

rubber. As a simple, cheap, and largely effective if not aesthetically pleasing device it was used in heterosexual intercourse earlier in this century mainly to prevent conception, but found little application in homosexual pairing since the chance of impregnation was non-existent. In the 1980s this attitude changed, and the gay media paid much attention to condoms. Special models appeared that are claimed to be superior for anal (as distinct from vaginal) penetration, and fear of disease has inspired the use of the sheath even for oral-genital contact. In any event, the sexual abandon that characterized much homosexual life in the 1970s has become fraught with danger, and the adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" has gained renewed meaning.

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SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM (1564-1616)

Playwright and poet, often considered to be the greatest writer in the English language. Of tenant farmer stock and the son of a glover, Shakespeare was born in the provincial town of Stratford-upon-Avon in England; however, the very few facts known about his life are derived from various legal documents. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children within the next three years; the following five years are unaccounted for, but by 1594 he was involved in the theatre world in London as both an

actor and a playwright. He enjoyed an increasingly successful theatrical career until his retirement in 1612 and his return to Stratford.

With so few substantiated facts about his biography, one can only turn with some reservation to his works for insight into the man. An undisputed master of both poetry and human nature, Shakespeare is the author of some of the most enduring classics in world literature: *Richard III* (1591), *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), *As You Like It* (1599), *Hamlet* (1600), *Twelfth Night* (1601), *Othello* (1604), *King Lear* (1605), *Macbeth* (1606), and *The Tempest* (1611), among his 37 plays. Given the almost complete range of human experience chronicled in these works, one can state little about the author's own character and personality without conjecture.

Shakespeare's prolonged separation from his wife and the stipulation in his will that she inherit his "second best bed" has, however, sparked much debate about his sexuality.

The Plays. A search of the plays reveals little advocacy for homosexuality, if much tolerance and compassion for all types of benign variations of human behavior. While his plays are peopled with many passive and introspective men (such as Hamlet and Richard II) as well as aggressive and independent women (such as Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*), no distinctly gay characters are evident. Some critics have singled out the sensuous and seemingly asexual Enobarbus of *Antony and Cleopatra*, the effete fop who incites the aggressively masculine Hotspur in *1 Henry IV*, or the doting and infatuated Sebastian of *Twelfth Night* as prototypes, but such designations are inconclusive.

Historically, however, theatrical companies of Shakespeare's time did not employ women; instead, their roles were played by boys, apprentices to the companies. In adherence to the laws and sympathies of the times, the plays were, therefore, unable to display any overtly sexual

behavior, but one of Shakespeare's most frequent plot devices was to have his heroines disguise themselves as boys, particularly in the comedies. Thus, what in reality was a boy pretending to be a woman pretending to be a boy leads to some psychologically acute and complex scenes with homoerotic suggestions, such as the encounters between Rosalind (as Ganymede, a name rich in suggestiveness) and Orlando in *As You Like It* and Viola (as Caesario) and Orsino in *Twelfth Night*.

The Sonnets. For more substantive evidence, one must turn instead to Shakespeare's sequence of 154 poems in the form of sonnets, published surreptitiously in 1609 and immediately protested by their author. Probably intended as a personal exercise for private circulation, the sonnets may be the works that reveal something of the man himself; in them, Shakespeare names the persona "Will," an obviously personal and intimate diminution of William, and, as in most of the Renaissance sonnet sequences, their subject is erotic love.

Dedicated to "Mr. W. H.," who has been variously identified as the Earl of Southampton, a boy actor named Willy Hewes, Shakespeare himself (in a misprint of his initials), someone unknown to history, or someone invented, the first 126 are clearly homoerotic, while most of the others concern a woman conventionally called "the Dark Lady." Historically, those scholars who begrudgingly admit to their subject matter try to discount their message. Most claim that the attraction the persona feels for the fair young man is either platonic or unconsummated; others assert that the poems are only examples of the Renaissance male friendship tradition. Still others insist on the fallacy of equating the persona with the poet and confusing literature with autobiography.

However, a close reading reveals a genuine emotional bond quite clearly consummated physically, one that grows and develops over a period of time, one threatened by a rival poet as well as the

Dark Lady herself, also the mistress of the persona and also in pursuit of Mr. W. H. If not homosexual, the sensibility behind the poems is decidedly **bisexual**, and if not William Shakespeare, "Will" is a voice that speaks with convincing experience. Those who minimize the homoeroticism of the sonnets fail to consider why a heterosexual poet would choose homosexual love and desire as his subject matter. They also fail to give credit to the persona, in Sonnet 121, when he says "I am that I am."

Conclusion. Shakespeare's sexual identity will probably always be speculative, but this in no way diminishes the achievement of a playwright who could sensitively chart the full range of human involvement in a compassionate portrait of human diversity. But without question, Shakespeare is the author of some of the finest lyric poems to describe gay love and passion.

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SHAMANISM

In the strict sense, shamanism is a phenomenon of the magical and religious life of Siberia and Central Asia. At its core lies a specific technique of ecstasy of which the shaman alone is the master, specializing in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and either ascend to the heavens or descend to the underworld. The shaman further controls his spirits in the sense that as a human being, he is able to communicate with the dead, with demons, and with nature spirits without becoming their instrument. He is invested with power over fire and enjoys a