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## “I AM NOT A FREAK!” DELIA BACON AS A DRAMATIS PERSONA

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The paper sets out to explore the one-actor play by contemporary American dramatist James Armstrong focusing on Delia Bacon, a passionate mid-19th c. champion of anti-Stratfordian (Baconian) theory. The famous Romantic writer Nathaniel Hawthorne who played a certain role in Bacon's life figures in the play as an off-stage character. Bacon's dramatic monologue reveals, on the one hand, her prophetic zeal in upholding Francis Bacon's authorship of Shakespearean canon, and on the other – her female frustration informing the play with tragicomic overtones.

James Armstrong's one-actor piece published in 2009 and later reprinted in the collections of the best short plays and best dramatic monologues has a long and rather clumsy title: *The True Author of the Plays Formerly Attributed to Mister William Shakespeare Revealed to the World for the First Time by Miss Delia Bacon*. It also happens to be the title of the lecture delivered by Miss Delia Bacon and, in fact, constituting the play's contents. The title could not but intrigue anyone enthralled by Shakespeare's universe, even though one is well aware of the peripheral space occupied in it by the so called Shakespeare authorship question. The name of Delia Bacon (1811–1859) rings the bell for everyone interested in unflagging authorship controversy that had been on and off for several centuries, since the charismatic New Englander led the anti-Stratfordian movement of mid-19th c. as a passionate champion of the earliest and, perhaps, the most influential anti-Shakespearean hypothesis.

It will not be amiss here to point out that the authorship debate has arisen, primarily, from a kind of seeming non sequitur between the two images of Shakespeare acknowledged as a problem at a certain stage of social and cultural progress. The persona of the artist of genius well-versed in every domain of

available knowledge and very much at home in English higher society – is projected by the works published under Shakespeare’s name. The other image – a petty trivial figure of a poorly educated man from social lower strata – can be reconstructed from scanty biographical data. The discordance was felt as acute contradiction due to the shaping of new and essentially romantic vision of creativity and artist in the Western imagination beginning late 18th c. This cognitive dissonance made it necessary to look for alternative author(s) of the plays which by that time have already acquired canonical status in both the Old, and the New Worlds. The philosopher, scientist, statesman, man of letters Francis Bacon (1561–1626) seemed a suitable candidate by virtue of his background, brilliant education, proximity to the court and – last but not least – unquestionable points of convergence between his beliefs and many ideas artistically embodied by Shakespeare. Baconian theory enjoyed large following; late 19th c. saw about 250 books published in its support, with Mark Twain as one of its adherents. The fact that it has not lost its appeal in our time is testified not solely by new publications in 1990–2000, but also by the successful operation of Baconian society in England with an edition of its own and substantial membership. Later, virtually every Elizabethan courtier and man of letters, including the Virgin Queen herself, was claimed to be the true author of Shakespeare’s plays. It is not my task, however, to discuss anti-Stratfordian theories at any length here, since this inexhaustible subject is extensively dealt with in what I would dub para-Shakespearean studies. No matter how close or far from the truth they might seem, delving into them is an entertaining and instructing enterprise; it is no mere coincidence that anti-Shakespearean discourse emerged concomitantly to detective stories [1, p. 4]. To avoid any misunderstanding, it should be noted without further delay that state-of-the-art academic Shakespeare scholarship denies any attempts at contesting the accepted point of view any grounds demonstrating that all indirect “evidence against Shakespeare” might look as such only in case of non-historical approach to early modern culture, that is, extrapolating to it much later understanding of literature as “an expression and exploration of the Self” [Ibid., p.263] uncharacteristic of Renaissance authors. In James Shapiro’s words, “the more that Shakespeare scholars encourage autobiographical readings of the plays and poems, the more they legitimize assumptions that underlie the claims of all those who dismiss the idea that Shakespeare wrote the plays” [Ibid, p. 267].

It is obvious in any case that a present-day American playwright’s aim was not to take part in the long-lasting authorship debate. What was his motivation, then, in digging out an old and next to forgotten episode of this debate and using it for his plot? Arguably, it was the protagonist’s outstanding personal appeal enabling the author to see her as a potential dramatic heroine. According to him, he condensed a great deal of Miss Bacon’s life “to show her excited research, frenzied

revelations and slow descent into madness, all in one speech” [2]. As the play’s readers/audience we automatically join the public gathered to hear Miss Delia Bacon’s lecture at the auditorium in the American Consulate in Liverpool, England (as we shall see, the setting is by no means accidental). The time is indicated in very general terms as “the mid-nineteenth century” for reasons soon to become clear. On the strength of quotations from Francis Bacon and Shakespeare, the lecturer is endeavoring to bring home to the audience her cherished idea that the true author of the plays attributed to “that man from Stratford” was her ancestor Francis Bacon (in fact, the historical Delia Bacon never claimed close kinship with or direct ascendancy from the Elizabethan philosopher). Her argumentation relies on Shakespeare’s low origin as “the poor son of a common butcher” [3, p. 185]; his altogether uninteresting life; and the lack of any sparks of genius in his family. On the other hand, the speaker remarks, England of that time could boast of new philosophy set forth not merely in scholarly treatises, but also in Hamlet, Julius Caesar, and Coriolanus “in the disguise of amusement”. Her conclusion is that “this Elizabethan philosophy is, in these two forms of it, not two philosophies [...], but one – one and the same!” [Ibid, p.187], so it is but one step further to assume that it was Bacon who authored the plays. The assumption is further corroborated by the plays’ secret code cracked by the speaker. The outward plot featuring standard anti-Stratfordian common places has, however, an inward counterpoint now and then breaking to the text’s surface. It is the outcry of a lonely and frustrated female soul on the brink of nervous breakdown which we are made to witness at the climactic moment of the play. It is to the author’s credit that he succeeds in interfacing these two plot lines within the limited textual space thus contributing to the desired tragicomic effect. It is achieved through Bacon’s frequent digressions, her increasingly incoherent narration, the hysterical notes sounding ever louder, unmotivated bursts of fury, and allusions to traumatic episodes of her private life – up to the shocking climax. Her fragmented and broken discourse provides an ironic contrast to the speaker’s desperate attempts to hold on to the rational as she feels she is losing control over her words: “Reason is the sole force which must motivate us in the quest for truth” [Ibid, p. 184]. So, what circumstances in Bacon’s life served as a point of departure for the playwright’s imagination?

Prior to discussing them, it is worthwhile to make a note of a paradox – one of the many in which Shakespeare’s history in America abounds. Scholars today have sufficient reasons to refer to the authorship issue as a largely American invention. Even making allowance for the exaggeration, it cannot be denied that the authorship of the player from Stratford was questioned by a galaxy of prominent intellectuals of the American Renaissance and after, including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mark Twain and Henry James.

It might seem surprising since Americans' republican mindset should, in all probability, rejoice in the democratic pattern where a dramatist from the lower strata attains artistic perfection and general recognition. In his effort to account for this paradox, Lawrence Levine links the emergence and success of numerous anti-Shakespearean publications in mid-19th c. to the change in the bard's status in American culture – from a popular dramatist he is transformed into the icon of high elitist culture. “The loftier Shakespeare's position became, the more untenable it was that a man of his low social standing and dubious education [...], could have risen to the heights of his drama” [4, p. 74]. Things are somewhat different in Bacon's case – she questioned Shakespeare's authorship from, so to speak, leftist perspective believing that his works were authored by a group of progressive-thinking English aristocrats led by Bacon who were trying to disseminate their Republican views by means of secret dramatic code to undermine the “despotism” of autocratic Elizabeth.

There is no need to dwell upon the passionate American's biography in detail since it was presented in her nephew Theodore Bacon's voluminous book (1888) and has become since, alongside with her ideas, the object for scholarly study. It will suffice here to indicate some of its key points. Delia Bacon, a personable and well-educated woman, as well as a brilliant teacher and lecturer highly esteemed among New Haven and Boston transcendentalists, arrived at the conclusion about her great namesake's authorship as early as 1845. It was based on her in-depth (today we would say “close”) reading of Shakespeare's texts. Soon after her “discovery” she found herself the center of a local clerical and social scandal – a young clergyman rumored to be engaged to her broke the relationship, apparently inflicting a deep trauma. In 1853 Bacon travels to England to look for material evidence to corroborate her hypothesis which, for her, has by that time become a dead certainty. To obtain it, she is planning no less than uncovering Shakespeare's tomb in Stratford-upon-Avon where, according to her belief, the group's secret documents are buried. Still, the action never takes place. In 1856 the Putnam magazine publishes Bacon's paper elaborating on her ideas but it is met with such opposition that no further articles follow. The next year sees the concurrent publication of her book *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded* in England and in the USA, in a small number of copies. It is exceedingly long, hardly readable and contains both subtle observations and daring suppositions that are ahead of their time, and chaotic, incoherent passages. By that moment her mental disease aggravated, she is hospitalized and shortly upon being brought back to the States, dies at an asylum, leaving a good deal of followers.

A brief and tempestuous life subordinated to one fiery passion attracts nowadays attention of feminist critics, as well as Shakespeare scholars studying the mechanisms of gestation and functioning of anti-Stratfordian theories In the

context of the play under consideration we are interested in one of its micro-plots, namely, the role played in Bacon's fate (including her post-mortal reputation) by her renowned contemporary, the writer Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864). In 1853–1857, that is, exactly when Bacon spent her time in England, Hawthorne served as American consul in Liverpool (the position he owed to his college friend Franklin Pierce, by that time the president elect of the USA). It was the Peabody sisters who drew his attention to Bacon's ideas and person – the younger, Sophia, was Hawthorne's wife, while the elder, Elizabeth, played a prominent part in transcendentalist movement. At their request, Hawthorne visited his compatriot in London (it was their only meeting), and despite his highly skeptical view of her theories, he could not but admit the power of her intellect, the personal charm of a middle-aged and unhealthy woman, as well as the passion with which she promoted her ideas. Not only did he subvent the publication of her book, but also undertook to write a preface to it. The writer shared his impressions of meeting Bacon in the essay *Recollections of a Gifted Woman*, eventually included into his notes on *England Our Old Home* (1863). Hawthorne has no doubts whatsoever that Bacon was «a monomaniac»: “these overmastering ideas about the authorship of Shakespeare's plays, and the deep political philosophy concealed beneath the surface of them, had completely thrown her off her balance” [5]. At the same time, the writer states, “they had wonderfully developed her intellect, and made her what she could not otherwise have become” [Ibid.]. According to Nina Baym, the subjectivity of Hawthorne's evaluation is due to his perception of Bacon as the last in the chain of his own unconventional heroines, such as Hester Prinn (*The Scarlet Letter*), Zenobia and Priscilla (*The Blithedale Romance*). “In this essay Hawthorne portrayed Bacon as a combination of his two major character types”, the researcher claims, – “the individual whose obsession determines the shape of the inner and outer life, and the antinomian heroine who defies social conventions” [6]. What matters is that Hawthorne's interpretation provided the prism through which Bacon's figure was largely perceived by generations to follow. It is no wonder, then, that Hawthorne as Armstrong's off-stage character is assigned an important function in the play.

To begin with, it is the facts of his biography that explain the choice of setting – hypothetically, Bacon, indeed, might have used the American consulate auditorium as a pulpit to preach her theory, since the office was headed by a sympathetic literary diplomat. Her Liverpool lecture, however, is totally a figment of the dramatist's imagination; it did not happen in reality, and this is the reason why the writer is elusive about the time of the action. Secondly, in the course of her monologue Bacon is constantly appealing to Hawthorne who is supposed to be sitting at the back of the room: she thanks him profusely for his support, introduces him to the public as a famous writer, alludes to their talks and more than once urges him to take a place next to her. It is not accidental that “an

empty chair” to the right of the speaker is one of the few elements of scenery specified in the stage directions [3, p. 183]. But all her appeals come to nothing: not only Hawthorne never joins Bacon on the podium, but he does not indicate his presence in any way. Eventually, her references to him get more and more personal. Drawing a parallel between the “true author of the plays” and Hawthorne, she refers to both as men “of both literary distinctions and governmental service”, men of connections to individuals of import”, and “perhaps, with a dissatisfied marriage, waiting to share his affection with...” [Ibid, p. 186]. Immediately, though, she interrupts herself – “or perhaps... this is reading slightly too much into the situation”. Her next slip of the tongue, in Freudian manner, evidences the way she persistently identifies Francis Bacon with Hawthorne; finally, no longer capable of keeping her emotions in check, she gives vent to them: “We can defy conventions, Mr. Hawthorne. Traditions do not matter to us; marriage doesn’t matter; forget about that New England cow of yours; I’ll wear your scarlet letter! ..OH DEAR GOD!” [Ibid, p. 188]. The growing tension reaches its climax in the physical action stipulated by the stage directions: “She screams, and knocks over the lectern. Papers fly everywhere. She flings her arms in a mad rage and continues to shriek through tears. She stops. Opens her eyes. Looks out at the audience” [Ibid]. So, in Armstrong’s rendition, it is Delia Bacon herself who dons the mask of Hawthorne’s tragic unhinged heroine rejected by the Pharisee patriarchal society. The play’s final lines are, appropriately, also addressed to the writer in her last desperate effort to be heard by the only “kindred spirit” she believes she has found in the wilderness of ignorance and hypocrisy: “I know... you couldn’t sit up here with me. I understand that now. But... that was you I saw in the back... It was... right? Mr. Hawthorne? Hello? Are you...? Mr. Hawthorne...?” [Ibid, p. 189]. No need to say that her appeal remains unanswered. “Hawthorne” as the construct of Bacon’s impaired mind, on whom she projects her intellectual endeavors interwoven with unfulfilled sexual desires, is a non-existing entity, a phantom.

To sum up, Armstrong’s dramatic monologue blends together the tragedy, albeit deeply subjective, of a prophet neglected and scorned by the contemporaries (this is, no doubt, how Bacon viewed herself) and the frustration of a dissatisfied woman victimized by male betrayal. In this paradigm Hawthorne is cast in an unenviable part of still another “man from the crowd” incapable of either grasping the intellectual revelations or of appreciating the gift of womanhood generously offered him and, therefore, cowardly betraying the giver. Even though this picture is in stark contrast with reality, by presenting it through a vibrant stage personality the author urges us to see the Bacon phenomenon not merely as a historical curiosity, still another “mad woman in the attic”, but as a dramatic figure at the intersection of cultural, gender, and power relations in the mid-19th c. USA going through crucial transformations.

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## ACQUIRING DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE WHILE LEARNING ENGLISH FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES

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В статье рассматриваются тонкости ведения межкультурного диалога на английском языке, а также способы проявления невербального дипломатического кода. Автором подчеркивается необходимость включения данного аспекта коммуникативного поведения и разработки адекватных этой задаче образовательных технологий в курсе овладения учебной дисциплиной «Английский язык для специальных целей».

Communication customs vary tremendously around the world. Good manners, polite behaviour and intercultural competence imply society, meeting, corporate, business, eating, bathroom to name but a few etiquettes. However, knowing how to behave properly and what to say uninsultingly and courteously maximise the person's opportunity to succeed.

Students need extensive practice to learn how to yield to social conventions, or how to choose the most essential structures and functions in the professional fields they are being trained for. Communicative functions are diverse but not endless. They could be presented in meaningful contexts including topical vocabulary and embracing: