

Shakespeare and John Dee Co-wrote *The Tempest*

by James Alan Egan

*Continuing on from research looking at the influence of John Dee on Shakespeare's works, James Alan Egan outlines his theory on Dee's hand in *The Tempest*.*

On a small hill overlooking Newport Harbor and the mouth of Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island stands a 28-foot tall stone-and-mortar tower. Eight sturdy pillars support an upper cylinder whose walls are about two feet thick. The first floor-room of the tower has a fireplace and three small windows that face northeast, south, and west.

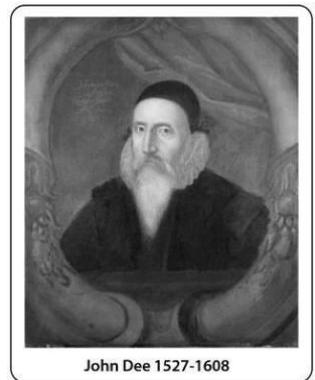


In the early 1990s, William Penhallow, a professor of astronomy and physics at the University of Rhode Island, found astronomical alignments in the windows of the Tower.¹ Just after dawn on the Winter Solstice, the sun shines through the south window, through the Tower, out the west window and can be seen from the northwest corner of the park.

One day every 18.6 years, at an event called Lunar Minor, the full moon shines through the northeast window, through the Tower, out the west window, and can be seen from the southwest corner of the park. Penhallow and I are members of the New England Antiquities Research Association, whose members study lithic structures all across New England. But there is nothing like the Newport Tower in all of New England. Or in all of America.

The 'Dee River' (Narragansett Bay)

Researching Rhode Island history, I was surprised to learn that Narragansett Bay was once called the 'Dee

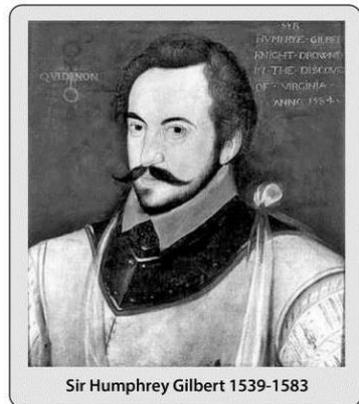


River² and was the site of the first English attempt to colonize the New World in 1583, led by army General Sir Humphrey Gilbert, navigational and legal expert John Dee, and wealthy English Catholic financier Sir George Peckham.

The scholars Richard Hakluyt (the elder) and Richard Hakluyt (the younger) were among the enthusiasts who, as Dee puts it, implored the Queen to “Send forth a sailing expedition to build a steadfast watch-post”³ in the New World, before the Spanish had colonized the whole East Coast.

As David Beers Quinn writes in *England and the Discovery of America: 1481-1627*, “Eventually, Dee assured Peckham that Spain had no rights in the area; on the maps it was New France, having been claimed for Francis I by Verrazzano in 1524 but not occupied. Moreover, Dee was able to point out to them on the large map of North America he had drawn in 1580 the precise place he thought their settlement should lie. Verrazzano had stayed for some time on Narragansett Bay, in modern Rhode Island, which he called his ‘Refugio,’ and there it was decided that Peckham should lay out his seignory.”⁴

In June of 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert set sail with five ships destined for the Dee River. One day out, the crew of the *Bark Raleigh*, captained by Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s younger half-brother, Sir Walter Raleigh, contracted a contagious disease and had to head back home. The other four ships, two of which were captained by Edward Hayes and William Winter, made it as far as St. John’s, Newfoundland, where they revictualized and rested for two weeks. Heading down the coast of Nova Scotia, near Sable Island, they hit a tempest. *The Delight*, owned by William Winter, hit a sand bar and was crushed to pieces. Having lost his two largest supply ships, Gilbert headed back to England, hoping make a fresh start the following spring.



Unfortunately, off the coast of the Azores, he got caught in another furious tempest. His ship was swallowed by a huge wave and he drowned. As the letters patent to North America were in Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s name, the effort to settle a colony at the Dee River came to a grinding halt. I suggest Gilbert’s fatal tempest inspired the tempest in *The Tempest*.



Historians assert Gilbert couldn't have built the Tower, as he never made it to the Dee River. Quite true, but David Beers Quinn found that a year earlier, in 1582, Gilbert sent a preliminary expedition of "two ships and a pinnace," led by Anthony Brigham, who voyaged to the New World. Brigham was gone for nine months, then returned to London and met with Secretary of State Francis Walsingham about "the discovery in America."⁵ I claim Anthony Brigham had a crew of about eighty carpenters and masons who built the Tower to be the city center of the first Elizabethan colony in the New World.

Though he never sailed to America, John Dee was not only the architect of the Tower, he was also the architect of the whole colonization plan. With the legal arguments, he put forth in his 1577 *General and Rare Memorials to the Perfect Art of Navigation* and his 1578 *The Limits of the British Empire*, John Dee convinced Queen Elizabeth she had a legal right to most of North America.⁶ Dee also coined the term 'The British Empire.'

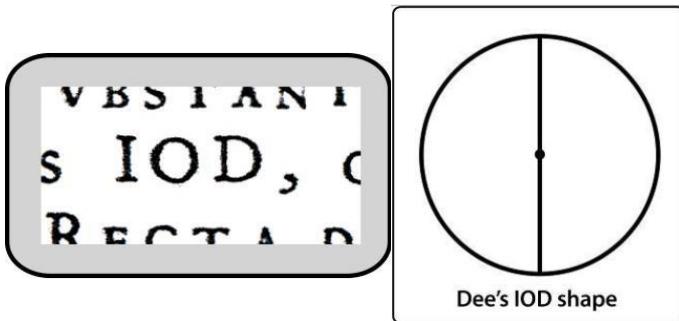
John Dee loved the number 10

By 1583, John Dee had amassed perhaps the largest library in England – over 4000 books and manuscripts. He also wrote over forty books on history and science. His



most cherished work was his 1564 *Monas Hieroglyphica*, which consists of twenty-four theorems involving mathematics, and written in alchemical language. I translated his book from Latin and came to understand John Dee's mathematical cosmology, which involves certain synchronies between geometry and number. Dee cryptically calls the number Ten "the Ultimate Power of Nature and Art," as it is a return to One, the Monad.

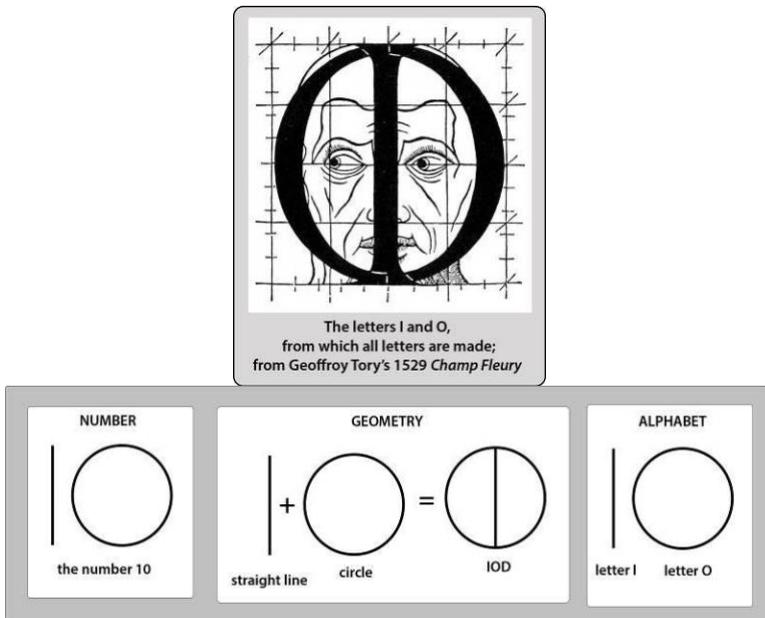
Dee's 'General Evaluating Rule' reads: "the strength and intrinsic Value of the One Thing, purported by others to be chaos, is primarily explained (beyond any Arithmetical Doubt) by the number Ten."⁷ Dee describes a symbol he calls the 'IOD' – a circle with a vertical diameter, resembling the Greek letter Phi, Φ . Dee also designed what he calls his 'Monas' symbol, which has ten points on its spine and, I believe, is the 'blueprint' for his Tower.



In Theorem One, Dee writes, "The first and most simple representation of all things" in Nature "is made by means of a straight line and a circle."⁷ He adds that the "first mystical letters of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin are made from straight lines and circles." Dee appears to have learned this concept from the French humanist Geoffroy Tory. In his 1529 *Champ Fleury*, Tory demonstrates how all the Latin letters derive from the letters I and O.⁸

In short, Dee's IOD symbol represents numerous things: line and circle in geometry; the seed of all the letters in the alphabet; the philosophical 'oppositeness' between 1 (everything) and 0 (nothing); and the number 10, which he saw as a return to 1. On top of that, the letters in the word IOD make the shape, Φ .





Dee leaves England

In 1582, despite the Queen's approval, Edmund Grindal, the head of the English church, vetoed John Dee's 60-page recommendation to revise the English calendar in a fashion similar to the Gregorian Calendar Reform in Catholic countries. As a result, England remained out-of-sync with the sun and with the rest of Europe for the next 169 years, until 1752.

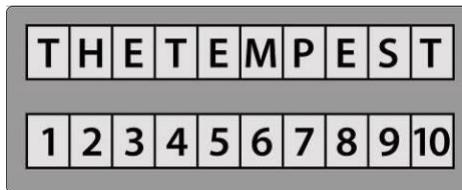
In September of 1583, fed up with his countrymen who couldn't plant even a small colony in the New World, and who rejected realigning their calendar with the cosmos, Dee surreptitiously left England. He spent the next eight years in the courts of various kings and princes across northern Europe. Dee brought with him his family and his scryer-for-hire, Edward Kelly, who reputedly conversed with various angels, like Rafael, Uriel, and Madimi.⁹

Over the years, many scholars have suggested that the character Prospero in *The Tempest* was inspired by John Dee. Both loved books and magic. After having studied Dee and his Tower for many years, I re-read *The Tempest* and realized it contains so many clues about Dee, his cosmology, and Elizabethan colonization effort of 1583, that Dee and Shakespeare must have been co-authors.

For example, Sir Humphrey Gilbert's final words were, "We are as near to heaven by sea as by land."¹⁰ He was paraphrasing a Sir Thomas More quote from *Utopia*, the book Sir Humphrey was apparently clutching in his hands. In the final words of Act One, Scene One of *The Tempest*, Gonzalo laments, "Now would I give a thousand furlongs of Sea, for an Acre of barren ground: Long heath, Browne firrs, any thing; the wills aboute be done, but I would faine dye a dry death."¹¹ To me, Gonzalo was Sir Humphrey Gilbert.

teMpeStas was originally teNpeStas

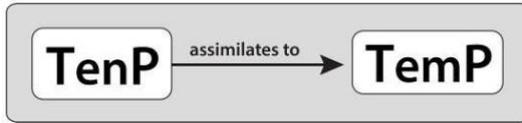
I found examples of Dee's 'ten-ness' all over the play. There are ten scenes (including the epilogue). There are ten letters in the title: *The Tempest*.



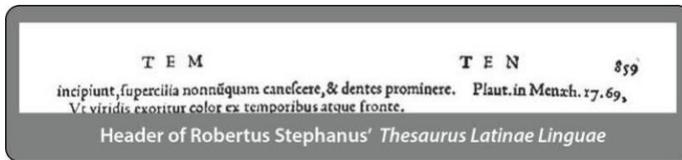
Studying the etymology of the word 'tempest,' I found that the prefix 'tem-' was originally the prefix 'ten-,' which means 'a stretch.' In Latin, *tempeStas* means a 'stretch of time' and *templum* means 'a stretch of land.'



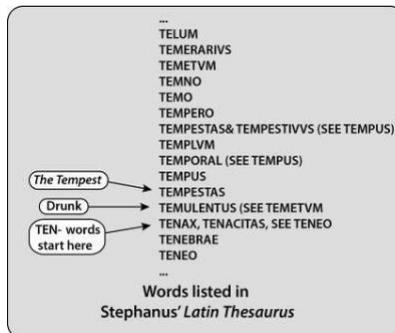
In early Latin, the word *tempeStas* was *tenpeStas*; but through the process of assimilation, the 'n' morphed into an 'm.' (Phonetically speaking, when followed by the plosive sound 'p,' the nasal sound 'm' is easier to articulate than the nasal sound 'n'.)



Studying John Dee’s 1583 library catalog, I discovered he owned *Thesaurus Latinae Linguae*, by far the most comprehensive Latin dictionary of his time, compiled by the Parisian humanist Robertus Stephanus.¹² (whose last name sounds a lot like *The Tempest* character Stephano, “a drunken Butler.”) Stephanus’ Latin dictionary is organized by first-three-letter groupings. The *TEM* words are followed by the *TEN* words.



And only one word separates *Tempestas* from the start of the *TEN* words: *Temulentus*, which means ‘drunk or intoxicated – a perfect description of Stephano. In my mind, this is the type of Latin literary riddle Dee would plant, not Shakespeare.



Who's who?

Based on clues about the other characters actions, words, and the spellings of the names, I deduced that each of the characters in *The Tempest* represents one of the key figures in the Elizabethan colonization effort of the 1580s (plus two French humanists, and two angels). By the word 'is' I mean 'a cryptic reference to.'

- Prospero is John Dee;
- Stephano is Robertus Stephanus;
- Trinculo is Geoffroy Tory;
- Gonzalo is Sir Humphrey Gilbert;
- Anthonio is Anthony Brigham;
- Alonso is Sir George Peckham, because one of Peckham's heroes (who heextols in *A True Report of the Late Discoveries*) was the fearless Alonso de Albuquerque, a Portuguese explorer who conquered all the lands bordering the Indian Ocean;¹³
- Sebastian, like Saint Sebastian the famous martyr, is Sir Walter Raleigh;
- The Boate-Swaine, is Edward Hayes, a riddle on 'hay-wain,' as, metaphorically, a ship is like a giant wagon. Hayes wrote *Sir Humphrey Gilbert's Voyage to Newfoundland*,¹⁴ in which he described the St. Elmo's fire phenomenon, which is like Ariel's "flam'd amazement" in *The Tempest*;¹⁵
- The Master of a Ship is William Winter, hinted at by the expression "yare, yare" (quick, quick), in the opening scene of *The Tempest*. The letter W, 'double-u,' derived from the Latin U, which derived from the Greek Y, so "yare, yare" is like 'W.' (Also, both names end in '-ter.' And a W is like an upside-down M.) Adrian, who corrects the wise Gonzalo about "Widdow *Dido*," asserting, "She was of *Carthage*, not of *Tunis*,"¹⁶ is the geographer and historian Richard Hakluyt (the elder). (Note that 'DIDO' has Dec's word IOD in it. And 'WIDDOW' does as well.);
- Francisco is Richard Hakluyt (the younger), who, while he was the chaplain to the English ambassador to France (isco), compiled numerous reports on foreign explorations for his two great works, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America* and *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*. In the dramatis personæ of *The Tempest*, "*Adrian & Francisco*" are the only two characters linked as a pair, like the pair of Hakluyts;
- Caliban represents Native Americans;
- Ferdinand is Simon Fernandes, the skilled Portuguese-born pilot, who made a 1580 reconnaissance mission to the New World for Gilbert and Peckham.

Upon his return, Fernandes delivered his ‘Sea-Carte’ to John Dee at Dee’s home in Mortlake. In the mid-1580s, Fernandes also guided several of Sir Walter Raleigh’s missions to Roanoke Island;¹⁷

- Ariel is the angel Anael or Uriel;
- Miranda is three-persons-in-one: Dee’s daughter, Madinia, who tragically died from the plague at age 15; her namesake, the angel Madimi; and Queen Elizabeth. Besides the similarities in spelling to the name ‘Miranda,’ all three were virgins.
- The initials of the three goddesses in the betrothal masque, Iris, Iuno, and Ceres, can be creatively combined to make Ioannes Dee’s initials, I D.



Summary of “Who’s Who.”

The secret code symbol and the secret code word

In 1583, the Spanish Ambassador warned the Queen that if she authorized anyone to settle in the New World, the colonists “would immediately have their throats cut as happened with the French who went with Juan Ribao.” (In 1565, the Spanish had massacred everyone in Jean Ribault’s French colony, in what is now Jacksonville, Florida.)¹⁸ So John Dee devised a secret code symbol and a secret code name for the mission of 1583. The secret code symbol was the ‘Anchor of Hope.’ And the secret code word was ‘Rode.’ In his 1525 report to the French King, Giovanni Verrazzano mentioned a prominent landmark: a “triangular island” (now called Block Island) “about the size of the Island of Rhodes,” which points to the mouth of “Refugio” (the Dee River, Narragansett Bay).

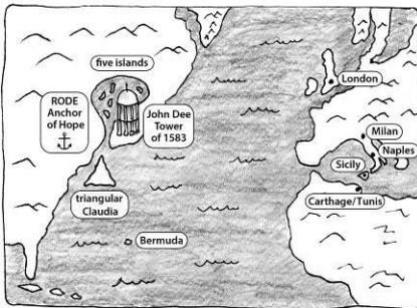
Triangular clues

In the *Monas Hieroglyphica*, Dee refers to himself as “the fourth letter, Δ.” The fourth letter in Greek is Δ (Delta) and the fourth letter in Latin is D(ee). John Dee delighted in making visual riddles with the equilateral triangle. In the Title page illustration of *General and Rare Memorials* is a tetrahedron that hides four clues, each involving a triangle. And in the John Dee Tower of 1583, there is a prominent triangular stone above the west-southwest arch, which faces the mouth of the Dee River and the triangular island beyond.¹⁹

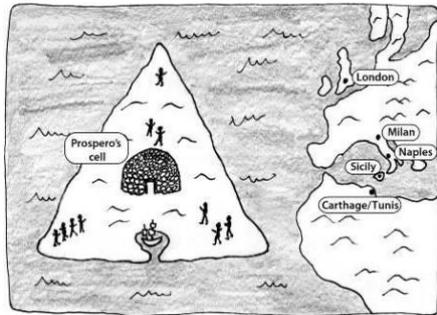


“Triangle” Rock in the W SW arch

I claim Prospero's island in *The Tempest* was meant to be seen as triangular, as Ariel separated the shipwrecked men into three distinct groupings: Ferdinand; the King's Men; and the two drunks. After various escapades, the three groupings all end up in the center of the triangular island, in a circle, inside Prospero's cell.



The John Dee Tower of 1583 at RODE in the New World



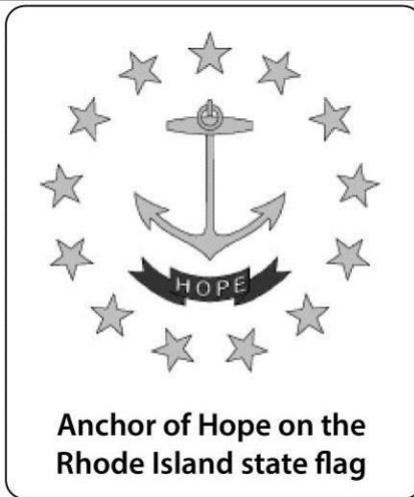
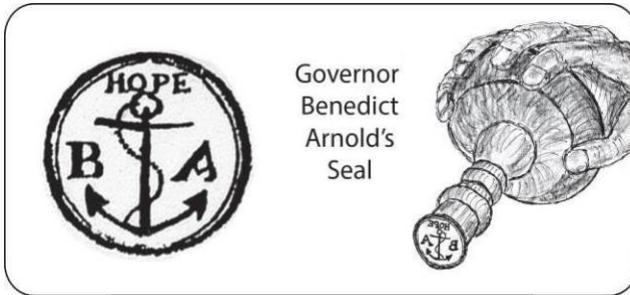
Prospero's cell on Prospero's Island in *The Tempest*

Governor Benedict Arnold

In April of 1636, one of the first English settlers in Narragansett Bay was Benedict Arnold (the great-great-grandfather of the notorious Revolutionary war traitor). In 1637, Benedict Arnold named Aquidneck Island (on which the Tower is located) "Rode-Island," even though Roger Williams wanted to name it Patmos, the island in the Aegean Sea where Saint John wrote the book of Revelation.²⁰

After learning the native Algonquin tongue, Arnold became a skilled negotiator and bought large tracts of land. He accumulated great wealth as the main trading factor between the Narragansett Indians (the largest tribe in New England) and the merchants of Boston (who traded with England).

In 1663, Benedict Arnold was appointed by King Charles II to be the first Governor of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. And the 'Anchor of Hope' became the official state symbol (and it still is today). In his Will of 1677, Arnold bequeathed the Tower and his Governor's mansion to his youngest daughter, Freelove, in hopes that she would marry well. Indeed she did. She married Edward Pelham, the man with the highest peerage (royal blood) in New England. I believe Arnold knew all about the Elizabethan colonization effort of 1583, but hushed up the Tower's true history by calling it a windmill, so the descendants of the 1583 investors wouldn't use the Tower as evidence for a land claim.



Summary

If *The Tempest* is a tree, the roots and trunk are Dee's cosmology. The Twigs and leaves are Shakespeare's eloquent words and plot twists. And the branches are their collaboration. Dee gave it structure. Shakespeare (whoever he was) breathed life into it. Two extraordinary minds, each bringing a unique talent to this classic play. I realize all this sounds fictional, but sometimes truth is stranger than fiction. All my conclusions are based on the plethora of clues Dee left in his texts, maps, illustrations, and in his Tower.

For a much more thorough explanation, read my 630-page book, *Shakespeare and John Dee co-wrote The Tempest*. The subtitle is: *Prospero's Island is Rhode Island. Prospero's cell is the John Dee Tower of 1583. The characters in The Tempest represent the main players in the.*²¹ For even more details on my interdisciplinary research, read *Elizabethan America, the John Dee Tower of 1583*.²²

Or even better, visit the Tower itself and the Newport Tower Museum, which is just 50 steps northeast of the Tower at 152 Mill Street.²³ There many more clues about this exciting chapter in the birth of America, and the birth of the British Empire, a term coined by John Dee.

Notes:

¹ William S. Penhallow, "Astronomical Alignments in the Newport Tower," in *The Newport Tower, Arnold to Zeno*, (Edgecomb, Maine: NEARA Publications, 2006), 32-43.

² William B. Goodwin, "The Dee River of 1583 (Now called Narragansett Bay) and its relation to Norumbega." (R. I. Historical Society, *Collections*, April 1934), 38-50; and also Mood, Fulmer, "Narragansett Bay and the Dee River, 1583," (R.I. Historical Society, *Collections*, October, 1935), 97-100); The February 28, 1582 Agreement between Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir George Peckham and George Peckham is reproduced in David Beers Quinn, *The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1940), Vol I, 341-346; The "Dee River" quote is on pages 342-343, along with Quinn's map of the land described in the agreement. The actual document is in the British Record Office, (Close Roll, 25, Elizabeth, pt.8 C54/1154 m. 2-3).

³ John Dee, *General and Rare Memorials Pertaining to the Perfect Arte of Navigation*, (London:1577), (Quote is written in Greek, across the banner on the Title page illustration).

⁴ David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America: 1481-1620* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973) 376; For another "Dee River" quote see Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages AD 500-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 570.

⁵ David Beers Quinn, *The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Vol. I and II*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1940), Vol I, 62 and Vol. II 375-376.

⁶ Ken MacMillan, with Jennifer Abeles, *John Dee: The Limits of the British Empire*, (Westport, CT, Praeger, 2004), 17-19.

⁷ Dee, John, *Monas Hieroglyphica* (Antwerp, Gulielmo Silvio, 1564), 5 verso and 27; James Alan Egan, *Monas Hieroglyphica* (In Latin), (Newport RI, Cosmopolite Press, 2014); James Alan Egan, *Monas Hieroglyphica* (In English) (or *Sacred Symbol of Oneness*), (Newport RI, Cosmopolite Press, 2014).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.



- ⁹ Geoffroy Tory, *Champ Fleury*, 1529 (New York; The Grolier Club, 1927), 38-55.
- ¹⁰ Deborah E Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 46-51.
- ¹¹ Richard Hakluyt (the younger) *The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589), 679-97.
- ¹² William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act 1, Scene 1, Lines 76-79; Line numbers based: <http://triggs.djvu.org/djvueditions.com/SHAKESPEARE/TEMPEST/Download.pdf>
- ¹³ Robertus Stephanus, (or Robert Estienne) *Thesaurus Latinae Linguae*, Three Volumes; John Dee owned the 1543 edition: Julian Roberts, & Andrew G. Watson, *John Dee's Library Catalogue*, (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1990), 215; and Index III, 240, "Latin Language and literature," Dee's book number 249.
- ¹⁴ Sir George Peckham, *A True Report of the Late Discoveries*, printed in *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, by Richard Hakluyt (the younger), (London: 1598-1600).
- ¹⁵ Hayes, Edward, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert's Voyage to Newfoundland*; published in Richard Hakluyt (the younger), *The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (London: 1589).
- ¹⁶ Shakespeare, William, *The Tempest*, op.cit, Act 1, Scene 2, Line 310.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., Act 1, Scene 2, Line 756.
- ¹⁸ David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America: 1481-1620*, op. cit, 252.
- ¹⁹ David Beers Quinn, *The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, Vol II, 278-9.
- ²⁰ John Dee, *General and Rare Memorials Pertaining to the Perfect Arte of Navigation*, (London: 1577).
- ²¹ Glenn W LaFantasie, (editor), *The Correspondence of Roger Williams, Vol. I*, p. 165.
- ²² James Alan Egan, *Shakespeare and John Dee co-wrote The Tempest*, (Newport RI: Cosmopolite Press, 2015).
- ²³ James Alan Egan, *Elizabethan America: The John Dee Tower of 1583, A Renaissance horologium* in Newport, Rhode Island: * A horologium is a building that keeps track of time.* (Newport RI: Cosmopolite Press, 2011).

For more information on the Newport Tower, please visit the following:

<http://www.newporttowermuseum.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/NewportTower/>