

SYNOPSIS

One of the less familiar dramas in the Shakespeare canon *Measure for Measure* has at its heart the God-like Rosicrucian figure of Duke Vincentio one akin to Prospero in *The Tempest* described by Dr Yates as a Rosicrucian manifesto. The role of the Duke is one of the longest roles in the Shakespeare canon. He is seen by many Shakespeare scholars as a surrogate of the dramatist himself with the joint Arden editors of *Measure for Measure* correctly maintaining that its author ‘sets up the correspondences between himself and the duke...extensively’, and that, *Measure for Measure* ‘persistently hints that the Duke is a playwright made in Shakespeare’s image’. Or put another way the secretive, complex and enigmatic character of Duke Vincentio, who adopts multiple masks, disguises and identities in *Measure for Measure* represents Shakespeare, that is to say, the true author of the play, who himself outside of the play itself, also adopts multiple identities and disguises behind his various literary living masks including the pseudonym of Shakespeare. The Duke is a complex dramatic portrait of his creator Francis Bacon, the supreme head of the Rosicrucian-Freemasonry Brotherhood, with the Duke in the play watching over Vienna just like Bacon, reflected in his Rosicrucian utopia *New Atlantis*, watches over the world and the future of mankind. In the play the Duke seeks to build a new, fair, and just society one based upon love just as Bacon with his Rosicrucian Brotherhood set in motion a plan for *A Universal Reformation of the Whole World*.

The intertwined themes of law and justice, sex and death, and the Rosicrucian-Freemasonry Brotherhood that are threaded all the way through *Measure for Measure* are mirrored and reflected in more than twenty of Bacon’s acknowledged writings and works, among them: unpublished manuscripts, private letters and speeches; his *Meditationes Sacrae*, *Of Colours of Good and Evil*, various essays including *Of Judicature*, *Of Seditions and Troubles*, and *Of Death*, one of the central themes of the play; as well as *An Inquiry Concerning the Ways of Death* and *The History of Life and Death*; the *Gesta Grayorum* and other dramatic devices; religious and political tracts including *A Confession of Faith* and *A Brief Discourse Touching the Happy Union of the Kingdom of England and Scotland*; his major philosophical and scientific treatises *The Advancement of Learning*, *Novum Organum* and *De Augmentis Scientiarum*; and several of his obscure or relatively unknown and unread legal treatises *A Proclamation Touching the Marches*, *The Charge of Owen Indicted for High Treason*, *A Proposition Touching the Compiling and Amendments of Law*, and *Touching the Office of Constable*; as well as his Rosicrucian utopia *New Atlantis* (or, *The Land of the Rosicrucians*) and the first Rosicrucian manifesto the *Fama Fraternitatis*.