

# Bacon's Use of Gematria and the 26 Letter Alphabet

By Richard Allan Wagner

Question: "When did the English Language adopt the 26 Letter Alphabet?" Go to any online search engine and ask that question. Invariably, the answer will be: "Around the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century." Now ask any Baconian scholar: "Did Francis Bacon work with a 26 Letter alphabet or a 24 Letter alphabet?" For many the answer will be: "A 24 letter alphabet." Why the discrepancy? Most Baconians reason thus:

- (a) All literature published during Bacon's lifetime conformed to a 24 Letter alphabet in which the letter "I" interchangeably represents itself and the letter "J" while the letter "V" represents itself and the letter "U". The fact that I's and V's were interchangeable with J's and U's, technically means I's and V's were actually treated as two letters rather than four.
- (b) The same interchangeability between the letters I and J, as well as V and U applies to the four "Elizabethan Gematria Ciphers" respectively referred to as the Simple, Kaye, Reverse and Short (ostensibly used by Francis Bacon). The fact that the I and J have the same numerical value, as do the V and U, in their respective cipher tables, further demonstrates conformity with a 24 Letter alphabet. In a nutshell, that's it.

## The Great Vowel Shift

Historians point to the fact that the Latin Alphabet didn't include the letters J or U as that language had no distinct vowel sound for either letter. During the time when the "U" and "I" vowel sounds were emerging, the Gutenberg printing press [1440] was invented. The new movable type essentially adhered to the Latin Alphabet. As the printed word saw the letter U, represented by the Latin letter V, and the letter I substituting for the emerging J sound, the first distinction between the letters U and V was recorded in a Gothic script from 1386 [Wikipedia] which freed up the letter U to develop into a full-fledged vowel. Meanwhile, the letter "J" materialized in 1524 when the Renaissance grammarian Gian Giorgio Trissino distinctly separated the J sound from the I sound (as with the pronunciation of Jehovah instead of "Yehovah" when spelled as Iehovah), effectively liberating the letter I as a clear vowel while giving birth to the (consonant) letter J. By the mid 1500's the "Great Vowel Shift" was a done deal. The English

Language now had two new letters, J and U—and, instead of three vowels (A,E,O) there were now five, A,E,I,O,U.

### **Juan Luis Vives Teaches the Five Vowels to The Tudor Generation**

The great Spanish philosopher and educational theorist, Juan Luis Vives (1493-1540), spent a number of his years instructing young English nobles in the latest developments of their language during the reign of Henry VIII. In his book “Tudor School-Boy Lives”, Vives reveals his highly effective trick of using the Spanish word “Oveja” (meaning sheep) as a means of remembering the five vowels:

“Every one of these signs is called a letter. Of these, five are vowels, A,E,I,O,U. They are in Spanish oveia, which signifies sheep.”

Actually, Vives taught the five-vowel word as “oueia”, substituting the vowel letters U and I for the consonants, V and J. The key point here is that it’s impossible for Vives to be teaching the letters A,E,I,O,U as the five vowels if he was working with the old 24 letter alphabet which did not use the letters I and U as exclusive vowels. He was clearly teaching the use of the new 26 letter alphabet more than two decades before Francis Bacon’s birth.



*Juan Luis Vives.*

## ***Love's Labor's Lost and the Parting of the Five Vowels***

In Act 5, Scene 1 of *LLL*, Francis Bacon picks up the vowel instruction where Vives left off, i.e., the five vowels being represented by the word sheep:

Moth: Ba, most seely [innocent] sheep, with a horn—You hear his learning.

Holofernes: *Quis, quis*, thou consonant?

Bacon is leading the reader/audience into some clever word play as Holofernes entreats us to seek out the letters I and U as consonants—which are now vowels. Moth corrects Holofernes with a somewhat cryptic reply.

Moth: The **last** of the five vowels, if **you** repeat them; or the fifth if **I**.

Bacon now adds a Masonic dynamic into the word exchange known to Freemasons as the “Parting of the Word” in which the Worshipful Master and the Candidate call out individual parts or fragments of a password back-and-forth between them until the word is complete. Vives had identified a four-step progression in the formation of words as: *Letter, Syllable, Vowel, Word*. Bacon adopted these progressive steps as the basis for the “Parting of the Word” ceremony that takes place in the performance of ritual in the first and second of the Masonic Degrees. In the First Degree, the Worshipful Master and the Candidate exchange the letters that make up the password. In the Second Degree, they exchange the syllables of the word. Theoretically, in the Third or **Last** Degree, they would exchange the vowels of the word—which, in this case, is the word for sheep, *oueia*.

Holofernes: I will repeat them. a,e,I—

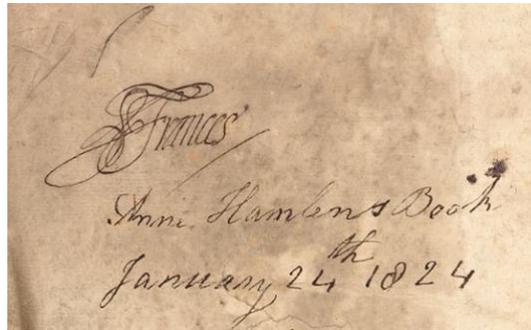
Moth: The sheep; the other two concludes it; o,u.

There's much more going on here which I'll elaborate on in a future article. For now, suffice it to say, Bacon (like Vives) has demonstrated the fact that we are dealing with a 26 Letter alphabet in which the addition of the letters I and U as vowels concludes the five vowels of the new alphabet.

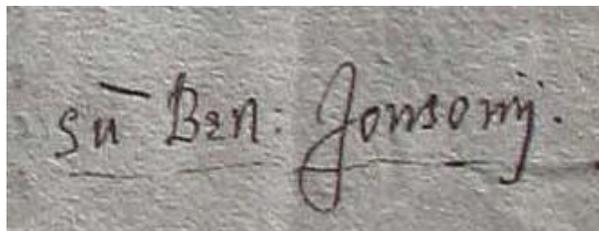
## **The Handwriting of Bacon and His Contemporaries**

During the three decades in which the Shakespearean works were written, most [but not all] published literature still conformed to the old 24 Letter alphabetic mold. Although the printing presses were mass producing books, steps to retrofit moveable type to keep up with a 26 Letter alphabet were, for the most part, non-existent. Printers were more enthusiastic about innovations in ornamental printing blocks and engraving plates than they were about cranking out new typesets for the nearly 1,500 presses throughout the European Continent. It was far cheaper and more convenient to simply pretend that I's were J's, and V's were U's. Besides, Bacon and his contemporaries, who wrote and published many books in Latin,

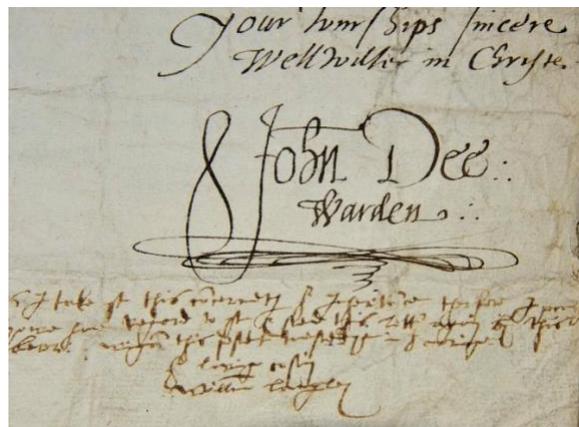
were quite comfortable with the Latin alphabet, and were in no hurry to hasten its demise. Also, Latin letters lent an appealing layer of ambiguity to their published writings. As far as the printed page was concerned, no one was in any hurry to change the mold—however, personal handwritten letters, notes and diaries were another matter, and they reveal a full embrace of the new 26 Letter alphabet. Here are some examples:



Francis  
Mini. Hamlen's Book  
January 24<sup>th</sup> 1824



su Ben: Jonsomij.

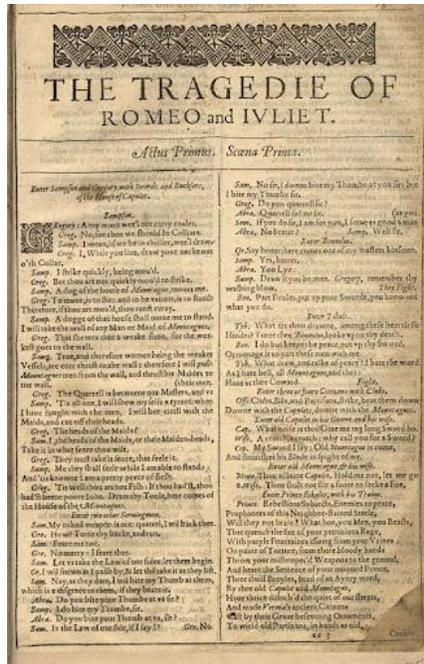


Your humble Sers / meere  
Wellwisher in Christe.

John Dee:  
Warden

*[Faint handwritten text below the signature]*





The year 1629 saw a break in the stagnation when Lazare Zetzner, a Strasbourg editor and printer, got fed-up with printing the letter U as V and manufactured a type set for the capital letter U. Five years later, he joined in the effort to produce typeset for the letter J. Nevertheless, printing in the 26 Letter alphabet didn't become standard practice until the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## Gematria Ciphers

Much has been written about Francis Bacon's use of ciphers particularly with regard to the Shakespeare authorship issue. Baconians (including myself) have generally taken the position that, in a variety of ways, Bacon incorporated cipher messages into the Shakespearean work—primarily aimed at identifying himself to be the (hidden) author or mastermind behind the work. That said, I'd like to point out that making an argument based only on a cipher theory doesn't constitute proof of a theory. The best theories about Baconian ciphers are those that start with tangible facts as a foundation, then extrapolate cipher evidence only as a confirmation—much like checking one's math in order to be sure things add up correctly.

Other than adding up the gematria value of names and words, Bacon's techniques for employing cipher messages into a text include letter and word counts and a variety of other methods to be discussed later. Many critics of Baconian cipher theories like to say that "if you torture a word severely enough, it will

confess to anything.” In some cases, I would agree with that sentiment—however, some astute individual, long ago, surmised that “if you find a turtle sitting on top of a fencepost, you can be reasonably certain the creature didn’t get there by itself.” As far as gematria ciphers go, I think the best example of the turtle on a fencepost axiom pertaining to the “Bacon is Shakespeare” concept is to be found in the case of John Marston and Joseph Hall’s references to *Labeo* as their secret code name for identifying Bacon as Shakespeare. Rather than echo the exemplary work already done on this matter by Peter Dawkins, the FBS, and Walter Saunders, I’ll simply refer the reader to them—however, I will recount what I think are the two most salient points made by them:

- (a) Hall and Marston’s back-and-forth references to the author of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* under the veiled name *Labeo* establishes they knew the author’s true identity [other than Shakspere of Stratford].
- (b) Marston tangibly connects the authorship to Bacon by bringing Bacon’s family motto, *Mediocria Firma* into the equation:

“Fond censurer [Hall]! Why should these mirrors seem  
So vile to thee, which better judgments deem  
Exquisite then, and in our polished times  
May run for senseful tolerable lines?  
What, not *Mediocria Firma* from thy spite?”

And the turtle on the fencepost part? That goes to the largely unexplored cipher confirmations pertaining to Bacon’s identity as *Labeo*.

## **Labeo**

Those fine Baconians who have preceded me in discussing how Hall and Marston connected the dots that tie Francis Bacon to the Shakespeare authorship by referring to him as *Labeo*, did so because they recognized the remarkable comparison between Bacon and the ancient Roman Jurist, Marcus Antistius Labeo—but is there more to the name?

At the conclusion of his article titled “The Identification of ‘Labeo’ and ‘Mutius’ as Francis Bacon in Hall and Marston’s Satires”, Walter Saunders went a step further by demonstrating how Bacon’s name adds up in the Simple (Gematria) Cipher to 100 i.e., Francis = 67, and Bacon = 33. Undoubtedly, Saunders wanted us readers to make the numerical connection between the names Bacon and Labeo by doing the math for ourselves i.e., Labeo also adds up to 33 (Simple Cipher). That’s a compelling confirmation, or, at the very

least, it's an uncanny coincidence. Did Saunders want us to delve deeper? Let's try the 24 letter Kaye Cipher. Yep, both of the names add up to 111 in the Kaye Cipher. OK, how about the Reverse Cipher? Aha, it's the number 92 for both. And the Short Cipher? Bingo, the two names add up to 15. Coincidence? I think not... my mind is forming the image of a turtle sitting on a fencepost. It would be naïve to think Bacon wasn't aware of all of this, after all, when it came to ciphers, he was the master [see the 24 letter cipher tables below].

	SIMPLE	REVERSE	SHORT	KAYE
A	1	24	1	27
B	2	23	2	28
C	3	22	3	29
D	4	21	4	30
E	5	20	5	31
F	6	19	6	32
G	7	18	7	33
H	8	17	8	34
I	9	16	9	35
J	9	16	9	35
K	10	15	1	10
L	11	14	2	11
M	12	13	3	12
N	13	12	4	13
O	14	11	5	14
P	15	10	6	15
Q	16	9	7	16
R	17	8	8	17
S	18	7	9	18
T	19	6	1	19
U	20	5	2	20
V	20	5	2	20
W	21	4	3	21
X	22	3	4	22
Y	23	2	5	23
Z	24	1	6	24

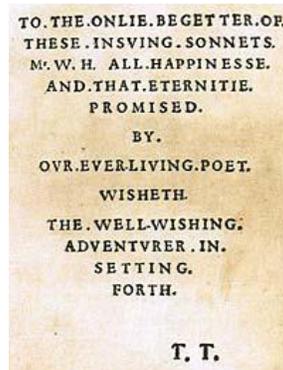
Additionally, we now know Bacon wasn't just limited to the use of 24 letter ciphers. How about a 26 Letter cipher? The one that immediately comes to mind is the Pythagorean Cipher. Let's check. Yes indeed! Both of the names Bacon and Labeo add up in that cipher to the number 17. We do not have a turtle sitting on top of a fencepost, we have a stack of them.

### The Pythagorean Cipher

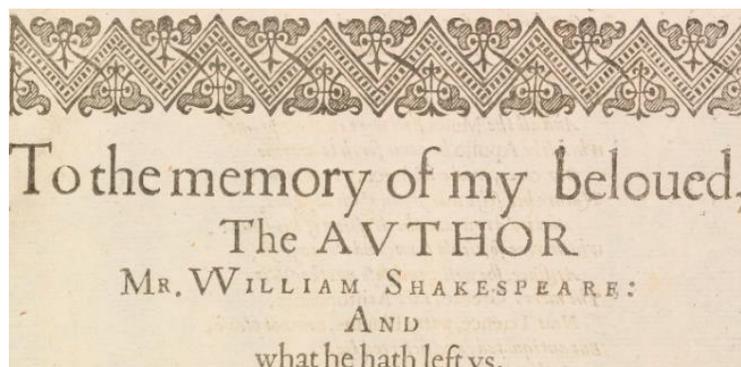
The Pythagorean Cipher assigns a numerical value to the 26 letters of the alphabet as a progression of 1 through 9, then repeats the process until all the letters have been assigned (see Pythagorean Table below).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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	

Bacon made extensive use of the Pythagorean Cipher beginning with his name i.e., Bacon = 2 + 1 + 3 + 6 + 5 = 17. Perhaps the best example of Bacon's use of the number 17 as a representation of his name can be seen on the dedicatory page of the "1609" edition of Shake-speares Sonnets.



The 7<sup>th</sup> line on the page reads "OUR.EVER.LIVING.POET" which consists of exactly 17 letters. Another excellent example is the caption above Ben Jonson's long eulogy in the 1623 Folio.



Here, instead of a letter count, we have a word count of 17. Also, since we're looking at Jonson's eulogy caption, I think it's worth noting that this is a rich mingling of Bacon's cipher signatures in three different ciphers. The words in the caption's 2<sup>nd</sup> line gives us "The AVTHOR" which add up to 111 (Simple Cipher). 111 = Bacon (Kaye Cipher). Next, we have the Masonic headpiece at the top of the page

consisting of a row of upright Mason's squares arranged so as to repeatedly spell out the letters WM. An upright Mason's square is the insignia worn by the Worshipful Master of a Masonic Blue Lodge. And, yes, the letters WM stand for "Worshipful Master"—WM combines to the number 33 (Simple Cipher).

I'll be going into greater detail about Bacon's cipher mingling and Masonic ritual in the Shakespearean works in future articles.

## **"Read Peter Dawkins comments on Richard Wagner's essay"**

Dear Rick,

Many thanks for sending me your 'Bacon and the 26-letter alphabet' article to read. I enjoyed it immensely. Also, I'm so glad you are pursuing the 26-letter alphabet and Pythagorean cipher. You explain it very clearly. I'm also so glad that you point out that "making an argument based only on a cipher theory doesn't constitute proof of a theory," and that "The best theories about Baconian ciphers are those that start with tangible facts as a foundation, then extrapolate cipher evidence only as a confirmation—much like checking one's math in order to be sure things add up correctly." This is so exactly how I view cipher – there needs to be something tangible to support it, or indeed even to be able to interpret the cipher message correctly, otherwise ciphers are prone to give rise to all kinds of speculations and illusions, and lead one astray. And, of course, as one would expect of Bacon, he ensures that there is always a double, triple or quadruple cipher check on the cipher messages; and then, from what I know of him, he expects us to look for and find (if we have not already come across it) tangible proof of some kind.

In other words, we discover ciphers in physical matter (e.g. books, etc.), which suggest messages or ideas of some kind. These are speculations. We then have to ground them in some way, to prove them. And this is a process that might have to be done several or many times. This is simply the scientific method, as used and promoted by Bacon. In Bacon's full scientific method, though, one can only consider something might be true if it is both useful and good, and stands the test of time, as the summary law is love, or charity, and all things should be governed by this. This is what sets Bacon's science apart from ordinary mainstream science, or at least from how it is so often used and abused.

From what I understand, ciphers belong to the science of mathematics which, for Bacon, enable a study of metaphysical matters, as in Kabbalah/Cabala. But Bacon, like all great sages, was a Hermeticist, in the sense that one needs to marry heaven with earth and earth with heaven in order to accomplish the Great Work. In other words, lofty thoughts have to be grounded, and earthly matters need to be raised. Every earthly body has a soul – everything is not just material or materialistic in the physical sense – and this has to be properly understood. And, contrariwise, every soul needs to incarnate in a material body in order to ground its own ideas and its own self, in order to gain any true understanding and knowledge of truth and its own self.

Peter Dawkins Dec 2021