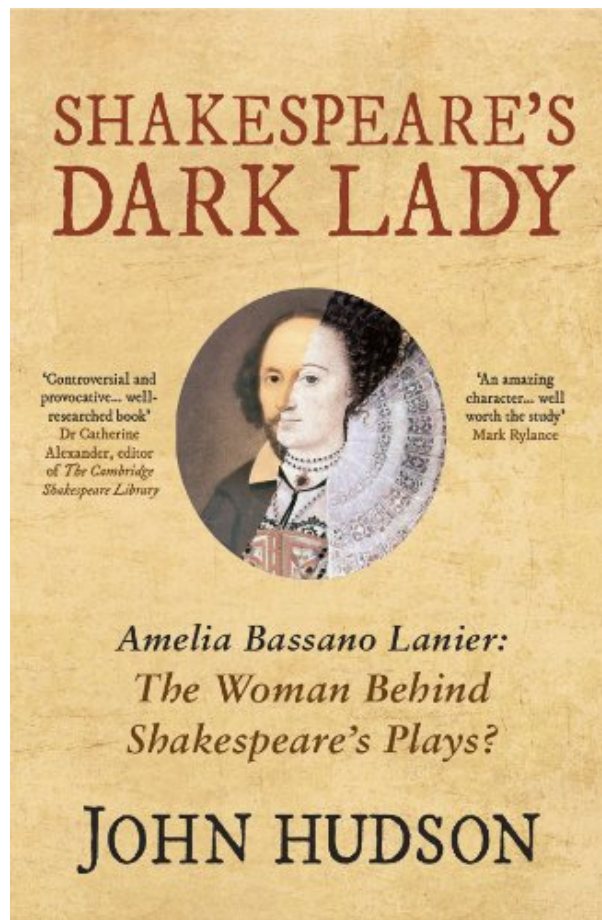


**SHAKESPEARE'S DARK LADY: AMELIA  
BASSANO LANIER THE WOMAN BEHIND  
SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS? BY JOHN  
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# SHAKESPEARE'S DARK LADY

'Controversial and  
provocative... well-  
researched book'  
Dr Catherine  
Alexander, editor  
of *The Cambridge  
Shakespeare Library*



'An amazing  
character... well  
worth the study'  
Mark Rylance

*Amelia Bassano Lanier:  
The Woman Behind  
Shakespeare's Plays?*

## JOHN HUDSON

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Amelia Bassano was born in 1569 into a family of Venetian Jews who were court musicians to Queen Elizabeth I. At about the age of thirteen, she became mistress to the fifty-six-year-old Lord Hunsdon, Henry VIII's reputed son by Mary Boleyn. As Lord Chamberlain, Hunsdon was in charge of the English theatre and would become the patron of the company that performed the Shakespearean plays. Amelia lived with him for a decade, during which time she also had an affair with the playwright Christopher Marlowe. When she became pregnant, Amelia was exiled from court and next surfaces as the mysterious dark lady in Shakespeare's sonnets. At the age of forty-two, she became the first woman to publish a book of original poetry, employing linguistic features resembling the later Shakespearean plays. Amelia died in poverty in 1645. Drawing upon a wealth of documentary evidence, this controversial and provocative book unites Tudor history, feminism, and Shakespeare scholarship to demonstrate that Amelia Bassano was in all the right places and had all the right knowledge, skills, and contacts to have produced the Shakespearean canon.

- Sales Rank: #757082 in eBooks
- Published on: 2014-02-25
- Released on: 2014-02-25
- Format: Kindle eBook

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23 of 26 people found the following review helpful.

Incredible and Revolutionary

By Montserrat Mendez

When I first read this book, I just couldn't believe it. And wrapping my head around it took several readings. But John Hudson presents an incredibly solid case that needs to be considered, studied and discussed. There's also the incredible details of Elizabethan Theatre as a way of life. And hasn't that way of life always been a business. Whether you believe the theory or not (and John Hudson's razor-like research will make you a believer) the time has come for people to discover Amelia Bassano, and her contribution to the literature of the ages.

13 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

REVIEW IN KIRKUS REVIEWS

By John Hudson

KIRKUS REVIEW

Hudson's first book is a scholarly examination of the ongoing debate about the authorship of the works of William Shakespeare.

Hudson argues that an obscure but talented woman named Amelia Bassano Lanier—posited to be both Shakespeare's "dark lady" of the sonnets and a "secret Jew"—was in the right place at the right time, and had the right skills and knowledge, to be the true creator of classics such as Hamlet and Much Ado About Nothing. Regardless of one's opinion on the subject of the Bard of Avon's works and their provenance, this book is a smart, wide-ranging examination of the society and circumstances of the 16th and 17th centuries. Subjects covered include Shakespearean scholarship itself (and its methods), life in late Renaissance London and the British royal court, English theater, plagues, gender, religion, intellectual life and a great deal more. Hudson argues that Shakespeare's plays, like Lanier's work, are highly critical of Christianity, that they reflect her travels (including a journey to Denmark) and that Lanier—like Shakespeare—is said to have undertaken a brief career as a schoolteacher. That Lanier had so much of the same background as Shakespeare supports Hudson's theory; that she had even more of the necessary background than the Bard did (as a musician, a law clerk, etc.) makes Hudson's case even more compelling. Even if Lanier didn't write the works of Shakespeare, she is a notable person in her own right. Exhaustively documented, with a lengthy bibliography and full index, the volume is clearly written and makes a deeply intriguing case for its thesis. Although many readers will take exception to its ideas from the very beginning (not everyone agrees that the generally known biography of Shakespeare makes him "superhuman" or his efforts "impossible"), Hudson's historical sleuthing and careful speculation make the Lanier theory at least as plausible as most of the others (from Edward de Vere, Christopher Marlowe and Francis Bacon on down). With graphics that include a "knowledge map" of which candidates might have been able to write which plays and symmetry analyses of some of the major works, the book advances these ideas concisely and with great rhetorical conviction.

Well-researched, fascinating and thought-provoking

11 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

The Dark Lady Defined as Prime Candidate

By Linda H.

This is an utterly fascinating read! Exquisitely argued, it brings Shakespeare's London and the characters who peopled it vibrantly to life while explicating in minute detail Hudson's contention that Amelia Bassano Lanier -- the "Dark Lady" -- was the author of the Shakespeare plays.

In view of the fact that what is known of Shakespeare's life does not jibe with command of the fields of knowledge evinced in the plays' contents, and because other often-mooted candidates for authorship -- the Earl of Oxford, Marlowe, Bacon, etc. -- also did not have all these fields of knowledge at their disposal, Amelia Bassano Lanier is a candidate to reckon with in that she did have a background that includes familiarity with court life, generalship, Judaism, science, astronomy, music, girls' literature, canals in Italy and a fresco in Bassano, not to mention silk culture and even falconry.

As Michael Posner points out in the introduction, there is as yet "no definitive smoking gun" (p. 10). However, as Hudson makes clear in his thoughtful final chapter, scholarship has only just begun to focus on Amelia Bassano Lanier. Who knows what evidence will be found tomorrow? In the meantime, by all means read this brilliant book.

Linda Kay Hoff

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