The hero, the villain, the princess, and the book: stories about the First Folio

Emma Smith,
Hertford College, Oxford

Abstract
This article establishes a prehistory of the excitement about the discovery of the Saint-Omer Shakespeare First Folio in a longer narrative of investments in the book's secrets. Tracing the neglected importance of Baconianism to the establishment of the First Folio's cultural prominence in the early twentieth century, parallels between the kinds of narratives told by authorship sceptics and by bibliographers are drawn. I argue that the sense that the book encodes mysteries about its own genesis unites popular and academic approaches to the First Folio, and is one way to account for the discrepancy between its value and its non-rarity.

Keywords
First Folio, Francis Bacon, authorship, narrative, Vladimir Propp

Résumé
Cet article retrace la préhistoire de l'intérêt suscité par la découverte du Premier In-folio de Saint-Omer en l'intégrant dans une narration plus large centrée sur les secrets que recèlerait l'ouvrage. En montrant l'importance du Baconisme, négligé par la critique, dans l'établissement de la pré-éminence culturelle du Folio au début du vingtième siècle, il établit des parallèles entre les scénarios créés par les sceptiques qui mettent en doute l'auctorialité shakespearienne et ceux des bibliographes. L'idée que le livre encrypte des mystères expliquant sa propre genèse, ainsi qu'on le verra, est ce qui unit les perspectives populaires et universitaires sur le Folio, et c'est l'une des clés qui explique l'écart entre sa valeur et son absence de rareté.

Mots clés
Premier In-folio, Francis Bacon, auctorialité, narration, Vladimir Propp

Corresponding author
Emma Smith, Hertford College, Oxford OX1 3BW, UK
Email: emma.smith@hertford.ox.ac.uk

As soon as the discovery of the St Omer Folio was announced to the world's media, theories about its possible significance multiplied. Dominant amid this speculation was the support this discovery might give to current arguments about Shakespeare's own Catholic beliefs. As the *Independent* newspaper reported in Britain, 'the discovery in France of a copy of the Bard's First Folio has fuelled speculation that he was a Papist'.[1] Scholars were quick to challenge this logic: James Shapiro told a news reporter in the USA: 'If it had been found in a yeshiva in Vilna, I wouldn't suggest that Shakespeare was Jewish'.[2] Nevertheless, that the book, or more precisely, the book in its context, might give us access to some occluded personal testimony about the Shakespeare who was dead seven years before it appeared on the London bookstalls, has been one of the fictions that has sustained its remarkable economic value and cultural cachet since its initial publication. That this book has more secrets to tell has been a particular and valuable part of its mystique in both scholarly and popular narratives over the last century.

Rémy Cordonnier's early and poetical invocation of the refound St-Omer First Folio as 'a Sleeping Beauty' firmly placed this important bibliographic discovery within the structures of fantasy, idealisation and wish-fulfilment associated with the fairy-tale. The romance of finding a rare book and the heroic associations of the quest narrative have often been part of Folio collecting, perhaps as part of a more sustained set of cultural fictions that try to blur the book's increasing association with personal wealth. Following Cordonnier's cue, but perhaps allocating a more active role to the book itself in its own narrative, we can further see that the discovery, public announcement, and subsequent tour of the copy of the book conform in many aspects to the morphology of the folktale influentially identified by Vladimir Propp. Following Propp's terms, the First Folio becomes the hero of a story combining several plot functions. The book's unexpected location in northern France combines Propp's absentation (function 1) and departure (11) functions; the forgetting or near-loss of the book takes up the form of struggle (16); the particular annotations especially its unusual 'PS' stamp are the bibliographic version of the branding of the hero (17);[3] its authentication as a genuine First Folio by Professor Eric Rasmussen is the scene of recognition (27); the much publicised visit by the First Folio to the Globe theatre in London is recast as a version of heroic return (20); the book's subsequent establishment at the heart of a cultural tourist strategy for the region transforms the heroic apotheosis which Propp figures as his final function: the hero's ascension of the throne and his wedding (31). There are roles for the persons of the discovery too. A folkloric version of the discovery narrative would cast Cordonnier as the equivalent of Propp's 'helper', First Folio whisperer Rasmussen as the 'donor' or 'magic helper', and no doubt we could find equivalents to Propp's other characters, particularly the princess, the villain and the false hero, among the academic, civic and bibliographic St-Omer *dramatis personae*.[4]

The point of Propp's analysis of the folktale to the narratives of discovery and revelation around the St-Omer First Folio is to establish two related points about this book. Firstly, just as the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays is itself full of stories of heroes, princesses, villains and helpers, so too the First Folio is a book about which we have persistently told stories. From John Heminges and Henry Condell's first creation myth in the book's own epistle, the unlikely claim 'that we haue scarse receiued from him a blot in his papers', origin stories have been a perennial staple of First Folio fictions.[5] Editorial arguments about the provenance or authority of its texts and bibliographic arguments about the way the book was produced often aspire, and may successfully appear, to be objective or evidential, but in many ways they are susceptible to the same forms of narrative structural analysis that Propp bestowed on the folktale. And secondly, thinking of these interpretative narratives as stories – as in some important morphological or structural sense fictional – helps us to set aside any

obligation to adjudicate their truth claims. The criterion for judging stories is emphatically not that they are true, but rather that they are variously recognisable, authentic, plausible, pleasurable, or resonant. Different narratives have been woven around the First Folio at different times, and these narratives, like all stories, reveal in their varying contexts our overdetermined investment in the First Folio in particular and, by extension, in the figure of Shakespeare.

Numerous candidates could be proposed as the most influential nineteenth-century critic of Shakespeare, from Samuel Taylor Coleridge to A. C. Bradley, and from Mary Clarke to Edward Dowden. Few, perhaps, would immediately agree with my nomination: the self-confessed non-Shakespearean US congressman and amateur scientist Ignatius L. Donnelly. But Donnelly's radically compelling narrative about the significance of the First Folio, I argue, plays an unacknowledged but highly significant role in the development of what the largest repository of First Folios, the Folger Shakespeare Library, called in a 2011 publication 'Foliomania': those related phenomena of Folio sales, increased prices, and expanded cultural resonance that mark the last decade of nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries, and from which we inherit our sense of the book's importance today.[6] We would not, to put it another way, know or perhaps even care that the St-Omer copy was the 233rd extant First Folio were it not for Donnelly's pioneering, perverse scholarship.

Ignatius Donnelly's 1888 book *The Great Cryptogram: Francis Bacon's Cipher in the So-Called Shakespeare Plays* was not the first work to propose Bacon's authorship of Shakespeare: Delia Bacon's *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspere Unfolded* (1857) was the most prominent early exponent, and her ideas were taken up by many influential and literate followers. Emerson later praised Delia Bacon and Walt Whitman as the preeminent creative Americans of their age. Baconianism swept the late nineteenth-century world as the Shakespearean corollary of the religious doubt engendered by the writings of Darwin. Donnelly's indelible contribution to this field was to tie it specifically to the First Folio. His *The Great Crytogram* advertised itself as being by the author of 'Atlantis: The Antediluvian World': connecting it to arcane and esoteric catastrophist theories rather than to literary or theatrical works. Donnelly was a progressive senator from Minnesota who disarmingly claimed no special knowledge of Shakespeare, admitting that it was when reading that Francis Bacon used codes in one of his young son's books that a 'pregnant association of ideas' occurred to him, which he enumerated:

> 1. Lord Bacon wrote the plays.
> 2. Lord Bacon loved them; and could not desire to dissociate himself from them.
> 3. Lord Bacon knew their inestimable greatness; and
> 4. Lord Bacon dealt in ciphers; he invented ciphers, and ciphers of exquisite subtlety and cunning.
> Then followed, like a flash, this thought:
> 5. Could Lord Bacon have put a cipher in the plays?[7]

Donnelly thus developed Delia Bacon's diffuse and opaque suggestions about Shakespearean authorship with an entirely new rigour and specificity. His instinct about the plays' authorship (item one in his chain of thoughts above) was, for him, satisfactorily corroborated by leading instances of the word 'Bacon' in Shakespeare's plays: 'When I read that phrase "On, bacons, on" [from *1 Henry IV* 2.2.77-8] I said to myself: Beyond question there is a cipher in this play'.[8]

But Donnelly initially struggled to make visible the cipher he was so sure was present, and early attempts to work with an edited text of Shakespeare's works were frustrating. The eureka moment was the realisation that 'I must get a copy of the play as

it was originally published'.[9] Howard Staunton's photo-lithographic facsimile edition published in 1866 enabled his imaginative theory to take flight. Donnelly noted the book's pagination irregularities including the fact that there were no page numbers at all in *Troilus and Cressida*. This was the sign that he had been looking for: a system of deliberate errors intended to signal a hidden code. He began some elaborate systems of counting to reveal its message. In fact, what Donnelly found was a string of sentences attributed to Bacon that revealed much about contemporary politics, about the biographical Shakespeare, and about the circumstances of subterfuge around the plays' authorship. The cipher told him the stories of the death of Marlowe, the Queen's anger at Essex's rebellion, and 'sweet Ann Hathaway': 'a gross and vulgar woman with a good heart, 'tis true, but a loud tongue and rough manners; a gossip with a giddy head, the model from which I draw Mistress Quickly'.[10]

The narrative revealed by the code is both detailed and clear, and, to readers, utterly baffling, as a sample paragraph indicates:

> If the reader will turn to page 76 of the fax-similes, being page 76 of the original Folio, and the third page of the second part of *King Henry IV*, and commence to count at the bottom of the scene, to-wit, scene second, and count upward, he will find that there are just 448 words (exclusive of the bracketed words, and counting the hyphenated words as single words) in that fragment of scene second in that columns. Now, then, if we deduct 448 from 505, the remainder is 57, and if he will count down the next column, forward (second of page 76) the reader will find that the 57th word is the word 'her'. That is to say, the word her is the 505th word from the end of scene second; and the reader will remember that 505 is one of the Cipher root numbers.[11]

Donnelly defended himself against the inevitable incredulity: 'I should not dare to utter these opinions save in the presence of so many marvelous proofs. But there is no imagination in the multiplication table; no self-deception can invade the precincts of addition and subtraction; two and two are four, everywhere, to the end of the chapter'.[12]

Irregularities were to Donnelly clues to a secret world of meaning in the text. His intensive reading of the First Folio was entirely uninterested in the plays' themes, characters, or poetry. Hyphens were his heroines, capital letters his clowns, italics his machiavels in a cryptographic drama of the page. And his method, postulating an elaborate spatio-verbal schema purposefully devised and supervised by Bacon in which every printed letter and word was in a pre-set square on the page, was entirely dependent on his complete ignorance about early modern printing practices.

This deficit was remedied in a scholarly enterprise which has a number of unexpected structural similarities with *The Great Crytogram*. Donnelly's investigation of the minute typographical and presentational details of the First Folio has as its bibliographic twin Charlton Hinman's *The Printing and Proof-Reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare*, 'an exercise in analytical bibliography' published in 1963.[13] Hinman's great and lasting contribution to the textual study of the First Folio was to shift the emphasis of editorial energy away from speculating about the features and the provenance of the lost manuscripts and instead towards the printing process itself.[14] Drawing on the moral seriousness and attention to detail honed in his wartime intelligence work, Hinman compared dozens of copies of the First Folio in the Folger Shakespeare Library. His patent optical collating machine substituted apparently robotic, modern objectivity for Donnelly's fervent amateur enthusiasms.

Nevertheless, the two works are similar in structure and in content. Each was a large, two-volume undertaking, with the first volume an outline of the argument and the second a more thorough marshalling of detailed evidence. Each worked to quantify the First Folio and to translate it into numbers. Neither had any literary interest in Shakespeare's plays, but was instead concerned with textual specifics, such as spelling, capitalisation and the use of hyphens. Each made an argument of such detail and complexity that it is often hard to follow or to reproduce: the reader needs to take certain elements of the investigation on trust. No-one has redone either man's work. Neither could have done their work with modern editions and each is convinced that such editions lose crucial evidence. And most significantly, they each investigate the First Folio itself with unparalleled seriousness and microscopic attention, more than any other previous commentators: for both, the First Folio has secrets that can be revealed by this close and painstaking work.

Hinman saw those same irregularities in presentation and typography that had so seduced Donnelly, but for him examples of spelling and other niggles or unconformities in the Folio text were absolutely extrinsic to the author (whether that author were Shakespeare or Bacon). Instead they were attributable to the working practices of the printing shop, the exigencies of workflow and the availability of copy, the distinctive individual preferences of experienced and less experienced pressmen and apprentices working in William Jaggard's printshop in London's Barbican, as well as to the nature of the copy from which the printers were working. Investigating, for instance, irregular page numbers helped Hinman to his theory that the First Folio was set by formes. The absence of page numbers for *Troilus and Cressida* that had been Donnelly's cue for his cipher-hunting revealed to Hinman rather that for reasons about the rights to the text, this play was only included belatedly in the collection, after the Catalogue page had already been printed. Thus, both Donnelly and Hinman found significant examples of spelling, capitalisation, hyphenation, layout and pagination in the First Folio that they attributed not to Shakespeare. In Donnelly's case, they were the work of Bacon instead, and in Hinman's, they could be distributed between a previously undifferentiated team of anonymous printshop workers. History has been sure that Hinman was right, and that Donnelly was wrong; perhaps what is more interesting is the morphological similarity of the narratives they produce through their related approaches to the First Folio.

The great discovery of Hinman's work was that there was no such thing as the First Folio singular, and from that insight, each of the now 235 authenticated copies gets much of their value. Donnelly, on the other hand, was convinced that his Staunton facsimile was indeed the true and identical text as Bacon had intended. Collating the copies of the Folio in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC, Hinman implicitly invented quantitative analytical bibliography as the retrospective academic justification for Henry Folger's extraordinary Folio stockpile. Beginning in 1893, Folger amassed an unsurpassed collection of 79 copies of the First Folio. In retrospect, Sir Sidney Lee's commendation of his efforts in 1905 – 'Mr Folger is to be congratulated on having acquired in the last few years as many as eight copies of the First Folio in all – a record number for any private collector' – reads as patronizing cultural complacency.[15] Lee's own Census of First Folio owners, published in 1902, served inadvertently as Folger's indispensable mail order catalogue for his rapidly expanding collection.

This concentration was not uncontroversial. If Folger had long planned that the ultimate destination of his collection was a purpose-built research library – and his property acquisitions suggest he might have – he did not publicise this ambition until an announcement in 1928. As far as scholars and booksellers were concerned, therefore, his purchases were entirely inaccessible, withdrawn from circulation and marked out as distinctly, even selfishly, private property. In her book on the desires and motives of

collecting, *On Longing*, Susan Stewart observes that 'the boundary between collection and fetishism is mediated by classification and display in tension with accumulation and secrecy'.[16] During his own lifetime Folger's First Folio acquisitions seemed to be decisively on the wrong side of this demarcation: accumulated rather than classified, secret rather than on display, and thus less a collection than a fetish. At a time of enormous bibliographic energy and the renewed attention to material texts characteristic of the New Bibliographers such as A. W. Pollard and W. W. Greg, the sequestration of large amounts of important primary material away from the prevailing gentlemanly conventions of scholarship by which book owners, experts, scholars and librarians were in regular communication, was distinctly unpopular. In 1920 Pollard, writing on the distribution of rare books between Britain and the US, noted drily that the large 'number of copies in Mr Folger's ownership (I wish I could say 'In his library') offers a promise of future possibilities of a really exhaustive collation which is all to the good'.[17]

No real scholarly reason for Folger's agglomeration of Folios had yet been articulated; the 'really exhaustive collation' had not been undertaken. Folger had himself planned to undertake a comparison of his copies in his retirement from Standard Oil, but he never did so. This unfulfilled scholarly project imagined a fantasy of hands-on proximity to his multiple purchases that, during his lifetime, were never consulted. Folger did claim in 1914 that 'every one of the [then] 47 copies seems to have an excuse for its presence', but at that point, there was no sustained corroboration of this defence, no confirmation that indeed there was any intellectual advantage to be gained from this Folio hoard.[18] Enter Charlton Hinman's labours. It is a commonplace to say that Folger's extravagant collection of First Folios enabled Hinman's work, but it also needed it. In completing this founder's unfinished task, that is to say, Hinman effectively inaugurated the Folger Shakespeare Library as a place of sustained and serious scholarship, and decisively recast Folger's apparently excessive personal Folio consumption as the enabling institutional laboratory for academic investigation. Hinman's triumph was thus the triumph of scholarship over amateurism – and implicitly, perhaps, the triumph of Shakespeare over Bacon. As he proved, close analysis of the First Folio could be decoupled from the enthralling lure of Baconianism.

By comparing Folger's multiple Folios, Hinman added new evidence to his findings about print-house practices. He identified some five hundred variants or press-corrections: errors that had been picked up by checking already printed sheets while the press continued to work, which were then corrected for the remainder of the run, and from which copies were bound up with random arrangements of corrected and uncorrected sheets. Some pages were corrected more than once, where the correction of errors introduced new mistakes or failed to rectify those that were noted for action. Disappointingly, not one of the corrections made a material difference to the interpretation of the text. Reviewing these conclusions, Peter Blayney, Hinman's successor as chief Folio bibliographer, noted sympathetically: 'while it is immensely valuable to know that the Folio contains few variants of any textual significance, Hinman must have found that result a disappointing reward for several years of hard work'.[19] Disappointing for Hinman and Folger both: the discoveries were a derisory scholarly payoff for the expensive effort of decades in buying up First Folios for this comparative exercise, as well as for the work of that exercise.

Donnelly's analysis of the Folio had enlivened it with hidden characters including the queen, Cecil, Marlowe and Anne Hathaway, and with cross-currents of dialogue encoded in its irregularities. Hinman, too, found a cast of characters hidden beneath the Folio's surface. He traced the particular spelling and punctuation preferences of a range of distinct compositors: compositor A, for instance, who preferred spellings including *doe, goe, young* and *heere* over his colleague compositor B's preference for *do*, *go, yong*, and

here. So sure was he of these spelling patterns that a page in *Macbeth* where Banquo speculates darkly about the elevation of his old comrade-in-arms [3.1] in which these preferences changed halfway through took on its own workplace choreography. Hinman explained this with a little scenario in which 'Compositor B was called away' and his workmate A 'finished the page for him *at case y*': '(in other words, A filled in for B standing at B's own workstation)'.[20] These men take on a physical distinctiveness at odds with their genesis as curious back-projections from a cluster of orthographic predilections (and the occasional hair that has been caught in the ink, or black fingerprint visible on the margins of Folio copies): 'I spell therefore I am' is an unusual modification of Descartes. But Hinman's fifth man, Compositor E, took on some more distinctly human characteristics. His work, confined to parts of the tragedies section of the Folio, 'teem[s] with mistakes'. His 'deficiencies were evidently well-known to his superiors, and all that he did was subject to more or less systematic review'.[21] Hinman identified that this supervised, inaccurate worker was likely to be an apprentice, and, further, that he was most probably therefore John Leason, a Hampshire youth apprenticed to Jaggard in November of 1622 and about whom nothing further is known, in or out of the printing trade.

Hinman's work is rightly identified as a landmark of descriptive bibliography, based on tireless, eye-straining work on the Folger Shakespeare Library's unsurpassed archive of First Folios. Donnelly's now – and to many at the time too – looks like the work of an excitable crank. But there are some notable similarities. Both approaches identify the main interest of the First Folio in its apparently accidental, even chaotic, features of type and layout, and for both, these random-seeming elements rearrange themselves into meaningful, human patterns. Both Donnelly and Hinman superimpose their own human dramas onto the pages of the First Folio, replacing Shakespeare's own plays and speakers with their own complicated dialogues of character, causation and effect. They each pursue their own oblique version of the character criticism that was dominant in Shakespeare studies over the period of their work; it is just that they are more interested in their own character inventions than in Shakespeare's.

Psychologists have explored a willingness to believe conspiracy theories – such as that the works of Shakespeare were in fact written by Bacon – as a kind of 'fundamental attribution error', in which the individual is particularly predisposed towards 'dispositional' understandings of causation – those that identify humans as the most prominent agents. 'In most cases', writes Steve Clark, 'the conventionally accepted non-conspiratorial alternative to a conspiracy theory is a situational one', where 'situational' explanations recognise contextual and environmental factors as crucial to any theory of causation.[22] Interestingly, according to this analysis, Hinman's findings are also deeply dispositional in their tendency. Hinman's labours were directed towards something human: the recovery, or invention, of the five compositors whose work he decodes from the orthography and type-setting of the First Folio. Even as Hinman acknowledged that spelling was not standardised, he hypothesised a number of pressmen whose spelling preferences were so recognisable and unchanging that he can actually identify the place in *Macbeth* where they swap working stations for a moment. He even allowed himself the 'pleasant' speculation that one 'John Shakespeare, son of a Warwickshire butcher' who had been apprenticed to Jaggard from 1610–17, might have been Compositor B.[23] These are indeed pleasant, but in their desire to identify human agents for the detailed appearance of the First Folio, they move closer to the dispositional epistemology routinely discredited in critical accounts of Donnelly and his adherents.

Hinman's work set the agenda for mid-twentieth century bibliography. Many editors working on other authors also made use of his Hinman collator to compare editions. The machine was patented and more than fifty units were sold to libraries

across Europe and North America. It even had some commercial success proofreading prescription labels in the pharmaceutical industry.[24] No editor of Shakespeare can ignore his work on the First Folio texts; no account of that book or of early modern printing techniques can avoid engaging with his scholarship.

But significant though Hinman was and remains in his field, this penetration and reach is dwarfed by that of Donnelly. It is hard to convey the scale of the excitement and the cultural saturation of Baconian theories in the early decades of the twentieth century, and their deep and wide connections with First Folio ownership. It is important to recognise that Donnelly's recalibration of Bacon's authorship with the First Folio reenergised both parties. The growth in the First Folio's reputation and sale value was not just coincident with the rise of Baconian theories: they were causally connected. The paradox of modern Folio ownership, and of the prehistory of the collections and institutions that have sustained contemporary scholarship, is their foundational implication in this counter-narrative. Shakespeare's First Folio was at its most costly, interesting and desirable precisely at the point when most of those interested in it were at least intrigued by, and often convinced by, the possibility that it was not by Shakespeare.

Sceptical Baconian discourse had deep and wide connections with First Folio ownership. While the claims of later alternative Shakespeare candidates such as the Earl of Oxford have been primarily focused on their apparent biographical fit with the situations and characters of the plays, Baconians tended to argue through, and be persuaded by, the cipher method as applied to the First Folio. The connection between Bacon and the First Folio was thus a vital one, and promulgating the claims of the first was a crucial step in popularising the second. For example, the Bacon loyalist and member of parliament Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence owned a First Folio along with a large collection of Bacon material now in Senate House Library. Around the turn of the twentieth century he began energetically to prosecute his views on authorship in a large number of penny pamphlets. Beginning with his contention that the Droeshout engraving on the Folio title-page was already a coded authorship statement, Durning-Lawrence reproduced the image from his own copy in this widely distributed material. In the uncompromisingly titled *Bacon is Shakespeare* (1910), Durning-Lawrence glossed the engraving as 'a cunningly drawn cryptographic picture, shewing two left arms and a mask'.[25] He later recruited a professional association of tailors to provide their expert confirmation of this sceptical interpretation of the Droeshout doublet.[26] Durning-Lawrence continued, with the messianic numerological obscurantism so typical of the genre:

> The description, with the head line 'To the Reader' and the signature 'B.I.' forms twelve lines, the words of which can be turned into numerous significant anagrams, etc., to which, however, no allusion is made in the present work. But our readers will find that if all the letters are counted (the two v.v.'s in line nine being counted as four letters) they will amount to the number 287. In subsequent chapters a good deal is said about this number, but here we only desire to say that we are 'informed' that the 'Great Author' intended to reveal himself 287 years after 1623, the date when the First Folio was published, that is in the present year, 1910, when very numerous tongues will be loosened.

Durning-Lawrence's clarion call concluded that: 'The hour has come when it is no longer necessary or desirable that the world should remain in ignorance that the Great Author of Shakespeare's Plays was himself alive when the Folio was published in 1623. … The hour has come when it is desirable and necessary to state with the utmost distinctness that BACON IS SHAKESPEARE'.[27] These cheap publications focusing on the famous title-

page image of Shakespeare comprised a significant expansion in its popular circulation, and thus in its visibility and recognisability. Thanks to him, the Droeshout portrait displaced the Chandos portrait that had been on public display in the National Portrait Gallery since its opening in 1856, as the best-known image of the playwright. The now iconic image of Shakespeare, that is to say, first became widely known as part of the energetic publicity for Baconian theories of authorship, just as the First Folio itself became more prominent in the popular imagination in the same way that the public became intrigued by the possibility that it was not in fact by Shakespeare.

Many First Folio copies show evidence of the Baconian enthusiasm lavished on the book during the early years of the twentieth century. The San Franciscan mayor Adolph Sutro pasted a review of Donnelly's book into the end-papers of his copy. A Folio now in Texas has an accompanying folder of cuttings relating to authorship codes[28]. Replying to Sidney Lee's request for information about First Folios for his census in 1902, the Revd R. H. Roberts who had inherited his copy from his father, answered that question that Lee had never asked: 'My father was not a convert to the Bacon theory but considered that the Baconians had made out a strong case, so much concerning Shakespeare being conjecture only'.[29] He was not the only one of Lee's correspondents to turn a discussion of the First Folio to a discussion about Baconianism. The Roberts copy, now in the Folger Library, includes an 1889 letter enthusing about Donnelly's work uncovering 'a great & wonderful cipher-system running through the whole of the Shakespeare Folio of 1623' from Mrs Henry Pott, author of numerous works on Bacon's authorship including *Did Francis Bacon write 'Shakespeare'? Thirty-two Reasons for Believing that he Did* (1884). Mrs Pott ingeniously and emphatically deciphered the message 'Francis Bacon, Viscount St Alban, Shakespeare, writ these plaies not the rogue Will Shakspurre' in the lines of Jonson's 'To the Reader'; she pops up again as a donor to the Bodleian Library's campaign to buy back its lost First Folio, presumably a philanthropic gesture aiming to bring Baconian enlightenment to Oxford readers.[30] Another Folio owner, John Davis Batchelder, who donated his large collection of books, manuscripts, coins and other material to the Library of Congress in 1936, seems to have spelled out some of the initial ciphers in his copy, marking 'bacon?' in the margin of the first page of *The Tempest*.[31] Batchelder also collected Baconian material including Bacon's signature.

Baconianism then, is almost entirely coexistent with First Folio collecting, particularly in the American Golden Age. It played its part in the preeminent Folio collection too. The year before he died, Henry Folger wrote to his British book dealer Broadbent that 'I … am coming towards the end of my interest in Bacon; for all the books I have seen, read by him, tend to prove that he could not have been in any way responsible for the Shakespeare plays'.[32] The phrase 'coming towards the end of my interest' is an arresting one, suggesting that Baconian authorship was by no means unthinkable to Folger during the period when he was amassing his Folios. Given the almost exclusive concentration of his collecting on Shakespearean texts, it is noticeable that his one other interest was in collecting material by and about Bacon, and about the authorship controversy, including a signed copy of Ignatius Donnelly's *The Great Cryptogram*. There were almost no other early modern authors represented in Folger's own collection except those acknowledged as Shakespeare's sources – that part of the Folger Library's holdings came from later acquisitions. A. S. W. Rosenbach's eulogy at Henry Clay Folger's funeral in 1930 felt the need finally to confirm that the great collector was 'not a believer in the Baconian theory', even as he acknowledged that 'Mr Folger formed an almost complete library on this subject, including many manuscripts and autograph letters'.[33]

The great period of author scepticism in the last decade of the nineteenth and first two decades of the twentieth century targeted on coded readings of the Folio is also the period of unprecedented numbers of sales of the book and a huge increase in its price at auction. More Folios changed hands in these decades than in any comparable period before or since, and over the thirty-year period the record high price for a First Folio rose from £750 in 1888 to more than £10,000 in 1922.[34] That this was also the period of acute interest in Baconian theories of authorship centred on the textual specifics of the First Folio is no coincidence. To collect and study First Folios in the period was perforce to engage with the issue of Bacon's authorship; it was the dominant mode of engaging with the book. And for those who could not afford an original, facsimiles directed themselves towards the authorship question. Donnelly's work was made possible by the Staunton facsimile, and later publishers specifically targeted readers who wanted to work themselves on similar interpretations. An advertisement for *The National Shakespeare* type-facsimile of 1888 alluded to Donnelly's topical book, and encouraged that 'every lover of Shakespeare naturally desires to have the means of forming his own opinion in the controversy'.[35] To be interested in the First Folio in the period of Folger's collecting – from 1889, the year after Donnelly's book, to the late 1920s – was to be interested in Baconianism. Paradoxically, cryptographic interest in the secrets of the First Folio text played a significant part in the ramping up of prices. It is a provocation to acknowledge that the period of the First Folio's increasing desirability was also the period when the idea that it was not by Shakespeare had most cultural permeation, and that collectors whose interests now enable much of our Folio scholarship were often most interested in narratives about the book that almost no academic discussion would now countenance.

A coda. The most reproduced picture from the St Omer Folio's visit to London in 2014 featured the actor and former Globe artistic director Mark Rylance leaning over its open pages. Rylance is also well-known as a Shakespearean who does not believe that Shakespeare wrote the works attributed to him. He has explained this doubt in terms of a story narrative: 'Even if the man from Stratford wrote the plays – which is a possibility – then he completely masked himself in the most mysterious way. It has been a mystery from the start. It's a wonderful mystery'.[36] The iconography of the First Folio in the twenty-first century thus recapitulated the book's insistent associations with authorship scepticism in the twentieth: questions about authorship continue to haunt the material copies of the First Folio. The Folger Shakespeare Library's US tour of First Folios to mark the four-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 2016 has the headline: 'the book that gave us Shakespeare'. What this suppresses, like much of our modern narrative about the First Folio, is the paradox that this book came to scholarly, collecting, and cultural prominence because of the persistence of the story that it actually gave us someone else entirely.

Notes

1 http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/news/discovery-of-lost-shakespeare-first-folio-revives-claim-playwright-was-secret-catholic-9894216.html (accessed 30 March 2016).

2 http://www.npr.org/2014/11/27/366956663/shakespeare-folio-found-in-small-town-french-library (accessed 30 March 2016).

3 On the investigation of this stamp, see Line Cottegnies and Gisèle Venet, 'More Mysteries about the Saint-Omer Folio: Nevill and other Marks of Ownership', *Études Épistémè*, 27 (2015), http://episteme.revues.org/472 (accessed 30 March 2016) and Line Cottegnies' article in this volume.

4 Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, second edition (Austin, TX, University of Texas Press, 1968), 25–65.

5 *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (London, Printed by Isaac Jaggard, and Ed. Blount, 1623), sig. A3.

[6] Owen Williams and Caryn Lazzuri (eds), *Foliomania: Stories Behind Shakespeare's Most Important Book* (Washington, DC, Folger Shakespeare Library, 2011).
[7] Ignatius Donnelly, *The Great Cryptogram: Francis Bacon's Cipher in the So-Called Shakespeare Plays*, 2 vols (London, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington Ltd, 1888), vol. 2, 506–7.
[8]Donnelly, *The Great Cryptogram*…., vol.2, 526.
[9] Donnelly, *The Great Cryptogram*…., vol.2, 647.
[10] Donnelly, *The Great Cryptogram*…., vol.2., 831.
[11] Donnelly, *The Great Cryptogram*…., vol.2, 655-6.
[12]Donnelly, *The Great Cryptogram* …, vol. 2., 690–1; 718–9; 729; 840–1; 865.
[13] Charlton Hinman, *The Printing and Proof-Reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare*, 2 vols (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963), vol. 1, 1.
[14] Hinman, *The Printing and Proof-Reading* …, vol. 1. 5.
[15] Sidney Lee, *Notes & Additions to the Census of Copies of the First Folio* ([S.l], Oxford University Press, 1906), 29–30.
[16] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, The Collection* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 163.
[17] A. W. Pollard, 'The Division of Rare English Books between England and the United States', *The Library,* 20 (1920), 111-9 (113).
[18] Stephen H. Grant, *Collecting Shakespeare: the Story of Henry and Emily Folger* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 2014), 97.
[19] Peter W. M. Blayney, 'Introduction to the Second Edition', in *The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare*, prepared by Charlton Hinman, second edition (New York and London, W. W. Norton and Company, 1996), xxxii.
[20] Hinman, *The Printing and Proof-Reading* …, vol. 1, 217.
[21] Hinman, *The Printing and Proof-Reading* …, vol. 1, 219–20.
[22] Steve Clark, 'Conspiracy Theories and Conspiracy Theorizing', in David Coady (ed.), *Conspiracy Theories: The Philosophical Debate* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006), 81–98 (81).
[23] Hinman, *The Printing and Proof-Reading* …, vol. 2, 513.
[24] See Steven Escar Smith '"Armadillos of Invention": A Census of Mechanical Collators', *Studies in Bibliography*, 55 (2002), 133–70.
[25] Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence, Bt, *Bacon is Shakespeare* (London, Gay Hancock 1910), 23.
[26] Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence Bt, *The Shakespeare Myth* (London, Gay Hancock 1912), 6–7.
[27] Durning-Lawrence*, Bacon is Shakespeare*, 29–30; 83.
[28] In Eric Rasmussen and Anthony James West (eds), *The Shakespeare First Folio: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), these copies have the following numbers: West 23; West 51; West 185.
[29] The completed census forms and other material for the Sidney Lee Census are held by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust ER85/6/1/Returns 21–40.
[30] West 91; on the story of the Bodleian copy and the fund-raising campaign to get it back, see Emma Smith, *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016), 70–87.
[31] West 142.
[32] Grant, *Collecting Shakespeare …,* 78.
[33] Samuel Parkes Cadman, *Henry C. Folger: 18 June 1857–11 June 1930* (New Haven, printed privately, 1931), 103.
[34] See Anthony James West, *The Shakespeare First Folio: The History of the Book. Volume 1: An Account of the First Folio Based on its Sales and Prices* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2001), 56; 62.
[35] Publisher's advertisement bound with the Bodleian copy of *The National Shakespeare: a fac-simile of the text of the First Folio of 1623* (London, Mackenzie, 1888–9), shelfmark Dunston B 36/1.
[36] http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/oct/14/shakespeare-playwright-trevor-nunn-mark-rylance (accessed 30 March 2016).

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Emma Smith is Professor of Shakespeare Studies at Hertford College, University of Oxford. She has published *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book* (Oxford University Press, 2016) and edited *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's First Folio* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).