

New documentary evidence shows
that William Shakespeare
certified his authorship of the Sonnets through
hidden name devices and thereby
his authorship of all his work.

**SHAKESPEARE *versus* EDWARD DE VERE and
FRANCIS BACON**

by David Basch

Shakespeare is unusual among the literary giants in that there is a sizable community of scholars that believes that he did not write the great works attributed to him. As early as fifty years after his death, there were those who disparaged him as an uneducated though facile craftsman who had cleverly absorbed the literary work and knowledge of learned persons to write his plays. Little did his critics dream that, considering the caliber of the resulting work, even such a feat would have stamped Shakespeare as superlative beyond belief. These carping critics could not accept that someone from Shakespeare's humble, plebeian circumstance could have written what he did. In succeeding years, the earlier mild kernels of disparagement progressed to such an extent that some critics began to charge that "*a better pen*" was actually the true author of his literary work. Among the many candidates proposed by critics for this role were the British noblemen, *Edward de Vere* and *Francis Bacon*.

But the case for an alternative authorship has now taken a fatal turn. As is now revealed, the true author of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* placed his full name in one of its poems in the original 1609 printing using the technique of *steganography*, an act that is most telling.

Steganography is a method of secret communication in which messages are hidden through disguising their presence. With a presence not suspected, such messages need not be in the form of complex ciphers or codes and can be plainly written, being visible but yet hidden from unwanted eyes. In this fashion, Shakespeare presented his first and last names in one of his sonnets. Obviously, the steganographic technique was remarkably effective since its use eluded the eyes of scholars for almost 400 years.

Normally, a finding that an author placed his name in disguise in one of his works would be of some interest but of little importance. However, in the case of Shakespeare whose authorship has been seriously questioned, such a finding has enormous implications in finally certifying him as having written his own work. What makes the placement of these secret, personal autographs especially useful in accomplishing authentication is that it is done in a manner that makes it unmistakable that it was the author himself who did this deed. The secretly imbedded names have been worked into the very texture of the words and arrangement of the sonnet, hence, these could not have been the work of an outside hand. Once this is recognized, it must stamp pretenders to the mantel of the Shakespeare authorship as altogether false. Otherwise, objectors would have to explain why an Edward de Vere or Francis Bacon would have placed hidden versions of the false name of William Shakespeare in a sonnet they themselves had written.

O Me!

It is a surprising discovery that *Sonnet 148* presents William Shakespeare's autographs. Most appropriate in telegraphing this role of bearing the author's telltale signatures, the sonnet begins with the declaration, "*O Me!*", words that are set off with an exclamation point on the first line as

if for special emphasis — "*O Me!* what eyes hath loue put in my head." Critics have commented on the exclamation point which some have thought would have better been located at the end of the line as appropriate to the line's full thought. While the opening words still flawlessly merge into the text of the poem, in which a love sick poet complains of the emotional ravages of a love that blinds him to what lies before his eyes, when the hidden content of the sonnet is revealed, the same words, "*O Me!*", take on new significance. They are not only a marquee and introduction to the overlooked material but serve as a focusing *commentary* on it. (See the full sonnet on page 8 and a facsimile of the original printing following.)

The original printed text of the sonnet is arranged in such a manner that inspection reveals numerous clear configurations that sound the poet's names as "*Will*" and "*Shakespeare*." Concerning the renderings of his name, "*Will*," one of these is immediately apparent in a first letter acrostic on the sonnet's lines 6 to 8, which happen to spell it out phonetically in capitals as "*W-I-L*." Moreover, since the prior line 5 begins with the letter "*I*," we can find in this giving a second *commentary* on the presence of the poet's name by reading it with the other acrostic letters as "*I[myself]WIL*."

Of course, a short, barely four-letter acrostic is hardly significant and could very well be accidental. But, as it happens, it does not appear alone. Accompanying it are other configurations that present the poet's name as "*wil*," "*wyl*," and "*w-y-l-ye*." The first of these, "*wi-l*," appears in a configuration that runs on lines 2 and 3 and makes use of perfectly aligned letters, "*wi-l*," of the vertically stacked words, "*with*" and "*fled*." The second instance, "*w yl*," is read *right-to-left* on line 4 in the words "*falsely what*." Finally, the configuration, "*w-y-l-ye*," appears in a vertical, ascending arc that begins on line 7 at the "*w*" of the word "*well*" as follows:

[4]	ey
[5]	l
[6]	y
[7]	w

Notice that these autographs are in full view, needing only clues to encourage hunting them down — like the clues given by the words, "*O Me*," and the acrostic, *I-W-I-L*. While these alleged devices, though repeated, may still prove little to the skeptic — *probably rightly so* — when they are considered in connection with additional devices that present letters sounding the poet's surname, *Shakespeare*, the case for the presence of deliberate *name-dropping* in the sonnet dramatically strengthens.

The steganographic versions of the poet's surname emerge in two-part configurations of its syllables, "*Shake*" and "*speare*." This division echoes the syllables of the poet's surname shown divided by a hyphen in the banner occurring at the top of every two-page spread of the 1609 *Sonnets*, reading *SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS*. An in-text version of the poet's surname is shown below within lines 10-14 of the sonnet as separately extracted letters, but with their configuration preserved. This is followed by the full text within which they are merged. (Note that abreast of the surname is a device of the poet's first name (*w-I-l*) embedded in the text's word "*selfe*" — another telltale commentary in this context. (A similar device of the poet's first name as *w-ll* is found on lines 7-8, stacked in letters of the words "*well*" and "*all*."))

[10]		eare
[11]		ake i
[12]	selfe	h eere
[13]	l	s p
[14]	w	s

[10] That is so vext with watching and with **teares**?
 [11] No maruaile then though I **mistake** my view,
 [12] The sunne it **selfe** sees not,till **heauen cleeres**.
 [13] O cunning **loue**,with **teares** thou **keepst** me blinde,
 [14] Least eyes **well** seeing thy foule faults should finde.

a closer sounding of the poet's surname as "*sha c — sp-y-er.*" Also, this is adjacent to the earlier seen device of the poet's first name, "*wi-l*" — *again giving the poet's full name.*

Finally, another indication that this was a poem on which Shakespeare lavished his special care is the appearance of what are called *equal letter skip (ELS)* devices. It is evident that such secret communications through *equal letter skips* were known during the Elizabethan period since they also appear elsewhere in the *Sonnets*. In *Sonnet 148*, there are two such instances spelling out "*w-i-l-l*," one at equal skips of 142 letters (beginning at the "*w*" of the word "*with*" on line 2) and a second at letter skips of minus 146 (*that is, reading right-to-left*) beginning with the "*w*" of "*well*" on line 14. (*See these marked in the sonnet on page 8.*) While there are 18 such *ELS* devices reading "*w-i-l*" in this sonnet, even numerous three-letter appearances are hardly telltale since accident readily yields them. But a random check of more than a dozen other sonnets does not disclose a single four letter *ELS* name sequence as "*w-i-l-l*."

Whatever the poet's reason, the hidden insertions of his name in so many forms woven into the texture of the poem, plus the at least three "*commentaries*" seeming to remark on the fact, demonstrate without question that this is the poet's own contrivance. We can speculate that Shakespeare probably did it to demonstrate his craft. Or perhaps he actually had reason to anticipate that one day there would be attempts to challenge his authorship of his own work.

Though the actual reason may remain elusive, that he did in fact autograph his sonnet must be considered proof of his authorship. *For can it be plausible that Edward de Vere, Francis Bacon, or any of the others proposed as authors would craft a sonnet with hidden autographs of Shakespeare's name?* It would make no sense since, as already noted, Shakespeare's authorship was proclaimed in the

original *Sonnets* at the top of every two-page spread in the banner title as *SHAKE-SPEARES*. This indication of his name would have required no further effort for an author, not Shakespeare, to falsely establish this authorship in the depths of a sonnet if the deception were indeed the fact.

Shakespeare can even be said to hint that such contrivances appear in his sonnets since he wrote the following in *Sonnet 76:7* — “*That every word doth almost [t]el my name.*” Below are four lines from this latter sonnet, including its line 7 above, shown in their original spelling, punctuation, and layout. True to line 7’s proclamation about his “*name,*” the lines reveal “*almost*” spelling of the poet’s first and last names as “*u-ill*” (“*ui*” sounded as “*wi*” as in the word “*quick*”) and “*s-ha-k-e — pe-er*” (*almost* sounded, lacking only an “*s*”), the latter device appearing in a way not unlike that seen in *Sonnet 148*. Note also in *Sonnet 76* the two phonetic versions of the poet’s first name (*w-lm, w-l m*). *Again, the repetition tells these and the others are deliberate devices and not outcomes of playful chance:*

- [5] Why write I still all one,euer the same,
- [6] And **keepe** inuention in a noted **w**eed,
- > [7] **Tha** euery word doth **al**most fe**l** **my name**,
- [8] **S**hewing their birth,and **w**here they did proceed

On the following page is the full text of *Sonnet 148*, shown in its original spelling and followed by a full extracted presentation of the embedments discussed, seen in their original configurations. These exhibits are followed by a facsimile of the original 1609 sonnet printing, shown with the embedments highlighted.

Sonnet 148

O Me ! what eyes hath loue put in my head,
 Which haue no correspondance with true sight,
 Or if they haue, where is my iudgment fled,
 That censures falsely what they see aright ?
 If that be faire whereon my false eyes dote, _5
 What means the world to say it is not so ?
 If it be not, then loue doth well denote,
 Loues eye is not so true as all mens: no,
 How can it? O how can loues eye be true,
 That is so vext with watching and with teares? _10
 No maruaile then though I mistake my view,
 The sunne it selfe sees not, till heauen cleeres.
 O cunning loue, with teares thou keepst me blinde,
 Least eyes well seeing thy foule faults should finde.

Sonnet 148

O Me ! s ha
 c resp wi
 y l
 ely w ey
 I l _5
 W y
 I w
 L ll
 eare _10
 ake i
 selfe h eere
 l s p
 w s s

O Me! what eyes hath loue put in my head,
 Which haue no correspondence with true light,
 Or if they haue, where is my iudgment fled,
 That censures falsely what they see aright?
 If that be faire whercon my false eyes dote,
 What means the world to say it is not so?
 If it be not, then loue doth well denote,
 Loues eye is not so true as all mens: no,
 How can it? O how can loues eye be true,
 That is so vext with watching and with teares?
 No maruaile then though I mistake my view,
 The sunne it selfe sees not, till heauen cleeres.
 O cunning loue, with teares thou keepst me blinde,
 Least eyes well seeing thy foule faults should finde.

The above is a facsimile of *Sonnet 148* as it appears in the original 1609 printing which shows the actual alignments of the various alleged embedment. Note the Elizabethan practice of using the letter “u” for the “v” in midword and the use at the beginning and midword of what is called “*the long ‘s,’*” resembling the letter “f” but without the horizontal line crossing at its center.