

10. Lights of Truth

*"Time's glory is to command contending kings,
To unmask falsehood, and bring truth to light"*
—Shakespeare: *The Rape of Lucrece*

Anagrams and Ciphers

If Shakespeare was the mask of Francis Bacon, then he may well have inserted cipher clues as to his identity in the works.* To many, the idea is preposterous and provides a source of much of the derision levelled at heretical viewpoints on the authorship question. But, as with so many facets of the myth, such people refuse to address the issue seriously.

Perhaps we should begin with some historical background. Ciphers are known to have been used for nearly four thousand years, not only by diplomats and spies but also by political, military and religious leaders and by scholars and literary artists. In his *Gallic Wars* Julius Caesar describes the substitution cipher and Suetonius tells us that he used it in his correspondence with Cicero. It involves the substitution of the letter three places further on in the alphabet for the letter required. Thus, for example, 'D' stands for 'A'. To take an example, the English word 'cold' appears as 'frog'. Cryptologists call such alphabetical displacements 'Caesars'.

The 13th century English monk and scientist Roger Bacon (no relation of Francis) wrote a part of his recipe for making explosives in cipher. Chaucer included passages in cipher in *The Equatorie of the Planets*, which describes the workings of an astronomical instrument. Galileo used a cryptogram in a letter to Kepler recounting his discovery that the planet Venus imitates the phases of the moon; and Huygens did likewise to a friend about finding one of Saturn's rings. Leonardo, of course, wrote his notes back to front and Samuel Pepys wrote his *Diary* in a private shorthand which had to be deciphered.

Again, the use of ciphers became popular in Elizabethan England. It spread from Europe where the Catholic Church had paved the way. In 1499 Trithemius, a theologian, wrote *Steganographia* (from the Greek word meaning 'covered writing'), which was probably the first cipher book. His systems became invaluable to Italian diplomats in the 16th century. From Italy the practice spread to Spain and France. In Paris in 1586 Blaise de Vigenère published his *Traicté des Chiffres*, in which he wrote: "All the things in the world constitute a cipher. All nature is merely

* Much of the cipher material presented in this chapter is derived from various articles since the 1960s in *Baconiana*, the journal of the Francis Bacon Society.

a cipher and a secret writing. The great name and essence of God and his wonders, the very deeds, words, actions and demeanour of mankind—what are they for the most part but a cipher?"

It was during the reign of Henry VIII that cryptography made its first impact in England. By Elizabeth's reign it had become an important arm of statecraft. The decipherment of a secret message to Anthony Babington sent Mary, Queen of Scots, to the execution block. It was, after all, an age of plots and counter-plots regarding the succession to the throne, and many of these plots were hatched, or at least supported, from abroad. Sir Francis Walsingham, for many years the head of the secret service, at one time employed 53 agents on the continent.

There is also clear evidence that writers were sometimes used as spies and themselves used ciphers. We know that Marlowe was sent abroad as a spy, as was Anthony Bacon, the brother of Francis. We also know that the Government paid the Earl of Oxford an annuity of £1,000 from 1586 until his death in 1604, but the reason is unknown. We know, too, that in 1599 a Jesuit spy wrote two letters to the continent informing his colleagues that the Earl of Derby was busy writing comedies, but we do not know why this information was considered important enough to communicate to fellow spies. Perhaps poets and playwrights of the time were required to do government service in return for a blind eye turned by the authorities to their literary efforts, and perhaps other spies were aware of this practice.

At any rate, the two activities were sometimes linked. Anthony Bacon used cipher in his correspondence, not only as Walsingham's agent in France, but also for the eight years that he served Essex. Spedding, Francis Bacon's biographer, says that he forwarded his letters generally through his brother Francis's hands to the Earl. Yet we have even more direct evidence that Francis Bacon was perfectly familiar with ciphers, for he invented one himself. In *De Augmentis* (1623) he outlines his biliteral cipher which, he says,

"I devised myself when I was at Paris in my early youth, and which I still think worthy of preservation. For it has the perfection of a cipher, which is to make anything signify anything; subject however to this condition, that the infolding writing shall contain at least five times as many letters as the writing infolded: no other condition or restriction whatever is required. The way to do it is this—first let the letters of the alphabet be resolved into transpositions of two letters only. For the transposition of two letters through five places will yield thirty-two differences; much more twenty-four, which is the number of letters in our alphabet..."

It is not necessary to give a detailed description and example of how the biliteral cipher works because it is not likely to have been used in

Shakespeare. The reason is that it requires two alphabets of different, but only minimally different, type faces. This requirement would have demanded extreme accuracy from the type compositor, as would the checking of the text after the type had been set. But early 17th century type setting was a rather haphazard business, especially as regards spelling, omissions of some letters and additions of others. Moreover, the ink, which frequently ran, was applied to handmade paper, giving innumerable minimal changes to even the commonest letters. The result was that not only was the same letter often rendered slightly differently on all its occurrences on one page but also variations appeared from one printed copy of a text to the next. Thus, of the 80 or so copies of the *First Folio* in the Folger Library in Washington, no two are textually identical throughout. In other words, the whole pattern of printing practice in the early 17th century militates against the use of such a technical cipher in printed books. Bacon himself, it must be stressed, never refers to the use of the cipher *in print* but always to its employment in writing.²

Having ruled out the biliteral cipher from the Shakespeare works, we turn to other possibilities. Anagrams are always a fruitful field, and many suggestions have been offered by Baconians, though usually with derisory results. The most conspicuous candidate for an anagram is the long word 'honorificabilitudinitatibus' in Act 5 Scene 1 of *Love's Labour's Lost*. It has made anagram hunters busy, as we have seen. This long word certainly interested Bacon, who even set it out in a diagram which can be seen among the collected papers of Bacon in the Harleian Collection in the British Museum. It is difficult to see for what purpose other than a cryptogram anyone would trouble himself to construct such a diagram. It begins with two letters and extends the word by two-letter increases to the left for 13 lines (the last 'step' must extend by three letters as there are an odd number of letters—27—in the word), as below:

ho
hono
honori
honorifi
honorifica
honorificabi
honorificabili
honorificabilitu
honorificabilitudi
honorificabilitudini

For a mid-20th century critical examination of such alleged ciphers, see William Friedman and Elizabeth Friedman: *The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined*, 1957.

honorificabilitudinita
honorificabilitudinitati
honorificabilitudinitatibus

And what are we to make of the dialogue which comes just after the word in *Love's Labour's Lost*:

Moth: "What is a, b, spelt backward with the horn on his head?"
Hol: "Ba, pueritia with a horn added".
Moth: "Ba, most silly sheep with a horn. You hear his learning".
Hol: "Quis, quis, thou consonant?"
Moth: "The third of the five vowels, if you repeat them; or the fifth if I".
Hol: "I will repeat them: a, e, I...".
Moth: "The sheep; the other two concludes it: o, u".

Now, this is surely a riddle. The reply of Holofernes to the initial question should have been in Latin since he and Nathaniel have just been exchanging Latin phrases. Since the Latin for 'horn' is 'cornu', he therefore should have said 'Bacornu' This is not far off Bacon which as we have said is 'Baconus' in Latin. And when Holofernes asks: "Quis, quis, thou consonant?" he could be asking: which Bacon? What is the first name that goes with, or is consonant with, Bacon? If so, AEIOU provides the answer. And the solution to this riddle is found in the cipher manual *Cryptomenytices et Cryptographia*, written by Duke Augustus of Brunswick- Luneberg, and published in Germany in 1624.

One chapter of this book is devoted to square-table ciphers, in which one letter followed by another gives the cipher letter. The author took his table from Vigenère's *Traicté des Chiffres*, from which we quoted earlier. It was published in 1586, so the author of Shakespeare did have the opportunity to be familiar with it (remember that it was while he was in Paris in the late 1570s that Bacon devised the biliteral cipher). Above is the

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | E | I | O | U |
| A | B | F | L | P | T |
| E | C | G | M | Q | U |
| I | D | H | N | R | X |
| O | E | I | O | S | A |

Square Table Cipher

table from both books. To work this key, we take two vowels and apply one to the left hand column and the other to the top row, and then follow to the right and down respectively until they meet at a letter. Thus 'AE' gives us 'F', 'IO' gives us 'R' and 'OU' gives us 'A'. So, if this table is relevant to

the passage in the play, and it seems to me that it is a distinct possibility, then the answer to the question, "Which Bacon?" is 'Fra' (an abbreviation which Francis frequently used). The reader may remain sceptical, but it is as good an explanation as any of these puzzling lines.

Another occasion when a name occurs is in the *Sonnets*. Indeed Sonnet 136 seems to end all argument, for the author spells it out in no uncertain terms: "And then thou lovest me, for my name is Will". But this is not all that it seems. I have reproduced Sonnets 135 and 136 below, along with certain keys. Lines 7 to 10 of sonnet 136 are most peculiar and do read like a riddle. What are the 'things of great receipt' that we prove with ease? In the *Advancement* Bacon says that "the greatest matters are many times carried in the weakest ciphers", but why should we look for a cipher here? There are at least three reasons. First, the author seems to be revealing his identity in these sonnets. However, and secondly, he does get the point over rather too well: sonnet 135 mentions the name 'Will' thirteen times in fourteen lines. It is almost as if he were reassuring any doubters. Thirdly, the author invites us to make mathematical calculations. This is indisputable: sonnet 135 has 'overplus', 'making addition', 'addeth' and 'add', while sonnet 136 has 'among a number one is reckon'd none'.

Sonnet 135

*"Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will,
And Will to boot, and Will in overplus;
More than enough am I that vex thee still,
To thy sweet will making addition thus.
Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious
Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
Shall will in others seem right gracious?
And in my will no fair acceptance shine?
The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,
And in abundance addeth to his store;
So thou, being rich in Will, add to thy Will
One will of mine to make thy large Will more.
Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;
Think all but one, and me in that one Will".*

Sonnet 136

*"If thy soul check thee that I come so near,
Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy Will,
And will, thy soul knows, is admitted there;
Thus far for love, my love-suit, sweet, fulfil.
Will will fulfil the treasure of thy love,
Ay, fill it full with wills, and my will one.*

*In things of great receipt with ease we prove
 Among a number one is reckon'd none:
 Then in the number let me pass untold,
 Though in thy store's account I one must be;
 For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold
 That nothing me, a something sweet to thee:
 Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
 And then thou lovest me, for my name is Will".*

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

SHAKESPEARE: $18 + 8 + 1 + 10 + 5 + 18 + 15 + 5 + 1 + 17 + 5 = 103$

FRANCIS: $6 + 17 + 1 + 13 + 3 + 9 + 18 = 67$

BACON: $2 + 1 + 3 + 14 + 13 = 33$

FRANCIS BACON: $67 + 33 = 100$

I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

FRANCIS BACON: $21 + 8 + 16 + 4 + 18 + 0 + 9 + 17 + 16 + 18 + 5 + 4 = 136$

WILLIAM: $12 + 0 + 2 + 2 + 0 + 16 + 3 = 35$

A numbers cipher starts with the basic alphabet: in Elizabethan times, this means 24 letters and numbers 1-24 as set out above. In this simple cipher, to find the numerical value of a name we simply add up the total of the individual values of the letters. So, for example, Shakespeare becomes 103, Bacon becomes 33 and Francis Bacon becomes 100 (see above, in the same code). But here we have a variation: "among a number one is reckon'd none", i.e. 1 = O. "In thy number's storehouse I one must be" therefore means I = 1. If 1 = O and I = 1, then I = O. We now set out the alphabet starting with I as O, K as 1 and so on, as shown above. Now, here's a curious thing. 'Francis Bacon' in this cipher is... 136, the number of the sonnet where the author is asking us to study his name and do some arithmetic calculations with it. What is more, 'William' adds up to 35. The last line of sonnet 135 reads: "Think all but one, and me in that one Will". 135 minus 1 does give us the 35 of William. Finally, there is another interesting fact about the number 136. If the reader refers to the simple numerical cipher, he will discover that if we add 'Bacon' (33) and 'Shakespeare' (103) we do arrive at 136, the number of the sonnet where we are assured that the author's name is 'Will'.

There is a third occasion where a pertinent name occurs in the works. In Act 2 Scene 4 of *Henry IV*, Part One, a servant called Francis appears—

eventually. Indeed, the playwright dwells on his name to the extent that it is printed no fewer than 33 times (Bacon = 33 in simple numerical cipher). Curiously, too, Poins continually calls Francis's name, and Francis keeps replying 'anon, sir'. If Bacon wrote this scene and is alluding to his own anonymity, then it would have been typical of the name who was reluctant, in Ben Jonson's phrase to 'spare, or pass by, a jest'.

Generally, though, it has to be said that the cipher approach has done more harm than good to the Baconian case. The reason lies not in the endeavour, which is perfectly valid in itself, but in the results so far. Most of the so-called cipher 'discoveries' are frankly ridiculous and have therefore received the derision that they deserve. Mocking is easy. For example, we can 'prove' that Shakespeare helped produce the King James Bible. When it appeared in 1611, Shakespeare was 46 years of age. The 46th word of Psalm 46 is 'shake', and the 46th word from the end is 'spear'!

Yet I have tried to indicate that the cipher efforts are not totally disastrous. Certainly, on three occasions where the author is clearly presenting us with a riddle about pertinent names—'Bahorn' or 'Bacornu' in *Love's Labour's Lost*, 'Will' in sonnets 135 and 136 and 'Francis' in *I Henry IV*—I do believe that he is offering us evidence of his cryptographical skills. None of it *proves* that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, but it is corroboration of that probability.

Emblems

Next we turn to emblematic evidence. By 'emblem' in this context we mean a picture representing to the mind something different from itself or, in other words, a pictorial symbol. At the beginning of this inquiry we argued that the Droeshout engraving in the *First Folio* was, in effect, just such a device. Emblems are usually accompanied by a motto, but there may even be a brief verse explanation or even a prose commentary. Emblems were certainly popular in the 16th and 17th centuries. Between 1560 and 1620 about 150 emblem books were printed in Britain and Europe. In many respects, emblem pictures delighted the educated of that period in much the same way that crossword puzzles do today. In the *Advancement* Bacon writes that emblems "strike more forcibly the memory and are more easily imprinted than that which is intellectual".

Like ciphers, emblematic evidence of the Shakespeare myth has been largely ignored or ridiculed by scholars, many of whom reject it simply because it implies a wider circle of familiarity with the secret authorship. Of course, they cannot have it both ways—claiming on the one hand that the Baconian theory is only of recent origin and had no root in contemporary hearsay while at the same time dismissing evidence of that hearsay on the

grounds that it refutes the secrecy. Yet we all know as a matter of fact that few secrets are ever entirely kept and many who are not 'in the know' often guess the truth anyway. Certainly, if any of the following examples are valid components of the heretic's case, then they do widen the circle of those who were familiar with or at least suspected Bacon's authorship. I offer no further comment on that; my concern is simply to examine the claims made about the emblems themselves.

All of the following examples are taken from *Bacon is Shake-speare*, by the Liberal-Unionist MP Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence, first published in 1910. This work is a source of much of the scorn directed at Baconians by the orthodox, most of whom have probably never bothered to study it. Although it is written in a dogmatic style, boldly announcing in large type at the end of each chapter that 'BACON IS SHAKESPEARE', it does contain some interesting stenographic evidence that is worth serious consideration and the best I can do is to summarise his arguments.

The first emblem occurs on the title-page of *Minerva Britannia*, published in 1612 (see page 233). This emblem book—generally regarded as the most representative of the emblem books in English—was written and illustrated by Henry Peacham, a Cambridge graduate and man of varied talents, who dedicated it to Prince Henry. Minerva is the Roman equivalent of Pallas Athena, the Goddess of wisdom, arts and literature. The title page of the book consists of a large emblem depicting a wreath of bay leaves, the poet's laurel, and a scroll intertwining it, on which is written in Latin: "One lives in one's genius, other things depart in death". Inside the wreath a hand holding a pen appears from behind a curtain attached to the proscenium of a theatre arch. The moving finger is writing upside down on another scroll: "*Mente Videbor*"—"By the mind I shall be seen" (many Oxfordians read the motto as '*mente videbori*' because they can make the anagram '*Tibi nom de Vere*', or 'Thy Name is De Vere', even though the 'i' at the end is actually the end of the pen making a dot).

There is no mention of Bacon here, and a Stratfordian will argue that the poet being referred to is the author himself, who provides a poem for every emblem in the book. Peacham, they say, is making a declaration and hope that he is a poet and artist whose work will be of lasting value. Yet he was hardly so arrogant as to claim that he himself was Britain's Minerva. Moreover, the emblem implies that the author is concealed behind a curtain—which doesn't apply to Peacham—and that he has written plays which will be recognised as the product of his unique genius by their style and content—which doesn't apply either. There can be no doubt that this emblem is about a concealed writer of poetic drama. The motto suggests that the reader's mind will identify the mind of the plays,

which is precisely what Ben Jonson says in the poem opposite the Droeshout engraving in the *First Folio*. Peacham's emblem also complements a verse dedication to Francis Bacon in Thomas Powell's *Attorney's Academy* (1623), which includes the words:

*"O give me leave to pull the curtain by
That clouds thy worth in such obscuritie.
Good Seneca, stay but a while thy bleeding,
T'accept what I received at thy Reading:
Here I present it in a solemne strayne,
And thus I pluckt the Curtayne backe again."*

It also complements the later words of Archbishop Tenison, writing in 1679: "Those who have true skill in the works of the Lord Verulam... can tell by the design, the strength, the way of colouring, whether he was the author of this or that other piece, though his name be not to it".

But, you may well ask, does Bacon actually feature anywhere in the book itself, which would justify putting him in the title? Well, yes, indeed he does. Page 34 is dedicated 'To the most judicious, and learned, Sir Francis Bacon, Knight' and bears the motto, '*Ex malis moribus bona leges*'—out of the death of evil, a legacy of good'. The illustration depicts a shepherd dressed in Bacon's hat tellingly piercing a snake with his spear. The text below the emblem reads as follows:

*"The Viper here, that stung the shepheard swaine,
(While careles of himselfe asleepe he lay,)
With Hysope caught, is cut by him in twaine,
Her fat might take, the poison quite away,
And heale his wound, that wonder tis to see,
Such soveraigne helpe, should in a Serpent be.

By this same Leach, is meant the virtuous King,
Who can with cunning, out of manners ill,
Make wholesome lawes, and take away the sting,
Wherewith soule vice, doth greeue the virtuous still:
Or can prevent, by quicke and wise foresight,
Infection ere, it gathers farther might".*

This speaks of how the viper, having stung the shepherd while he lay asleep, is now with hyssop caught and cut in two, in order that its fat might be used to take the poison away and heal the shepherd's wound. The imagery here is that of Pallas ('pallein'—to shake) Athena shaking the spear of light at the serpent of ignorance and vice, precisely what Ben Jonson says of Shakespeare, who seemed to 'shake a lance, as brandish'd at the eyes of ignorance'.

Our second example is more mysterious. In 1645 an edition of Bacon's *De Augmentis* was published in Holland. The title page shows Bacon

sitting at his desk (see page 234). He is pointing with his right hand in full light to the bottom of his open book, while his left hand in deep shadow is holding up a small figure in goatskins. This figure is holding a closed and clasped book, as if offering it to the temple on the rocky crag. According to Edwin Durning-Lawrence, the cross lines on the book's side (the accepted symbol of a mirror) show that it represents the mirror up to nature—in other words, the Shakespeare plays.

Again, informing us that '*tragedos*' was the Greek name for a goatskin and that tragedies were so-called because the actors were dressed in goatskins, he assures us that the small figure represents the tragic muse. There may be something in his theory, but the reader must make his or her own judgment. In support, we could note the dots on Bacon's cloak just above his foot which clearly form a face. Indeed, it looks remarkably like a jester with his traditional cap and bells. If it represents comedy, then presumably it is intended as a counterpart to the tragic muse above. The lightning flashes in the sky and the temple on the hill might well suggest Mount Parnassus, the mountain of poetry and music whose summit was inhabited by Apollo, god of the fine arts, together with Pallas Athena, his feminine counterpart, and the nine muses, the daughters of Zeus. (Compare the emblem with Claude Lorrain's *Apollo and the Muses on Mount Helion (Parnassus)*, painted in 1680, but not reproduced here.)

It is also noticeable that there is a small book hidden under the large one open on the desk. The large book is folio size, yet none of Bacon's writings published under his own name appeared in folio form. On the other hand, the *First Folio* of Shakespeare was published in the same year, 1623, as the first edition of the *De Augmentis*, and the smaller book hidden under the folio is the appropriate size of the latter publication.

The third and final example requires more detailed explanation. It is contained in *Cryptomenytices et Cryptographia*, published in Germany in 1624. Its author, Duke Augustus of Brunswick-Luneburg, used the anagrammatic pseudonym 'Gustavus Selenus', and in the introductory poems he is described as '*Homo Lunae*' (the man in the moon). Augustus was a highly educated and well travelled man who attended the coronation of James I and was well known in English court circles. His book incorporates many earlier cipher systems, including those of Trithemius, Porta and Vigenère. Some Baconians believe that it is therefore a key to ciphers used in the First Folio, and we have suggested above that the square-table cipher may have been used in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Here, however, our attention is drawn to the book's curious frontispiece. It presents four pictures which superficially depict the author and a fellow cryptologist (see page 235). So the two men at the bottom represent the

Duke, who is standing, and Johannes Trithemius, who is seated at his desk (the tablature states that his *Steganographia* is incorporated). As stated in a letter from the Duke to his literary agent in 1620, the other three pictures represent a courier being given secret letters which are then carried here, there, on foot, on land and on water. Closer examination, however, reveals a number of peculiarities. The standing figure in the bottom picture does resemble the Duke as shown in a portrait of him in another of his books, except that the head is set too far to one side. But the seated figure does not conform to known portraits of Trithemius. He does wear a monk's habit but beneath it can clearly be observed the sleeve of a courtier (as in the left-hand picture), and he also wears a ruff. It is also noticeable that he is not tonsured, a fact which is emphasised by the standing figure in removing the mitre from his head. Some Baconians believe that the seated man is, in fact, Bacon and that the cord which links the girdles of the two men is meant to indicate that *Steganographia* was a joint work of Augustus and Bacon.

Durning-Lawrence believes that the man standing is William, "very much overdressed and wearing a mask something like the accepted mask of Shakespeare" (*op.cit*, p129). This seems like stretching it a bit, yet there is a curious thing that might lend credence to the view that the seated man is both Trithemius and Bacon. One of the Trithemius ciphers depends on the transposition of his Latin alphabet a number of places to the right or left. If we remove 'mitre' from 'Trithemius', as the picture does, we are left with the letters 'tsuih'. Transpose these five letters five places to the right and we get...'Bacon'. Amusing, perhaps, but was it intentional? It is impossible to say.

In the pictures to the left and right of the entablature we see first a courtier in a tall hat handing a book or piece of paper to a courier. Durning-Lawrence says that it is Bacon handing the plays to William who then rides away with them. At first sight, this seems laughable, but the courier is wearing what could be actor's boots, does carry a spear (for what ostensible reason is not at all apparent), does wear a spur, and has a sprig of bays in the hat which he holds in his left hand along with the spear. The courtier in the left-hand picture *could* be Bacon, but then he was hardly the only person in Europe at the time who wore a tall hat. His cloak certainly looks peculiar. It seems to be closed at the base and bulges like a bag. Perhaps it is from this cloaked bag that he has taken the book which he is giving to the courier.

Durning-Lawrence refers to the passage in *The Return from Parnassus* about actors:

*"England affords these glorious vagabonds,
That carried erst their fardels on their backs,*

*Coursers to ride on through the gazing streets,
Sooping it in their glaring satten sutes,
And Pages to attend their maisterships:
With mouthing words that better wits have framed,
They purchase lands, and now Esquires are made".*

So, according to him, the actor is shown with a fardel on his back (left), riding a courser (right) and 'sooping it' in his glaring satin suit (bottom).

Durning-Lawrence suggests that another key to the emblem is Camden's *Remains Concerning Britaine* (1605). In this book, as we have indicated before, there is a chapter on surnames, and on page 128 we read: "Breakspeare, Shake-speare, Shot-bolt, Wagstaff, Bagot in the old Norman; the same with Scipio, that is a stay or walking staff with the Latines, which became a surname, for that Cornelius served as a stay to his blind father". Durning-Lawrence then comments on the left-hand picture:

"In the middle distance the same man still holding a spear, still being a Shake-speare, walks with a staff, he is therefore a Wagstaff. On his back are books—the books of the plays. In the sky is seen an arrow, no, it is not sufficiently long for an arrow, it is a Shot-bolt. This shotbolt is near to a bird which seems about to give it the scroll which it carries in its beak. But is it a real bird? No, it has no real claws, its feet are Jove's lightnings, verily, 'it is the Eagle of Great Verse'" (*op.cit*, p125).

All this might seem to be an amusing fantasy of Durning-Lawrence's overactive imagination. Yet, again, it is not without some support. Let's start with Camden. There is a copy of his *Annales* in the Cottonian library which contains on blank pages notes in the hand of Francis Bacon. Spedding, Bacon's biographer, comments: "I suppose that Camden had lent the MS to Bacon to read and criticise; that Bacon had returned it with these passages suggested for insertion; and that they had been inserted accordingly, either by Camden himself or by someone to whom the MS was entrusted". So, if Bacon assisted Camden with his *Annales*, he may also have done so with his *Remaines*. We should also note that Camden refers to *Scipio* (Latin for 'staff'). It was of course Scipio who was suspected of writing the plays of Terence. Recall, too, that a letter belonging to Tobie Matthew refers to Shakespeare as 'Sir John Falstaffe'.

Jean Overton Fuller, in her biography of Bacon, comments on the theatrical symbolism in the pictures. For example, she notes the huge curtain (bottom), which is unrelated to the windows and seems to descend from the ceiling, looped up at the side. She thinks that it looks like one of the pair of curtains draping the proscenium arch of a theatre, being partially drawn back. She also believes that on the left the dominating building in the town to which the man walks is not a fortress but a theatre. Its raised rectangular part is therefore the area where the wires and other

stage effects are housed. According to her, it is indeed the Globe Theatre. Moreover, if we join the pictures to the left and right, we see that the mountain has two peaks which, she claims is Mount Parnassus, which had twin peaks (*Sir Francis Bacon*, 1981, pp320-322).

We come, finally, to the top picture. Durning-Lawrence claims that its oval shape is explained by its being enclosed in the magic circle of the imagination, surrounded by the masks of Tragedy, Comedy and Farce. He believes that the engraving represents a tempest with beacon lights: "No; it represents *The Tempest* of Shakespeare and tells you that the play is filled with Bacon lights" (*op.cit*, p126). He adds that at this time 'beacon' was pronounced 'bacon'. William Shakspeare thus performs the function of spreading the word of the god of literature, and in so doing brings himself enough prosperity to ride a fine horse and wear a large spur on his boot.

Ultimately, we have to confess agnosticism about a Baconian interpretation of the *Cryptomenytices* title page. There is insufficient concrete evidence to link it directly with Bacon, let alone any theory which advances his claims to Shakespeare. Durning-Lawrence's general interpretation may be correct, but there is no way of substantiating it in our present state of knowledge. All we can say with confidence is that the pictures do not tell a straightforward story. In no ordinary circumstances would a courier of cipher letters go out, as the man in the left picture does, with a spear in one hand and a walking stick in the other because it would imply that he was both strong enough to throw the spear and weak enough to require the stick. Nor are the spear and the actor's boots likely to speed him on his way. And is he likely to announce his arrival with cipher letters to all and sundry with a horn, as he does on the right? So this frontispiece is definitely an emblem—it has hidden significance—but of what we cannot really say.

In general, ciphers and emblems have done more harm than good to the heretical case because they are easily mocked as the fancies of overactive imaginations which stretch credulity to the limit. By seeing cryptograms and pictorial clues everywhere, even in non-Shakespearean books, Baconians have held themselves up to ridicule and done their case enormous harm. Yet the orthodox are equally guilty of rushing to judgment and forgetting that hidden and mysterious messages have been conveyed in works of literature and art from time immemorial. Look at the *Mona Lisa*, at *Las Meninas*, at the *Arnolfini Betrothal*. The author of Shakespeare is a great tease and, like Hamlet himself, loves riddles and puns. Hamlet, after all, is an anagram of Amleth (the name of the hero in the story on which the play is based: see Chapter 18). And the world itself is full of infinite jests and most excellent fancies.