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“People tend to throw out the past and say that it’s not relevant anymore. My argument is, it’s very relevant,” Cooperman says.

# Robert Cooperman

*on the Need for Conservative Theater*

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LITERATURE

# Did ‘Hamlet’ Take a Journey to the East?

An Uncanny Clue to the Authorship of Shakespeare’s ‘Hamlet’

EVAN MANTYK

“Hamlet” is arguably the most famous of William Shakespeare’s plays. It is the source of such famous lines as “To be or not to be—that is the question,” “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark,” “Brevity is the soul of wit,” “To thine own self be true,” and the list goes on and on. The famous skull that often appears in caricatures of Shakespeare comes from “Hamlet.” I also find my children watching current TV shows that feature “Hamlet”-themed episodes and, of course, Disney’s “Lion King” takes some plot points from the play. According to the British Council, “Since 1960, there have been publications and productions of ‘Hamlet’ in more than 75 languages.” For the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, in 2016, famous actors like Benedict Cumberbatch, Ian McKellen, and Judi Dench, as well as Prince Charles, took to the stage to humorously bicker about how best to deliver the famous “To be or not to be” line. Thus, in the highly picked-over and analyzed world of Shakespeare, and in the even more picked-over and more analyzed world of “Hamlet,” I was certain that there could be nothing new under the sun. This is why, one day, I was quite shocked when I found something very different about “Hamlet” that I’d never expected.

**‘Journey to the West’**  
I had taught classical literature at my school before, the works of Homer, Defoe, Tolstoy, and so on, but since our student body includes many people of Chinese ethnicity, I thought I would venture into some of the Chinese classics that semester. “Journey to the West,” by Wu Cheng’en, is regarded as one of the Four Great Novels of China and seemed like the natural choice since, from what I had understood, it was full of fantasy-like adventure as well as profound spiritual themes. It would be both entertaining for students and rich in essay-writing opportunities. It’s hard to imagine, but “Journey to the West” has undeniably had a bigger influence on Chinese society than “Hamlet” has had on the West. The novel has spawned television series, cartoon series, and a comic book series with which every Chinese child is familiar. In 2015, China even named its Dark Matter Particle Explorer satellite “Wukong” after one of the main characters in “Journey to the West.”

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Prince Hamlet holding the skull of Yorick, 19th century, by Ronald Gower, Stratford-upon-Avon.



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**HISTORY**

## Mothers and Sons: Mary Pinckney Hardy MacArthur and General Douglas MacArthur

The hand that rocks the cradle

*On battlefields around the world, soldiers have cried out for their mothers as they lay dying. And memorably, Abraham Lincoln once said, "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother." In our series "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle: Mothers and Sons," we will look at a number of famous men strongly influenced by their mothers. Not all these women were angels, but their love, disposition, and sense of principle left an indelible stamp on their sons.*

**JEFF MINICK**

The last few decades have witnessed the rise of helicopter moms—mothers who hover over their children—taking an often excessive interest in their development, encouraging their academic and social success, sometimes even calling a college professor to complain about a grade received by their student. Tiger mom has become a household name for mothers who push their children to excel in school. This same phenomenon occurs with stage moms placing young children with modeling agencies and entering them into beauty pageants. So keen is this desire for their children's success that some parents have gone so far as to bribe college officials to win them entrance to their schools.

With the exception of those who employ bribery, such moms might consider making Mary Pinckney Hardy MacArthur—"Pinky" to her family and friends—the godmother of helicopter parenting. Pinky was the mother of General Douglas MacArthur, one of the greatest of American military commanders and a man whose reputation remains controversial to this day. For over 50 years, she was his teacher, his exemplar, his major domo, his confidante, and his lodestar of inspiration.

Though a Southerner whose brothers had fought for the Confederacy, in 1875 Pinky married Arthur MacArthur, a Union war hero and a man who, until his death 37 years later, remained a legend in the U.S. Army. With him, Pinky moved from one Army post to another, bore three children, lost one, Malcolm, at age 4 to measles, and the other, Arthur III, a graduate of Annapolis and a rising star in the Navy, in 1923 to appendicitis.

Douglas MacArthur was 3 years old when his brother Malcolm died, and from that point on he became the center of his mother's care and affection. He adored his father and looked up to him as a hero, but it was the ever-present Pinky whose words and example molded MacArthur's character.

As Arthur Herman writes in the biography "Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior," "Until her death in 1935, she would be the single most important woman—indeed the single most important person—in his life."

**This Man Is Her Son!**  
Pinky began by seeing to his early education. "Her sons never lacked books about martial heroes," biographer William Manchester tells us in "American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964." "In her lap they learned the virtue of physical courage and the disgrace of cowardice."

For high school, Pinky enrolled her son in San Antonio's West Texas Military Academy, where, with her constant encouragement, he soon turned from academic mediocrity to shining achievements. In the field of sports he excelled as well, becoming quarterback of the football team, a shortstop in baseball, and winner of the school's tennis championship.

After his graduation as class valedictorian, both of MacArthur's parents sought to do all in their power to prepare him for

his entrance examinations to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Pinky supervised his studies in preparation for these exams, having him read under her attentive care while also hiring tutors for him and enrolling him in a Milwaukee high school to review such subjects as mathematics and English.

On the day of the test, when a sleepless MacArthur felt nauseated by anxiety, it was Pinky who put some backbone in him. She pulled her son aside just before the exams and said, "Be self-confident, self-reliant, and even if you don't make it, you will have done your best. Now, go to it."

His score was 16 points higher than the best of the rest of the applicants. MacArthur was off to West Point, and so was his mother.

For the next four years, Pinky rented a room in a hotel near the Academy, where MacArthur visited her whenever he had the freedom to do so, sharing his adventures and taking advice and inspiration from her.

At one point during his time as a cadet, MacArthur faced an enormous crisis. A court established to investigate hazing at West Point ordered MacArthur to reveal the names of cadets who had hazed him to the point of unconsciousness. It was an order he considered dishonorable and intended to refuse, but that refusal might well lead to his dismissal.

Before entering the courtroom, he once again experienced the nausea that had afflicted him on the day of his entrance examination. Just before he was to appear in the courtroom, he opened a letter containing a poem sent to him by his mother. The last lines gave him the strength he needed to face the court.

Be this your task, if task it shall be  
To force this proud world to do homage to me.

Be sure it will say, when its verdict you've won  
She reaps as she sowed: "This man is her son!"

MacArthur kept his honor, survived the ordeal, and graduated at the head of his class.

**Only once did Pinky have a falling out with her son.**

**His Life**

Even then, Pinky remained very much a part of MacArthur's life, the chief person whose counsel he sought and valued. She wrote letters promoting his assets to General Pershing. She traveled with him early in his military career to the Far East, and thereafter remained physically near him when circumstances permitted.

Only once did Pinky have a falling out with her son. When MacArthur married his first wife, a union that would end in a bitter divorce, she refused to attend the wedding and scorned his new bride.

Some sons might have resented such overbearing maternal affections. Not Ma-



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Arthur. Until the end of her life, and indeed until his own death, he offered his mother unstinting affection. Dwight Eisenhower, an aide at the time to MacArthur, remembered that his mother's death in 1935 "affected the General's spirit for many months."

In a letter to a friend, MacArthur himself wrote some days after the funeral that "Mother's death has been a tremendous blow to me and I am finding the greatest difficulty in re-coordinating myself to the changed conditions." Later, he wrote, "My loss has partially stunned me and I find myself groping desperately but futilely."

Rarely in history do we encounter such a bond between mother and son. Her influence was immense. As Arthur Herman writes, "She had been the central character in his life... She had been tough and charming, practical yet sentimental, an incurable romantic yet wise to the ways of the world—character traits that she had passed on to her son."

MacArthur went on to a brilliant military career. He commanded forces in the Pacific during World War II, ushered in political and economic change to Japan following that war, and in a much-disputed action, was removed from command by President Truman during the Korean War.

Guiding Douglas MacArthur throughout all these endeavors were those principles and lessons embedded in him by that helicopter-mom-extraordinaire, Pinky.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin in seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See [JeffMinick.com](http://JeffMinick.com) to follow his blog.

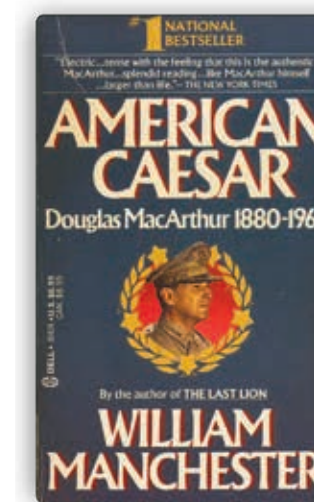
**Rarely in history do we encounter such a bond between mother and son.**



(Left) Brig. Gen. MacArthur at a French chateau, in September 1918.

(Above) In his book "Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior," Arthur Herman points out the importance of MacArthur's mother to his life.

(Below) The biography of Gen. MacArthur by William Manchester.



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## LITERATURE

# Did 'Hamlet' Take a Journey to the East?

An Uncanny Clue to the Authorship of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'

Continued from Page 13

Just imagine if the Hubble Telescope was called the Hamlet Telescope—that's the influence of "Journey to the West."

The novel tells the story of an unusual group of Buddhist monks traveling from China in the East to India in the West to obtain sacred scriptures from the Buddha. The group includes the monk Sanzang, a character based on a real monk during the Tang Dynasty (618–907) who made the journey, as well as entirely fictional characters: a magical monkey-man known as the Monkey King; a foolish, gluttonous pigman known as Pigsy; and a relatively minor character named Sandy.

I found myself enchanted when I first read it. It was like a fairy tale that never stopped, with episode after episode of the group running into dastardly trouble and finding a way out, usually thanks to the Monkey King or divine intervention. It was one such episode, found in chapters 37–40, that struck me as curiously similar to "Hamlet." Like "Hamlet," the episode began with a visitation from the ghost of a dead king.

The next year, I decided to teach "Hamlet" for the first time and use the "Journey to the West" episode as a story for literary comparison. In rereading the stories and analyzing them with my class, it suddenly dawned on me

that there was not simply a fortuitous connection for a high school English teacher to make here; there was genuinely something going on.

## Eerie Connections

Both stories begin with the visitation of the ghost of the dead king, but that is only the beginning. Both dead kings have a specific message to impart to the main characters: essentially that the king was secretly murdered by his brother—in "Hamlet," a real brother, and in "Journey," "a sworn brother."

In "Hamlet," this brother killed the king while he was in his garden—in "Journey," it's technically an orchard—and the brother then becomes the king, marrying the queen. In "Journey," the sworn brother is a sorcerer who transforms himself into the king's likeness, but the effect is the same: The queen is now the king-killer's wife.

In both stories, the murder leaves the prince, who is heir to the throne, at first in the dark about the whole matter. Once the prince becomes aware of the ghost's message, he sets out to right the wrong. The same overall story arc—just getting rid of the bad king—is present in both "Hamlet" and "Journey."

One of the first orders of business for the prince in both stories is to confront the queen. In "Journey," this exchange of dialogue between the prince and the



▲ The four protagonists of "Journey to the West": (L-R) Sun Wukong, Tang Sanzang (on the white dragon horse), Zhu Bajie, and Sha Wujing. The painting decorates the Long Corridor in the Summer Palace in Beijing.

## Both 'Hamlet' and 'Journey' end with a plot twist that puts all of the previous story into a new light.

queen seems as if it is straight out of "Hamlet"—not verbatim but certainly in effect:

To which the Prince replied with a kowtow, "Mother, who is it who now occupies the throne?"  
"The boy's gone mad!" exclaimed the Queen. "It's your father who's King. Why do you ask?"

In "Hamlet," the queen also accuses Prince Hamlet of being mad, and Hamlet similarly tries to awaken his mother to the evil character of the murderous brother sitting on the throne.

Both "Hamlet" and "Journey" end with a plot twist that puts all of the previous story into a new light. In "Hamlet," just as Hamlet is dying, the Prince of Norway, Fortinbras, who has been in the background of the entire play (so much so that his character is often completely cut out of productions), shows up to claim the throne and leave what seems a happy ending for Denmark.

In "Journey," a Buddhist god, known as Bodhisattva Manjushri, shows up out of nowhere and sets everything straight. It turns out that the king who was murdered was actually being justly punished for something bad he did (similar to how the ghost in "Hamlet" says he must be "confined to fast in fires, / Till the foul crimes done in my days of living / Are burnt and purged away"), and that the devious "sworn brother" was in fact the Bodhisattva's heavenly lion magically disguised. The king in "Journey," who has been brought back to life, is reinstated on the throne and the tragedy is entirely averted, with this kingdom, like Denmark, also having a happy ending.

If these similarities were not proof enough and, frankly, eerie enough, both works have a publication date that is bizarrely close, considering the geographically opposed and disconnected nature of 16th-century England and China. "Hamlet" is believed to have been first performed at the Globe Theatre around 1600, and the official publication date of "Journey" was just eight years earlier in 1592.

Finally, another similarity that I would be willing to dismiss as coincidental, but that also seems negligent to entirely ignore, is the name of the kingdom in "Journey," which is Wuji and can be literally translated as "crow cock." There is no explanation whatsoever why the kingdom has such a silly name in "Journey," but in "Hamlet" Act 1 Scene 1, several lines mention the crowing of a cock, which scares away the ghost.

The distinct impression one gets is that the author of "Journey," Wu Cheng'en, or someone else who transmitted the story to China, simply pulled a few words from the very beginning of "Hamlet" to be the name of the kingdom.

## What Does It Mean?

There is the obvious explanation that the stories simply were passed around, one way or the other. A common example of such literary exchange is the fairy tale of Cinderella, which has both a common European version and a very similar Chinese version. Which came first? No one knows for sure, and almost no one cares.

However, in this case, the situation is decidedly different since the amount of Shakespeare scholarship is extensive and has built a rather elaborate Shakespeare narrative that is something of a fragile house of cards, with one weak part depending on many other weak parts. "Hamlet" is believed to have been written, at the earliest, around 1599. A little wiggle on 1599 and the whole history of Shakespeare could come crumbling down.

Based on my numerous readings and analysis, it seems likely that some version of "Hamlet"—virtually the same as the "Hamlet" we have now, given the close similarities to "Journey"—actually

## One episode of the famous Chinese literary classic 'Journey to the West,' found in chapters 37–40, struck me as curiously similar to 'Hamlet.'

came before "Journey to the West." The interweaving plotlines in "Hamlet" and the play's realism do not give the feeling of something that was artificially adapted. It seems a natural work on its own—though one that we already know has some basis in Western legends of a prince acting mad while plotting to unseat the king.

The "Journey" episode, however, because of its fairy-tale-like nature and greater interest in thematic elements and humor rather than plot and character coherence, does have a feeling of being thrown together with anything possible at any turn. For example, characters transform to look like others, and beings fly back and forth to heaven. Thus, it seems plausible, indeed likely, that the "Hamlet" storyline was simply adapted into the framework that "Journey" follows.

If "Hamlet" did come first, this means that the "Hamlet" we know must have been written a bit earlier, definitely before 1582 when Wu Cheng'en died and probably some five or ten years before that in order for the story to have traveled to China and been incorporated into "Journey to the West." However, if we even give the generous date of 1578 as the date that "Hamlet" was written and circulated, that would mean that Shakespeare, born in 1564, was only 14 years old. How could that be possible?

## Shakespeare Authorship Theory

This leads to the long-existing theory that Shakespeare did not in fact write Shakespeare's plays. There is a widely held belief that William Shakespeare was merely an actor and that the plays were written by someone else of noble status. The theater was considered too common at that time for a noble to attach his name to a play performed there, so the actor William Shakespeare received the credit.

"This may sound preposterous now, but "Hamlet" itself is evidence of the strict code of what was and was not acceptable for the English nobility at that time. When any royalty in "Hamlet" speaks, it is in iambic pentameter. Only when Hamlet is acting mad or is interacting with commoners, including actors, does he switch to speaking in normal prose. Also, Shakespeare's plays demonstrate that whoever wrote them had an extensive education in history, languages, and foreign countries that a noble would likely have and William Shakespeare, who was a commoner, most likely did not have.

The strongest candidate for who wrote Shakespeare's plays is the Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere, who was known as a great playwright but has no plays existing in his name, and who has poems published under his name up until works start appearing under the name William Shakespeare. His life experiences and travels seem to reflect the content of Shakespeare's plays, and it is famously recorded in history that someone said to him in the royal court,

"Thy countenance shakes spears"—quite possibly a tongue-in-cheek reference to the name "Shakespeare." Indeed, the case is so strong for de Vere that a major 2011 movie, distributed by Columbia Pictures, presented it as fact. The movie was titled "Anonymous."

De Vere was born much earlier than Shakespeare, in 1550, and would have been 28 at the time that I have hypothesized "Hamlet" could reasonably have been written. The character Hamlet, who was probably to some extent autobiographical, was 30 years old. Therefore, in China, we find another point of evidence for de Vere as the real Shakespeare playwright.

## True Wisdom

But squabbling about Shakespearean authorship is not what I had in mind when I was shocked by the similarities. Rather, it was a sublime moment when I realized that all of human affairs, as chaotic as they seem, are in fact working in a clear and coherent fashion that is difficult, and usually impossible, for us mere human beings to see.

Strange coincidences that defy chance can be found throughout history. In science, it is actually somewhat common, such as when Sir Isaac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz both invented calculus independently on opposite sides of Europe around the same time. The Russian Dmitri Mendeleev invented the Periodic Table of the Elements at the same time that, according to ThoughtCo., other scientists in Germany and France were doing the same thing. More inexplicably, there are the simultaneous deaths of U.S. Presidents Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, who had opposing political ideologies and lived far away from each other. Both died on July 4, 1826, exactly 50 years after July 4, 1776.

Looking further back at a wider scope of history, we see that Siddhartha Gautama (circa 566–486 B.C., also known as the Buddha), Laozi (sixth century B.C., the forefather of Taoism), Confucius (551–479 B.C.), Socrates (circa 470–399 B.C.), and the Jewish prophet Daniel (circa 620–538 B.C.) all lived around 2,500 years ago and had profound effects on the spirituality and culture that would exist up to the present.

The fact that this episode of "Journey to the West" and the play "Hamlet" are so similar and were widely circulating around the same time on opposite sides of civilization tells us that there is some force—sublime, divine, heavenly, whatever you call it—that cannot be explained but cannot be denied. It leaves all of our human affairs looking rather shallow in comparison. This is more than literature; it is true wisdom.

Evan Mantyk is the president of The Society of Classical Poets and editor of the book "Prince Hamlet and the Monkey King," from which the "Journey to the West" quotes are taken.



Both stories begin with the visitation of the ghost of the dead king. An engraving of Hamlet, Horatio, Marcellus, and the Ghost, from "Hamlet," Act 1, Scene 4, by Robert Thew after Henry Fuseli. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



THEATER REVIEW

A Debate on

# MORALITY

DIANA BARTH

**N**EW YORK—Playwright Robin Glendinning was inspired to write the provocative “Kingfishers Catch Fire” by a visit a few years ago to the Ardeatine Caves in Italy, where a terrible incident had taken place in World War II.

A Nazi lieutenant colonel, Herbert Kappler had been in charge of a massacre of 335 Italian men, in reprisal for the killing of some German soldiers, in Rome. He had received a life sentence for his participation in crimes against humanity.

The playwright has imagined conversations that may have taken place after the war between actual people: Kappler (Haskell King) and Monsignor Hugh O’Flaherty (Sean Gormley) in Kappler’s prison cell in a sixth-century castle in the city of Gaeta on Italy’s western coast. The play’s title comes from a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins.

The monsignor, uninvited, starts to question Kappler about his comfort in the prison: Is he being treated well, getting enough exercise, and so on? The cynical Kappler gives terse answers. The two men had known each other briefly during the war, when Kappler, who was head of the Gestapo in Rome, had given orders to assassinate O’Flaherty for his activities in helping enemies of the Third Reich flee to freedom. Of course, Kappler was unsuccessful.

It is a cat-and-mouse encounter, with each man putting forth his own moral concepts, his views of the world, and of how people should behave.

Kappler accuses the monsignor of trying to capture his soul, to convert him to Christianity. The monsignor denies this. But Kappler goes on to present his view of things. If religion were such a great thing, how could such terrible acts as war and atrocities be permitted? Monsignor has no answer.

The second act builds to the nitty-gritty of the discussions. What actually happened at the caves? The details are painful to relate, and as painful to listen to.

Kappler insists he did the deed—that is, take charge of rounding up 335 potential victims—against his own personal feelings. When the monsignor pleads “Why didn’t you stop?” Kappler replies: “I had to keep going until it was finished.”

There is so much of this throughout history: ordinary men simply following orders. Surely, this is more dreadful than assuming that only monsters commit these monstrous deeds.

As the play is all talk with not much cause for action, it is a tribute to the two excellent actors and to director Kent Paul’s extremely subtle and sensitive direction that the production never fails to hold one’s interest.

Haskell King, especially, in a section where he insists he is not entirely to blame, has such a strong sense of actor’s truth that he is mesmerizing. I would



have wanted a more consistent German accent, but that is a minor quibble weighed against his overall performance.

Sean Gormley is the perfect picture of a monsignor, with brogue to match.

The production values are excellent, with Edward Morris’s set conveying the right, dark feeling of an uncluttered, primitive prison cell, supported by Matthew McCarthy’s somber lighting. Linda Fisher’s costumes are right on the mark.

The production is a thoughtful, compelling theatrical entity in its world premiere.

*Diana Barth writes for several theater publications, including “New Millennium.” She may be contacted at diabarth99@gmail.com*

(Above) Nazi Lt. Colonel Herbert Kappler (Haskell King) and Monsignor Hugh O’Flaherty (Sean Gormley) in Kappler’s prison cell discuss the war crime committed by Kappler during World War II.

(Right) Haskell King as Nazi Lt. Colonel Herbert Kappler.

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