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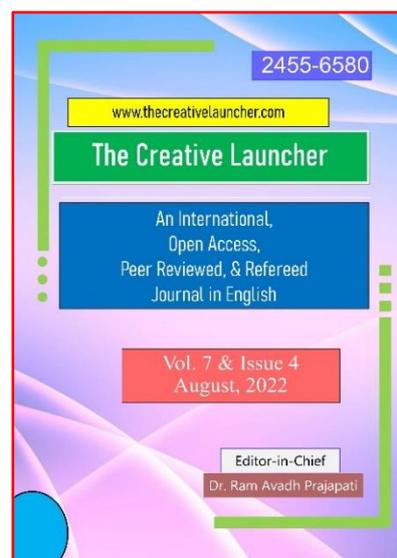
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Research Article



The Shakespearean Poetic Rosary: The ‘Sacred Numbers’ in Shakespeare’s Sonnets

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Abstract

In human culture there are certain numbers of special importance. They are mostly used in old and modern writings as “sacred numbers” of religious and literary significance. They are present in the Greek myths, in Egyptian Pharaonic culture, in ancient Persian, in the Indian culture, and in Arab traditions; then (Islamic) culture as well as in the Biblical Western culture. These numbers are of two kinds: even and uneven or odd. The odd numbers 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9

play a far more important part than the even numbers. *One* is Deity, *three* the Trinity, *five* the chief division, *seven* is the sacred number, and *nine* is three times three. These numbers have good function and been looked at as 'Sacred' or 'Perfect' numbers either of good omen or evil. There is another fourth number, which is "10", it comes mainly in Jewish and Islamic education in very few cases having similar religious suggestion. Shakespeare has used the number Ten in Sonnet 6 *Then let not winter's ragged hand deface*. "Sacred Numbers" have become a part of religion and even of modern belief, and mostly represented in the popular rituals. Shakespeare has used the "Sacred Numbers" in his works either prose or poetry, and this article is restricted to deal only with three Shakespearean sonnets where I imagine Shakespeare reciting his Latin Rosary in a poetic religious tone and drawing the cross sign on his chest and on the forehead of his sonnets in order to invoke divine protection. It seems that Shakespeare's date of birth and death (1564 -1616) carries a certain secret of his fondness for sacred numbers; thus: The sum of the date of his birth (1564=16) is doubled in the date of his death (1616).

Keywords: Sonnets, Sacred numbers, Perfect numbers, England church, Latin Rosary, Papist

Introduction

Reading "English" literary writings, one can easily notice these numbers been used as 'sacred' numbers. In Milton's prose and poetry, in Defoe's and Austen's novels, and even in modern literary and historical writings, these numbers mainly the three "Perfect" numbers 3, 7 and 10 come carrying the same religious suggestion. But these numbers are excessively used by the English Christian great writer. Shakespeare was a true mirror for his "Christian" society: and a glorified historical voice of England and Scotland.

Shakespeare (1564 -1616) wrote 154 sonnets mostly in the 1590s. Fairly short poems, they deal with issues such as lost love. His sonnets have an enduring appeal due to his characteristic skill with language and words.

He wrote sonnets with different emotions: happy, sad, or funny. Shakespeare followed the more idiomatic rhyme scheme, not the formal one. A common rhyme scheme of his sonnets was: a, b, a, b, c, d, c, d, e, f, e, f, g, g.

He died in Stratford in 1616, and is buried in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford. Richard Davies further certifies that "he dyed a papist".

Shakespeare and the Church of England

"Good luck lies in odd numbers ... They say, there's divinity in odd numbers, either in nativity, chance, or death" (Shakespeare *Merry Wives of Windsor*. 5. 1). For centuries throughout the medieval period the church had united Western Europe beneath one-fold, one vision, and one language (Latin). The unity itself contributed in spreading Renaissance ideas: secularism and the classical humanism that place the pedestal for Protestant. The Renaissance lasted for few centuries and unfold from Italy to France to European country, North Europe, and then to England. Living in England, William Shakespeare had the nice luck

to expertise the Renaissance achievements, discoveries, and developments. In short, the Renaissance, as Harold Branam has summed up: "was a time of change and transition, from the sacred to the secular, from communal life to individual life, from the medieval to the modern." (4, 6)

In the Elizabethan period Protestants and Catholics alike believed that the recent religion persisted as a result of individuals clung to the religion of their fathers. Hugh Latimer, (quoted in Grove 25), argued that mortals "would folowe theyr forefathers". This was the idea of Protestant polemicists and Catholics too, and Shakespeare was a real Catholic.

So, this paper asserts what Richard Davies found in Fulman's notebooks that "He [Shakespeare] dyed a papist". In his book *Religion in Shakespeare: 1592-1604*, Groves presents smart reading concerning Shakespeare's devote to his forefather's religion, he writes: "A certain amount of recent research has suggested that Shakespeare might be one of those who 'somewhat popish' was "loath to league the tradition of his fathers,"(p.27) Presenting enough evidences to approve his reading .Several Shakespearean plays are put in the past, and they include prayers to mother, requiem lots, and Easter observances which were a part of their world.

It is known that Shakespeare was a blind believer in Fate or in some unseen hand or power that regulates human destiny. He did believe that if man escapes from penalization at the hands of man, he's certain to be chastised within the long-term by some agent of divine justice which can be man or belief. Moreover, Shakespeare was keen on the mathematician symbolism of "Perfect Numbers", Blick points out that:

Shakespeare was about to sensible mathematicians and astronomers [of London world] and to a minimum of one nice musician from concerning 1590 forwards. Whoever his mathematical, musical and philosophical contacts were, William Shakespeare showed a most definite interest within the mathematician qualities of numbers during which mathematicians, astronomers and musicians were then intensely interested. (11)

The Bible was a singular resource for early trendy playwrights as, in contrast to the classics or perhaps the chronicle histories, it absolutely was better-known by the overwhelming majority of their audience. Church attending was mandatory in Elizabethan England and every one absent from parish church each Sunday and on holy days had to pay a fine of twelve pence. This spiritual education shows the importance of these 'mass' of biblical allusions in Shakespeare's plays specifically, associated asserts that his audience were conscious of them since the audience was a part of the second generation to whom an English Bible was accessible. However, Shakespeare reckons upon the biblical context, and as Groves remarks,

Shakespeare consciously victimization biblical quotation and holding up biblical illiteracy— confusing leader with Judas Iscariot — as one thing which may destroy theatrical presentation. Judas's kiss was proverbial, however the joke concerning his exit into darkness at the Lord's Supper suggests that William Shakespeare expected his

audience to acknowledge allusions even to comparatively obscure elements of biblical stories.

Odd numbers one, 3, 5, 7 and 9 play a way more vital half than the even numbers. One is god, 3 the Trinity, 5 the chief division, Seven is that the sacred range, and 9 is thrice 3. Shakespeare has exploited the 'Sacred numbers' religiously and literarily, and used them in prose and poetry to the total extent, to the lees.

The 'Sacred Numbers' in Shakespeare's Sonnets

The environment of Shakespeare and his religious upbringing has dictated him to use the Perfect/ 'Sacred Numbers' in his writings, that no play, poem, or a sonnet is devoid of using them literary and religiously.

Looking in *Thesaurus Dictionary*, the English noun 'number' comes from the Latin 'numerus' to mean 'number', musical measure, time, rhythm, harmony, 'numbers' and 'verse'. Elizabethan poets called their verse 'numbers', as did Shakespeare in his sonnets 17, 38, 79, 100 and in *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

As previously expressed, the three is not restricted to *Macbeth* or *Hamlet* but runs everywhere in Shakespeare's works. For example, in *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare forecasting his final victory near the end of the play, Octavius proclaims:

The time of universal peace is near,
Prove this a prosperous day, the three- nooked world
Shall been the olive freely. (4.6.5-7)

"nook" means one of the corners of the earth. He refers here to the traditional understanding that the world had three major divisions or nooks, Europe, Africa and Asia.

Antony and Cleopatra make her monument in Alexandria into a struggle for sea, the largest of the three. Beside Egypt nook, and the other two nooks of the world were Rome and Cydnus. In all his works, either prose or poetry, Shakespeare presents a clear picture for his time which was primary religious. There. the effect of the Church of England upon the mass; and the religious conflict between Protestant groups (Calvinists and Puritans) who strived hard to 'purify' the Church of ritual and certain dogmas under the reign of Elizabeth and could develop the Anglican (Protestant) state church.

Shakespeare intently has put numbers for some of his sonnets to apt to their themes such as: sonnet 12 for the clock, sonnet 60 for minutes and sonnet 52 about the long year.

In his *Palladis Tamia* Francis Meres in 1598 (qtd. in Blick P. 12) has hinted to some special link between Shakespeare's verse, his 'numbers', and Pythagoras, particularly in relation to the Sonnets. In fact, Shakespeare mentions Pythagoras or the Pythagoreans in **three** of his plays, each time in connection with the concept of the transmigration of souls, (*As You Like It*, 3.2..176, *The Merchant of Venice*, 4.1..131, and *Twelfth Night*, 4.2.50 and 58).

This article is going to present three Shakespearean sonnets as examples where the poet /the sonneteer uses the 'Sacred Numbers': 105 *Let not my love be call'd idolatry* and 94 *They that have pow'r to hurt, and will do none* and 6 *Then Let Not Winter's Ragged Hand Deface, In*

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 lived alone,
 Which **three** till now never kept seat in one.

The poet compares the honest Youth to the Christian God. The three virtues of fairness, kindness, and sincerity have perpetually been individualistic. "Fair, kind, and true have usually lived alone," however currently they live in harmony person at intervals his love: "Which three till now ne'er unbroken seat in one." The three attributes/ 'Personages' in one allude to the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and the Holy Ghost, thence the hypostasis for the sole one Lord. I imagine Shakespeare writing this Sonnet reciting his Latin beads in a very poetic spiritual tone and drawing the cross register his chest and on the forehead of his sonnets so as to invoke divine protection. I can call it the Shakespearean Poetic Rosary.

3. The Number Ten in Sonnet 6

Then let not winter's ragged hand deface,
 In thee thy summer, ere thou be distill'd:
 Make sweet some vial; treasure thou some place
 With beauty's treasure ere it be self-kill'd.
 That use is not forbidden usury,
 Which happies those that pay the willing loan;
 That's for thy self to breed another thee,
 Or **ten** times happier, be it **ten** for one;
Ten times thy self were happier than thou art,
 If **ten** of thine ten times refigur'd thee:
 Then what could death do if thou shouldst depart,
 Leaving thee living in posterity?
 Be not self-will'd, for thou art much too fair
 To be death's conquest and make worms thine heir.

The writer begs the young man to not die unfruitful — "ere one thousand be distill'd" — while not initial creating "sweet some bottle" , the bottle of fragrance is a picture for a girl. The writer declares that 10 youngsters can generate 10 times the image of their father and 10 times the happiness of just one child. He powerfully condemns the young man's egoism during this sonnet by linking it with death. "Self-killed" refers each to the youth's losing his beauty by not passing it on to a baby, and to his inevitably dying alone if he continues his self-loving behavior. Sonnet 6 is notable for the ingenious multiplying of conceits and particularly for the closing pun on a legal can within the final couplet: "Be not disobedient, for large integer art a lot of

too truthful / To be death's conquest and build worms thine heir." Here, as earlier in the sonnet, the poet juxtaposes the themes of narcissism and death.

In short, the poet says do not let winter's effects take their toll on you. While you are still in the summer of your life you should beget an heir, and preserve your beauty before you die. Using your beauty to create offspring is not a bad thing, but you are paying back the loan of the beauty you have been given by producing another beauty. Alternatively, you could be ten times happier by having ten children – and they will be happier than you if all ten look like you. Then what could death do if you were to die leaving such a legacy? Do not be selfish, for you are too beautiful to let death win and make worms your heir. The Number Ten is used here as a perfect number, and signifies the perfection of Divine order. According to the Biblical education of Shakespeare the historically significant number, **TEN** signifies completeness testimony, law and responsibility. It is also viewed as a complete number, that it also a result of 3 the number of Trinity and +7 the number of grace and Holy Spirit.

According to the Pythagoreans, Ten is taken into account holy as a result of it's derived from the primary four numbers. Ten is additionally created from four, the quantity of the physical creation, and 6, the quantity of man. of these which means area unit recalled to the literary work wherever the writer urges the truthful youth to seek out a vessel for his seed: "some vial" which means "a womb" to make a baby who would indicate to the globe of his beauty; and threatens that the truthful youth's beauty can die with him if he doesn't take this action, then he suggests that the truthful youth ought to have 10 children! And here falls completeness.

The "Sacred Numbers" became a neighborhood of faith and later of the fashionable belief, and largely described within the well-liked rituals, and Shakespeare has understood their literary and spiritual significance and used them in his works to the lees. And, that is a lot of, Shakespeare's date of birth and death (1564 -1616) carries a definite secret of his fondness for sacred numbers; thus: The sum of the date of his birth (1564=16) is doubled within the date of his death (1616).

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