



Author suggests Queen Elizabeth may be author of Shakespearean plays.



Did actor William Shakespeare merely act greatest role for his Queen?

SHAKE-SPEARE the Mystery

A distinguished O.U. alumnus has written a book revealing a scientist's efforts to discover true authorship of plays attributed to Shakespeare. Following account, Chapter 7 of book, reveals his answer. The spelling "Shake-speare" has been adopted by author from original spelling in First Sonnet Folio and other works.

By GEORGE ELLIOTT SWEET, '27chem, '29ms

*"I've reared a monument, my own,
More durable than brass,
Yea, kingly pyramids of stone
In height it doth surpass.
Rain shall not sap, nor driving blast
Disturb its settled base,
Nor countless ages rolling past
Its symmetry deface.
I shall not wholly die, some part
Nor that a little, shall
Escape the dark destroyer's dart
And his grim festival."*

Ode Epilogue of Horace

SHAKE-SPEARE did not strive for originality in his sonnets any more than he did in his plays. In the dramas his style and

the foreground of his thought derived from his fellow University Wits; his classic background was the broadest possible including derivations from Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Darius Phrygius, Ovid, Horace, Virgil, Lucretius, Statius, Catullus, Seneca, Terence, and Plautus. The inspiration for his sonnets came principally from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, various poetry of Horace, and from Chaucer's *Roman de la Rose*. As Francis Meres has indicated, Shake-speare as a poet was closer to Ovid than to any other writer. A comparison of Shake-speare's time sonnets with the *Epilogue to the Odes of Horace*, quoted above, will show the similarity of thought and expression between the two poets. Apparently,

contemporary poets had relatively little influence on Shake-speare's sonnets, which argues that he was one of the first Elizabethans in the sonnet field. Since the sonnet fashion reached its peak in the 1590's, it is natural to assume that Shake-speare wrote his sonnets before the 1590's. Therefore, we have an independent indication that Mr. Hotson's date of composition is correct.

Many interpretations can be put upon the sonnets. Some critics view them as allegorical, some think that they are more dramatic than personal, others that they might have been written merely as exercises in the art of composition in the sonnet form. All of these various elements

probably play a part. We will never know just how personal or just how artificial the sonnets are. Since the poet is of necessity a central figure in a sonnet as he is not in a play, the literary detective, while he knows he is on shaky ground because of the latitude allowed by poetic license, nevertheless is so starved for clues he is bound to speculate on the possible revelations as to the poet's character, physical attributes, and identity contained in the sonnets. The literary detective hopes that the sonnets are as personal as E. K. Chambers thinks they are by his, "Here are souls that pulse and words that burn."

The first 126 sonnets are written in admiration of the physical, mental and spiritual beauty of a "lovely boy." The next twenty-six are principally devoted to condemning the infamous "dark lady" as a wanton with a soul as dark as her complexion. The narrative of the "lovely boy" and the narrative of the "dark lady" taken together strike a most discordant note. The sixteenth century was still the age of chivalry. The story of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table continued to be the most popular story in England. No small percentage of the populace took the story to be history and actually awaited King Arthur to return as he had promised. The Tudors claimed to be descended from Arthur through Owen Tudor, grandfather of Henry VII. Serious writers suggested that Queen Elizabeth was the embodiment of King Arthur and that the Elizabethan Age was the Golden Age of the return of Arthur. A poet was expected to sing the praises of some beautiful lady and by the same token, I suppose, a poetess would be expected to dwell on the admirable qualities of some beautiful boy or beautiful man. But here we have a poet singing a boy's praises and throwing mud on his lady. This is certainly a maladjustment. T. G. Tucker decries the lack of "decent taste and ordinary chivalry" in most of the "dark lady" sonnets.

In 1640 John Benson edited and published a medley of Shake-speare's sonnets in which in some cases he altered the sex of the addressee by switching the pronouns. Through the influence of Benson and others, the view was generally adopted that the main body of the sonnets was addressed to a woman. Samuel Coleridge took the position that the main body of the sonnets, "could only have come from a man deeply in love, and in love with a woman." For a century and a half, the presumption prevailed that the addressee was a woman; then came a reversal. Edmund Malone took up the study of changing the male pronouns to female pronouns and after extensive re-

search arrived at the conclusion that the main body of the sonnets was addressed to a man. Edmund Malone established this hypothesis as the correct theory and his views have prevailed down to the present. Malone was a thorough and competent research worker on Shake-speare. He it was who discovered the poaching story of William Shakspeare's youth had to be false because Sir Thomas Lucy did not have a deer park until much later. Malone also exposed a number of Shakespearian forgeries.

SOMEWHERE OR SOMEHOW there appears to be a *misplaced gender* about the sonnets. Barrett Wendell recoiled at the idea of myriad-minded Shake-speare sincerely prostrating himself before a boy patron; then reminded himself of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*; she was six years older than her "lovely boy," Robert Browning.

The picture of the "lovely boy" as generated by expressions in the sonnets is very flattering. He is "the world's fine ornament," a "beauteous and lovely youth." He is in his late teens or early twenties, "And thou present'st a pure, unstained prime." He has red or auburn hair, "And buds of marjoram had stol'n thy hair," The boy is as fair in disposition and mental ability as he is fair of face, "Fair, kind and true, is all my argument"; also "Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue." The beautiful youth has a beautiful mother and we have a hint that Shake-speare has known her in her lovely girlhood:

"Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime";

What is meant by the seventh line of Sonnet 20: "A man in hue all hues in his controlling"? Gerald Massey suggests that it might refer to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, who had for one of his titles, *Ewe*. Herman Conrad for a number of reasons selected the Earl of Essex as the "lovely boy." In the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, E. K. Chambers mentions this choice of Essex, disagrees with the idea, but praises Conrad's work in general. Essex had auburn hair. He was born on November 19, 1566, and would have been twenty in April, 1587, which would fit the time requirements perfectly.

We see personal allusions to Shake-speare in some ten sonnets.

Sonnet 22

"My glass shall not persuade me I am old,
So long as youth and thou are of one date;
But when in thee time's furrows I behold,
Then look I death my days should expiate."

Sonnet 37

"So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite

Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth;"

Sonnet 48

"But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,"
and

"Within the gentle closure of my breast,"
Sonnet 62

"But when my glass shows me myself indeed,

Bated and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity"
and

"Painting my age with beauty of thy days"
Sonnet 63

"Against my love shall be, as I am now
With Time's injurious hand crush'd and o'erworn;"

Sonnet 72

"My name be buried where my body is"
Sonnet 73

"That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do
hand

Upon those boughs which shake against the
cold,

Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds
sang.

In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west;"

Sonnet 76

"Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth and where they did
proceed?"

Sonnet 89

"Speak of my lameness, and I straight will
halt,"

Sonnet 94

"They that have power to hurt and will do
none,

That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who, moving others are themselves as stone,
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow;
They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
And husband nature's riches from expense;"

The ideas expressed by Sonnets 72, 76, and 94 might be guideposts and then again, they might not be. *Perhaps* Sonnets 72 and 76 are hints as to Shake-speare's identity. *Perhaps* Sonnet 94 is autobiographical. From Sonnets 37 and 89 we gain the impression that Shake-speare is lame or has been lame some time in the past. There should be no doubt that the four age sonnets, 22, 62, 63, and 73 mean what they say in the absence of any contradictory evidence in the rest of the sonnets. Another age sonnet, number 138, has not been quoted because it is a member of the "dark lady" sonnets in which we believe Shake-speare is speaking with another's voice and gazing with another's eyes. The age sonnets plainly relate that in 1587 Shake-speare was middle-aged, perhaps forty or fifty. In this year, William Shakspeare was in his early twenties.

Gerald Massey was of the opinion that Sonnet 48 was spoken by a man to a woman, but J. M. Robertson comments of Massey, "he instantly evokes the rejoinder that it is more fitly to be conceived as addressed by a woman to a man." The only solution

that will completely lay to rest the problem of the *misplaced gender* of the main body of the sonnets is to assume that *Shakespeare was a woman*. A fantastic idea? Hardly, when for years Mary, Countess of Pembroke, has been seriously considered as a candidate for Shakespeare's position. T. W. Baldwin is of the opinion that both the "dark lady" sonnets of the 127-152 series and the allusion to a lady in Sonnets 40, 41, and 42 are purely literary fictional fabrications. If such be the proper interpretation, then for the sonnets to have been written by a woman makes even greater sense. It would be quite natural for a woman to feel called upon to show her esteem and admiration for a lovely boy.

In the two books of Frank Harris, *The Man Shakespeare* and *The Women of Shakespeare*, the author many times points out the womanly qualities of Shakespeare. In the introduction to *The Women of Shakespeare* he makes this explanation about choosing a title for the book: "Here again Shakespeare will reveal himself as the gentle, irresolute, meditative poet-thinker-lover we learned to know in the Orsino-Hamlet-Antony, an aristocrat of most delicate sensibilities and sympathetic humour whose chief defects are snobbishness and overpowering sensuality, if indeed this latter quality is not to be reckoned a virtue in an artist or at least an endowment. But the public probably would have misunderstood the title *The Woman Shakespeare*, so I changed it to *The Women of Shakespeare*." Mary Fitton has long been the popular choice for the dubious honor of being the "dark lady" of the sonnets. Mary Fitton was Frank Harris' enthusiastic choice. Toward the end of the book *The Women of Shakespeare*, Harris says: "Mary Fitton was so strong that she seems to have been the positive or masculine element and Shakespeare so gentle-sensitive that he was the feminine element in the strange union. The soul has not always the sex of the body." We agree with but little of what Mr. Harris has to say. For entirely different reasons we can see feminine traits in Shakespeare.

Does Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, fit the time-scale? She does not. In April 1587 she was twenty-five and would hardly fit either the age or the time sonnets. Furthermore, she would be about the last person in the world to have had a love affair with the Earl of Essex or anyone else. Only the year before, her beloved brother had been killed in The Netherlands in battle; Mary was busy with her husband and her young children; apparently she was content and happy except for the shadow of the death of Philip Sidney.



George Elliott Sweet, scientist turned literary detective, is seen with his son, Jerry.

Shakespearian Scientist

A descendant of Sir Francis Drake would naturally be curious about the world his ancestor lived in. George Elliott Sweet, '27chem, '29ms, certainly is, and for years he's been reading all he can find concerning the Elizabethan age. When Sweet isn't traveling around the country in fulfillment of his duties as president of the Sweet Geophysical Company, he may be found at the nearest library. Always the scientist, he likes to dig out facts and sift them for truth; such a sifting process formed the backbone of his new book *Shakespeare the Mystery*, published at Stanford University Press.

Sweet turned down an unsolicited appointment to Annapolis in order to come to O.U. for two degrees in science. He was a college athlete, a hurdler and quarter-miler, but a heart murmur almost put

a stop to that. However, a wise doctor told him to keep running and the murmur would go away. It did.

Sweet's controversial book is dedicated to his son Jerry, just turned 13 and of whom his father writes this: "In the last year in Little League Jerry won ten games and lost two; for all I know he may be pitching for the Sooner Nine some day." He is married to the former Mildren Robison, '36ba, '38Law. The family lives in Malibu, California.

Comments made thus far by first readers of *Shakespeare the Mystery* have ranged from orchids to onions: some are convinced by Sweet's argument, others outraged. Most, though, seem fascinated by the book, which Barbara Bundschu of United Press said "reads like a detective story"—a description with which the editors are inclined to agree.

WE HAVE ANOTHER woman candidate; she fits the age sonnets perfectly, and in April 1587 she fell in love with Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. On May 3, 1587, one Anthony Bagot wrote a letter in which he said, "When she is abroad, nobody with her but my lord of Essex, and at night my lord is at cards, or one game or another with her, that he cometh not to his own lodging till birds sing in the morning." The lady

was none other than England's queen, Elizabeth Tudor. She was fifty-three, her lovely boy but twenty; a much greater discrepancy than between Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning. Elizabeth Tudor was charming at any age and she was a great and noble queen.

The critics specify that Sonnet 104 was written for a birthday or some other kind

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Oklahoma A&M at Stillwater, December 1—Outlook is for more speed, more depth and less experience than any Oklahoma A&M club since 1948.

These are the teams Oklahoma will meet. If the Sooners are to continue their impressive string of wins and other records, they will have to perform at top form throughout the season. A let-down against any opponent could provide an upset. Teams rated the best chance of doing it are Notre Dame, North Carolina, Texas and Missouri.

This season could be Coach Wilkinson's finest coaching hour. If his Sooners fulfill their potentialities, he could have his third national championship.

Shake-speare . . .

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of an anniversary. We have already learned from Leslie Hotson that Sonnets 104, 107, 123, and 124 were composed late in the year 1589. The birthday of Essex was on November 19; cold weather had no doubt set in by November 19, 1589, which would have fulfilled all the requirements of Sonnet 104 and would place the composition of Sonnet 1 in April 1587. The expressions in Sonnet 104 "Since first your eye I eyed" and "Since first I saw you fresh" mean *since the day I discovered my love for you*. Elizabeth had known Essex as a child, but April 1587 was the first time she had met the man Essex, the warrior returning from the Lowlands campaign.

Elizabeth and Essex were parted on several occasions during the three-year interval 1587-89. Sonnets 26-32, Sonnets 43-52, Sonnets 56-61, and Sonnets 97-99 were written during periods of absence. Late in the year 1590, the Earl of Essex secretly married the widow of Sir Philip Sidney. When Queen Elizabeth found out about the marriage she was exceedingly angry, but was somewhat mollified when Essex consented that his wife should live "very retired in her mother's house." E. K. Chambers suggested that Shake-speare wrote *Romeo and Juliet* because of a perturbing love experience through which he had just passed. From the London earthquake reference we can fix the date of the composition of *Romeo and Juliet* as 1591, the next year after Essex's marriage.

The reference to Shake-speare's lameness in Sonnets 37 and 39 may be explained as meaning the sore on Elizabeth's leg that bothered her for a number of years. On July 1, 1570, De Spes, the Spanish Ambassador, in a letter to Madrid reported that "The illness of the Queen is caused by an open ulcer above the ankle, which prevents

her from walking." Sonnet 37, however, may refer to a more lamentable lameness. Ben Jonson's story to a tavern friend that the Queen ". . . had a membrana on her, which made her incapable of man, . . ." finds a striking parallel in Sonnet 37, which strongly suggests sexual lameness.

"So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,
Take all my comfort of thy worth and
truth."

Lytton Strachey in his *Elizabeth and Essex* informed the public that Elizabeth and Essex contended "like school children" in the realm of learning and literature. The sonnets were Elizabeth's part of that contention, which was echoed centuries later when another poetess wrote *Sonnets from the Portuguese* to her younger love, Robert Browning. The writer of the sonnets was also the writer of the thirty-seven plays and the two long poems. There is too much parallelism of thought, word, and style between the sonnets, *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Henry VI*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *King John*, and other plays for there to be any doubt on this point.

Somerset Maugham points out that involved expressions in letter writing do not predicate involved play composition: ". . . English prose is elaborate rather than simple. It was not always so. Nothing could be more racy, straightforward and alive than the prose of Shakespeare; but it must be remembered that this was dialogue written to be spoken. We do not know how he would have written if like Corneille he had composed prefaces to his plays. It may be that they would have been as euphuistic as the letters of Queen Elizabeth."

WHEN WOULD a busy queen have time to write plays? We might well ask: When would a busy actor, memorizing play after play, have time to write? It is a well-known maxim that you go to a busy person to get things done. The very fact that there are no plays with Elizabeth as authoress creates the suspicion there must be hidden plays of hers. A born competitor, she was bound to experiment with every type of writing, and she surely would not completely neglect the most popular narrative medium of her age, namely, the drama. She was keenly interested in the development of the play medium from the moralities through the blank verse of *Gorbuduc* and up through the finished product of the University Wits. She witnessed the beginnings and gradual development of the

drama: she probably saw more plays than any person in her time. She fought the Puritans to keep open the theatres. Elizabeth liked what the people liked and what Shake-speare liked. John Middleton Murry explains how she made possible Elizabethan drama:

"In so far as Shakespeare had to please the Court—which he had to do—it resolved into pleasing the Queen. Not because of the money-reward earned by Court performances, but because the very existence of the players directly depended upon the royal authority. It was the royal countenance which enabled them to establish themselves in the outskirts of London in spite of the bitter opposition of the puritan authorities of the City. The queen liked to be amused, but she did not like to pay for her amusement. It was a blessed conjuncture for the Elizabethan drama. The Privy Council issued warrants for the players during the plague on the ground that 'they may be in the better readiness hereafter for her Majesty's service whensoever they shall thereupon be called.'

"To please the people, to please the Queen, and to please himself—these were the driving motives of the period of Shake-speare's career which culminated in *Hamlet*. And he was the kind of man to be able to do all at once: and the Queen was the kind of Queen to make it easy for him, because she had fundamentally the same tastes as the people. She liked the plays they liked; and they liked the plays she liked—at bottom."

We see in Shake-speare Elizabeth's twin. Their myriad intellects neither clashed nor diverged; they always saw eye to eye. The political propaganda in the plays never came in for any act of censorship because it was written exactly as Elizabeth would write it. Their philosophy was the same, their religion was the same, their intense patriotic devotion to England was the same, their desire to instruct while amusing was the same. Tucker Brooke writes of Elizabeth: "With whom are we to match her? With whom but with the man of Stratford, the greatest of all her subjects, her mightiest colleague in building the age we know alternately by both their names? . . . And at the end there are no better words to apply to Elizabeth than those Arnold addressed to her poet:

"Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask: thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge."

J. E. Neale writes, "Elizabeth had no intention of surrendering her powers, or acquiescing in men's views of women. She had a great longing, she said, 'to do some act that would make her fame spread abroad in her lifetime, and, after, occasion memorial for ever.'" We are on firm ground when we assume that Elizabeth, in

choosing a pen name, would use her fine intelligence to formulate a nom de plume that would be appropriate and fitting, yet would be ingenious enough to preserve her secret until well after her death. It is very much like that thoughtful queen to do as thorough a job as possible inventing a fool-proof disguise for her authorship.

Elizabeth Tudor would no doubt have been pleased to have been able to follow the advice of Theodore Roosevelt to "talk softly and carry a big stick," if she had been possessed of a big stick. The English of her day as well as the English of today were opposed to a large standing army. Her navy against the Spanish Armada was only a handful of small vessels. She was banking on the skill of her naval architects and the superior abilities of her great sea captains to carry off the victory. Elizabeth ruled half a small island with a total English population of about four million. Little wonder she found the only practical policy was to "talk a good fight and run scared." When

Spain got tough she became chummy with France, and when France became quarrelsome she made overtures to Philip. All English sovereigns were perpetually in need of money. Elizabeth was no exception. She encouraged Sir Francis Drake to seize Spain's homeward-bound gold ships and then informed Philip that she simply could not control her pirate merchantmen. The great Queen understood full well the futility of battle (exactly the same lesson explained by Shake-speare in *Troilus and Cressida*) and she would not go to war if there was any way to avoid the conflict. Elizabethan England would not have been a world power had it not been for the adroitness with which Elizabeth maintained the balance of power in Europe, and she did it by shaking-a-speare—that is to say, she knew how to make a show of strength where a show of strength was needed and to keep one and all, even her Privy Council, in doubt as to her next political move. The pen name Shake-speare had to be appropriate; it was. Shake-speare had to be subtle; it was, as the passage of time well testified. Shake-speare had to appear in the image of a flesh-and-blood man of a similar name; this was arranged. Shake-speare had to appear in the image of a man, not a woman, because sixteenth-century England would never forgive a woman, let alone a queen, for writing down-to-earth realism, and that was the way Elizabeth wanted to write. In order to test the good and bad qualities of a play, the author must obtain a completely frank expression of public opinion, which would only be frank if the literary effort were written anonymously or under a pen name, if said author is some great personage. Even in the nineteenth century, male prejudice being what it is, Mary Ann Evans Cross thought it best to write as George Eliot; and Charlotte, Emily, and Ann Bronte as Currer Bell, Ellis Bell, and Acton Bell.

Brakspeare and Hurlspeare are warlike names without a doubt. Shake-speare has been called a warlike name, but when we stop to analyze the verb-noun combination, Shake-speare is more appropriately the name of a statesman, a politician, a sovereign, and a writer. Elizabeth was, in the highest sense, all four. To shake-a-speare, or to shake-the-speare, is in some instances a show of strength, sometimes it is a threat; in a broader sense it is a means of keeping the other fellow guessing as to just what your intentions are. It is a means of keeping your opponent or opponents wondering just how much strength you possess and just how you will employ said strength. To shake a weapon is to write—or should we say that to write is to shake a weapon and

that a powerful writer wields a powerful weapon. The original sceptre may have been a speare; at least a sceptre and a speare are similar shafts. In a speech before the House of Commons in 1586, Elizabeth had this to say: ". . . Then to the end I might make the better progress in the art of swaying the sceptre I entered into long and serious cogitation what things were worthy and fitting for kings to do; and I found it was most necessary that they should be abundantly furnished with those special virtues, justice, temperance, prudence, and magnanimity, . . ."

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