

# The Secret Signature



*The AA Sigil of the Mystery Schools and Secret Signature of Sir Francis Bacon, Shakespeare and the Rosicrucians.*

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*2<sup>nd</sup> version (Updated and expanded version of the 2016 original)*



## Secrecy

The word ‘secret’, in its finest sense, refers to something that is sacred. The greatest secret is truth itself, and truth is, as Francis Bacon points out, “a naked and open day-light”.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, it is either too bright or too obvious or too simple for us to actually see it or take notice of it, and, as Bacon says, we tend to prefer “candle-lights”. The greatest truths or secrets often lie right in front of our nose, but very often we don’t see them or don’t want to see them, or don’t believe what we do see, or don’t want to believe what we do see. It is an old saying, “Seeing is believing,” but to see and believe are two big steps to take, and it often requires someone else to point it out or else training of some kind to help us recognise it for ourselves. Then, seeing in the sense of understanding and seeing in the sense of knowing are two further big steps to take. The AA sacred sign of the mystery schools is an example of one of the great secrets, as it enshrines one of the greatest and most sacred secrets of all; yet in the time of Bacon and Shakespeare it was put right in front of our eyes for all to see. Do we see it?

## Ancient Origins

The use of the “Double-A” or AA hieroglyph as a special symbol and secret sign of the mystery schools or schools of wisdom can be traced back to classical times. It probably existed in some form or other in even earlier times than this. The single A as a symbol of creation certainly existed in Ancient Egypt, but in the hieroglyphic form of a hand plough. A larger development of the plough is associated with and pulled by the sacred ox or bull, Apis, whose special sign is a white triangle, the underlying geometric and symbolic basis of the letter A.

Apis was known as “the herald”, “the beautiful soul” and “the renewal of life” of Ptah, the creator god. He was regarded as an oracle and associated with the Ankh (“Cross of Life”). As a symbolic representation of the pharaoh, Apis was considered to be the incarnatory form of Ptah while he lived and the resurrected soul of Osiris when he died. As the latter, he was known as Osiris-Apis (Greek: Serapis). The Apis bull was black with a white triangle on its forehead. This triangle with a representation of horns added, and the sun-disk of Hathor (his mother) displayed between the horns, was one of the ways he was depicted hieroglyphically—an image associated with and looking somewhat like the Ankh.

The first alphabet to actually use the form of the letter from which our modern letter A is derived is the Phoenician alphabet, from which descended the Greek alphabet and then the Latin alphabet that we use today. (The English alphabet is based on the Latin alphabet.) The Phoenician letter A (Alep) is directly associated with the ox or bull, the shape of the letter being derived from the shape of the face and horns of the bull. This is also the basis of the astrological sigil for the zodiacal sign of Taurus (the Bull)—the sign that is the Alpha or first sign of all the twelve signs of the Zodiac and from which the other eleven derive. The shape of the letter A includes the geometric form of the triangle, emblematic of the Holy Trinity—the underlying law and divinity of life and source of all else, the alphabet included. The letter A therefore represents the All, from which everything derives and within which everything exists. Its associated cipher is the number 1.

## Alpha-Omega: The Double-Truth

The Double-A ('AA'), however, has an even more profound or additional meaning, one of which is Alpha-Omega, or Creation-Revelation, where the end result is the perfect revelation or image of the beginning. This is in the sense of the beginning or creative power being the divine wisdom and the end result being the perfect revelation or knowledge of this wisdom. That is to say, the Alpha is Light, the Omega is illumination. The former is the Son or Sun of God; the latter is the illumined human soul. In this sense, therefore, the last letter is depicted the same as the first letter, hence the AA sigil or hieroglyph.

In Orphic-Greek mythological or mystery school terms, the Alpha is the elder Eros, the Self-born First-Born, whereas the Omega is the younger Eros, son of Aphrodite and Ares, who is said to have all the attributes of his 'Father', the elder Eros. The mystery teachings of Christianity are exactly the same, wherein the Greek word Christos is another name for Eros.

In terms of a cycle of creation and evolution, or cycle of life, the Alpha represents the original wisdom that creates the cycle, whereas the Omega symbolises the state of knowledge or illumination at the end of the cycle, which of course might not be perfect. However, as Francis Bacon pointed out, if the cycle is manifested and experienced to its optimum, the knowledge at the end will be the perfect image or echo of the wisdom—i.e. the one will be like the other. This is what the AA symbolises.

In further explanation, Francis Bacon refers to wisdom as "the truth of being" (or "existence"), and to knowledge as "the truth of knowing": -

The essential form of knowledge... is nothing but a representation of truth: for the truth of being and the truth of knowing are one, differing no more than the direct beam and the beam reflected.

Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* (1605), Bk I.

In other words, the AA represents what is known as the Double Truth—the truth of being and the truth of knowing. In the Hall of Maati or Hall of Double Truth, as described in the Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, the heart of the deceased person is weighed in the Scales of Truth. One scale holds a pure white feather; the other scale holds the human heart. The idea is that the heart should weigh the same as the feather. That is to say, the heart should be as light as the feather, wherein "light" refers to purity and illumination plus the ability to soar into heaven like a bird, in consciousness, rather than to be weighed down by the heaviness and

gravity of earthly matters. The feather is symbolic of the truth of being, whereas the heart is symbolic of the truth of knowing. The former is the spirit; the latter is the soul. In the Egyptian story, whatever part of the heart makes the heart too heavy is eaten up by the great beast or crocodile, to be composted and recycled. That part of the heart remaining, which is as light as the feather, is raised up to become immortal and added to the higher self or soul in the heavens.

In this and other senses, the AA hieroglyph symbolises polarity, such as beginning and ending, creation and revelation, wisdom and knowledge, light and illumination, spirit and soul, lover and beloved, immortal and mortal; and also, top and bottom, right and left, forward and behind, inside and outside.

In a mystical way the AA also represents infinity. For instance, in the human body the zodiacal sign of Aries rules the head and that of Pisces rules the feet, with all the other signs stretched out across the body in between Aries and Pisces. In other words, Aries and Pisces symbolise the extremities or poles of each of us, in the sense of above and below, and thus they can be represented by the AA hieroglyph. In the Zodiac, these two zodiacal signs are adjacent to each other: thus, the cusp of Aries-Pisces is a symbol for the mystical meeting or union of the crown and root of a human being, particularly in the sense of the crown of the head and soles of the feet touching each other.

This mystic union of heaven and earth, Shiva and Shakti, lover and beloved, is represented in human Ouroboros symbols such as the one carved in the keystone position crowning the Romanesque west door of the basilica of St Magdalene at Vézelay, wherein an acrobat is depicted bending his body backwards to touch his head to the soles of his feet, thereby creating a circle of infinity.



This is actually an emblem of perfection, as it symbolises the coming together of opposites, such as male and female, or heaven and earth, in a loving union and mystical marriage.

## Earliest Example

The earliest example that I have been able to find regarding the use of the AA hieroglyph as a symbol and signature of the mystery schools is a sculpted relief, dated to c.238-244 AD, on display in the museum of Ephesus. The relief is carved on a stone capital rescued from the ruins of the Temple of Artemis.

The relief depicts, in a subtle way, not just the Double-A but the Triple-A. The extra A is the mystical central A that represents the relationship between the other two A's as well as the source of existence of the other two. In a Double-A hieroglyph, the middle A is inferred rather than shown, or else it is represented by another symbol or picture. The three A's signify the Holy Trinity.



**Sculpted relief, Temple of Artemis, Ephesus**

The Ephesian sculpture portrays the letter A in the centre, set within a circular laurel wreath, with Artemis and Serapis as supporters on each side. The Ephesian Artemis, who is also Cybele, is equivalent to the Egyptian goddess Isis. Serapis is the Greek name for Osiris-Apis, the “resurrected” pharaoh. In other words, on the one side is the goddess Artemis and on the other side is the human Apis, the initial letters of their names providing the AA. Moreover, this particular symbolism emphasises the idea of immortal-mortal, birth-death and creation-revelation, as well as goddess-god and what the Greeks portrayed elsewhere as Aphrodite-Ares, another AA interpretation.

### Apollo, Artemis, Athena

In the *Melopoiae* by Petrus Tritonius (Augsburg, 1507), the illustration of Apollo on Mount Parnassus depicts Apollo together with the goddesses Artemis and Athena. The Triple-A is thus depicted subtly, symbolically and naturalistically in the persons and names of these three divinities, the god being central in the picture and the two goddesses standing on their respective temples on the summits of twin-peaked Parnassus.

Athena (Minerva) is on the mountain peak to Apollo’s right, together with the Muses and Pegasus; Artemis (Diana) is on the mountain peak to Apollo’s left, together with Bacchus, Silenus and the Dryads. Athena is Apollo’s Spearshaker partner who is associated symbolically with the Sun; Artemis is Apollo’s twin sister who is associated symbolically with the Moon. In this way the two goddesses suggest something of the meaning of the Double-A and its association with the Pillars of Hercules and Great Pillars of Solomon’s Temple. The outlines of the two peaks also suggest the AA symbolism, whilst the arrangement of Apollo playing his musical instrument is such that his form constitutes an ‘A’ shape.

The oracular ever-green laurel-tree stands behind and above Apollo, in the V-shape of space left between the two mountain peaks. The V is the natural reflection or echo of the A. The laurel tree filling this V shape signifies Daphne, the Apollonian priestess beloved of Apollo. The A of Apollo and V of Daphne provide the signature AV which, when united, become the Seal of Solomon. It is an alternative signature to the AA and similar if not identical in meaning.

The underlying geometry controlling the design of the picture and producing this effect is very simple, being composed of two diagonals joining the opposite corners of the picture’s rectangular border. The centre, where the diagonals cross, is at Apollo’s throat. The throat

and neck is ruled by Taurus the Bull (the Alpha), and it is from the throat that the Word of God (or in this instance the song of Apollo) is sounded.



Apollo on Mount Parnassus, *Melopoiæ of Trionius (1507)*

## Fontainebleau AA

The earliest use of a pure and blatant form of the AA sigil that I have managed to find is in France, in François I's Great Gallery (1534-37) in the Palace of Fontainebleau. It appears prominently in the bold stucco framing to the pre-eminent 'elephant' painting in the king's private long gallery—a symbol of the king himself as being both divine and human, wise and intelligent, standing within the centre of the universe.<sup>2</sup>

François I, duke of Valois and king of France, was the sovereign responsible for introducing the Renaissance into France in the early 16th century and beginning the Valois dynasty of French kings that culminated with Henri III. François also inaugurated a Renaissance mystery school, of which he was the sovereign initiate. The evidence for this can be seen most clearly at Fontainebleau, which François created as his first Renaissance palace and which became, as he intended, the jewel of the Renaissance in France. In other words, it was at Fontainebleau that the Renaissance culture and the Valois mystery school were introduced to France.



**AA hieroglyph, Great Gallery, Fontainebleau Palace, France**

The Great Gallery at Fontainebleau was François' private gallery, of which he was immensely proud. It was the first great decorated gallery to be built in France. Beautifully preserved, it is filled with frescoes focusing on particular events in various myths, all of which are framed in elaborate stucco created by Rosso Fiorentino during the years 1522-1540. The 'elephant' picture in the gallery rises above a huge stucco AA. This, together with the design and meaning of the Great Gallery and its pictures—and indeed the architecture of the whole of Fontainebleau Palace as built by François I—reveals that the king was a high initiate of the Mysteries and both patronised and entertained a mystery school there. This was a mystery school that continued to exist throughout the Valois dynasty and probably survived at least until the end of the 16th century. It was not only visited by but also inspired Francis Bacon in his teens.

### First Appearance of the AA Hieroglyph in Print

The first time that the AA hieroglyph seems to have appeared in print was in a very rare book that came into the possession of William T. Smedley and which was once owned by Francis Bacon. The AA hieroglyph forms the basis of a highly symbolic ornamental headpiece that is printed on the first page of two extra pages inserted at the back of a book published in Paris a few months after Francis Bacon's arrival there in September 1576.



AA headpiece, *Hebraicum Alphabethum Jo. Bovlaese* (Paris, 1576/7)

Smedley says of this AA headpiece: -

The first occasion upon which this device was used appears to be in a book so rare that no copy of it can be found, either in the British Museum or the Bodleian Library. Unfortunately, in the copy belonging to the writer the title-page and the two first pages are missing. The work is called "*Hebraicum Alphabethum Jo. Bovlaese*." It is a Hebrew Grammar, with proof-sheets added. It is interleaved with sheets of English-made paper, containing Bacon's handwriting. Bound up with it is another Hebrew Grammar, similarly interleaved, called "*Sive compendium, quintacunque Ratione fieri potuit amplessimum, Totius linguæ*," published in Paris in 1566. The book ends with the sentence: "Ex collegio Montis—Acuti 20 Decembris 1576"; then follow two pages in Hebrew, with the Latin translation over it, headed "Decem Præcepta decalogi Exod." Over this is the design containing the light A and the dark A, and the squirrel and rabbit.

One thing is certain, that the copy now referred to was in the possession of Bacon, and that the interleaved sheets of paper contain his handwriting, in which have been added page by page the equivalents of the Hebrew in Greek, Chaldæic, Syriac and Arabic.

William T. Smedley, *The Mystery of Francis Bacon* (London, 1910)

This AA headpiece is also the first to associate the Gemini ('Heavenly Twins')—the immortal Pollux and the mortal Castor—with the two A's of the Double-A hieroglyph, thus revealing a fundamental meaning of the AA hieroglyph. These two—the AA and the Gemini—were to become the primary cipher signatures and *modus operandi* of 'Shakespeare', and to be used for the purpose of identifying the authorship of 'Shakespeare' whilst also being a key to discovering and understanding to some extent the divine authorship of the universe.

The Triple-A is also suggested, for the relationship between the two always creates the third. This third or middle A is represented in this headpiece by a holy grail of fruits, which veils the secret and yet at the same time reveals something of what it means.

It is of additional interest that this book is made up of two Hebrew Grammars or books, bound together like twins to make one book, and that the last two pages, added as a supplement, should contain both Hebrew and Latin text, also put together like twins, and that it is over this final text that the AA device is printed.

In the 1912 edition of his book, Smedley writes: -

The earliest use of the design with a light A and dark A which I have found is in a work entitled "*Hebraicum Alphabethum Jo Bovlaese*" published in Paris in 1576. The book ends with the sentence "Ex Collegio Montis-Acuti 20 Decembris 1576." So the date of the

publication was probably between January and March, 1576, which according to our present method would be 1577.

I have a copy of this work bound up with a book bearing the title “*Sive compendium, quintacunque Ratione fieri potuit ampleximum, Totuis linguae*,” published in Paris, 1566. Both are interleaved and altered and amplified in Francis Bacon's hand-writing for a second edition. The latter contains the equivalent of the Hebrew in Greek, Chaldaic, Syriac, and Arabic. So far I have been unable to find that a second edition of these works was published. But these manuscripts bear evidence of young Bacon's command of languages in 1576. I believe that just as Philip Melancthon was working for Thomas Anshelmus, the Printer, when at Tübingen University at seventeen or eighteen years of age, so Francis Bacon was employed in Paris as early as 1576.

This head-piece not only appears in the “Shakespeare” and Bacon Works, but those of Marlowe and Spenser, as well as the so-called King James version of the Bible.

William T. Smedley, *The Mystery of Francis Bacon* (London, 1912)

The book ends with the sentence, “Ex collegio Montis-Acuti 20 Decembris 1576,” meaning “From the Acute-Mountain College 20 December 1576”—a seeming reference to Mount Parnassus, home of Apollo, Athena and the Muses, and perhaps to the illustration of Apollo, Artemis and Athena on Mount Parnassus in the *Melopoiaie* by Petrus Tritonius (see previous). ‘Acute’ means: sharp; reacting readily to stimuli or impressions; sensitive to details; keen; highly perceptive or discerning: penetrating in perception or insight; of extreme importance or consequence; crucial; narrowly pointed; an angle less than 90°; a triangle containing angles each of less than 90°. All of this is a pointed indicator of the letter A and the double-pointed Mount Parnassus, the mountain of inspiration, poetry, arts and sciences, and of the Delphic Oracle and College of inspired initiates.

## Falsely Dated

The first time that the AA hieroglyph is usually thought to have appeared in print was in 1563. It appeared in the form of an emblematic headpiece over the dedication “Ioanni Soto Philippi Regis” in a version of John Baptista Porta's cipher book, *De Furtivis Literarum Notis, Vulgo De Ziferis*, dated 1563 on its title page. However, this date is in fact not correct, as discovered by William T. Smedley. This particular version of Porta's book was actually printed in London in 1591 and falsely dated 1563 so as to pass for the first edition, in which the AA head-piece does not appear.



AA Headpiece, *De Furtivis Literarum Notis, Vulgo De Ziferis*  
(London, 1591, but falsely dated 1563)

William Smedley reports: -

The first edition of this work was published in Naples in 1563 by Io. Marius Scotus, but this does not contain the AA design. In 1591 the book was published in London by John Wolfe; this reprint was dedicated to Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland. After the edition had been printed off, the title-page was altered to correspond with the 1563 Naples publication. The dedication was taken out, and a reprint of the original dedication was substituted, and over this was placed the AA head-piece; then an edition was struck off, and until today, it has been sold and re-sold as the first edition of Baptista Porta's work.

William T. Smedley, *The Mystery of Francis Bacon* (London, 1910)

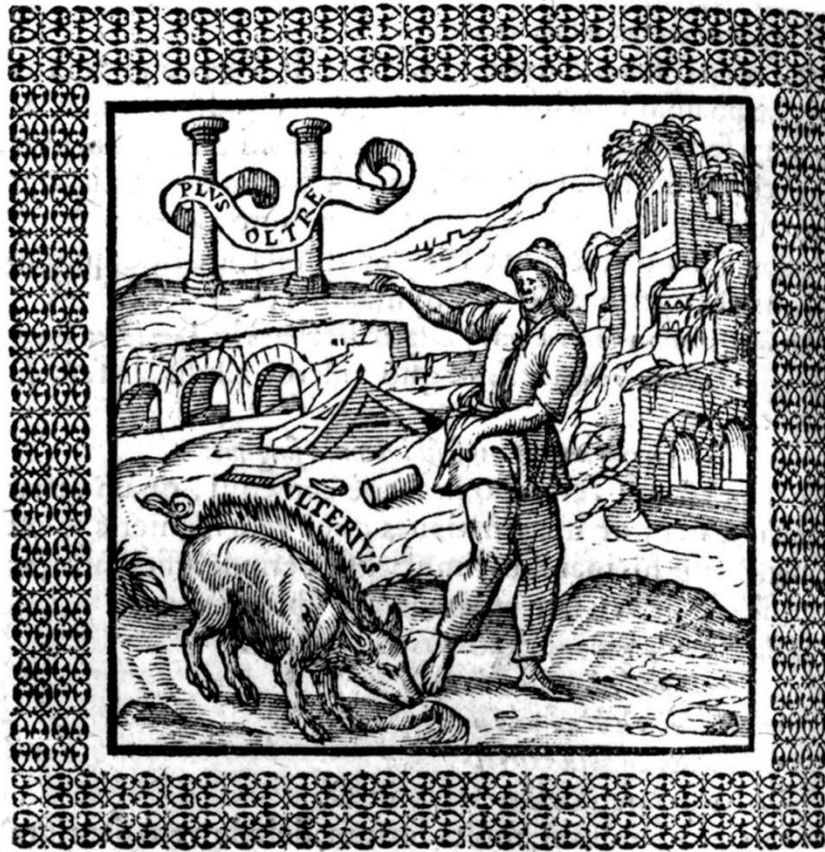
## Apollo, Hyacinth, the Boar and Royal Arch of Solomon

Other than the 1576/7 *Hebraicum Alphabethum*, which appears to have been more of a private publication for a select few, or for Francis Bacon only, the first public appearance of the AA in print was in emblem XLV, entitled "In Dies Meliora" ("On to better days/things"), printed in the 1577 edition of Andreas Alciato's *Emblemata*. This edition was published in Antwerp by Christopher Plantin, a Frenchman who set up a printing business in Antwerp and who was one of the most noted and ardent members of the "Family of Love".

The Family (or House) of Love was a fellowship of initiates and adepts scattered throughout Europe who were responsible for the deep study and transmission of occult and mystical truths during the European Renaissance, and who became particularly potent (or recognisable) in the latter half of the 16th century. It had developed out of French humanism and mystical Arasmanism. The Family believed in tolerance, friendship, the promotion of learning and artistry in service of truth, and that the purity and strength of a person's inner spiritual life was of more importance than any outer religious observance or political point of view. Members pursued the liberal arts and sciences, but, most importantly, they viewed charity as the greatest of the virtues and set out to practice it as far as possible.

The Family of Love had a good representation in France at the time that Francis Bacon was in the English embassy attached to the French Court, especially in Paris where the apothecary, Pierre Porret, acted as an agent for the Plantin publishing business in the rue Saint-Jacques. Porret was not only one of Plantin's oldest and closest friends, but was also "an agent, not only for the Plantin publications, but also for the diffusion of Familist teachings."<sup>3</sup> The Valois Court of Henri III was strongly influenced by the Familists, and Henri III even asked Plantin to establish himself as a printer in Paris as "royal printer for ten languages."<sup>4</sup> This offer, which was in fact refused, took place in 1577.

The "In Dies Meliora" emblem picture alludes symbolically to the mystery of the Royal Arch Degree of Freemasonry. It depicts a boar (the initiate) rooting the ground with a swineherd (Apollo) standing by, instructing the boar. With his left hand and forefinger, the swineherd points to the boar and the Latin word "Uterius" that appears over the boar's spine. This word means "Beyond", "Further" or "On the other side", which would appear to be the instruction being given by the swineherd (Apollo) to the boar (the initiate). Besides pointing to the boar, the swineherd is also pointing at two free-standing pillars (the Great Pillars) that display the motto "Plus Oltra" ("More Beyond"), thus giving the clue to the boar as to what to do and where to go.



Emblem XLV, "In Dies Meliora", Andreas Alciato's *Emblemata* (Antwerp, 1577)

The Great Pillars are standing upon the threshold of the ruins of a temple (Solomon's Temple). Behind the swineherd are the remains of some of the walls of the ruined temple. On the ground between the swineherd and the pillars is a pyramid (the sacred cornerstone or keystone of the temple) on which is displayed the AA hieroglyph. This, together with the positioning of the remaining walls and other elements of the ruined temple, indicates that the pyramidal AA capstone lies within the foundations of the original temple, at the heart of the temple. This emblem has a direct connection with Francis Bacon.

Francis Bacon not only inherited the Bacon family crest of a boar and the motto, "Mediocris firma" ("The Middle Way is sure"), but he also personally adopted two other mottos, together with the Great Pillars, as having an especial bearing on his aims and objects in life. One of these mottos was "Plus ultra" ("More beyond"), which, with the Great Pillars (known as the Pillars of Hercules), had been the device of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V.<sup>5</sup> The other motto was "Moniti meliora" ("Being instructed, to better things").<sup>6</sup> This motto is actually incomplete and should read in its fullness, "Moniti meliora sequamur" ("Let us, being instructed, strive after better things"), which is taken from Virgil's *Aeneid*.<sup>7</sup> This is precisely the meaning of the "In Dies Meliora" emblem picture, with its additional "Plus Oltra" motto.

Francis Bacon was first sent to France "from her majesty's royal hand" in September 1576, when he sailed on the Queen's battleship, Dreadnought, in the company of his French tutor, Sir Amyas Paulet, who had been appointed by the Queen as the new English ambassador to the French Court. Francis eventually returned to England in March 1579, on the death of Sir Nicholas Bacon.

In 1576 Francis Bacon was aged fifteen—the age of Hyacinth when he died. Hyacinth is the youth whom Apollo loved and whose reappearance on Earth as a “very powerful hero” had been prophesied by Ovid. This particular legend is referred to in the picture of the boar snuffling the ground for truffles in the “In Dies Meliora” Royal Arch emblem picture, wherein the swineherd (Apollo) is directing the boar (the pupil-initiate), his right hand more or less pointing to the Great Pillars but actually hovering over the pyramidal AA capstone (the ‘keystone’) that forms the entrance to the secret underground crypt (the Royal Arch).

According to the Hyacinth legend, the boar, by snuffling the ground, imprinted it with the AA sign, symbol of the sighs of grief (“Ai, Ai”) uttered by Apollo when Hyacinth was accidentally slain by the discus thrown by Apollo during the starting games. The discus hit the ground and bounced up at Hyacinth, who was over-eager to retrieve it, and sliced off the top of the youth’s head. Apollo’s sighs, in the form of the AA symbol, were imprinted by Apollo upon the hyacinth flower into which Apollo changed the dying youth. Hyacinth’s blood determined the colour of the flower. As in the story of Adonis who, when he was slain by the boar, was changed into an anemone by Aphrodite, the hyacinth flower is representative of Hyacinth’s resurrection or rebirth in a more spiritual form. The slicing off of the crown of the head is associated with the Royal Arch Degree and, rightly understood, denotes the opening of the crown chakra and full illumination that accompanies psychological death and resurrection into the higher degrees of initiation.

In this Royal Arch symbolism, Hyacinth is being used as representative of the Grandmaster whom Freemasons call Hiram Abiff, the architect of Solomon’s Temple, who was slain by ruffians and whose body, together with the Sacred Word he was protecting, was interred in the secret crypt beneath Solomon’s Temple. The temple, itself symbolically associated with Hiram Abiff, was subsequently destroyed and the Jews taken into captivity.

The Royal Arch Degree concerns the return of some of the Jews to Jerusalem and the rebuilding (or resurrection) of the temple, in the course of which the secret underground crypt is discovered and the Sacred Word, imprinted on a triangle of gold, is raised and “brought to light”. This process signifies the resurrection process that the Royal Arch initiate goes through. It also represents the raising or resurrection of the true soul of Hiram Abiff, whose spirit is the Sacred Word and whose spiritual form is signified by the golden triangle.

In the boar symbolism, the truffle is a synonym for the treasure hidden in the Royal Arch crypt beneath the keystone. The fact that the boar imprints the ground with the AA sign as it snuffles around for the truffle signifies that it is appropriately attuned for discovering the treasure and therefore will be successful. It just needs the help of Apollo to point it in the right direction.

The boar traditionally represents the initiate in the Greek and Druidic mystery schools, and the actual sacrifice of a boar was used as the symbolic representation of the psychological sacrificial death of the initiate that leads on to resurrection into the Higher Mysteries, which resurrection or rebirth is accomplished in the Royal Arch Degree. In relation to the Hyacinth legend that is alluded to in the emblem, the boar in this instance can signify Hyacinth, the beloved pupil of Apollo, whose death and resurrection is the archetype for other initiates to follow and act out. The AA, the boar, Hyacinth and Apollo are all intimately connected with each other.

The discovery and raising of the boar during the rebuilding of the temple is portrayed in another emblem of Christopher Plantin's 1577 edition of Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata*; namely, Emblem II, 'Mediolanum' (Milan). In this emblem a single A can be seen depicted carved on a stone that lies near the excavated pit from which the boar is being raised. In this instance the boar is a *scrofa semilanuta* (in Italian: 'half-woollen boar') and in particular a boar-sow which is half-pig, half-ram. This is Milan's symbol, described as "a wool-bearing boar, and animal of double form, here with sharp bristles, there with sleek wool."



Emblem II, 'Mediolanum', Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata* (1577)

In this emblem, the A-engraved stone is representing the Alpha (also known as the Foundation Stone), whilst the resurrected boar represents the Omega. Thus, although very subtly disguised, this picture shows the AA Sacred Sign of the mystery schools.

## The French Academy

An allusion to the AA symbolism also appeared in 1577 in a French book, *L'Academie Française*, attributed to Pierre de La Primaudaye (1546-1619) although the text states that it was written by a youth of small experience.<sup>8</sup> In the dedication to Henri III, the author thanks the French king for his hospitality whilst attending the court of Henri at Blois. The court was held at Blois from November 1576 to February 1577 specifically for a meeting of the Estates-General, but the time had also been one of exceptional festivity and cultural activity connected with the Palace Academy that had been founded by the king in 1576. Not only does the author liken Henri to King Solomon but he also makes a pointed emphasis of the capital

letter A in naming pseudonymously four particular students at the French Academy: viz. Aser, Amana, Aram and Achitob. Although the letter A is given separately as the first letter of each name, the effect is that of a pair of double A's.

## Andrea Alciato

By the same argument, of course, the AA could be said to have appeared from the start in Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber* or *Book of Emblems*. This collection of emblems was first published unauthorised by Heinrich Steyner in Augsburg, Germany, in 1531. The first authorised version of the book was published in Paris by Christian Wechel in 1534. It is the initials of Andrea Alciato that provide the AA signature, just as the initial letters of the names of the four students of the French Academy provide the AA signature twice, and the initials of the publisher Thomas Thorpe on the title page of *Shake-speares Sonnets* give the TT signature of the Thirty-Third Degree, the final or highest degree of illumination.

Andrea Alciato (1492-1550) was an Italian jurist and writer who is regarded as the founder of the French school of legal humanists. His *Emblemata*, consisting of woodcut emblem pictures accompanied by Latin verse texts, was published in dozens of editions from 1531 onwards, with each edition containing notable changes or additions.

## The English Republic

The next known book to display the AA signature as a headpiece is *De Rep. Anglorum Instauranda libri decem*, *Authore Thoma Chalonero Equitite, Anglo*, published in 1579 by Thomas Vautrollier in London. This was the first appearance of the AA device in print in England and is the same Gemini/Grail AA headpiece that was used in Francis Bacon's copy of the *Hebraicum Alphabethum* published in Paris in 1576. The headpiece is printed above the title *De Rep. Anglorum Instauranda* on page 1 of "Liber primus" (Book 1).



AA Headpiece, *De Rep. Anglorum Instauranda* (London, 1579)

Thomas Vautrollier was a French Huguenot refugee from Troyes in Champagne who, in 1564, began his career in London as a bookbinder and bookseller. In 1567 he began acting as the London agent for Christopher Plantin, the printer-publisher and Familist in Antwerp. He did this in association with another Huguenot bookseller, Jean Dessersans. However, by the end of 1568 this partnership had been dissolved and Vautrollier set up as a printer on his own account in Blackfriars. The preface to the first book published by him is dated January 1569.

## "A per se A"

The publishing of Vautrollier's edition of *De Rep. Anglorum Instauranda* corresponds precisely with the return of Francis Bacon from France to England in 1579 and the forming of the English Areopagus of poets. This group's existence was first announced by Gabriel Harvey, a member

of the Areopagus and Bacon's university teacher in rhetoric, whom Francis Bacon first met whilst at Cambridge University. In one of Harvey's famous letters to the poet "Immerito" that were printed in 1884,<sup>9</sup> he refers ambiguously and cryptically to "Everyone A per se A his terms and braveries in print."

Ten years later Harvey again referred to "A per se A", associating the expression with the "odd man *Triu Litteraru*" whom he mocks as being like the three-bodied, three-headed monster, Geryon, who goes under the three names of Hatchet, Greene and Nashe. By "Hatchet", Harvey means John Lyly, alias "Euphues".<sup>10</sup>

The Latin *per se* means "by itself". That is to say, if something exists *per se*, it exists by itself, intrinsically, without need for qualifications or to refer to anything else. It is used particularly as a legal term, such as "slander *per se*", which means that the slanderous statement stands by itself and needs no further explanation. In terms of the letter A, *per se* is applied entirely appropriately, as the A stands for the number 1, which relates to the expression "One and Only" and which is incorporated in the folk ditty, "Green grow the rushes O," as "One is One and all alone, and evermore shall be so".

In Greek myth, Geryon was a three-headed, three-bodied giant who was a guardian of the underworld. He owned a two-headed hound named Orthrus, which was the brother of the three-headed hound named Cerberus.

In Harvey's *Pierce's Supererogation, or a New Prayse of the Old Asse* (1593), which deals with the gibes at him by Greene, Lyly and Nashe, Harvey versifies, referring to these three as "three faces in one hood", thereby re-emphasising what he had said before—that the three poets provide a three-faced disguise (hood) for one person, like a "three-headed Cerberus". Cerberus was Hades' faithful three-headed watchdog who guarded the gates of the Underworld.

Aske not what Newes? that come to visit wood:  
My treasure is Three faces in one Hood:  
A chaungling Triangle: a turncoat rood.

Three hedded Cerberus, wo be unto thee:  
Here lyes the onely Trey, and rule of Three:  
Of all Triplicities, the A B C.

Harvey then goes on to reiterate his earlier description of this single poet with three heads or faces as "the three-shapen Geryon", whose personas or masks are "a conjuring Hatchet, a rayling Greene, or a threatening Nash": -

Somebody oweth the three-shapen Geryon a greater duty in recognisance of his often promised curtesies; and will not be found ungrateful at occasion. He were very simple that would feare a conjuring Hatchet, a rayling Greene, or a threatening Nash.

This three-headed poet, he says, is the "same odd man *Triu Litteraru*" that he mentioned before, whose wit and conscience was "A per se A": -

These, these were the only men that I ever dreaded: especially that same odd man *Triu Litteraru* that for a linsey-woolsie wit and a cheverill conscience was A per se A.

In *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592), Nashe—or the one who is using Nashe as a mask—makes it clear that the “A per se A” is his own special nickname, given to him by his “Godfather Gabriel”. On the one hand the expression “Godfather Gabriel” can refer exoterically to Gabriel Harvey, his friend and teacher in rhetoric; on the other hand, it can refer esoterically to the Archangel Gabriel, the divine agent in the annunciation of any great birth of Light: -

A per se, A can doe it; tempt not his clemency too much. A per se, A? Passion of God, how came I by that name? My Godfather Gabriel gave it me, and I must not refuse it.

To all this should be added the enigmatic question written by Francis Bacon in his *De Interpretatione Naturæ*, which links together the swine (i.e. boar), the single letter A, and the transcription of tragic plays: -

Sus rostro si forte humi A literam unam impresserit, num propterea suspicabere integram trageodiam veluti literam unam, ab ea posse describi?<sup>11</sup>

Translated into English, this renders: -

Supposing that a swine should impress a single letter A in the ground with its powerful snout, do you suppose therefore that an entire tragedy could be transcribed by that swine even as the single letter can?

From all this and other evidence, it is possible to discover that this “A per se A” or AA poet who used three living persons to both mask and assist him was Francis Bacon, whose pseudonym “Immerito” (“the Blameless One”) was later turned into yet another living mask, Edmund Spenser.

John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe and Edmund Spenser were all writers and poets in their own right, so the question then is, which are the poetic works written by Francis Bacon that are actually published under the name of one or other of the other four?

For instance, the words, “Isle of Dogs / by Thomas Nashe,” are written on the contents page of the collection of manuscripts known as the Northumberland Manuscript. The words appear on two lines at the foot of a list of contents that otherwise says that all the contents are by Francis Bacon. So perhaps this play, the *Isle of Dogs*, supposedly by Nashe, was actually written by Francis Bacon? As for poetic works published under the name of Edmund Spenser, there are indications that the *Shepherd’s Calendar* and *Faerie Queene*, and possibly some of the other poems attributed to Spenser, were actually written by Francis Bacon.

It is also possible that Lyly, Greene and Nashe were three of Francis Bacon’s “good pens” who not only masked but also assisted Bacon in the writing and transcribing of his earlier poetic works, such as some of the plays that were later produced under the name of “William Shakespeare”. For instance, Lyly’s influence can be seen in the Shakespeare plays and he is known to have been one of Bacon’s “good pens”. Also, it is thought by many Shakespearean scholars that Robert Greene was partly responsible for some of *Titus Andronicus* and *Henry VI*, Parts 1 & 2, and to have been a contributor to *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Moreover, Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1590-1) has a number of elements pointing to his and the author Shakespeare’s collaboration on the play. His *Pandosto* (1588) was the source for the plot of Shakespeare’s *Winter’s Tale*. It is also agreed that there are definite influences from Thomas Nashe in the Shakespeare plays, as

indeed from others such as Christopher Marlowe, George Peel, Thomas Watson, Thomas Kyd and Thomas Lodge.

All these poets (Lyly, Greene, Nashe, Marlowe, Peele, Watson, Kyd and Lodge) comprised the “University Wits”—the university-educated poets of the 1580s who revolutionised the stage. Most of the half-dozen or so early Shakespeare plays that had been produced by 1594 resemble the work of these poets. Greene addressed three of these poets in his *Groatsworth of Wit*, inferring that the three of them plus himself were members of the real “Shake-scene” who actually wrote those plays which a certain actor was pretending were his own.<sup>12</sup>

## The Divine Art of Poesie

The 1579 *De Rep. Anglorum Instauranda libri decem*, published by Vautrollier, was followed in 1584 by *The Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie* of King James VI of Scotland, also published by Vautrollier, which bears the Grail AA headpiece that was to be used later in the falsely dated *De Furtivis Literarum Notis*, printed in London by John Wolfe in 1591. Vautrollier, at the instigation of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, had set up in 1583 a second press in Edinburgh where he printed ten books, including King James’ *Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie* (1584).



AA Headpiece, *The Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie*  
(Edinburgh, 1584)

In 1586 Vautrollier returned to London, but on his return he was taken ill and from then on the work of the firm was superintended—as it had been during his absences—by his wife Jacqueline and his apprentice Richard Field, who had been with him since 1579. Vautrollier died in 1587 and the business passed into the hands of Richard Field, who married Vautrollier’s widow in 1589.

## The Art of English Poesie

In 1589 Richard Field printed *The Arte of English Poesie*, which carries the same Gemini/Grail AA headpiece as was first used in the *Hebraicum Alphabethum* (Paris, 1576/7) and then in the *De Rep. Anglorum Instauranda* (London, 1579).



AA Headpiece, *Arte of English Poesie* (London, 1589)

## Shakespeare Signature

When the name of “William Shakespeare” was first announced in 1593, printed on the dedication page of *Venus and Adonis*, the “first heir” of the author’s “invention”, the book (printed by Richard Field) displayed the AA signature very prominently in several ways on both the title page and the dedication page.

Heading the dedication page, which has the “William Shakespeare” printed typeset signature placed at the end of the dedication, is an AA headpiece, this time portraying the twin A’s touching each other and surrounded by vegetation in which two snails are lurking. The Gemini *per se* are missing in this headpiece, but in fact the Gemini theme of immortal-mortal can be found in the title of the poem and its story of Venus, the immortal, and Adonis, the mortal.



AA Headpiece, *Venus and Adonis* (London, 1593)

The Greek name of Venus is Aphrodite, whilst Adonis is the same name in Greek as well as Roman, hence the AA hieroglyph can readily signify these two names and mythological beings, and what they represent.

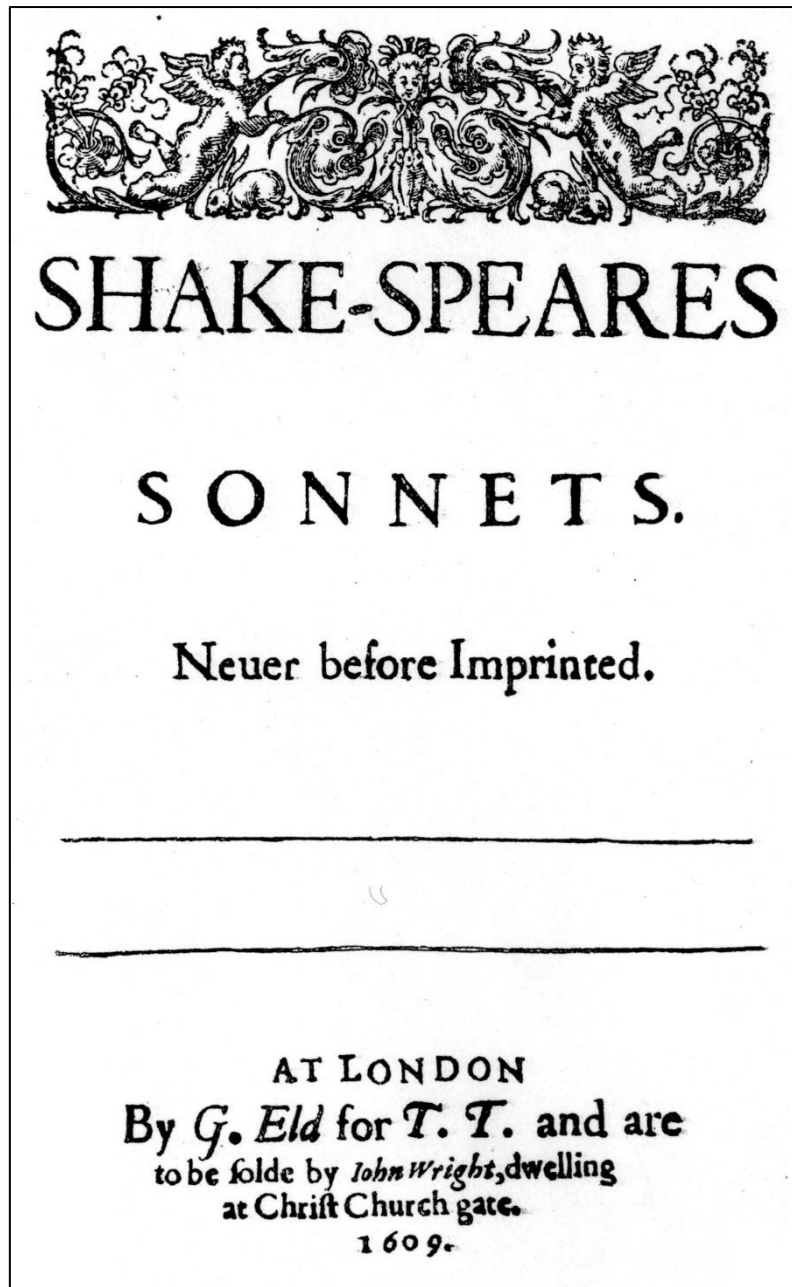
Interestingly, the second edition of *Venus and Adonis*, which was published the following year (1594), has the AA headpiece reversed on the dedication page. This reversal, wherein the light A is on the left of the emblem (the viewer’s right) and the shadowed A on the right (the viewer’s left), is the opposite to the usual seeing ‘face to face’ of most pictures including the 1593 AA headpiece. However, it cannot have been accidental, as the woodblock was carved this way, so it is almost certainly so as to bring our attention to the fact that this is seeing the image ‘back view’, wherein the viewer can identify with being the image him or herself.



AA Headpiece, *Venus and Adonis* (London, 1594)

In other words, the second edition of *Venus and Adonis*, with this reversal difference in the AA headpiece of the dedication, is intended to show us that there were two poets known as “William Shakespeare”.

This is something that the Shakespeare sonnets tell us more openly, such as Sonnet 83 which speaks of “both your poets”. This twinship is discreetly supported by the way the title of the collection of Shakespeare sonnets is spelt as *Shake-speares Sonnets* on the original 1609 title page. Besides being hyphenated, alluding to a pseudonym, the name *Shake-speares* does not have an apostrophe ‘s’, which suggests that there might be more than one Shakespeare.



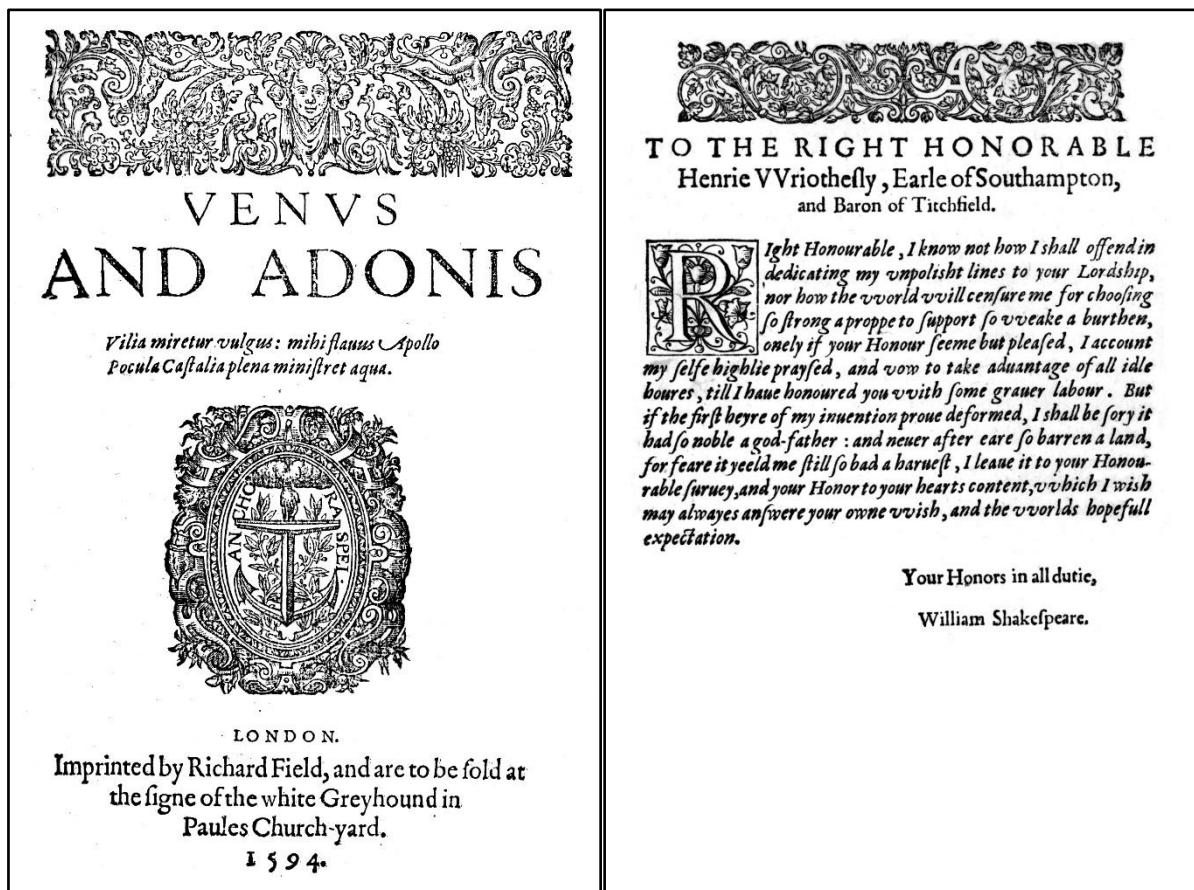
Title page: *Shake-speares Sonnets* (1609 – Wright version)

Sonnet 83 is part of what is referred to as the 'Rival Poet' group (Sonnets 80-86); but these so-called rival poets are also lover and beloved, and their rivalry can best be described as inspiring and spurring each other on to better things, such as in the classical proverb concerning the love affair between Mars and Venus – "Strife and friendship are the spurs of motion and the keys of work" – a proverb that Francis Bacon refers to in his *History of the Sympathy and Antipathy of Things*.<sup>13</sup> In this proverb, Mars is associated with Strife, and Venus with Friendship. The result of their love affair is the birth of Concordia and Cupid, so it is of note that the last two Shakespeare sonnets (Sonnets 153-154) concern Cupid. The Greek name of Mars is Ares, and of Venus is Aphrodite, so from this point of view the 'AA' can be seen as referring to Ares and Aphrodite.

The sonnets are also about two main characters, the 'Fair Youth' and 'Dark Lady', who can be likened to Apollo and Artemis, the brother-sister twins. The Romans referred to Artemis as Diana. She is referred to in the final two Shakespeare sonnets as associated with the cold valley-fountain or cool well. So, at yet another level and point of view, Apollo and Artemis are the twins (Gemini) represented by the AA hieroglyph.

The title page of *Venus and Adonis* displays the AA and Gemini cipher signatures in two different ways. Firstly, the AA signature is provided by the initial letters of *Venus and Adonis*, wherein one of the A's is inverted to give the letter V, thus providing the idea of the cup and cover of a chalice, the cup being associated with Venus and the cover with Adonis. Secondly, because of the way the title is printed in capitals on the title page, the signature AV is displayed twice, with two capital V's in "VENVS" and two capital A's in "AND ADONIS".

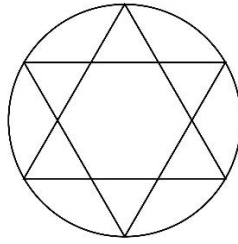
The symbolism of the A and the V also relate to the symbols of alchemical fire and water, fire being represented by the upward-pointing triangle (i.e. A) and water being represented by the downward-pointing triangle (i.e. V).



Title page: *Venus and Adonis* (1594)

Dedication page: *Venus and Adonis* (1594)

The A and the V put together create Solomon's Seal which, when perfectly fused in love, becomes the six-pointed Star of David, also known as the Blazing Star or Christ Star, the symbol of perfection. This is what the complete love-union of Venus, the immortal, with Adonis, the mortal, would mean—although, of course, the poem shows the failure of this due to the lack of both interest and love of Adonis.



Solomon's Seal

However, this poem is but the start of the evolutionary and initiatory process that the ensuing Shakespeare poems and plays show, culminating in the eventual marriage of the immortal with the mortal that is achieved by Prospero in *The Tempest*.

Not without reason is *The Tempest* traditionally known as Shakespeare's "last play", with the capitals of the title giving the TT signature—the T or Tau, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, being the equivalent of the Omega of the Greek alphabet. Shakespeare's third poem, the *Phoenix and Turtle*, is also on the subject of the perfect mystical marriage, whereby the two lovers become one mutual flame of love.

The headpiece at the top of the *Venus and Adonis* title page portrays Bride, or Truth Revealed. Two Pan-like figures, each emerging from a letter A, together with two peacocks, stand on each side of her. Besides being the creatures of Hera, sister-wife of Zeus, the queen and king of Olympus (Heaven), the peacocks are symbolic of the Gemini; and Bride, as shown here, is another way of portraying what is known as the Holy Grail in the highest spiritual sense. She is also Echo, the beloved of Pan, the Spirit of Nature. They signify the wisdom (sound) and intelligence (echo) of all Nature.

AA-Gemini-Bride-Peacocks headpiece, *Venus and Adonis* (1593), *Lucrece* (1594)

## Anchor of Hope

*Venus and Adonis* was republished in 1594 together with the first publication of its twin poem, *Lucrece*, which has a similar title page design. Besides the AA-Gemini-Bride-Peacocks headpiece, they both display on their title pages an emblem bearing the Latin motto, "Anchora Spei", which is virtually the same as the "Anchora Spei" emblem on the title page of King James' *Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie*, published in Edinburgh in 1584. This seems to have a particular significance when we find that Francis Bacon, writing years later to King James, reminds him of "your Majesty's Royal promise (which is to me *Anchora Spei*)," and the fact that John Marston and Joseph Hall, in their satires published 1597-1598, identified Francis Bacon as the real author of the two Shakespeare poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*.<sup>14</sup>



*Anchora Spei* emblem on the title pages of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594)

## Shakespeare, Sydney and Spenser

The AA signature continued to be used in the Shakespeare sonnets and plays, as well as the Gemini signature, culminating with the Shakespeare Folio of 1623. The AA signature was also used, in various forms but usually as a headpiece, in many other works of the Elizabethan-Jacobean period—works that are associated, by means of the signature and other signs, with Francis Bacon and the Rosicrucian fraternity. For instance: -



AA Headpiece, *Hamlet* (1603), *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1609)



AA Headpiece, *Shepheard's Calendar*, *Spenser Folio* (1611)



AA Headpiece, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1625)

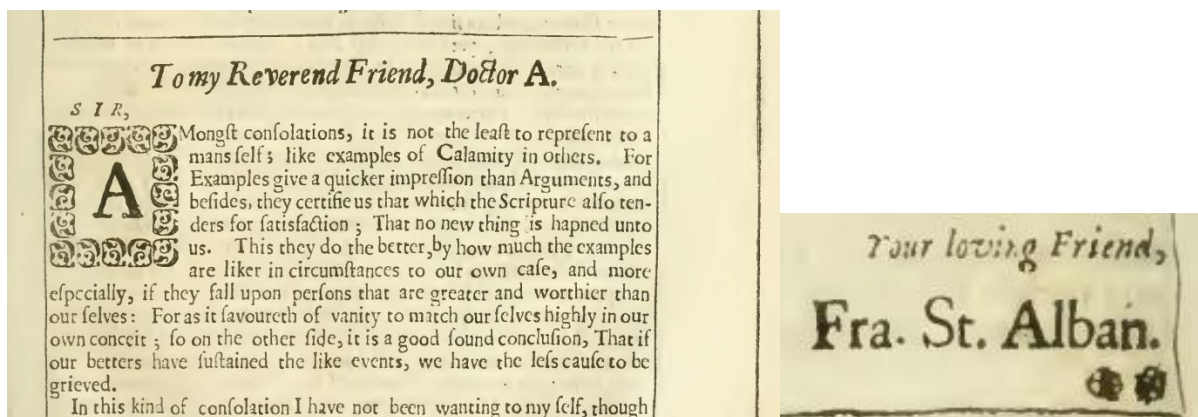


AA Headpiece, Shakespeare Folio (1623)

## Francis Bacon, the AA and Doctor A

It is noteworthy, however, that even though Francis Bacon was directly and intimately associated with the AA symbol, as the AA author-poet, none of the works that Bacon published under his own name in his lifetime had an AA headpiece on them. When he died in 1626 it was a different matter, and several of his works were published after 1626 with the AA headpiece, such as *Bacon's Remaines*, printed by B. Alsop for Lawrence Chapman, 1648, and *The Mirrour of State*, printed for Lawrence Chapman, 1656. The last use of an AA headpiece is over the 'life of the author' in the second volume of an edition of Bacon's *Essays* edited by Dr. William Wilymott and published by Henry Parson in 1720.

In all this, we must not forget the letter to "Doctor A" by Francis Bacon that was included in a special first edition of *Resuscitatio*, a collection of some of Bacon's various writings published by William Rawley in 1657.<sup>15</sup> This letter, which appears to have been written soon after Bacon's impeachment and signed "Fra. St. Alban" with two roses inscribed, includes the AA signature in a most beautifully cryptic way. At the same time, also cryptically, Bacon reveals that the AA is a synonym for Time, otherwise known as Pan, Janus or Christ, the Alpha-Omega, to whom he dedicates with this letter his particular "Argument" or writing that mixes both civil and religious, and also contemplative and active, considerations.



**'Letter to Doctor A', *Resuscitatio* (1657) – opening paragraph of letter on page 131; and Bacon's signature as Francis Saint Alban at the end of the letter on page 132**

In Eastern teachings, Time is Kalki, the tenth and final Avatar of Vishnu who comes at the end of the great cycle of time and human evolution. This is the same as the tenth and final appearance of Christ, usually referred to as "the Second Coming". He appears as the Alpha-Omega at the Omega moment of one great time cycle, which leads directly into and thereby becomes the Alpha moment of a new great time cycle—i.e. the AA Being appearing at the AA moment in time.

To the ancient Greeks, Time was known as Kronos, as distinct from Chronos who is Eternity. To the Romans, Kronos was Saturnus, or Saturn. Saturn, the planetary symbol for *Daath* ('Knowledge') on the kabbalistic Tree of Life, represents all-knowledge that is illumination (i.e. knowledge of truth), and is the holy spirit or 'god' that inaugurates and oversees a Golden Age. That Time, the Alpha-Omega, is now come; and it would seem that Francis Bacon knew this and prepared us for it.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Francis Bacon, essay 'Of Truth'.

<sup>2</sup> See FBRT essay, *Secrets of the Rosy Cross*, by Peter Dawkins.

<sup>3</sup> Frances A. Yates, 'Religious Processions (1583-4): The Family of Love', *Astraea* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975). See also Wallace Kirsop, *The Family of Love in France* (Sydney University Press, III, 1964-5).

<sup>4</sup> L. Voet, *The Golden Compasses* (Amsterdam, 1969), ch.I, p.91. See also Frances A. Yates, 'Religious Processions (1583-4): The Family of Love', *Astraea* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> The Emperor Charles V used, for his device, two pillars with the words "Plus Ultra" (i.e. "More beyond") as a deliberate contrast to the ancient legend that the Pillars of Hercules at the west end of the Mediterranean Sea, where the Atlantic Ocean began, had had the legend "Ne Plus Ultra" (i.e. "No More Beyond") on them.

<sup>6</sup> The motto, "*Moniti meliora*", can be translated as "Instruction bringeth improvement". This motto was painted on the wall over the dining table in the hall of Sir Nicholas Bacon's house at Gorhambury, together with a mural of Ceres teaching the sowing of the golden seeds of corn. It was a key reference to the Orphic Mysteries, to which Gorhambury was dedicated (see FBRT Journal, *Dedication to the Light*). It is recorded that the young Francis Bacon used to continually ponder on the meaning of this picture and its motto, and kept inquiring about it.

<sup>7</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, iii, 188.

<sup>8</sup> Although the author of *L'Academie Française* describes himself as a youth of small experience, yet the contents of the book bear evidence of a wide knowledge of classical authors and their works, an intimate acquaintance with the ancient philosophies, a profound interest in modern philosophy and moral virtue, and a store of general information that would have been impossible for any ordinary youth of his time and age to have possessed. Basically, it is a summary of the philosophical and scientific knowledge of the era. In the *Gesta Grayorum* of Gray's Inn (Christmas 1594), whose principal playwright and organiser was Francis Bacon, the *French Academy* (English translation of *L'Academie Française*) is specifically mentioned as necessary to be studied by the Knights of the Helmet, Bacon's fraternity in learning and illumination. Its influence can be found in the Shakespeare works.

<sup>9</sup> *The Letter-Book of Gabriel Harvey*, AD, 1573-80 (1884, ed. E.J.L. Scott, Camden Society).

<sup>10</sup> The name "Hatchet" is derived from "Pap-hatchet", which itself is derived in jest from a pamphlet published anonymously in 1589 entitled *Pappe with an Hatchet*. This pamphlet was principally concerned with the Martin Marprelate dispute, but it contained an incidental snipe at Harvey as part

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of the game of gibing wit. Harvey replied to this taunt in that part of his *Pierce's Supererogation* dated November 1589: -

Pap-hatchet (for the name of thy good nature is pittifully growen out of request), thy old acquaintance in the Savoy when young Euphues hatched the eggs that his elder friends laid (surely Euphues was someway a pretty fellow: would God Lilly had always been Euphues and never Pap-hatchet): that old acquaintance now somewhat straungely saluted with a new resemblance is neither lullabied with thy sweet Papp nor scarre-crowed with thy sour hatchet.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Bacon, *De Interpretatione Naturæ* (Works, 1740 ed. Vol.II, p.263.)

<sup>12</sup> See FBRT essay, *The Shake-scene*, by Peter Dawkins.

<sup>13</sup> Francis Bacon, *The History of the Sympathy and Antipathy of Things* (1623).

<sup>14</sup> See FBRT essay, *Labeo is Shakespeare is Bacon*, by Peter Dawkins.

<sup>15</sup> See FBRT essay, *Doctor A*, by Peter Dawkins.