

Chapter 1

The Sonnets and the Queen

WHEN I HAD COMPLETED my book *Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart*, I began looking for other references to Queen Elizabeth's beauty. My first port of call, so to speak, was Elizabethan's who wrote. So this naturally led me to start with William Shakespeare. Modern and past writers once again, seemed unable to produce any major links between Liz and Will and this I found odd and disappointing. They did however suggest that Will wrote the *Merry Wives of Windsor* for her, or at her request. So I scrutinised my copies of the complete works for references to Elizabeth in that play. Using my knowledge gained from the fact-laden books I have read, plus my own endeavours, I found nothing of significance to show there were any obvious comments about Elizabeth in the play at this stage of my investigations. The same was not true for other parts of my Complete Works. I stared in amazement at the first few sonnets! There was Will talking about beauty and urging somebody to marry and have children. It didn't need a degree to work out who he was referring to - Queen Elizabeth.

Research was needed and sure enough I found that I was not the first to see that the sonnets are about Liz. George Chalmers in 1790 made the connection.¹ Much later in 1956 George Elliot Sweet jumped to an even bigger conclusion that Elizabeth had written the entire lot and plays as well, all from reading the epilogue of the play Henry VIII. (*All is True*). In spite of that the idea to most writers, historians, seems ludicrous and the subject matter of the poems on further examination doesn't fit in with them being solely about Elizabeth. We can not be certain they even are about William or wrote by him, say some writers. This is of course complete nonsense. True the sonnets are not completely about the Queen; nevertheless she can not be dismissed at this stage.

This seems to be the excepted story of the 154 sonnets:

1. There are 3 or 4 people involved: a poet, a friend (to the poet), a handsome young man, and the mistress' of the poet (a dark lady).
2. The poet urges the young man to marry and have children.
3. The friend steals the poet's mistress.

Some believe the handsome man and the friend are the same person. Others also think that the friend is a 'rival poet'.²

Why this explanation of the sonnets has come about is anyone's guess! Though with the academic lobby it doesn't surprise me why they can't get past it. For it does not stand up even though a long list of names, all very plausible, probably why the professors love it, now exists for each of the people. This is why the sonnets baffle us. We are lead to believe the sonnets tell a story or are biographical. Therefore writers have to invent the characters to tell the story or in other words a self fore-

1 The Great Writers No 46 P1085.

2 Later in another chapter, I will give details that could fit this theory, yet I think that this is still all rubbish.

filling tale, the literally equivalent of perpetual motion. But do they tell a story? Or tell us of William's life? Or are they just one of statements or a series of statements? Certainly some have themes and yet it is evident to myself that no story is told. If they are about life, it's more likely his love life. What I have noticed about them is some are negative and some are positive in the way they express what is being said in each. Sometimes the last two lines appear to contradict the other lines of the stanza.

In my view they are statements, but don't take my word for it let's break the stupid story idea by simply reading the end lines of sonnet 42:

"But here's the joy: my friend and I are one.

Sweet flattery! Then she loves but me alone!"

So you can see there is no friend or rival poet, just the poet writer in a curious double play on himself. Similarly the Dark Lady or mistress are also double play allusions and are connected to the negative sonnets I mentioned earlier. It's as so the writer of these sonnets is putting themselves down, as in 130 with the exception of the last two lines and especially the last line which reads:

"As any she belied with false compare."

This line is extraordinary! As it suggest that the verse above was written by a woman and not only that, but by a woman who thinks she is ugly or is putting herself down. This means the sonnets could have been written by a woman! Well not Mary Queen of Scots, when did she ever put herself down or some other woman then? Indeed, yet not all of them, for the sonnets NAME whom the man is.

Sonnet 136 last line: "And then thou lov'st me, for my name is Will."

So we know that William Shakespeare wrote some of the sonnets and the rest of the above sonnet, plus several others furthermore refer to Will, with the original title and volume, being printed with his name on. Pure Shakespeare fans reckon he could have written these feminine verses, yet surely he would have needed a split-personality and would be incredibly vain to write everything? Realistically the vast amount of small detail, which William is unlikely to know, from his background, puts an end to this idea. This is why the believers of other candidates jump on their bandwagon. Paradoxically these small details can help us prove the Shakespeare connection, but not as a sole writer of the sonnets.

The handsome young man or boy, as he is sometimes referred to in the sonnets, you might be asking, who's he? With careful checks of the sonnets I can suggest to you that there are only two people involved, being that we have dismissed two from the story theory, just leaving a woman, and the other William himself. With that the only conclusion to be drawn is that William is the handsome lad, being referred to by the woman. Now that just leaves us to work out who that woman was!

Before we delve further it's interesting that the Sonnets seem to be Shakespeare's Holy Grail. In that if you prove they were written by somebody else then the Bard didn't write them. A clear distinction is made between Sonnets and plays. For example even Stratfordians will allow saying that the Bard can work in collaboration on some plays, but never on Sonnets, it's that simple. Therefore with this background you can't have TWO writers on the Sonnets, so what I'm writing hear is heresy.

Onwards we go with the heresy then. Scanning through the poems does not reveal her name. It might have been in once according to sonnet 81 line 5, though an early sonnet (17) insinuates no one would believe him (William) of her beauty. I know the feeling William! Whoever she was she was very beautiful and the most famous lines Shakespeare wrote follow on in the next stanzas, starting with the words "*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?*"

To go through the list of candidates that university people have come up with for the Dark Lady seems pointless to me, especially when they have created one of the biggest frauds about Shakespeare that anyone can come up with. In their efforts to go along with political correctness, which was clearly based on University ideas in the first place, students came to unfounded conclusions based on the sonnets. Once again I can debunk these ideas.

The Wilde Thing

If you think that only one person (the Bard) wrote all the sonnets things become ludicrous. The sonnets as a whole have suggested that William might be gay to some writers; this is of course the academic world at its most stupid level. Take away the sole writer and they suggest, if the woman who wrote sonnet 2 is anything to go by, that William was the 'toy boy' of a much older women - 40 years or so older to be precise.³ The Will is gay lobby get very mixed up with their arguments, though if a man reads all the sonnets out loud, in particular the 'boy' verses you could convince anyone. So far I have not been able to track down the person or persons who suggest that William is gay to the rest of the world, though clearly it's not a recent argument. Oscar Wilde tried to use them in his defence in court. Courts of the past don't tend to



get things right in modern eyes, though the dismissal of this evidence turned out to be correct, by accident then judgement! Sonnets are the only thing to 'suggest' gayness in Shakespeare. However the sonnets can suggest other conditions or states of mind.

For instance the 'old' verses for me give the game away! Because 130 alludes to a woman, this also means she is old, as William certainly was not! The other thing is that this woman was not married and believed that William was also not married. We know that William was married to Anne Hathaway (which rules out her as the woman of the sonnets, plus she was not that old) and so was deceiving this woman and his wife, assuming that they were written after 1582. This adds up to some pretty convincing evidence the sonnets had to be vague about who is involved and why. There is also an indication in number 36 to show that honour is important and other lines in this stanza have a bearing on this, more on this later. Back to Oscar for a tick, he should have realised that what Shakespeare had produced was a private script, which somebody printed anyway. Yet then he had his own agenda, as those presumably gay, academics do when they still see them as gay writings.

With the gay Shakespeare put in the bin of absurdity, we can continue to search for the woman of the Sonnets. They do give us loads of clues to this female's identity. It would be needless to say all of them when one is sufficient. Have you ever wondered why the sonnets are full of illusions and direct references to roses? As in line 3 No.95 "*Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!*" Yes 'budding name'. Well there you go! Enter Elizabeth Tudor, The Tudor Rose, to quote Will, "*A rose by any other name.*"

Now the older woman, when William was 18 the Queen was nearly 50, so that ties in. He married Anne at 18 as well, this would be quite an achievement if he was

³ Perhaps this sonnet refers to a woman who is well past the age of 40, rather than an actual age gap. The whole thing points to the youthful arrogance of one writer.

seeing the Queen also, but we can not go much past that date because of the 'youth' and 'boy' in the poems. Actually we can, in view of the Elizabethan's used the term youth right into a person's twenties. In 1590 for example Liz was 57 and to her a 26 year old man may have been just a boy. Alternatively it might have been her affectionate way. Many of her letters have the word love sprinkled through out them, even very important ones. Of course you may now be saying that she would have known about Will being married. However Robert Dudley kept his marriage to a lady in waiting secret from her, although she did find out eventually. William's marriage was no big secret and he might have augured that if nobody asked about it he wasn't going to say. Anne was back at Stratford, Will in London could do as he liked and nobody was going to tell anyone in Stratford of his doings, because transport was poor. I dare say gossip never reached Stratford, in deed they don't seemed to have known much about William's fame in Stratford, till after his death. There's no reason to assume too that they were all written at the same time, even year. The adultery angle doesn't come in if some where written before, say 1580 or earlier.

A Strong Blond

This leaves the beautiful woman. In *Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart*, I argued that Queen Elizabeth was a beautiful blond. During her early reign she never reportedly had any accurate paintings painted, or any that I could confirm as being spot on, however when she was in her fifties the artist Nicholas Hilliard returned from France. Lots of small miniatures were produced of her. The academic writer Roy Strong has shown these to be part of a cult. Saying her features had been 'Transformed into the face of a 16 year old girl.'⁴ You won't be surprised to hear that I totally disagree with



this conclusion. It's clearly based on a belief, which can not be supported by evidence. She looks nothing like a 16-year-old. My belief is that Hilliard produced the nearest thing we have to a photo of her. Unlike Strong, I can sight this as picture as evidence. You can see wrinkles and evidence of aging. I am not arguing that Liz has the body of a 16 year old, yet what I will say is that it is possibly for a woman to look 30 years younger say than she is. There are many women alive now that look much younger and if they do young men will consequentially chase after them. This could be certainly true of Elizabeth and is nothing to do with flattery or power. Young men or old were not rewarded for just being at court. Indeed you had to do something brave or a real achievement to

get an honour from the Queen. Statistically only 878 people were knighted in her entire reign.⁵ Everyone in the court would have known that by her middle age and anyone trying to gain anything through flattery would soon loose a lot. Our Queen Elizabeth gives out more honours and nobody flatters her!

⁴ Strong Cult of Elizabeth P.

⁵ Bingham P18.

The cult idea does not stand up either under investigation. Indeed a beautiful woman would likely keep her good looks through her life. Not always yet why disbelieve people from that time? It is true that they used allegory and yet to see it in everything and link unconnected items together is perhaps taking things too far. As Roy says there is a basis of truth in many poems, paintings of the Queen. Might not this truth be that at sixty plus Elizabeth was still beautiful?

To establish if she was indeed extremely attractive, in the 1590's, for the sonnets that could have been written at later dates, we need independent witnesses. These by definition must not be English, poets or painters, as these could link us back to the cult idea and prove it true. There are such persons whose comments on the Queen were recorded. The first, Monsieur de Maisse, who saw her in 1597, is too neutral as it can be read by us to mean one of two things.

These are his words...

“When anyone speaks of her beauty she says that she never was beautiful, although she had that reputation thirty years ago. Nevertheless, she speaks of her beauty as often as she can.”⁶

This does make her appear vain somewhat, Yet again that is what expert lobby have jumped to. I can however look at this simple statement two ways. Like the ‘Strong’s’ of this world or alternatively that the man is perplexed by her denials, when he can clearly see she is attractive. However he does not say she is admirable and if she did use the word ‘reputation’ she must have a distorted view on beauty. Why? Because it is very difficult to be regarded as beautiful, you either are or are not. People decide if you are, with the exception if they have not seen the person. Therefore someone can then have a reputation of being beautiful under those circumstances, which in Elizabeth’s case doesn’t apply.

I believe that if Elizabeth were shown to be attractive at her age many modern historians would be seen as ageist! Another term invented by them. So that's what I will now do, with the help of the second independent witness.

Paul Hentzner was a German traveller and saw the Queen in 1598. She was going to the chapel, at Greenwich, one Sunday morning. Despite being in a procession, Paul could see quite clearly, enough for him to see her eyes in his complete description of her.

Unfortunately he wrote in Latin, so the document needs translating. Latin is taught very little today. I need a Latin to English Dictionary to be able to read it.⁷ A lot of the academics should use one too. Instead they relied on a translation printed in 1757 written by Richard Bentley which was edited into a book by Horace Walpole. Sadly, I, for the various reasons given in my previous book, have not been able to see either the original document or this translation. Roy Strong used the translated version in one of his books.⁸ In a book by Mary Edmond, she put some of the Latin words and the translated versions in side by side.⁹ I decide to check them. Mary by the way accepted the translated words as gospel, like Roy seems to have done. Some of the words checked out, using my Dictionary, like: labiis compressis - lips narrow, the way she spoke: blanda & humanissima - pleasant & very gracious. Others were totally wrong: fulvum - red (hair), face candida - fair.

In my book 'fulvum' for the colour of her hair translates as yellow or gold or sandy and definitely not red! In Latin the word for Red hair is rufus!

⁶ Strong Elizabeth R P46.

⁷ D. A. Kidd - Latin Gem - Collins 1972.

⁸ Strong Elizabeth R P42.

⁹ Edmond P135.

The next word confirms that she was a breath-taking attractive woman at the age of 65. 'Candida' does not translate as fair, but white and beautiful.¹⁰ I believe it has also become a female name with the same meaning. Fans of seventies pop, will recall the group 'Dawn' had a hit with a song called that. Hentzner also states she is very majestic and one word which should not need translation - magnifica.

He does show signs of her age, but the overall impression is one of a very beautiful woman and stately Queen. He also has no axe to grind and therefore convinces me. If there are some that are still not convinced an Envoy of the Duke of Wurttemberg, in 1592, said she could compete with a maiden of 16 in grace and beauty!¹¹ These three statements attack the cult idea, as it depends on the basis that Elizabeth was not attractive in her later years. No games were played, so if men go around professing love for her than, more often than not they do.

The Queen of the Greeks

With the cult gone, I believe this opens up the floodgates to all the other Elizabethan writers and painters, who saw the Queen as beautiful. Edmund Spenser dedicated his book the Faerie Queen to her and helps create the 'Gloriana' image of Liz. Now we know why. To them she was a sort of goddess, like the classical ones such as: Diana, Helen, Venus and countless other Greek and Roman Gods, together with their properties: ageless, immensely powerful, beautiful and un-spoilt by men (a virgin). Elizabeth was, after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, supported by the one true God, in their eyes. She would become known to the world as 'Good Queen Bess.' Children even sing her praises today.¹² Many people rose to greatness during her reign. Great houses were built and wealth was created. Thomas Dekker sums it all up: "Brought up a nation that was almost begotten and born under her."¹³ In what has become known as her 'Golden Speech.' She addressed her people as loving subjects and said "you will never have a more loving prince."¹⁴ It looks like (if we are honest with ourselves) she was right even up to the present day. Historians of our times only see the problems of her latter years. Well even I know she wasn't a god! Back then if you didn't have a problem with her, then she wasn't far off being one. Little wonder that William Shakespeare was very much in love with her. In the sonnets he begs us to compare her with a summer's day, which he then criticises for not being as good as Liz. Yet in number 18, the same one, his own confidence declares that while anyone is alive she can live in his lines. Liz read this and followed it with the next sonnet (19) copying what Will thought about his words. The '*long-lived phoenix*' she refers to is of course herself, telling time to '*burn*' it. This is a classic Elizabeth, where she puts herself down in the verse, widely seen throughout the sonnets. The last line of the same stanza, starting with the words '*My love,*' poses an awkward question? Was Elizabeth really in love with William Shakespeare? The problem is that she is so affectionate that she uses the word love too much. The sonnets also solve the problem for in number 21 she spells out the kind of love she means. It starts negative and critical of Will's sonnet 18. I suppose we should accept this from her by now. William didn't and added the last two lines, sort of dismissive if you read it alone and not linked to the above stanza. Yet she changes the style of the verse with the words '*true*

¹⁰ 'Fair' in the 1590's would actually mean beautiful, however candida should not be translated for the modern reader as fair.

¹¹ Strong Gloriana P.

¹² The lady on the horse in the Banbury Cross Nursery Rhyme is Queen Elizabeth.

¹³ Fraser P214.

¹⁴ Strong Elizabeth R P62.

in love'. Again in 22 she starts and he finishes the last two lines. Now we learn they have swapped hearts, a sure sign of love. We become also involved in the intimate details of the two lovers. Which being love and lovers often makes no sense! Who says love should? To continue, apparently his heart in her is now dead! Her heart in Will is alive and he isn't going to give it back to her. Why is his heart dead? We could guess all right lets! He is upset over her criticism of verse 18, or perhaps her hatred of herself. Hearts can not live without love or self-love, hence hers being alive in William's body. There I told you love makes no sense!!

In sonnet 23 Elizabeth reveals one of her great weakness, her '*fear of trust*' and it is she who describes herself as an '*unperfect actor on the stage,*' not William.

Knowing the Last Lines

You may be wondering why I believe that the last two lines of some sonnets are written by Will or Liz and may even think its nonsense! Well the sonnets answer that one easily. Numbers 100 to 102 are one-writer sonnets and negative, however 103, reading them in order, is critical of the previous sonnets. It starts "*Alack, what poverty my Muse brings forth,*" and reveals "*hath my added praise beside.*" This is why I believe last lines are added and 103 are by William and 100 to 102 are Elizabeth's. Unfortunately working out which one of them wrote each sonnet is not always easy. Although I can find no proof, I think some lines, in some stanzas are mixed, as in numbers: 3,4,41,42,61 and 96.

I'll show you what I mean with 3 & 4. These are experiments in verse, as number 1 is clearly all William's work and number 2 all Elizabeth's. Presumably one of them said let's make them different whilst keeping to the correct structure of the stanzas. Like this:

Sonnet 3

William

"Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest

Now is the time that face should form another,

Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest."

Elizabeth

"Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother.

For where is she so fair whose unear'd womb

Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?"

William

"Or who is he so fond will be the tomb..."

The rest of the stanza is all William' work.

Sonnet 4 is the same style, with the almost backbiting comments at one another.

This time only lines 5 & 6 are by Liz:

"Then, beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse

The bounteous largess given thee to give?"

'*Niggard*' appears to be a comment aimed at Shakespeare by Liz. Yet I don't believe he was mean, and it refers back to William's first Sonnet where he had used the word and called her ill bred.¹⁵ Will hit back with the phrase "*profitless usurer*". Today we call

¹⁵ Sonnet 1 line 12, reads "*And tender choler makst wast in niggarding:*". Which translated means: "An affectionate ill-bred person wastes time in being mean."

'usury' interest. The use of that word was in this context is quite an insult. There was at this time a ten- percent limit on usury (interest) before some form of punishment was imposed. Even then if you were caught giving money and charging any amount for it you'd be in big trouble. For one man, not convicted I might add, was told to read the 15th psalm, plead guilty, and give 5 shillings to the poor!¹⁶ Still, Will did add profitless, going somewhat to play the insult down. Another sign of true love I'm afraid!

Because there are only a few sonnets mixed, they must have agreed that these stanzas didn't work. On the whole they seem to have gone with a stanza by one and the two last lines by the other, or whole stanzas each. A quick not accurate count reveals that they seem to have written 125 sonnets each.

Metaphorically speaking

Proof of Elizabeth writing her 125 sonnets can be found in her use of metaphors, which she was using at the early age of 13 to her brother Edward. Such as this: 'Like as the richman that daily gathereth riches to riches, and to one bag of money layeth a great store til it come to infinite, so methinks your Majesty....'¹⁷

This is so like the sonnets as to be unbelievable! *No. 60 'Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore...'* and *No.118 'Like as, to make our appetites more keen....'* Also these are Liz's own work as well! At one point she even uses her own Latin motto, translated into English, for the benefit of William, in Sonnet 76.¹⁸ Clues such as this few writers not alone Shakespeare would have known.

Remember the "Dark Lady"? Well it's actually Elizabeth in a way. All right Peter Jones, I know it's a "preposterous"¹⁹ idea, however in No. 127 (by William) it says '*now is black beauty's successive heir And beauty slandered with a bastard shame...*' Okay it is poetry, but as Elizabeth was declared illegitimate and she was heir of Anne Bolyn, who reportedly had black hair, as the first line says (Anne) was in the 'old age' not seen as a beautiful woman, all the history fits together like a jigsaw. If you use Mr Jones' theories on Shakespeare on himself, you might be able to prove his ideas are from Mars or some other silly place! Carrying on the theme of black in the Sonnets, connecting 130 to 131 works, as 131 says that "*In nothing art though black*". Or in other words in nothing is Liz black, apart from her 'acts' (deeds) and this nasty bit she will write next. Which is precisely what I think William intended, nevertheless this does not fit in with 127, as far as the context of order is concerned. The mistress in this refers to a double of Liz (imaginary) like the rival poet is the double of Shakespeare. Its creation stems from 130. So for Will to start using it in reference to the Queen before is odd, thus contradicting 131 too soon. For that is clearly his desire in 127. In this he fights, in words, to get Elizabeth 'crowned' as the Queen of Beauties, using her own words as his weapons. Not an easy task, as Liz as such a low opinion of herself. William gets right to the point on sonnet 1, "*Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.*"

Then later in number 9 he goes into what I call 'Freud Mode' as he tries to work out why she is like this. William resolves on it being fear that she may die before any

¹⁶ Emmison P72/3.

¹⁷ Perry P41/43.

¹⁸ 'Semper Eadem' - 'Ever the Same'.

¹⁹ The Sonnets, Edited by Peter Jones, part of introduction by him P15.

husband, then he returns to the theme of having children to keep beauty alive.²⁰ Liz would have none of it and declares, "*No love toward others in that bosom sits*" (hers).

Shakespeare is shocked to say the least and reply's in No. 10: "*For Shame deny that thou bear'st love to any, Who for thyself art so unprovident!*"

Because she was Queen of England he follows that with the next line: "*Grant if thou wilt, thou art belov'd of many*".

Before returning to the self hate argument, he says it is "*most evident*" she loves no one, because she is out to destroy herself. Possessed with hate, she presumably could not love anyone fighting herself and William pleads with her to change her mind. "*Shall hate be fairer lodged than gentle love?*" He asks and then shows us how she appears on the surface: "*gracious and kind*" while self-hate boils underneath. You would think that something might have clicked inside her, alas no. She tells Will to make a child for love of me that beauty can live in his children, of course by another woman, and in the next sonnet she says his problem is youth and when he his her age he would have a different outlook on life. What a woman! Poor William he must have been a glutton for punishment from her and yet he continued. He would only question her beauty when summer itself became like winter (12). Elizabeth returns to same argument of Will getting married in the next. However he was married and had produced children already. He does not let on and answers in the last two lines: "*You had a father; let your son say so.*"

At no point does he say daughter, possibly because like many of that time he wants a King, though it too could be no more then the sexist attitude of men at that period. Moreover it was also a belief then; that the female merely carried the child and all characteristics came from the male only.

Both William and Elizabeth would appear to have been interested in what we call astrology and astronomy. These now are virtually separate though as you can tell from No.14 are very mixed up then. Liz is known to have consulted astrologist and used their advice, she clearly told Will about it. Debates rage now if astrology works, yet people still use it, we're told even top figures consult them!

Taking Liberties

Liz might well have been jealous of Will's youth and his looks, but she was no man. Yet we all know that Henry VIII was determined that she was a boy. This explains Sonnet 20, so Will puts this in by saying "*And for a woman wert thou first created*" then goes on to say that Nature messed up by not adding the male genital, which pleased William! The last two lines are sexually explicit. Unbelievably Will does not write them!

Line one "*But since she PRICKED thee out for women's pleasure,*"

My capitals on that word because apart from the pun on the word picked, the line clearly stands for the fact that nature put a penis on William, the next line is stronger still!

"*Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure*".

In other words I'm your lover and I will use what you have! At the extreme end of this, would imply sexual intercourse.²¹ I don't think this was intended, however these are Elizabeth's lines and there is little doubt that when she wanted to express her sexuality she did. No I think she never went all the way and as she said she would live

²⁰ If Freud had put her on his couch, he would have come to the conclusion she had one massive inferiority complex, as I did in my last book, now Shakespeare adds to this conclusion.

²¹ These references to sex survive, because the censor was not interested in sexual content.

and die a virgin. It's not too far fetched an idea, as some people seem to think. After all we are acutely aware these days of the dangers of sexual intercourse. Many of us now practice Safe Sex, not involving intercourse, so why couldn't Elizabeth then?

As you will see the other side of the Queen (as opposed to the shy low self-esteem side) was flighty and raunchy. WOW did she have some lovers. She makes some comments on this in No. 31, when Shakespeare is metaphored as a '*grave*' where her '*lovers trophies hang*'. Which if you don't get the meaning is that Will looks like them all. Even Will had his share of lovers, in the royal palaces he must have encountered the ladies in waiting on the Queen. Will being good looking of course, would naturally attract their attention. Liz noticed this! So in the sonnets 40/41 Will has to tell the Queen "*Take all my loves*" and "*those pretty wrongs that liberties commits*" when of course he's away from the Queen. Yet Liz understands! She breaks in on 41 saying "*Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assailed*". Liz states that when a woman woos what man would leave! The verse then says "*Aye me!*" Yes William would and he wrote that. Liz then calls him a '*straying youth*' and the last two lines rap Will - '*by being false to me*'. So she did not let him off the hook for his straying.

Speaking of straying in the literal sense, both of them left one another for periods of time. Will mentions his absence in No 109. There are no specific details of where Will went and yet we do know that the theatre companies did tour because the money from royal performances was not great, but it is clear that the Queen went to different places on what have become her progressions. The following sonnet tells us how she often thought about her tours, which she seems to think that they made her looked down upon, when she uses phrases like "*Motley to the view*" and "*Sold cheap what is most dear*". It's as though these tours robbed her of her virtue. We know that she hated flattery too and in 114 she calls it "*the monarch's plague*". In the same sonnet there are lots of references to royalty, which you would expect from a Queen.²² What you wouldn't expect is for that Queen to call herself a '*mistress*'. Nevertheless that is precisely what she does in the extremely negative 130. Will didn't allow her to get away with it and calls her '*tyrannous*' in the next and in 132 Liz tones down the verse.

Shakespeare's sense of humour crops up 135 with an elaborate tongue-twister on his own name. Elizabeth's humour was no different and has a go at tongue-twisting in 136, still using William's name and she is also recorded as using nicknames for some of her friends/lovers, though I cannot detect any for Will here in the sonnets.

Which brings us to if there is any other proof that William and Elizabeth were lovers?

Take My Hand

Painting is the answer, some of the sonnets mention limning, made famous at that time by Hilliard and Isaac Oliver in their miniatures of the Queen and others. As I have already stated, I believe these to be fairly accurate. Mary Edmund in her book²³ is practical certain that William met both painters, with London being so small. Leslie Hotson in 1977 identified Shakespeare in a 1588 picture by Hilliard, of a man clasping a hand. Shakespeare was 24 then and the hand in this picture certainly resembles the Queen's in other pictures by the artist. Of course he couldn't conceive of a humble person breaching the class barrier. Not alone it was being reversed. Some experts have come to the conclusion that he is holding a god's hand. Thus he is

²² Leslie Hotson saw the images of royalty in them, yet failed to make the connection, as did A. D. Wraight. Wraight P.23.

²³ Edmund Hilliard & Oliver P.92.

holding the hand of the patron of poets or something. The Latin motto is obscure and my translation of it may not be perfect, yet I think it fits in with them both. Remember the Latin spelling may have varied then, if you want to translate it yourself!

"Greek lovers therefore" or the original "Attici amoris ergo".

Shakespeare was of course interested in Greek writings, as was Liz. Both were into music²⁴ also, which has Greek connections but the main suggestion, I think, is one of



the Greek Gods and Goddess who were lovers. Interestingly enough the Sonnets end with Gods and Goddess, showing the connection between the Sonnets and Hilliard's miniature. Naturally this means that both William and Elizabeth saw each as gods. Poor me, I thought we only saw Shakespeare as a god. Maybe Hilliard pushed it to far for another miniature done in 1590 also shows William, but this one is much plainer, though it does not name him and puts his age at 27. In spite of that the features are similar and the Bard is recorded as only roughly knowing his age. This one was done by Oliver, who clearly did not know about William's connection with

the Queen. Then again did he approve, of either the relationship, or the god connection? Having said that I don't think Isaac Oliver got on well with Elizabeth and they may have quarrelled over his paintings of her! His miniatures are more controversial than Hilliard's with his Ladies often painted with their hand on their breast. Perhaps it was William who didn't like Hilliard's motif! Chances are the



Queen didn't! I am also going to stick my neck out and say that the miniature of Henry, Prince of Wales (by Oliver) is actually a picture of William in stage costume playing Mark Anthony or Julius Caesar. But before we get carried away with ourselves, it's worth mentioning that Roy Strong thinks Hilliard's painting is that of Thomas Howard the Earl of Suffolk.²⁵ Curiously most writers have thought that William only played bit parts or none at all. I think this idea is total rubbish and even the printed pamphlets on plays list Shakespeare first in the cast list if you need more proof.

So, so much for no pictures of him, actually I think there are quiet a number as I will show you in later chapters.

The cat comes out the bag

Near the start of this chapter I said that honour was important to them both and it's when you hit sonnet 121 that it really comes into play. This sonnet is all by Elizabeth, and is for me the worst in its language towards William. Remember his sonnets are for her and Liz's sonnets are for him, we should never forget that. For the sonnets were not meant for all to see! Cruelly it starts "*Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed*". Clearly something is on her mind. WE by now should know what it is when she uses "*false adulterate eyes*".

²⁴ See sonnet 128 written by Will, last 2 lines by Liz and also his play with the line "*If music be the food of love play on*".

²⁵ Strong disputed Hotson's claim the same year, only in the Times. Dobson/Wells P352.

William has been gossiped about in the Queen's presence. She says "*No, I am that I am, and they that level abuses at my abuses reckon up their own*". A possible indication of a personal attack on her by someone who was not Shakespeare, she goes on to say these people are '*bevel*'. Surely this word means they are corrupt and may have been the same as our word 'bent' and she also says she is straight - not corrupt. "*My deeds must not be shown*" for her honour is a stake. In other words her duplicity is William's lie about his marital status and as this sonnet goes on, the '*evil*' of the deed, as she saw it.

Finally Elizabeth sums up with the essence of her argument in this sonnet, which could give us an indication of why she stayed a virgin: "*All men are bad and in their badness reign.*"

Perhaps it was just aimed at William Shakespeare instead. You would have thought that William would have commented on this, the rest of the sonnets don't though and Elizabeth doesn't stop writing them either, in the remaining one's. So it could be out of sequence and deliberately so, for it could give rise to who's involved in these sonnets. It would make a dramatic end to them!

The last sonnet she writes in the order of them is 152. The truth is out HIS '*bed-vow broke*' and the strange "*new faith torn*". She even knows Ann's maiden name, for in line four '*hate*' is there! This line's sole purpose is undoubtedly to convey that word, a pun on Hathaway. The effect of this truth on Elizabeth is devastating. She says "*All my honest faith in thee is lost.*"

Shakespeare tries to redeem himself in the last two lines of 152, yet whom is he trying to kid when he finishes with: "*To swear against the truth so foul a lie!*"

Its here after 152 were I think sonnet 121 would be.

They don't end there for two poems, not a bit like the previous 152 sonnets, can be found. They are William's work and I think they and some others tell us how William first met Queen Elizabeth in a code of strange poetry. Why are they here at this point in the sonnets? Probably just the rejected poet turning back to the past to hide his true feelings of deep hurt. Nonetheless this does not destroy the Queen's relationship with the poet and writer of plays. Such a powerful link is not easily severed, but honour was saved!

Well there you have academia's world 'mystery' of the sonnets solved. The answer being they are complex poems between a young man and an older woman, who just so happen to be William Shakespeare and Elizabeth Tudor. First bit solved, with the exception of the NEW FAITH TORN remark of the Queen.