From Dee's "Hieroglyphic Monad" to Andreae's "Chemical Wedding": Re-reading Frances Yates

Thomas Willard

INTRODUCTION

Despite our very different points of origin, György Szőnyi and I were both deeply influenced by the books of Frances Yates (1899–1981) during our student years. In Canada, where I did my doctoral studies, Yates was known as a "kook", even by one professor who admired her insights and confessed his passion for "kook books."[1] My thesis advisor, Northrop Frye, owned and annotated several of her books and felt a special fascination with *The Art of Memory.*[2] When he read her last book, *The Occult Philosophy in Elizabethan England,* he noted "the combination of sober documentation and the wildest guess work", all of which he found "very exhilarating."[3] In Hungary, where Yates's work was almost unknown at the time, professors of Renaissance topics were more interested to hear about it. Nevertheless, we both found early on that the "Yates thesis" required some explanation on our parts.[4]

The so-called thesis derived from Yates's 1964 book *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition,* which showed a steady progression from the ideas attributed to Hermes Trismegistus in late-classical Egypt and the translation of the Greek texts in Renaissance Florence through Bruno's "Hermetic reform" in England to scientists like Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton. Yates's celebrated ability to spin a story, which prompted the English

[1] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "kook" as slang for "a cranky, crazy, or eccentric person" with examples dating back to 1960; www.oed.com.

[2] Robert D. Denham, *Northrop Frye: Religious Visionary and Architect of the Spiritual World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 210; see the dozen index entries on 212. Frye's annotated copy Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) is available in the Frye archives at the library of Victoria College in the University of Toronto.

[3] *Northrop Frye's Late Notebooks, 1982–1990: Architecture of the Spiritual World,* ed. Robert D. Denham, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 1:51–2. Frye's annotated copy of Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in Elizabethan England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) is also available at the Victoria College Library.

[4] See Robert S. Westman, "Magical Reform and Astronomical Reform: The Yates Thesis Reconsidered," *Hermeticism and the Scientific Revolution: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar, March 9, 1974* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1977), 1–91.

philosopher Stephen Toulmin to liken her to the mystery novelist Agatha Christie,[5] tied her line of investigation together in what seemed to postmodernists a "grand narrative."[6] She was prepared to change her argument in future books. In one notable example, she went from characterizing the Rosicrucians as a "reactionary" underground movement in *Giordano Bruno,* and that because it came "after Hermes Trismegistus was dated", to identifying and declaring the Rosicrucian "Enlightenment" eight years later.[7] Supporters of Yates have opined that she would have made more nuanced pronouncements had she continued publishing under the aegis of the Warburg Institute, with its rigorous editorial review process, rather than taking her later books to presses concerned with the "trade" market. However, they recognize that she felt under growing pressure to publish the fruits of her lengthy research projects.

Yates was also given to partisan outbursts, of which one of the most famous took place at the Royal Society of London's headquarters, less than two miles south of the Warburg Institute. After two lecturers in the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Leeds delivered a paper on "Newton and the Pipes of Pan", in which they drew attention to Newton's use of the *prisca theologia* (ancient theology) in manuscript notes to his famous *Principia Mathematica* (1687), Yates rose from her seat in the audience and declared, "Newton was one of us!"[8] In saying this, without the conciliatory "also", she was recognizing the talk's sponsors as an implicit "them." Had she applied the same eirenic response to the scholarly turf wars of the time that she routinely brought to the religious and philosophical debates of earlier centuries – perhaps in the mode of John Maynard Keynes's famous Royal Society lecture on Newton as "the last of the magicians"[9] – she might have avoided the reckoning she later faced over her supposed thesis.[10]

---

5 In conversation at a conference in Tempe, Arizona, in May 1996.

6 György E. Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation through Powerful Signs,* SUNY Series in Western Esotericism (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 10.

7 Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition,* chap. 21; see esp. the section on "Reactionary Hermeticists; The Rosicruians," 407–16. The early review of this book by Allen G. Debus in *Isis* 53.3 (1964): 389–91, expressed the need for a more "tempered [...] presentation" of the role of Hermetic magic in the seventeenth century, especially with the role of Robert Fludd (390). Yates gave Fludd that attention in *The Theatre of the World* and *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment.*

8 J. E. McGuire and P. M. Rattansi, "Newton and the Pipes of Pan," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 21, no. 2 (December 1966): 106–43. I owe the anecdote to the late Professor Hugh Ormsby-Lennon.

9 John Maynard Keynes, "Newton the Man," Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *Essays in Biography* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1951), 311.

10 Professor Rattansi later responded to Westman's charges; see Piyo Rattansi, Review of *Hermeticism and the Scientific Revolution, Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19, no. 3 (July 1981): 392–96.

Beginning with *The Theatre of the World* (1969), Yates made John Dee a focus of her remaining books, all of them published by Routledge and Kegan Paul, which had released books of esoterica since the nineteenth century and became her regular publisher with the British issue of *Giordano Bruno* four years earlier. The books featuring Dee included *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972), *Astrea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (1975), *Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach* (1975), and *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (1979). They all treated Dee prominently, perhaps too prominently, as if he had a hand in everything that interested Yates. My focus will be on *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*,[11] which I encountered when I was beginning to write a PhD thesis on Thomas Vaughan, the author of small books on magic and alchemy. Yates dealt with him as the editor of the two "Rosicrucian manifestos" in English translation, reproduced in her book's appendix. She deftly placed the short, curious documents within the historical sweep of English literature from Shakespeare to Milton as well as in the great European developments of the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution. Dee was never far distant, beginning with the third chapter: "John Dee and the Rise of 'Christian Rosencreutz'."

In my contribution to Gyuri's birthday book, I will return to my early reading of *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* and my later attempts to negotiate between the information I gratefully absorbed there and in subsequent scholarship that Frances Yates helped to inspire.

THE OTHER ENLIGHTENMENT

I first read about *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* in a brief but admiring review by the British novelist Anthony Powell.[12] I examined a library copy as soon as I could find one, and made notes on pages relevant to my research. However, I only read the book as a whole when an inexpensive paperback edition was issued, including a new introduction by the author.[13] Like the first reading of a novel, my first journey through the book was what literary critics call a naïve reading. I was reading, as readers of a novel first do, to see

---

[11] Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1972). Parenthetical page numbers in the text of this article refer to this edition.

[12] Anthony Powell, "The Men of the Rosy Cross," *The [London] Daily Telegraph,* 21 December, 1972, 8.

[13] Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (St. Albans, Hertforshire: Granada Publishing / Paladin, 1975). Yates's "Introduction to [the] Paladin Edition," dated 1974, covers nine pages (11–9) and includes thoughts about the growing interest in "the esoteric" as part of a widespread "discontentment" with the modern world – pages not included in the Routledge Classics reissue of *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (2000).

what happens next, what new characters appear on the scene, and what they learn from the other characters. I was not reading all the footnotes, let alone inserting marginal notes of my own. The detective-story quality of the writing certainly helped to hold my attention as an overworked graduate student. Yates had the detective's knack of posing big questions as she moved her investigation forward. Here, for example, are some questions from the chapter on Dee and Christian Rosencreutz:

> 1. Who was this 'Christian Rose Cross' who first appears in these publications? Endless are the mystifications and legends [...]. But let us begin this chapter with the easier question, 'Who was Johann Valentin Andreae?' (30)
>
> 2. Surely the visit of the [Order of the] Garter embassy [from London] and its [accompanying stage] actors must have been an immensely exciting and stimulating event for the imaginative young student at Tübingen, Johann Valentin Andreae? (33)
>
> 3. Should one therefore look for an influence of John Dee in the Rosicrucian manifestos? (39)
>
> 4. Why should these influences [of Dee] have been published in this strange way through their dissemination in the Rosicrucian publications? (39)

Yates builds on her sleuthing questions with statements beginning, "We can make a very good guess [...] " (31), "Thus there can be no doubt [...] " (39), or "As a tentative answer to this question [...]? (40). Even a parting reference to a print reproduced in the chapter "affords a major line of evidence [...] , as will become apparent in the next chapter" (40).

How could one stop reading?

Yates took the unusual tack of starting her Rosicrucian tale, not in the German duchy of Baden-Württemberg, but in far-off London. It would end there too, with the Freemasonry of a later century. It made good sense to do so, for she was a Londoner and she wrote for a British audience first of all. Nevertheless, she had good reason to make the historical connection between England and Germany. Yates was a long-term fellow of the Warburg Institute in the University of London, based on a remarkable collection of books rescued from Nazi Germany by its founder Aby Warburg and his librarian Fritz Saxl.[14] After the Second World War, the institute took a pan-European approach to learning, promoting the cultural exchange of ideas.

---

[14] For a brief but excellent account of this collection, see Alberto Manguel, *The Library at Night* (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 2006), 193–211.

In 1613, when Yates's narrative begins, King James I of England (ruled 1603–1625) was forging a link with the protestant states in Germany by marrying his one living daughter, Elizabeth Stuart, to Frederick V of the Palatinate in the Rhineland of Germany. Frederick had recently succeeded his father as Elector and effective head of those states. The couple seemed well matched: they were the same age (a few months short of their seventeenth birthdays) and Protestants (she Anglican and he Calvinist, though with an interest in the mystical side of religion). James would later arrange the marriage of his one living son, Charles Stewart, to the Spanish Infanta, Henrietta Maria, in 1625. The marriage of Frederick and Elizabeth was a happy and (re)productive one. During the Bohemian Revolt against the appointment of a new Catholic King of Bohemia, in 1618 – a revolt led by Protestants fearing the loss of freedoms given them by the former Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II – Frederick was elected King of Bohemia and crowned in November 1619. However, the revolt set off the Thirty Years' War, during which Frederick was forced to flee Prague in November 1620. Henceforth the couple became known as the Winter King and Winter Queen of Bohemia, living mainly in the Hague during the rest of their lives. He died in 1632 and she in 1662. Their son Prince Rupert became a commander of the royalist army during the English Civil War in the 1640s, while their eldest son, Prince Carl Louis, regained his father's Electorate in 1648. Their daughter Sophia (b. 1630) became Electress of Hanover, Germany, by marriage. She was made heir to the Throne of England under an act of succession signed in 1701, and her son George (b. 1660), became King George I of England in 1714. With his reign began the rule that became known as the House of Windsor during World War I. Yates made only passing reference to Sophia, but could assume that British readers would know the long history of its ruling family, beginning with the royal marriage in 1613.

Yates discusses the "Bohemian tragedy" in the second chapter of *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment,* and moves from there to the chapter on Dee and Christian Rosencreutz. This introductory group is followed by chapters on the Rosicrucian manifestos, followed by the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz*. There are also chapters on the printers of the Rosicrucian documents and on the excitement these documents aroused in Germany and France. In the second half of the book, Yates goes from Rosicrucian traces in the work of Francis Bacon to the development of the Royal Society of London, which took Bacon as it guiding light. She then returns to to John Dee and his influence on "Rosicrucian alchemy" in the experiments of Isaac Newton. Between the chapters on Bacon and Newton, there are glimpses of Rosicrucian influences in what would become Italy, Germany, and the Czech Republic. Following the chapter on Newton is a discussion of

Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, and a final statement about the Rosicrucian Enlightenment.

In her preface to the volume, Yates specifies that she uses the terms "Rosicrucian" and "Enlightenment" in quite different ways: "The fact is I am using 'Rosicrucian' in a strictly limited historical sense, and I am not using 'Enlightenment' in the usual strictly limited historical sense" (xi). She has no interest in modern groups that claim Rosicrucian connections, such as the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC) in San José, California, with its newspaper ads promising members a "split second into eternity." Her interest is a specifical moment connecting James I and the Palatinate.[15] Within that moment, she is concerned with the current of philosophical ideas that she thinks of as magical or occult and, more specifically, Hermetic and "Christian Cabalistic." Meanwhile, she does not limit herself to the discussion of the Enlightenment as a philosophical and scientific movement, but includes the related concept of "illumination" as the word was often applied to seventeenth-century Rosicrucians. Yates uses the word "illuminati" in the general sense of people who claim special knowledge,[16] applying it both to the Rosicrucians "as a fraternity of illuminati" (75) and to precursors like Paracelsus (35). Moreover, she makes the connection of illumination and enlightenment in the book's closing paragraphs. Especially in the preface to the paperback edition, when *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* was already in its eleventh printing, she notes with pleasure that the former trend to remove any reference to the Hermetic and the esoteric from publications in the history of science has been reversed. "Today", she asserts, "it is considered less desirable to separate the genuinely scientific elements in the minds of thinkers of the past from the context of their outlook as a whole, from one part of which the scientific interest developed."[17]

When I first read *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, I shook my head at the suggestions, thinking, "The lady doth suggest too much. Why does she not assert what she has intuited?" I assumed that Dee and Andreae had both asserted their intuitions. In the naiveté of my first reading, I failed to notice Yeats's insistent position:

---

[15] Yates never suggests that Dee had a personal contact with the group, let alone that he was a member. See the discussion and dismissal of claims that Dee brought Rosicrucian to England in Richard Deacon, *John Dee; Scientist, Geographer, Astrologer and Secret Agent to Elizabeth I* (London: Frederick Muller, 1968), 63–8.

[16] *Oxford English Dictionary,* "illuminati." The *OED*'s examples of the word's general usage (sense C) all come from the nineteenth century.

[17] Yates, "Preface to [the] Paladin Edition," *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1974), 11.

> The present book – and I wish to emphasize this strongly – is basically a *historical* study. It is concerned with the 'Rosicrucian' phase of thought, culture, and religion, but its main attempt is directed towards indicating the *historical* channels through which the phase was distributed. These channels have been choked up and obscured through the disappearance out of history of a most important phase of history. (xiii).

The phase in question is the early seventeenth century, which, as Yates had come to realize, saw a flowering of the Hermetic tradition she had described in her book on Bruno, rather than a falling off after the historical dating of Greek Hermetic texts by the great scholar Isaac Casaubon – a dating published ironically in the same year as the first Rosicrucian manifesto. In fact, the Hermetic tradition seemed to culminate in the figure of "the late Renaissance magus who combined 'Magia, Cabala, and Alchymia' to achieve a world-view in which advancing science was strangely mingled with angelology" (xii).

For me, as a student preparing to write about the Welsh poet Henry Vaughan and his twin brother Thomas, the combination of magic, Christian cabala, and alchemy was more important at the time than the Rosicrucian label. Only as studies of Rosicrucianism surged in the next half-century did I realize how profoundly Rosicrucian the Vaughans' writing was, even if they had no contact with any of the mysterious brethren.[18] It was precisely the historical emphasis that required Yates to rely on suggestion rather than assertion to develop a line of research. Her Warburg colleague D.P. (Pick) Walker emphasized the "suggestive" side of Yates's research in one of the most penetrating early reviews of the book:

> Dr Yates herself points out many areas in this field that call for further research, and puts forth important hypotheses for other scholars to verify or refute. It is on this suggestive, seminal side that I want to concentrate [...]. For it is clear from her preface that she realizes, with proper humility, that this book is only a first step [...] and that she correctly considers, with proper pride, that it is a very important step in the right direction.[19]

I was hardly unique in my oversight about Yates's attempt to enrich the historical understanding of philosophic and religious trends in the early seventeenth century. By the mid-1970s, the historian of science Robert Westman was treating Yates's combined suggestions as a single "thesis" and finding that it did not really apply to Copernicus and sixteenth-century astronomy, much less to the scientific revolution as a whole.[20] Meanwhile,

---

[18] I have addressed the thematic association in a recent book: Thomas Willard, *Thomas Vaughan and the Rosicrucian Revival in Britain, 1648–1666* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2022).

[19] D. P. Walker, "The Elusive Rosicrucians," *History of Science* 11, no. 4 (December 1973): 306–10.

[20] Westman, "Magical Reform and Astronomical Reform: The Yates Thesis Reconsidered," 287–316.

the literary critic Brian Vickers took Yates to task for treating Andreae's *Chemical Wedding* as a Rosicrucian "manifesto", in her chapter on the "Rosicrucian Manifestos", especially in light of Andreae's remark that the book was a *ludibrium* or joke and of the earlier efforts by John Warwick Montgomery to separate Andreae from the unknown authors of the earlier manifestos (41–58).[21] More recently and persuasively, Wouter Hanegraaff has treated the supposed thesis as a "paradigm."[22] All three treatments focus on the earlier *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition;* however, their conclusions apply to Yates's later work as well.

Hannegraaff's impression that Yates relies too heavily on a grand narrative of "secular progress", continuing the trend of much nineteenth-century histories, characterizes much of the current response to her work. To some extent, the response is to publishers and their publicists, who like books with straightforward developments. Similar criticism of a grand narrative has been levelled against other books of the early 1970s, including *The Great Instauration* by Charles Webster, the title of which makes a connection between Francis Bacon and members of the Royal Society of London, which considered him their patron saint.[23] If anything at all, Webster's study is focused on Samuel Hartlib and his papers at the University of Sheffield Library. Webster tried to break the false impression about this book in a subsequent series of lectures published as *From Paracelsus to Newton.* He remarked there that the "polarization of attitudes" was already present in medieval treatments of *magia naturalis* or natural magic. He proposed a general

---

[21] Brian Vickers, "Frances Yates and the Writing of History," *The Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 2 (June 1979): 289–91. The position developed in John Warwick Montgomery, *Cross and Crucible: Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654), Phoenix of the Theologians,* 2 vols. (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1973) has not held up well. Current scholarship suggests that Andreae had a hand in the earlier manifestos and wrote the *Chemical Wedding* as a corrective. See Carlos Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica: Die Rosenkreuzer im Spiegel der zwischen 1610 und 1660 entstandenen Handschrift und Drucke (*Amsterdam: Biblioteca Philosophica Hermetica, 1995), 50–3.

[22] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Beyond the Yates Paradigm: The Study of Western Esotericism between Counterculture and New Complexity," *Aries* 1, no. 1 (2001): 13–8. The introduction of the term "paradigm" was especially useful in that it recalled Thomas Kuhn's notion of the "paradigm shift" in *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1964). As I have noted, Kuhn's paradigm shift meant change both in the model used for scientific research but in subjective elements of language and thought associated with the change. See Thomas Willard, "Goddess and Guide or Treasury and Machine? Seventeenth-Century Debate about the Role of Nature," in Albrecht Classen, ed., *Paradigm Shifts During the Global Middle Ages and the Renaissance,* Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Turnhout, BE: Brepols, 2019), 355–56.

[23] Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine, and Reform, 1626–1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975).

scholarly recognition of the "division between the exoteric and esoteric expressions" of magical ideas in order to overcome two developments in the historiography of early modern science: "exaggerating the internal coherence of hermeticism", on the one hand, and "overdrawing the significance of such artificially propagated exotica as Rosicrucianism", on the other. The "Rosicrucianism" here is presumably secret knowledge, the *bête noire* of rational scientists calling for the free exchange of information. For Webster added that both the exoteric and the esoteric sides in seventeenth-century science "contributed towards heightening expectations of science", while they "gave greater reality toward the ideal of cultural reality."[24]

Writing at the start of our present century, Hanegraaff confirmed Yates's hope and Walker's impression that her studies of writers in the Hermetic tradition would influence future studies. For the study of Dee, which guided much of her writing after the books on Bruno and the art of memory, a definite mark of confirmation occurred with the 2006 volume *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in English Renaissance Thought,* a 366-page collection of essays by fifteen scholars who had written books and essays on Dee and his world.[25] The book's fourth part (of six) offered essays on "John Dee's Conversations with Angels", of which the first was György Szőnyi and provided contexts for Dee's angelology.[26] Here Dr. Szőnyi went over ground covered in his 2004 book on Dee, but also anticipated further studies that he would make of the Enochian language in which Dee learned to communicate with angels. For good reason, Yates's name is all over this volume, from the editor's introduction to essays on Dee's philosophy, angelic conversations, and connection with Edward Kelly.

There remains the question of Dee's influence on Andreae, to which I now turn.

TWO LIBRARIES, IN ENGLAND AND ON A HIGHER PLANE

I first wrote on Dee and Andreae for a collection of essays in 2010.[27] In that essay, I focused on Andreae's use of the Latin word *ludibrium* as discussed by both Yates in *The Rosi-*

---

[24] Charles Webster, *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science,* Eddington Memorial Lectures (Cambridge, London / New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 60.

[25] Stephen Clucas, ed., *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in English Renaissance Thought,* International Archives of the History of Ideas 193 (Dordrecht, NL: Springer, 2006).

[26] György E. Szőnyi, "Paracelsus, Scrying, and the *Lingua Adamica:* Contexts for John Dee's Angel Magic," in Clucas, *John Dee,* 207–30.

[27] Thomas Willard, "Andreae's *Ludibrium:* Menippean Satire in the *Chymische Hochzeit,*" in Albrecht Classen, ed., *Laughter in the Middle Age and Early Modern Times* (Berlin / Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 767–89.

crucian Enlightenment and Brian Vickers in his highly critical essay on her "writing of history." I noted, with Yates, that Andreae used the word when he acknowledged his authorship of *The Chemical Wedding*. I noted, with Yates, that he was frankly embarrassed by the success of that work. Andreae referred to it as a *ludibrium* when writing in Latin and as a *Spott* when writing in German. Both words are equivalent to English "jest" or "sport"; so is the obsolete English cognate "ludibrious", an adjective that the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as meaning "apt to be the subject of jest or mockery."[28] I noted further that Yates referred to the *Wedding* as a "comic fiction" and that she remarked on Andreae's fascination with the performances of English actors who toured in Germany and who probably relied on a good deal of improvised physical comedy to overcome the language barrier (60). In the matter of genre raised by Vickers, I noted that the compound noun *Spottdichten* means "satire." Andreae was deeply influenced by the prose satires of Erasmus, of which the most famous is "The Praise of Folly" (*Moriae Encomium,* 1511). This satire was in the Menippean mode associated with the Greek satirist Lucian. Moreover, Andreae released a book of prose satires under the title *Menippus* in 1617, shortly after the *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz, Anno 1459*.[29]

When I read an early version of my paper on Andreae's *ludibrium* at a conference on laughter in pre-modern times, a member asked if I thought Yates was right or wrong about *The Chemical Wedding*. The member was a former student of Yates, and I kept my answer brief, saying that she was fundamentally right and that I thought her reading of the *Wedding* as comic fiction could be pressed further with the identification of its *ludbrium* as satire. I noted that the first manifesto was published in a volume with a long title beginning, "A General Reformation of the Whole Wide World" and began thus because it was preceded by the translation of an Italian satire pointing out the impossibility of such reform.[30] I also noted that Christian Rosencreutz is first named in the *Wedding,* having been called C.R. or C.R.C. in the earlier manifestos, and that he was a literary creation. In the *Wedding,* where he is the narrator of his own story, he laments his own *Unverstand* (lack of understanding) and *Unwürdigkeit* (unworthiness). Moreover, while there are a good many references to laughter in the *Wedding,* the laughter is directed at Christian himself in all instances but one, and there he joins the other remaining guests at the wedding. On their last evening, they are about to be made Knights of the

---

28 Willard, "Andreae's *Ludibrium,*" 776.

29 Johann Valentin, *Menippus Sive Dialogorum Satyricorum Centuria* (Cosmopolis [Strasburg; Zetaner heirs?], 1618; [Johann Valentin Andreae], *Chymische Hochzeit: Christiani Rosencreutz, 1459* (Strassburg: Lazarus Zetzner, 1616).

30 *Allgemeine und General Reformation der ganzen weiten Welt* (Kassel: Wilhelm Wessel, 1614).

Golden Stone, and a castle page reads five articles to which members must subscribe. When he comes to the last – "That you shall not be willing to live longer than God will have you" – Christian reports: "we could not choose but laugh sufficiently." He speculates that the last item may have been added "only for a conceit."[31] This "conceit", or jest or farce (German *Posse*), suggests the Order is unlike any esoteric group promising elixirs of life. The new initiates have been given power over sickness, recalling power that Jesus gave to his disciples (Matthew 10:1), as well as over poverty and ignorance. After agreeing to the statutes, which recall those of the first Rosicrucian manifesto, each new member chooses a motto and signs the register of members of the Order. Christian chooses a very Socratic motto, "The height of knowledge is to know nothing." This is a symbol of his humility. As narrator, Christian asks readers "not to interpret the following Narration to any vain glory or pride of my own" and adds that he would have concealed his honors "if there had not been a special necessity in it."[32]

In a second paper on *The Chemical Wedding,* presented at a conference Gyuri organized at the University of Szeged in 2011, I considered the *Wedding* within another literary genre: the medieval dream-vision, of which Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* and Langland's *Vision of Piers Plowman* are English examples and Dante's *Commedia* may well be the supreme example. These are works in which the poet-narrator falls asleep and dreams something far greater than an ordinary dream: a vision within which the dreamer may go though a week of dreams within the narrative. This reading was meant to supplement my reading of the *Wedding* as a satire, one which made fun of wedding guests who had inflated opinions of their worthiness and understanding. It also attempted to address the problem of the *Wedding*'s ending. For the text ends abruptly with a marginal note by the editor who claims to have brought Christian's manuscript to the press. The note states that, because Christian had been sentenced to remain at the royal palace, he decided to leave under the cover of darkness and return home.[33]

It seemed an impossible journey by night, for it covered a choice of difficult, dangerous paths that had taken a full day's travel, on the story's second day. Yet Christian hoped to be back at his humble cottage in time for the Easter service. (In my reading, the *Wedding* began on the night of Palm Sunday and concluded during the Easter vigil with the alchemical work performed on the afternoon of Good Friday.) On the first night and most of the other nights since, Christian had dreamed about what lay ahead for him.

---

[31] Christian Rosencreutz, *The Hermetick Romance: Or The Chymical Wedding,* trans. E. Foxcroft (London: A. Sowle, 1690), 220.

[32] Ibid., 212.

[33] Ibid., 226.

Now, on the seventh night, it seemed that he could have wakened from a dream-vision in which he had a series of shorter dreams.[34] It was here that I introduced the figure of John Dee, whose "hieroglyphic monad" symbol appeared on the invitation to the royal wedding and gave Christian confidence that the invitation came from a good source. I did not discuss further influence of Dee in the second essay, or in a third written the next year."[35] However, it seems appropriate in an essay for Gyuri to give some further reasons that Dee may have served as a magus figure for the author of *The Chemical Wedding*. To this end, I shall discuss three aspects of John Dee's reputation in his own time: Dee as mathematician and astronomer/astrologer, Dee as book collector and scholar, and Dee as aspiring alchemist.

Although Dee was skilled in languages and became the under professor of Greek at Cambridge University when he was still a teenager, he regarded himself as a mathematician first of all, including astronomy/astrology and cartography/navigation as disciplines that depended on good mathematics. Similarly, Andreae was far more skilled in mathematics than is commonly recognized. He completed a mathematical degree at the same time as his theological degree, and he published a book of mathematical and geometrical problems.[36] Moreover, just as Dee refined instruments for use by English navigators, Andreae constructed an elaborate and beautiful clock-calendar combination and a cipher device, both of which have been on display in German museums.[37] On the third day of Andreae's *Wedding,* Christian takes great interest in a cleverly made terrestrial globe of thirty feet in diameter. The globe is overseen by one Atlas, who is said to be the royal astronomer. At the castle Christian sees "all kind of Art-Shops." He notes that "their chambers are built in *semi-circle,* that so they might have before their Eyes the costly Clockwork which was erected upon a fair Turret in the Center, and regulate themselves according to the course of the *Planets,* which were to be seen on it in a glorious manner."[38]

Rather like his literary precursor Erasmus, Dee spent all his extra money on books and manuscripts, amassing what was said to be the largest library in England. Andreae's Christian wants especially to see the castle library once he is admitted to the company of of-

---

[34] Thomas Willard, "Dreams and Symbols in *The Chemical Wedding,*" in Peter J. Forshaw, ed., *Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017), 130–51, esp. 142–47.

[35] Thomas Willard, "The Strange Journey of Christian Rosencreutz," in Albrecht Classen, ed., *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times* (Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), 667–97.

[36] Johannes Valentin Andreae, *Collectaneorum Mathematicorum Decades 11* (Tübingen: J. A. Celius, 1614).

[37] Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica,* 54–5.

[38] Rosencreutz, *The Hermetick Romance,* 78.

ficial guests at the royal wedding. He is delighted to see a library "as it was before the Reformation." He notes with amazement:

> At the entry of this room stands a *great* Book, the like of which I never saw, in which all the Figures, Rooms, Portals; also all the Writings, Riddles and the like, to be seen in the whole Castle, are delineated. Now although we made some promise concerning *this* also, yet at present I must contain my self, and first learn to know the World better.[39]

However, he is not allowed to browse, for his guide is reminded that the king does not allow the collection to be seen by any living man. This suggests the collection is something like the Akashic Records of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy.

Finally, just as Dee's symbol of the Hieroglyphic Monad appears on the wedding invitation that Christian receives on the first day, the teachings about alchemy in Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* dominate the royal wedding, a marriage of heaven and earth completed in a seven-story alchemical tower on the sixth day. Behind Dee's Monad is the recognition that the seven planets of the pre-Copernican world, including the Sun and Moon as well as the five planets visible to the naked eye, correspond to the seven metals on which the alchemist must perform the *opus magnus* or great work. Dee described the true alchemy as a "lower astronomy" *(astronomia inferioris)* to be completed on seven levels (see Fig. 1).[40] He also realized that knowledge of the highest, supercelestial realm of angels, archangels, and God was needed, and he thus anticipated Yates's Alchymia, Magia, and Cabala. In the *Wedding,* Christian foresees the alchemical operation as he observes the stars on the night before the alchemical procedure, when he does not dream. He alone of all the wedding guests who are later initiated into the Order of the Golden Fleece (also the Golden Stone) understands how the apparently miraculous creation of the new king and queen is made possible and performed in the alchemical tower.

The alchemy performed there is of course allegorical; however, we may take a hint from Dee's statement that the true mercury of the philosophers is the "celebrated microcosm and Adam" *(Celeberimus Microcosmos & Adam).*[41] Based on this statement, we might guess that the king regenerated alchemically in the tower is the archetypal man, and his queen the archetypal woman. Andreae's *Chemical Wedding* has other elements

---

[39] Ibid., 76–7.

[40] John Dee, *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564; Frankfurt: Johann Welcher and Peter Fischer, 1591), 62–6; Theorem 18. Dee affirms here, "I have learned that heavenly astronomy is the parent and teacher of the lower world" *(Caelestem Astronomiam, Inferioris esse puasi Parentem & Magistram).*

[41] Dee, *Monas Hieroglyoguca,* 49; Theorem 13. The Wellcome Library copy has Dee's Monas figure penciled in the margin beside the word "Adam".


HIEROGLYPHICA. 61

viciſſim nunc ILLARVM VERBALEM VIM, CVM IPSA CRVCE, CONFEREMVS, quod inde Oriatur LVX: VERBVM, Finale & Magiſtrale (ex illa TERNARII, in Vnitate Verbi, Conſpiratione & conſenſu) cũ ſumma Admiratione, Intelligemus.

THEOR. XVIII.

EX duodecimo & decimotertio Theorematibus noſtris colligi poteſt, Cæleſtem Aſtronomiam, INFERIORIS eſſe quaſi Parentem & Magiſtram. Subleuatis ergo in Cælum oculis Cabaliſticis (ex Prędictorum Myſteriorum Theorica Illuminatis) talem ad amuſſim noſtrę MONADIS, conſpiciemus ANATOMIAM: In NATVRÆ LVMINE, VITAQVE ſeſe ſic nobis ſemper o-

Fig. 1 Alchemy as the lower astronomy.
From John Dee, *Monas Hieroglyphica*
(1564; Frankfurt: Johann Wenzel and Peter Fischer, 1691).

that confirm the intuitions Yates would later have. For example, the magic number seven in the *Wedding*'s seven days and seven-story tower appears also in a drama performed for the wedding party and guests on the fourth day. At the center of the story, at its farthest remove from the wedding invitation and the return to Christian's humble cottage, there is a play in seven acts. In the play, the king's son rescues his future bride from a tyrannic "Moor." Thus, we have the symbolic alchemical marriage of the *mulier candida* (white woman) to a purified *vir rebis* (red man). Similarly, Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* performed at the wedding of Frederick V and Elizabeth Stewart and with which *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* began, Miranda is betrothed to Prince Ferdinand after her attempted rape by Caliban, the "savage and deformed slave."

But here one must fantasize, and the American novelist John Crowley has done just this in his cycle of esoteric novels published under the collective title *Aegypt*: *The Solitudes* (1987), *Love and Sleep* (1994), *Daemonomania* (2000), and *Endless Things* (2007). A distinguished reviewer of the tetralogy notes: "Crowley himself calls it a 'fantasia' on themes of Frances A. Yates and other scholars of the Renaissance occult."[42] Dee's presence and influence are evident throughout the cycle. The first novel opens with an angel seen in Dee's scrying glass, the Elizabethan equivalent of a crystal ball; the last one introduces Andrae, who happens to

[42] Michael Dirda, "A Secret History of the World," *The Washington Post,* April 19, 1987, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/1987/04/19/a-secret-history-of-the-world/ba4ececf-198e-47d6-8778-c8739bcc4a46/. Also see Dirda, "Souls Hungering after Meaning," *The American Scholar* December 1, 2007, https://theamericanscholar.org/souls-hungering-after-mea ning.

be in Heidelberg when the entourage of Ferdinand V and his new wife Elizabeth enters the city. The truth of Crowley's fiction is a literary truth of the sort that one grasps after reading a fine literary work to its completion and can reflect on it as a whole. Specifically, the fictional truth is what James Joyce, echoing Aquinas, called the art work's wholeness, harmony, and radiance.[43] Joyce's autobiographical protagonist prefers to speak of beauty, but we know from Keats and indeed from Plato that beauty and truth are closely intertwined. Dee sometimes had to apologize for maps that looked too geometrical to be literally exact, especially when they illustrated a great *desideratum* such as the existence of a Northwest Passage to China.[44] But he spent his life believing, like the polymathic magus he aspired to be, that the physical world lay under the influence of the celestial and supercelestial worlds. I suspect it was this combination of philosophy and spirituality that especially appealed to Dee's great advocate at the Warburg Institute. [45]

[43] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914; Aukland, NZ: Floating Press, 2010), 32, chap. 5.

[44] Amir R. Alexander, *Geometrical Landscapes: The Voyages of Discovery and the Transformation of Mathematical Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 70–8.

[45] Yates's first biographer has made it clear that she was a lifelong sceptic, after abandoning the Catholicism of her parents, but appreciated the combination of philosophy and spirituality that she found in books by Dee and other writers in the Rosicrucian tradition. See Marjorie G. Jones, *Frances Yates and the Hermetic Tradition* (Lake Worth, FL: Ibis Press, 2008).