

“The fair, the chaste, and inexpressive she”:
the Divine Feminine in *As You Like It*

Marianne Kimura

Giordano Bruno expressed his pantheistic and spiritual defense of goddess worship allegorically in his esoteric work *Gli Eroici Furori*, published in London in 1585. William Shakespeare knew this work and was influenced by it. Shakespeare's *Love's Labor's Lost* (1594–5), subtitled “a pleasant conceited comedie” dramatizes both the spirit and content of *Gli Eroici Furori* as its conceit and reveals that Shakespeare agreed with Bruno's radical pantheistic proposal.¹

Gli Eroici Furori had a profound influence on Shakespeare: some fundamental patterns relating to the way that the Goddess is characterized and presented in *Gli Eroici Furori* are seen throughout Shakespeare's comedies. The first and most important pattern is the dual nature of the goddess which Bruno presents as his ideal. On the one hand, Bruno conceives of this Goddess, the Divine Feminine, as a Diana figure, a spirit of nature, strong, free and wild and connected to the moon, which reflects the sun. In *Gli Eroici Furori*, Bruno uses the Diana-Actaeon story from Classical Greek mythology to present his vision of a philosopher or Heroic Lover (Actaeon) pursuing Divine Truth (Diana) in a forest:

... 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 (Gli Eroici Furori)*, 66–68)

On the other hand, the other female supernatural figure in *Gli Eroici Furori* is the singular nymph on the Thames River who opens the magical vessel for the nine blind philosophers and sprinkles the water in the vessel on the men so

that they can see again.

These two supernatural women, the nymph and Diana, represent a complete view of the Goddess for Bruno. The nymph on the Thames, linked to Protestantism and Britain (and away from Roman Catholicism), is a view of the holistic and integral world of science, including Bruno's scientific ideas—the universe is infinite, the earth moves around the sun, the sun is a star, the earth relies on the heat and light of the sun. The other supernatural figure, Diana, is the spellbinding beauty of nature. Bruno's particular Goddess is based on the beauty and sacredness of material earth (Diana) but she also has an open and methodical mind for education, study and learning (the nymph on the Thames).

This dualistic conception of the Divine Feminine was preserved by Shakespeare in the comedies, which are used to affirm and reflect Bruno's vision in a positive way. Therefore we see pairs of female characters: Katherine and Bianca (*The Taming of the Shrew*), Adriana and Luciana (*The Comedy of Errors*), Hermia and Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Olivia and Viola (*Twelfth Night*); Portia and Nerissa (*The Merchant of Venice*); Rosalind and Celia (*As You Like It*); Hero and Beatrice (*Much Ado About Nothing*); and Isabella and Mariana (*Measure for Measure*). Significantly, one or both of the female characters often disguises herself, a reference to the fact that these main female characters are cloaked goddess figures.

In addition, in conjunction with these main female characters (disguised goddesses), are further references to Diana, secret tributes to *Gli eroici furori*: "Diana's lip is not more smooth and rubious" than Viola's; Rosalind "will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain"; Orlando addresses Diana when he says: "hang there, my verse, in witness of my love / And thou, thrice-crowned Queen of Night², survey / With thy chaste eye, from thy pale sphere above..."; Claudius tells Hero, "You seem to me as Dian in her orb"; Portia complains that

she “will die as chaste as Diana”; Hermia is told that she must either “wed Demetrius or on Diana’s altar to protest for aye austerity and single life”. 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!” Invoking the power of Diana, Shakespeare set *A Comedy of Errors* in Ephesus, the site of the famous Temple of Artemis, whereas the source material, Plautus’ *The Menaechmi*, was set in Epidamnus.

Unlike *Love’s Labor’s Lost*, which is an intricate and technical allegory of *Gli Eroici Furori*, *As You Like It* is a more general tribute to Bruno’s life and work, but it does particularly emphasize the Divine Feminine. (By the time *As You Like It* was written³, Giordano Bruno had already been burned at the stake for his heretical beliefs). Bruno is very much present in this comedy, a play whose forest setting also recalls the forest of Diana in *Gli Eroici Furori*. Diana is mentioned several times, once by Orlando, once by Celia (“he hath bought a pair of cast lips of Diana / A nun of winter’s sisterhood kisses not more religiously..” (III. iv. 15 – 6)), and once by Rosalind (“I will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain (IV. i. 153 – 4)) Moreover, the presiding character of the play, Jaques, a philosopher from the Continent who “moralizes” on various topics, masks Bruno himself.

Given the importance of the Actaeon-Diana passage in *Gli Eroici Furori* for Shakespeare, it is no coincidence that as in *Twelfth Night*, the image of a hunted stag appears in *As You Like It*. This stag appears at the same time that one prominent character, Jaques, is first introduced:

Duke Senior: 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 banished you.
To-day my Lord of Amiens and myself
Did steal behind him as he lay along
Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out
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 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 the extremest verge of the swift brook,
Augmenting it with tears. (II. i. 21 – 43)

Duke Senior: But what said Jaques? Did he not moralize the 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 your 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. (II. 1. 21 – 64)

Many allusions to both Bruno's situation and his ideas are inscribed in the passage. The wounded deer is suffering and near death, as Bruno was before his execution in 1600: "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.

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" reveals Shakespeare's own positive evaluation of Bruno's profound ideas.

By grieving over the wounded deer, Jacques expresses the perspective of the creatures of the forest. The image crystallizes an image of a mind in sympathy with a huge cosmic nature, as Bruno was through his philosophy. Duke Senior's description of the forest as "tongues on trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything" (II. i. 16 – 7) is a poetical characterization of Giordano Bruno's heroic efforts to capture nature in his writings and ideas, in a sense, to give the whole cosmos a voice.

In Jaques' conversation with Rosalind in Act IV, scene I, one of the most notable aspects of Bruno's life, the fact that he travelled to many countries, is alluded to when Rosalind calls him "a traveller!" and adds "By my faith, you

have a great reason to be sad. I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's; then to have seen much and have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands." (IV, i. 21 – 25)

At the end of this play, though Duke Senior asks him to stay, Jaques goes off to an "abandon'd cave" (V. iv. 195), echoing the fate of Bruno's Heroic Lover: "he lives like a god under the protection of the woods in the unpretentious rooms of the cavernous mountains, where he contemplates the sources of the great rivers, vigorous as a plant, intact and pure, free of ordinary lusts, and converses most freely with the divinity, to which so many men have aspired"⁴

As You Like It develops a network of relationships among the characters which allow this divinity, the Divine Feminine (symbolized by Rosalind and Celia), to step forward within the freedom of this Brunian forest in order to exercise her power and influence for the benefit of all. The pantheistic philosophy of Bruno is brought to vibrant life.

The play is an allegory which shows the crisis, due to fossil fuels, threatening and endangering the local economy and the environment of England during Shakespeare's lifetime and beyond. In *As You Like It* Shakespeare uses the concept of the Goddess to solve this crisis.

Orlando, oppressed by his brother Oliver, expresses this pernicious environmental and economic crisis. One clue to his identity may lie in the word "land" inside Orlando's name. (Shakespeare's main source for the subject matter of *As You Like It* is Thomas Lodge's prose work *Rosalynde*, where the persecuted younger brother character is named "Rosader".) Orlando's description of his troubles are the important opening lines of the play:

As I remember, Adam, it was upon this fashion bequeath'd to me by will but

poor a thousand crowns and, as thou say'st, charg'd my brother, on his blessing, to breed me well; and there begins my sadness. My brother Jaques he keeps at school, and report speaks goldenly of his profit. For my part, he keeps me rustically at home, or (to speak more properly) stays me here at home unkept; for call you that keeping for a gentleman of my birth, that differs not from the stalling of an ox? His horses are bred better, for besides they are fair with their feeding, they are taught their manage, and to that end, riders dearly hir'd; but I (his brother) gain nothing under him but growth, for the which his animals on the dunghills are as much bound to him as I. Besides this nothing that he so plentifully gives me, the something that nature gave me, his countenance seems to take from me. He lets me feed with his hinds, bars me the place of brother, and as much as in him lies, mines my gentility with my education. This is it, Adam, that grieves me, and the spirit of my father, which I think is within me, begins to mutiny against this servitude. I will no longer endure it, though yet I know no wise remedy how to avoid it. (I. i. 1 – 25) (my emphasis)

The word “mines” hermetically references “coal”. Moreover, these important opening lines contain a secret indictment of what was happening to the rural economy as it became secondary to the powerful cities as coal altered everything. Words or phrases like “a thousand crowns”, “profit”, “dearly hir'd” and “growth”, along with “mines”, hermetically critique the socioeconomic changes happening as coal became the primary fuel for England. Elizabethan chronicler William Harrison noted that “the ground of the parish is gotten up into a few men's hands, yea, sometimes into the tenure of (one) two or three, whereby the rest are compelled wither to be hired servants unto the other, or else to beg their bread in miserie from doore to doore” (Harrison qtd in Weimann 162).

Orlando is rural England, captive to capitalism and profits under the new fossil fuel regime. In a climate of economic growth, increasing energy use and increasing complexity, cities grew and became polluted and crowded while

rural ways of life were no longer viable for many. Orlando's phrase "the spirit of my father" recalls the idea that the old order (the old sun economy) has died, giving way to a new order (allegorized in the figure of Orlando's brother Oliver).

At the end of his opening speech, Orlando admits that he knows "no wise remedy how to avoid" this situation where he is constantly treated as an inferior. Orlando and Oliver, whose names are similar, are the two sides of the same crisis: they represent respectively, the people who lost out, and the people who gained, from the new capitalistic regime. Both can be said to be oppressed by this regime of the 'market economy'. Shakespeare sides, therefore, with humanity and our planet against the pervasive, pernicious and temporary influence of fossil fuels and capitalism, and therefore indeed, though somewhat esoterically, articulates what Michael Bristol eloquently refers to as "values more durable than those which circulate in current markets":

In my view, Shakespeare's authority is linked to the capacity of his works to represent the complexity of time and social value in the successor cultures of early modern England. One of the crucial features common to these successor cultures is the way individuals and institutions must constantly adapt to the exigencies of a market economy. Our extended dialogue with Shakespeare's works has been one of the important ways to articulate values more durable than those which circulate in current markets. (Bristol, xii)

Besides being oppressed and having his life threatened by his brother, Orlando also cannot express himself; the countryside had no voice compared to the powerful cities. He meets Rosalind and after a few words, he finds himself tongue-tied: "What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue?" (I. ii. 257)

Rosalind, as a goddess figure, is equally oppressed (specifically, her life is

threatened) in the male-dominated world of the court of Duke Frederick. Both Rosalind and Orlando escape to find freedom and safety in the Forest of Arden, the Brunian space where nature is correctly understood and where the truth can speak freely without fear of punishment and death.

Once there Orlando finds that he can express himself (especially his love for Rosalind) by writing love poems and hanging them on trees:

Hang there, my verse, in witness of my love,
 And thou, thrice-crowned queen of night, survey
 With thy chaste eye, from thy pale sphere above,
 Thy huntress' name that my full life doth sway.
 O Rosalind, these trees shall be my books,
 And in their barks my thoughts I'll character,
 That every eye which in this forest looks
 Shall see thy virtue witness'd every where.
 Run, run, Orlando, carve on every tree
 The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she. (III. ii. 1 – 10)

In this Brunian world, Orlando finds his voice and at the same time, he can properly worship the Goddess: he names Rosalind as a huntress or votary among the companions of the hunt of which the goddess Diana (“the thrice-crowned queen of night”⁵) is patron. Giordano Bruno’s pantheistic philosophy comes to life in this forest.

However, the philosophy of Bruno is not just a ‘forest of pretty theories’; this forest offers real suggestions to oppose coal and capitalism. What can actually counter coal as a fuel? There is only one thing which people can turn to instead, and this is the sun. In *As You Like It*, there is a sun figure, who like Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, allegorically represents the sun. Considering that Giordano Bruno’s philosophy included thermodynamic heliocentrism, it is not surprising that the sun figure in *As You Like It* is Jaques. Jaques comes into

contact with Orlando in a central scene in the play and enacts a beneficial cure.

The main (but not the only) speech that gives away Jacques' identity as the cosmic sun figure is his own speech, which occurs early on in the play:

A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest
A motley fool. A miserable *world!*
As I do live by food, I met a fool,
Who laid him down, and basked him in the *sun*,
And rail'd on Lady Fortune in good terms,
In good set terms, and yet a motley fool.
"Good *morrow*, fool", quoth I. "No, sir" quoth he,
"Call me not fool till *heaven* hath sent me fortune."
And then he drew a *dial* from his poke,
And looking on it, with lack-lustre eye,
Says very wisely, "It is ten *o'clock*.
Thus may we see," quoth he, "how the *world* wags.
'Tis but an *hour* ago since it was nine,
And after one *hour* more 'twill be eleven,
And so from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour, we rot and rot;
And thereby hangs a tale." When I did hear
The motley fool thus moral on the *time*,
My lungs began to *crow like chanticleer*,
That fools should be so deep contemplative;
And I did laugh sans intermission
An *hour* by his *dial*. O noble fool!
A worthy fool! Motley's the only wear. (I. vii. 12–34) (my emphasis)

The directly sun-related words or phrases (*sun*, *morrow*, *heaven*, *hour*, *dial*, *o'clock*, *crow like chanticleer*, *time*) function emblematically, and because they are spoken by Jacques, it is to Jacques that they become subconsciously linked. (Even the words "ripe and ripe" and "rot and rot" indirectly bring to

mind the workings of the sun on a fruit tree.) Another clue that Jaques is the sun is his appreciation of Touchstone, who is a fool, which is also seen in the text above. The fool or clown character is an old one, closer to the sun because this character dates back to the festive occasions and rituals that started as seasonal rites and festivals.

The “cure” scene between Jacques and Orlando seems very different from that which takes place between Titania and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Titania is the troubled land and Bottom is the sun figure.⁶ First of all, Jacques and Orlando are antagonistic toward each other. (Jacques: let's meet as little as we can; Orlando: I do desire that we may be better strangers (III. ii. 257 – 8)). They insult each other, so the romantic mood of a miraculous meeting such as exists between Titania and Bottom is not present.

However, Jacques has seen the trees which Orlando has carved. Jacques says, “I pray you mar no more trees with writing love-songs in the barks” (III. ii. 259) and then asks, “Rosalind is your love's name?” (III. ii. 262), implying that he has read the verses, and that Orlando can express himself here. Then Jacques, rather exasperated with Orlando's quick and witty replies, says, “you are full of pretty answers; have you not been acquainted with goldsmith's wives and conn'd them out of rings?” (III. ii. 270 – 3). Orlando, who was tongue tied when he tried to talk to Rosalind in the first scene is instead now “full of pretty answers”. In addition, “goldsmith's wives” contains the word “gold” in it, and gold is a color mythically associated with the sun. The word “rings” also recalls a circular shape, like the sun. The “pretty answers” that Orlando is now capable of voicing are metaphorically linked to this solar / gold ring image because they have (in Jacques' wordplay) originated from a golden ring.

Moreover, while Jacques and Orlando engage in this conversation, Rosalind and Celia, the goddess figures, are present, but hidden and listening. Orlando's love for Rosalind, who, along with Celia, symbolizes the Goddess, the

sacredness and spirituality of the material earth, is the main topic of Orlando's and Jaques' conversation. With the Goddess and the sun connecting with the oppressed rural society (Orlando), Orlando can find his voice.

Orlando finds his voice but the play plays with this theme of his cure a while longer. After Jaques exits, Rosalind greets Orlando and proposes to cure him of his love. Rosalind tells Orlando, "I will not cast away my physic but on those that are sick", and Orlando plays along, inquiring, "I pray you tell me your remedy" (III. ii. 367). Then the words "cur'd" or "cure" appear five times in their lines of witty dialogue, ending with the plan of Rosalind's, "I would cure you, if you would but call me Rosaline, and come every day to my cote and woo me." (III. ii. 427)

All of the references to cures mean that it's likely that Shakespeare had a Mummer's play in mind while writing *As You Like It*. Mummer's plays, where a hero is wounded and a doctor cures him, had ritual origins "in the fertility rites and agrarian festivals of pre-feudal and pre-Christian village communities" (Weimann 17). (These ritualistic and ancient plays are still performed by local citizens in towns across England around Christmas). Robert Weimann describes the structure of the Mummer's play as follows:

The basic four-part structure of the play begins with an introduction in which one of the actors addresses the surrounding audience asking for room to play and requesting, sometimes, their attention as well. This is followed by the hero-combat, in which two protagonists (often St. George and the Turkish Knight) appear to boast of their strength and engage in battle; the defeated player is subsequently wounded or killed. A doctor, usually assisted by an impudent young servant, is then summoned to heal the fighter's wounds or resurrect him from the dead. A number of comic characters appear in the last part of the play, which ends finally with a collection and another address to the audience. (Weimann 15 – 16)

Shakespeare creatively modified and updated this structure, but some elements are evident in *As You Like It*. For example, the request for the audience's attention occurs in Act II, scene v, where the men who attend Duke Senior are singing: "come hither, come hither, come hither". It is worth noting, too, that this song participates in solar imagery: "who doth ambition shun / And loves to live i' the *sun*" (II. v. 39) The old cultural pathway back to village festivals and seasonal rites is being subtly referenced here, subtly opposed to the "working-day world" (I. iii. 12) of the court, which represents capitalism, the necessity to get and spend money through burning fossil fuels.

The hero-combat is of course the conflict involving Orlando and Oliver. Oliver is rendered powerless (though not physically injured) and then he is rejuvenated and restored to happiness by Celia, another goddess figure.

The last part of the Mummer's Play format (the collection and another address to the audience) is modified in the epilogue where Rosalind explains, "I am not furnish'd like a beggar, therefore to beg will not become me" (V. iv. 9 – 10)). Shakespeare was faithful to the conventions of the Mummer's play, a clue that its traditional ritual significance in welcoming the return of the sun (since Mummer's plays were performed around the winter solstice) may have also been an idea that found resonance with his own cosmic and energetic concerns.

Oliver is also cured in the forest when he is saved from a lioness by Orlando. Soon afterwards, Oliver meets Celia, also a goddess figure, and falls in love with her. With the Goddess (deep care and love for the sacred earth and understanding of the natural environment in a Brunian way) present, the crisis, caused by coal, can be symbolically solved. (The sun would prevail and coal and fossil fuels would be scorned in such a world). Everyone is happy and satisfied in the Brunian forest, a place where they have learned so much, and then it is time to go back to the city and spread the good news (Duke

Senior is to get back his lands and position; Oliver and Orlando have reconciled) and apply Bruno's philosophy there.

Poignantly, though, as I explained above, only Jaques will not accompany the others back to the city. He will stay in the forest in a cave. Bruno, who is masked by Jaques, was already dead, and Shakespeare wanted to pay tribute to Bruno as a Heroic Lover who roams Diana's forest forever, absorbed into the beautiful world, one with it forever.

As the play reaches its denouement, the specific way that the Goddess or Divine Feminine could emerge from human interaction with Bruno's thought is allegorized by the strange and mysterious magician who is suddenly mentioned in Act V but who never actually appears on stage. This magician is cited by Rosalind as the special person who can 'magically' bring Rosalind to Orlando's side:

Orlando: (Oliver and Aliena) shall be married tomorrow; and I will bid the Duke to the nuptial. But O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes! By so much the more shall I tomorrow be at the height of heart-heaviness, by how much I shall think my brother happy in having what he wishes for.

Rosalind: Why then tomorrow I cannot serve your turn for Rosalind?

Orlando: I can live no longer than by thinking.

Rosalind: I will weary you then no longer with idle talking. Know of me then (for now I speak to some purpose) that I know you are a gentleman of good conceit. I speak not this that you should bear good opinion of my knowledge, insomuch as I say I know you are; neither do I labor for a greater esteem than may in some little measure draw a belief to from you, to do yourself good, and not to grace me. Believe then, if you please, that I can do strange things. I have, since I was three year old, convers'd with a magician, most profound in his art, and yet not damnable. If you do love Rosalind so near the heart as your gesture cries it out, when your brother marries Aliena, shall you marry her. (V. i. 42 – 61)

The word “conceit” is a hint that this play is another allegory. (Like so many of Shakespeare’s other plays, this allegory, as I have said, is about mankind, coal, the sun and humanity’s need for the Feminine Divine. The word “*gentleman*” modifying Orlando also points to him being ‘man’ in the hidden allegory). This hint is given together with the information that Rosalind “has convers’d with a magician”. Yet, Rosalind does not concretely explain how this magician will help her. She merely leaves it as a suggestion or implication that he will.

Shortly after that, Orlando in turn tells Duke Senior about this magician:

My lord, the first time that ever I saw him [Rosalind / Ganymede],
 Methought he was a brother to your daughter.
 But, my good lord, this boy is forest-born,
 And hath been tutor’d in the rudiments
 Of many desperate studies by his uncle,
 Whom he reports to be a famous magician,
 Obscured in the circle of this forest. (V. iv. 28 – 34)

Orlando adds that the magician is Rosalind’s “uncle”. The fact that this magician is Rosalind’s uncle recalls Rosalind’s words to Orlando when they met in the forest in Act III:

Orlando: Are you a native of this place?
 Rosalind: As the cony that you see dwell where she is kindled.
 Orlando: Your accent is something finer than you could purchase in so remov’d a dwelling.
 Rosalind: I have been told so of many; but indeed an old religious uncle of mine taught me to speak, who was in his youth an inland man, one that knew courtship too well, for there he fell in love.... (III. ii. 338 – 346)

Since the main words that are used to describe this mysterious character, so far, are "uncle", "magician", and "religious", with "uncle" used twice, it is likely that this figure is one and the same.

In Act V we get a final glimpse of this mysterious figure. An "old religious man" is said to have had some conversation with Duke Frederick (the 'bad guy' who had usurped the title and position of Rosalind's father, Duke Senior, and threatened Rosalind with death) and through this conversation, Duke Frederick decides not to mount an armed attack against Duke Senior and instead he makes up his mind to become a religious hermit:

Duke Frederick, hearing how that every day
Men of great worth resorted to this forest,
Address'd a mighty power, which were on foot
In his own conduct, purposely to take
His brother here, and put him to the sword;
And to the skirts of this wild wood he came;
Where, meeting with an old religious man,
After some question with him, was converted
Both from his enterprise and from the world,
His crown bequeathing to his banish'd brother.... (V. iv. 154 – 63)

Who is this mysterious figure, though? We know that in the allegory underlying this play, this figure is an important source of wisdom because he teaches Rosalind to speak and teaches Rosalind "many desperate [dangerous] studies". One clue to the identity of the magician is found in the way that Rosalind associates him with love ("there he fell in love"): references to love like this may point to the Heroic Lover of *Gli Heroici Furori* and therefore, more specifically, to Giordano Bruno.

The connections linking the mysterious magician and Giordano Bruno become firmer still when we recall that Bruno wrote extensively about magic.

Bruno's sort of magic is emphatically not superstition: "Leaving aside those principles of magic which play on the superstitious...", he writes in his work *On Magic*. (Bruno, *Essays On Magic*, 109) Bruno is instead mainly interested in explaining what he terms 'natural magic'. By this, he does not mean what he says is "commonly called 'natural magic", the manipulation of "active and passive powers, as occurs in chemistry, medicine and such fields" (Bruno, *EOM*, 105). Bruno's emphasis is rather on what he terms "'natural magic' in the proper sense" (Bruno, *EOM*, 105), which he defines as "what happens as a result of powers of attraction and repulsion between things, for example, the pushes, motions and attractions due to magnets and such things, when all these actions are due not to active and passive qualities but rather to the spirit or soul existing in things" (Bruno, *EOM*, 105). Later, Bruno gives further specifics about how a magician of this "'natural magic' in the proper sense" goes about his craft:

... a dog generates the same species of dog, and a human the same species of human.

From this, it is clear that the entire cause of the differences is due to an idea, which is generally present everywhere in nature, and which is later limited to this or that species, depending on whether one or other species resembles the idea more. As a result, any magician who wishes to carry out his work in accordance with nature must especially understand this ideal principle and how it applies specifically to species, numerically to numbers and individually to individuals. From this, he formulates an image and the proportions of the matter so formed, and with good reasons reinforces the result with the wisdom and power of his magic. (Bruno, *Essays On Magic*, 112)

From this passage, it is clear that a Brunian magician must have a deep understanding of the principle involved in the particular sort of natural magic that he or she practices. With similar emphasis on the human ability to use

imagination creatively to achieve working knowledge of mysterious processes, Bruno defends the pagan, nature-worshiping religion of the ancient Egyptians, who "had made sense of their world, using their 'irrational' worship of animals and idols to eminently rational ends" (Rowland, 166):

The stupid, insensitive idolaters had no reason to laugh at the magic and divine religion of the Egyptians, who in every cause and effect, according to the principles appropriate to each, contemplated divinity, and knew how to obtain the benefits of Nature by means of the species that are in her womb: just as she gives fish from the sea and river, wild animals from the desert, metals from mines, so from certain parts, certain animals, certain beasts, certain plants, there are offered certain destinies, powers, fortunes, and impressions. Hence the divinity in the sea was called Neptune, in the sun, Apollo, in the earth, Ceres, in the desert, Diana, and so differently in the other species, all of which refer back to a god of gods and wellspring of ideas that exists above Nature. That god, being absolute, as nothing to do with us, but inasmuch as he is communicated through the effects of Nature and is more intimate to them than Nature herself, if he is not Nature per se, certainly he is the nature of Nature ... hence those who wanted to receive his help had to present themselves by the order of species, adjusting themselves to particular principles, just as whoever wants bread has to go to the baker...." (Bruno, *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, Dialogue 3, quoted in Rowland, 166)

Summarizing Bruno's methodology, Hilary Gatti describes the Brunian conception of magic as an emergent process of step-by-step thinking and imagination:

Magic, in this sense seems to be intimately related to the powers of the imagination. It creates, beyond the sphere of our will, and according to an intimate necessity of method, the infinite number of diads, or contraries, or differences, through which the mind attempts to rise, by elaborating a series of ever more elaborate syntheses, to an understanding of the ultimate unity of

the whole. (Gatti, *Essays on Giordano Bruno*, 288)

This kind of magic can even be seen, in a modern light, as a kind of spiritual process. As Kamata Toji writes, “Spirituality allows us to plumb the depths of thinking about ourselves and the totality of existence, by means of which we change in a fundamental way” (Kamata, 182).

The magician-religious-uncle in *As You Like It* is a reference to the Brunian magician who engages deeply with the world but in a hidden way (“obscured in the circle of this forest”) and behind the scenes. Of course, this is Shakespeare himself, whose plays are about using the power of the human imagination to understand the power of the sun and nature and the ‘ultimate unity of the whole’, though this ultimate unity has been sadly forgotten and ignored in the rush to burn coal and later, oil.

The magician of course, is also Bruno, whose ideas were at the core of Shakespeare’s work. Rosalind, as a goddess, connects these ideas of nature worship directly with Orlando (mankind) and this connection is symbolized by their marriage. But the magician (Shakespeare and Bruno) is needed to bring them together. When Rosalind mentions him in Act IV, the mysterious magician seems to be merely a practitioner of legerdemain or sleight of hand, since the audience knows Rosalind and Ganymede are one and the same. However, his craft, like Shakespeare’s hidden solar allegories, is actually quite a bit deeper than that.

This religious magician hermit figure appears in many of Shakespeare’s plays and always functions to bring mankind and the Goddess together. In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Topaz, the curate, marries Olivia (a goddess) and Sebastian (mankind). In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Friar Francis protects and shelters Hero (a goddess figure) so that her name can be cleared and then she can marry Claudius (mankind). In *The Merchant of Venice*, Stephano tells Lorenzo

and Jessica that Portia will soon arrive accompanied by a mysterious "holy hermit" who never appears again in the text:

Stephano is my name and I bring word
My mistress will before the break of day
Be here at Belmont: she doth stray about
By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays
For happy wedlock hours.
Lorenzo: Who comes with her?
Stephano: None but a hold hermit and her maid. (V. i. 39 – 45)

Portia (a goddess figure) marries Bassanio (mankind).

Of course, the most active friar / religious hermit figures are probably Vincentio, in *Measure for Measure*, who brings together Mariana (a goddess figure) and Angelo (mankind); Friar Lawrence, in *Romeo and Juliet*, who tries but fails to bring Juliet (the sun and a goddess figure) and Romeo (mankind) together; and Prospero, in *The Tempest*, who brings together Miranda, the goddess, and Ferdinand (mankind). The pattern is pretty clear: Shakespeare was actively subverting the common notion of a single male god and proposing a sacred material earth: the Goddess. These days, where a new consciousness empowering women (seen, for example, in the #metoo movement) has emerged, it does seem that his idea, radical enough in his time to have been considered heretical had he not skillfully disguised it, was prescient indeed.

Note

- 1 “‘Thou being a goddess I foreswore not thee’: the Divine Feminine in the ‘pleasant conceited comedy’ called *Love’s Labor’s Lost*”, in Eibungaku Ronsou (published by Kyoto Women’s University), pages 1-27, March 2018. I also presented a version of this paper at the British Shakespeare Association conference “Shakespeare Studies Today” in Belfast, Ireland, on June 15, 2018.
- 2 When in the skies, the moon-goddess is named Cynthia, Phoebe or Luna; when on the Earth, she is Diana; in the underworld, she is Hecate.
- 3 *As You Like It* was marked “to be staid” from publication on August 4, 1600 and Giordano Bruno was executed on February 17, 1600. (*Riverside Shakespeare*, page 53)
- 4 <http://esotericarchives.com/bruno/furori.htm>
- 5 Thrice-crowned queen of night means the divinity who ruled on earth as Diana, in the heavens as Cynthia the moon goddess, and in the underworld as Hecate or Proserpina.
- 6 Kimura, Marianne, “And Phibbus’ car shall Shine from far”: the Sun, a ‘green’ Mummer’s Play and hieros gamos in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 筑波大学地域研究 (34), 87 – 114, 2013
筑波大学大学院地域研究研究科 <https://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/120005246924>

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