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### **The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets**

Gerald Massey's work of 1888 presented a strong argument against the many theorists who viewed Shakespeare's Sonnets as autobiographical – 'a permanent reply to Shakespeare's misinterpreters'. Beginning by outlining the known background and context of the Sonnets, Massey proceeds to wage what he terms his 'battle against fictions, fallacies, forgeries, and groundless assumptions'. Who were the Sonnets addressed to, if anyone, and what is the significance of the inscription in the edition of 1609? What is the correct arrangement of the Sonnets, and why did Shakespeare himself give personal testimony to their 'purity'? Following detailed descriptions of the many different theories, Massey provides close readings and analysis of the Sonnets themselves to dispute the autobiographical claims, and to demonstrate that the Sonnets are 'partly personal and partly dramatic'.

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# The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets

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THE  
SECRET DRAMA  
OF  
SHAKSPEARE'S SONNETS

BY  
GERALD MASSEY

LONDON  
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A

NEW WORK ON OLD LINES

A Rational Plea on behalf

OF

*SHAKSPEARE'S SONNETS*

A

PERMANENT REPLY TO HIS MISINTERPRETERS

A LABOUR OF LOVE

*DEDICATED TO HIS LOVERS*

A NECESSARY SUPPLEMENT TO ALL EDITIONS  
OF HIS WORKS

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TO

THE AUTHOR.

“ Come farfalla, che la luce attira,  
Alla vorace fiamma abbrucia e spira,  
Così, dell' arte al sacro fuoco, anch' io  
M'incendio tutto, per fatal desio !

“ Per te Massey la sorte è ben diversa !  
L'istinto che ti sprona non t'avversa.  
Andranne la salma, sepolta e pesta,  
Ma con l'opere tue, il *Genio* resta !

“ TOMMASO SALVINI.”

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