

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, plebian 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 a writer 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 a distinction of *Sonnet 148* is that it presents William Shakespeare's autographs. Most appropriate in telegraphing this role of bearing its author's telltale signatures, the sonnet begins with the declaration, "*O Me!*", that is set off with an exclamation point as if for

special emphasis. 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 full thought of this line — "*O Me! what eyes hath loue put in my head.*" While the opening words otherwise 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 as not only a marquee and introduction to the overlooked material but as a *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 the first letters of the sonnet's lines 6 to 8, which happen to spell it out in capitals as "*W-I-L.*" Moreover, since the prior line 5 begins with the letter "*I*," we can find in this a second *commentary* on the presence of the poet's name by reading it with the other letters as "*I*" [*myself*] "*WIL.*"

Of course, a short, barely four-letters long acrostic is hardly significant and could 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 to lines 2 and 3. It makes use of perfectly aligned letters of the vertically stacked words, "*with*" and "*fled*." The second instance, "*w yl*," is read backwards on line 4 in the adjacent words "*falsely what*." Finally, the configuration, "*w-y-l-ye*," appears in a vertically 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 a clue 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* — but when they are considered in connection with additional devices that present versions of 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 emerges in a two-part configuration of its syllables, "*Shake*" and "*speare*." This division into syllables echoes the syllables of the poet's name that is shown divided by a hyphen in a banner at the top of every two-page spread of the 1609 *Sonnets* spelling out *SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS*. The in-sonnet version of the poet's surname is shown below as separately extracted with its configuration preserved and as it is found merged within a five line segment of *Sonnet 148*:

[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 mist**ake** 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.



alignment of letters that, reading up, spell "w-l-l," a contracted form of "Will." "Selfe" becomes an obvious third *commentary* on the devices and is, once again, an indication of a deliberate plan to create them. What is more, the configuration, "w-ll," occurs again in the sonnet, stacked in the words on lines 7 and 8, "well" and "all."

Finally, another indication that this was a poem on which Shakespeare lavished special care is the appearance in this sonnet of what are called *equal letter skip (ELS)* devices. It is likely that such secret communications through *equal letter spacing* were known during the Elizabethan period since they are found elsewhere and there are two such instances in this sonnet that spell out "w-i-l-l" at skips between letters of 142 spaces (beginning at the "w" of the word "with" on line 2) and at a letter spacing of -146 (reading backward) 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, frequent, short, three letter appearances are hardly telltale since accident easily yields them. But a random check through a dozen other sonnets does not disclose a single *ELS* instance of the four letter name sequence, "w-i-l-l."

Whatever the poet's reasons, 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, perhaps, Shakespeare 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 correct reason may remain elusive, that he did in fact autograph his sonnet must be considered proof of his authorship. *For can it be at all 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, *SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS*. There would have been no further need for any author, not Shakespeare, to make the effort to certify such a deception 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 on line 7 of *Sonnet 76* — "*That every word doth **almost** [t]el my name.*" Below are four lines of this latter sonnet, including line 7 above, shown in their original spelling, punctuation, and spacing and revealing the "*almost*" spelling, shown in bold, of the poet's name as "***u-ill***" and "***s-h-a-k-e — p-er,***" the latter appearing in a way not unlike that seen in *Sonnet 148*. *Clearly, the repetitions tell these and the others are devices and not outcomes of playful chance:*

- [5] Why write I **still** all one,euere the same,
- [6] And **keepe** inuention in a noted weed,
- > [7] **That** euery word doth almost fel my name,
- [8] **Shewing** their birth,and where they did proceed

On the following page is the full text of *Sonnet 148* shown in its original spelling, followed by a full presentation of the embedments discussed, shown extracted but in their approximate configurations. These exhibits are followed by a facsimile of the original 1609 sonnet marked with the embedment highlighted. In viewing the facsimile, note the Elizabethan use of the interchange of the letter "*u*" for "*v*" in midword (and, though not occurring in this sonnet, the use of "*v*" for "*u*" at the beginning of a word) and, also, the use at the beginning or at midword of the *long* "*s*," a letter "*s*" resembling the letter "*f*" but without the horizontal line fully crossing at its middle.

*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 marvaile 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 sp    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

**O** Me! what eyes hath loue put in my head,  
 Which haue no correspondance 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 meanes 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.