

**A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS ON SHAKE-SPEARE'S SONNETS IN ORDER OF PUBLICATION DATE:**

prepared by Stephanie Hopkins Hughes (1999)

- 1899 Butler, Samuel.** *Shake-speare's Sonnets Reconsidered*. London: Jonathon Cape, 1927.

Butler was more a writer of fiction than an academic, which lends his opinions a certain weight. However, he was writing before the bulk of the definitive research had been done. His book offers an insight into how the question was seen a hundred years ago.

- 1910 Shaw, George Bernard.** Preface. *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. <http://heserver.Org/drama/>

As a creative writer himself, Shaw is very enjoyable when he is describing Shakespeare. His opinions on the identities of the Fair Youth, etc., are limited by the incomplete research of the time.

- 1949 Hotson, Leslie.** *Shake-speare's Sonnets Dated*. London: Rupert Hart Davis.

Hotson is one of the most interesting of the Shakespeare scholars. He's a good writer himself, very entertaining, and filled with information. His dating scheme, however (late 80s with *Sonnet 107* referring to the Armada in '88) is an example of the kind of conjecture offered by the best scholars before replicated dating tests brought consensus.

- 1952 Hubler, Edward.** *The Sense of Shake-speare's Sonnets*. Princeton: PUP.

A 1950s academic, Hubler takes no stand on the background story but has valuable insights on the poet's attitudes and the predominant themes of the *Sonnets*.

- 1955 Knight, G. Wilson.** *The Mutual Flame*. London: Methuen.

Always an interesting and sensitive commentator on Shakespeare, Knight writes chiefly from a psychological viewpoint. He takes no stand on identities.

- 1960 Vyvyan, John.** *Shakespeare and the Rose of Love: a Study of the early plays in Relation to the Medieval Philosophy of Love*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Perhaps the third most important book on this list. Goes into detail on the connections between Jean de Meun's thirteenth century classic on the theme of Courtly love, the *Roman de la Rose* and Shakespeare's belief as expressed in all his works that romantic/sexual love was sacred and can lead to salvation.

- 1960: Barber, C.L.** "An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets." *William Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1987. Originally the Introduction from *The Laurel Shakespeare: The Sonnets*.

Although Barber feels the true story of the *Sonnets* can't be known, he gives a marvelous explanation of their eternal appeal, comparing the way Shakespeare follows his preferred structure to a figure skater performing classical turns and jumps. Extremely informative.

- 1962 Fiedler, Leslie.** "Some Contexts of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *The Riddle of Shake-speare's Sonnets*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Fiedler examines the Sonnets in the context of Love's Labors Lost and Venus and Adonis, tracing themes to be found in all three, such as the division of love into good love (the Youth's) and bad love (the Dark Lady's).
- 1962. Frye, Northrup.** "How True a Twain." *The Riddle of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- One of the most entertaining pieces I've ever read on Shakespeare, witty, informed and wise. A sample: "Instead of acquiring a wife and transferring his beauty to a successor, the youth has acquired the poet's mistress and transferred his patronage to a second poet."
- 1962 Schaar, Claes.** *Elizabethan Sonnet Themes and the Dating of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Copenhagen: Lund.
- An in-depth examination, often line by line, of connections between Shakespeare's sonnets, the other sonnets of the period and *Edward II*, with many references to other studies and to earlier sonnets in French and Italian, and thereby dating the Sonnets to 1592-96. The most important book on the dating question. Utterly convincing.
- 1963 Wilson, John Dover.** *Shake-speare's Sonnets*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Wilson's book was widely read. However, because he adhered to E.K. Chamber's dating of the plays, he was forced to date the *Sonnets* late, which then forced him to accept Pembroke as the Fair Youth. Too bad he hadn't read Schaar before he published.
- 1968 Akrigg, G.P.V.** *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- A biography of Southampton that includes a chapter on the sonnets. Akrigg is among those who replicated the stylistic tests of Isaac and Davis, confirming their dates.
- 1972 Wait, R.J.C.** *The Background to Shake-speare's Sonnets*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Interesting because it contains a considerable amount of historical detail which he uses to make points about the events behind various sonnets.
- 1972 Hayashi, Tetsumaro.** *Shake-speare's Sonnets: a Record of 20th Century Criticism*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- A bibliography of books of and about the sonnets. I am still looking for one that's more up to date.
- 1974 Green, Martin.** *The Labyrinth of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. London: Skilton.
- A fascinating study of the sexual puns in the *Sonnets*. Once they're pointed out it's impossible to ignore them or believe they could have been unintentional.

- 1977 Booth, Stephen.** "Commentaries on the Sonnets." *William Shake-speare's Sonnets*. Ed Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House.

An example of the best kind of criticism. Goes into three of the sonnets in detail, bringing a great deal of fascinating information and scholarship to bear, supplying the reader with much that can be used to read the rest of them. But no comments on the backstory.

- 1979 Muir, Kenneth.** *Shake-speare's Sonnets*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

The second most useful book for this study. Muir goes into detail on all the facets of the problems he sees with the issues covered in this paper. His logic, common sense, absence of personal agenda and attention to detail give his opinions added weight.

- 1979 Rowse, A.L.** *The Poems ofShakespeare's Dark Lady*. New York: Potter.

Rowse is annoyingly opinionated as always, but facts are facts. He deserves much credit for uncovering the facts about Emilia Bassano Lanier. His reasons for her purpose in publishing should be taken seriously. It includes her poem and its potent feminist introduction.

- 1982 Giroux, Robert.** *The Book Known as Q*. New York: Atheneum.

As a former senior editor with Farrar, Straus and Giroux, the author is a reader, not an academic, which may give him a certain freedom in his thinking. Absolutely the best and most complete book on the subject the one to read if there's no time for more. He includes a section where he lists the poems in terms of their topics (35 43). This is helpful in fixing what events may have inspired them.

- 1984 Rowse, A.L.** *Shake-speare's Sonnets*. London: Macmillan. Third edition (original 1962).

All the sonnets with his interpretation of each. Irritatingly opinionated, but, as an historian, at least Rowse is willing to deal with the story. His dedicatee (Mr. W.H.) is William Hall and his Rival Poet is Marlowe; he follows the mainstream in everything else. Includes a blurb on Emilia Lanier as the Dark Lady.

- 1985 Greene, Thomas M.** "Pitiful Thrivers: Failed Husbandry in the Sonnets." *William Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Originally from *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey H. Hartman. Methuan.

An essay that examines the way Shakespeare combines sexual and economic imagery; dense terminology, but with useful insights.

- 1985 Felperin, Howard.** "Towards a Poststructuralist Practise: a Reading of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *William Shake-speare's Sonnets*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Originally from *Beyond Deconstruction: The Uses and Abuses of Literary Theory*. Howard Felperin.

Lit crit twaddle. One sentence, chosen at random: "A rhetoric that derives its performative capability from its disturbance of conventional usage has itself become conventional usage, thereby requiring a further disturbance to maintain its mimetic advantage." If one must translate, one would prefer having to wrestle with the French, Latin or even Greek that the Victorians loved to quote without translating. That at least offers some reward.

- 1987 Pequigney, Joseph.** *Such is My Love*. Chicago: UCP.  
Promotes the view that the *Sonnets* are love poems celebrating a fully sexual relationship between two consenting males. Offers a satisfying argument that they were published in the order as written.
- 1993 Green, Martin.** *Wriothesley's Roses*. Baltimore: Clevedon.  
An in-depth look at Southampton's family history, including the most detailed biography of his grandfather, the First Earl, I've yet seen. Well-documented, thoroughly researched and convincing.
- 1993 Woods, Susanne, ed.** *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Oxford: OUR  
A critical study of Lanier's work, this book also provides information on her life not available elsewhere, including her foster child relationship with the Countess of Kent. She ignores the Dark Lady theory.
- 1995 Lasocki, David and Roger Prior.** *The Bassanos: Venetian Musicians and Instrument Makers in England, 1531-1665*. Ashgate.  
Primarily about the family, but with a detailed chapter on Emilia Bassano's claim to Dark Ladyship.

#### ARTICLES AND LECTURES

- 1964 Auden, W.H.** "On the Sonnets." BBC broadcast.
- 1989 Moore, Peter.** "The Rival Poet of *Shake-speare's Sonnets*." *The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*. Fall 1989: 8-12.

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Note: These are the books and articles I read while preparing for the lecture on the *Sonnets* given at the 1999 Shakespeare Oxford conference in Newton, Mass. I didn't include all of these in the Works Cited in "The Story of the *Sonnets*" because I didn't have reason to quote them in the essay. Nor are they all the books or articles I read for that lecture, but (all but one of) these are the ones I believe have the most to offer other researchers.