

CHAPTER III RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Description of Data

Many examples are displayed of references to astronomy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and examples of symbolism and doublespeak. Further, it has been shown that Dickens experienced additional difficulties writing *Drood* once he changed course to pursue 'a curious, new idea.' Too, it has been demonstrated, that Dickens beyond any doubt had shown interest in the notion of relating the so-called 'good old days' back to Druidism, which is the theme all these patterns is pointing to. Combining some of these threads will shed more light.

3.2 Interpretation

3.2.1 The shared solstices in Shakespeare and Dickens

There is no special reason for *Drood* to vanish exactly at the winter solstice and for time to 'stop' with the defacing of the clock hands apart from the evidence marshaled above. That the hour is the most precarious, sensitive and vulnerable for an agrarian religious system explains it all. (Solstice, 2000)

The meta - meaning of *A Midsummer Nights' Dream* considering the two elements together, we get a lead. Where Edwin disappears on exactly the night of the winter solstice, midsummer is the summer solstice. It is the time of the observance of the rites of May Day. In both stories, engagement and the destiny of lovers *appear* to be the central story. But Midsummer night takes place within the context of a cosmic struggle between Oberon and Titania, the elemental deities. The 'oath of infertility' comes from their 'forges of jealousy' and has caused a 'distemperature' on the land and on her people. Because of the jealousy, the due patterns of worship are disrupted:

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"I have forsworn his bed and compæ

The Nine Men's Morris is filled up with mud
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are indistinguishable:
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
Therefore the moon, pale in her anger, washes all air
That rheumatic diseases do abound
And through this distemperature we see
The seasons alter." (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)

Thus the love confusion is really brought about by the cosmic feud. If the love-confusion were set right would it dispel the distemperature? It is so, for as soon as Titania and Oberon are again 'in amity' the May Day observations are performed, all is set right. As with the Morris Dance and everything else connected with May Day the intention is a *synchronization of humanity with the patterns of astronomical time*.

"Simply put, a Solstice Day is either the shortest or longest day of the year, with the day defined as the length of time the Sun is above the horizon. At the moment of a Solstice the Sun appears immediately overhead at its most extreme northern or southern terrestrial latitude of any time during the year. At the moment of a Solstice, the semi-annual, *apparent* journey of the Sun to the point immediately above a tropic's boundary latitude reverses course, though in reality the Earth is the body in motion. As organized religion integrated pagan Solstice worship into Church tradition, new terms were adopted. Summer Solstice became known as Litha; the Winter Solstice was known as Yule."

"At the winter solstice the sun began to come back to life. The days grew longer and the nights shorter. Life was assured for another year, because the goddess he worshiped, who had been fertilized at the previous vernal equinox, gave birth to a son at the Winter Solstice. The god was reborn!"

“Through these rituals performed on the exact dates of the vernal equinox, the summer solstice, the autumn equinox, and the winter solstice, pagan men and women were warding off catastrophe, ensuring fine hunting, obtaining bountiful harvests, and giving themselves the hope of living again beyond the grave.” (Equinox, 1998)

Drood disappeared when the sun is at its greatest distance from man, Jasper’s shadow on the sun dial, garden’s walled up in poor strips-the sun must be appeased. Significantly, Dickens requested his illustrator, Sir Luke Fildes to include a sun-dial in his illustration. “Dickens, who in fact expressed the idea to include the sun-dial to Fildes in a letter dated 27 April 1870: “Suggestions for No. 5 The proposal at the Sun Dial for one subject” (*Letters* 12, p. 514). Bear in mind also, that the chapters we have received begin with ‘The Dawn’ and end with ‘The Dawn Again.’”

This is another point with which issue should be taken against the consensus of scholarship. Coverley, for example, clearly notices significance in the storm having torn off the tower clock hands. He remarks: “On December 25 in *Drood*, mechanical devices for measuring time stop too. ‘It is . . . seen that the hands of the Cathedral clock are torn off’, and Edwin Drood’s watch had ‘run down, before being cast into the water’. (Figuratively, solstice means a stopping-point.)” (*Themes*) Once again, Coverley raises a strong point only to essentially ignore any ramifications.

By using *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Dickens uses inversions as clues to show that *Drood* is likewise secretly concerned with nature righting. The faces change, time goes on, the names of things change, but there remains an elemental force that arranges the players’ destinies.

As Shakespeare’s Helena says: “The story shall be changed. Apollo flies and Daphne holds the chase. The dove pursues the griffon: the mild hind makes speed to catch the tiger.” What do the reversals mean? When Jasper asks, ‘How can an ancient cathedral tower be

here? He gives us a clue. He introduces an incongruent strain, similar, again, to A *Midsummer Night's Dream*-‘how can British fairies and Athenian nobility be mingled with decency in the same play?’ How can *this* religion exist simultaneous with *that*?

3.2.2 Grewgious and the Rite of The True Lover

In the apparent story, Edwin checks in with his fiancée’s guardian, Grewgious at Staple Inn, itself a place where “sun bestowed its bright glances before horizon was blocked with lofty architecture.” (Dickens, 1870: 108) (i.e. before the spire of the church). This is a beauty of a cryptic passage. From the point of view of the London coven, the church spire is a menace.

When Edwin goes to Grewgious’s Staple Inn rooms it is for the purpose of initiation, a fascinating passage, in the ability to read both the apparent and the ‘truer’ stories simultaneously:

‘Lord bless me (benediction) cried Mr. Grewgious, breaking the blank silence which, of course ensued: though why these pauses should come upon us when we have performed any small social rite, not directly inductive of self-examination...’

In the following substitute ‘initiate’ for lover and ‘coven’ for ‘the beloved’ and the meaning becomes obvious:

“I could draw a picture of a true lover’s state of mind tonight.”

“Mr. Edwin will correct me where it’s wrong (will object if he cannot consent)

“The true lover’s mind is completely permeated by the beloved object of his affections.

(The group demands exclusive loyalty.)

Her dear name is precious to him, cannot be heard or repeated without emotion, and is preserved sacred. (This is why Sapsea is in trouble; he risks the cults’ exposure due to his bragging.)

If he has any distinguishing appellation of fondness for her, it is reserved for her, and is not for common ears (again, nothing whatsoever about the cult is to be uttered on the High Street, or in the vicinity of the public.)

A name that would be a privilege to call her, being alone with her own bright self, it would be a liberty, a coldness, an insensibility (two descriptions of a corpse) almost a breach of good faith to flaunt elsewhere.”

Dickens completes the picture:

“It was wonderful to see Mr. Grewgious sitting bolt upright, with his hands on his knees, continually chopping his discourse out of himself; much as a charity boy with a very good memory might get his catechism said.(it is a catechism)

Mr. Grewgious continues:

“Having no existence separable from that of the beloved object of his affections, as living at once a doubled life and a half life.” (this explains the pervasive duality of the town and people.)

Edwin sat looking at the fire and bit his lip. (He contemplated the specific implications by contemplating the fire.) “There can be no doubt, no half fire and half smoke state of mind in a real lover.” (Dickens, 1870: 219-221)

What will the cult expect from him? Just what is this ‘engagement’ with Rosa adding up to? Grewgious tells Edwin, “ You are going down yonder where I can tell you you are expected and to execute any little commission from me...”(219)

“Grewgious charges Edwin with his eyes on the fire. Edwin nods assent with his eyes on the fire.” (219)

Edwin does break the engagement. He decides he will not execute the obligation so now Jasper and he know that the ‘finger of scorn’ is upon them. As Grewgious said, ‘the largest

fidelity to a trust is the life blood of the man.’ And the Droods and Jaspers have betrayed that trust.

3.2.3 Rosa as Sacrifice

The idea of sacrifice lurks especially around Rosa Budd. When Grewgious leads Edwin through the rites of the true lover it was noted that ‘no half smoke, no half fire would do.’ Grewgious looked upon the fire and Edwin took his meaning. Is some sacrifice looming? Return to Jasper’s rooms for a moment, ‘mostly in shadow’. Even when the sun shines brilliantly, it seldom touches the grand piano in the recess, or the folio music-books on the stand, or the book-shelves on the wall, or the unfinished picture of a blooming schoolgirl hanging over the chimneypiece.” (Dickens, 1870: 25) The sun cannot touch Rosa because of Jasper’s shadow-even as Rosa hangs precariously over the fire. Grewgious instructs Edwin, ‘you are going down yonder where, I can tell you, you are expected and to offer to execute any little commission from me.’ (219)

“What is this imagined threatening, pretty one? What is threatened? I don’t know. I have never even dared to think or wonder what it is.” Always vague, always half imagined, like the fear that wells up in any drowsy nightmare. “Don’t Eddy!” “Don’t what, Rosa?” (Dickens, 1870: 77)

Rosa’s sacrifice seems prefigured.

“Miss Twinkleton turns to the sacrifice and says, ‘you may go down. Miss Budd goes down, followed by all eyes.’ (54)

Elsewhere she is the ‘doomed little victim’ and ‘apparition.’(54)

Early on, Edwin points to a portrait and says, “I’ll burn your comic likeness.” (37) Is he talking about the picture or is he talking to the picture and referring to *its* likeness?

Remember during the rite Grewgious essentially directed Edwin’s attention on the fire. Why? Why does the plot need Druids to sacrifice Rosa? In one of the key passages:

Rosa “represented the spirit of rosy youth abiding in the place to keep it bright and warm in its desertion.” (Dickens, 1870: 188)

The connection can be explained in an understanding of pagan agriculture based, astronomically tuned nature religion:

Virtually every civilization has a fire/sun god. The Egyptians (and sometimes Romans) called him Vulcan. The Greeks named him Kronos, as did the Phoenicians—but they also called him Saturn. The Babylonians called him Tammuz, Molech or Baal, as did the Druids.” (Day, 1867: 19)

Ezekiel 8:13-14 records a picture of the women of Israel “weeping for Tammuz.” This Tammuz (the god of fire) was considered their chief deity and the etymology of the word itself is fascinating. *Tam* means “to make perfect” and *muz* “fire.”

Considering an explanation about the solstice, helps to add sense to this idea of the sun’s desertion .

Mr. Tartar is a dashing sailor who rather mysteriously shows up out of nowhere in the middle of events, and the reader is supposed to immediately place Rosa under his protection. When Tartar settles Rosa in her London rooms, in what she and the readers consider safety, ‘Rosa imagined living her whole life atop the fireproof stairs.’ (Dickens, 1870: 271)

Again, “...what is to be done with you? ...living fireproof, up a good many stairs for the rest of her life was the only thing in the nature of a plan that occurred to her.” (269)

That would mean, of course, that Tartar is not her savior after all. In fact, Dickens arranges it so that the greater the relief the reader feels for Rosa’s safety in Tartar’s care, the closer she is to unspeakable horror.

Tartar enters the picture providing greater leadership for the Druids. Grewgious (as well as Sapsea are in the hot seat now for fumbling things to this point.) When boat rowing, “Mr.

Grewgious was doing this much that he steered all wrong-a turn of Tartar's skillful wrist could put all to rights." (266)

Proof of Tartar's connection to the cult can be found in the text. He is really very easy to implicate once the reader has developed the 'ear' intended by Dickens.

His "chambers were the best ordered under the sun moon and stars." (223) This is the only time moon is mentioned in the entire second part of the book, compared with twenty eight in the first. It stands out as a clue so when we realize that the phrase is from Deuteronomy 4:19 "And lest when you see the sun and the moon and the stars you are drawn away and worship them and serve them" we know at once Tartar's allegiance.

The "purity of Tartar's household gods" (213) demonstrates his paganism.

Tartarus is, of course, "a deep, gloomy place, a pit, or an abyss used as a dungeon of torment and suffering that resides beneath the underworld. As a place of punishment, it can be regarded as a hell'. (Tartarus, 2011).

Tartar is connected with sun worship through symbolism. He is deeply sunburned (though Dickens is careful to show us he is not a dark person by his white neck line). "Tartar's floors looked as if all the blacks left London for good." (210)

His boatman, Lobely was "the dead image of the sun in old woodcuts, his whiskers answering for rays." (220)

The whole time, "Mr. Tartar talked as if he were doing nothing to Rosa" (230) so Rosa went further and stood on P.J.T.'s doorsteps. She was indeed a "dove laid in a cage of lions." (250)

3.2.4 "The Sapsea Fragment"

After Dickens's death, the task of sorting out Dickens's papers fell to his friend, John Forster. Among the papers in Dickens's desk at the Gad's Hill chalet, were a few pages written on a sheaves of paper a different size than those Dickens customarily used. The

couple of pages had Sapsea for a character but otherwise bore little resemblance to the action in the other installments. It seemed like an earlier piece because of Sapsea's presence but otherwise nothing could be made of it. "The first thing we notice is that it (the fragment) has no apparent connection with the subject matter of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*....Looks like a by-blow, a piece of writing tangential to the much more demanding work he had in mind." (Cox, 1920: 34).

"How Mr. Sapsea Ceased to be a Member of the Eight Club," the so-called "Sapsea Fragment," is more meaningful seen in light of the 'shadow story'. The fragment has always seemed 'oddly tangential' to scholars because the storyline appears to have little to do with anything in the finished product. The Sapsea Fragment has everything to do with things once one considers the hidden story. In the fragment, Thomas Sapsea is castigated by members of some group (the Eight Club) for being mistaken in the street for an ecclesiastical leader. Why should that be significant to write about? It threatens the group's exposure. In the fragment, a character, Poker, is poking around. He is the one who seems to be able to make inroads into information by exploiting Sapsea's vanity. Is there a 'poker' in *Drood's* pages? The traditional assumption is that Poker reemerges as Datchery near the book's end but Sapsea concerns himself with the whole epitaph monument business with John Jasper. Jasper is indeed the 'poker,' or at least, *a* poker. "You are evidently going to write a book about us."

The hidden Eight Club is concerned with the old ways, for they have only pretended to renounce a connection.

"Sapsea had overheard Kimber's amazed remark about someone thinking that someone else was very high in the church; but Kimber, catching Sapsea's eye, had lowered his visual ray...and passed a remark on the next phase of the moon." (Fragment) Notice that a topic for discussion in this 'club' has to do with lunar phases.

In fact, found in this ‘by-blow’ are a number of the ingredients one might expect to find if one were to adhere to the Druid hypothesis:

1. A group of select members.
2. Strong reaction to Sapsea’s being identified as having some ecclesiastical identity.
3. Next topic naturally falls to astronomical consideration, ‘moon phases’.
4. A ‘poker’ character poking around.

Curiously, of all the nature names (for it is becoming clearer Dickens had in mind to name the characters sap, Kimber (timber) etc..i.e., nature names. The device is reminiscent of the film *The Wicker Man* (1973) in which a group of modern day Druids living off the coast of Scotland ends up immolating poor Edward Woodward in a giant wicker effigy. The townsfolk display similar nature names like ‘Rowan’ ‘Oak’ and ‘Willow.’ The name Pear tree appears in the Sapsea fragment along with the other nature names.

It seems that Dickens had a number of story ideas in mind at the time he began writing *Drood*. An engaged couple story. A murder of nephew by uncle story. And a ‘curious new idea’ to write a shadow story about Sapsea and an Eight Club, using nature names etc.. These ideas blended, expanded and became *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* as received.

Who pokes around, threatening their sun worship? Shadowy John Jasper, one of Dickens’s premiere bad guys is, in fact, one of his great heroes. Unfortunately, (as Jasper says): “circumstances may accumulate so strongly against a man that they may slay him.” (Dickens, 1870: 216) This phenomenon is one of Dickens’s supreme achievements- that the world would come to hate his hero and thus, unwittingly root against him, even as he attempts to battle pagan sun worshippers.

3.2.5 The curious case of Mr. Tope

Tope’s name was originally, Mr. Peptune, obviously another astronomical, as opposed to biblical name. (The biblical names tend to belong to the ‘bad’ guys Luke Honeythunder

and John Jasper). In fact, the original manuscript shows clearly that ‘Peptune’ was used for ‘Tope’ for at least two chapters before Dickens revises the name. Why? Was Dickens ultimately uncomfortable with too many ‘astronomical’ names? Whatever the reason, that the change was so deliberated upon signifies that readers should deeply consider the name Dickens finally decided on. Dickens changes the name to Tope. Surely there is a clue.

Tope’s job as verger explains the reason for his clever new name. ‘Historically vergers were responsible for the order and upkeep of the house of worship, including the care of the church buildings, its furnishings, and sacred relics.’ (Murray, 2011)

It won’t help to know what we modern readers know the word ‘tope’ means. When investigated, it must be able to be proven what men of Dickens’ time were aware the word meant. For such answers, documents extant around the time of the writing of *Drood* must be searched. ‘Tope,’ from *Day and Son*, an article entitled, ‘Nature and Art’ June 1, 1867, vol. II, is ‘from the mound or cairn came the tope and pyramid, and very strong evidence could be added to show that the dome and spire are only another growth.’ Also, James Fergusson’s ‘*Tree and Serpent Worship*’ (1868) proves that there was no lack of ready material from which to draw.

The character of Billickin, a landlady introduced late in the text is a tantalizing character. Billickin gives a sure clue when, in describing her property she winks, “beyond the arch is a mews....Mewses must exist.” (Dickens, 1870: 257)

Not only is a mews a back alley stable but it is also a chamber for predatory birds. “Mews is plural in form but singular in construction and arose from ‘mews’ in the sense of a building where falconry birds are kept.” (Murray, 2011) Couple this with Grewgious’ admonishment to Edwin that the lover seeks the beloved *as a bird seeks its nest.*” Since the group is increasingly crowded out of their sacred gardens, it is, at last, forced into a cramped situation. Is their meeting place an actual location in the book?

Since Tope is verger, the custodian of sacred space, and since his name itself means ‘marker over which there are sacred relics;’ further, since Dickens went out of his way to replace the original name for the character, ‘Peptune,’ with ‘Tope,’ close attention should be paid when arriving at the phrase describing Tope’s house as ‘a hole in the wall.’ It helps to think like a Victorian in having a mind supersaturated in biblical literacy for, again, it is another phrase from the Old Testament, the eighth chapter of the prophet Ezekiel and it is the jewel, the centerpiece of the original Eight Club idea, and the very heart of the hidden mystery:

“Then He brought me to the entrance to the court and I looked, and I saw *a hole in the wall*. 8:8 Son of man, now dig in the wall. So I dug into the wall and saw a doorway there. And he said to me, “go in and see the wicked and detestable things they are doing here. So I went in and looked, and I saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling things and detestable animals and all the idols of the House of Israel. In front of them stood 70 elders of the House of Israel. Each had a censer in his hand, and a fragrant cloud of incense was rising.”

“He said to me, “son of man, have you seen what the elders of the House of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, ‘The Lord does not see us: the Lord has forsaken the land. Again He said, ‘You will see them doing things that are even more detestable.’”

“Then he brought me to the entrance to the north gate of the House of the Lord, and I saw a woman sitting there, mourning for Tammuz. He said to me, “Do you see this, son of man? You will see things that are even more detestable than this.”

“He then brought me into the inner court of the house of the Lord, and there at the entrance to the temple, between the portico and the altar, were about twenty five men with

their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, they were bowing down to the sun in the east.” (*New International Version*).

Interestingly, Carlo Fruttero and Franco Lucentini together trace the phrase to the biblical passage in their book, *The D Case: The Truth About the Mystery of Edwin Drood*. However, yet once more, the stone is subsequently left unturned. Fruttero and Lucentini make no effort to ask the crucial *why*?

Edwin is an engineer who Rosa teases in comparing him with Italian strongman turned engineering explorer Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778-1823). Belzoni’s “contribution to the study of the Giza pyramids was opening the previously unknown upper entrance, according to *Early Travelers and Explorers to the Pyramids, Part II*, (Winston, 1852: 109). It begins to be seen more clearly why Jasper took a secretive night excursion among the crypts and tombs (no, he wasn’t looking for a place to hide Edwin’s body), why, in a recurring opium vision, Jasper looks down and points, why Edwin is an engineer, why Grewgious says of Edwin, ‘you are expected to go down yonder,’ and why Billickin prophecies ‘he will go through your jistes.” and ‘trench upon the nest.’ Readers can’t be sure, since the book is unfinished, but all indications point to Edwin penetrating to the heart of the cult. Whether he survives is another matter, although, apparently he was not to have.

The cult had been increasingly cramped to the point where their nest is a hidden room under the cathedral. Actually, it is common knowledge that syncretism often built Cathedral over acknowledged pagan places in order to champion and to appropriate local allegiance.