

# TYr'd with all these

by David Basch

*Sonnet 66* is unusual among Shakespeare's 154 sonnets in that ten of its fourteen lines begin with the word "And" — a most unusual repetitive feature. The opinion of commentators on this has been mixed. Those who believe that faithfull adherence to the English sonnet form makes poems good see this departure as failure, a sign of the poet's waning creativity. Others are not so sure that this is so, certainly not for a poet who thrives on breaking the mold of conformity. Below is the sonnet arranged in the layout and spelling of the original 1609 quarto printing. (See the last page for a facsimile of the full original.)

## 66

- [1] TYr'd with all these for restfull death I cry,  
[2] As to behold desert a begger borne,  
[3] And needie Nothing trimd in iollitie,  
[4] And purest faith, unhappily forsworne,  
[5] And gilded honor, shamefully misplast,  
[6] And maiden vertue rudely strumpeted,  
[7] And right perfection, wrongfully disgrac'd,  
[8] And strength by limping sway disabled,  
[9] And arte made tung-tide by authoritie,  
[10] And Folly/(Doctor-like) controuling skill,  
[11] And simple-Truth miscalde Simplicitie,  
[12] And captiue-good attending Captaine ill,  
[13] Tyr'd with all these, from these would I be gone,  
[14] Saue that to dye, I leaue my loue alone.

In one respect, the *series of "ands"* makes sense for a sonnet that is a listing. It is a listing of the deplorable social ills of a fallen world that could make a sensitive soul wish for death. Scholar Helen Vendler theorizes that the allegedly rigid "*and-format*" is the poet's way of illustrating what happens when "*arte [is] made tung-tied by authoritie*" — one of the ills listed. But Vendler also discloses the order, development, and hierarchy in the listing that is anything but artless. It begins with pegging the routine failure to render the due owed to the deserving. Ten lines later, this mushrooms into a pervasive, demoralizing social corruption in which "*captive good*" is made to serve "*Captaine ill.*" Who would not be disheartened by such a world? The poet was and wished to die.

Having paraded before us the deplorable corruption that makes life unendurable, the poet suddenly rouses, recognizes that there is a love between himself and his friend. Hence, were he to die, he deserts, leaves alone, his “*loue*,” leaves behind the love that, after all, brings redemption, does make life worth living.

Of particular note is that, while the poet has immersed his poem in a listing of ruinous social crimes, he has, as shown by Vendler, managed not to become part of this corruption by a diminishment of his artistry. On the other hand, external to the poem and beyond issues of artistry is a rankling factor that threatens to undermine its literary achievement. This is the imputation that the poem celebrates a forbidden love for a shallow, young man — allegedly the unsavory nobleman to whom two narrative poems had been dedicated. Given the image of the poet incongruously redeemed by his enthrall to a flawed love, both sonnet and poet are inevitably diminished, the poem suffering by an aura of seeming to be an ode to perversity. Can such a condition have affected the heart and mind of the great poet, of whom fellow poet Ben Johnson wrote, “*He is not of an age but for all time*”?

Happily, these negative suppositions are in error. For the poet reveals in this and in other sonnets that these poems are hardly the “*unpacking of a heart*” devoted to unholy passions. It turns out that this and his other sonnets actually extoll heavenly figures and mentors. Among these is God — *the Friend of Whom the poet tells in Sonnet 30 that, in the while He is thought of, “all losses are restored and sorrowes end.”* Others in this august array include two “*friends*” that are representations of man’s *higher* and *lower souls* — *the very necessary good and bad inclinations*. In the *Sonnets*, the *good inclination* is personified as a beautiful, “*man right faire*” and the *bad inclination* is personified as a “*Dark Lady*,” a temptress toward terrestrial lusts.

While the *lower soul* is common to all living creatures, the *higher soul* arrives later, at about the age of 12. The latter is envisioned as a heavenly visitation to all young people that marks their entry into the moral stage of life. Though this idea has been

generalized by some from the *Bible*'s account of the coming of age of young Solomon in his having an angelic visitation, it is a view common to many religions. Late in arriving, the *higher soul* is envisioned as returning to God at the death of the body.

The poet is more explicit in *Sonnet 144* about the two inclinations, referring to them as “*friends*,” his “*two loves*,” “*being both from me*,” and further describing them as “*angels*” and “*spirits*.” It turns out, these “*friends*” are essential. For absent the influence of the *temptress, the lower soul*, man fails to manifest the passion to reproduce and is incapable of the aggression necessary to feed and defend himself. But absent the *higher soul*, man fails to be attracted to Godly aspirations toward moral goodness and is as a beast. Since the poet craves a Godly, spiritual, higher life of goodness, he is depicted in the *Sonnets* to love the beautiful youth, *his higher soul*, more than the *Dark Lady, his lower soul*, resisting the latter temptress drawing him to earthly passions.

*Given this context, we may now understand the message of the Sonnet 66. We fathom the poet's attachment and deep love for the “man right faire” within himself and how painful is the prospect of separation from his beloved higher self.*

The poet directly reveals this *higher soul* through telltale, *steganographic* embedments in the sonnet text — *elements secret and unsuspected*. These appear as *transliterations* of the Hebrew name for the *higher soul*, known as “*the ne’sha’mah*.” One of these embedments directly presents it in the letter string, “*n-e-’sha’m-ah*,” beginning with the “*n*” of “*perfection*” (line 7), continuing on a diagonal to lines above to the “*e*” of “*virtue*” and to the letters “*sham*” of “*shamefully*,” ending in a *right-to-left* reading of the letters “*ah*” in “*vnhappily*” (line 4). A nearby second version reads, “*n[e]-’sha’m-ah*,” beginning (line 4) with the “*n*” of “*vnhappily*” and, as before, continues below to the letters “*sham*” of “*shamefully*” and again above to “*ah*.” In the latter device, as occurs in written Hebrew, the vowel [e] is assumed. (See these in bold in the sonnet on page 1.)

Still another of these transliterations appears in the lengthy

string, “**n-o-’s-h-o-’m-a-h**” (lines 8 to 13). This begins with the “**n**” in “*controuling*” (line 10) and reads up to the letters “**o**” and “**s**” and then, *in a downward string*, continues to line 13, picking up letters “**h,**” “**o,**” “**m,**” “**a,**” and “**h.**” (*See these in bold, page 1.*)

Other Hebrew devices further highlight the spiritual nature of this sonnet. This occurs with two sets of devices presenting traditional Hebrew names of God, alluding to his role in the affairs of man and man’s soul.

One of these names shows up as *YaH*, the shortened form of the *Tetragrammaton* that appears in *Psalms*. This can be read in the diagonal string “**y-a-h**” that begins with the “**y**” of “*Folly*” (line 10 ) and runs up, *diagonally right*, to the “**a**” of “*made*” (line 9) and to the “**h**” of “*strength*” (line 8). Other strings present this name as “**i-a-h,**” “**i-ah,**” and “**ia-h,**” in each the letter “**i**” read as “**y.**” License for the latter usage is given by the poet who instructs in the opening word of *Sonnet 124*, which conspicuously begins with substituting “**y**” for “**i**” in its first word, “**IF**” — “**YF** *my deare loue ...*”

The other form of God’s name appears as “**ha’tov,**” “*the Beneficent*” — a name used in the grace and other traditional prayers. This reads as “**h[a]’t-o-v**” on lines 4 to 6 and in at least three other instances as “**h[a]’t-o-u.**” In the latter, the poet resourcefully uses the Elizabethan printing convention that often transposes “**u**” and “**v.**” Again, it is the repetitions that make these devices credible. (*See these in bold in the sonnet, page 1.*)

Another confirmation of the poet’s communication through devices comes from representations of his own full name. As such, his name, *William*, is phonetically sounded in the letter string reading, “**w-i-’l-y-’em.**” This begins with “**w**” of “*with*” (line 13) and reads up across four lines to the letters “**e m**” of the words “*arte made*” (line 9). Support for this device is given by a second version, “**u-i-’l-i’am**” (lines 4 to 6). Here the letters “**ui**” are sounded “**wi**” (as in “*quick*”). This is a phonetic reading that opens up the discovery of numerous additional *Will* name devices, reading as “**uil**” and “**uill.**” (*See these color coded on page 1.*)

Adding to the name devices are two versions of the poet's surname. These are rendered phonetically in divided form as “*s-u[a]-c—s-p[ee]-r*” (lines 4 to 7) and “*s-u-e-a-c—s-p-p[e]-or*” (lines 10 to 14). Here, “*su*” sounds “*sh*” as in “*sure*” and in the latter version both syllables spring from the same “*s*” of “*these*” (line 13):

[4] And **purest** faith vnhappily forsworne,  
 [5] And **gilded** honor **s**hamefully mis**sp**last,  
 [6] And **maid**en vert**ue** rudely strumpeted,  
 [7] And right perfe**ct**ion wrongfully disgrac'd,

[9] And arte**m**ade tung-tide by authoritie,  
 [10] And Folly**y** (Doctor-like) contr**ou**ling skill,  
 [11] And simple-Truth miscalde Simp**li**citie,  
 [12] And capt**iv**e-good attending Cap**ta**ine ill.  
 [13] Tyr'd **w**ith all these, from the**se** would I be gone,  
 [14] **S**au**e** that to dye, I leaue my lo**u**e alone.

Although the implication of these many devices is unmistakable, since some fail in standard spelling or are inexact phonetically, some would question their validity. But what critics demanding perfection in such devices fail to consider is that, *as chance*, these so-called, flawed devices — in which the order of consonants are regularly faithful — have already run an enormously difficult gauntlet in appearing and moreso in repeating. This already stamps them as deliberately contrived. Had these been entirely the product of accident, few could have been expected. And with every addition to their number, it becomes ever more evident that these had outrageously defied the laws of chance.

A poet communicating in such a manner not only must meet the rigorous demands of poetry but must simultaneously have visualized letters of his words as taking on contrapuntal configurations presenting meaningful text strings. This enormous challenge entails that, if such a mode of communication is to be made minimally possible, expedients must be taken to give flexibility without sacrifice of validity. This is accomplished by the use of phonetic approximations and printing conventions involving letter transpositions — “*ui*” for “*wi*,” “*su*” for “*sh*,” “*i*” as “*j*,” and interchanges between “*y*” and “*i*” and between “*u*” and “*v*.”

To be sure, such usage risks making individual, alleged devices appear less credible. The poet, apparently mindful of this pitfall, overcomes it, as we have seen, by providing many instances of the devices as well as their repetitions. Also, he makes them exhibit thematic interconnection — *the first name and surname of the sonnet author are given; devices are thematically interrelated and some turn up in the same foreign language.* Altogether, this creates a profile totally uncharacteristic of randomness. It makes unmistakable their deliberate contrivance and, thereby, validates this technique as a method of communication.

Astoundingly, the full array of these devices has not as yet been presented. Looking into the sonnet facsimile, reading down from its opening edge are the strings, “*n-a-y*” and “*a-n-u-l*,” and, reading up from the bottom edge, is the string “*a-y-c-s*” (*aches*). These words, all negative, read as commentary on the evils listed in the sonnet are hardly necessary since self-evident. However, given the genius of a poet taking greatest care with the smallest detail, we must suspect this redundancy is some kind of alert.

In fact, it is. Crossing one another (lines 8 to 4) are the additional commentary devices, “*w-e-e-p*” and “*w-o-e*,” the latter appearing in a second instance as “*wo-e*” (lines 13 to 14). A special distinction of these words turns out to be that accompanying them are devices transliterating their translations into Hebrew, linking them to the other Hebrew devices. These are shown below:

- [4] And purest faith vnhappily forsworne,  
 [5] And gilded honor shamefully misplast,  
 [6] And maiden vertue rudely strumpeted,  
 [7] And right perfection, wrongfully disgrac'd,  
 [8] And strength by limping sway disabled ,  
 [9] And arte made tung-tide by authoritie,  
 [10] And Folly (Doctor-like) controuling skill,  
 [13] Tyr'd with all these, from these would I be gone,  
 [14] Saue that to dye, I leaue my loue alone.

For example, the Hebrew for “*weep*” as *bo'chah* (*fem.*) and *bo'cheh* (*mas.*) are both transliterated. The masculine form appears twice above as *b[o]-'c[h]e* (lines 8 to 7) and *b-o'c[h]-e* (lines 9 to 10). The feminine form appears as *b[o]e'[c]h[a]o* on line 2 in the letters of “*behold*” — “*h*” transliterating “*ch.*”

As for the device “*woe*,” its Hebrew, “*a’hoh*” (*ah’hawh*), is transliterated as “*a’h[o]-h*” (lines 4 to 5) and again in the vertical string, “*a-h-o-h*,” the latter descending from “*a*” of “*all*” to the “*h*” of “*faith*” (lines 1 to 4). Another version may be read as “*a’h[oa]-w*” (lines 14 to 13). Again, it is the repetitions that affirm them. But what is also most interesting about the device “*woe*” is that it can be sounded in the Hebrew of the sonnet’s number 66.

This is seen when the numbers 66 are presented as their Hebrew *cipher-letter* equivalents. (Hebrew is written in a *cipher-alphabet*, which means that its letters are also numbers.) Taking the numbers 66, one-for-one, in which 6 is the Hebrew letter *Vov* (ו), these can be represented as *Vov-Vov* (וו). The *Vov* is an unusual letter since not only does it sound like “*V*” but it can also serve as the vowel, *Holom* (ו), which sounds “*oh*.” Hence, side by side, one letter the *Vov* and the other the *Holom*, the letters וו (*read right to left*) sound *V-oh*. But since the letter *Vov* in the Sephardic pronunciation is as the “*W*,” the same letters sound “*W-oh*” (*woe*). In this sense, the sonnet number, read as *cipher-letters* and taken as they sound in English, actually serve as the sonnet’s title marquee, headlining its theme of social “*woe*.”

Another interesting aspect emerges when number 66 is considered as a whole, in which the *cipher-number* expression of *sixty-six* is סו. Here, *Samach* (ס) is *sixty* and the *Vov* (ו) is 6. Together, these letters (the phonetic equivalent of *SV*) given vowels in the Hebrew manner can phonetically sound “*S[ai]’V[a]*” the Hebrew word for “*old age*” (שיבה), which can also mean “*wisdom*” — *the wisdom of age*. As “*wisdom*,” the *cipher-numbers* may again serve as a sonnet marquee, one that heralds the *wisdom* of the poet who comes to recognize his hasty despair over the baseness of life — *a base life yet made worthy and ennobled by the love of his friend, his higher soul*.

Similarly, the *cipher-letters* (like *SV*) may phonetically sound “*Save*,” a word actually occurring in the sonnet’s last line. This can be read as announcing the sonnet’s theme as “*but*” or “*except that*.” This highlights the poet’s predicament: his desire for death, *except that*, he then forsakes his love — *the significant redeeming exception in a world of corruption*.

Finally, the sonnet number 66 reveals an even more striking feature that tells the ultimate reason the poet designed this sonnet as a series of verse lines beginning with “*And*.” This arises from the feature of these *cipher-letters* that, together, the two *sixes*, *Vov-Vov* (vv - וו), can sound *VoV*, the letter *six*’s actual name. What is significant about this is that this letter pronounces “*ve*,” which in Hebrew preceding a word means “*and*” — as in *A’dom ve’Cha’va* (*Adam and Eve*). Thus, once again, we find the sonnet number serving as an appropriate marquee, this time alluding to the distinctive feature of the sonnet verse lines that begin with “*And*.” Incidentally, this use of “*and*” to begin separate lines is reminiscent of the special *Bible* scrolls in which each page is arranged to begin with “*and*” through a word with the letter *Vov* as the first letter, suggesting a poet fully aware of this traditional *Bible* scribal mode.

Through all of the foregoing, the poet demonstrates a virtuoso ability to create a poem that integrates a complex steganographic content of contrapuntal letter configurations as well as at the same time integrating the variety of meanings implied by the sonnet number as these relate to the themes of the sonnet. This bespeaks the poet’s amazing creativity. He shows himself as not limited by the arbitrary constraints of the sonnet form — a form which to him is not in all respects an essential condition of literary value. To the poet, the sonnet form is a point of departure for his creativity and not an end in itself. Here — as with others of his sonnets — the poet departs from strict adherence to this literary form that calls for three equal quatrains and a couplet. He creates a poem affording a wider communication than that allowed by the sonnet form construed as a rigid mold.

*Sonnet 66* plays an essential role in the *Sonnets* in giving a glimpse of the redeeming power of the *higher soul*. This soul, deep within the heart of man, although set in a flawed world of anguish and evil, is nevertheless shown sufficient to give hope of a life worth living — a conclusion echoing a parallel commitment to life in *Psalms 66:8-9* — “*O bless our God ... Which holdeth our soul in life ...*”

**T**Yr'd with all these for restfull death I cry,  
 As to behold desert a begger borne,  
 And needie Nothing trimd in iollitie,  
 And purest faith vnhappily forsworne,  
 And gilded honor shamefully misplast,  
 And maiden vertue rudely strumpeted,  
 And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,  
 And strength by limping sway disabled,  
 And arte made tung-tide by authoritie,  
 And Folly (Doctor-like) controuling skill,  
 And simple-Truth miscalde Simplicitie,  
 And captiue-good attending Captaine ill.  
 Tyr'd with all these, from these would I be gone;  
 Saue that to dye, I leaue my loue alone.

*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 that lie directly below or above it, wholly or in part.

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. 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 used as the letter “*j*.”

## CODA

As we have seen, the poet clearly lavished great ingenuity on this sonnet through numerous telltale steganographic embedments. It is astonishing to learn that the poet went far beyond what we have already seen by embedding a transliteration of a full line of a well known Jewish prayer that recounts an aspect of the ancient temple worship mentioned in the *Pentateuch*.

This prayer commemorates the burning of incense that accompanied the Temple worship, creating a fragrance to make the service pleasant. The prayer intones: “*Thou art the One before Whom our fathers burned the spice incense.*”

This prayer line is presented below in Hebrew and is followed by a transliteration of its words. This was adapted by the poet in embedments in this sonnet that render these words. The words are shown in the sonnet on the next page, its elements presented in bold and in color coding for legibility. This presentation is also accompanied by directional arrows to facilitate their reading:

אַתָּה הוּא שְׁהִקְטִירוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְפָנֶיךָ אֶת קִטְרֵת הַסַּמִּים.

Atah hu she'hik'ti'ru a'vo'sey'nu le'fa'ney'cha es k'to'ret ha'sa'mim.

- [1] **T**Yr'd with all these for restfull death I cry,  
 [2] **A**s to behold desert a begger borne,  
 [3] **A**nd needie **N**othing trimd in iollitie,  
 [4] **A**nd purest faith **v**nhappily forsworne,  
 [5] **A**nd gilded honor **s**hamefully mispl<sup>a</sup>st,  
 [6] **A**nd maiden vertue **r**udely strumpeted,  
 [7] **A**nd right perfecti<sup>o</sup>n wrongfully disgrac'd,  
 [8] **A**nd strength by limping sway disabled,  
 [9] **A**nd arte **m**ade tung-tide by authoritie,  
 [10] **A**nd Folly (Doctor-like) controuling skill,  
 [11] **A**nd simple-Truth miscalde Simplicitie,  
 [12] **A**nd captiue-good attending Captaine ill.  
 [13] **T**yr'd with all these, from these would I be gone,  
 [14] **S**au<sup>e</sup> that to dye, I leaue my loue alone.
- [3] **A**nd needie Nothing trimd in iollitie,  
 [4] **A**nd purest faith vnhappily forsworne,  
 [5] **A**nd gilded honor shamefully misplast,

*ll = lines*

**A-T-a** (ll 2-3) **h-oo** (ll 2-3)

**A-T-a** (ll 12-14) **h-oo** (ll 13-12)

**sh[e]-'h-i-v-o-e-c'ti-e'ru** (ll 3-5, begins l 5) - **v** read as **u**

**ae'uo-'se-ai'n-u** (ll 14-12, ends l 13) - **u** read as **v**.

**le'f[o]-'ne-'c[h]a** (ll 14-11) **eS** (l 11)

**c[e]'to'r[e]-ht** (ll 10-11)

**h[a]'s-a-'me-i-m** (ll 5-3)

**s-u-c** (ll 5-7) **sp[ee]-r** (ll 5-4) (**su** = **sh**, as in "sure")

**s-u-e-a-c** (ll 14-11, begins l 13) **s-p-p[e]-or** (ll 13-10) - see page 5.

**u-il-'i'am** (ll 4-6)

**w-i-'l-y-'em** (ll 13-9)