

## Introduction

**L**ET'S JUST GET THIS OUT of the way before we start: Vincent Bridges believed he had many of the memories of Sir Edward Kelley. In the last few years of his life, he became obsessed with understanding Kelley<sup>1</sup>'s life and clearing his name. If you start from this framework, all of his actions of the last few years of his life make sense. If you start anywhere else, they don't.

In 2009 at age 56, Vincent went to Prague for the first time (or the first time this life, as he would often say). He'd been invited to participate in a conference hosted by Roger Green. The presentation he and Dan Winter gave on John Dee's angelic language is still widely available on the Internet, and well worth listening to.

But it's the story behind that visit that led to this book, and at least two others that remain unpublished. Vincent returned a changed person. Within a year, he'd returned to Prague, and planned to stay. He spent the rest of his life giving half-explanations to those who wondered why.

Yes, he found love. Yes, he also loved Prague. Yes, he felt Bohemia had played a special role in what he liked to call the Hermetic Revolution. But those all, for better or worse, came second to his obsession with understanding and vindicating Sir

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<sup>1</sup> In John Dee's diary, the name is given as "Kelly." Vincent and many other writers use "Kelley." For consistency, we've changed the name to "Kelley" throughout except where quoting the work of others.

Edward Kelley. If you don't believe they could come in second, then you weren't around him the last five years of his life, a time where he made breakthrough after breakthrough in his understandings about the past, as his circle of friends often simply watched and wondered what was going on. Sometimes, we watched and nursed our wounds; other times, we watched and were amazed.

The night of July 24, 2014, I remember getting an excited call from my husband Alan. I was abroad, teaching a graduate English course in Wuhan, China, and Alan was at home in Wisconsin, and had just gotten off the (Skype) phone with Vincent in Prague. They had talked for nearly two hours. As he'd often done before, Vincent urged Alan to come over and bring his harp (Alan often played for Vincent's workshops and other events, and knew he might have more venues in Prague than in the small town where we live). But that wasn't the main reason why Vincent wanted him to move over.

"I'm telling you, man, moving to Prague will lengthen your life," he'd said. Vincent's health had been poor, but always improved when he left the U.S. And he was excited about his one-act play, "The Donkey in the Cradle," that was going to be performed the very next day at Sir Edward Kelley's legendary Prague home and the play's namesake.<sup>2</sup> Alan had rarely talked to Vincent when he was in such an up-beat mood.

But by the next morning, Vincent was dead. The Facebook event page for the play announced that it had been canceled "due to tragic circumstances."

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, among academic historians, whether or not Edward Kelley lived at the Donkey in the Cradle is something many assume, but one which writers from Deborah Harkness to Rafal Prinke point out can't be proven. Yet for literally generations in what is now the Czech Republic, writers have placed him there. Because of this, we have included an appendix giving the history of that location.

In the months before Vincent died, he'd told both friends and family that he'd finally finished a book that he'd worked on for the previous four years, concerning William Shakespeare's "lost years" in Prague and his association with Edward Kelley and John Dee. Maybe that book and his one-act play will see the light of day in the next year or so. Editing them involves a few other issues, not the least of which was that he borrowed liberally from this book (as I'll explain below) and another he was working on, as well as from our shared work.

I suppose this is as good a time as any to state that I give Vincent permission to use any of my writing and research on John Dee, Edward Kelley, or the times in which they lived. Most of what I've written about Renaissance Hermeticism would never have been possible without Vincent.

Many have wondered what happened to that book on Shakespeare Vincent was writing, *Young Will: Shakespeare's Lost Years in Prague*. Does it actually exist?

Yes, the manuscript exists, though substantial editing problems remain. Fortunately, Vincent left copies of most of his post-2009 works with different friends: for example, this entire book on Sir Edward Kelley he sent to me by e-mail in October 2011. After a fair amount of discussion, Eliska and I decided that it would make the most sense to publish *An Alchemical Enigma* first, and *Young Will* later on, perhaps with some of the fragments of his fiction and playwriting on the same topic.

Both Eliska and I would like to thank his mother, Ruth Bridges, for permission to publish these works. In fact, we can't thank her enough or too often. We also thank Alan Moore as well as Vincent's former editor Jeffrey Kupperman for providing graphics for the text of the book, and April Lionhart for the frontispiece artwork.

Although Vincent had at one time avoided the subject of Edward Kelley, writing about the Renaissance in England was old hat to him, as was writing specifically about Shakespeare. He'd been the Public Relations director for the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary season in 1986; most of the articles in the newsletters put out that season were written by him, though usually without by-lines. (As PR Director, those kinds of articles fall under "work for hire" laws.) Even before that, in the 1970s, he'd written a pseudonymous novel, *The Orpheus Book*, right after high school. The plot was half love-story and half a tale of intrigue featuring John Dee's "crystal magic" from the perspective of the "English Orpheus," John Dowland. In some sense, returning to writing about Elizabethan England and RudolFINE Prague brought Vincent full-circle to the topics that most interested him as a younger man.

I met Vincent under unusual circumstances in 2001 then soon after visited him as a client. His writing fascinated me and I offered to help edit various projects. It was a not terribly subtle way to trade research and copyediting help for an almost total immersion into the western mystery tradition. Vincent was full of energy then, just starting a revision of *A Monument to the End of Time* (or *AMET* as he liked to call it), a work he co-authored with Jay Weidner. For the next several months, I provided research help and read over revised chapters.

During that time, I also came across his earlier work on John Dee and suggested we do a book together. My hand pulls Joy Hancox's *The Byrom Manuscripts* and *Kingdom for a Stage* off the bookshelf, and inside I find pages of scrawls and underlining: the sacred geometry drawings in the latter work were what launched the first project Vincent and I worked on together.

Hancox's books attempted to connect Renaissance theater construction to John Dee and some sort of initiatory society

around him by building heavily upon two discoveries: first, the Byrom manuscripts, 516 sacred geometry drawings perhaps left with the family of John Dee's son Arthur's family-by-marriage in Manchester; and second, the connection of some of those manuscripts to the remains of the Elizabethan Rose and Globe Theatres unearthed in Southwark in the late 1980s. Hancox and other writers such as James Egan thought that four of the drawings represented plans for the original 1599 Globe playhouse. Some of the other drawings are for churches; still others present architectural drawings of what look like alchemical vessels. Some either appear to be by (or associated with) John Dee.

We started writing about Dee and Elizabethan theater in 2003; that project morphed into one titled *Shakespeare, John Dee and the Hermetic Revolution: Alchemy and Espionage in the Magical Theater of Elizabethan England* then slowly turned into short articles rather than a book. Years passed. Our project morphed again, into one much more focused on Sir Edward Kelley and Shakespeare. Vincent posited a series of intrigues surrounding the “Dark Lady” of Shakespeare's sonnets. As with most of our projects, the creative insights were usually Vincent's; the footnotes and corrections were usually mine. We sometimes worked at cross-purposes. Almost always, I was the one who balked.

Yet each of us knew no one else who was as interested in the particular twists and turns of these stories as each other, and we remained locked in a strange kind of karmic collaboration for many years. Our differences made co-authoring anything difficult and sometimes impossible, but our shared interests (and having another person to bounce ideas off of) led each of us to a flurry of individual articles. In 2008, when I argued that the “Francis Garland” of John Dee's diary could refer via a “cover name” to Will Shaksper, or as he is better known, William

Shakespeare, I cited Vincent as the one who had the original idea. This book's appendix, "A Francis Garland Spyline," originally appeared in expanded format with that article. When Vincent suggested that the "G.S., Gent." to whom Edward Kelley dedicated his 1589 poem "Concerning the Philosopher's Stone" was also "Gulielmus Shaksper," or William Shakespeare, I devoted months of energy trying to disprove him. Instead, I wound up writing an analysis of the poem that agreed with his insight. That is also included here as an appendix, as it was in Vincent's 2011 draft of this book.

How did Vincent come up with this Francis Garland hypothesis (one which, incidentally, is impossible to disprove)? I think I'll save that tale for *Young Will*, if and when we finish editing that work. The same with the story of Edward Kelley's ghost, which by some reports haunted play rehearsals and demanded changes in the script of "The Donkey in the Cradle." Kelley's ghost, it seems, was still angry at the Dark Lady and did not like her somewhat sympathetic treatment in his play. You could not make up better drama than that surrounding Vincent's actual life after 2009. Unfortunately, he seemed to be the only one who suspected it might be heading to a tragic end.

In any case, writing about John Dee, Edward Kelley, and William Shakespeare was a project we'd started together, but as co-authors we parted ways when he returned from his first visit to the Czech Republic in 2009. (More simply put, he informed me that it was his way or the highway, and the highway it became.) What he planned as a work of non-fiction turned into a novel, then a screenplay, then a treatment for a miniseries. Meanwhile I plotted out my own miniseries, a retaliation of sorts after he booted me from the project. Yet on trips home to North Carolina, Vincent still entertained us by reading aloud from the early parts of these works.

During his creative burst in Prague, Vincent also wrote drafts of a third short book, about the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's sonnets. He composed sonnets of his own, re-analyzed those of Shakespeare, stumbled into those of Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa, even drafted the outlines of a surrealist novel, *Karma Karnevale*, "written" by someone called Viktor Bardo. He folded parts of the Dark Lady book into his Shakespeare book, which turned from fiction back into non-fiction, then pulled the third chapter from this book, expanded it, and dropped it into *Young Will* as well. He fictionalized parts of his south of France geomancy tours and sent me a copy of an incident from one of the tours written up as a short story. (I was then fiction editor of a small literary journal, *The Driftless Review*.) Finally, in May 2014, he sent me a draft of his play, "The Donkey in the Cradle." Over and over, Vincent returned to the connections between Edward Kelley, Francis Garland, and what he called the Hermetic Revolution.

What did he mean by "Hermetic Revolution"? If one is familiar with what Frances Yates called the "Rosicrucian Enlightenment," it is looking at the esotericism of that time as the traces of a revolution that failed. In the introduction to *The Ophanic Revelation*, we said it referred to an era in British and European history that ran "from the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 until the beginning of the Thirty Years War at the Battle of White Mountain in Bohemia in 1620." Both the reactionary Counter-Reformation in Europe and Puritan regicide in England, and some of its most hopeful religious "heresies," such as the Family of Love, are part of what is reacted against: along with a wide swath of other pursuits ranging from alchemy to theater. At the center of this Hermetic Revolution, like to Rosicrucian enlightenment posited by Yates, stands the work of Dr. John Dee, particularly the *Monas Hieroglyphica*.

Not stated in the definition I just gave you was Vincent's particular conviction that, had Edward Kelley been listened to and his advice followed, the Hermetic Revolution rather than either the counter-reformation in Bohemia or Puritanism in England might have triumphed. When he first mentioned this, I did not think he was serious. Vincent was not amused at my lack of receptivity. Nor was his own *karnevale* slowing down: soon he had moved into the Donkey in the Cradle, one of the legendary homes of Sir Edward Kelley in Prague.

March 8, 2011, Vincent made a public post to his Fifth Way Mystery School discussion group about how he wound up living there. Here's an excerpt:

“Prague is Disneyland for drunks,” Zach announces, very certain of his wisdom.

Zach is a 30-something expat from Michigan who has been in Prague for four years. He's a musician, day job as a drug rep, and we are sitting in the hospoda at the top of Jansky vrsek<sup>3</sup> with his girlfriend, Viola, a young red headed Romanian girl who looks much like a fox. The pub is very faux medieval, armor in the shadows and heavy wooden tables, even a folk trio, lutes and flutes, on the weekends, but the beer is cheap and the food is home style Czech. We have just met, they live in the flat above me at The Donkey at the Cradle, also known as Kelley's Tower, and it is my first day in Prague after five months in the States and my first day at the Tower.

“My problem,” Viola says, “is that I can't tell what part

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<sup>3</sup> Jansky vrsek translates to “John's Hill,” and is the street in Mala Strana (or Lesser Town) on which the Donkey in the Cradle is located.

of the story are we in? I feel like I came in, in the middle of something.”

Zach shrugs and starts his story again, from a different point. Something about holding off a gypsy with a knife, a rescue by the husband of the lady who owned the flat where they live now, a brain tumor and coma in 1995, visions of 9/11, moving to Prague, recording in the crypts under the Tower, magic, alchemy, rock and roll and the power of synchronicity. All in answer to the question: how did you end up at the Tower?

Well, of course, exactly, indeed and amen. How does one describe the workings of inscrutable fate?

Zach is the reason I'm at the Tower at the end of thirty years searching for the real Edward Kelley. Without his “fate” I would not be telling this story now. He happened to be sitting on his balcony one Sunday afternoon six months ago when I brought a tour group through, stopping for lunch at the Magister Kelley Tavern in the courtyard and giving my usual spiel on Kelley, Shakespeare and The Dark Lady of the sonnets. Zach, amazed, rushed down and we exchanged contact info. The rest, as they say, is quite a story.

Not long after, on April 4, 2011, Vincent posted this greeting to the Fifth Way Mystery School discussion group:

*Dobry den, y'all,*

So, I'm in Prague, living at the Donkey at the Cradle, also known as Kelley's Tower. Sir

Edward bought the place in 1589 and lived there off and on until 1595<sup>4</sup> when Rudolph II threw him into Most prison for not coming across with the great secret. Young Shakespeare visited here at least half a dozen times, and the story of the place was a major influence on his depiction of Bottom in *Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>5</sup>

The story goes that soon after Magister Kelley moved in one of his neighbors complained about the chemical vapors flowing up from the Gothic crypts beneath the tower. Kelley, in a snit because the silly woman had interrupted his work, told her to get home and look to her child. When she did, she found that the Magister had turned her child's head into that of a donkey.<sup>6</sup> Needless to say, no one ever complained again...

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, among academic historians, whether or not Edward Kelley lived at the Donkey in the Cradle is something many assume, but one which writers from Deborah Harkness to Rafal Prinke point out can't be proven. Yet for literally generations in what is now the Czech Republic, writers have placed him there. Because of this, we've included an appendix giving the history of that location. .

<sup>5</sup> Would Shakespearean scholars agree with this? Almost certainly not, but this didn't seem bother Vincent. If you visit one of the displays at the Museum there, you'll find that those who designed the exhibits didn't care much about what Shakespearean scholars thought, either: one part of the museum features a wax likeness of Shakespeare writing and in another, you can peer through a peep-hole to see Bottom from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, turned into a donkey and performing on stage.

<sup>6</sup>A reference to one source of this legend is in Appendix X on the Donkey in the Cradle. But this excerpt itself might give you the flavor of how much Vincent hated to cite the sources of his stories. He often could retell them far better than whomever had told them the first time around.

Actually, the story is much older than Kelley's time, and goes back to the ancient pagan shrine to the goddess that made this strange little bulge on the side of the castle into a sacred spot. Apparently, this building is on the ruins of that pagan site. Having seen the crypts, I can believe it.

Not long after, April 12, he wrote this rhapsodical intro to his article "Reflections of a Symbolist in Prague:"

It is early morning on Jansky vresk; the sun has yet to reach the darker corners of the narrow streets and dead-end squares and the night air lingers like the exhale of the last ghost to fade in the dawn twilight. Magick is afoot, the angels are humming the blues from the top of the Castle's spires, the bells of Prague echo faintly in the distance, the butchy looking nursing sisters whisper by on their way to morning mass in the hospital's chapel, and I sit at my window, reading Czech poetry and trying to understand that which can't be named, or described, but only experienced. Baroque Gnosis, Gothic Illumination, Valentinian's Ialdabaoth on the door of the American Embassy, house signs that read like a page out of an Alchemical treatise; these are not really tangible objects, though they exist. They are clues to a larger puzzle, messages from a deep well, golden to be sure, of meaning and

myth and awareness.<sup>7</sup>

Giordano Bruno and the Lurianic Kabbalists taught the art of memory by creating theaters or palaces and filling the rooms and spaces, in their imaginations, with the knowledge they wished to remember. Prague itself is just such a memory palace, filled with knowledge and information waiting to be retrieved by those who can remember the intangible, the mystical, the ineffable Gnosis, of the genius/daemon of the place that is Prague.

He was also, he wrote, on his way to “being the resident expert at the new Edward Kelley Alchemical Museum in the Tower,” more precisely known as the Museum of Alchemists and Magicians of Old Prague, housed in part of Kelley’s former residence. Another posting promised “more updates to come.”

But the “updates” after that were few and far between, unless you were lucky enough to visit him in Prague, where he was writing and giving esoteric tours. Alan Moore and I did just that, joining him for two workshops in the Czech Republic in 2010. I returned alone that summer; Alan joined him for more workshops in 2011. When Vincent returned to the United States, we often had the chance to hear and (at his insistence) twice recorded more “updates” about his writing, tours and workshops.

Vincent also taught and practiced many esoteric subjects, chief among them the Enochian (or Ophanic or Angelic) system of magic. He thought the way most people used this system was incomplete at best and wrong-headed at worst. He also thought,

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<sup>7</sup> This article is available various places on-line. See, for instance, <http://www.vincentbridgeslegacy.com/reflections-of-a-symbolist-in-prague/>

for reasons that will here go partially unexplained, that until Edward Kelley's "name was cleared," so to speak, it would be hard to work properly with Enochian. By having Kelley's name "cleared," he didn't mean that Kelley was usually honest, or that Kelley's scrying was never intended to manipulate. He meant that Edward Kelley, as both clairvoyant and con artist, was as surprised by the authenticity of the "Angelic" materials as John Dee, that his ability at alchemy was real, and that his claims to nobility had some basis in fact.<sup>8</sup>

He felt Edward Kelley and his "brother" Thomas had continued to work with the Enochian materials long after John Dee returned to England. He took the painting which is this book's frontispiece as evidence of that; moreover, he took the barely visible words that apparently can be seen on the original—"Laski magician"—as "Laski's magician," and to him this implied some earlier relationship between Kelley and Prince Vojtech a' Lasko (usually Germanized to Albrecht Laski or Anglicized to Albert Laski) and/or Laski's third wife, the former Sabina de Sève. He wondered if the painting, in the artist's memory at least, was "set" at a particular place in the Donkey in the Cradle, a place he viewed as Kelley's "magic room." He was sure that during the 1590s, Edward Kelley and his brother Thomas took the "Enochian" or "Angelic" magic they'd received

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<sup>8</sup> As for the final claim, you'll find that one of the few places where we've made editorial additions to Vincent's text is in Part One, where we've added a quote from a recent article by Ivo Purs and Vladimír Karpenko, two Czech scholars who have recently (2016) published an English translation of a document that supports the idea of Kelley having noble Irish origins. All other source citations are given (along with the text they refer to) in the Notes section that immediately follows Vincent's text. Since Vincent did not care for footnotes, we've haven't added them to the text but have inserted a section that shows, by page number and boldfaced sentence excerpt, where his references are from.

far beyond what is shown in the manuscripts left behind by Dee. Of course, there is no record of this. Believe me, I've spent a lot of time looking, as did Vincent. But it was at this point—the point where Kelley, not Dee, worked with Enochian—that Vincent was trying to move things forward, and he gave workshops in the Czech Republic and Italy on his new discoveries.

He thought that until Kelley's name was cleared, people would keep going back to exclusively Dee's manuscripts, when some of the most important parts of those manuscripts are missing. This, of course, is possible. Based on our own study of Enochian and how parts of that system evolved, Alan and I both think it is even probable. But you can't empirically prove that Kelley did this, at least with conventional methods of research or without an unexpected recovery of lost documents.

For better or worse, using strictly conventional methods of research doesn't appeal much to ceremonial magicians anyway. Part of what one is supposed to learn in the higher "grades" of various kabbalah-based initiatory systems includes scrying the spirit vision, exactly what Edward Kelley was doing for John Dee. In recent years, you can even find books like Donald and Jenny Tyson's *Spiritual Alchemy: Scrying, Alchemical Communication, and the Spirit Vision*, where the writers describe Jenny's clairvoyant contact and reception of scrying instructions from none other than. . . Edward Kelley. You simply can't cite these details in scholarly histories.

Yet Vincent's associates from those last years in Prague told us that he wanted nothing more than to be taken seriously as a scholar. I believe them. He told me the same thing. But the paradox of disliking academic scholarship while wanting to be accepted by scholars seemed one he could never resolve even to himself. Vincent, my dear friend, genius that you were, you should have known you'd never be taken seriously by Renaissance scholars. You had the magic of – remembering?

screaming? dropping in upon? – the 400-years-dead past and making it live again, and you did not want what you thought happened to be labeled as “fiction.” The tiny group of people who consider themselves academic “Edward Kelley” researchers do share at least one trait with historians generally: they require empirical historical evidence. You thought empirical evidence was a good thing if available, but also pointed out all of the records that seemed rather selectively destroyed. Then there is the reality that relying upon past-life knowledge doesn’t sit very well with the academy, nor does data obtained by screaming the spirit vision or trying to “drop in” on the past. That doesn’t mean for a moment that what you saw or remembered might not have been correct.

It’s a well-worn convention in most types of research that writers should work from an empirical data set, rather than reverse-engineering from a predetermined conclusion. Perhaps a person’s accumulated data will lead to a grand “aha” about whatever the topic is; perhaps not. However having spent the better part of my life pouring through academic research, I’m afraid this convention simply is not followed when one is doing research on Edward Kelley. Until this century, all researchers—all, not most—have started from the conclusion that Kelley was a charlatan and explained the few details they had to fit. But didn’t someone (several people, actually) report that Edward Kelley knew the secret of the philosopher’s stone? Well, clearly that person had to have been taken in by Kelley’s con, or so the arguments have proceeded.

Was Vincent reverse-engineering from what he took to be past life memories? In a few places he definitely was. For instance, Vincent held to his conviction that Kelley had spent time in Montpellier, France, despite never finding the evidence he sought to support this. And seek he did: Vincent had a voluminous library, the largest one I’ve ever seen maintained by

an individual. One day in 2008, Alan and I photographed all the titles just so there would be a record of it. Vincent poured through books and said he always read the many critical articles and chapters I dug up and sent to him (which included, by the way, a history in French of Montpellier medical school). But having found no evidence after looking for it for many years, and having found no way to make it even a good speculation, he cut that part of the book.

His “narrative” about Sir Edward Kelley evolved over many years, and while a few parts never changed, most of it did, and the parts that he was sure of but couldn’t prove started to develop more of a context. He was almost alarmed, for instance, to learn that Kelley had step-children. It seems this was not something he cared to remember. But by the time he was living in the Donkey in the Cradle and trying to diagram where different people had lived, he’d claim to see his step-daughter’s ghost running through the old kitchen and connected John and Elizabeth Weston to other parts of the story. You can also find more back-story on particular details in the Notes section.

To restate the obvious, Vincent’s methods of research were entertaining if not conventional. Dan Winter likes to tell the story of Vincent arriving in Prague and immediately going to the Jewish cemetery “to visit with his old friends,” i.e. the ghosts. Alan and I both had the experience of walking with Vincent and him literally turning into a wall, then grumbling that “this didn’t used to be here.” We remember, the first time we visited him, also meeting a group called the *Putujici* or “Pilgrims,” who had traveled to Most (where Edward Kelley died) to remove a curse that kept part of Kelley’s soul complex “stuck” there. They had done this in 2008; through a translator, one of the “pilgrims” told Vincent that “you can imagine how surprised we were when you showed up here the next spring.”

Vincent was one of the few truly clairvoyant people Alan or I have ever met. That meant he could see and interact with the spirits that others claimed either did not exist, or that some could “feel” though rarely see. When I first realized this about Vincent, it so delighted me that I suggested we try to call up the ghost of Edward Kelley and see what we found out.

“Why would you want to do that?” I remember Vincent saying, back in 2003. “All he’s gonna do is lie to you, and curse at you in Latin.” When we asked again, he just repeated, “I’m telling ya, you don’t want to talk to him.”

Apparently, he had tried that already and it wasn’t a pleasant experience. The shift from someone suspicious of Sir Edward Kelley to being Kelley’s greatest advocate did not go unnoticed by either Alan or me. But probably Dan Winter, his friend since the late 1980s, saw the change more dramatically. You can read his thoughts about this in the “Afterward.”

As Vincent’s own “karma karnivale” spun around and around like an out-of-control amusement ride, he would revise his story of Kelley’s life because of whatever new things he’d encountered: his life in Prague became his own sort of karmic fieldwork and was much more how he went about “research” than visiting archives. As I write, I’m conscious of sounding somewhat unintentionally mocking in how I talk about this, when in fact Vincent’s gifts were stunning to behold and almost unbelievable to relate in any way but as fiction. Those days, when he could not find an explanation for Kelley’s behavior, he would still bounce ideas off Alan and me. His favorite technique was to blind-side one of us with a question and see how we reacted. That meant that by 2013, our conversations had indeed grown very strange.

I search through my saved Skype and Facebook conversations and find very curious exchanges between us. For instance, once he wrote me this description of Joan Kelley: “she was a little taller than EK, with large eyes, strong jaws and a high brow back to her

hair, as if plucked, as I guess it was... brown eyes, blonde/brown hair, worn in side braids..." Obviously, if you're writing an historical novel, you need to imagine how characters appear. But he was no longer writing a novel.

He was also sure that Edward Kelley was older than people thought, and his alleged birthdate a product of identity theft. Both ideas sound plausible to me as well. But... something being plausible does not make it so, for most people. And in the case of Joan Kelley, he didn't find evidence for her physical appearance... he simply "saw" her.

Often our conversations concerned the spirits Dee and Kelley encountered. By then he knew I was working on a novel as well, set in a slightly later time, and trying to supply motivation to my characters. I'll give a rather lengthy example of one of our conversations, then explain why it's important. This is from the spring of 2013:

Vincent: so... what's your take on the spirit Madimi?

[Madimi appears often in John Dee's spirit diaries.]

Terry: ?? today as opposed to yesterday?

Vincent: yes...

Terry: no real change

Vincent: in general then

Terry: spirit of Mars etc as mentioned. Why?

Vincent: Madimi is unique in the sessions... and in spiritualism in general... she seems to be the guiding force behind the whole missionary adventure...

Vincent: and there is the business of her involvement with Laski/Lacy weirdness...<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Madimi, through Kelley, describes a pedigree of the Lacy family, the Earls of Lincoln. It appears Madimi does this to show that Laski is related to earls of Lincoln, who are relatives of the Queen's, so if what the "angels" say is correct, he would be distantly in the line to the throne. Commenting upon

Terry: from our perspective, we wonder at TK's [Thomas Kelley's] connection to her [Madimi] and if anyone else is around when she appears. I imagine our focus is slightly different.

Terry: not sure what you mean? [about Laski/Lacy]

Terry: though it does again lead me to wonder if TK is around when she appears in the records

Vincent: yes, he is... later on though...

Terry: . . . What are you looking for?

Vincent: just a hint on what you thought of her as a general plot device of the angels. TK is around

Terry: I don't think angels need plot devices, lol.

Vincent: am trying to explain certain portions of EK's behavior...

Terry: such as?

Vincent: oh those that seem to... need plot devices.. something to precipitate them. *What is real and what is performance...*[emphasis added]

Terry: oh so you think Madimi as scryed is performance to manipulate Dee? And/or Laski?

Vincent: everything is [performance, up to that time], in truth... with some truth added for spice... [snip]

Vincent: EK is truly frightened in the summer of 1583... and Madimi is part of why he is scared... [what was at

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the English succession would be heresy, so one might think that John Dee would not want to put this in writing. Instead, Dee connected Laski with John Ferne, an expert on heraldry, to prove this link. Instead, Ferne found they were not related.

Interestingly enough, one Shakespearean with no obvious interest in Dee or Kelley has argued that Shakespeare has Jack Cade, in *2 Henry VI*, allude to the Lacy/Laski connection when he claims descent from the Earls of Lincoln (and in doing so undermines his credibility). See Longstaff, "Jack Cade and the Lacies," 1998.

first Kelley's manipulation and performance suddenly was taken over by a real spirit and went out of his control]

Vincent: The Lacy stuff is true dynamite...

Terry: don't know why it would scare him unless he didn't plan for it to come through. It is evidence they are both spies or writing about it would be heretical. But we've talked about that.

Vincent: EK often used his vision/2nd sight as a starting point for the context of a session... [in other words, he would clairvoyantly "see" what the person wanted, and play upon that.]

Terry: ok

Vincent: yes indeed we have... (talked about that) which is why I asked you for an opinion...

The conversation continues for pages, and I could pick any of a dozen others from the same year. I'm bringing this particular one in to illustrate part of the problem of writing about John Dee or Edward Kelley and using Dee's spirit diaries, a problem most conventional histories never address. Put simply, you can't treat them as all true, or all false. And when one or both men are acting, you have to speculate about why, or you get nowhere. When you know some things are left out (such as Kelley's step-children or the return of his brother to England), you have to speculate about why.

On the one hand, you have to use Dee's spirit diaries: for many, many things, they are the best direct evidence. Also, they show what Edward Kelley, and to a lesser extent John Dee, are famous for: their conversations with spirits and their works of

alchemy.<sup>10</sup> We have Dee's spirit diaries from the time he met Kelley through 1587, and starting again in the 1590s; we can read them or any of several transcriptions. But that does not "prove" that what Kelley says he saw (according to Dee's accounting of it) actually existed. Similarly, if some of the more usual types of data—such as Kelley's name or birth date—in Dee's diary are wrong, or a cover, we have no way of proving that empirically either, at least most of the time. One of my beefs with some types of academic scholarship is the assumption that just because something is written down, it is true. A lie in print is still a lie. Are we really to believe that the Elizabeth Secret Service could not produce fake documents, or that John Dee's spirit conversations were not part for show, especially when Dee was conducting scrying sessions for visiting aristocrats like Count Laski, or at an audience with someone like King Steven Bathory? You must get to extreme cases, like an entire batch of documents being tossed into the fire then reappearing, before some people acknowledge that Dee could be making some things up or leaving others out, even if we know he would have to do that to protect himself.

To understand what motivated Kelley, you have to know, or guess, how much of what he was reporting to Dee was his own fabrication to trick Dee, as well as if he was working for someone else like spymaster Sir Francis Walsingham or William Cecil Lord Burghley: someone who could give him an officially approved yet fabricated "cover story." That begs the question of what Kelley could do that was valuable enough that he would be given such a cover story.

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<sup>10</sup> To John Dee though not to most alchemists, "magic" and "alchemy" seem to totally overlap. His spirit diaries, not surprisingly, support this view, as discussed in Part Four.

As for Dee himself: what of the things he says about Kelley were invented, and what details did he leave out?<sup>11</sup> We do know both men were spies... or if not, they had unstated other reasons for writing letters back to Walsingham and Burghley and unusual permission to be visiting the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor during the build-up for war with Catholic Spain, especially since Dee is often writing back to his “brother” Richard Young, who Edward Fenton calls “one of the most virulently anti-Catholic judges of the age” (343).

It is fair to assume that some of what Dee “reports” could be a cover story made up for other eyes to read and sometimes he could be being tricked by Kelley. What was true and what was sleight of hand?

There’s no way to know this at all, unless you’re able to get inside of Kelley’s head. Vincent thought he’d done that. In the long quote above, he was trying to zoom in on one particular scrying session in 1583 as the place where Kelley’s performance turned from an act into, some of the time, the real thing. In the same way, Vincent’s play (set in 1593, the year Kelley was arrested) was his way of focusing in on another critical time.

### Editorial Method and Final Comments

In editing this edition, we decided not to change Vincent’s text unless there was a pressing reason to. In terms of overall

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<sup>11</sup> Susan Bassnett, in her 2006 article “Absent Presences: Edward Kelley’s Family in the Writings of John Dee,” points out the problem with the generally “bad press” accumulated by Edward Kelley in history after history: “if Kelley is cast in the role of the deceiver, then Dee must be cast in the role of the deceived.” Yet many of John Dee’s omissions about Edward Kelley—in particular, never mentioning Kelley’s step-children when they at time share the same living space—must be intentional rather than the product of deception on Kelley’s part.

structure, we've made only one shift: we moved part of Part Four to the beginning and called it the "Prelude." Vincent planned an opening that focused on Edward Kelley, but either never wrote it or left behind no copy.

Part Two is much longer than other sections. This is the part he and I spent the most time sending thoughts about it back and forth in the summer of 2011. I suspect he intended to expand the later sections. Certainly that's true of Part Three, which became an outline so to speak for his book *Young Will*. Given the choice between merging the two books or simply presenting this one in the basic form he had it in, we've chosen the latter. Where *Young Will* had some sections involving Kelley and his compatriots that were greatly expanded (such as a much longer discussion of Count Laski, for instance), we've resisted the urge to shift them into this work, and we've left the chapter lengths and divisions the way he had them. We've left the appendices as he had them, with the exception of those by me, where I reduced their length, and we added two others written by Eliška drawing upon her expertise at evaluating Czech sources.

Keep in mind that this book was finished by October 2011, relatively early on during Vincent's stay in Prague. Because of that, you'll find some places the Notes section where we've indicated how particular ideas evolved in subsequent years. Vincent wrote *An Alchemical Enigma* while living at the Donkey in the Cradle; an abbreviated draft of the manuscript is still used by the alchemy museum there, and some of the text can be seen on mock parchment as you walk through the museum.

Finally, there's a problem that I must spend some time on here: Vincent's habit of recycling prose from his own writing and works he'd co-authored with others. After receiving the manuscript from Vincent on October 4, 2011, he and I argued, and abruptly stopped talking for nearly a year. Before I discuss

how that discussion connects to the editing of this work, I would like to put it in some context.

When Vincent and I first met, he was turning out original prose every day, slowly but steadily. He'd taken the lead on revising *A Monument to the End of Time*, the book he and Jay Weidner had co-authored, into what became *The Mystery of the Great Cross at Hendaye*. If you compare the two, you'll see just how much was added to the revision. At the same time, he was trying to help Steve Crockett revise a book called *The Prophet Code*, often by writing whole chapter introductions as suggestions. (The revision never came out, sadly. I saw all of the changes because I was serving as a kind of "test audience," to see if someone could understand Steve's work if she knew very little about precessional astronomy.) Vincent was trying to get me to write, but often grew tired of my slowness: so most of our co-authored articles were written more by Vincent than by me. If someone did a style study of "When Beautiful Minds Speak to Higher Intelligences," our introduction to *The Ophanic Revelation*, it would be pretty easy to determine that the first few pages of it is in one prose style (mine) and the rest was his.

I mention this because the Vincent I knew when we started writing together in 2003 was nothing if not generous, although he simultaneously resented doing so much writing for other people. But he was the one who offered to do it. He didn't like to wait for others and hated asking for approval. In *A Monument to the End of Time*, for instance, he folded in parts of a long essay he was writing on the history of western alchemy. Jay Weidner didn't ask him to do that: he did it himself because he thought that was how the book should be and waited to see whether or not Jay would object. That's only one of many examples.

But by the time he moved to Prague, Vincent was in far worse health than any of us knew, and stretched far too thin emotionally, physically, and financially. We knew he was not well, yes, but

had no idea exactly *how* not well he was. Vincent suffered from what he called “bamboo spine,” or Ankylosing spondylitis (AS). Once in 2010, when Alan and I were asked to take the lead at a conference hosted by Daniela Enrico at Casa Khuan in Borgo d’Ale, Italy, because Vincent’s flight had been cancelled, Klaus Bamberg took Alan aside and asked him if we realized how serious a health condition AS was. We didn’t. “He could drop dead any minute,” Klaus said.

But almost no one else thought so, though in hindsight the signs were all there. Alan remembers Vincent telling him about one time when suddenly Vincent couldn’t see, and even the light of a camera screen in a dark room hurt his eyes. A close friend rushed him to the hospital in Prague, where he received a steroid shot behind the eyeball. The doctors wanted him to come back. Vincent didn’t. But his health did improve. He started going to a holistic doctor in Prague, fell in love, and near the end was able to walk several kilometers each day. Maybe he thought he could hold off the progression of “bamboo spine” by the force of his own will. For a while, he succeeded.

Since he has died, various urban legends have been passed around about how and why Vincent died: that Kelley’s ghost killed him, that a cabal of Black Magicians cast some kind of spell. The most plausible explanation is also the most prosaic: his heart gave out as a complication of AS.

Now that Vincent is gone, it is easy to see why he left behind manuscripts with attribution problems. But when he sent me *An Alchemical Enigma* in 2011, I knew little about his being in physical *extremis* and cared little about the added emotional situation of having just broken up with someone. I didn’t know he was trying and failing to convince another former partner to sell a house in the United States; I didn’t know he was worried about aging parents even while he was unwilling to move home.

In his last few years, interpersonal drama seemed to stalk Vincent almost as much as it had Sir Edward Kelley. As Alan and I were to learn later, most of his friends in the United States knew little about what Vincent was doing abroad and few of his friends in the Czech Republic, France or Italy knew many of his American friends.

In any case, that October I simply saw all of the recycled and borrowed sentences and, once my jaw was no longer dropping, I informed him that doing this sort of thing in a college course could have gotten him kicked out of school. He'd added his name to one of my articles, the implication being that it was only fair considering what proportion of our co-authored works were written by him. But I hadn't asked him to do most of the writing in those articles—I am just a slow writer who footnotes excessively rather than not at all—nor given him permission then, as I am doing now, to put his name on sentences written by me reflecting research done by both of us. We hung up on each other, and it was almost a year before we spoke again. When I next heard from him, it was something I thought would never happen: Vincent calling to apologize.

He was going to rework *An Alchemical Enigma* after finishing *Young Will*. He never got the chance to. So in the gap between intention and reality, I've written the "Notes" section for this work. We spent enough time and wrote enough Skype messages about the content—over 300 pages of them in August 2011 alone—that I am pretty certain what his sources were.

Looking back, I think Vincent knew the end was near and was racing against the clock. He was cutting corners everywhere. He wanted Kelley's story out and even to tell that story very briefly is a complicated task. With limited time and resources, he simply refused to spend time revising sentences that had already served his purposes well. For instance, having written many times about John Dee, he saw little reason to write one new word to add to the

pages of prose he already had. In contrast, the sentences explicitly connected to Kelley were almost all new and revised yet again when he moved them into *Young Will* a couple years later.

Yes, as I told him, this “borrowing without citing” is plagiarism. I’m sure his unspoken answer was “I don’t really care.”

After all, he’d point out, the greatest plagiarist the English language has ever known was William Shakespeare, and he plagiarized, among others, Sir Edward Kelley. (Yes, Vincent was sure that more than a few lines in plays had come from Sir Edward, as well as most of the plot of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and he’ll tell you later in this work about where he thinks “Oberon” originated.) Other characters and plot lines he traced to various members of the nobility, especially Ferdinando Stanley Lord Strange. He basically viewed William Shakespeare as the most talented and well-known script doctor in theatric history. . . even though he viewed many of the plays and the sonnets as literally sacred texts.

Responding to a “Shakespeare the plagiarist” comment by saying “that was another time, when everyone borrowed everyone else’s story lines,” accomplished nothing. In any case, you will find sentences in this work that Vincent has written before, in other articles. In our editing, we have not put that text in quotations, but simply pointed out in the Notes section the names of the articles from which he’s taken snippets of his own earlier writing. The same is true where the sentence comes from something I’ve written, or that we’ve written together. But if it is from any other work than mine, his, or ours, I have noted sources where necessary and in several places rewritten sentences. His original manuscript had many, many block quotes but nothing saying where they were from.

We've also standardized the spelling of names, choosing the English variant in this English edition, and adding person and place glossaries that gives Czech, German, Polish and Latin equivalents where necessary. Vincent updated 16<sup>th</sup> century spellings into contemporary English, and we have left them that way. Predictably, I focused on documenting English sources while Eliska focused on the Czech sources and compiled the two glossaries. She's also written two important appendices: one that looks at the history of the Donkey in the Cradle, and another examines the history and reputation of Edward Kelley in the different places where he lived in Bohemia.

What do I hope that you, the reader, take from Vincent's *Alchemical Enigma*? That's up to you. Some may take this biography the same way Vincent took Edward Kelley's life: as a cautionary tale. Some may find it inventive fiction. I hope a few will find, as I have, some interesting new avenues for research, whether your type of research is conventional scholarship or scrying the spirit vision.

Some people, ceremonial magicians especially, may find it an interesting sidelight to Vincent's approach to what has been variously called the Enochian or Ophanic or Angelic language and system of magic. After all, those of us who work with a system that was given through spirit communication can hardly fault Vincent's methods for wanting to find out more about Edward Kelley. Vincent surely cut a kinder figure than many others who have claimed to be Kelley's reincarnation and likely did a lot more on-site research, as unconventional as his research was.

I'm grateful to have another chance at working with this book. Vincent wanted it published and despite our differences, he remained one of my best friends, and is without a doubt the most unusual person I've ever known. So, without further ado, please

enjoy *An Alchemical Enigma: The Rise and Fall of Sir Edward Kelley*.