

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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, London: Gay Men's Press, 1982; Marilyn French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*, New York: Ballantine, 1981; Joseph Pequigney, *Such Is My Love: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985; Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Rodney Simard

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

unique method of healing. Shamans belong to the elect who have access to a region of the sacred that is closed to other members of the community.

Siberia. The connection of homosexuality with shamanism was noted by the classic investigators of the subject. Waldemar Bogoras mentions that, under the influence of a Siberian shaman, a Chukchi lad at sixteen years of age will suddenly relinquish his sex and imagine himself to be a woman. He adopts female dress, lets his hair grow, and devotes himself entirely to female occupations. Disclaiming his sex, he takes a husband into the hut and performs all the work usually incumbent upon the wife. This change of gender identity is strongly encouraged by the shamans, who interpret such cases as an injunction of their individual deity. The gender shift coincides with entry into shamanhood, and nearly all the shamans are individuals who have left their sex.

There are three degrees of effemination of the male. The lowest grade consists simply in the feminine style of the hairdo. The second is marked by the adoption of female clothing, which can be for shamanistic or therapeutic purposes; it need not entail a complete change of sex. That is the third stage, in which the subject, aided by the spirits, learns all the female handicrafts, begins to speak in a feminine mode, and even acquires the physical weakness and helplessness of a woman. He becomes a woman with the physical appearance of a man. He contracts a marriage with a man which is then solemnized in the usual fashion, and the couple lives together as man and wife, with the "wife" taking the passive role in sexual relations. The shaman also has a special protector among the spirits who functions as a kind of supernatural husband, regarded as the real head of the family who gives orders through the "wife," which the husband is duty-bound to execute. The effeminate shaman is feared by other shamans who have not undergone

the change of sex, because he alone has the spirit protector who can avenge any wrong done to his protégé.

In speaking of the Koriaks, Stefan Krashennikov refers to men who occupy the position of concubines, comparing them in turn to the "men transformed into women" of the Kamchadale. Every one of the latter is regarded as a magician and interpreter of dreams, wears women's clothes, does women's work, and has the status of a concubine. The homoeroticism of the Koriaks was interpreted by Bogoras and Waldemar Jochelson as an outgrowth of the shamanic, but in turn as a monopoly of the profession of shaman held by the homosexual. In olden times, according to Jochelson, shamans "transformed" into women were not rare among the Koriaks, and were even regarded as the most powerful of their ilk. They entered into marriages with men, or became second wives when a female wife was already present. Professional shamans have guardian spirits who appear to them in the guise of animals or birds, typically as wolves, bears, seagulls, eagles, or lapwings. The future shamans are often nervous youths who suffer from attacks of hysteria during which the spirits order them to devote themselves to shamanism. Those in the process of becoming shamans pass through a stage of fits of wild paroxysm alternating with states of total exhaustion. The phenomenon was declining among the Koriaks early in the twentieth century following their conversion to Russian Orthodoxy.

The Broader Context. Edward Carpenter understood the shaman as the precursor of a higher stage of cultural evolution, a variation of the human type that sprang from a variant of the sexual orientation itself, or rather of the germ plasm that underlies that orientation. Such classes of men and women, diverging as they do from the norm of sexuality, become repositories and foci of new kinds of lore and new techniques of control over the world of spirits and divinities feared

and adored by the rest of their tribe. The primitive development of the intellectual, as opposed to the purely physical, aspects of culture was first embodied in the shamanistic type, which rejected the customary activities of the hunter and warrior in favor of a sacral occupation. The superstitious belief that the spirits had conferred supernatural powers upon them reinforced their commitment to the profession of trance medium and healer—one exercised by many homosexual men and women in different cultures, even in the high civilizations of later centuries. In the whole process the homosexual-transvestite orientation is primary, the shamanic calling secondary. Shamanism is a distinctive feature of the archaic paleoarctic cultures that has fascinated students of primitive religion, though not all have acknowledged the homoerotic component of the phenomenon.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Waldemar Bogoras, "The Chukchi of Northeastern Asia," *American Anthropologist*, 3 (1901), 80–108; Edward Carpenter, *Intermediate Types Among Primitive Folk*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1919; Ferdinand Karsch-Haack, *Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben der Naturvölker*, Munich: Reinhardt, 1911; Åke Ohlmarks, *Studien zum Problem des Schamanismus*, Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1939.

Warren Johansson

SHAWN, TED (1891–1972)

American dancer and choreographer. Born in Kansas City, Missouri, to a father who was a successful newspaperman and a mother related to the famous Booth family of actors, Shawn at first planned to be a Methodist minister. But while at the University of Denver he contracted diphtheria and the experimental serum that saved his life left him temporarily paralyzed from the waist down. As he began to recover, he turned to therapy, to exercise, and then to dance. When he decided upon a dance career, he appraised the potential of his own body and found it

incompatible with the demands of ballet, but he surmised that he could infuse the decorativeness and technical polish of the ballet into a contemporary dance style that was still rather trivial. This gave him a new vision of dance in America whose culture was then scarcely receptive to such an innovation, and he devoted his life to realizing it.

His first partner was a dancer named Norma Gould, but she was soon eclipsed in Shawn's life by Ruth St. Denis, a star of the day. They met in 1914, and not long afterwards he proposed to her, although at 22 he was some fourteen years the younger, and despite her objections they were married on August 13. The union was not consummated until some time in October, and then only after she had convinced herself that contraceptive methods would shield her from pregnancy and childbirth, which, she felt, would destroy the beauty of her body. During much of their marriage, however, she was unfaithful to him; he did not disapprove of her conduct on moral grounds but took it as an affront to his vanity.

As a teacher and employer of male dancers he was paternalistic and generous. Shawn paid his dancers higher wages than the union demanded, even during the lean depression years. He sought never to invade the privacy of his boys, or to impose himself on them. He required only that they maintain an unbroken façade of masculinity and never display any sign of effeminacy. He was fighting an uphill battle in the America of the interwar period to prove the manliness of dance. If in his instructional readings he touched upon the Greek ideal of male love, he never tried to convert anyone to homosexuality. He himself was bisexual, and not a few of his male dancers were bisexual or homosexual, but he did not make advances to them. Unlike his wife he was not promiscuous, but sought an enduring relationship with his partners. Had she not been unfaithful to him, he might not have