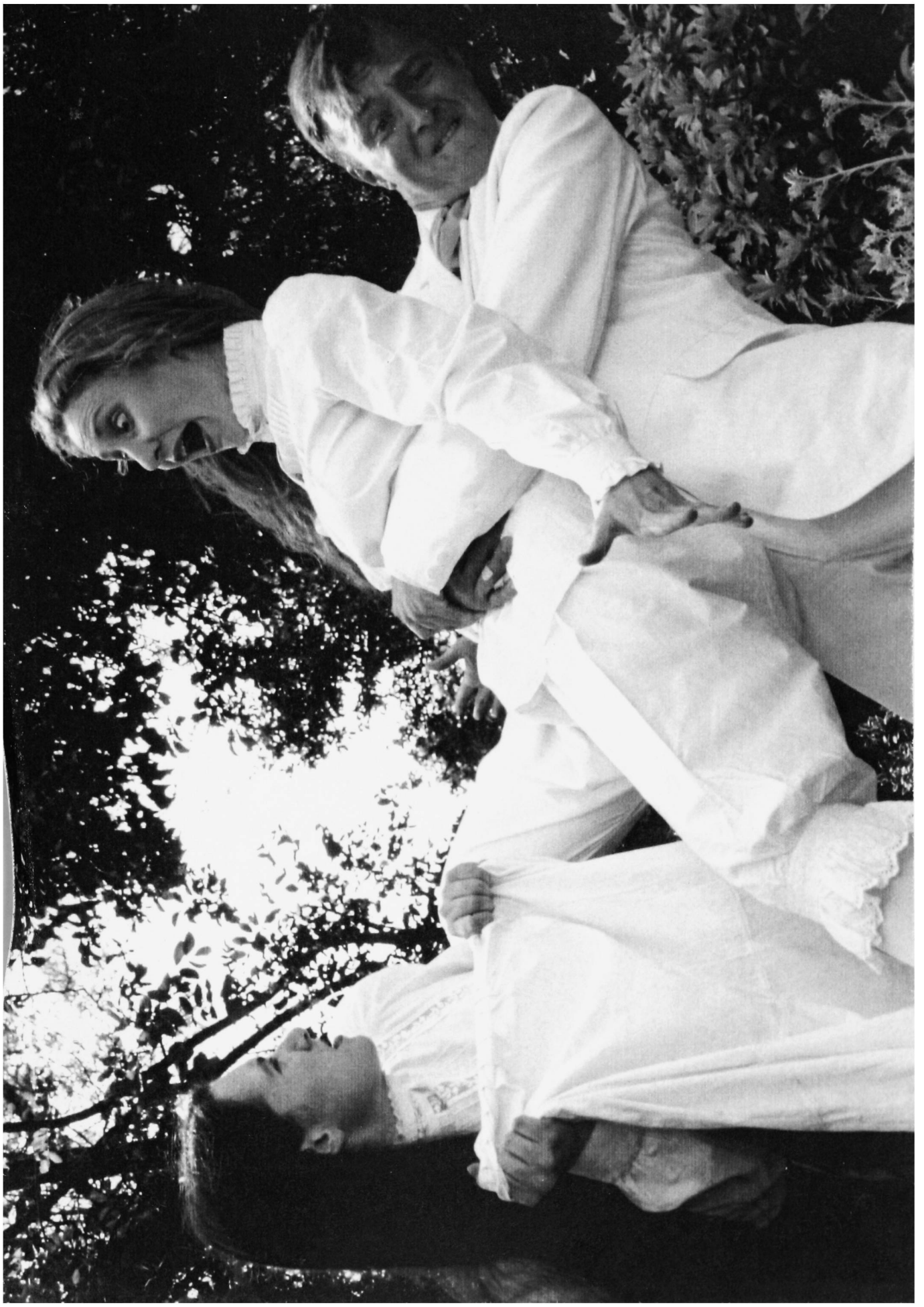

Figure 20: The lovers' quarrel. Theatre Set-Up 1995

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Figure 21: Hermia and Helena fighting.

Theatre Set-Up 1995.

CHAPTER NINE: 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

Figure 22: Titania and Oberon as nature spirits.

Theatre Set-Up 1995.

CHAPTER NINE: 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

Figure 23: Oberon as nature spirit. Theatre Set-Up 1995

CHAPTER NINE: 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

Figure 24: The mechanicals. Theatre Set-Up, 1995.

CHAPTER NINE: 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

Figure 25: Pyramus and Thisbe. Theatre Set-Up 1995.

CONCLUSIONS

I conclude that Shakespeare's plays have many levels of meaning, and that these include, in addition to the psychological reality of the characters of the stories, arcane significance. A number of literary critics share my opinion that the plays are polysemous and are encoded with spiritual allegories.

There would seem to be a variety in the arcana embedded in the plays, but every play has alchemical, Biblical and Platonic levels of meaning. In addition, some plays have Celtic significance and certainly The Merchant of Venice embodies the Cabbala. Many plays also have a level which signifies theurgy. All these levels are connected to each other through their meanings and symbols, and generally represent a process of spiritual redemption through purifying and testing trials. The nature of this process explains the often-tragic beginning of some comedies (as the two analysed in detail above), setting out as it does, the allegorical frame within which the redemption will be worked out. Thus the nature of Shakespeare's comedies is of a scenario which is not necessarily humorous, (although The Comedy of Errors and A Midsummer Night's Dream have many funny scenes) but which ends happily for most of the protagonists (as Cymbeline, Measure For Measure, or Love's Labour's Lost). The stories fall into natural segments, (not necessarily corresponding with the act and scene divisions), each of which has arcane significance.

CONCLUSIONS

Shakespeare varies his use and treatment of arcana, applying, for example, a rigid twelve-stage system of alchemical allegory to The Comedy of Errors while a broader four-stage alchemy is used in A Midsummer Night's Dream. The moral tone of the Biblical New Testament teaching prevails in the comedies, with a Christian-like forgiveness characterising the outcome.

As it is the custom of mystery systems to hide their secrets in jokes and games, thus ensuring that they are passed on to posterity without danger of prohibition, we must look to Shakespeare's comedies as well as to his tragedies to find encoded blueprints of the philosophies and mysteries of his time. Thus the analysis of a play such as The Comedy of Errors, which, on the surface, may be regarded as a light farce, reveals very profound spiritual allegories. Strange comic scenes, such as those involving Titania and Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream, may adumbrate an iconography of deep mystical significance. This strangeness, typifying less comic scenes from other plays such as Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale, may be attributed to spiritual iconology.

The understanding of the arcana in the plays clarifies the subtext for actors who are performing them, and, by explaining any allegorical significance of the language and plot, removes illogicalities which would otherwise block the actors from performing truthfully.

When the arcane significance of the plays is

understood, and incorporated into the direction of the play, it frees the actors and directors to lighten the script and play directly along its inner line, not feeling the need to be tendentious or impose gimickry. Ironically, a deeply spiritual interpretation of the play conveyed through a director's notes to actors and audience may provide the frame for a more comic style of performance.

Often an arcane level of a play may provide the inspiration for the style of the production, but the arcana do not necessarily stamp their character on the outward form of the play which may take its style from another source.

Audiences appreciate the clarity of the resultant productions and value any information on the play's arcana written in the programme notes, feeling that this illuminates the play for them, and gives them a deeper understanding of both the play and the production. Those members of the audience who are not interested in such information will nevertheless benefit from the clarity of the acting.

Theatre Set-Up intends to continue incorporating an understanding of the arcane significance of Shakespeare's plays into the direction of their productions. As I write these words, we are working in this way on Romeo and Juliet, and finding that Platonic and alchemic iconography explains much of the thought and language of the play.

CONCLUSIONS

I also think that the other playwrights of Shakespeare's time were incorporating spiritual arcana into their work and consider that examination of this possibility would open up the plays of some writers such as John Lyly, George Peele and Robert Greene to a wider audience through the clarification of their scripts.

It is possible that a new era of interpretation of Shakespeare's plays in the light of their secret meanings will open up with Mark Rylance, a firm believer in their arcane content, established as the artistic director of the Shakespeare's Globe.

NOTES

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3. Read, p.11.
4. Masonry & Medieval Mysticism (London, 1977), first published 1900, pp.161-162.
5. The Masonic Way (London, 1936), p.36.
6. Ancient Masonry (Los Angeles, 1967), first published 1938, p.32.
7. 'The Philosopher's Stone' is often abbreviated to 'Stone'.
8. Israel Regardie, The Philosopher's Stone (Minnesota, 1978), pp.15-18.
9. Read p.59.
10. See Read pp.57-60.
11. See Read pp.39-46.
12. Ripley's spelling 'coniunction' wherein the sound 'j' is signified by 'i' is changed to conjunction throughout this thesis.
13. 'Ourobouros' is sometimes spelt as 'ourobos'.
14. (London, 1979) p.196.
15. OED defines 'menstrue' for this context as 'solvent'.
16. see Nicholl pp.145-151.
17. Gilchrist p.60.

CHAPTER SIX

1. In order to avoid the variations in terminology and classification of this movement, I present the bald facts as presented in an encyclopaedia to satisfy the need to use this chapter as a reference resource in later chapters.
2. See Alfred Edward Taylor and Philip Merlan, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 24 vols (London, 1961), XVIII p.49. Further references to work of these authors will be from this publication and will be abbreviated to 'Taylor, Merlan'.
3. Taylor, Merlan, p.63.
4. Second edition (New York, 1961), p.69.
5. See Metamorphoses, The Arthur Golding Translation, 1567, edited, with an introduction and notes by John Frederick Nims (London, 1965).
6. Only examples from plays not dealt with in Chapters Eight and Nine are given in this chapter.
7. (Oxford, 1963) References to this author's work in the following several paragraphs will be from this publication and will be abbreviated to 'Jayne'.
8. The University of Missouri Studies 29, No.1. (Columbia, 1944), pp.1-247.
9. See Arthur Hilary Armstrong, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 24 vols (London, 1961), XVI, p. 217. Further reference to the work of this author will be of this publication and volume and will be abbreviated to 'Armstrong'. References to his work in other volumes of this publication will be designated by the appropriate volume number in Roman capitals.

References to work of other authors in this publication will be designated by their names followed by the name of the publication and the volume number.

10. See Geoffrey Bernard Abbott Fletcher, Encyclopaedia Britannica, XIV, p.599. English translation of Somnium Scipionis by W.H. Stahl (London, 1952).
11. See Armstrong, p.219 and Thomas Alexander Lacey, Encyclopaedia Britannica, II, p.682.
12. See Armstrong, p.219 and Henry Chadwick, Encyclopaedia Britannica, VII, p.396.
13. See Armstrong, p.219 and Lorenzo Minio-Paluello, Encyclopaedia Britannica, I, pp.779-780.
14. See Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance, Nesca A Robb, second edition (London, 1956), p.17.
15. Robb pp.18-19.
16. See Sears Jayne, 'Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium', The University of Missouri Studies, 29, no.1. (1944), pp.1-247, pp.13-14. All subsequent references to work of this author will be from this publication and will be abbreviated to Jayne followed by the page number.
17. Ficino is inconsistent in his nomination of speakers of these dialogues. In his introduction (see Jayne p.123), he says that the physician Ficino and the theologian, Bishop Agli were called away so that their speeches were given by Giovanni Cavalcanti, but he does not adhere to this scenario in the text.
18. Second edition (Sussex, 1978) p.39. Further references to work of this author will be from this edition and abbreviated to Hankins.
19. Hankins, p.111.
20. A reference to his father, Diotifeci d'Agnolo di Giusto, physician to Cosimo de'Medici who became the first Medici patron of Marsilio Ficino.
21. Presumably this is the source of the colloquial term 'better half', for a spouse.
22. For the complete exposition of this philosophic metaphor see the English translation by Walter Hamilton of the dialogue in Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII (London, 1973), pp.50-66.
23. See Shen Lin, The Element of Platonic Love in 'The Tempest': An Exercise in Iconological Principle: unpublished M.A. thesis, The University of Birmingham, The Shakespeare Institute (1984), p.24.
24. (Harmondsworth, 1967). Subsequent references to this work will use the short-title, The Courtier.
25. Edmund Spenser The Fowre Hymnes edited by Lilian Winstanley (Cambridge, 1907.)

NOTES

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. (London, 1973) p.87.
2. (London, 1963). Further references to the work of this author will be from this publication and will be abbreviated to R. M. Frye.
3. (London, 1993). All further references to the work of this author will be from this text and will be abbreviated to Shaheen.
4. Introduction to Tyndale's New Testament (London, 1989) p.ix.
5. Daniell p.xi.
6. Daniell p.xi.
7. Introduction to the Apocrypha, the Geneva-Tomson Bible (London, 1609).
8. This garment is variously interpreted: as 'apron' in the St James translation; and as 'breeches' in the Geneva Old Testament.
9. See The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (Harmondsworth, 1991), 1st published 1959, pp.272-281.
10. (London, 1974), p.9.
11. For details of this comparative cultural mythology please see my own Dissertation, Drama as Mesocosm, as detailed above.
12. The Under World Initiation, pp.79-80.
13. The Western Way, The Hermetic Tradition, II, p.152.
14. The Western Way, The Native Tradition, I, p.109.
15. The Western Way, The Hermetic Tradition, II, p.68. See the Apocryphal New Testament, edited and translated by M.R. James (London, 1924).
16. The Underworld Initiation, p.161.
17. Shaheen establishes that Shakespeare refers most often to this edition and the Bishops' Bible in the comedies, p.25.
18. Shaheen makes the comment that Tomson's translation from the Greek includes an over-literal supplanting of the definite article with 'that'.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, 8 vols (London, 1977), I, p.3.
2. Introduction to The Comedy of Errors (Harmondsworth, 1967), p.7.
3. Shakespeare Criticism, edited by Thomas Middleton Raysor, second edition, 2 vols (London, 1961), I, p.89.
4. Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition (London 1949), pp.68-70.
5. Weirdness in'The Comedy of Errors', in Shakespeare's Comedies: An Anthology of Modern Criticism, edited by Laurence Lerner (Harmondsworth, 1967), p.22

(originally published in the University of Toronto Quarterly, 1939).

6. Two Comedies('The Comedy of Errors' and 'Much Ado'), in Shakespeare's Comedies: An Anthology of Modern Criticism, edited by Laurence Lerner (Harmondsworth, 1967), p.34.
7. 'Shakespeare, Molière, and the Comedy of Ambiguity', Shakespeare Survey, 22 (1969), pp.15-26.
8. The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy (Princeton, 1985), p.65.
9. Errors in Comedy: A Psychoanalytic Theory of Farce, in Shakespearean Comedy edited by Maurice Charney (New York, 1980), p.236.
10. Shakespeare's Comedies (London, 1991), pp.29-30.
11. The Comedy of Errors (London, 1962), pp.xxxiii-xxxiv. All quotations from the play in this chapter are taken from this edition.
12. What's in Shakespeare's Names (London, 1978), pp.68-69.
13. Further references to the sections into which I divide the story are not given a heading, being indicated by an arabic numeral.
14. The spellings of Egeon and Emilia are used in this chapter which quotes from the Arden edition of the play. However the spellings of Aegeon and Aemilia were used in the 1986 production of the play, recorded in the programme notes (see Appendix A,1.)
15. The Shakespearean Tempest (London, 1932), p.115.
16. Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton U.S.A., 1957), p.150.
17. ''Time's deformed hand': Sequence, consequence, and Inconsequence in The Comedy of Errors', Shakespeare Quarterly, 25 (1972), pp. 81-91.
18. See entries on Demeter and Eleusis, A Dictionary of Classical Antiquities: Mythology, Religion, Literature and Art.
19. 'The Basis of Shakespearean Comedy', in Essays and Studies, 3 (1950), 1-28, p.9.
20. See entry on Ephesus in A Dictionary of Classical Antiquities and accounts of St. Paul's ministry in Acts 18.19, 19. 23-40, 2 Timothy 4.14, and 1 Corinthians 16.8.
21. Further correspondences between quotations from this play and biblical text detected by Shaheen will be abbreviated to Shaheen.
22. Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse are henceforth referred to as Syr. Antipholus. and Syr. Dromio.
23. Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus are henceforth abbreviated to Eph. Antipholus and Eph. Dromio.
24. See also entry on Ephesus in A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by Sir William Smith, 3 vols (London, 1893).
25. Shaheen p.53.

26. 'The Comedy of Errors: A Freely Binding Chain', Shakespeare Quarterly, 22 (1971), pp.35-41.
27. (Urbana, 1965) pp. 132-133.
28. Shaheen p.55.
29. See also Shaheen pp.55-56.
30. Shakespeare's Treatment of Love and Marriage and Other Essays (London, 1921) p.24.
31. Jayne on Ficino, p.145
32. Shakespearean Comedy, edited by Maurice Charney, pp. 84-95.
33. Shaheen p.56.
34. See also Shaheen p.57.
35. See also Shaheen p.58.
36. See also Shaheen pp.58-59.
37. 'Porpentine' means 'porcupine', see OED entry on Porcupine, 'Porpentine was the form known to Shakespeare who uses it 7 times, in 4 of these as the sign of an inn'.
38. Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions (New York, 1952), p.197.
39. Jayne on Ficino, p.185.
40. Shakespeare's World of Images, p.35.
41. See also Shaheen p.59.
42. See also Shaheen p.61.
43. See also Shaheen p.62.
44. See above p.174 and entry on 'Eleusis', in A Dictionary of Classical Antiquities.
45. See also Shaheen pp.64-65.
46 On the Compositional Genetics of 'The Comedy of Errors' p.37.
47. See also Shaheen p.65.
48. Jayne on Ficino p.162.
49. Jayne on Ficino p.159.
50. 'Old and New Comedy', Shakespeare Survey, 22 (1969), pp.1-5, p.5.

CHAPTER 9

1. The Exemplary Theatre (London, 1922), p.211.
2. Contrast Rather than Interaction, in Shakespeare: 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (London, 1983), p.120.
3. The Diary of Samuel Pepys, edited by Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols (London, 1970), III (1870-82), p.208 (diary entry for 29th September 1662).
4. The Words of Mercury: Shakespeare and English Mythography of the Reniassance, Salzburg Studies in English Literature, Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies, Editor: Dr James Hogg (Salzburg, Austria, 1974), p.181.
5. A Natural Perspective, p.58.
6. Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty, p.9.
7. (London, 1983), p.171.

8. (London, 1967), p.8.
9. Shakespeare's Best Comedy, in Shakespeare: 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', A Casebook edited by Antony Price, p.114.
10 (London, 1966), p.155
11. 'A Midsummer Night's Dream: The Fairies, Bottom, and the Mystery of Things', Shakespeare Quarterly, 26 (1975), pp.254-268, p.255.
12. A Midsummer Night's Dream (London, 1992), p.75.
13. Shakespearean Studies, 6 (1970), pp.35-50, p.36.
14. Second edition revised (Bristol, 1967) translated by Boleslaw Taborski.
15. (Amsterdam, 1973), pp.33-145.
16. ''Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture', Representations, 2 (1983), pp. 61-94.
17. Shakespeare Survey, 30 (1977), pp.125-134, p.128.
18. (Bristol, 1979), p.cxxxix.
19. (Cambridge, 1984), p.5.
20. Subsequent sections of the story will be signified only by section headings and the appropriate arabic numeral.
21. Shakespeare Quarterly, 4 (1953), pp.139-144, p.140.
22. For this summary of the alchemy relevant to the play see the 1995 Theatre Set-Up programmme notes.
23. See entries under names of characters or syllables making up those names in the A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language of Ernest Klein.
24. (London, 1980), p.97.
25. (Cranbury, New Jersey, 1973), p.43.
26. The Western Way, II, p.36.
27. John Vyvyan, Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty (London, 1961), p.78.
28. Vyvyan, p.79.
29. See Vyvyan, pp.79-80.
30. Vyvyan, p.80.
31. See Vyvyan pp.80-81.
32. See Vyvyan, p.83.
33. (Basingstoke, 1986).
34. (New York, 1966), p.3.
35. (Wellingborough, 1981), first printed in 1946, pp.3-4.
36. Also see Vyvyan, p.80
37. For example, see Beverley Milne, Consulting the 'I Ching' (London, 1978),pp.7-8.
38. See Vyvyan, p.88
39. Metamorphoses, VI.440-668.
40. The Holland text is re-printed in Waller's book (pp.75-91) from 'Hermia's Dream', The Annual of Psychoanalysis, 2 (1979), pp.369-389.
41. Shakespeare Quarterly, 23 (1972), pp.69-78, pp.70-71.
42. (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1988), p.136.

43. Shakespeare Quarterly 10, (1959), pp.513-521, p.513.
44. (Paris, 1982), pp.3-13.
45. Shakespeare's Comedy of Love (London, 1974), pp.89-90.
46. (London, 1984), pp.33-34.
47. The Golden Ass, translated by Robert Graves, p.279.
48. See The Rose of Love by John Vyvyan and A History of White Magic by Gareth Knight.
49. (New York, 1969), p.7.
50. Shakespeare Studies, 11 (1978), pp.39-51, pp.39-40.
51. See Vyvyan, p.85.
52. 'Animals as Agents of Revelation: The Horizontalizing of the Chain of Being in Shakespeare's Comedies', in Shakespearean Comedy, edited by Maurice Charney (New York, 1980), pp.79-95.
53. Shakespeare Quarterly, 33 (1982), pp.432-447.
54. Vyvyan, p.89.
55. Vyvyan, pp.89-90.
56. Shakespeare Quarterly, 24 (1973), pp.61-68, p.61.
57. 'Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream', Studies in English Literature 35 (1968), p.26.
58. Introduction to The Riverside edition of A Midsummer Night's Dream (Boston, 1974) p.219.
59. 'Imagination in A Midsummer Night's Dream', Shakespeare Quarterly, 15 (1964), pp.115-129, pp.115-127.
60. Shakespeare Quarterly, 5 (1954), pp.141-153.
61. See The 'Metamorphoses' of Ovid, translated and with an introduction by Mary M. Innes (Harmondsworth, 1981), first published 1955, pp.95-98.
62. See Vyvyan, p.90.
63. 8 vols (New York, 1941), VI, p.457.
64. p.270.
65. (London, 1964) p.42.
66. Shakespeare Quarterly, 44 (1993), 327-342.

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