CHAPTER 29.
EVeRY WORD….

For a poet to instruct the reader, as Shake-Speare does in Sonnet 72, to entomb his memory and to refuse to "rehearse" his name because of the shame which poetry confers on him, is not a Renaissance convention. Some elements of the present study could be rationalized and rejected by making a simple shift in logical typing. Perhaps the alleged connections between de Vere and Shakespeare are an illusory consequence of the fact that the two hypothetically distinct individuals belonged to the same "culture." The experience voiced in Sonnets 71-72 demonstrates the superficiality of this line of reasoning; these sonnets contradict not only the poetic norms of the day, but also those of the golden and silver ages of Latin literature in which Horace and Ovid first celebrated the memorializing function of poetry. Apotheosizing "Cynthia" in *Colin Clout's Come Home Again,* Edmund Spenser articulates the post-Armada *energeia* of a generation of poets, fed by the literary revival of the Renaissance and celebrating their own immortality in verse, in conscious imitation of Ovid and Horace:

> And while after I am dead and rotten,
> Amongst the shepheards daughters dancing round,
> My layes made of her shall not be forgotten,
> But sung by them with flowery gyrlonds crowne. (640-43)

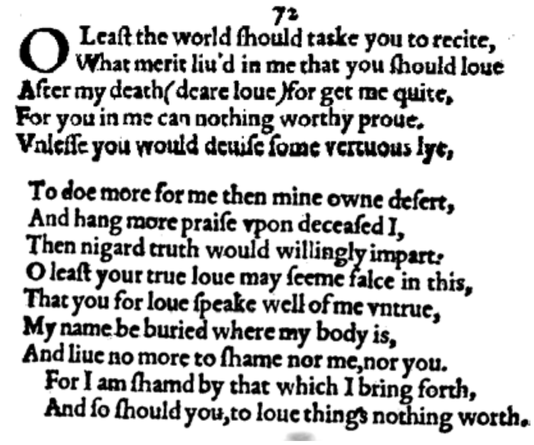
Spenser's speaker, ironically, is Cuddy -- previously identified in this study as "Shepherd Oxford." The sentiment, however, is classical -- and in its classical form in Ovid and Horace the promise of immortality is claimed not only and not primarily for the objects of the poet's art, but for the poet's own self.

In a previous chapter we have seen much evidence for the bard's deep concern for the existential problem of the "putting out" of the author's name. We have seen that in his Geneva Bible, de Vere marks several Biblical pretexts for this problem which are echoed in Shakespeare. We have seen how at least three texts, *Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet,* and the *Sonnets,* can be examined in terms of this linguistically sophisticated subtext or inter-text which consists of the author's cunning ironic punning on his own name, *Ver*itas, "truth." By means of such cryptic devices the writer preserved testimony to his identity despite the public erasure of his name as the legal author.

Several further examples serve to drive home the point that the Oxfordians do not need a "smoking gun" discovery to prove their claims -- because the Shakespeare canon, in itself, testifies punningly to de Vere's authorship. In fact, as we shall see later in this chapter, *As You Like It* sardonically dramatizes the alienation of de Vere’s work by the country lad “William”.

In Sonnets 71-74 the de Vere puns achieve a tragi-comic apotheosis in which the author laments the putting out of the name but celebrates the rebirth of his identity in his own work. Although he felt himself to be one of the "ungodly," whose name would be "put out" from the book of life (Ecclus. 41.11, Rev. 3.5), his works testify to his intrinsic merit and perseverance in carrying forward devotion to the divine will.

As we have previously seen, Sonnet 71 enjoins the reader not to "rehearse" the author's name after his death, lest the "wise world should look into your moan." The subsequent sonnet -- responding to the marked thought of Ecclus 41.11 -- exhorts us to bury the author's name "where my body is" (figure one hundred and three). These two injunctions -- one not to speak the name and another to "bury" it in a specific location -- set the stage for a comic epiphany, a Christian "resurrection" of Dantesque magnitude, a divine comedy in which poetry triumphs over Caesar's sword. We have only to read with open eyes and ears -- reminded punningly that "to hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit" (Sonnet 23)[1]. For "my body" means "my corpus"—my “copies”--and the forbidden name has already been interred in the verse by the author. Sonnet 72, a small but consequential piece of the corpus, in fact flags the name Vere, no fewer than three times: *truth, true, untrue.* The name is, quite literally, buried *within* the body.



72

O Leaſt the world ſhould taske you to recite,
What merit liu'd in me that you ſhould loue
After my death(deare loue)for get me quite,
For you in me can nothing worthy proue.
Vnleſſe you would deuiſe ſome vertuous lye,

To doe more for me then mine owne deſert,
And hang more praiſe vpon deceaſed I,
Then nigard truth would willingly impart:
O leaſt your true loue may ſeeme falce in this,
That you for loue ſpeake well of me vntrue,
My name be buried where my body is,
And liue no more to ſhame nor me,nor you.
For I am ſhamd by that which I bring forth,
And ſo ſhould you,to loue things nothing worth.

Figure One hundred and three: Sonnet 72 from 1609 Q. Note the iteration of the truth puns in “truth” (8), “true” (9), “untrue” (10) – all leading up to the exhortation “my name be buried where my body is” – i.e. with my *corpus.*

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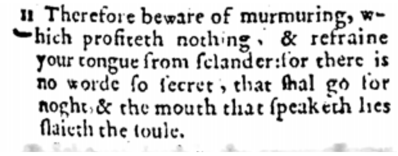
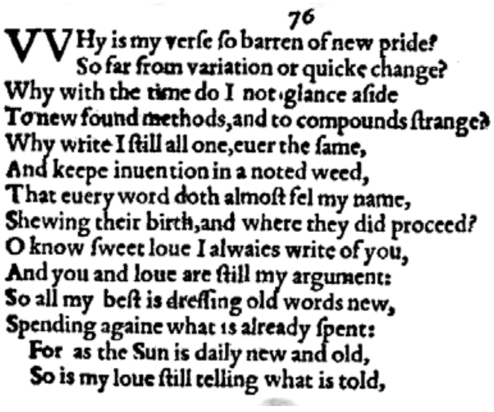
[1] Activating the homophone "eyes"/ "ayes".



11 Therefore beware of murmuring, which profiteth nothing, & refraine your tongue from ſclander:for there is no worde ſo ſecret, that ſhal go for noght, & the mouth that ſpeaketh lies ſlaieth the ſoule.

Figure One hundred and four: Wisdom 1.11 in de Vere STC 2106.

In a previous chapter on *Measure for Measure,* I introduced the concept, derived from a succession of images appearing in the play and an apparently related image from Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britanna*, of the "doctrine of smallest things." I suggested that the line "by every syllable a faithful verity" encoded a double anagram of the name "Vere" -- in the words "every" and "verity." A verse marked in the de Vere Bible which is relevant to the "doctrine of smallest things" as well as to the concept of speech acts is Wisdom 1.11 (figure one-hundred and four) . The verse declares that "there is no word so small that it shall go for noght" -- meaning that every word, no matter how small or apparently insignificant, has potential spiritual consequence. This passage from Wisdom is an example of the importance placed in Hebrew practice on perfect fidelity to each and every word, or even letter, in the transmission of a textual tradition, a precursor of Matthew 5.18 in which Christ declares that not a "iote or a title" will be put out of the law "until all things shall be fulfilled." Interestingly, the same principle is enunciated by John Paul Stevens in his 1992 *Pennsylvania Law Review* essay on the authorship controversy, in which he writes: "words --even a simple word like 'now' -- may have a meaning which is not immediately apparent" (1373).



76

VVHy is my verſe ſo barren of new pride?
So far from variation or quicke change?
Why with the time do I not glance aſide
To new found methods,and to compounds ſtrange?
Why write I ſtill all one,euer the ſame,
And keepe inuention in a noted weed,
That euery word doth almoſt fel my name,
Shewing their birth,and where they did proceed?
O know ſweet loue I alwaies write of you,
And you and loue are ſtill my argument:
So all my beſt is dreſſing old words new,
Spending againe what is already ſpent:
For as the Sun is daily new and old,
So is my loue ſtill telling what is told,

Figure One-hundred and five: Sonnet 76 from 1609 Q.

Wisdom 1.11 is one of those arresting verses in the de Vere Bible which, although not previously recorded as exercising an influence in Shakespeare, is capable almost by itself of transforming the Stratfordian paradigm with a single stroke of ink. To consider why, let us examine Sonnet 76. This Sonnet contains the well-known "Oxfordian" line, echoing that of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*[2], "*ev*ery word doth almost tell *my name*". Wisdom 1.11 not only confirms the Oxfordian reading of Sonnet 76 and other contested passages of Shakespeare, but leaves a palpable imprint of the mental process by which the author was inspired to invoke linguistic conundrums such as "every word doth almost tell my name", as testimony to his disguised but not quite obliterated identity. The statement "there is no word so small it shall go for naught" contains the following syllogism:

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[2] By *every syllable*, a faithful *ver*ity, the Duke comes home tomorrow" (4.3.123).

Premise A: Some words are small or apparently insignificant
Premise B: Even words which are small or apparently insignificant are important
Conclusion: all words, large or small, obvious or insignificant, are important

The phrase "every word doth almost tell my name" inverts the syllogism by affirming that "every word" -- even those which are small or apparently insignificant -- expresses the author's communicative intention by telling his "name." It depends on the same premises contained in the marked verse in Wisdom 1.11 but restates the conclusion as an anagram -- again not a letter-perfect anagram but one which certainly rings a punning turn on the hidden name sought by the Oxfordians -- of "Edward Vere."

The wider context of the entire Sonnet makes this "Oxfordian" reading all but unavoidable. In Sonnet 76 the writer laments that he must "keep invention in a noted weed" -- in other words, he houses his literary production ("invention") within the *nom de plume* ("noted weed") "William Shakespeare."[3] The result is that his suppressed identity assumes a kind of chronic punstering wit, assertively attempting to break through and reach his readers with subliminal indications of his suppressed but substantial nature.

This reading not only satisfies a reader's natural desire for comprehension but exposes -- by making use of the documentary evidence of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible -- the rationale according to which the line was apparently written.

Let us pass from close reading and semantics to the image of the author, and allegories of authorship, which also reveal de Vere's presence behind the work. Like *Measure for Measure*, *As You Like It* enacts an allegory of authorship. In this allegory Touchstone, who like his kindred fools Feste in *Twelfth Night* or LaVache in *All's Well that End's Well*, shares the distinction of being a strongly "authorial" character, contests with a country squire named "William" over the possession of a woman, Audrey. The idea of woman-as-text enjoys a rich foreground in the literary traditions inherited by the play's author[4]. And the concept Audrey as an ironic personification of the Shakespeare canon finds ample intrinsic warrant in *As You Like It* itself. Although she adopts the pretense of simple-mindedness, Audrey is evidently one of those characters in Shakespeare who speaks more than she admits to knowing. To her, Touchstone addresses his authorial moral that "when a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child, understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room" (3.3.12-16). Replies the guileless Audrey:

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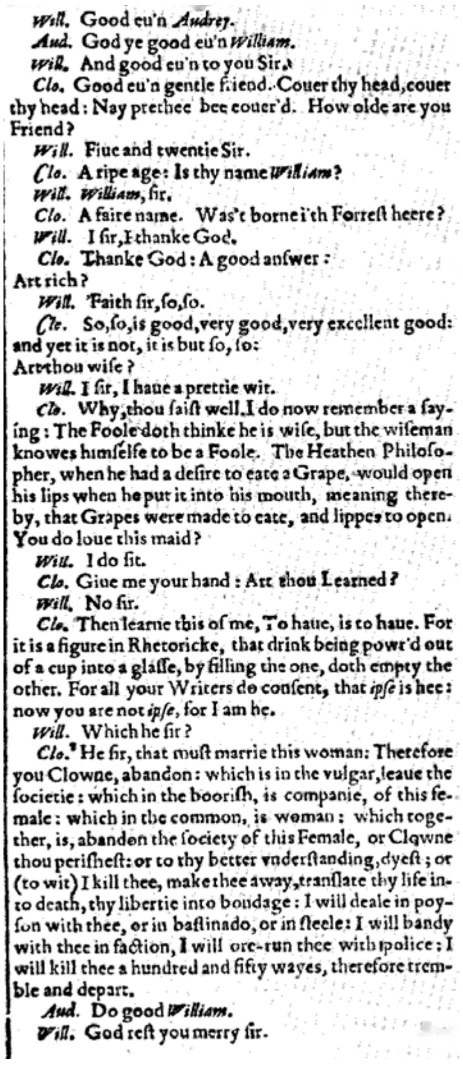
[3] Why -- if the author's name is (unproblematically) "William Shakespeare"-- would he ever write such a line? His name, reason Charlton and Dorothy Ogburn, "*must be* hidden, then, if it is only thus tacitly revealed" (1952 892: italics added).

[4] See for example Augustine's discussion of rhetorical styles in *De Doctrina Christiana* (IV, 48-50), in which the female body as text is implicit.

> I do not know what poetical is.
> Is it honest in deed and word? Is it a true thing? (3.3.17-18)

Exactly -- that is -- the question which the author de Vere might well have been asking himself around 1593, shortly following the murder of Christopher Marlowe (who is memorialized in the play as a "dead shepherd") and the publication of the narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* under the fictive name "William Shakespeare." Is "poetical" a "true thing"? Audrey wonders because she suspects Touchstone of plotting improper designs on her virginity. *The author,* a reader may infer, wants to know because he understands Touchstone's point, about the destruction of the poet at the hands of uncomprehending readers, from personal experience. Has he too suffered the metaphorical death of being misconstrued by readers incapable of seconding his wit with the "forward child, understanding”?

In 5.1, after Sir Oliver Martext -- a parody on the Puritan controversialist Martin Marprelate -- refuses to marry Touchstone and Audrey, the former introduces her to an alternative suitor from the Forest of Arden named "William." This "William" is said to be 25 years of age; he lives in the Arden forest; he is uneducated, but possesses "a pretty wit." Such character traits serve to help identify this "William" with the William Shakspere who has subsequently become known as the author of the plays. In 1589, the year of the Marprelate controversy[5] Shakspere, like the "William" of *As You Like It,* was exactly 25 years of age. Stratford village in Warwickshire, of course, adjoins the ancient forest of Arden.



Will. Good eu'n *Audrey.*

Aud. God ye good eu'n *William.*

Will. And good eu'n to you Sir.

Clo. Good eu'n gentle friend. Couer thy head, couer thy head: Nay prethee bee couer'd. How olde are you Friend?

Will. Fiue and twentie Sir.

Clo. A ripe age: Is thy name *William*?

Will. *William*, ſir.

Clo. A faire name. Was't borne i'th Forreſt heere?

Will. I ſir, I thanke God.

Clo. Thanke God: A good anſwer:
Art rich?

Will. 'Faith ſir, ſo, ſo.

Clo. So, ſo, is good, very good, very excellent good: and yet it is not, it is but ſo, ſo:
Art thou wiſe?

Will. I ſir, I haue a prettie wit.

Clo. Why, thou ſaiſt well. I do now remember a ſaying: The Foole doth thinke he is wiſe, but the wiſeman knowes himſelfe to be a Foole. The Heathen Philoſopher, when he had a deſire to eate a Grape, would open his lips when he put it into his mouth, meaning thereby, that Grapes were made to eate, and lippes to open. You do loue this maid?

Will. I do ſir.

Clo. Giue me your hand: Art thou Learned?

Will. No ſir.

Clo. Then learne this of me, To haue, is to haue. For it is a figure in Rhetoricke, that drink being powr'd out of a cup into a glaſſe, by filling the one, doth empty the other. For all your Writers do conſent, that *ipſe* is hee: now you are not *ipſe*, for I am he.

Will. Which he ſir?

Clo. He ſir, that muſt marrie this woman: Therefore you Clowne, abandon: which is in the vulgar, leaue the ſocietie: which in the booriſh, is companie, of this female: which in the common, is woman: which together, is, abandon the ſociety of this Female, or Clowne thou periſheſt: or to thy better vnderſtanding, dyeſt; or (to wit) I kill thee, make thee away, tranſlate thy life into death, thy libertie into bondage: I will deale in poyſon with thee, or in baſtinado, or in ſteele: I will bandy with thee in faction, I will ore-run thee with police: I will kill thee a hundred and fifty wayes, therefore tremble and depart.

Aud. Do good *William.*

Will. God reſt you merry ſir.

Figure One hundred and six: *As You Like It* 5.1.13-59 from the 1623 Folio.

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[5] In which year, according to the scenario outlined in chapter seven (
against theatrical satires against Mar-prelate resulted in the clampc

Shakspere never attended College, his attendance at the Stratford grammar school is purely conjectural, and his children and parents were apparently illiterate. It was, however, said of him -- recalled John Aubrey in his *Brief Lives* (compiled circa 1685) -- that he was "a natural wit" (1962 275)[6]. Only the most dedicated Stratfordolators can ascribe such parallels to coincidence.

A reader's understanding of these lines undergoes a metamorphosis by the scene's conclusion. Is Touchstone catechizing William with the intent of approving the lad's marriage to Audrey? Until Touchstone breaks into his "to have is to have" (40-44) speech, the unwary reader is led to suspect so. The Puritan hedge-priest has refused to sanctify Touchstone's own designs on the Lady, and clearly she lacks a man. This naive reading is abruptly terminated by Touchstone's "to have is to have" speech and his subsequent enumeration of all the ways in which he will gore and eviscerate his rival if he doesn't shove off and abandon his love-suit. Possession is nine tenths of the law, Touchstone possesses Audrey, and William should disappear and leave them alone. This is followed by the peculiar rhetorical enthymeme which concludes that "all your writers do consent that *ipse* is he: now you are not *ipse,* for I am he" (43).

When William asks, "which 'he', sir?" Touchstone answers: "He, sir, that must marry this woman" (46), emphasizing by repetition that the riddle of *ipse* is fundamentally connected to the possession of Audrey. *Ipse* is *he* – all *the writers* do consent -- *who will possess Audrey*.

The passage is utterly inexplicable from an orthodox point of view which refuses to consider the ironic implications of William's Christian name and the persistent intellectual irony of his competitor, Touchstone. Touchstone's outrage against William, played literally, is inconsistent with the ironic superiority with which he approaches every other situation in the play. William poses no real threat to his monopoly on Audrey's attentions. In fact, Audrey has clearly stated that William "hath no interest in me in the world" (5.1.9) "Interest" is glossed by Knowles in the New Variorum edition (1977 258) as a "legal concern" or "right or title to." As the reader will recall, the same word, used in the same sense, has already been encountered in Sonnet 71.

The scene is rescued from its dramatic implausibility if we consider it from a literary perspective, as Alex McNeil has recently done (1999): it enacts a self-reflexive ironic commentary on the alienation of de Vere's work, animated by a playful punstering wit. "To have is to have" in Italian is "avere é avere" -- a perfect bilingual anagram of "a Vere is (é) a Vere" [7]. William cannot be *ipse* -- the conquering lover who lays claim to a justified "interest" in the work

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[6] Baldwin's extensive commentary (II: 116-120) on the sources of Touchstone's speech in Cicero and Quintilian sheds very little light on the literary or dramatic purposes invoked in this display of fustian rhetoric. Nor does it dissuade an independent reader from the sneaking suspicion that the passage contains rhetorical dynamite.

[7] See Burford (1987).

-- because Vere is he. Thus Touchstone finally answers Audrey's question of whether "poetical" is a "true" thing -- though of course, in keeping with his indirect, poly-linguistic manner of speaking in riddles, he does so in a highly "poetical" fashion, so elliptical that it has required four hundred years to come to a proper appreciation of the meaning of the lines.