“This dream is all amiss interpreted”: Julius Caesar, Shakespeare’s Alchemical Tragedy

Jesús CORA ALONSO
Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED)

ABSTRACT
In this paper I show how Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar (1599-1600) depends on the notion of alchemy as a psychological process. Whereas for Carl G. Jung (1875-1961) this process of transformation involved ‘individuation’, Shakespeare’s references to alchemical transformation signify psychological and political manipulation. Thus, the play’s images of fire and melting metals denote a change in the characters’ moods and attitudes, especially the one operated by Cassius on Brutus’s mettle (an obvious pun on “metal”) to persuade him to join the conspiracy against Caesar. In the light of alchemical symbolism, Decius’s interpretation of Calphurnia’s dream in 2.2.76-90 is the clearest scene of psychological manipulation, but it also, however cryptically, identifies Caesar’s death with the achievement of the Philosophers’ stone and, therefore, it shows that the conspirators’ alchemy of minds aims at the political transmutation of Rome into an ideal Commonwealth of the type that millenarian and enthusiast preachers envisaged in Early Modern England. Following Jung’s practice of using eclectic materials to interpret alchemical symbols, but abstaining from applying his psychoanalytical interpretation, I discuss the play’s imagery in the light of alchemical symbolism as well as period religious and alchemical iconography, and I turn to the historical work of Frances A. Yates and Christopher Hill to read the play against the background of Renaissance utopian, idealistic Christian movements, particularly the Puritan Sidney-Essex circle, and the esoteric discourse in which they expressed their radical ideology. Finally, as a result of my imagery analysis, I also offer a final remark in order to add to the debate on whether there is contention or subversion in the play.

In recent years, the proliferation of new historicist, postmodernist, deconstructionist, postcolonial, and gender-centred readings, particularly in Shakespeare and Renaissance Studies, has resulted in the neglect and
even total rejection of more traditional approaches that are period-specific and focus on the study of the function of metaphor and image as a revealing, cohesive aesthetic and thematic device in Shakespeare’s texts. This attitude towards such type of studies might perhaps induce scholars and students of Shakespeare’s plays to think that a formalist, historicist —antiquarian or archaeological— approach to Shakespeare’s play is exhausted by now. Nothing further from the truth. Indeed, this approach can also elicit questions and topics favoured by both new historicism and cultural materialism such as how radical and subversive a Shakespeare play is. Thus, Julius Caesar offers an example of how the study of Shakespeare’s metaphor and imagery still requires ground-breaking research in order to both clarify the meaning of the play in the context of Shakespeare’s own time by elucidating obscure passages that have been interpreted rather lightly by editors and critics alike, and add further elements that foster different, competing interpretations of the text, with particular attention to the issue of political subversion in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama that characterises the ongoing debate between the new historicist stress on contention of subversion and cultural materialist foregrounding of subversion despite the limits set to it in these plays.

References to alchemy and the use of alchemical metaphors and symbols are frequent and prominent in Julius Caesar, however, scholars and critics have hardly paid any attention to this essential aspect of the play. Caroline Spurgeon (1934:1970) and Wolfgang Clemen (1977) neglect this play in their respective studies of Shakespearean imagery and they almost fail to discuss it. Indeed, they do not mention alchemy in connection with the play. Indeed, Clemen (1977:90, 99-100) only mentions Julius Caesar in passing.

The scholars responsible for the most commonly available editions of the play hardly make any reference to alchemy in the play. Most do it just perfunctorily or in the footnotes to some passages of the play. Certainly, they do not offer a detailed commentary or interpretation on this matter. Only two offer brief but significant orientation on the subject.

T. S. Dorsch, in the 1955 Arden Shakespeare second series edition, disagrees with Spurgeon and stresses the importance of the imagery of civil war, metals, blood and the theatre. Dorsch focuses on images related to metals that are used to define the minds and morals of the characters according to the oppositions “between the sharpness and bluntness of metal objects, between liveliness and dullness, between preciousness and baseness” (Dorsch 1973:lxvii) and suggests that perhaps Shakespeare used this kind
of metaphors because of the meaning of Brutus’s name (which can be translated as “blunt”, or even “thick”, or “rude”). Dorsch mentions the pun on the homophones “mettle” (“disposition”) and “metal” in Cassius’s conversation with Brutus to persuade him to join the conspiracy against Caesar, but he does not establish its relationship with alchemy. Consequently, Dorsch subordinates the references to alchemy in the play to the imagery of metals, instead of identifying the correct reverse relationship in which all the references to metals are a background to the more important, symbolical element of alchemy.

Norman Sanders, in the 1967 New Penguin Shakespeare, repeatedly affirms that the play is characterised by “very unmetaphorical clarity” (Sanders 1996:10), an “uncharacteristic lack of metaphorical richness” (Sanders 1996:11) and a “largely unmetaphorical and unlyrical style” (Sanders 1996:39) only to contradict himself by listing the different clusters of images, namely the multiple associations of blood, the metallic images of hacking and cutting, the metaphors of value, the imagery of stag-hunting and bleeding carcasses, and the expression of friendship and love with images of fire and affection. This contradiction is all the more evident and blatant when at the end of his discussion of the poetry of the play he observes:

> These and other image patterns the play contains such as those connected with storm and disorder, acting and the stage, the physical aspects of the city, the human body, sleep, and the spiritual world, are linked at every point with one another and with the more obvious issues, and greatly enrich the imaginative vision of the whole. (Sanders 1996:40)

Apart from the contradiction, Sanders does not mention alchemy as an element of the play’s imagery, but in his commentary endnotes he does indeed include elucidations of the text bearing in mind alchemical notions (Sanders 1996:186 n II. 2. 89).

Marvin Spevack, in the 1988 New Cambridge Shakespeare edition, points to the little attention the imagery of the play has received as “it is generally agreed that it contains relatively few images or image patterns or clusters” (Spevack 1999:3). However, quite significantly and perceptively, he indicates that the theme of the change of the characters, as opposed to their desire for constancy and stability, is conveyed in part by means of alchemical images (Spevack 1999:25) which coexist with the cluster of verbs indicating violence, images of strife and storm, and the semantic fields of fire and blood (Spevack 1999:26-27).
Equally keen, are David Daniell’s 1998 commentaries in the Arden Shakespeare third series edition. Daniell summarises some of the studies on imagery of the play (G. Wilson Knight 1931, R. A. Foakes 1954, and Maurice Charney 1961) that focus on blood, storm and fire (Daniell 2000:44-45), but later in his analysis of Brutus’s character, he relates his evolution along the play with the images of alchemy and explains that “[i]t is possible that the vocabulary of alchemy points to a subversive movement in Brutus” (Daniell 2000:52). Daniell adequately identifies and discusses the clearest alchemical references in the play and points out that Cassius begins using this type of vocabulary in order to express the sinister idea that Brutus’s nobility can be changed into acceptance of joining the conspiracy against Caesar, and that Casca compares the positive effect that having Brutus as an ally will have on public opinion with the beneficial effects of alchemy (1.3.157-160). Moreover, Daniell notes that Brutus himself adopts this alchemical vocabulary when he joins the conspiracy and that his purpose is to transform Rome into gold by killing Caesar. He also sees that possibility of interpreting the vocabulary in the last lines in Brutus’s long speech against taking oaths to kill Caesar in an alchemical key expressing Brutus’s desire to employ “the highest Roman qualities, to act together to make new gold” (Daniell 2000:53). Daniell also comments on the idea of the sacrifice of Caesar expressed with the imagery of hunting, butchery and even the culinary (Daniell 2000:54) and the religious symbolism that also offers parallelisms with the passion of Christ (Daniell 2000:99), but just like those before him, he does not relate these religious and violent images with the alchemical ones.

If the most commonly available editions of the play are generally disappointing as to the discussion of alchemy in the play, the specialised bibliography on this issue is all the more so. In his specialized article on the metaphor of alchemy in the play, William B. Toole (1972) summarises the ideas of the main alchemical English authors (George Ripley, Thomas Norton and R. Bostocke) and surmises that Shakespeare might have read their production. Toole does interpret Shakespeare’s metaphors in the light of alchemy and identifies the whole conspiracy against Caesar as an alchemical process. He comments on the key relevance of the recurrent mettle/metal pun in the play that develops the theme of change and its association with Brutus, and also points out that the references to health and sickness are a means to signify Brutus’s involvement in the corrupt conspiracy orchestrated by Cassius as well as his psychological evolution from wary reluctance to enthusiastic embrace of the cause against Caesar. Valuable as Toole’s article
“This dream is all amiss interpreted”: *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare’s Alchemical...

is for understanding the alchemical key in the play, it fails to identify and interpret appropriately the most cryptic alchemical symbolism in the play or use iconography to underline the analogy between Shakespeare’s images and alchemical symbolic illustrations.

Surprisingly enough, Stanton J. Linden’s specialised monograph (1996), because of its panoramic scope, tiptoes on alchemy imagery in Shakespeare and just quotes a few lines from *King John* (3.1.75-82), *Julius Caesar* (1.3.157-160), an image from *Antony and Cleopatra* (1.5.36-37) (Linden 1996:100-101), and briefly discusses Sonnet 33, Sonnet 114 and Sonnet 119 (Linden 1996:92-93). After the briefest of comments on the plays, Linden concludes, most disappointingly that:

> In each of these examples from the drama, alchemical allusions are short and easily separated from the larger work; [...] they perform no vital role in motivating the action of a play, in promoting characterization, or in establishing a significant pattern of imagery. (Linden 101)

Judging by the information I have summarised so far, it is evident then, that the study of the imagery in *Julius Caesar* remains limited, patchy and somewhat confused, Toole’s article excepted, especially as to the function of alchemical images and symbols. However, it is possible to establish that the apparently different strains of imagery within the play are in fact related and that alchemy is actually the unifying symbolic language to which all the other metaphors are subordinated by virtue of the Proteic quality of alchemical symbolism found in 16th and 17th-century treatises.

Toole’s and Daniell’s acute observations about the relationship between alchemy and Brutus’s psychology and saviour-like political aims indeed suggest that Shakespeare was conversant in the discursive and visual symbolic codes of alchemy. Curiously enough, this relationship shows some analogy with and lends cogency to Carl Gustav Jung’s interpretation of alchemy and its symbols as a code for the representation of a process of spiritual transformation and perfection. If Shakespeare uses alchemy’s symbols to encode Cassius’s persuasion strategies and Brutus’s assuming the idealistic sacrifice of Caesar, Jung decodes alchemical emblems and illustrations and analogous images in dreams as part of the process of ‘individuation’, the ultimate communion of an individual with his or her Self (*i.e.*, the subconscious centre of the psyche). Clearly, the directions that Shakespeare and Jung take for relating alchemy and the mind are opposed and their types of psychic transformation are different, but they
share the large common ground of alchemy’s symbols and metaphors. That is why Jung’s books on alchemy (1992; 1993; 2002, especially the first two) are a very good, easily available primary introduction to the complex symbolism of alchemy and a good guide for checking which symbols match the imagery Shakespeare employs in the play in order to ascertain the play’s coherent meaning fully. Thus, following Jung’s example as to the handling of iconographical materials, but leaving aside his theory of psychoanalysis, I use religious and alchemical illustrations to interpret Shakespeare’s images very much following what would be best termed as ‘reversed iconology’, for if Erwin Panofsky (1994) and other scholars belonging to the golden age of the Warburg Institute employ texts and philological analysis to study images, I resort to images and diverse iconographical representations to elucidate the true intrinsic meaning and import of Shakespeare’s metaphors and images, not one that is projected or forced upon the text from any particular perspective, political agenda or sociological arm-wrenching.\(^1\)

I totally concur with Toole in that the first scene of the play sets up the tenor for the imagery of the play and points to the issue of persuasion and manipulation considered as an alchemical process. Two tribunes, Flavius and Murellus (1623 Folio) / Marullus (Theobald 1733), confront the Commoners and mechanics who celebrate Caesar’s victory over Pompey’s forces and his return to Rome and they recriminate their swift change of heart from supporting Pompey in a not very distant past. When interrogated about his trade by Murellus, a Cobbler humorously identifies himself as a “mender of bad soles” (1.1.14)\(^2\). The primary meaning involving his profession is complemented by the connotations of the homophone “souls”, thus pointing to his ability as a political speaker who is able to rally the support of the other workers for Caesar’s cause. However, the Cobbler’s defiance and sarcasm against the tribunes does not last for long and is overpowered by the tribunes’ highly rhetorical arguments against their fickleness. This prompts Flavius to observe how easily they are controlled: “See where their basest mettle be not moved. They vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness” (1.1.62-63). This is the first instance of the pun on “mettle” and “metal” that most editors and critics identify as recurrent in the play.

---

\(^1\) See the first chapter in Panofsky (1994:13-44) for his account of the philological method applied in iconology.

\(^2\) I use Daniell’s edition for all the references to and quotations from *Julius Caesar* in this paper. However, I maintain traditional forms of names such as Casca, instead of the form “Caska” employed by Daniell.
This play on words introduces the relation between disposition, character and spirit on the one hand and metals on the other and therefore offers the connection between the alchemy of metals, i.e., their transformation into gold, and the changes and transformations as well as downright manipulations operated in some characters’ minds.

This pun is repeated in the course of 2.2. in which Cassius fathoms Brutus’s opinions about Caesar and offers to be his mirror so that he discovers and acknowledges his opposition to Caesar’s becoming king. Brutus uses the word “mettle” to comment on Casca’s character: “What a blunt fellow is this grown to be! / He was quick mettle when he went to school” (1.2.294-295). Cassius corrects his wrong impressions about Casca and when Brutus leaves, Cassius, apparently prompted by Brutus’s error in judgement, takes on the word “mettle” and remains pondering about Brutus’s personality in a monologue in which he contemplates the possibility that Brutus may be won over (i.e., “seduced”) by Caesar and the chances he has to do the same: “Well, Brutus, thou art noble: yet I see / Thy honourable mettle may be wrought / From that it is disposed. [...]” (1.2.307-309). Here the alchemy of minds is further developed and worked into a paradox for the implication is that the effect of alchemy is inverted as the gold of Brutus’s nobility can be changed into something else, necessarily baser. To my mind, Shakespeare conveys the double meaning that Cassius sees the danger that Caesar may corrupt Brutus and he also perceives that he has an opportunity to transform Brutus in a fellow conspirator against Caesar. In fact, his train of thought in the following lines, in which he plans to have inflammatory messages thrown with stones to his windows, shows that he develops the second meaning and considers how best to achieve it.

In the following scene, the other conspirators also see the need for Brutus to join their faction and Casca makes the comparison between the positive effect that Brutus’s would cause on the people’s reaction to Caesar’s assassination:

O he sits high in all the people’s hearts:  
And that which would appear offence in us  
His countenance, like richest alchemy,  
Will change to virtue and to worthiness.  
(1. 3. 157-160)

This time alchemy implies a double change, on the one hand the people of Rome will be subject to the alchemy of psychological transformation,
enacted by Brutus’s participation in the conspiracy, on the other hand, as a result of this change in the people’s minds, the very act of the murder of Caesar will be transmuted from a crime into a virtuous action. Thus, Casca’s observation signals the moment in which Brutus changes from a passive position in which he is subject to alchemical operation, that is, Cassius’s persuasian, to an active one in which he is the potential agent in the change of others, namely the people of Rome. In the following scene, not only does Brutus decide that Caesar must die, but also, as David Daniell points out, his diction changes in two significant ways. In contradistinction to the more classical vocabulary that he uses in the first act, he starts to use more modern words, the sort of vocabulary that Cassius uses. Also, he uses alchemical vocabulary and images in consonance with his new role and purpose of transforming Rome into gold by sacrificing Caesar. In this respect, I think it is worth reading Brutus’s words in the light of alchemical iconography for then we will discover that many of the images and vocabulary that he employs are apparently unrelated to alchemy, but in fact are part and parcel of its cryptic symbolism.

Thus, when in the first monologue in act 2 (2.1.14-34), Brutus reflects about what Caesar may do when he reaches supreme power as king, his vocabulary has alchemical echoes even when he sounds more aphoristic. He ponders on how the crown “might change his nature”, how he may scorn “the base degrees” he left behind in his ascension to power. The allegory of the ladder is an old biblical and philosophical image, but it is also related to alchemy as the whole gradual process of the production of the Philosophers’ Stone was symbolised with a ladder or scala lapidis hermetis [ladder of the hermetic stone] (FIGURE 1). Expressions such as “bear no colour for the thing he is”, “that what he is, augmented / Would run to these and these extremities” suggest the different colours and stages in the alchemical process that sometimes could be deceiving and mislead the adept into cutting it too short or prolonging it too much with, sometimes, fatal consequences. At the end of the monologue, Brutus gets to the conclusion that he must kill Caesar, and although the image he uses seems to be a commonplace built on the association of the snake with evil, it also seems to derive from alchemical lore for, as Jung explains in Psychology and Alchemy (1993:217, 238, 430), eggs were symbols of the Philosophers’ Stone. Thus, the mercurius vivus, a synonym among many of the Philosophers’ Stone was sometimes symbolised with a serpent’s egg, for instance, the ouroboros enclosed within an egg (FIGURE 2), or an egg on which some kind of violence must be exerted (FIGURE 3).
Similarly, what is said in the rest of the scene seems to be inspired by alchemical imagery and is best understood bearing in mind iconographical materials. Later in the same scene, the conspirators visit Brutus to persuade him to join the plot. The very time of the day is highly symbolical, not only because it makes coincide the break of a new day with the preparation for a new political order, but because Casca points to the Capitol with his sword indicating that the Sun arises there. This also points to an identification of Caesar as a Solar figure. It is highly significant, as Daniell (2000:53) points out, that Brutus’s vocabulary becomes studded with alchemical terms or words related to alchemy in the speech in which he demands mutual trust among the conspirators without resorting to an oath (2.1.113-139). He uses the following words: “fire”, “kindle”, “steel”, “melting spirits of women”, “stain”, again “mettle of our spirits”, and “particle”. His vocabulary shifts a few lines later towards the semantic field of violence exerted on the human body when he reflects that killing Caesar will be considered butchery, but that they must present it as a sacrifice for they aim at killing Caesar’s spirit, that is, his ambition, not his body, and so must the people understand their actions prompted not by envy but by necessity (2.1.161-182). This vocabulary may seem totally unrelated to alchemy, but when read in conjunction with an illuminated folio from the alchemical treatise Splendor solis (FIGURE 4), the coherence between the identification of Caesar with a solar figure, the alchemical vocabulary and the dismemberment of Caesar’s body becomes quite clear. In this illustration, there is a human figure that has been beheaded and whose limbs have been hacked by the standing figure wielding the execution sword. The head is golden so the mutilated figure represents the Sun, i.e., gold, most likely the quantity of gold that, according to some authors, was necessary to melt together with other metals and substances at a given stage in the alchemical opus in order to achieve the transformation (multiplication) of the whole mixture into the Philosophers’ Stone. Also, in the background of the illumination the sun rises over the horizon and the buildings of a city that seems to be Venice and the clouds are tinged with a rosy hue in a clear indication of dawn, very much as in Casca’s words in this scene, even if instead of Venice the setting is Rome. This type of symbolism proves that the language of alchemy and that of mutilation and sacrifice in the play are in fact the same and form a coherent whole.³

³ Linden (1984:105-106) points to other sources of metaphors in which the persecution and torture of metals and Christ’s crucifixion are used as symbols of the alchemical process and how, in turn, these symbols are used as the sources of conceits in Jonson’s The Alchemist and Donne’s...
Calphurnia’s ominous dream in 2.2., that Caesar summarises, is also based on alchemical symbols, for the religious symbolism that some critics and editors find in it is in fact part of the alchemical imagistic code and therefore employed to convey an alchemical meaning just like the images I discussed previously. Caesar explains that:

She dreamt tonight she saw my statue,  
Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,  
Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans  
Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it.  
(2.2.75-79)

This dream clearly anticipates later developments in the play, for Caesar dies at the feet of Pompey’s statue bespattered with his blood and the conspirators bathe their hands and stain their swords in that same blood. Very skilfully, Decius manages to offer an interpretation that assuages Caesar’s fears and encourages him to go to the senate to meet his fate, again an instance of the alchemy of the strategies of persuasion that is recurrent in the play:

This dream is all amiss interpreted.  
It was a vision, fair and fortunate.  
Your statue spouting blood in many pipes  
In which so many smiling Romans bathed  
Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck  
Reviving blood, and that great men shall press  
For tinctures, stains, relics and cognizance.  
This by Calphurnia’s dream is signified.  
(2.2.83-90)

“Resurrection Imperfect” and “Elegie on Lady Marckham”. Linden also discusses alchemical imagery in Herbert’s poetry and other seventeenth-century authors such as Frances Quarles, Sir Thomas Browne, and Henry Vaughan. Dawn, aurora in Latin, symbolises the production of the red tincture or Philosopher’s Stone in several treatises throughout the history of alchemy, for instance in the 13th-century *Aurora consurgens* attributed to Thomas Aquinas, Gerhard Dorn’s *Aurora philosophorum* (c. 1565), Henri de Linthaut’s *L’Aurore* and *L’Ami de l’aurore* (early 17th century MSS, published in 1978, see Linthaut 1978) or Paracelsus’s (attrib.) *Paracelsus His Aurora, & Treasure of the Philosophers* (1659). I am indebted to García i Amat (1997:7) and Linden (1984:n 19) for the knowledge of these titles.
Ironically, Caesar accepts Decius interpretation at face value, and fails to understand that Decius does not mean it is fair and fortunate for Caesar, but for Rome. Decius is quite literal about Rome “sucking” Caesar’s blood and he means that Caesar’s assassination will revive the Republic and, implicitly, that his murderers, i.e., the “great men” that “bathe” in his blood, stain their clothes and hands with Caesar’s blood will be honoured and ennobled by citizens because of their action. “Tinctures, stains, relics and cognizance” point respectively to alchemy, real blood and murder, religion, heraldry and nobility.

Because of the religious, biblical vocabulary, most editors limit their interpretation to an equation of Caesar with a sacrificial, Christ-like figure that even anticipates Rome’s Christian future. Thus, “suck / Reviving blood” is a phrase suggestive of the crucifixion and communion albeit with rather gruesome connotations. However, it is my contention that the Christian vocabulary and associations are again subordinated to alchemy. Iconography, both Christian and alchemical does clarify this relationship.

The image of a fountain with a statue spouting blood through wounds or pipes for men and women to bathe and even drink is a common iconographical representation of Christ as the “fountain of life” (i.e., fons vitae) (FIGURES 6, 7 AND 8) undoubtedly inspired by the same metaphor that identifies God and the fountain of life in several places in the Old Testament, later paralleled and developed as an identification of Christ with the same such fountain in John 7:37 (see FIGURE 7). However, this must not mislead us and make us conclude rashly that Shakespeare’s image has a biblical origin. The anonymous alchemical treatise Rosarium philosophorum (1550) includes both a fountain and a Christ figure as symbols of the Philosophers’

---

4 The key verses of the Bible where God is equated with a fountain are listed here as they appear in the Authorised Version or King James Bible (1611). Old Testament: Jeremiah 2:13 (“[…][For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”); Jeremiah 17:13 (“[…] they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the L ORD, the fountain of living waters”); Psalm 36:7-9 (“7 How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. 8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. 9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.”). New Testament (apart from the Christ-fountain implicit image in John 7:37): Revelation 21:6 (“[…] I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”). John 7:37: (“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood an cried, saying, if a any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”. For more instances of this metaphor in iconography see Davidson (1993).
Stone (Figures 9 and 10). Significantly, they are the first and the last woodcuts, so to speak, the alpha and omega of the treatise. So, by virtue of the multifarious possibilities of alchemical symbolism, in Calphurnia’s dream the two images do in fact coalesce in a single metaphor, just as they do in Revelation 26:1, to identify Caesar as the “Philosophers’ Stone” or Christ-lapis philosophorum that will transform Rome into an ideal Commonwealth.

In The Psychology of the Transference (1992:41-42), Jung explains the symbolism and the inscriptions of the Rosarium philosophorum woodcut showing the fountain. The four stars point to the four elements and the fountain represents the quinta essentia, i.e., the quintessence, or mercurius vivus, also known as the Philosophers’ Stone. The square being reduced to the circle of the fountain’s bowl, the vas Hermeticum or the alchemical matrix, is also a symbol for the alchemical process. The inscription on the fountain’s rim reads: “Unus est M[ercuriu]s mineralis, M[ercuriu]s vegetalis, M[ercuriu]s a[nimali]s” [“Mineral Mercury, vegetal Mercury, animal Mercury are only one”], which is parallel to the inscription of the double-headed snake: “a[nimal]is, mineralis, vegetabil[is]” [“animal, mineral, vegetal”], that is, the three orders of being according to alchemy. The liquid issuing from the fountain’s spouts is variously termed: “lac virginis, acetum fontis, aqua vitæ” [“virgin’s milk, vinegar of the fountain, water of life”], in fact, synonyms for the philosopher’s mercury or Philosophers’ Stone (lapis philosophorum).5

The fountain woodcut as a whole shows the reduction of the four elements to the triple name of mercury, its dual nature (Sun and Moon, double-headed snake) and its being only one (the fountain and the quintessence itself as the inscription on the rim indicates).6 Thus, the

5 The text on the page facing the illustration (Bij) indicates that (my own translation):

Succus lunari[ae], Aqua vit[ae], Quinta essentia, Ardens vinum, Mercurius vegetabilis omnia ide[m] sunt: Succus lunari[ae] fit ex vino nostro, quo paucis filiis nostris notum est, & cum illo fit solutio nostra, et fit aurum potabile nostrum mediante illi, & sine illo nequaquam.

[Lunar juice, the water of life, the quintessence, the burning wine, vegetable mercury, all of them are the same thing: lunar juice is made from our wine, that is known to few of our sons, and with which our solution is made, and our potable gold is made through it, and not at all without it].

6 See also Jung (2002:18-27) for the explanation of the quaternium or four elements in his lengthier discussion of alchemy as a deep psychological process.
illustration is also based on numerological symbolism. Quite remarkably, numerological symbolism also plays a very important part in *Julius Caesar* too and constitutes an element that underscores the alchemical key of the metaphors and images that Shakespeare uses in the play. Thomas McAlindon (1984) cogently argues that the play offers recurring instances in which numbers four —meaning reconciliation of contraries, friendship and unity— and eight —justice, regeneration and new beginning— become important in themselves or suggested by puns on other words (especially “forth”, see McAlindon 1984:387-388). The fact that the principal conspirators against Caesar are four (Cassius, Casca, Decius and Brutus) is significant, as well as the continuous references to the four elements and four humours with which even the characters are related (Brutus is melancholic, Cassius is choleric, Caesar phlegmatic and Antony is sanguine) (McAlindon 1984:380). Also, the groupings of four characters on stage constantly recur in the play (McAlindon 1984:382-383; 391-392). On the other hand, number eight, the total number of agreed conspirators in Shakespeare’s play -never completed because of Ligarius’s absence, hence its failure- points to the regenerative conception of Caesar’s assassination (McAlindon 1984:384), while Octavius, literally “the eighth”, stands as the authentic figure of justice and regeneration (McAlindon 1984:385). Finally, McAlindon explains that Shakespeare also deals with time as another subsidiary element to the numerological symbolism. Thus in the play time behaves as another element that contributes to the order of universe and the coincidences as to times and dates of the deaths of the characters enforces such principle, indicating that Caesar’s killers are not justified.

Numerology and the treatment of time in the play are analogous to the numerology and the symbolism of the circle form in the *Rosarium philosophorum* woodcut showing the fountain. The four main conspirators seek the quintessence to transform Rome; killing Caesar is the quintessence, the fountain, the Philosophers’ Stone, whose “Reviving blood” is the aqua vitae that will heal the Commonwealth.

It is precisely aqua vitae, the last term of the three that label the spouts of the fountain in the *Rosarium philosophorum* woodcut, that allows for the connection with biblical passages and the identification with the Christ figure that appears later in the same text. In fact, the whole of the *Rosarium philosophorum* abounds in references to God, Christ and the Holy Ghost as well as Christian theological concepts, so choosing the figure of the risen Christ to symbolise the *lapis philosophorum* is not only far from being
strange or extravagant as it might at first appear, but justified and prompted by the text itself. Moreover, the equation between the lapis or elixir and Christ was not an innovation exclusive to the *Rosarium philosophorum*, but a long standing one in alchemical treatises as Jung (1992:143, 146; 1993:345-434) and Linden (1984:103-104) explain.7

Quite evidently then, Calphurnia’s dream and moreover Decius’ interpretation is an alchemical, not a Christian symbol, in which the fountain and Christ are combined into the fountain of life metaphor not to signify Christ, but the Philosophers’ Stone or Tinctura, another synonym for the same concept, *i.e.*, Caesar’s death, in the “alchemical” process of ridding Rome of his tyranny and giving new life to the Republic.

From the interpretation of Calphurnia’s dream and especially from the scene of Caesar’s assassination, the alchemical images become very scarce and devoid of such rich symbolical complexity as the transformation of Rome into an ideal Commonwealth fails completely. Gold is no longer symbolical and Cassius’s corruption and Brutus’s need of solid gold to pay his soldiers prompt the quarrel between them in 4.3. The last alchemical references in the play are Cassius’s reflection on the coincidence that he is defeated and he is to commit suicide on his very birthday. His life comes full circle and indeed as McAlindon points out this is also part of the numerological symbolism, the circle is the symbol of perfection and also a circle with a dot in the middle is the symbol of gold. Finally, as Brutus realizes that he has lost the battle and his only honourable way out is suicide too, he observes: “Night hangs upon mine eyes: my bones would rest, / That have but laboured to attain this hour” (5.5.41-42). To my mind, “laboured” has an alchemical echo too, for the *magnum opus* of alchemists was also sometimes known as *magna labor, i.e.*, the “great labour” (*Figures 11 & 12*). It is only appropriate that, as Strato observes, at the end of the play “The conquerors can but make a fire of him” (5.5.56), his “labour”

7 Linden (1984) discusses the metaphor and pictorial representations of God as an alchemist and Christ as the *lapis philosophorum*. He indicates that the second connection is based on the biblical metaphor of Christ as a cornerstone and refers to Ambrosius Siebmacher, who in *The Water-Stone of the Wise Men* (1656:146-147) indicates Isaiah 28:16: (“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste”); Psalms 118:22 (“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner”); Matthew 21:42 (“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?”), and Acts 4:11 (“This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner”) as instances of the cornerstone metaphor as support for the later connection lapis-Christ.
only leads to fruitless calcinations and not to a true transmutation of Rome into the ideal Commonwealth.

To conclude and in an attempt at bringing my article to a full circle of perfection too, I would like to retake, however briefly, one of the ideas with which I opened my paper: the question of subversion and radicalism in *Julius Caesar*, whether the alchemical symbolism adds in any way to contending views of new historicists and cultural materialists over subversion in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

In this respect, it is interesting to note that the play was performed in 1599, while the debate on tyranny and the right of rebellion against a tyrannical ruler —such as Elizabeth was sometimes considered to be— was raging and other Roman plays were used as vehicles for such a debate (Daniell 2000:22-29). One of the factions that criticized Elizabeth most fiercely was that formed by some Puritans who considered that both Parliament should have more prerogatives at the expense of royal power and the Church of England should abandon the Anglican via media and move towards freer, looser, Presbyterian organization. Some of these views were also supported at court by the Earl of Leicester, the Sidney circle, Sir Walter Ralegh, and most significantly, the Earl of Essex who eventually led the 1601 rebellion against Elizabeth. This was so much so that some Puritans even looked forward to having Essex as their leader (Daniell 2000:29).

As Christopher Hill (1991), Margaret C. Jacob (1976), Stanton J. Linden (1984:114-120), John S. Mebane (1989) and Frances A. Yates (1991; 1969; 1979) have shown, Puritan radical political and religious movements were intimately related to magic, alchemy and the early sciences, so the arcane symbols of alchemy formed one of the strains that shaped the messianic, millenarian language discourse that raged throughout the end of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century until the end of the Commonwealth (1659). The other major influence on radical dissenter rhetoric was Protestant hermeneutics, and sometimes a combination of the two.8

I have already shown how Shakespeare uses the language and imagery of alchemy to signify psychological manipulation and the political plot in the play, I will concentrate now, however briefly, on how he also employs Protestant hermeneutics to characterise the main participants in the

---

8 Nevertheless, Jacob, Schuler and Linden emphasise that alchemy and millenarianism actually influenced a cross-section of religious ascriptions and consequently they were also common to Anglicans. Schuler (1980:294) qualifies the latter as being “moderate Anglicans”.
conspiracy against Caesar, thus completing its identification with a Puritan, messianic plot.

The Protestant tradition of the hermeneutics of prodigies, monsters and uncommon events was inaugurated, among others, by Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchton’s antipapal tracts on the monk calf and the Pope ass (1523) and continued with the account of prodigies of Konrad Lycosthenes (1557) and Pierre Boaistuau (1560), that together with the more scientifically-minded teratological treatise of Ambroise Paré (1573), formed the main body of literature whose influence seeped into the 16th- and 17th-century popular broadsides accounting for the births of deformed babies and findings of strange animals (see Watt 1994:152-154; 165-166; Razovsky 1996; and Borot 1999:esp. 42-46).9

In both the Protestant books of prodigies and this type of popular broadsides, we find that the uncommon prodigies are interpreted as signs and warnings from God for sinners to repent and heralds of calamities, God’s visitations, and substantial natural and political changes in a reading of the natural world as a text written by the godly hand. In *Julius Caesar*, the portents that Casca sees and interprets as omens in 1.3., are cleverly exploited by Cassius, who plays on the gullibility of his fellow conspirer. Cicero wisely points out “[…] men may construe things after their fashion / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves” (1.3.34-35), in what strikes me as an authorial intervention in which Shakespeare speaks his mind about the issue, and Cassius makes good Cicero’s observation by seizing astutely on the opportunity to manipulate Casca and persuade him to join the conspiracy. Cassius is implicitly identified as a Puritan type when Caesar points out to Antony that Cassius reads much, is a good observer, does not love plays or music, and hardly smiles but sneers when he does (1.2.200-203), so it is only coherent with the type of person he is that he interprets the portents according to the tradition of Protestant hermeneutics that informs both the prodigies treatises and the popular press broadsides. Significantly, he links the prodigies with monsters and gets to the sly conclusion that they foretell and warn of “some monstrous state” (1.3.71).

---

9 However, the tradition of books on prodigies was inaugurated by Julius Obsequens in the 4th century BC with his *Prodigiorum liber*, first printed in Venice in 1508 by Aldo Manuzio. The books by Lycosthenes and Boaistuau were fairly soon adapted or translated into English. Bateman (1581) adapted Lycosthenes and Fenton (1569) translated Boaistuau. However, Paré’s treatise was not translated —incompletely, because of the defective Latin edition used as a source— until Thomas Johnson published his *Workes* in 1634. A modern English translation of Paré is easily available (Paré 1982).
and insidiously refers to a fearful man that Casca correctly identifies, following Cassius’s cue, with Caesar.

In connection with Cassius’s use of Protestant hermeneutics, the identification of Caesar with Christ, although having an alchemical meaning, also lends itself to a typological interpretation —typological exegesis being one of the basis of biblical hermeneutics— that adds to the political details encoded in the play. If Cassius employs Protestant hermeneutics to read the portents, Decius’s interpretation of Calphurnia’s dream would also introduce to the most cultivated of Shakespeare’s contemporary spectators a typological identification of Caesar with Antichrist. By virtue of the flexible use of analogy between historical times, characters, figures, events, situations, etc., typological biblical exegesis establishes a hermeneutical circle and reads the present in the past and the past as a prophecy of the future. The name Antichrist allows for a double interpretation, on the one hand, the figure that comes before Christ or is a substitute for Christ, on the other, opposition to Christ and the Christian faith. Caesar lived and died before Christ, therefore, the symbolical identification between them in Calphurnia’s dream casts Caesar in the role of a false Christ that anticipates the real Saviour. Consequently, Caesar as a tyrant and false Christ-figure corresponds to and prefigures the much feared and hated Antichrist that according to Protestant millenarian and enthusiastic interpretations of Daniel, 1 John, and The Book of Revelation would rule the world, either as real person or as an allegory of a generalised frame of mind, and oppose the true Christian faith before the Second Coming, and whom some radical Protestants also identified with the Church of England and the political and economic status quo of the successive reigns of Elizabeth, James and Charles (Hill 1990:41-1991:148-149). Quite evidently, then, if Caesar is equated with Antichrist, those who oppose him in the play prefigure Protestant radicals who strive for a truly Christian Commonwealth against the allegedly Antichristian, tyrannical values.

10 The “presentism” of today’s cultural materialism and much of contemporary criticism on Renaissance literature is nothing but a different form of such hermeneutical circle as it also reads the present into the past and often with as free disregard for historical fact as biblical exegesis.

11 Hill explains that: “‘Anti-’ […] means not only ‘opposed to’ but also ‘equivalent to’ or ‘substitute for’: this sense lends itself to a Manichean dualism, […]. In French the name is Antéchrist, before Christ: this sense is also to be borne in mind when Antichrist is associated with the last days.” (1990:5).
Therefore, Shakespeare’s use of alchemical imagery and biblical exegesis to build the psychological profile of his characters and colour their political activities reflects in fact a specifically late Elizabethan historical context and addresses a specific political faction in Elizabethan England, that of radical Puritans, only skilfully veiled by their Roman disguises and setting. However, the fact that Shakespeare chooses an episode in Roman history in which political revolution is a failure and shapes it in order to address the political questions of his own time and shows how revolution is doomed by the real-life dangers of unchecked idealism, opportunistic political rivals, internal corruption, and lack of funds suggests that Shakespeare not only stresses the contention of subversion, as the new historicists would have it, but moreover he seems to use his play, in the context of the political debate on tyranny reflected in the Roman plays of the 1590s, to warn the Earl of Essex and his radical protestant supporters about their dark, far from golden future.12

12 Mebane (1989:87) points out that this attitude denouncing the irony of occultist idealism being used opportunistically is a common thread to other key plays of the period: “Despite the important differences among the plays by Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare, the feeling that the magicians’ idealism about human nature has been undercut by the ruthless actions of those who keep political power is a major thread which ties together Dr. Faustus, The Alchemist, and, to some extent, The Tempest”. Quite evidently, then, Julius Caesar can be added to this group. Leithart (1995) sees, from a conservative perspective, an attack on Shakespeare’s part against the religion of Revolution, “the myth of sacred violence” on the grounds of the failure of Revolution as it unleashes further violence, the emphasis on miscalculation of time and the failure in foreseeing the consequences of realpolitik. Leithart implies that Shakespeare portrays the conspirators making a Christ figure of Caesar as a terrible mistake since there is only one sacrificial Victim (i.e., Christ) that brings about peace.
“This dream is all amiss interpreted”: _Julius Caesar_, Shakespeare’s Alchemical...

**Figure 1.** A ladder as an alchemical symbol, the *scala lapidis hermetis* [ladder of the hermetic stone]. “Emblematical Figures of the Philosophers’ Stone” (British Museum, MS Add. 1316, 17th century). Reproduced from Jung (1993:56).
Figure 2. Brutus “And therefore think him as a serpent’s egg / Which hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous, / And kill him in the shell” (2.1.32-34). The serpent’s egg is a symbol for the *lapis philosophorum*. The egg contains the ouroboros, symbol for eternal circulation in alchemy. The figure standing on the egg is Mercury, who symbolises that the egg represents *mercurius philosophicus*, a synonym for the philosophers’ stone. Eirenaeus Philalethes, *Speculum veritatis*, 17th century, Rome, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, MS. Lat. 7286. Reproduced from Roob (1997:496).
“This dream is all amiss interpreted”: *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare’s Alchemical...

*Figure 3.* Exerting violence on the egg (though not of serpent, but a bird) as a symbol for the achievement of the philosophers’ stone. Emblem VIII in Michael Maier, *Atalanta Fugiens, hoc est, Emblemata Nova de Secretis Naturae Chymica, Accommodata partim oculis et intellectui, figures capro incises, adjetisque sententiis, Epigrammatis et notis, partim auribus et recreationi animi plus minus 50 Fugis Musicalibus trium Vocum, quarum duæ ad unam simplicem melodiam distichis canendis peraptam, corrispondeant, non absque singulari jucunditate videnda, legenda, meditanda, intelligenda, dijudicanda, canenda et audienda; Authore Michaele Majero Imperial. Consistorii Comite, Med. D. Eq. Ex. Etc. Oppenheimii Ex typographia Hieronymi Galleri, Sumptibus Joh[anni]. Teodori de Bry. 4º. Reproduced from de Jong (1969:384).

Godwin’s translation of the epigram (1987:91) is the following:

Take the egg and pierce it with a fiery sword.

There is a bird, the most sublime of all,
To find whose Egg should be your only care.
Its white surrounds a soft and golden yolk:
One cautiously attacks with fiery sword.
Let Vulcan aid the work of Mars: the chick
Hatched thence will conquer both the iron and fire.
Brutus’s consideration of Caesar’s death as a sacrifice is also based on alchemy. The mutilated corpse is a symbol that stands for the Sun-gold that must be dissolved only to multiply later. *Splendor solis*, ca. 1582. British Library, Harley MS 3469, f. 20v. Reproduced from Roberts (1994: Plate III, facing page 32).
“This dream is all amiss interpreted”: Julius Caesar, Shakespeare’s Alchemical...

FIGURE 5. Again murder and mutilation, and also resurrection, as an alchemical symbol for some stages of the alchemical process. Emblem XLIV in Michael Maier, Atalanta Fugiens, hoc est, Emblemata Nova de Secretis Naturæ Chymica, Accommodata partim oculis et intellectui, figures cupro incises, adjetisque sententis, Epigrammatiæ et notis, partim auribus et recreationi animi plus minus 50 Fugis Musicalibus trium Vocum, quarum duæ ad unam simplicem melodiam distichis canendis peraptam, correpondeant, non absque singulari jucunditate videnda, legenda, meditanda, intelligenda, dijudicanda, canenda et audienda; Authore Michaele Majero Imperial. Consistorii Comite, Med. D. Eq. Ex. Etc. Oppenheimii Ex typographia Hieronymi Galleri, Sumptibus Joh[anni]. Teodori de Bry. 4º. Reproduced from de Jong, (1969:420). Godwin (1987:163), translates the motto and epigram as follows:

Typhon kills Osiris by trickery, and scatters his members far and wide, but the renowned Isis collects them.

Syrian Adonis, Dionysus Greek,  
Egyptian Osiris: all Wisdom’s SUN.  
Isis, Osiris’ sister, mother, wife,  
Rejoins the limbs that Typhon cut apart,  
But lacked his virile member, lost at sea;  
The Sulphur that made SULPHUR is not there.
Figure 6. Christ as fountain in a Catholic woodcut representing Benedictine nuns as “les âmes penite[n]tes” [“penitent souls”] in Règle de Saint Benoît (Paris, 1520). Reproduced from François Garnier (1984:115, illustration 220). The scrolls read (from left to right): “SANGVIS · EIVS · SUPER · NOS / REMITTVNTVR · PECCATA · V[ES]TRA / MISERERE · MEI · DEVS” [“His blood on us. / Your sins will be remitted. / Take pity on me, oh, God”].
“This dream is all amiss interpreted”: *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare’s Alchemical...

FIGURE 7. Christ as Fountain. Woodcut in the Protestant *The fou[n]tayne // or well of lyfe / out of whiche doth / springe most swete co[n]solat[i]o[n]s / right // necessary for troubled co[n]sciences / to then // rent [that] they shall nat despayre in aduersite // and trouble. Translated out of latyn // in to Englysshe* (London, 1532) signature A2v. Cambridge University Library. Reproduced from Clifford Davidson (1993:23). The cartouche reads: “He that is a thurst[e] / let hym come to me and drinke” Jo[hn]. vii[:37]. The inscription on the woodcut sides reads: “. Savour / and see howe swete the lorde is. Blessed is that man of w[illlegible] god is his desire”. Psalm 34:8 (the inscription follows the Vulgate numbering of the Psalms; Psalm 34 is Psalm 33 in the Vulgate as in this version Psalms 9 and 10 are considered only one text, whereas Protestant Bibles split them in two independent texts).

Because so far away from God we are,  
That ’tis impossible for us to get near him,  
His son was born in the likeness of men  
Except he is both clean and free from sin.  
Whoever wants to move away from sin  
And flee from paying Satan servitude,  
He comes to Christ to satisfy his thirst  
Because we all can drink his plenitude.
"This dream is all amiss interpreted": *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare’s Alchemical...  

Figure 9. The fountain of life (fons vitae) as fons mercurialis. *Rosarium philosophorum secunda pars alchimie de lapide philosophico vero modo preparando, continens exactam eius scientiae progressionem...*, Francoforti [Frankfurt am Main]: ex officina Cyriaci Iacobi, 1550, Bvº. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Biblioteca Histórica Marqués de Valdecilla, signatura: MED 120. Available on line. <URL: http://cisne.sim.ucm.es/search*spi/tROSARIUM+PHILOSOPHORUM/trosarium+philosophorum/1,2,2,B/frameset&FF=trosarium+philosophorum+latin&1,1,>. The English translation of Jung’s Psychologie der Übertragung. (1992:41) renders it as follows:  

We are the metals’ first nature and only source /  
The highest tincture of the Art is made through us.  
No fountain and no water has my like /  
I make both rich and poor both whole and sick.  
For healthful can I be and poisonous.
Jung (1992:41-42) explains that the inscription of the double-headed snake reads: “a[nim]alis, mineralis, vegetabil[is]” [“animal, mineral, vegetal”], that is, the three orders of being according to alchemy. The liquid issuing from the fountain’s spouts is variously termed: “lac virginis”, acetum fontis, aqua vitae” [“virgin’s milk, fountain’s vinegar, water of life”], in fact, synonyms for the philosopher’s mercury or philosophers’ stone (lapis philosophorum). The inscription on the fountain’s rim is: “Unus est M[ercurius] mineralis, M[ercurius] vegetalis, M[ercurius] a[nimalis]” [“Mineral Mercury, vegetal Mercury, animal Mercury are only one”].
“This dream is all amiss interpreted”: Julius Caesar, Shakespeare’s Alchemical...
Figures 11 & 12. Rosicrucian representation of the two kinds of labour in alchemy, the *ergon* or mystical work, and the *parergon* or chemical experiments to achieve the *lapis philosophorum*. The book lying on the shore of the river to the left reads “LABORE” (‘work’, ‘labour’) and points to the symbolism that links mercury with the morning dew and water because mercury is a liquid metal. Theophilus Schweighart [pseudonym of Daniel Möging], *Speculum sophicum Rhodostauroticum* [*Rosicrucian Mirror of Wisdom*] ([Frankfurt], n. p., 1618). Reproduced from Roob (1997:333). The date of publication indicated in Roob (1604) is wrong. There is an easily available English translation of this work: <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/schweig.html>.
“This dream is all amiss interpreted”: *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare’s Alchemical...

References


Anon. 1550: *Rosarium philosophorum secunda pars alchimiae de lapide philosophico vero modo preparando, continens exactam eius scientiae progressionem…*, Francoforti [Frankfurt am Mein], ex officina Cyriaci Iacobi. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Biblioteca Histórica Marqués de Valdecilla, signatura: MED 120. <URL: http://cisne.sim.ucm.es/search*spi/tROSARIUM+PHILOSOPHORUM/ trosarium+philosophorum/1,2,2,B/frameset&FF=trosarium+philosophorum +latin&1,1,>.


Bateman, S. 1581: *The doome warning all men to the iudgmente: in maner of a generall chronicle, gathered out of Sundrie approued authors by S. Batman*. London, R. Neubery. 4º.


SEDERI XIV


“This dream is all amiss interpreted”: *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare’s Alchemical...


Lycosthenes, Konrad 1557: *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon*. Basileae, Per Henricum Petri, Mense Augusto anno MDLVII.


Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare. Lincoln, Ne.: University of
Nebraska Press.
Melanchthon, Philipp and Luther, Martin. 1523: Deutung der czwo gewliche Figuren
Baptesels czu Rom, vnd Muchkalbs zu Freyberg ynn Meysssen funden. P.
Melanchthon. M. Luther, Wittenberg. MDxxij. 4º.
Obsequens, Julius 1508: Prodigiorum liber. Venetiis, In aedib. Aldi, et Andreae Asulani
socier. 8º.
Row.
Lafuente Ferrari. Versión española de Bernardo Fernández. Madrid, Alianza
Paracelsus [Bombast von Hohenheim, Philipp Aureol Theophrast]. 1659: Paracelsus
His Aurora, & Treasure of the Philosophers. As Also The Water-Stone of the
Paré, Ambroise. 1573: Des monstres et prodiges. In Deux livres de chirurgie. Paris,
chez André Wechel.
___ 1634: The Workes of That Famous Chirurgion Ambrose Parey. Translated out of
Latine and compared with the French. Trans. Thomas Johnson. London, T. Cotes
and R. Young. Fol.
___ 1982: On Monsters and Marvels. Translated with an introduction and notes by
Philalethes, Eirenaeus N. d. [17th century]: Speculum veritatis. Rome, Bibliotheca
Apostolica Vaticana, MS. Lat. 7286.
Razovsky, H. 1996: Popular Hermeneutics: Monstrous Children in English Renaissance
Broadside Ballads. Early Modern Literary Studies 2.3: 1.1-34 <URL: http://
purl.oclc.org/emls/02-3/razoball.html>.
Library.
42.
Shakespeare, William. 1623: Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories and
Tragedies. Published According to the True Originall Copies. London, Printed
by Isaac Iaggard [Jaggard], and Ed Blount.
London, Methuen, rptd.
Sanders. Reprinted with a revised Further Reading by Michael Taylor. London,
Penguin, rptd.
“This dream is all amiss interpreted”: *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare’s Alchemical...


---

Author’s address:
Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED)
Departamento de Filologías Extranjeras y sus Lingüísticas
Facultad de Filología
Edificio de Humanidades
Planta -1, Despacho 1
Senda del Rey, 7
28040 Madrid, Spain
jcora@flog.uned.es