A Dedicated Sleuth Finds Picture-Puzzles Long Buried: A Review of Russell Storrs Hall, *Bacon Shakespeare Conundrum: Direct Evidence of Francis Bacon's Shakespeare Authorship* (posthumously published, 2012)

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Bacon Shakespeare Conundrum was published posthumously by the author's daughter, Janice Gold-Orland. Researching for this book was her father's lifetime passion, she says. It is obvious from his book that Hall has studied the Bacon-Shakespeare authorship question in some depth. One of his main points is that "The only way out of the authorship enigma is to be found in the Shakespeare Folio of 1623" (p. 12). There is a great deal of other evidence, of course, but that is the course he sets for himself in this book.

On page 25, he sets out Bacon's words, "I have (though in a despised weed) procured the good of all men." As Hall writes, "These words, set in one of the tenderest prayers ever written, represent a confession to God by Sir Francis Bacon, that in menial garment or disguise, he did some work that would benefit all mankind. It has often occurred to me that a man who did something good for all men would not lie to what he understood to be his Creator ...." In an appendix, Hall reprints Bacon's poem in full. He does more than just solve puzzles. He writes to give credit where it is due; that is, to honor the humanitarian poet Francis Bacon. That is what Bacon's friends appear to be doing as well, covertly, in the front matter to the First Folio.

Hall does something I have never seen done before: he reveals picture-ciphers within the First Folio, made possible by the careful setting of type. He shows us how, by following hints within the text, one can draw lines which make images, such as a dog or goose or sword, which cleverly illustrate the text! Hall also points out acrostics which reveal the names of "Bacon," "Shakespeare," Leicester, and Queen Elizabeth, suggesting one reason for the Shakespeare pseudonym was Bacon's secret royal birth. One might see these hidden ciphers or picture-puzzles as rhetorical devices intended to enhance the text.

Codes and cipher-writing were very popular during this period, and Bacon himself invented a cipher, the biliteral cipher that led to the invention of the modern computer. Some may be skeptical, of course, but [Peter Amundsen's](#) deciphering of the Shakespeare plays led him to Oak Island and the search for treasure there.

On page 37, Hall prints a portion of Ben Jonson's poem, "An Execration upon Vulcan" which certainly seems to show Jonson's complicity in "certain forms of puzzle creation." Hall also addresses two poems from the Second Folio printed in 1632 and a poem from John Milton which Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence included in "Milton's Epitaph to Shapespeare." He also devotes chapters to the Shakespeare monument in Stratford's Trinity Church, the gravestones "old and new," a 1640 edition of poems, and the prologue to "Troilus and Cressida." These appear to be all his original findings, except for one example, from "The Tempest," that he borrows from William Stone Booth's book on acrostics in the Shakespeare plays, "Subtle Shining Secrecies" (according to Booth, the book in which he collects his best examples).

Also valuable are the appendices which include Hall's cryptological analysis of Bacon's poem, useful chronologies with each entry numerically referenced to the "Chronology Bibliography" (180-259), and a general bibliography (259-272). This book might be best read by someone who already has some background in Bacon-Shakespeare authorship studies. This can be obtained, of course, from reading resources collected at www.SirBacon.org.

This author was on to something. Some people like to create puzzles, and many people like to solve them. There always seems to be another level to explore with Bacon-Shakespeare studies!