

# Shakespeare's Anne Hathaway

by David Basch

Anne Hathaway was eight years older than the eighteen year old William Shakespeare she married — a most unusual age match. Shakespeare may have thought so too since his Duke Orsino in the *Twelfth Night* counsels a young lady to marry a man older than her for enumerated practical reasons. This literary episode, along with the historical fact of Anne's pregnancy at the time of their marriage, his residency in London away from Stratford for long periods of time, and his will leaving Anne "*his second best bed*," led to the surmise that their relationship was a poor one.

On the other hand, there are indications, little considered, that would point oppositely. One of these is that, irrespective of a will, by law, a wife received a third of her deceased husband's property. Hence, Anne was hardly a deprived heir. More telling is what the poet reveals about her in *Sonnet 145*, where she is shown as admirable, compassionate, dynamic, and loved. Below is the sonnet in the spelling and approximate layout of its original 1609 quarto printing. (*See the last page for a facsimile of the original.*)

## 145

- [1] **T**Hose lips **tha**t Loues owne hand did make,  
[2] **B**reath'd forth the sound that said I **hate**,  
[3] To me **tha**t languisht for her sake:  
[4] But when she **saw** my wofull state,  
[5] Straight in her heart did **mercie** come,  
[6] **Chiding** **tha**t tongue **tha**t euer sweet,  
[7] **Was** vsde in giuing gentle dome:  
[8] And tought it thus a new to greete:  
[9] I **hate** she **alterd** with an end,  
[10] That follow'd it as gentle day,  
[11] Doth follow night who like a fiend  
[12] From **heauen** to **hell** is flowne **away**.  
[13] I **hate**, from **hate** away she threw,  
[14] And **sau**'d my life saying not you.

Compared to the others, *Sonnet 145* is radically idiosyncratic. It is composed of just two sentences, the first being an unusual twelve lines long, running from line 1 to 12 with two subordinate clause divisions. Added to this, the poem is not written in the pentameter of others but in shorter tetrameter lines. This speeds the pace at which the twists and turns of its marvelously connected sequences of rhymes and alliterations impinge on the reader. One critic described as “grotesque” and “entirely unidiomatic” its disproportionate fourteen subjects and verbs in its long sentence and has had a field day in cataloguing the numerous and unusual grammatical features involved. Yet, the poem’s brisk and flowing narrative is humorous, its surprising punch line arriving along a convoluted path of unexpected shifts in meaning — shifts that Shakespeare is observed fond of using in his other poems.

Given the poem’s underlying complexity that ironically is put to the service of conveying a simple and effective narrative, it is hard to understand why commentators would misconstrue it as some kind of light literary effort, writing it off as a work not worthy of the poet or as a product of his early immaturity. Also, the poem’s allusions to damnation and salvation are observed to fit themes taken up in neighboring sonnets — hardly a misplaced effort.

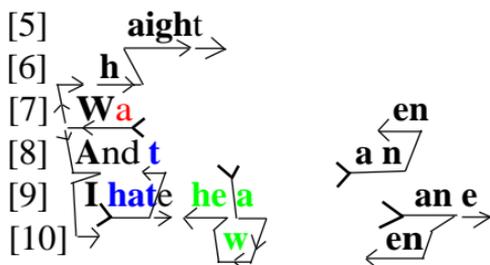
Another remarkable aspect of the sonnet is that leading commentators have reported being persuaded that Anne’s surname, *Hathaway*, is presented as a pun in line 13 in the words, “*hate away*.” Also, an expert on Elizabethan pronunciation has observed that, since “*and*” was regularly heard as “*an*,” it is likely that the poem’s last line that begins with “*And*” is a tribute to Anne, its words heard as “*An[ne] saved my life*.” In fact, we have in this sonnet what is most rare in Shakespeare’s work: a direct personal reference to him as well as to his wife. Yet, for the most part, scholars have taken little account of what the sonnet does reveal about Anne or of the poet’s feelings toward her.

By all rights, that the sonnet alludes to the personal poet should encourage careful attention. Telltale elements, such as the last words of lines 2 and 12, present the words, “*hate*” and “*away*,” again give Anne’s surname as we saw it in line 13. And, what is more, we find again the combination, “*hate*” and “*away*,” con-

spicuous as the words that in effect begin and end the cluster of lines 9 to 12 — the last subclause of the sonnet’s long sentence.

If finding significance in this recurrence seems far fetched, *what must be said* when the brief acrostic, **W-A-I**, on lines 7 to 9 is noted with the letter “**a**” beside the **W** (see below), notably forming the letter string, “**aW-A-I**,” sounding “*away*” as in *Hathaway*? Then reading “*hat*” on line 9 with another “*t*” above, we have the letters **hat-t** to link to nearby “**a’W-A-I**.” And above “**aW-A-I**” on line 6 is a letter string beginning with “**h,**” which, read up on a diagonal to the letters “**aight**” of “*straight*,” again sounds “*hate*.” Joining these two strings again gives “**h-aight – aW-A-I**” — another version of Anne’s surname. Also, when “*h-aight*” is read, minus its ending “*t*” but with the letters “**aW**” below read up to it on the diagonal, the combination yields “**h-aight –a’W-h-aigh**” — again *Hathaway*.

And this is not all. A similar outcome occurs in reading “*hate*” on line 9 in *palindrome-like* fashion with the letter string abreast of it, “**a-w-eh**” — the latter reading down from “**a**” of “*altered*” to “**w**” and then up, diagonally left, to letters “**eh**” — giving “*hate* > < **a-w-eh**.” These readings, preserving their original quarto text layout, are shown extracted below on the left with directional arrows, :



Although these *Hathaway* renderings are built up by joining, close by, but separated letter strings, their sheer number of instances is impressive. More impressive yet are the *continuous versions* as “*ha’-th-i-’w a-e*” (lines 1 to 5) and on lines 13 to 9 as “*ha’t-heaue-’w-w-a e*.” In the latter device, the quarto’s “*u*,” which in the sonnet is read “*v*,” is here sounded “*u*.” (See these two versions in the sonnet on page 1.) These many devices tell of a deliberate arrangement as part of the sonnet design.

That these are indeed devices, not accidents, is further buttressed by numerous devices of the name *Anne*. One was already encountered in the word “*And*” on line 14, telling of the “*sav[ing]*” *Anne* had wrought. A similar case can be made for “*And*” on line 8, heard as “*An[ne] tought*.” Her name shows up again in a nearby, eye-catching cluster of three more readings between lines 7 to 10. Two are read “*a n-ne*” and one reads “*an e*,” as shown with directional arrows, extracted on previous page 3.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from these many repeated devices is that the sonnet is designed to celebrate *Anne*. This alone should spark interest in what the sonnet tells about her. We read of her in the first line, telling of “*those lips that Loves (Cupid’s) own hand did make*.” (*Is there a wife that would not be thrilled by such a compliment?*) Further on, we learn of the poet’s woe and anguish at *Anne*’s expression of “*I hate*” and of his sorrowful mood that stimulates the “*mercie*” that came “*in her heart*.” She chides her “*tongue*” that was “*ever sweet*” in pronouncing “*gentle do[o]me*,” teaching it to again be merciful. In this, we learn that *Anne*’s way was ever to express a “*gentle doom*” — *not a shrewish, blood curdling doom* that is at first suggested by her opening words, “*I hate*.”

The sonnet describes a woman with “*mercie*,” a kind heart, soft-spoken and warm — “*ever sweet*” and “*gentle*” — of whom the poet is absolutely enamored. She is in the guise of a dynamic, aroused force and the poet cringes at the thought that somehow he had done something to displease her. And that is why both we and the poet are so very much relieved when we learn in the sonnet’s very last words that the “*I hate*” she “*breath’d forth*” was directed at “*not you*.”

The sonnet brings an encounter with an aroused, vital woman, far different from stereotypes of an Elizabethan submissive wife. Certainly, *Anne* is not a silent type but a forceful woman, a mainstay of her home, respected and loved.

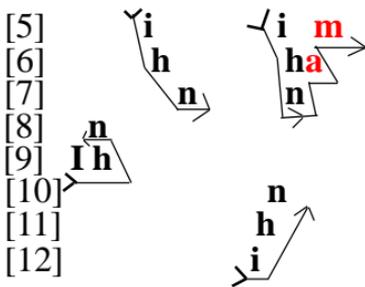
If after what has been seen, the skeptic persists in doubting that the name devices shown represent deliberately embedded structures that impart messages, not mere accidents, then



- [1] **T** hose **lips** **th**at Loues owne hand did make,  
 [2] **B**reath'd forth the sound **th**at said I hate,  
 [3] To me **th**at languisht for her **sake**:  
 [4] But when she **saw** my wofull state,  
 [5] Straight in her **h**ear<sup>t</sup> did mercie come,

Devices of the full names of *Anne* and *Will* having been shown, we next find that, in a like manner, there are also representations of the names of the second principal couple of the Shakespeare family, that of the poet's father *John* and mother *Mary Arden*.

As to John's name, we recognize its representations when we note that the Elizabethan letter "i" is also "j." It is then that we may read the consonants of John's name appearing in configurations four times as "**i-h-n**" (reading *j[o]-h-n*, the vowel assumed in the Hebrew manner) — in lines 12 to 10, 9 to 8, and twice in lines 5 to 7. Note the version "**i[o]-'h[a]-'n-a-m**," corresponding to "*Johannem*," his name as listed in a period court record, revealed by British historian Peter Levi. These devices are presented below and in the sonnet on page 1, in bold:



Turning to the name *Mary*, this appears as "**m[a]-'r-ie**" and "**m[a]-'ree**" (vowels again assumed), with both versions springing from "**m**" of "*dome*" on line 7, one reading up from the "**m**" and the other down. A third version sounds the name in Hebrew ("**mer-'eu-om**"). A fourth version as "**m-ar-y**" occurs with its letters on lines 4 to 5. All are presented below:



- [4] But when she saw my wofull state,  
 [5] Straight in her heart did mercie come,  
 [6] Chiding that tongue that euer sweet,  
 [7] Was vsde in giuing gentle dome:  
 [8] And tought it thus a new to greete:

Concerning Mary's surname, three devices are found approximating the sound of *Arden*. The first of these is in a divided form that runs between the lines 6 to 9. It begins with the letter "o" of "dome" (line 7) that is read with the letters "er" above as the string "o-er." The device continues with the letter "d" (beside the "o") that is read vertically down to pick up the letters "o" and "n" on lines 8 and 9. Combined, this gives in full, "o-er - d-o-n," as shown below extracted:



Another two versions, "erd-u-n" and "er-d[e]-n," are each continuous. These are seen below within lines 7 to 11, both springing from the same letters "er" of "alterd" on line 9. These are read in two letter strings that unfold in opposite directions, one version read upward and the other down, as shown extracted:



Although these representations of *Arden* are approximations, their consonants do correctly correspond to that in her name. The mere presence of three of these devices must challenge the idea that chance alone had brought them. That they are telltale becomes even more certain when still another continuous version is found on lines 12 to 14 in the letters "a-r-'d-o-en" — an even closer resemblance to this name (see this on the next page). This device begins on line 14 with the letter "a" of "sau'd"

that is read up along a slight diagonal to the “*r*” above in “*from*.” The string continues diagonally down to “*d*” of “*sau’d*” and then vertically to letters “*o*” and “*en*” on the two lines above. This is shown below with directional:

[12] From heauen to hell is flowne away.

[13] I hate, from hate away she threw,

[14] And sau’d my life saying not you.

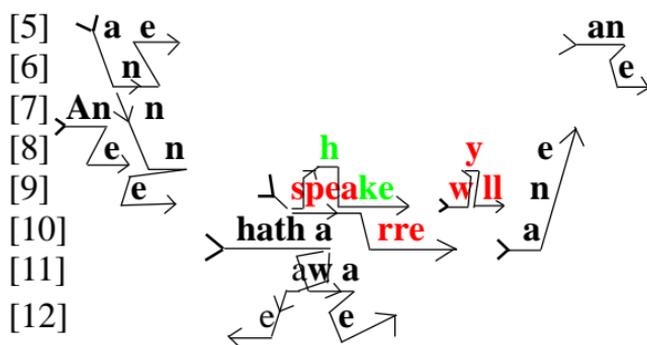
It becomes most apparent that this extensive orchestration of related and repeated devices within a single sonnet is a phenomenon far beyond any normal working of chance. That there are representations of the full names of four members of the Shakespeare family, including that of the poet, and that these appear in a sonnet that specifically sonneteers one of them, the poet’s wife, indicate that these must have been deliberately crafted by the author. This array of devices, probably purchased at the cost of the unusual form of the sonnet that enabled them, reveals the poet’s supreme literary mastery, that, in addition to his meeting the demands of creating a spirited poem, he was able to do so while simultaneously visualizing the letters of its words in taking on the numerous observed configurations of name.

Critics focusing on the sonnet’s unconventional form are deceptively distracted to regard it as some light limerick, perhaps not even the work of Shakespeare. But now, with the greater understanding that built into the poem’s texture are numerous name devices that imposed most difficult requirements of skill to bring about, the poem can be recognized as a stellar example of the possibilities of the literary art. The hurdles that had to be overcome in bringing forth this complex literary array — *the selection of strategic words with letters that enable the contrapuntal configurations of words and yet manage to meet the severe literary constraints of poetry* — make it evident that this is a poetic work worthy of the genius of Shakespeare.

As has been observed, the sonnet is invaluable in giving a rare glimpse into the personal life of the poet and his wife. However, in addition to this, as we see, the sonnet also re-

veals a hitherto unknown technique of communication that the poet used in presenting covert messages through devices contrapuntal to the text. While this demonstrates his uncanny skill, the question must arise as to why he would have felt the need to resort to such heroic efforts to create secret communications.

Perhaps the answer is that the poet anticipated challenges to his authorship. By presenting devices of his name and those of close family members, he thereby built into his sonnet proof of his authorship. That this was not a unique attempt to do so is shown by *Sonnet 130*, in which in a resourceful intertwining of letters, he also presents his full name as “*s-h-ake – spea-rre*” and “*w-y-ll*.” At the same time, he again confirms his love for *Anne*, identifying her as the sonnet’s beloved “*Mistres*” through numerous devices that specifically spell her name — “*An-e*,” “*a-n-e*,” “*a-n-n-e*,” and “*ha’th a-w a-e*.” These are shown extracted below in their original quarto layout in that sonnet:



*Sonnet 145*, couched in the humble garb of a spirited rhyme, shows the poet as a loving husband and authenticates him as the author of his poem (and thereby all his poems). Of note, he also shows a respect for the *Bible* through actualizing *verse 14* of correspondingly numbered *Psalm 145*, which verse tells of the Lord’s beneficence in upholding “*the fallen*” and in “*straightening those bent [by harsh circumstance]*” — a condition that, *tongue in cheek*, could well describe the poet in the sonnet’s first thirteen lines. Finally, in an allusion to God’s oversight of all who revere Him — “*He will ... save them*” (*Psalm 145: 19*) — the poet indeed finds rescue in the nick of time, revealed in the sonnet’s last line:

“*An[ne] sav’d my life saying not you.*”

Also to be noted is the sonnet's tie to correspondingly numbered *Psalm 145* in the latter's assertion of God's "abundant goodness" (verse 7). This tie is shown by the device in the sonnet's opening letters transliterating God's name as **H[a]'T-To-B**, "the Good." This begins below on sonnet line 1 as follows:

- [1] **T**Hose lips that Loues owne hand did make,  
 [2] **B**reath'd forth the sound that said I hate,  
 [3] **T**o me that languish't for her sake:  
 [4] **B**ut when she saw my wofull state,  
 [5] Straight in her heart did mercie come,

What is more, God's name as the *Tetragrammaton* also appears in a device between lines 3-5 as "y-h-w-h," beginning with "y" of "my" (line 4) in a progress of diagonals, as shown above.

Another interesting aspect of the sonnet turns out to be its number, 145. In transliterated letters that correspond to the Hebrew *cipher-letter* expression of this number, **KMH** (קמה), this actually spells the Hebrew word **Ka'MaH**, which literally means, "she arose." This catches the essence of Anne's action in the sonnet and seems to have inspired the very theme of this unusual sonnet. In another allusion suggested by the sonnet number, expressing these numbers as letters, *one-for-one*, gives the Hebrew word, **A[E]'M[a]H** (אמה)\* — **mother** — another theme that has been shown to have been carried out in the sonnet by the devices that sound the full name of the poet's mother, *Mary Arden*, and other family mothers.

But more far reaching in this vein are the numerous transliterations of the Bible's first *Matriarch's* name, *Sarah*. The implication is that the poet, by doing so, is identifying himself and the others as sons and daughters of *Mother Sarah* — an

\* *The same letters may sound "A[y]'M[a]H," which means "dread," another theme expressed in this sonnet that describes the poet's reaction to Anne's outburst.*

*Also, the sonnet contains three transliterated versions of the Hebrew for "a woman of valor" (a'shes/t cha'yil - אשת חיל). This reads on lines (ll) 3 to 4 (see above) as "a-'she s" and ll 2-1 as "h[a]-'il" ("h" transliterates Hebrew "ch"; "i" reads as "y" as occurs in some sonnets, e.g., **IF** spelled **YF** in Son124). See also on page 5, ll 10-13 as "a's-h-e-t," ll 13-14 "ha-'yl," ll 13 "ay'she t," and ll 13-12-13 "h-o-'y-l."*

*historic, personal revelation.* One of these name devices is close to the pronunciation in Hebrew, “**soH-’r[a]-h.**” It begins on the sonnet’s first line (*see these and others on page 1*) in a *right-to-left* reading of the letters “**soH**” of “*Those*” and continues below to the “**r**” of “*Breath’d*” and then down diagonally to “**h**” of “*that.*” (*The added vowel here, as in others, is assumed in the manner of written Hebrew, in which vowels are inferred from context*). A second version reads down from the “**s**” of “*Loues*” (line 1), joining vertically with the letters below, “**o**” of “*found*” and “**r h**” of “*for her,*” giving “**s-o-’r[a]h.**” Another begins from the “**s**” of “*saw*” (line 4), continuing down on a diagonal to the letters, “**r h**” of “*her heart,*” giving “**s[a]-’r[a]h.**” Still another version appears on lines 14 to 12, beginning its reading with “**sa**” of “*sau’d*” (line 14) to the above letter “**r**” in “*from*” and up again on a diagonal to the letter “**a**” of “*heauen,*” giving “**sa-’r-a.**”

As a further confirmation that the *cipher-number*’s theme of “*mother*” is being carried out, the sonnet also includes numerous devices transliterating the name “*Eve*” — the *Bible*’s “*mother of all.*” This is read twice in the palindrome, “*eve,*” in the word “*euer*” (line 6). In addition, phonetic versions appear in the letters “**ea[v]**” of “*heauen*” (line 12) and as “**e-a[v]**,” the latter emerging in reading up from “**e**” of “*hate*” (line 13) to the previous letters “**au**” of “*heauen.*”

To make the point of “*mother*” unmistakable, *Eve* in Hebrew, *Cha’vah* (חַוָּה), is transliterated twice in continuous vertical tandem as “**h[a]-’u-o-h**” and “**h-a-’u-o-h**” (running from lines 8 to 1, beginning in the words, “*thus*” (line 8, page 7) and “*heart*” (line 5, page 6). “**C[a]-’W[a]-h**” (lines 6-7-6, from “*Chiding*”) and “**k[a]-’w[a]-h**” (lines 11-13, from “*like*”) also sound the Hebrew (see page 1). In all these, “**h**,” “**C**” and “**k**” transliterate the Hebrew *Chet* (similar to “*ch*” in Scottish “*loch*”); “**u**” sounds “**v**”; “**w**” sounds the “**v**” given by the Hebrew letter *Vov* in *Chavah* (חַוָּה) — the latter as pronounced by Sephardic Hebrew speakers.

*Sonnet 145* exhibits the supreme mastery of Shakespeare in bringing forth an amazing wealth of devices that augment the themes given by the words of the poem. These provide never before observed windows into the poet’s thoughts and methods, enabling deeper probes of the poet’s message and of the poet himself.

**T**Hose lips that Loues owne hand did make,  
 Breath'd forth the sound that said I hate,  
 To me that languisht for her sake:  
 But when she saw my wofull state,  
 Straight in her heart did mercie come,  
 Chiding that tongue that euer sweet,  
 Was vsde in giuing gentle dome:  
 And tought it thus a new to greece:  
 I hate she alterd with an end,  
 That follow'd it as gentle day,  
 Doth follow night who like a fiend  
 From heauen to hell is flowne away.  
 I hate, from hate away she threw,  
 And sau'd my life saying not you.

*Notes on reading quarto facsimiles:*

The quarto facsimile displays the original spelling, arrangement, and alignments of letters and can be used to verify alleged alignments in devices. Note that the diagonal linkages from a *starting letter* reach to the letters beside the letters, wholly or in part, that lie directly below or above it.

The Elizabethan spelling practice is to use in midword the letter “*u*” for the “*v*” and the “*v*” for the “*u*” at the beginning of words. (Shakespeare makes them interchangeable in his devices.) Also, note the replacement of the “*s*” at the beginning of words and at midword by the “*long s*” — a letter form that resembles the “*f*” but without the full crossing of the horizontal bar at its center stem. Also, note that Elizabethan letter “*i*” is also the letter “*j*.”