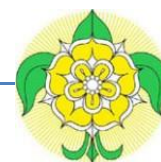


Beauty, Truth and the Gemini



The core theme of the Gemini, Truth and Beauty, in Shakespeare

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There are various indications which imply that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* was probably the first Shakespeare comedy to be written (c. 1592-3). The play would appear to be the 'gateway' to all the subsequent plays—the comedies and tragedies—which develop the underlying theme of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and other themes within it, in a panoramic variety of ways. The underlying theme is based on the classical myth of the Gemini, 'the Heavenly Twins'. Indeed, the Gemini myth provides the key theme of the whole Shakespeare canon and acts like a signature. As I shall explain, it is equivalent to and defines the name of 'Shakespeare'. It constitutes the gateway to the Mystery of Shakespeare—the mystery of the author and the works.

The Gemini are symbolised by the twin pillars at the entrance to a temple. Those of Solomon's Temple are known as 'The Great Pillars' (Jachin and Boaz) and stand at the entrance to the porch of the temple. In Romanesque and Gothic cathedral architecture they are represented by the twin towers at the western end of the church that rise each side of the main west entrance, and also by the pillars of the 'Great Archway' dividing the nave from the choir. Renaissance tomb wall monuments also show these Twin Pillars or Great Pillars. The Shakespeare Memorial in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, is not only an example of such use but even has the Gemini twins carved in human form crowning the pillars, presumably to make sure that we don't miss the symbolism. The astrological sign (♊) for Gemini is representative of the two pillars standing on a threshold and capped with a lintel.



'Gemini' means 'Heavenly Twins'. These are the two brothers, one mortal (Castor) and the other immortal (Pollux), who become, by means of love, friendship, forgiveness and mercy, the immortal-mortals. Another formula for this latter title is 'son of God, son of man'. The twin brothers have twin sisters, Clytemnestra and Helen, the former being mortal and the latter being immortal.

In several plays, Shakespeare blatantly portrays this theme of twinship in various different ways, such as two male friends linked in a deep bond of friendship (e.g. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice*); or as two brothers at enmity with each other (e.g. *As You Like It*); or as two women friends (e.g. *As You Like It*); or as a pair of twin brothers and a pair of twin servants (e.g. *Comedy of Errors*); or as two pairs of lovers (e.g. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*); or as a twin brother and sister (e.g. *Twelfth Night*). In other instances and other plays the 'twinship' is more subtle and in some cases is purely the interaction between and coming

together of the immortal (spiritual) and mortal (human) levels, such as in *The Tempest* wherein Ariel is the immortal and Prospero the mortal. This metaphysical relationship refers to the most essential meaning of the Gemini, wherein the mortal twin signifies the natural human being or person (i.e. psyche) whilst the immortal twin signifies that person's higher, spiritual self or soul. The very publication which announced Shakespeare to the world as the name of the author—*Venus and Adonis* (published in 1593)—is a love-story about an immortal goddess and a mortal human.

To help confirm this key theme of the Gemini, all three major publications of the Shakespeare works (Poems, Sonnets and Folio) display a Gemini headpiece, like a signature. These headpieces have three variant designs: that for the poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, show the Gemini as winged Pan-like figures, symbolic of their spiritual or purely immortal form; that for the *Shakespeare Sonnets* show the Gemini as winged boys, symbolic of them as the immortal-mortals; whilst that for the Shakespeare Folio of plays show the Gemini as two boys without wings, thus symbolising them as mortals.

Bride and Peacocks
Headpiece on title page
Venus and Adonis (1595)



Bride and the Gemini
with Baconies
Headpiece on title page
Shakespeare's Sonnets (1609)



AA-Gemini-Wheatsheaf
Headpiece to Hugh Holland's
sonnet page
*Shakespeare's Comedies,
Histories and Tragedies* (1623)



Moreover, the opening poem (Portrait Poem) on the very first page of the Shakespeare Folio is signed "B.I.", which can be taken to mean "Ben Jonson" but more essentially refers to the Great Pillars, Boaz and Jachin. Indeed, the whole of the Shakespeare Folio can be taken to represent a literary form of Solomon's Temple, such as in the sense that Francis Bacon referred to when he said that he was "laying a foundation in the human understanding for a holy temple after the model of the world".¹ In his *New Atlantis* he associates this philosophical temple with Solomon's Temple, to be built by the holy and charitable members of Solomon's House—the College of the Six Days' Work. The Shakespeare poems, sonnets and plays are involved with the fourth 'Day' or stage of the work, 'The Ladder of the Intellect', which concerns the actual work of building the temple.

In the classical myth of Leda and the Swan, the Gemini are Leda's children. The swan is symbolic of love, poetry, music, culture, grace and beauty. Zeus takes on this symbolic form or role in order to impregnate Leda (who is also symbolically a swan in this divine intercourse). On the same night that this takes place Leda also sleeps with her mortal husband Tyndareus, who likewise impregnates her. As a result she conceives two sets of twins who are born from two eggs, one set of twins being children of Zeus and therefore immortal, and the other set of twins being children of Tyndareus and thus mortal. The immortals are Pollux (Polydeuces) and Helen; the mortals are Castor and Clytemnestra.



The Gemini story concerns the two brothers, Pollux and Castor, who grow up together, develop a deep love and friendship for each other, and go on many adventures together. Eventually Castor makes a huge mistake and desires the bride of another man on her wedding day. He chases her and in his lust is determined to have his way with her. The family of the bride are furious and chase after them, catch up with them and kill Castor. Pollux is so upset at this that he goes to Zeus and begs the great god to forgive Castor and restore his brother to life, in return for which he is willing to give up his immortality, and everything that he is, as a love sacrifice. Zeus is so moved by this that he says he will grant Pollux's wish and in addition bestow an extra boon, which is that the brothers can become mortal-immortals.

Because of their parentage, the Gemini are known as 'Swans'. What is not so well known is that they are also traditionally known as 'Spear-shakers'. In other words, from the Shakespeare point of view there are two 'Shakespeares'. Ben Jonson uses this Gemini symbolism in his tributary poem to the author Shakespeare in the Shakespeare Folio, when he refers to the author as the "Sweet Swan of Avon" who seems to "shake a Lance at the eyes of Ignorance".

The Gemini theme is fundamentally that of love and friendship, and this forms the basic theme of all the Shakespeare plays—love and friendship, or lack of it, together with all the various opposites: e.g. constancy and inconstancy; honesty and dishonesty; unselfishness and selfishness; moral goodness and moral corruptness (i.e. good and evil). The Shakespeare comedies show the path of initiation that transforms imperfect love into perfect love. The tragedies show the opposite. In this, Shakespeare is portraying constancy in love as the quality of immortality, whilst variability in love is the mode of mortality.



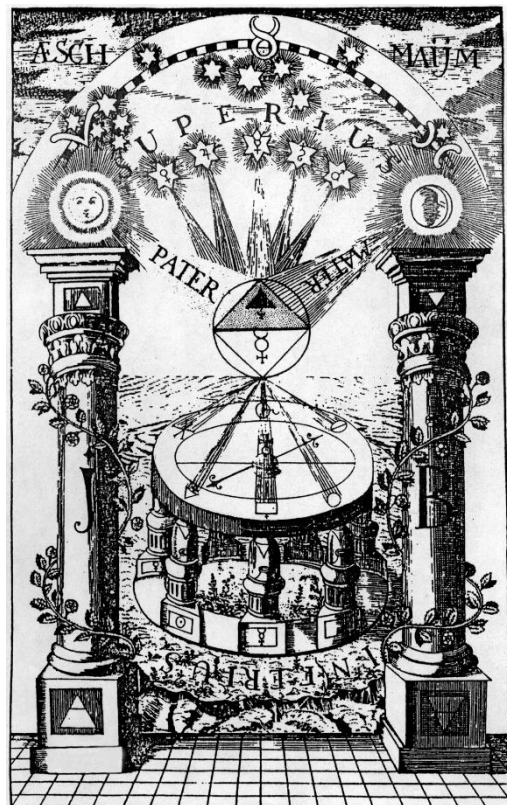
In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Valentine is constant in love whilst Proteus is variable in love and, basically, does some bad things that lead him to attempt a rape of Valentine's fiancée, Sylvia. Of the two ladies, Sylvia is constant in love whilst Julia is variable in love; but Julia's love for Proteus increases and she doesn't do bad things. The play culminates in Proteus' repentance and, as a result, being instantly forgiven by Valentine. The whole situation of all the characters is thereby redeemed—transformed as if by magic onto another level wherein all ends happily and the hoped-for marriages take place.

Many theatre directors cannot understand the sudden conversion and redemption, and make out-of-character and sometimes perverse alterations to the end of the play. But in fact repentance can be sudden and totally real when the sinner is brought face-to-face with his or her guilt and is truly repentant, asking for forgiveness and willing to make amends. True love, which is always willing to forgive, is then enabled to forgive; the reason being that such a repentant sinner is suitably receptive to receive that forgiveness. Moreover, such love has the power to inspire and transform others as well, changing attitudes and situations. This is the miracle, or magic, of love. It is known as redemption. It is referred to by St Paul as being accomplished in a "twinkling of an eye".² The Law of Redemption is a higher law than the Law of Karma (Cause and Effect) and can totally transform and transmute the karmic situation into something better.

The Law of Karma is applied via Justice; the Law of Redemption is applied via Mercy. They relate respectively to the Great Pillars of Freemasonry and Kabbalah. For instance, Justice is a name for the left-hand pillar of Severity, Strength, Understanding and Intelligence (the mortal or Moon pillar, Boaz, with which Proteus is associated), whilst Mercy is a name for the right-hand pillar of Compassion, Wisdom, the Word (the immortal or Sun pillar, Jachin, with which Valentine is associated).

There is also a third pillar, the middle pillar known in Freemasonry as Mahabone ("the Great One"). This middle pillar is the Pillar of Balance and Harmony, although referred to in Freemasonry and elsewhere as Beauty. This is represented in the imagery of Solomon's Temple by the double-cubed Altar of Incense in the heart of the temple.

All of this profound wisdom and symbolism is summed up in three lovely poems by Shakespeare: a song in the play *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, a sonnet in the collection of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, and a poem forming the apex of Shakespeare's 'Sacred Triangle' of poems, of which *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* are the base angles:-



Song to Sylvia (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act 4: Scene 2)

Who is Silvia? What is she,
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair and wise is she;
The heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admired be.

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness.
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness,
And, being help'd, inhabits there.

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling:
To her let us garlands bring.

Sonnet 105 (*Shake-speares Sonnets*)

Let not my love be called idolatry,
Nor my beloved as an idol show,
Since all alike my songs and praises be
To one, of one, still such, and ever so.
Kind is my love to-day, tomorrow kind,
Still constant in a wondrous excellence;
Therefore my verse to constancy confin'd,
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.
Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words;
And in this change is my invention spent,
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.
Fair, kind, and true, have often liv'd alone,
Which three, till now, never kept seat in one.

'Threnos' (*The Phoenix and the Turtle*)

Beauty, truth, and rarity,
Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclosed in cinders lie.

Death is now the phoenix' nest
And the turtle's loyal breast
To eternity doth rest,

Leaving no posterity:
'Twas not their infirmity,
It was married chastity.

Truth may seem, but cannot be:
 Beauty brag, but 'tis not she;
 Truth and beauty buried be.

To this urn let those repair
 That are either true or fair
 For these dead birds sigh a prayer.

These three poems present the overall Truth in three different ways:

1. Holy, fair and wise
2. Fair, kind and true
3. Beauty, truth and rarity

In this triple triplicity, fair is clearly to be understood as meaning the same as beauty. To be wise is defined as having the ability to discern or judge what is true—i.e. to think truly and discern truth. Holiness is equated with kindness and rarity. The *Phoenix and Turtle* poem associates the Turtle (male) with truth and the Phoenix (female) with beauty. Beauty is associated with the feminine, whether as Sylvia, or the poet's beloved, or the Phoenix. In this way we have Shakespeare's particular descriptions of the Three Great Pillars:-

- Fair, beautiful (beauty) = Right-hand Pillar (Jachin), associated with Venus
- Wise, true (truth) = Left-hand Pillar (Boaz), associated with Mars (and Adonis)
- Holy, kind, rare (rarity) = Middle Pillar (Mahabone), associated with the Sun

In this description, Shakespeare's use of words seems slightly at odds with the modern commonly accepted terminology given to the Three Great Pillars; but the bard appears to be describing the pillars in terms of the Venus and Mars myth, Venus being representative of the right-hand pillar, and Mars of the left-hand pillar. These two immortals are lovers for eternity, and give birth to Harmony and Cupid (Love), who are representative of the middle pillar.

Sylvia's Song says that holy, fair and wise constitute grace from heaven, and that beauty lives with kindness. Sonnet 105 reiterates this by remarking that fair, kind and true constitute three themes in one, and that the beloved's love (i.e. beauty's love) is both kind and constant. The *Phoenix and Turtle* poem echoes the same Trinitarian theme by remarking that beauty, truth and rarity constitute grace in all simplicity.

To summarise, beauty and truth, when truly married together like the Phoenix and Turtle, become one flame of love that is holy, kind, rare, constant and simple (i.e. single). This can be equated to what the Ancient Egyptians and Francis Bacon referred to as the Double Truth—the truth of being and the truth of knowing:-

... for the truth of being and the truth of knowing are one, differing no more than the direct beam and the beam reflected.³

These two pillars, or two truths, or two lovers, are associated either with the Gemini, who united in love become the mortal-immortal 'son of man, son of God', or with Venus and Mars who, through their constant love-union, produce Harmony and Love (Cupid). Cupid (Greek: Eros) is also known as Christ (Greek: Christos). Christ is known as the son of man, son of God—the immortal-mortal, truly beautiful.

This is the whole Truth. As the later poet, John Keats, wrote:-

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty," – that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.⁴

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Pictures

1. Shakespeare Memorial, Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, England.
2. Leda and the Swan. Oil on panel (1515-20). Painted by Cesare da Sesto after a lost painting by Leonardo da Vinci. (Wilton House, Salisbury.)
3. The Gemini Spear-shakers. Emblem p.174, "Imagini de i Dei", from Cartari's *Le Imagini de gli Dei de gli Antichi* (1581).
4. Temple of Pansophia. Illustration from *Compass der Weisen* (Berlin, 1779).

Endnotes

¹ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, Bk I, Aph.120 (transl. Spedding & Ellis).

² "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed." [1 Corinthians 15:51-52.] The "dead" refers to those who are spiritually dead, separated as it were from God, because of committing or indulging in sin of some kind; whereas the "living" are those who are living a life of love without sin and are therefore in a state of grace. "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins" (Colossians 2:13).

³ Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* (1605), Bk I.

⁴ John Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (1819), published anonymously in the January 1820, Number 15 issue of the magazine *Annals of the Fine Arts* (lines 46–50).