

## Hamlet's "strucken deer": a pointed reference to *Gli Eroici Furori* and the execution of Giordano Bruno

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The staging of *The Mouse-trap*, the play-within-the-play written by Hamlet, ends in total disaster: Claudius, unable to contain his guilty feelings, bolts from the hall. He calls for "light" and runs off, with everyone else following him, except Hamlet and Horatio, who banter in a relaxed manner, making jokes about Hamlet's possible future career in a theater group. (Horatio also seems to exhibit knowledge of the theater business.) Suddenly, in Hamlet's song, the image of a wounded deer appears. :

Claudius: Give me some light! Away!

All: Lights, lights, lights!

*Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.*

Hamlet: Why, let the strucken deer go weep,

*The hart ungalled play;*

*For some must watch, while some must sleep:*

*Thus runs the world away.*

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers—if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me—with two Provincial roses on my raz'd shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?

Horatio: Half a share.

Hamlet: A whole one I!

*For thou dost know, O Damon dear,*

*This realm dismantled was*

*Of Jove himself; and now reigns here  
A very, very- pajock.*

Horatio: You might have rhym'd.

Hamlet: O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound! Didst perceive?

Horatio: Very well, my lord.

Hamlet: Upon the talk of the poisoning?

Hamlet: Aha! Come, some music! Come, the recorders!  
For if the King like not the comedy,  
Why then, belike he likes it not, perdy.  
Come, some music! (III. ii. 269 – 295)<sup>1</sup> (my emphasis)

The image of an injured or stricken deer had also been used famously, not too many years before Shakespeare moved to London, by Giordano Bruno. Bruno used the Actaeon and Diana myth (the ancient myth from Greece) when he wrote *Gli Eroici Furori*, which was published in London in 1585. (In this Greek myth, Actaeon is turned into a stag by Diana when he catches sight of her bathing in a lake under the moonlight and then he is ripped apart by his own hounds.) Bruno uses the Actaeon-Diana myth as one of the main metaphors in *Gli Heroici Furori* to describe the methods of the Heroic Lover, the pursuer of Eternal Truth. In Bruno's application of the story, Artemis, or Diana, is a vision of the Eternal Truth being 'caught' (seen, apprehended) by the pursuing Heroic Lover (on his quest for the truth). Actaeon's cruel fate is used in a rapturous way by Bruno as a metaphor for the heroic intellect approaching—and gaining intimate knowledge of—this Divine / Eternal Truth, to the point where the distinction between his human body and the truth of

nature dissolves and becomes one:

... But yet, to no one does it seem possible to see the sun, the universal Apollo, the absolute light through supreme and most excellent species; but only its shadow, its Diana, the world, the universe, nature, which is in things, light which is in the opacity of matter, that is to say, so far as it shines in the darkness.

Many of them wander amongst the aforesaid paths of this deserted wood, very few are those who find the fountain of Diana. Many are content to hunt for wild beasts and things less elevated, and the greater number do not understand why, having spread their nets to the wind, they find their hands full of flies. Rare, I say, are the Actaeons to whom fate has granted the power of contemplating the nude Diana and who, entranced with the beautiful disposition of the body of nature, and led by those two lights, the twin splendor of Divine goodness and beauty become transformed into stags; for they are no longer hunters but become that which is hunted. For the ultimate and final end of this sport, is to arrive at the acquisition of that fugitive and wild body, so that the thief becomes the thing stolen, the hunter becomes the thing hunted; in all other kinds of sport, for special things, the hunter possesses himself of those things, absorbing them with the mouth of his own intelligence; but in that Divine and universal one, he comes to understand to such an extent that he becomes of necessity included, absorbed, united. Whence from common, ordinary, civil, and popular, he becomes wild, like a stag, an inhabitant of the woods; he lives god-like under that grandeur of the forest; he lives in the simple chambers of the cavernous mountains, whence he beholds the great rivers; he vegetates intact and pure from ordinary greed, where the speech of the Divine converses more freely, to which so many men have aspired who longed to taste the Divine life while upon earth, and who with one voice have said: *Ecce elongavi fugiens, et mansi in solitudine*. Thus the dogs—thoughts of Divine things—devour Actaeon, making him dead to the vulgar and the crowd, loosened from the knots of perturbation from the senses, free from the fleshly prison of matter, whence they no longer see their Diana as through a hole or window, but having thrown down the walls to the earth, the eye opens to a view of the whole horizon. So that he sees all as one

..... (Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 66 – 68)

It is entirely possible that Shakespeare read this work: a printer in London named Thomas Vautrollier, a Protestant refugee from Paris, employed an apprentice named Richard Field, a man from Stratford-upon-Avon whose father worked with Shakespeare's father. Vautrollier published several of Bruno's works and it is possible that Shakespeare had access to them through Field. (Greenblatt, 193)

Appearing immediately after the stricken royal retinue leaves, the "stricken deer" image in *Hamlet* is very interesting, and becomes more fascinating if we remember that the same odd stricken deer image appears significantly in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, two plays about love and written about the same time as *Hamlet*, and all of them written around 1600, the year that Giordano Bruno was executed in Rome by the Roman Inquisition.

In *As You Like It*, the image of the stricken deer appears when Jaques moralizes on the wounded stag:

Duke: Come, shall we go and kill us venison?  
 And yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,  
 Being native burghers of this desert city,  
 Should, in their own confines, with forked heads  
 Have their round haunches gor'd.

First Lord: Indeed, my lord,  
 The melancholy Jaques grieves at that;  
 And, in that kind, swears you do more usurp  
 Than doth your brother that hath banish'd you.  
 To-day my Lord of Amiens and myself  
 Did steal behind him as he lay along

Under an oak whose antique root

Upon the brook that brawls along this wood!  
To the which place a poor sequest' red stag,  
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,  
Did come to languish; and, indeed, my lord,  
The wretched animal heav'd forth such groans  
That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat  
Almost to bursting; and the big round tears  
Cours'd one another down his innocent nose  
In piteous chase; and thus the hairy fool,  
Much marked of the melancholy Jaques,  
Stood on th' extremest verge of the swift brook,  
Augmenting it with tears.

Duke: But what said Jaques?

Did he not moralize this spectacle?

First Lord: O, yes, into a thousand similes.  
First, for his weeping into the needless stream:  
'Poor deer,' quoth he 'thou mak'st a testament  
As worldlings do, giving thy sum of more  
To that which had too much.' Then, being there alone,  
Left and abandoned of his velvet friends:  
'Tis right'; quoth he 'thus misery doth part  
The flux of company.' Anon, a careless herd,  
Full of the pasture, jumps along by him  
And never stays to greet him. 'Ay,' quoth Jaques  
'Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens;  
'Tis just the fashion. Wherefore do you look  
Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?'  
Thus most invectively he pierceth through  
The body of the country, city, court,  
Yea, and of this our life; swearing that we  
Are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse,  
To fright the animals, and to kill them up

In their assign'd and native dwelling-place.

Duke: And did you leave him in this contemplation?

Second Lord: We did, my lord, weeping and commenting Upon the sobbing deer. (II. i. 21 – 66)

Many allusions to both Bruno's situation and his ideas are inscribed in the passage. The wounded deer is suffering and on the verge of death, as Bruno was before his execution: "sequest' red" refers to Bruno's imprisonment, while the word "innocent" stands as Shakespeare's own private verdict on the accused man. The sad "groans" and "tears" of the deer recall the sufferings of Bruno, burned at the stake in public after being tortured in the dungeon prison at Castel d'Angelo in Rome.

Brunian philosophy, "whose antique root peeps out" like that of the oak, in that Bruno used classical thinkers, is also alluded to in the passage. "Flux" and the repeated references to streams and movement of water recalls the important Brunian concept of vicissitudes, while "he pierceth through the body of the country, city, court, Yea, of this our life" Hermetically broadcasts Shakespeare's own whole-hearted endorsement of Bruno's philosophy. In fact, with this lengthy passage about a wounded deer, a secret allusion to the wounded deer in the Actaeon myth, Shakespeare has managed to associate Jaques, a Frenchman from the Continent, secretly with Bruno (also Continental, an Italian), who had probably been executed by the time *As You Like It* was written. (*As You Like It* first shows up in the records on August 4, 1600 (when it was one of four plays which the Lord Chamberlain's Men asked to be "staied" from publication.))

Speaking of "staying", at the end of *As You Like It*, Duke Senior asks Jaques to "stay, Jaques, stay" (V. iv. 194), but Jaques refuses and says he will go to

"your abandon'd cave" (V. iv. 196). These lines are very likely a rendering of a 'farewell' to Bruno on Shakespeare's part. Shakespeare wants him to still be alive (i. e. : "stay"), but, of course, Bruno has already been executed. Visualizing the best, most ideal place for Bruno's spirit, Shakespeare returns to *Gli Eroici Furori* and places 'Jaques' (Bruno) in a "cave", echoing Bruno's own description of the state of the "one who comes to understand to such an extent", one who is sitting in "simple chambers of the cavernous mountains, whence he beholds the great rivers; he vegetates intact and pure from ordinary greed, where the speech of the Divine converses more freely". (Bruno *Gli Eroici Furori*, 67) (my emphasis). (Shakespeare's idea is probably *just as Bruno would have liked it*, and Giordano Bruno is therefore the "You" in *As You Like It*, and this title is a tribute to him.)

The stricken deer image in *Twelfth Night* appears in the opening scene. It is also to be noted that in *Twelfth Night*, the reference is more than just to a wounded deer in a forest, but also specifically to the Actaeon-Diana myth: "That instant was I turned into a hart".

Curio: Will you go hunt, my lord?

Orsino: What, Curio?

Curio: The hart.

Orsino: Why, so I do, the noblest that I have:

O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first,

Methought she purged the air of pestilence!

That instant was I turn'd into a hart;

And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,

E'er since pursue me. (I. i. 16 – 22)

It is not difficult to pick up on the many topical references and allusions to Bruno in *Twelfth Night*: the parody of a Catholic Inquisition conducted on

Malvolio, who is questioned about his view of Pythagoras' conception of the soul, as Bruno was during his lengthy trial which culminated in his execution for heresy; or Viola's code-name, Cesario, similar to "Cesarino" the name of one interlocutor in *Gli Eroici Furori*. Or, for example, the line "O, I have read it. It is heresy." (I. v. 228) Orsino is a Heroic Lover (a sort of literary model of the philosophical one Bruno sketches out in *Gli Heroici Furori*) who bids Viola to "unfold the passion of my love" (I. 4. 24) in his pursuit of a woman representing an ideal (Olivia) and whose innermost longings are explained through the metaphor of a mysterious, heretical and unnamed "text": "Where lies your text?" (I. 5. 223) asks Olivia, to which Viola, speaking on behalf of Orsino, replies, "in Orsino's bosom." (I. v. 224) To which Olivia counters "What chapter of his bosom?" (I. 5. 225); to which Viola answers "in the first of his heart" (I. 5. 226); to which Olivia dismissively replies, "O, I have read it; it is heresy." (I. v. 227) Bruno, an executed heretic, of course was found guilty of heresy.

The stricken deer in a forest image appears also, importantly in *Julius Caesar* (1599), and Bruno was imprisoned in Rome (he was sentenced to death in 1599 in Rome and imprisoned in Rome in 1593 after being transferred from Venice, where he was seized in 1592) and it was also in Rome where Julius Caesar was executed:

Antony: ..... Pardon me, Julius! Here wast thou bay'd, brave hart;  
 Here didst thou fall; and here thy hunters stand,  
 Sign'd in thy spoil, and crimson'd in thy lethe.  
 O world, thou wast the forest to this hart;  
 And this, indeed, O world, the heart of thee.  
 How like a deer, stricken by many princes,  
 Dost thou here lie! (III. i. 204 – 210)

Here, Shakespeare uses the terms "usurpers" "tyrants" or "princes" to characterize the people who execute or wound the deer. The powerful were in charge of executing Bruno.

Early on in his career, Shakespeare uses this Heroic-Lover-in-a-field image (a man pursuing a woman in a field whom he refers to as a "god") in *The Comedy of Errors* (1594). (Since Bruno had just been caught, Shakespeare hasn't yet become despairing of his situation and only the Heroic Lover, not the accompanying tragic stricken deer, is seen.) Echoing Bruno's metaphor of the Heroic Lover pursuing Eternal Truth in the forest, when Antipholus of Syracuse divulges, to Luciana, his passion for her in Act III, scene 2 of *The Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare uses the metaphor of a mortal wandering in "an unknown field" who comes across a being who can "teach" him "how to think and speak". "Are you a god?" he asks and uses the phrase "my soul's pure truth":

Sweet mistress—what your name is else, I know not,  
 Nor by what wonder you do hit of mine,—  
 Less in your knowledge and your grace you show not  
 Than our earth's wonder, more than earth divine.  
 Teach me, dear creature, how to think and speak;  
 Lay open to my earthy-gross conceit,  
 Smother'd in errors, feeble, shallow, weak,  
 The folded meaning of your words' deceit.  
 Against my soul's pure truth why labour you  
 To make it wander in an unknown field?  
 Are you a god? would you create me new?  
 Transform me then, and to your power I'll yield.  
 But if that I am I, then well I know  
 Your weeping sister is no wife of mine,  
 Nor to her bed no homage do I owe  
 Far more, far more to you do I decline.

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 them and there lie,  
 And in that glorious supposition think  
 He gains by death that hath such means to die:  
 Let Love, being light, be drowned if she sink! (III. ii. 29 – 52)

Luciana's name (original and not found in the source material) means "light" (from Latin "lux"), and besides the fact that Diana is seen in the moonlight and also Bruno compares seeing the Truth to "being led by those two lights, beauty and goodness" (*Gli Heroici Furori*, p. 67) this is also a clue that Shakespeare may have been starting to incorporate the solar ideas of Giordano Bruno, who begins *Lo spaccio della besta trionfante* with "He is blind who does not see the sun, foolish who does not recognize it, ungrateful who is not thankful unto it, since so great is the light, so great the good, so great the benefit, through which it glows, through which it excels, through which it serves, the teacher of the senses, the father of substances, the author of life." (Bruno, *Lo spaccio della besta trionfante*, 1584: 69)"

Another clue to the importance of Bruno is found in the fact that in *The Comedy of Errors* the setting is, importantly, *not* Epidamnus (which is the setting in the source material, Plautus' *Menaechmi*), but instead it is Ephesus, famous as the city where the Temple of Artemis (a. k. a. Diana), or the 'Artemision' (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World) was located. Shakespeare definitely knew about this famous temple since it is featured in Ovid. The passage above echoes the Actaeon / Diana myth, where Luciana is associated with a god in a field who has been pursued by a mortal viewing her in wonder and delight.

Besides *The Comedy of Errors*, one more case of the Actaeon / Diana myth is found in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Here, Petruchio is a fascinating Heroic Lover, much more nuanced and complex than Antipholus of Syracuse. Shakespeare seems to have come to the conclusion that the most successful sort of pursuer is the "rough" one ("for I am rough and woo not like a babe" (I. ii. 137)), a Trickster type, in disguise (referenced when Petruchio arrives at his wedding dressed in rags, a sort of motley), a jokester, a comedian, not necessarily an elite, but a clever sort of fellow. So, what happens when Petruchio meets Kate for the first time? First, there is a lot of banter which (in place of an actual forest) uses images of the natural world: wasps, asses, crabs. The banter could be seen as rhetorical pursuit of a kind, with Kate 'fleeing' by cleverly parrying Petruchio's comments. Then Petruchio says to Kate:

Did ever Dian so become a grove  
 As Kate this chamber with her princely gait?  
 O, be thou Dian, and let her be Kate,  
 And then let Kate be chaste, and Dian sportful! (II. i. 258 – 261)

A few lines later, Petruchio references the Diana / Actaeon myth again (with the word "light" recalling the moonlight under which Actaeon caught sight of Diana) when he says to Kate:

Now, Kate, I am a husband for your turn,  
 For by this light whereby I see thy beauty,  
 Thy beauty that doth make me like thee well,  
 Thou must be married to no man but me (II. i. 272 – 5)

Thus the moment of betrothal is the very same moment that the important Actaeon / Diana myth is referenced by name. The Heroic Lover has found the

goddess and the pursuit is over. But actual possession and incorporation of the two into one occurs later. The whole rest of the play develops the theme of union (the ‘taming’ of Kate is its allegory) in a way that mirrors the parrying of banter between the couple in their first scene together. Petruchio’s technique involves him constantly tricking Kate by playing a ‘mad man’. Through performance, he brings about needed reform, just as later Shakespearean Tricksters in disguise such as Viola, Rosalind and Portia (all their disguises are also as confident young fellows with a certain swagger, and all their disguises involve performance) are able to do other wonderful and difficult tasks with regard to love in more complex and refined ways. In *The Taming of The Shrew*, references honoring Bruno and his ideas are seen too in the way the sun and moon become focal points in an extended discussion (“it is the blessed sun” (IV. v. 18)). At one point Signor Hortensio marvels at Petruchio’s technique by commenting “Why, so this gallant will command the sun.” (IV. iii. 196) Of course, Petruchio will only *command Kate*, not the sun, but she, like the sun, has a cosmic dimension, though it is cloaked. A skillful Trickster, like Petruchio, can accomplish wonders.

The last scene, quite famous, where Katherine advises other the women to “place your hands below your husband’s foot / in token of which duty, if he please, / My hand is ready, may it do him ease” (V. ii. 177 – 179), has long been contentious. But if the play is merely a cloaked allegory, the end represents only a picture of the union of the Heroic Lover with the Goddess Diana. She is utterly one with him. No wonder that Petruchio greets her comment with “Come on and kiss me, Kate” (V. ii. 180), the symbolic union of the two then occurring on the stage. As with Actaeon, the mouth is important, though it is a kiss, not a meal, which allows the union of the Heroic Lover and the Truth, captured successfully, to occur. In addition, the beginning of this play references the use of philosophy, Giordano Bruno’s specialty, in the pursuit of

happiness:

Lucentio: ... and therefore, Tranio, for the time I study  
Virtue, and that part of philosophy  
Will I apply that treats of happiness  
By virtue specially to be achieved. (I. i. 17 – 20)

So, returning to *Hamlet*, as I have shown in my paper "Stand and Unfold Yourself": Prince Hamlet Unmasked"<sup>2</sup> (Tsukuba University 2013) and my similar presentation<sup>3</sup> at the Shakespeare 450 Conference in Paris in 2014 (sponsored by the Société Française Shakespeare), *Hamlet is a long literary work in secret code* about the role Shakespeare decided to play in history as a secret fighter for the sun economy (his dead father) against fossil fuels (Claudius).

So, after *The Mouse-trap* performance, when Claudius and the royal retinue, including Gertrude and Polonius, are agitated and stricken by its plot, this is an allegory for Shakespeare's own view of his role as a provider of dramatic works that code in the truth ("guilt") of dependence on fossil fuels. (It's primarily an environmental idea). This is why the royal retinue all cry out for "light" as the play dissolves: drama was born in seasonal festivals based on the sun and retains its festive core.

The "strucken deer" is obviously a reference to the stricken Claudius who has rushed out of the room, of course, but at the same time, it is a reference, always also to Giordano Bruno, who had just been executed (February 17, 1600). Shakespeare cannot leave out Bruno's contribution to science and philosophy and when the "truth" is discovered about Claudius in *Hamlet*, then also the deer image makes its due appearance as a signal of truth and also as a private symbol of Bruno.

In *Hamlet*, also, Bruno's death is also criticized (called brutal) in a coded way in the nearby lines where Julius Caesar's murder is brought up. Bruno was, like Julius Caesar, Killed in Rome ("Kill'd in th' Capitol") :

Hamlet: ....[*to Polonius*] My lord, you play'd once I' th' university, you say?  
 Polonius: That did I, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.  
 Hamlet: What did you enact?  
 Polonius: I did enact Julius Caesar. I was kill'd in th' Capitol; Brutus killed me.  
 Hamlet: It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there. (my emphasis)

The dead philosopher is immortalized in this play where another work of his, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* (*Lo Spaccio dela besta trionfante*) (a work starring Jove, who is overseeing the skies being populated by new Virtues as old ones are banished and *dismantled* in a movement towards reform), is also quoted by, appropriately, Prince Hamlet himself in the scene starting with Gertrude's lines "But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading" (II. iii):

Polonius: ... What do you read, my lord?  
 Hamlet: Words, words, words.  
 Polonius: What is the matter, my lord?  
 Hamlet: Between who?  
 Polonius: I mean the matter that you read, my lord.  
 Hamlet: Slanders, sir; for the satirical old rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes are purging thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams; all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down .... (II. ii. 191 – 202)

Hilary Gatti has noted the strong "echoes" in the above with one passage from Dialogue I of Bruno's *Lo Spaccio*:

... the very next passage in the Hamlet-Polonius dialogue echoes a page from the *Spaccio*:

Look, my body is wrinkling and my brain getting damper: I've started to get arthritis and my teeth are going; my flesh gets darker and my hair is going grey; my eyelids are going slack and my sight gets fainter; my breath comes less easily and my cough gets stronger; my hams get weaker and I walk less securely. (Gatti, *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge*, 142; the lower passage is a quote from *Lo Spaccio*)

Hamlet's description of this book as "slanders" is an ironical reference to the fact that *Lo Spaccio* was the only work of Bruno's singled out by name by the Roman Inquisition in its summation of his trial (although all of Bruno's books were banned by the Church). Hamlet's phrase "the satirical rogue" also points to Bruno, naturally not identified by name since he had been executed for heresy, and Bruno's dialogues have many satirical elements. Hamlet's daring to allude to his own agreement with the book's ideas—"I most powerfully and potently believe"—yet his subtle comment—"yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down"—also may be seen to imply that *Lo Spaccio*, though an allegory itself, was too easy for the Roman Inquisition to see through and use against Bruno.

Gatti's scholarship on Shakespeare and Bruno is limited to *Hamlet*, and Gatti develops the idea, which other critics have supported, that *Hamlet* and Giordano Bruno's work *Lo Spaccio della besta trionfante* (1583–5) share many fundamental similarities. Gatti focuses on the concept of the working out of a total reform as one common point;

All he can hope from his studies and his writings, states Bruno wryly is 'material for disappointment': any prudential reckoning will consider silence more advisable than speech. What spurs Bruno to write at all is what he calls

'the eye of eternal truth'. It is in relation to this higher and divine dimension of justice that his message must be unfolded, the terms of a total reform worked out. The Explicatory Epistle then goes on to indicate briefly the vices associated with the various constellations and to visualize their defeat followed by the reinstatement of corresponding virtues. What (*Lo Spaccio*) involves is thus the visualization of a new era, the arduous working out of a plan of total reform. Only when this task has been completed can the heroic intellect allow itself to rest: 'There is the end of the stormy travail, there the bed, there the tranquil rest, there a safe silence.'

Hamlet, confronted like Bruno by a world become 'rank and gross', weighs the dangers and uses of words in very similar terms: 'It is not, nor it cannot come to good. / But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue'. Then the Ghost, who announces himself as Hamlet's 'eye of eternal truth', spurs him to speak. Only when Hamlet, like Bruno, has penetrated and denounced the vices which dominate his world does he reach the end of his stormy drama with the advent of a new Prince. There, too, he finds 'the bed', the ultimate moment of quietness and safety: 'the rest is silence'. (Gatti, RDK 120 – 1)

In a later version of her essay on *Hamlet* and its relationship to *Lo Spaccio*, Gatti notes that *Hamlet* and *Lo Spaccio* also share a major fundamental dynamic and structural plot similarity: a strong but increasingly decrepit power center (Jove and Claudius) is vexed and challenged by a powerless but witty, brilliant and radical outsider (Momus and Hamlet):

*Lo Spaccio* narrates the story of a macroscopic, universal reform undertaken through the transformation of signs of the zodiac from bestial vices into reformed virtues, the entire operation being carried out by a Jove who considers himself an absolute prince, both in a political as well as a religious sense. Bruno, however, reminds his readers that even Jove, like all things that are part of the material world, remains subject to the laws of vicissitude, suggesting he is far from infallible, as he wishes to be considered. In order to underline this point, Bruno sees him as being accompanied throughout his long and meticulously organized reform by the suggestions of an ironic and

satirical Momus, who gets dangerously close to appearing as the real hero of the story. (Gatti *Essays on Giordano Bruno* 149)

Momus, the god of satire in the classical world, was expelled from Olympus by the gods for his caustic wit, and Bruno claims that his role in the celestial court of Jove in *Lo Spaccio* is similar to the Fool or court jester in an earthly court: "where each (jester) offers to the ear of his Prince more truths about his estate than the rest of the court together; inducing many who fear to say things openly to speak as if in a game, and in that way to change the course of events." (Gatti EOGB 149) Speaking "as if in a game", including the Hermetic need and practice to use enigma, riddles, or allegory in order to hide a message, can be seen as of course, Hamlet's "antic disposition", but also, more broadly, in my reading, as the whole play itself, which is an allegory, another sort of 'game' or mind tool.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Jove's project to reorder and reorganize the skies and constellations in *Lo Spaccio* is clearly and strongly alluded to in *Hamlet* in the lines ("this realm dismantled was") immediately after the "strucken deer" lines:

*For thou dost know, O Damon dear,  
This realm dismantled was  
Of Jove himself; and now reigns here  
A very, very-pajock.* (III. ii. 282 – 285)

The "pajock" (peacock) was thought of as a vicious bird in Elizabethan times, and clearly Claudius, reigning (as fossil fuels have taken over everywhere since 1600 when they took over England first), is associated with this vicious image. On the other hand, Horatio, Hamlet's friend, is, by contrast, "Damon dear", a reference to the myth of Damon and Pythias (or Phintias) in

Greek mythology. The legend symbolizes trust and loyalty in a true friendship. Unlike Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are only “paid spies” (Gatti, *RDOK*, page 155) working for Claudius, Horatio is loyal only to Hamlet and will, at the end of the tragic play, promise the dying Hamlet that he will tell his story.

#### Note

- 1 Evans, G. Blakemore et al editors, *The Riverside Shakespeare*. 1974. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (All subsequent quotations of Shakespeare’s works refer to this edition.)
- 2 [https://www.academia.edu/6937932/\\_Stand\\_and\\_Unfold\\_Yourself\\_Prince\\_Hamlet\\_Unmasked](https://www.academia.edu/6937932/_Stand_and_Unfold_Yourself_Prince_Hamlet_Unmasked)
- 3 <http://www.shakespeareanniversary.org/shake450/panels/panel-10-shakespeare-and-natural-history/>

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