

Shakespearean Authorship Trust



Amelia Bassano Lanier

Dates:

1569-1645

Background:

Brought up opposite the theatre district in a family of Venetian Jews of Moroccan ancestry, at the age of 7 she was given to be educated by Countess Susan Bertie, in the family headed by Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby. At the age of 13 she became mistress to Lord Hunsdon, the man in charge of the English theatre. When she got pregnant a decade later she was expelled from court and married off to a minstrel. She was one of the first women to own and operate a school and the first woman to publish a book of original poetry *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611). She died in poverty.

Literary Evidence:

- The dying swans to music in the Shakespearean plays---the standard symbol for the great poet-- are associated with her four names Aemelia (in Othello), John-son (King John), Willough(by) (Othello) and Bassanio (Merchant of Venice);
- *Salve Deus* includes a masque sequence resembling the one in *The Tempest*
- *Salve Deus* uses rare words and word clusters only found in the Shakespearean plays;
- Not only is she a major experimental poet, *Salve Deus* is a 1600 line satirical crucifixion parody resembling the anti-Christian satires detected in the plays eg. in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Biographical fit:

- Her maternal cousin was Robert Johnson who composed most of the music for the plays, and her 15 closest male relatives were professional musicians. This explains the 2,000 musical references in the plays which are 300% more musical than any others of the time;
- Coming from a Jewish family explains the Jews and the Moors in the plays, and also their use of Hebrew texts such as the Mishnah (identified by Altimont), and odd nonsense phrases in AWW that turn out to be Hebrew (identified by Amit), and their Jewish allegories;
- Her life with Lord Hunsdon equipped her with knowledge of the court, rare plants, military and legal terminology;
- Her life with the Willoughbys explains the references to Denmark, and the expertise shown in Bible translation.

The Case:

She has long been identified as the 'dark lady' of the Sonnets. Her candidacy was announced in March 2007 in a lecture at the Smithsonian Institution as part of the Washington Shakespeare Festival by John Hudson, artistic director of the Dark Lady Players, a New York company who perform the underlying Jewish allegories in the plays. A 5000 word major article on her appears in the Summer/Fall 2009 special issue of *The Oxfordian* dedicated to the top authorship candidates. A 15 page review by Michael Posner in *The Queen's Quarterly* concluded that the case for Lanier is as plausible as that for Shakespeare. A 15 minute tv documentary made by Mitchell Riggs of Stony Brook University Drama Department is available on the web. For more information, visit:

www.darkladyplayers.com or contact DarkLadyPlayers@aol.com

References

John Hudson (2009) 'Amelia Bassano Lanier: a new paradigm', *The Oxfordian* (2009)
http://shakespeare-oxford.com/wp-content/oxfordian/Hudson_Bassano.pdf

John Hudson (2008) 'Shakespeare's Plays Were Written By A Jewish Woman'
http://www.jewcy.com/arts-and-culture/shakespeares_plays_were_written_jewish_woman

Michael Posner 'Unmasking Shakespeare' Reform Judaism Magazine (2010)
<http://reformjudaismmag.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=1584>

Mitchell Riggs (2008) The Dark Lady Discovery
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyn-3GN0d7w>

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