

I Demand an Undying Devotion to the Play: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* *are Undead*

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Since the first production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* at the turn of the seventeenth century, the play has attracted performers, fascinated audiences, and stimulated scholarly discussion and debate — a form of immortality which has been further perpetuated from the twentieth century onward by film versions of the play.¹ The attitudes of literary critics and theater reviewers toward Shakespeare productions, however, remain widely divergent. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, for example, observe, "In the last fifty years, the play's iconic status has led to countless attempts to adapt, rethink, debunk and vandalize it."² The judgment implied by the word "vandalize" suggests the continuing divide between "high" and "popular" cultures, and draws attention to the issues potentially arising when a canonical text is appropriated and newly interpreted.³

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead (2010), written and directed by Jordan Galland, participates in this tradition of variation and experimentation.⁴ The film combines homage to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1602), W. S. Gilbert's short comedy *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (1891),⁵ and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1968),⁶ with a number of otherwise disparate elements: vampires, the legend of the Holy Grail, Rosicrucianism, and film. This indie film is a locus of intertextuality, insofar as it alludes to — and assumes that the viewer has some knowledge of — pre-existing literary texts and films; it is thus "constituted through a multiplicity of textual elements."⁷ It may also be considered a fan text, in the

sense that it is evidently intended to appeal to various fan groups, including disciples of Shakespeare, film enthusiasts, and those devoted to vampires and/or the esoteric. However, while it ostensibly participates on the levels of both high and popular culture, it is unclear exactly which type of fan the film is intended to attract, and whether there is enough material from any one of the perspectives above to sustain audiences possessing specific and specialized interests. Indeed, one reviewer predicted that "[S]erious theater or Shakespeare fans will likely be turned off by the shallow engagement with the source material, and horror and/or vampire fans will be disappointed by the lack of suspense and gore."⁸

From my own perspective as a scholar of early modern literary texts, this observation is certainly justified, precisely because of the film script's tenuous connection to the actual text of *Hamlet*. This raises two related questions: first of all, if the film signals its indebtedness to both Shakespeare and Stoppard, to what extent does this embody a promise of a significant level of engagement with the source materials?⁹ Secondly, does the suggestion that the film has distinct literary origins not imply that the integration and interplay of the appropriated matter with the new material will be meaningful in a way that maintains its connectedness to the *Hamlet*-related texts to which it alludes?¹⁰

These questions may be countered with further questions, of course, in regard to the issue of individual expectations. For instance, why should any form of "poaching"¹¹ come burdened with promises, and who is to determine what constitutes a "significant level of engagement" with the original texts? As Henry Jenkins states, "... a poached culture requires a conception of aesthetics emphasizing borrowing and recombination as much or more as original creation and artistic innovation."¹² To acknowledge this form of creativity, then, should not such "borrowings" and "recombinations" be celebrated, rather than being perceived as misguided? While I acknowledge that the responses to these issues must be largely subjective, I still maintain that the original questions are worth asking, because I also believe that the use of earlier works within another work implies a responsibility both to the original sources and to the audience. Although *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead* might be approached from many angles — and quite

lucratively from the perspectives of both movies and multimedia — my concern here is specifically for the literary texts (primarily *Hamlet*) to which the film is indebted.

Shakespeare himself borrowed freely from other writers. "Throughout Shakespeare's career as a playwright," Stephen Greenblatt observes, "he was a brilliant poacher — deftly entering into territory marked out by others, taking for himself what he wanted, and walking away with his prize under the keeper's nose."¹³ Stoppard's approach in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is rather different from Shakespeare's form of poaching; he has constructed a drama directly parallel to, and concurrent with, the action of *Hamlet*, and it is clear that he is thoroughly familiar with Shakespeare's text. The approach in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead* is different again: because it incorporates multiple genres — Galland characterizes the film as both a "surreal romantic comedy" and a "smorgasbord" — it seems to lean toward parody rather than homage.¹⁴ The film's quirky assemblage of ingredients attempts to narrow the gap between high and popular cultures, and perhaps even attempts to subvert the high cultural elements themselves.

In addition to my predominantly literary and dramatic focus, I will also briefly discuss the written texts that are the basis respectively for the interest in vampires, and of Rosicrucianism. The film is supplemented by an official website, and I acknowledge its possible appeal to fans in a discussion of the website's "Shakespiracy" link. Before investigating further the film's appropriation of materials, however, I include here a synopsis, highlighting the elements that are most relevant to the present discussion.

The background story of the film centres around:

a four hundred-year-old duel over the Holy Grail, between a master vampire named Horatio and his nemesis, the former vampire Prince Hamlet, who drank from the Holy Grail, curing himself of the vampire curse, and then travelled the world, erasing much of Horatio's legacy ... while still retaining his own everlasting life. Today, the vampire Horatio is known as the playwright Theo Horace, who always hires a young, controllable human to direct his plays, and turns every actress in his play into a vampire bride.¹⁵

In the present day, Theo (John Ventimiglia) hires Julian (Jake Hoffman) to direct his off-Broadway adaptation of *Hamlet*, entitled *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*, while Julian's ex-girlfriend Anna (Devon Aoki) plays Ophelia, and his friend Vince (Kris Lemche) is cast as the prince.¹⁶ The transformations of Anna, Vince, Carlo/Rosencrantz (Carlos Velazquez) and Mickey/Guildenstern (Mike Landry) into vampires — and the discovery of the “two thousand-year-old-conspiracy” through the secret society agent, Charlotte — is followed, ultimately, by a confrontation between Theo and the “real” Hamlet, who triumphs over his adversary by driving a stake through Horatio's heart.

Now that Julian's on-again girlfriend is a vampire, he is anxious to obtain the grail himself and cure Anna of her curse. Yet the film is, after all, a romantic comedy, and when Anna points out to Julian that immortality means “we can be together forever,” he quickly chooses to join her as one of the undead.¹⁷

This synopsis should indicate the use of the Shakespeare and Stoppard texts, primarily, as a combined point of departure for the film. The questions raised earlier, regarding the relationship between the canonical and popular elements in the film, cannot be addressed without discussing the intertextual nature of the film, and how the “poached” material has been manipulated. Fundamentally, except for a few of Shakespeare's more famous quotations, the texts are essentially subsumed within Galland's playful pastiche.¹⁸

In the play-within-the-film, Theo dramatizes the history of the conflict between himself and the Prince. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was the first of four plays masterminded by Theo; the second was W. S. Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*; the third, Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Each of these plays is present, in some form, in Theo's fourth play. During the process of rehearsing, we hear fragments of Shakespeare's lines, performed by the actors in Elizabethan-style costuming, within attractively stylized sets. The following speech, spoken by Vince/Hamlet, is characteristic of the comic treatment of some of the best-known lines from *Hamlet*: “Ah, well aimed, Horatio — your arrows have outrageous fortune. You may be good with arrows and bows; myself, I'm good with ribbons and bows. Who designed your clothing? That outfit just screams, ‘Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.’ Is that a

Roman toga? It's got to — go!" Julian questions these lines, as they do not appear in the script; menacingly, Theo retorts, "I like it. We're modernizing."¹⁹

As a character, Theo provides the essential link between the "usually" separate worlds of Shakespeare and vampires. He appears to be intimate with the text of *Hamlet*, but he is also recognizably part of the post-Stoker evolution of the vampire. Even without stage makeup, for instance, Theo bears a resemblance to the vampire figure in *Nosferatu*, so that he is recognizably a product of the visual representations of the undead in classic films. Part of Theo's strategy for maintaining his charismatic power over humans and vampires is through the manipulation of the texts of others. The figure of Shakespeare himself is given a brief scene in Theo's play, in a dramatized flashback during which Horatio insists that "Spakes-heare" writes the words "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead." The playwright is depicted merely as Theo's puppet, and is shown at the beginning of the scene struggling to find the right word: "To be, or not to be — that is the — dilemma?"²⁰ The most direct instance of homage toward Shakespeare — still in a comic context — occurs when Theo/Horatio says to the real Hamlet, "I turned you into a vampire; also, by having Shakespeare write that epic tragedy, I turned you into a god." Unfazed, Hamlet first retorts, "The only tragedy here is who in the hell is Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's acting coach?" — then follows up with, "is this a soliloquy or an aside I'm doing?"²¹

While Gilbert and Stoppard do not appear as characters in Theo's play, one rehearsal scene incorporates part of Gilbert's First Tableau, staged beneath the title, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*. Although it is not mentioned in the film, Gilbert's Claudius is responsible for writing a play entitled *A Right Reckoning Long Delayed*; it is intended as a tragedy, but fails miserably, Rosencrantz explains, as it is "a piece of / pompous folly / intended to excite no loftier / emotion than laughter and / surprise."²² Galland's representation of the "real" Hamlet may be modeled on W. S. Gilbert's character, who is described (in Gilbert's play) as "idiotically sane / With lucid intervals of lunacy."²³

The humour in this film, then, is closer to the spirit of Gilbert's comedy, rather than Stoppard's play, for the potentially serious is

always undercut by a comic inversion of the viewer's expectations. This extends to the very mechanics of play-writing itself. In Theo's play, Rosencrantz says: "This play that Horatio wrote with Shakespeare makes us look like idiots, so I found this guy, W. S. Gilbert, who write [sic] a play where we're the heroes. It's cool, no?" When Guildenstern expresses concern that Horatio will think they're still alive, Rosencrantz suggests, "We could write a newer play and call it *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, or something," while Guildenstern muses, "Now, can we get Tom Stoppard to write it?"²⁴

Like Stoppard's characters, Mickey/Guildenstern appears to have been gifted with slightly more intellect than Carlo/Rosencrantz; moreover, they are constantly seen together, even behind the scenes. Further influence of Stoppard's text is evident in the exchanges of dialogue between the two characters; in an echo of the confusion over which one is which, Carlo proposes a number of alternatives to their names, which Mickey and Julian immediately reject. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*, Carlo speaks almost entirely in slang, while Mickey is chiefly obsessed with the details of his appearance and gestures onstage. At one point he interrupts the rehearsal to ask, "Jules, does that work with the two fingers like that? Do I need to get my thumb involved somehow?"²⁵ The subtle mingling of humor and pathos in Stoppard's play is entirely absent from the film, and the emphasis, instead, is on satirizing theatre "types."

Curiously, the lines which may suggest homage to the characters' verbal tennis match in Stoppard's play are given not to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but to Vince. When he meets with Charlotte, she advises him to be careful if Theo asks him questions: "... repeat what he says as if you don't understand, with a question mark." "A question mark?" Vince asks, to which she replies, "That's perfect."²⁶

Although *Hamlet* and the plays derived from it are the most obviously literary texts in the film, vampires are also part of an established literary tradition.²⁷ In an interview, Galland relates, "When I was eleven I read *Dracula* and decided that one day, I wanted to make a vampire film. I read everything about vampires I could get my hands on."²⁸ At 14, he played the part of Rosencrantz in a "high school version" of Stoppard's play, and was also "strongly drawn" to *Hamlet*:

One day I thought of the title *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead* and began seeing that the supernatural evil of vampires resonated within the story and language of *Hamlet*. I was compelled to explain these connections. The Holy Grail conspiracy was something that had intrigued me throughout my childhood. It added another exciting layer to the historical elements of my script.²⁹

In suggesting that he has identified the “resonance” of vampire evil “within the story and language of *Hamlet*,” Galland is maintaining a fiction that extends beyond the film itself, and is further developed on the official film website.³⁰ The vampire content that he perceives “within” the text of *Hamlet*, and which he feels “compelled to explain,” is of course Galland’s own projection of vampire mythology onto the text. Each of the levels of the “Shakespiracy” on the website is accompanied by YouTube clips, presented in the same style (animations with voiceover) as the DVD in the film. These short excerpts provide “information” on the following topics: “Rosenkreutz and Goldenstone,” “Shakespeare and Vampires,” “Hamlet and the Holy Grail,” “King James I and the Lost Passage,” and “Pirates and Ancient Rome.” This part of the website is designed to be interactive; provision for leaving comments encourages feedback from visitors.

In order to successfully maintain this fiction, however — to impart to it an air of authority, no matter how tongue-in-cheek — the “information” used as supporting material needs to be plausibly presented. As Galland observes of the DVD in the film, “When I was writing about it, I wanted it to feel like a real thing.”³¹ Although on the one hand these video clips function as a simple parody of the “infomercial,” Galland has also drawn upon elements of existing scholarship in order to imply a reasonable knowledge of his various subjects. However, he can only hope to entertain a fan group that is unconcerned about the accuracy and credibility of the material used, for both the film and the website contain errors, and much of the “scholarship” touched upon by the website is surprisingly out of date. This observation pertains to Rosicrucianism, to *Hamlet*, and to Shakespeare himself.

Three major Rosicrucian texts appeared in the second decade

of the seventeenth century. Although Galland does not identify the original treatises that have evidently inspired his "Shakespiracy," the date assigned to the "Rosicrucian and Goldenstonian" manifesto in the film is 1615, the year in which the second text, the *Confessio Fraternitatis*, appeared. Likewise, the name "Goldenstone" may be derived from the third text by Johann Valentin Andreae, entitled *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (published 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death); in it, the eponymous hero is initiated into a secret brotherhood of spiritual alchemy and earns the title of "Knight of the Golden Stone."³² In the "Shakespiracy" link on the film website, the manifestoes are described as being filled with "references to the Kabbalah, Hermeticism and Alchemy," along with the "claim" that it was Andreae who had discovered the tomb of the vampires Rosenkreutz and Goldenstone in 1601.³³ In an interview with Janice Brown, Galland observes:

There was a lot of material I had to cut from the screenplay that's based on historical conspiracy theory — I'd found these correlations between the text of *Hamlet*, the theory that Shakespeare may not have written some of his most famous plays, and vampire mythology ... I spent a lot of time researching and making those connections so that if you search online, it would almost appear that I hadn't made it all up!³⁴

While a little more material from the alchemical point of view might have provided an illuminating context for the concept of vampire immortality, it is obviously not essential. There is, however, an oversight on the film website in regard to *Hamlet*. According to Galland, a "mystery" surrounds Hamlet's age: "In act five scene one Hamlet says it was 'three and twenty seven years' since Yorick was buried. The math doesn't add up. Hamlet just finished college, so how could he have known Yorick?"³⁵ This is erroneous on two counts. In this scene, the gravedigger tells Hamlet that he has been a sexton for 30 years, and that he began his work "on the very day that young Hamlet was born." Hamlet is therefore 30; Yorick has been buried for "three and twenty years," so his death occurred when Hamlet was seven.³⁶ Secondly, Hamlet has not finished "col-

lege": near the beginning of the play, Claudius announces that Hamlet's intention to go "back to school in Wittenberg" is "most retrograde to our desire," indicating that the Prince is still a student.³⁷

Despite the film's integration of vampire material with *Hamlet*, there are essentially only two phrases from the play which are used to support the vampire theme. The first fragment, "Now could I drink hot blood," is misquoted both on the website, and in the four times that Vince utters it during the film.³⁸ The second is paraphrased during a rehearsal scene, in which Vince/Hamlet asks Anna/Ophelia how she knew he was a vampire. She replies, "Look at you — pale as your shirt — your knees knocking each other;" whereupon Vince/Hamlet finishes with, "You don't like the shirt? It's my new design — sheep's feather."³⁹ In one interview, Galland relates how, in earlier drafts of the script, he had listed "quotes" that could be related to vampires; insofar that this material may have added greater interest to the film, it seems a curious decision to have deleted it.⁴⁰

Also on the website's video clips, Galland raises the question of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays, but includes only the rather outdated theory (originating in the nineteenth century, most notably with Delia Bacon)⁴¹ that Francis Bacon was the author of the Shakespeare canon; none of the more recent candidates are mentioned.⁴² Likewise, Galland has obliquely referred to the tradition that Shakespeare incorporated his name into a translation of Psalm 46 for the King James Bible.⁴³ On the website, this becomes a "cryptic passage in the bible" revealing the "hidden location of the Holy Grail," which was "omitted" from the King James version.⁴⁴ Although Galland is clearly being playful with his materials, adjusting them to suit his own purposes, the overall feeling is that his approach to these Shakespearean contexts is particularly free, an impression which the misspelling of the names John Dee and Johann Valentin Andreae further reinforces.⁴⁵

Jenkins observes of "poached" culture that it can be "a patchwork culture, an impure culture, where much that is taken in remains semidigested and ill-considered."⁴⁶ I consider this to be an apt description of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*. For while the film does not promise — or require — a consideration

of the appropriated texts from a rigorous, academic perspective, it does seem to promise, yet not deliver, a significant level of engagement with those texts. While the film seems to attempt a hybridization of high and popular cultural elements, it fails to engage with the kind of questions — issues of individual consciousness and will, death and immortality, the supernatural — that have repeatedly sent readers and spectators back to *Hamlet* for more than 400 years.

So what type of fan is *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead* ultimately intended for? It may be, in the end, that I am asking the wrong question, approaching the film from the viewer's perspective, rather than that of the writer and director. In an interview with Dan Schechter, Galland was asked whether he thought that all the "promotional stuff" for the film would "help." Galland replied, "It depends on what your goal is, really, because, I mean, you can reach a handful of people and they get — they can enter your world — and that's ... an amazing personal reward, and it feels very successful and satisfying."⁴⁷ Here, the implication is that Galland is preoccupied less with possible fan groups, and more with sharing the product of his creative vision.

As an enthusiast for live Shakespeare performances, I consider the visual impact of Theo's theatrical sets and costumes to be the most successful aspect of the film. Yet I also hope that the fans of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead* who are new to Shakespeare will be encouraged to discover this iconic playwright for themselves, and to forge — if not an "undying devotion" to *Hamlet* — at least the beginning of an intimate and rewarding relationship with Shakespeare's text.

Notes

- 1 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson, 2006).
- 2 Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, Introduction, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson, 2006), 120.
- 3 These designations are borrowed from Roberta Pearson, "Bachies, Bardies, Trekkies, and Sherlockians," in *Fandom: Identities and Commu-*

nities in a Mediated World, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 98–99. Pearson includes Elizabethan drama amongst the “rarefied realms” of culture, pointing out that while the “study of high culture still undeniably thrives in the academy,” from the perspective of popular culture, “high culture figures only as a repressive other against which to celebrate the virtues of the popular.”

- 4 *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*, DVD, director Jordan Galland, (2009, New York: C Plus Pictures, 2010).
- 5 W. S. Gilbert, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, *Gilbert and Sullivan Archive*, accessed August 22, 2011, math.boisestate.edu/gas/other_gilbert/rosencrantz/script.html.
- 6 Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968).
- 7 Cornel Sandvoss, “The Death of the Reader? Literary Theory and the Study of Texts in Popular Culture,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 23.
- 8 Joshua Bell, “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead,” *Film Critic.com*, June 3, 2010, <http://www.filmcritic.com/reviews/2010/rosencrantz-and-guildenstern-are-undead/>.
- 9 Reviewers of the film have commented on the frustration of expectations created by the title. Andrew Schenker observes that, “despite its clever title,” the film fails to “explore the comic possibilities inherent in the vampire-Hamlet pairing.” “*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*,” *Slant Magazine*, May 31, 2010, <http://www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/rosencrantz-and-guildenstern-are-undead/4845>; Joe Lozito describes *Undead* as “a clever title desperately in search of a movie to back it up,” and concludes that the film is “never more than the sum of its one-liners,” “*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead Review*,” *Big Picture Big Sound*, June 14, 2010, <http://www.bigpicturebigsound.com/Rosencrantz-and-Guildenstern-Are-Undead.shtml>, while Josh Bell suggests that the “quality humor in *Undead* pretty much begins and ends with its title,” *Film Critic.com*, June 3, 2010, <http://www.filmcritic.com/reviews/2010/rosencrantz-and-guildenstern-are-undead/>.
- 10 Perhaps of relevance here is John Tulloch’s study of the audiences of specific Chekhov productions. He distinguishes between the “Chekhov fans” (who were familiar with the plays and were aware of “critical traditions”) and “star fans” (those who “went to a particular production because they loved seeing a particular star actor.”) He observes that the two groups had “rather different measures for

excellence." Star fans tended to have "much less knowledge of 'Chekhov'," and they "tended to be happy if the production was 'uncomplicated,' direct,' and 'easy to follow.'" Tulloch, "Fans of Chekhov: Re-Approaching 'High Culture'," in Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, eds., 117, 112, 119.

- 11 I use the term "poaching" to refer to the practice of using material from other works in a manner that is relatively unconstrained, so that — in the present context — it serves the purposes of the film-makers rather than representing an attempt to incorporate specific elements that appear in the original works.
- 12 Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 224. I acknowledge that similar questions about poaching may be usefully raised in relation to Stoker's *Dracula*, but an investigation of the horror genre in regard to this "vampire" text is beyond the scope of this essay.
- 13 Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 152.
- 14 Nicole Holland, "Indie Filmmaker Finds the Holy Grail," *Independent Film Quarterly*, accessed January 29, 2011 <http://www.independentfilmquarterly.com/ifq/interviews/jordan-galland.htm>.
- 15 "As I Lay Undying," *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*.
- 16 During the "Job Interview With a Vampire," Theo asks Julian, "... do you suffer from any blood vessel abnormalities, iron deficiencies, vitamin B12 deficiencies and/or intravenous drug usage?" When Julian answers in the negative, Theo breathes, "Too good to be true!" and informs his new director, "I demand an undying devotion to the play."
- 17 The popular appeal of this notion, embodied in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* Saga, is clearly something of which Galland is aware. Interviewer Dan Schechter teases Galland as they discuss the possibility of various trinkets to be used as promotional items for the film; he comments, "This is capitalizing on the success of *Twilight*?" — to which Galland laughingly replies, "Exactly." Dan Schechter, "Interviews: Director Jordan Galland," *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*.
- 18 Compare this approach with that of Stoppard, or of Jean Betts, in her play *Ophelia Thinks Harder* (Wellington, NZ: The Play Press, 2003). Betts's text bears the name "Wm. Shakespeare" alongside her own — acknowledging the "collaborative" nature of the play — and is subversively comic while still engaging intimately with the text of *Hamlet*.
- 19 "GraveNew World," *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*.
- 20 In the First Quarto (the 'Bad' Quarto) of 1603, the line reads, "To be, or not to be — ay, there's the point" (7.115) — this, and Galland's variation, suggest the humor inherent in any deviations from a well-established

text. *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), 92.

- 21 "Death of a Pale Man," *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*.
- 22 From the Third Tableau in Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*. Gilbert and Sullivan Archive, accessed August 25, 2011, math.boisestate.edu/gas/other_gilbert/rosencrantz/script.html.
- 23 From the Third Tableau in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*.
- 24 "Death of a Pale Man," *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*.
- 25 "Grave New World," *ibid*.
- 26 "Dial S for Shakespiracy," *ibid*. During this same scene with Charlotte, there is a visual similarity to the question-and-answer game scene in the film version of Stoppard's play ("Role-Playing," *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*); the circular fountain in the background in Galland's film perhaps recalls the ornamental apple tree in Stoppard's. In that scene, Rosencrantz eats an apple; in Galland's film, Charlotte produces an apple and offers it to Vince, saying, "An apple a day keeps the demons away." Earlier in the film, Julian is impressed with Theo's apple-eating exercise during a workshop, ironically observing to the others, "... there's no separation between him and his character — he is his character!" "Grave New World," *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*.
- 27 Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (first published in 1897) was preceded by novels in the Gothic tradition, including Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (published 1765); William Beckford's *Vathek* (published in English in 1786); Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794); Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796); and C. R. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). The grail legend has an even longer history, as the subject of medieval romances by such writers as Sir Thomas Malory, Chrétien de Troyes and Wolfram von Eschenbach.
- 28 Holland, "Indie Filmmaker."
- 29 *Ibid*.
- 30 *Shakespiracy.com*, accessed August 24, 2011, <http://shakespiracy.blogspot.com/>.
- 31 Afi Dallas, "Afi Dallas Video Interview: Writer/Director Jordan Galland (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*)." *Vimeo*, May 8, 2009. [gordonandthewhale.com](http://gordonandthewhale.com/afi-dallas-video-interview-rosencrantz-and-guildenstern-are-undead-writerdirector-jordan-galland/). <http://gordonandthewhale.com/afi-dallas-video-interview-rosencrantz-and-guildenstern-are-undead-writerdirector-jordan-galland/> (accessed February 17, 2011).
- 32 The first Rosicrucian treatise, the *Fama Fraternitatis*, appeared in 1614. For a discussion of the manifestoes, see Frances A. Yates's influential book, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1972), a copy of which may be seen in the film on the character Bobby Bianchi's dresser.

See also *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*, ed. Paul M. Allen (Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1968), for Thomas Vaughan's 1652 translations of the *Fama* and the *Confessio*, as well as the first English translation of *The Chymical Wedding* (1690) by Ezechiel Foxcroft.

- 33 "Level 1: Rosenkreutz and Goldenstone," accessed January 29, 2011 <http://shakespiracy.blogspot.com/>.
- 34 Janice Brown, interviewer, "Jordan Galland and the Art of Spooky: Search Party and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead," NYC Spotlight, *Sonic Scoop*, accessed February 17, 2011, <http://www.sonicscoop.com/2010/04/23/jordan-galland-the-art-of-spooky/>.
- 35 "Level 2: Shakespeare and Vampires," <http://shakespiracy.blogspot.com>.
- 36 *Hamlet*, Act 5, scene 1, lines 153, 139, 163–64.
- 37 The footnotes to the Arden edition elaborate on these issues. Thompson and Taylor acknowledge that Hamlet's age "would make him an unusually mature student by Elizabethan standards," (note 113, 174) and also that there is a variation on these dates in the First Quarto. In the earlier text, the editors point out, the gravedigger says that Yorick has "lain in the earth 'this dozen yeare', perhaps indicating that Hamlet is 18 rather than 30, an age which would seem more appropriate to his status as a student" (note 153, 420).
- 38 In a similar lack of fidelity to the text, Hamlet's line at 1.5.170 is altered, in the film, to "There are more things in heaven and earth / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio."
- 39 "A Streetcar Named Ophelia," *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Undead*. The original line (2.1.78) is part of a speech in which Ophelia describes to her father Hamlet's strange behavior toward her, leading Polonius to the conclusion that "this is the very ecstasy of love." (line 99).
- 40 Afi Dallas, "Afi Dallas Video Interview."
- 41 See S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, New Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), esp. 385–94.
- 42 "Level 2: Shakespeare and Vampires," <http://shakespiracy.blogspot.com/>.
Amongst other proposed contenders for Shakespearean authorship — though perhaps no more creditable than Bacon — are Christopher Marlowe and the Earls of Derby, Rutland and Oxford.
- 43 In his biography of Shakespeare, Anthony Burgess observes, "whether he had anything to do with it or not, he is in it ... The forty-sixth word from the beginning is *shake*, and the forty-sixth word from the end ... is *spear*. And, in 1610, Shakespeare was forty-six years old. If this is mere chance, fancy must allow us to think that it is happy chance." Burgess, *Shakespeare* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 234.

- 44 "Hamlet and the Holy Grail," "King James I and the Lost Passage," <http://shakespiracy.blogspot.com/>.
- 45 Similarly, in the film "Rosicrucians" is spelled incorrectly on the cover of Charlotte's DVD.
- 46 Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 283.
- 47 Dan Schechter, "Interviews: Director Jordan Galland."