



THE
Shakespeare
Code

Virginia M. Fellows

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THE SHAKESPEARE CODE

by Virginia M. Fellows

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I dedicate this book to my wonderful
family and all the patient ones
whose help made it possible to bring it to a finish.

I thank each one of you
from the bottom of my heart.

I want to thank the dedicated members
of the Francis Bacon Society of London
for your many years of tireless probing
into every possible aspect
of the Shakespeare-Bacon anatomy.
I owe much to your thorough scholarship.

* * *

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I am seeking not my own honour, but the honour and advancement, the dignity and enduring good of all mankind...

I keep the future ever in my plan, looking for my reward, not to my times or countrymen, but to a people very far off, and an age not like our own, but a second golden age of learning.

—Francis Bacon

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

In November 1623, the First Folio of the plays of William Shakespeare was published. The Folio is one of the most closely studied works of English literature, yet it raises many unanswered questions. In October 1623, a month earlier, Francis Bacon, one of the leading figures of the English Renaissance, published a book containing a complete description of a new and ingenious system of concealing messages in code. Is it just a coincidence that these two books were published one month apart?

In fact, the code that Bacon described unlocks many of the mysteries of the First Folio. The key to the Shakespeare code was embedded in a book that was widely circulated in his time and to the present. Yet it was more than 250 years before anyone realized that Bacon's writings on ciphers were not just theoretical, but they were describing his method for recording a secret history of his times.

Francis Bacon used this and other codes to conceal his work in books published under his own name and under the names of Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe and others of the time. The hidden messages tell a startling story. They reveal state secrets and scandals—the marriage of a “Virgin Queen,” murder and

intrigue, corruption and lies at the highest levels of the government. And they also tell the personal life story of Francis Bacon himself.

These stories could not be safely told in Bacon's own day—more than one person was severely punished for daring to speak these truths. So Bacon concealed them in code, hoping for a future time when they could be discovered and a day when men could be free to speak and to know the truth. The codes and the secrets they contain were discovered in the late 1800s. We believe it is time for the truth to be known and the story of the cipher to reach a wider audience.

This book is an account not so much of the intricacies of ciphers and the detective work of those who discovered them, but of the hidden story itself. It does fill in details of history but, more importantly, it sets the record straight about Francis Bacon, one of the most remarkable men the world has seen.

Bacon lived in an era filled with great men and women whose names are known even today: Walter Raleigh, Francis Drake, Ben Johnson, Leicester, Essex, Queen Elizabeth I. His name may not be as well known in our time as some of the others in this list, but he has been the most influential of them all, and we are all the beneficiaries of his work.

In the idealism of his youth, he envisioned a grand plan to change the world. He sought to free the mind of man from the straitjacket of religious and secular orthodoxy. He rejected the science of his day as lacking in practical accomplishment. He foresaw a time when science and industry would lift the curse of Eden. And he outlined a new philosophy of science and nature to achieve that goal. All this is recorded in history books.

The startling story hidden in code reveals still more. It tells of Francis Bacon as the true author of the plays and poems attributed to Shakespeare. The plays are among the greatest

works of English literature. They have illuminated the issues of love and life, of right and wrong, of loyalty and friendship, of mercy and justice. Even more than this, Bacon sought to create a new language and literature in England, one that could be used to express the most sublime concepts of morality and philosophy, so that great ideas and ideals could be accessible to all, not just to those who could speak and read Latin.

The codes also reveal a hidden side of Francis Bacon and the struggles he faced. They tell of a destiny denied, secrets that could not be told. They tell of tragedy and loss, a great persecution by those who saw themselves as his enemies. Yet even in the midst of all this, Bacon's spirit remained undaunted, his optimism undimmed. Against great odds, he forged a victory from the midst of seeming defeat.

The codes and their revelations are not the end of the story of Francis Bacon, but only a beginning. They are one way of entry into his fascinating life and achievements, but not the only one. This book combines their revelations with the outer story to give a picture of Francis Bacon that has not been told before.

The author, Virginia Fellows, worked for many years to bring it to fruition. We are pleased to be able to present the story in this latest edition, which has been significantly revised throughout. New for this edition are most of the illustrations, captions and notes. We have also added a section which includes an account of the codes and details of their workings.

Virginia was gratified to see the beginning of the work on the new edition in 2005. Unfortunately, she did not live to see it finished. Shortly before she died, we were able to show her the new cover and she was grateful to know that an important part of what she considered to be her own mission would finally be fulfilled.

As you read this book, we hope that you will come to know

something of the soul of Francis Bacon as Virginia knew him and as we have come to know him. There are lessons here for all of us.

Bacon was a visionary and a poet, yet someone who walked the corridors of power and held the highest offices in the land. Eventually, the rich and powerful cast him out; he was a scapegoat who might be sacrificed so that they could live another day in their own corruption. He did not become resentful or bitter. Rather, he set himself again to fulfill the aspirations of his youth, and perhaps his greatest contributions were after his retirement from public life.

Among the many works of those final years was *The New Atlantis*. It was a grand vision of a promised land. For him, the idealism of youth did not fade. With the passing of the years, he did not abandon his dreams but found ways to make them more real.

He was a prophet of the modern world—and of a future golden age. Much of what he foresaw has come to pass, but not yet everything. His Great Instauration, his plan for the remaking of society, awaits its fulfillment. The building of that new world is not yet complete. Therefore, the story is not finished. There is work to do. And each of us is called to play a part.

And perhaps the soul of Francis Bacon yet holds the key to a golden age foretold by him—a destiny yet written in the stars.

THE EDITORS

PREFACE

“It is impossible,” one critic has noted, “to write an uninteresting book about Shakespeare.” Certainly a broad statement considering the reams of print published about that famous genius in the past four centuries, and yet it is not entirely without logic.

Although the name William Shakespeare tops the list as one of the most influential writers of the Western world, readers have sensed an indefinable aura of mystery surrounding the great dramas. Something seems to be missing, and indeed it is. Only half the story has been told. The half that is omitted is filled with more drama, intrigue, codes, false identity, tragedy, betrayal and mystery than any popular fiction author would dare dream up. It was this distinct element of mystery that first caught my interest.

When I learned that there was doubt about the authenticity of the tale told by orthodox sources—not from any ill will on their part but from a conspiracy of silence on the part of the playwright—I was hooked. A baffling enigma seems to have been carefully hidden behind the screen of these incredibly brilliant plays.

Next I learned that some researchers believed that Francis

Bacon was the real author. That was all the inspiration I needed. Unaware of the complexity of the story I was about to encounter, I was off with the enthusiasm of a novice on an eager search for clues to these enigmas—enigmas that appear to have surrounded the whole question of authorship from the beginning.

Could the plays really have been the work of the famous British philosopher-statesman-author known as Francis Bacon? I was soon to be, and am still these many years later, in constant amazement at what I learned.

The influence and reflection on our modern world of the life of this remarkable man is little known or understood by the mainstream historian. Much of what is taught about him is either in error or misinterpreted. Neither the exact time nor the circumstances of his birth are known, nor is the true identity of his parents. His life is a puzzle, his death a mystery. A mere fraction of his real contribution to the world has been revealed.

This twenty-first century promises to be a time of many disclosures; it is the time when the full details of the “Shakespeare controversy” may finally be resolved. “Thou stand’st as if some mystery thou didst?” wrote Bacon’s friend Ben Jonson. Only a handful of serious “detectives” have cared to pierce to the heart of the enigma.

The first step of my research was a visit to the Francis Bacon Library in Claremont, California, where a fine collection of Bacon-related books endowed by philanthropist Walter Arensberg had been preserved. Arensberg, staunch but sometimes overly enthusiastic, was a great Bacon admirer during the early twentieth century. (The attractive little library has now been closed and the collection taken over by the prestigious Huntington Library in San Marino.) I asked the then director, Elizabeth Wrigley, to recommend one single book that would give the true history of Francis Bacon. “There is no such thing,” she answered, “you will

have to be the one to write it.”

Since that time I have visited dozens of fine university and public libraries; I have prowled through new and used bookstores and interviewed many people through letters and personal contacts. I have acquired a collection of Baconian books and have kept in close touch with the Francis Bacon Society in London. This scholarly group was formed in the nineteenth century to explore the real facts of the Bacon-Shakespeare story. They are devoted seekers after the truth and have revealed many fascinating facts about the Elizabethan aristocrat, but even they have not reached a final conclusion about him. The one fact they *do* agree on is that Bacon was the true author of the works of Shakespeare.

Early in my research, that strange phenomenon which Carl Jung called synchronicity brought me in touch with the single most amazing Baconian artifact I could have imagined. Most readers are familiar with such surprising events. Suddenly out of nowhere, just at the right time and the right place, some essential object or information will appear, as though a genie had been at work behind the scenes. For me this surprise came in the shape of a strange wooden contraption known as a Cipher Wheel. On the printed pages affixed to it, in a most ingenious code is recorded the true story of Francis Bacon—an account actually and incredibly written by him in his own words. It is a story that changes the current concept of English history.

No longer was guesswork necessary. Now the task was to fit the details of Bacon's life, as the cipher gives it, into accepted records of history. *The Shakespeare Code* is my attempt to do just that and to explain what the Cipher Wheel is and why Bacon felt the need to create the ciphers. It is a poignant and tragic tale—but one that ends on an unexpected note of triumph.

It is a story that is crying out to be told.

Chapter One

A Tale of Two Strangers

*The revealing [of secrets] is not for worldly use,
but for the ease of a man's heart.*

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a lone horse and buggy could be seen at almost any hour of the day or night jogging along the dusty roads surrounding the city of Detroit. Dr. Orville Owen, a young physician, possessed not only an amazing memory but also a commendable sense of responsibility. People who knew him best were certain that one day he would become the most outstanding surgeon in the state.

As the doctor drove his horse and buggy on his daily rounds, he became aware that he was allowing his concerns about one patient to be carried over to the next. In order to clear his mind between calls, he took to reciting poetry aloud to the clop-clop-clop of his horse's hooves. As a great lover of Shakespeare, he eventually decided to commit to memory all the plays of this favorite poet of his, memorizing a modern, amended edition and then the original 1623 First Folio. In due time, Dr. Owen had

learned them all so well that his dinner companions considered it a fine parlor trick to test his memory by reciting a line from a play and challenging Owen to identify the right act and scene.

This was no problem for Owen. He could easily quote even the following and the preceding lines. The only times he was uncertain was when he found lines in Shakespeare that were nearly identical from one play to another. In this case, he would have to ask that further lines be quoted.

These repetitions puzzled Owen, just as they have puzzled other scholars before and after this time. He pondered over them and even more over the out-of-context passages that occurred so frequently in the plays. There were also strange passages that made no sense. No one seemed to be able to explain these any more than they could explain certain oddly related sections that appeared from play to play at random and for no apparent reason.

The more familiar the doctor became with the plays, the more mystified he was. Why so much repeating? Nonsense passages from the most talented playwright in the world? Why were some words needlessly italicized while others were wrongly capitalized? Owen was well aware of the inconsistencies of Elizabethan spelling and printing, but these oddities were more than could be explained by that fact alone.

And he began to wonder, as the American scholar Delia Bacon had wondered before him,¹ why did Shakespeare make so many of his settings resemble scenes in Elizabethan England? Why had Hamlet attended a university that had not yet been founded? Why did he write about firearms before firearms had been invented, clocks when there were no clocks? What was the point of all this? A man as well acquainted with English history as the writer of the history plays would certainly have known that there had been no cannons in King John's reign.

Owen puzzled over these anomalies and finally came to believe that these and other similar errors had been deliberate “mistakes” on the part of the dramatist and not just ignorance or carelessness. But why? What could have been the point?

Most of all, he puzzled over the many references to ships and the sea that began to appear seemingly at random and totally out of context in play after play. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, for instance, he remembered an oddly unrelated passage:

This Puncke is one of Cupid’s carriers,
Clap on more sailes, pursue: up with your sights;
Give fire: she is my prize, or ocean whelm them all.

act II, sc. 2

This peculiar passage had nothing whatsoever to do with the ridiculous Falstaff’s pursuit of the merry housewives. What was it doing there? Owen could find no explanation. He found other passages equally confusing.

By now the good doctor’s curiosity was piqued beyond limit. Painstakingly he wrote out all the passages in which these nautical references occur. Then he read them together and found, to his utter astonishment, that he was reading a more or less recognizable account of a great sea battle, specifically that amazing victory achieved by the Elizabethans over the Spanish fleet, the Armada, sent to attack them in 1588. It seemed impossible to believe, but there it was—two different stories being told by the same words used in different sequences.²

Dr. Owen was not only shocked, he was hooked. Every minute he could spare was devoted to combing through the plays line by line. A passage in the prologue to *Troilus and Cressida* attracted his attention.

Beginning in the middle, starting thence away
To what may be digested in a play.

Beginning in the middle of what? And why? What was the playwright trying to say? On and on went his search.

After many trials and errors, Owen found “the middle”—in the middle group of plays, the history plays. In the first history play, *King John*, he found the following: “Thus, leaning on mine elbow, I begin” (act I, scene 1).

This is a phrase we are familiar with now, but it was not an idiom of the time. It was the opening Owen had been looking for. From that moment on, he was on his way to one of the most amazing literary discoveries of all time—the plays of William Shakespeare were cover text for a cipher biography, a story totally different from the plots around which the plays revolved. The doctor from Detroit was receiving glimpses of a poignant and secret life story, and it was told in great detail and in the same blank-verse style so typical of Shakespeare.

As he continued his work, Owen found that certain key words—such as reputation, fortune, honor, time, nature—marked the passages with sentences belonging to the cipher story. Entire plays and even poems had been most ingeniously buried under the cover of outer stories that have become familiar to the entire world.

The demands of his discovery forced Owen to give up much of his practice to spend time on the work, and before long he realized that he needed help. Elizabeth Wells Gallup, a respected teacher in a Michigan high school, and others were hired to type out the passages as he read them aloud. After these secretaries typed the passages, they would sort them into various boxes according to the subject matter and keywords. When they had collected a pile, Owen would check them over and join the phrases according to the rules he had discovered in the cipher itself.

As he went along, he discovered that eventually he had enough new material to fill five separate small books. These were

**Elizabeth Wells Gallup**

While assisting Dr. Owens in decoding Bacon's Word Cipher, Mrs. Gallup discovered a second cipher, the Bi-literal Cipher, embedded in the same works of Shakespeare.

published by the Howard Publishing Company as *Sir Francis Bacon's Cipher Story*. These little books are now out of print, but many large libraries still carry copies of them (and some are available through the Web).

As the work continued, Mrs. Gallup became aware of the odd use of italics in the original publications. No more reasonable explanation could be found for this than for the misplaced subject matter. She remembered that Francis Bacon had described, in great detail, a style of cipher-writing which he called the Bi-literal Cipher in his own 1623 *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. Mrs. Gallup studied it closely and discovered that in addition to the Word Cipher being disclosed by Owen, the same plays and texts contained a Bi-literal Cipher just as described by Bacon.

In both styles the message was the same. And what it revealed

was at least as startling as the existence of the ciphers themselves. They said that Francis Bacon was not the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon and his wife. He was, incredibly, the son of Elizabeth Tudor, England's "Virgin" Queen, and was a child whom she recognized privately but not publicly.

The great Elizabeth, determined to present herself as the image of the mythic Virgo, the Virgin Queen, had concealed from the general public the birth of her son, whose father was her favorite, Robert Dudley, later Lord Leicester. Yet she had told Parliament: "This shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a Queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin."³ She was not about to give up this carefully created image of herself; neither was she going to give up her personal and sensual pleasures.

Bacon dared not oppose the queen by revealing his true identity. His only recourse was to hide his true story in cipher, and hope that one day it would be discovered and revealed to the world. His greatest fear was that the cipher might never be discovered and that his work would be a true case of "love's labor lost."

Dr. Owen found that the Word Cipher used phrases lifted from various plays, giving a totally different context or story in the same blank verse. The Bi-literal Cipher, discovered by Mrs. Gallup, used two different fonts, or styles of type, on the original printed pages. These fonts were distinct but quite close in appearance, and the hidden message was discovered by decoding the pattern they formed. What Mrs. Gallup had deciphered was a text in short prose sentences that eventually corroborated all that Owen had found in the poetic lines of the Word Cipher.

The scheme of the triple content of the plays (the original and

the two cipher stories) was far more brilliant than anything either Gallup or Owen could have conceived of, as they well knew. They had no choice but to accept, in amazement, the awesome story that was being unfolded as they applied the rules, play by play. As they continued their work, they found that the same methods could be applied to certain other writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—and these revealed the same ciphers that had been inserted by Bacon himself.

It was an absolute impossibility that such material could be extracted from the works if it had not been purposely placed there in the beginning. Owen thought about the adage “Nothing comes from nothing.” No man could have had the genius to find a play where there was none. If he had done the impossible, he would have been a far greater genius than Bacon and “Shakespeare” combined.

Owen’s editor, George Goodale, wrote his opinion on the subject:

The existence of a cipher by use of which these stories are revealed is an indisputable fact. The stories are not Dr. Owen’s inventions. He did not compose them, for the reason that neither he nor any man that lives is gifted with the surpassing genius to do it. Nobody has the right to pass judgment ... who has not first read the book.⁴

Owen had long been aware that some people believed the wondrous plays loved by all the world were not the work of an actor from Stratford but of the brilliant philosopher Francis Bacon. The doctor had not paid much attention to the idea before because he could see no valid reason for such a deception; but here, revealed line by line, was a more than adequate explanation. Here was the man who had gone to an enormous amount of effort to leave his secret biography hidden in the plays, claiming that he was the son, unacknowledged of course, of Queen

Elizabeth. Quite unintentionally, Owen had stumbled upon a state secret that would rewrite the history of Tudor England if it were known.

Doubts about who had written the works accredited to a young peasant lad from a country village in Warwickshire had been tossed about publicly for more than two hundred years by the time Owen came along. And who knows how long before that private manuscripts had been exchanged by those who were in on the secret.

In 1769, an odd little pamphlet was circulated publicly—*The Life and Adventures of Common Sense*. In this peculiar tract, a man called Common Sense is having a conversation with a stranger about “a person belonging to the playhouse”:

This man was a profligate in his youth, and, as some say, had been a deer-stealer.... [He] took the first opportunity that presented itself to rob [men] of everything he could lay his hands on.... He presently cast his eye upon a common place book, in which was contained an infinite variety of modes and forms to express all the different sentiments of the human mind, together with rules ... upon every subject or occasion that might occur in dramatic writing.... With these materials and with good parts of his own he commenced play-writer. How he succeeded is needless to say when I tell the reader that his name was Shakespear.⁵

A few years later, in 1786, another little tract appeared, *The Story of the Learned Pig*. The author claimed to be “an Officer of the Royal Navy.” Witty and satirical, it is a supposed account of the reincarnation of a pig at Sadler’s Wells (an old medicinal springs where a theater that frequently produced plays of Shakespeare was built).

Formerly this pig had been embodied as Romulus, founder of Rome, and later as Brutus, legendary founder of England. During Elizabeth's reign, the pig, now known as Pimping Billy, had been embodied as the son of Ben Jonson's fictional character Cob. One of Billy's friends was Will Shakspeare, whom he accuses of certain inelegant hi-jinx, including having been "falsely fathered" with plays not belonging to him. The plays mentioned were *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It would be hard to say who "fathered" this little jibe at Shakespeare, but we can make an educated guess that it was a member of a secret society, possibly a Rosicrucian, who was aware of the true story of "Shakespeare."

Little tracts such as these barely rippled the surface of the literary seas. But at about the same time in the 1780s, another dissenter came along who raised a larger tempest. He was the Reverend James Wilmot, rector of the little village of Barton-on-the-Heath, which was a few miles to the north of Stratford-on-Avon, Shakespeare's hometown.

Wilmot was commissioned by a London firm to write a biography of William Shakespeare, a poet and playwright who was becoming more popular day by day. Wilmot accepted the offer and vigorously set about the task of collecting data, stories, personal remembrances—anything and everything he could find about the man from Stratford. Trip after trip to the neighboring village, however, failed to turn up anything of the least significance. About the most famous resident of Stratford there seemed to be nothing at all. No one seemed to know anything about him. There were no anecdotes about his youth or his retirement days in the village, no schoolboy tales—nothing!

Wilmot's enthusiasm ebbed lower and lower after each visit. He could not find the slightest reason for believing that the immortal *Lucrece*, the mystic *Tempest*, the enigmatic sonnets or

even a single line of the most beautiful blank verse in the English language had been written by a man who had lived in the squalid little market town that was the Stratford of the time.

Wilmot found not even a trace of the necessary cultural and educational opportunities that would have been essential for the writing of the plays. Did a boy named Shaksper or Shastpur or Shaxper (there were many spellings of such a name—never Shake-speare with a hyphen, as it was sometimes printed) ever study at the one-room local grammar school? No records existed to show that he did. Were there books available that he might have used? Wilmot combed the countryside for fifty miles around and found not a single book that had belonged to Shakespeare.

Could the writer of the most magnificent English ever spoken have learned it from the dull and almost incomprehensible dialect of the uneducated Warwickshire villagers? Both the mother and father of Will Shaksper had been illiterate and signed their names with an X.

Stratford-on-Avon revealed itself to Wilmot as nothing but a dreary little country town whose inhabitants were, for the most part, illiterate, whose town council had difficulty in persuading the citizens to keep their trash out of the streets, whose gutters were “full of foulness” and whose one-room school did not possess even one book on grammar. A grammar book would have been a necessary item for an adequate education, the kind of education that was available in those days only to children of the higher classes.

Reluctantly Wilmot conceded that the roots of education, culture and learning that would have been an indispensable background for the writing of the sublime literature of Shakespeare did not grow in Stratford. He gave up in discouragement and went back home to Barton.

Shocked by his discovery, Wilmot kept his thoughts to himself, but he did share his findings from time to time with a few favored visitors. Only once did his beliefs see print, in a paper that one of these visitors presented at the prestigious Ipswich Philosophical Society. One man in all of England, Wilmot was convinced, had the brilliance of mind and the scholarship to have written the glorious plays. That man, he said, was none other than the great philosopher-scholar Francis Bacon.

As might be expected, this paper about Wilmot's discovery caused quite an uproar at the Ipswich Society. The information was presented there on two occasions, with the same results—disbelief and condemnation. It wasn't until 1932 that a professor came across the paper with Wilmot's great secret and published it for the world to see.⁶

Meanwhile, the ranks of those who doubted Shakespeare's authorship had been steadily growing. John Greenleaf Whittier wrote, "Whether Bacon wrote the wonderful plays or not, I am quite sure the man Shakspeare neither did nor could."⁷ Dr. W. H. Furness wrote: "I am one of the many who have never been able to bring the life of William Shakespeare and the plays of Shakespeare within planetary space of each other.... I think we could have found no one of that day but F. Bacon to whom to assign the crown."⁸ Henry James wrote: "I am sort of haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practiced on a patient world."⁹ Even Mark Twain joined the fray: "That man could not have been the Stratford Shakespeare—and *wasn't*."¹⁰

In the late nineteenth century, an American congressman from Minnesota by the name of Ignatius Donnelly took up the quest. Donnelly was the author of one of the earliest books on Atlantis.¹¹ He was also one of the first to claim to have discovered a cipher in the Shakespeare works. Using a complicated system

based on certain key numbers, he extracted several intriguing passages on the lives of Will Shaksper and Francis Bacon. However, Donnelly never managed to form his ideas into a methodical system, and when his book on this subject, *The Great Cryptogram*, was finally published in 1888, it was met with such ridicule that he gave up in despair and never completed the development of his theories. (My personal opinion is that he was on to a legitimate discovery, and it is unfortunate that this particular style of cipher has never been carried further.)

There are several good books on the market, new and old, discussing the controversy about Shakespeare, fascinating and detailed explanations as to why the uneducated Will could not have written the remarkable plays that are attributed to him. Each writer has his own favorite contender for the honor. Edward de Vere, Christopher Marlowe, William Stanley, Roger Manners, Sir Walter Raleigh and numerous others have been proposed as candidates, and even Queen Elizabeth herself. All of them were friends and acquaintances of Francis Bacon.

It is not the intent of this book to go into a controversy about why Will Shaksper or any of the other claimants cannot be considered the true author. This has been adequately examined and explained by others. This book is about Francis Bacon, about the nearly incredible drama of his life, especially as he himself reveals it through the codes in his many writings.

Owen, to assist in his deciphering work, built a one-of-a-kind contraption known as the cipher wheel. A description of it and of my personal connection with it is now due.

We find that Owen, as he went on with his deciphering, discovered that the original author, Francis Bacon, had inserted into the works themselves coded instructions to aid in the tiring

task of extracting the cipher.

The fact that instructions were given about cipher in cipher has caused some ridicule by those who deny the legitimacy of Owen's work. What would be the purpose of giving instructions about the code if you have to first break the code in order to find the instructions? The objection may seem valid enough, except for the fact that the instructions are there and no one could have inserted them except the original author:

The easiest way to carry on the work is to
Take your knife and cut all our books asunder,
And set the leaves on a great firm wheel
Which rolls and rolls.¹²

Dr. Owen followed these instructions carefully. After numerous experiments he had two large wooden wheels, or cylinders, built. Around the cylinders, which measured 36 inches in diameter and 48 inches in height, was wound a thousand feet of waterproof, linenlike material. The wheels were mounted in a frame in such a way that they could be turned backward and forward, much in the way that a parchment scroll or a modern tape player works. Onto the linen he glued printed pages cut from valuable books or copies of books from the period of the English Renaissance. When the big wooden wheels are rolled back and forth, the pages of the old books are exposed for easy viewing, thus allowing hundreds of pages to be rolled in and out of view with just a turn of the wheels. The cipher wheel is large and ungainly and awkward, but it serves its purpose admirably.

When I first heard of the strange contraption, it was owned by Elizabeth Hovhaness of Massachusetts and her former husband, Alan Hovhaness, both well-known musicians. The wheel, crated and untouched for years, had been stored on the fifth floor of an unheated, concrete warehouse in a rundown section of Detroit, sixty easy miles from the city of Flint, where I lived at the



Dr. Orville Owen's cipher wheel

This illustration, from Dr. Owen's original publication of the cipher story, shows the cipher wheel set up as he used it in his workshop. As he read passages from the wheel, his assistant would type them. The sheets would then be sorted according to the key-words typed at the top of each page.

time. Mrs. Hovhaness planned to move to England and did not intend to take the heavy crate with her. (It weighed almost four hundred pounds and was about as easy to ship as a grand piano.)

I had long been fascinated by the existence of this intriguing cipher wheel but never expected to be fortunate enough to actually see it, let alone possess it. I learned through Elizabeth Wrigley of the Bacon Library, now in San Marino, that Mrs. Hovhaness was looking for a permanent home for the wheel. The small Bacon Library had no room for it. Excitedly I contacted Mrs. Hovhaness at her home in the East. Within days, she said, she would be on her way to London. She was nearly as happy as I was to find a home for the wheel before she left. She made only one stipulation—the wheel must have a permanent home where it would be secure, appreciated and readily available for serious examination. I was able to promise her that eventually the wheel

would go to Summit University in Montana, where it is now in storage and occasionally on display.

Mrs. Hovhaness graciously called the warehouse with immediate orders to release the huge crate to me. Within a few days, I was on my way with a friend and a truck to pick up this treasure. I could hardly have chosen a worse day for it. We had no sooner collected the huge crate from the warehouse and loaded it on the open bed of the truck when the funnel of a tornado came barreling down over the city, missing us by less than a mile. The tumult overhead slammed down ice balls large enough to leave dents in the truck. Fortunately, they bounced off the tarpaulin that covered the crate, preventing serious damage.

The sixty-mile drive home through the storm was slow and hazardous, and it was with genuine relief that we finally arrived with our cargo intact. It took three husky men to slide the big box down the planks from the truck bed to the concrete floor of a room attached to our garage. My treasure was intact and safe.

The value of this unique object is certainly not in terms of money. But it is the product of the eye-straining, exhausting labors of two dedicated men—Francis Bacon and Orville Owen. They were born three hundred years apart, yet together they created a marvelous machine on which are recorded secrets of history that the world little dreams of. It is my hope that this book will aid in vindicating the reputations of both of these remarkable men, for their stories are crying out to be told.

This is such a strange story—Francis Bacon’s life as revealed in the cipher—that it has been difficult for people saturated by “orthodox” history to believe, but the writer of the cipher himself had anticipated this. The Word Cipher takes the clever form of a conversation between Bacon and the man of the future whom he expects will someday be his decipherer.¹³ He speaks to him as to his dearest friend. The decipherer makes some objections:

But may they not say it is chance that doth this?

Bacon answers:

We thought of that; and if any man conceive
 That it is done without any system...
 Let him proceed to form a history
 And neglect the guides. He cannot go through with it
 To its completion....
 No man can know the shiftings, or how to go
 Forward...
 Until he finds our four beginnings.

In another place the Decipherer complains:

Men, no doubt, will think that I am a liar.
 I may not conceal from you that I shall appear
 For a time to be a fool.
 I shall be met with universal ridicule.

Bacon's challenge to all his objections:

What mean you?
 Will you lose your reputation for truth?¹⁴

Mrs. Gallup's and Dr. Owen's tireless efforts to unravel the mystery led to many converts; they also failed to convince others. The vicar of the church in Stratford-on-Avon appears to have been convinced against his will. This gentleman had come to the United States on a lecture tour hoping to interest affluent Americans in making contributions to the Shakespeare Memorial in Stratford. Having heard of Owen's discoveries, he made a trip to Detroit to point out to the doctor the error of his ways. Planning to expose the fraud once and for all, he visited Owen at his studio and requested to see the workings of the cipher. Dr. Owen courteously demonstrated his work to the vicar and

allowed him to participate in some of the extractions from the wheel. He reduced the good man to silence. According to Owen's colleague, Dr. William Prescott, the vicar canceled the remainder of his lecture tour and soon returned to England, apparently unwilling to raise money for a project he no longer believed in.¹⁵

There are other stories of the successes of Dr. Owen. A leading Detroit newspaper printed a scathing report of one of Owen's lectures. Owen considered it libelous and got an injunction against the paper. To settle the dispute, the paper sent one of its best writers to witness a demonstration of the deciphering work. Soon, to the writer's enormous surprise, Owen had her not only convinced but actually working the cipher herself. The paper printed a front-page apology to Owen and the case was dropped.¹⁶

Any and all skeptics were cordially invited by both Mrs. Gallup and Dr. Owen to attend demonstrations of the methods of deciphering. Interestingly enough, and perhaps to be expected, not one so-called scholar of the academic community seems to have responded.

The idea that Francis Bacon was the true author of the works attributed to Shakespeare (the Baconian theory) has always been controversial. Some critics have claimed that Bacon could not possibly have written the plays because "he didn't have a poetic bone in his body."

This statement is so far from reality that one must question whether such commentators had ever read a word that Bacon wrote. In simplicity, rhythm and clarity, his *Essays* have been compared to the writings of Shakespeare, and this by persons who had no idea of the connection between the two. Even in Bacon's mundane, scientific writings, the soul of a poet shines through his works. His very thoughts framed themselves in poetry. Eulogies that were written after his so-called death leave

no doubt that his contemporaries thought of him as a poet. The court masques that Bacon is known to have written (and there are several) are as original, imaginative, lyrical and poetic as it is possible for the stage to be. Even the poet Shelley recognized the poetry of Bacon's soul:

Lord Bacon was a poet. His language has a sweet and majestic rhythm which satisfies the sense, no less than the almost super human wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect. It ... distends and then bursts the circumference of the reader's mind, and pours itself forth ... into the universal element with which it has perpetual sympathy.¹⁷

Shelley claimed he would rather be "damned with Plato and Lord Bacon than go to heaven with Paley and Malthus."¹⁸ And who could better recognize a great poet than another poet?

Some have asked an obvious question: If Bacon was the author, why isn't this widely known? The secret history revealed in the coded passages explains all we need to know about why this great poet and philosopher was denied the recognition he so richly deserved.

Now let us take up the life of Francis Bacon as it is revealed in history and in the Shakespeare Code. As we do so, we will discover secrets that have lain hidden for hundreds of years. We will also gain new insights into the man who, perhaps more than any other individual, has been responsible for the birth of the modern world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Virginia Fellows was born in the tiny prairie town of Jordan Valley, Oregon, sixty miles from the closest railroad. Her parents, easterners themselves, had heeded the popular call of their day to “Go west, young man.” Later they moved to the more metropolitan area of Boise, Idaho, and there Virginia began her education. She attended Scripps College in Claremont, California, and graduated from the University of Washington at Seattle. Transported to Michigan at the time of her marriage, she continued her education at the University of Michigan while raising four children. She considers several trips to Europe, India, South America and the Pacific islands to have been an important part of that education.

Intrigued from childhood by the mysterious and the unfamiliar, after her family left home, Virginia embarked on the studies of mysticism that led her to spend time at Summit University in Pasadena, California (now located in Montana). It was there that her fascination with the remarkable world of Francis Bacon began. *The Shakespeare Code* explains a few of the amazing facts that she discovered after years of research about this great and only partially understood philosopher. Although she has published numerous articles and pamphlets on the subject, this is her first full-length book.

“To write with powerful effect, he must write out the life he has led—as did Bacon when he wrote Shakespeare.”

— Mark Twain (written in the margin of a book)

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The story is extremely important and needs to be told.
It’s inseparable from the Shakespearean authorship puzzle.”*

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