

## CHAPTER 6. SOME CURIOUS MARKS

Quid hic vides?

'Vestigia,' dixit porcellus. Vestigia unguarum. Vagitum brevem  
excitatumque emisit. 'O Pu! Credis vusillum significare?'

'Significare possunt' dixit Pu. 'Modo significant, modo autem minime. De  
vestigiiis semper dubitandum est.'

--Winnie Ille Pu<sup>1</sup>

For reasons already noted, the void at the heart of the Shakespeare question vanishes when one considers the alternate proposition that Edward de Vere wrote the works ascribed to the bookless Mr. Shakspere<sup>2</sup>. According to the Oxfordian theory, "Shakespeare" translated his native brilliance and superlative education into a body of literary creation both personal in its elaborate evocation of the raw stuff of a specific lived experience --including reading -- and universal and enduring in its generic artistic reformulation of those experiences.

One vital new line of evidence supporting this proposition is the discovery of books from de Vere's library, which have begun to lend corroborative substance to the claims advanced by Looney, Ogburn, Fowler, Miller and others. The potential for future discovery of additional books once owned by de Vere is difficult to estimate. However, record of several such books is preserved in extant documents preserved for the Court of Wards -- an institution in which De Vere, as we have seen, was a prominent ward. Among these, for example, we may note the following:

To William Seres, stationer, for a Geneva Bible gilt, a Chaucer, Plutarch's Works in French,  
and other books and papers.....2 7 10<sup>3</sup>

While noting that the gilded Bible sold in this record is almost certainly the copy discussed in the present dissertation<sup>4</sup>, we should not overlook the significance of de Vere's purchase of books by Plutarch and Chaucer in the same order. Add Ovid, Holinshed and Boccaccio to this list and one has, arguably, Shakespeare's half-dozen most influential authors. In the third quarter of the same year as the Geneva Bible was purchased, the Court of Wards also approved expense for "two Italian books," for Tully (Cicero), and for Plato -- "with other books, paper, and nibs" (Ward

---

<sup>1</sup> *Winnie Ille Pu* by A. A. Milnei (Novi Eboraci: Sumptibus Duttonis, MCMLX). Latin Translation by Alexander Dutton.

<sup>2</sup> I follow the spelling as used by the *New Shakspeare Society* founded by Furnivall *et alia* to denote the Stratford Shakspere, whose name was typically, if not always, spelled without the "e" after "Shak."

<sup>3</sup> The document is S.P. Dom. Add., 19.38.

<sup>4</sup> Now Folger shelf mark 1472.

1928 33)<sup>5</sup>. One cannot help but wonder how many of Burghley's court wards were so busy writing that they had to make special orders for writing supplies such as pen nibs. And -- consider the books! Plutarch, Chaucer, Tully and Plato! At nineteen, de Vere was already imbibing the "Tully's orator" which Cornelia used to instruct her sons in *Titus Andronicus*.

The de Vere Geneva Bible, a copy of the second quarto 1568-70 edition<sup>6</sup> of the translation prepared in Geneva during the 1550s by William Whittingham and other Protestant exiles from Mary Tudor's counter-reformation rule (1547-53) and first published in 1560, contains over a thousand marked and underlined Bible passages in the fine italic handwriting of Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford<sup>7</sup> (see appendices H-I for details). Despite reckless assertions to the contrary -- vide, e.g., Smith (1993 59-61) -- the case that the Bible's annotations were made by the hand of the original owner Edward de Vere is beyond reasonable dispute. Three convergent lines of evidence which support this conclusion, the minor premise of the present argument, may briefly be recapitulated here:

- As previously noted, records reprinted in Ward (1928), unmentioned by Smith (1994) and other critics of the minor premise, record that a Geneva Bible, answering to the description of the Folger copy of STC 2106, was purchased for Edward de Vere by John Hart, Chester Herald of the Court of Wards, in 1570, along with the following additional items:

To William Seres, stationer, for a Geneva Bible gilt<sup>8</sup>, a Chaucer,  
Plutarch's works in French, and other books and papers.....2  
7 10.

- The Bible, bound in 16<sup>th</sup> century crimson velvet, is adorned with engraved silver center and corner-plates. Edward De Vere's heraldic devices -- the blue boar capped with a coronet and the quartered shield, gules and gold<sup>9</sup> with a sinistral molet (star) - - are engraved into the Bible's centerplates (see figure One). It is certain that these devices point to de Vere as the Bible's original owner: the engraved arms show no mark of difference which would be required by Tudor "law and heraldry" if prepared

---

<sup>5</sup> Surprisingly, the STC lists no editions of Plato published in England before 1641; even Cicero, who was extensively printed after 1573, was not available in English imprint in 1570. Therefore these books, like Folger 1427, must have been imported for de Vere from Continental sources.

<sup>6</sup> STC 2106; Darlowe & Moule. The de Vere copy contains the dates 1568 for the Old Testament, 1570 for the New Testament, and 1569 in the attached Sternhold and Hopkins psalms (STC 2440a).

<sup>7</sup> These annotations have previously been discussed by the present writer in two research reports written with the assistance of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, the late William Hunt, James Hardigg and Rich and Tiana Eustis, among other generous benefactors whose assistance I would like to acknowledge. Conclusive photographic evidence for the identity of de Vere as the annotator is presented for the first time in appendix H of the present dissertation.

<sup>8</sup> The Folger de Vere Bible has a gilded fore-edge.

<sup>9</sup> The colors of which do not, however, ~~of course,~~ show in the engraved devices.

for a member of a cadet lineage of the de Vere clan. The Bible was definitely bound for an Earl of Oxford, and given the temporal circumstances that person can only have been the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl.

- The simplest conclusion based on these two facts -- namely that de Vere was the annotator of his own Bible -- is verified beyond reasonable doubt by the paleographical evidence analyzed in Appendices H-I.

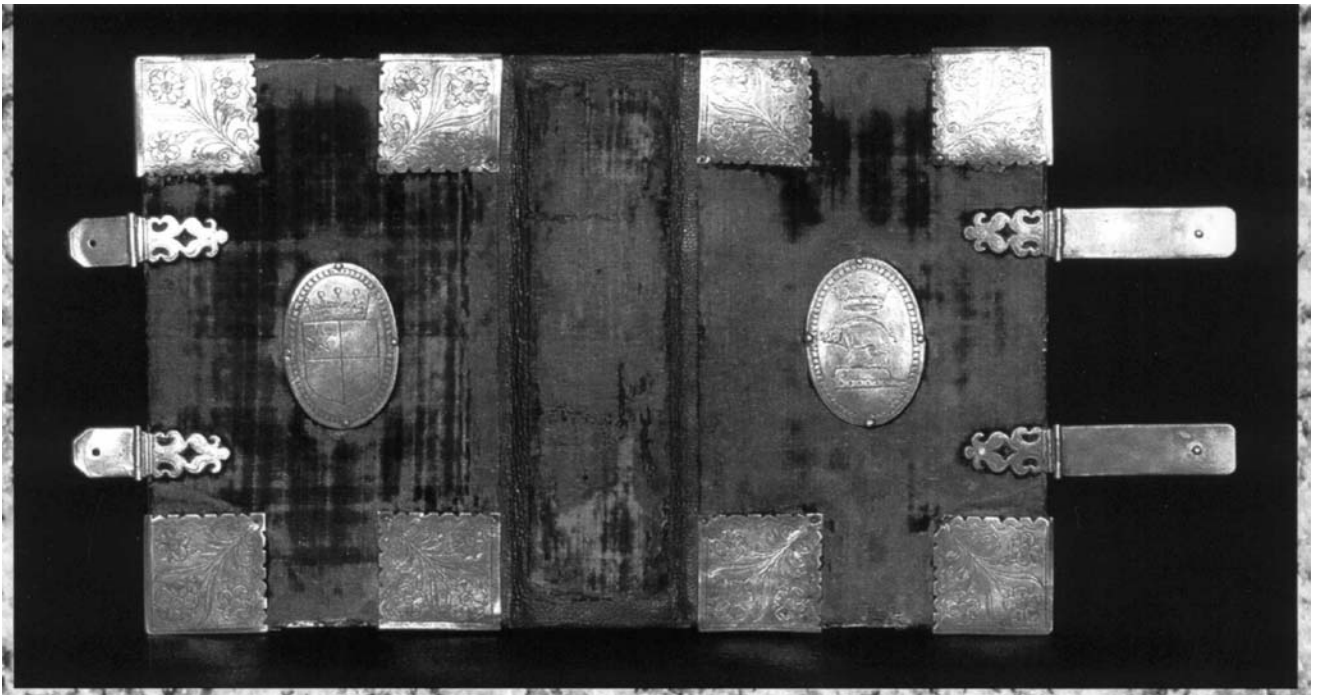


Figure One: Binding of de Vere STC 2106 showing heraldic emblems of the Earl of Oxford: the standing boar -- a canting symbol of the name "Vere," derived from the old French Verres, and the quartered shield with sinistral molet.



Figure Two: Obverse of de Vere Bible STC 2106 showing heraldic blue boar of the Oxford earldom.



Figure Three: Edward de Vere Gheeraedt's Portrait (circa 1586), showing heraldic boar symbol. After the original formerly in the possession of the Duke of St. Albans and now owned by the Minos Miller Trust Fund.

There is a further point, however, that must be mentioned. When the de Vere Bible was purchased in 1925 by Henry Clay Folger (1857-1930) it was purchased as an Elizabethan artifact once owned by Edward de Vere. This fact might not seem to require emphasis, except in the present atmosphere of orthodox revisionism *ad infinitum*, in which not only “Shakespeare,” but the facts themselves, are retailed in a flash to fit contemporary needs. As previously discussed by Stritmatter and Anderson (1996), Bruce Smith has invented a hypothetical previous owner to account for the Bible's annotation; *Smithsonian* and the *Shakespeare Newsletter*, while apparently oblivious to the methodological absurdities of Smith's case, accordingly announced that the de Vere Bible is-- as *Smithsonian* so proudly trumpets in a textbook display of journalistic hubris -- a "false alarm."

Folger's 1925 invoice from Leicestershire bookseller Bernard Halliday identifies the book as a Geneva Bible in a silver binding bearing the "arms of [the] Earl of Oxford" (figure four). The date of purchase, only five years after the

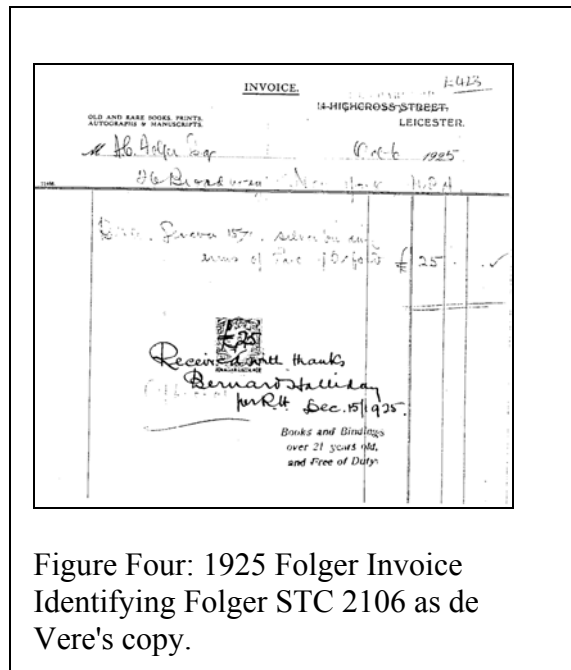


Figure Four: 1925 Folger Invoice Identifying Folger STC 2106 as de Vere's copy.

publication of "*Shakespeare Identified*," has naturally raised speculation about whether Mr. Folger had some particular interest in Oxford. For some time now it has been rumored that Folger, like Freud or William Mcfee, who in his introduction to the second (1948) edition of *Shakespeare Identified* compared Looney's book to Darwin's *Origin of Species*, may have covertly entertained serious sympathy for the heresy. Convincing evidence to support this proposition has recently come to light.

In 1929, when the American novelist Esther Singleton published her literary tribute to de Vere in the form of a collection of stories titled *Shakespearian Fantasias: Adventures in the Fourth Dimension*, Folger took notice. According to Charles Wisner Barrell's account in a 1946 issue of *The Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletter*, Folger was so impressed by Ms. Singleton's book -- in which the madcap Berowne of *Love's Labour's Lost*, the melancholic Jacques of *As You Like It*, and the witty lover Benedick of *Much Ado About Nothing* make cameo appearances as projections of de Vere's literary *persona* -- that he purchased twenty copies as gifts for his friends (Barrell 1946 14) and negotiated to purchase the manuscript of Singleton's book (Barrell 1946 14). Folger researchers have recently verified that, after the deaths of Folger and Singleton, the library obtained Singleton's manuscript under the terms of Mr. Folger's bequest. Folger was apparently well aware, then, when he purchased the Bible in 1925, that it had originally been owned<sup>10</sup> by the man whom many Elizabethan scholars believed was "Shakespeare"; moreover Folger's awareness apparently extended to a serious sympathy for the "Oxfordian" position, one which has unfortunately been vigorously repressed within the institutional confines of the library which Mr. Folger's resources endowed (Crinkley 1985).

Based on these considerations there is absolutely no rational basis for speculation that Edward de Vere was not the annotator of this Bible. It is not even accurate, as Alan Nelson has recently claimed, that "the principal grounds for [the proposition of Oxford's hand as annotator] are paleographical" (Nelson in press 1995 1). On the contrary, the grounds for this conclusion are multiple and convergent: paleography serves primarily as a check against a too-casual positive identification of de Vere as the annotator and secondarily as a verification of the reasonable inference, based on circumstantial evidence, that he was.

Approximately one thousand and forty three verses or marginal notes and twenty psalms are underlined or marked in the de Vere Bible. With a single exception<sup>11</sup> excluded from the present study, all annotations are in the same hand. Four colors of ink are employed in the Bible: a

---

<sup>10</sup> Tellingly, this manuscript was not included in the 1993 Folger exhibit, *Roasting the Swan of Avon*. To acknowledge its existence would have required that the library deal with its own history of repression and denial and to admit in public that its founder was a "fellow traveler" with the Oxfordians.

<sup>11</sup> See appendix G.

scarlet, an orange, a brown-black and a grey. Fortunately, samples of written annotations exist in all four ink variants. Forensic analysis of these handwriting samples among themselves and with de Vere holograph (see appendix H) permits the certain conclusion that all four ink sets are the work of a single individual, Edward de Vere<sup>12</sup>.

Two methods of underlining are employed by the annotator: most commonly --in orange or black-- he marks just a verse number; in some books, particularly I and II Samuel and II Esdras, he underlines -- in scarlet or rarely in black-- portions of the verse itself. I designate the former method Verse Number (VN) and the latter Continuous (C). In a few instances, for example Micah 7.9 (figure five), the annotator uses both marking techniques, perhaps indicating a repeated or sustained interest in the marked passage.

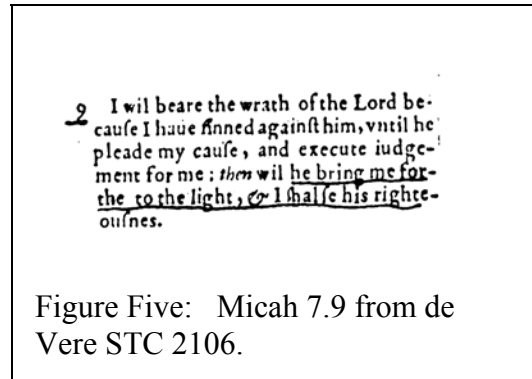


Figure Five: Micah 7.9 from de Vere STC 2106.

Some eighteen psalms are marked in the de Vere Bible by a marginal drawing of a small hand with a pointing finger, a style of annotation also found in Psalm 137 (figure six):

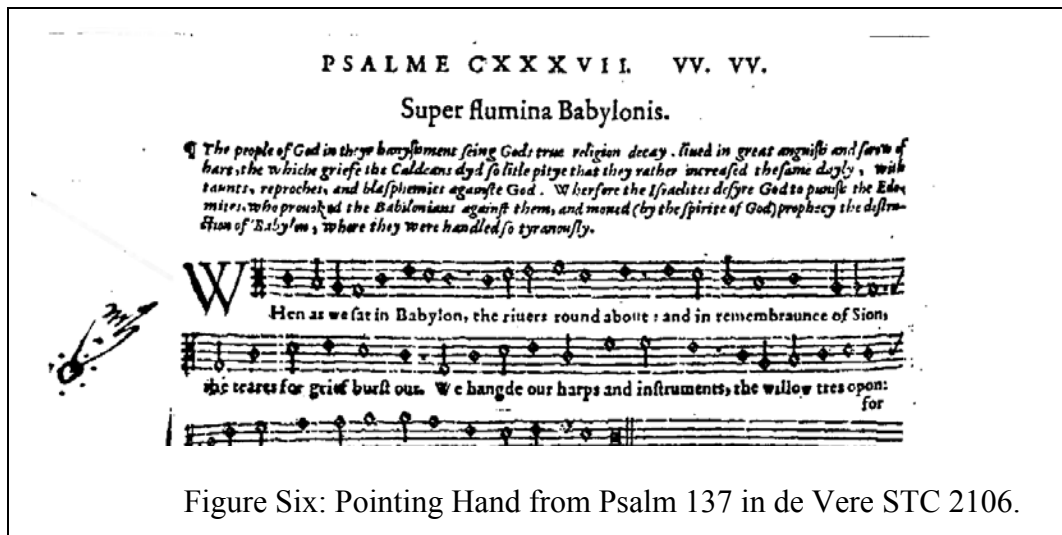


Figure Six: Pointing Hand from Psalm 137 in de Vere STC 2106.

<sup>12</sup> The orange and scarlet inks, unfortunately, have suffered considerable fading over time. The weak black and white reproduction of certain images such as those in figures 16, 31, 35 or 75, is a consequence of this problem. Fortunately these images show up much more clearly in color.

In a few cases, the annotator also marks certain verses with a fleur-de-lys icon (figure seven).

Both icons are part of the visual stock inherited by 16<sup>th</sup> century annotators from the medieval glossators and copyists. From the glossators they were carried over into early printed books such as the Great Bible (1539), which uses the pointing hand icon as one method for marking verses approved of by Protestant editors of Henry VIII's reign.

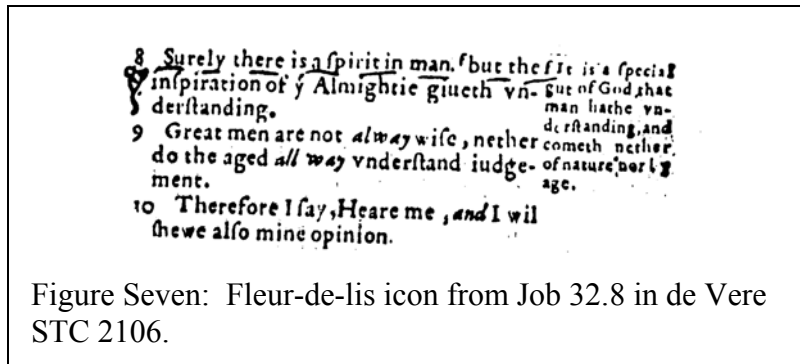


Figure Seven: Fleur-de-lys icon from Job 32.8 in de Vere STC 2106.

The de Vere Bible also contains as many as forty-one small marginal notes, many cropped during the restoration of the Bible, which took place at some time during the past two centuries.

The notes appear in full below in the paleographical Appendix H. Almost all consist of a single word or short phrase, marking the thematic emphasis of the

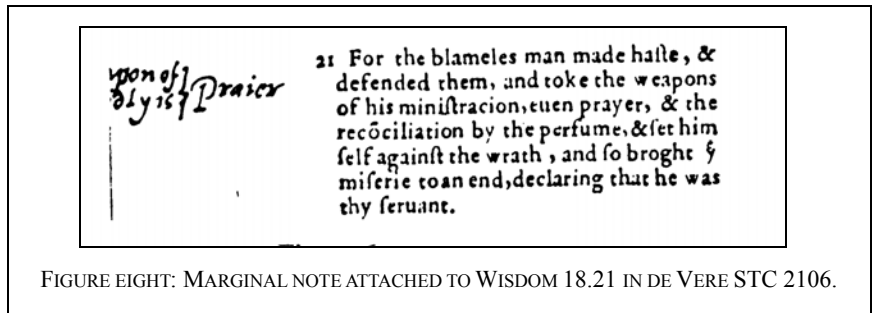


FIGURE EIGHT: MARGINAL NOTE ATTACHED TO WISDOM 18.21 IN DE VERE STC 2106.

verse. With one exception the annotations are so abbreviated and generic that, in themselves, they supply little more than a confirmation of the reader's attention to the theme of the verse so marked. The exception to this rule is the cropped note, longer than most, which occurs adjacent to Wisdom 18.21-22, which states: "[the wea]pon of [the Go]dly is Praier" (figure eight).

The idea that the word – prayer -- is more powerful than the sword occurs frequently in Shakespeare, elaborating the annotator's aphorism from the book of *Wisdom*:

- When Queen Margaret says critically of her husband Henry VI:

....His champions are the prophets and the apostles,  
His weapons holy saws of sacred writ, his study his tilt yard. (2 Henry VI 1.3.61)

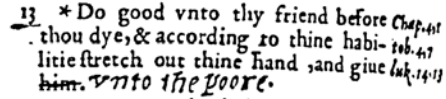
➤ Or when Bolingbroke begs the prayers of his cousin Aumerle:

To reach at victory above my head;  
Add proof unto mine armour with thy prayers,  
And with thy blessings steel my lance's point,  
That it may enter Mowbray's waxen coat. (Richard II 1.3.72-75)

In several cases the annotator leaves slight but impressive traces of his very close reading even of Bible passages in which he has marked no verses. Ecclesiasticus 14.13 is one of a small number of marked verses corrected, apparently, on the authority of the annotator's detailed knowledge of variant translations of the Bible (figure nine). In the Genevan translation of STC 2106, the verse exhorts giving alms to "thy friend." The annotator's change of the pronoun "him" to "unto the poore" qualifies as a correction to the Genevan edition; the change reflects the wording of the Vulgate Bible, which reads in this place "da pauperi"<sup>13</sup>.

The distinction is of course significant not merely for editorial reasons. There is a profound normative difference between charity offered to *one's friend* and that given to "the poor." Furthermore, the change demonstrates the annotator's knowledge of variant Bible translations, even of relatively

obscure passages from the apocrypha such as Eccus. 14.13. Such knowledge of variant translations of the Bible is further confirmed by a passage from Edward de Vere's Jan. 3 1576 letter from Sienna to Lord Burghley in which he remembers -- and alters<sup>14</sup> -- Acts 9.5 in Italian: "*I see it is but vain calcitrare contra li busi*"/"I see it is but vain to kick against the Oxen."



13 \* Do good vnto thy friend before Chap. 41  
thou dye, & according to thine habi- 116. 47  
litie stretch out thine hand and giue Luk. 14. 13  
him. vnto the poore.

Figure Nine: Ecclesiasticus 14.13 showing annotator's correction of STC 2106 to the wording found in the Vulgate translation.

<sup>13</sup> Curiously, no 16<sup>th</sup> century Latin Bibles published in England which I have consulted show this reading; apparently the modern Vulgate text descends from a Latin exemplar which never made the passage into print in England. If so, this demonstrates de Vere's close familiarity with Continental traditions of Bible scholarship.

<sup>14</sup> I am indebted to Alan Nelson for first noting this significant discrepancy between the Biblical source text and de Vere's usage.

