CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

It is, of course, impossible definitely to date most of the Sonnets, although some unquestionably date themselves. But whenever No. 36 was written, who can deny that it was addressed to the poet's beloved son, a person distinguished in his own right?

> Let me confess that we two must be twain,
> Although our undivided loves are one:
> So shall those blots that do with me remain
> Without thy help, by me be borne alone.
> In our two loves there is but one respect,
> Though *in our lives a separable spite,*
> Which, though it alter not love's sole effect,
> Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight.
> *I may not evermore acknowledge thee,*
> Lest *my bewailed guilt* should do thee shame,
> Nor thou with public kindness honour me,
> Unless thou take that honour from thy name:
> But do not so; I love thee in such sort
> As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.[1]

Could anything be more tenderly paternal than this? It obviously belongs to the time when the youth had learned that Lord Oxford was his father. In No. 39 he says,

> Even for this, let us divided live,
> And our dear love *lose name of single one.*

And in No. 108,

> . . . thou mine, I thine,
> Even as when first I hallow'd thy fair name.

(So there was a christening of some sort.) As for his "bewailed guilt," that is a very complicated matter.

Yes, it may be said, granted that these are paternal: but how can one be justified in naming Southampton as the son to whom they are written? To this, if our argument has not yet convinced the reader, we reply by quoting the dedication to *The Rape of Lucrece:*

[1] No. 96 ends with the same couplet.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
HENRY WRIOTHESLEY
Earl of Southampton and Baron of Titchfield

> The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end; whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. *What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours.* Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater; meantime, as it is, it is bound to your lordship, to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with happiness.
>
> Your lordship's in all duty . . .

This is signed with the pseudonym, "William Shakespeare." And naturally the conventional form of modest poet to great patron is followed. But the young man to whom he gives all his devotion here is surely the same one to whom he gives it all in the Sonnets. (Compare the "untutored lines" statement to Sonnet 26, *lines* 3-8.) He is the same one of whom Antonio-Oxford says in *Twelfth Night* (V.1.80-2):

> His life I gave him, and did thereto add
> My love, without retention or restraint,
> All his *in dedication.*

"You are my all-the-world," he says in No. 112. We shall quote a few lines from that one and from No. 88, as combining the "bewailed guilt" motif with that of deep paternal devotion. All of No. 88 should be read, for the full effect, but we stress the following lines:

> . . . I can set down a story
> Of faults conceal'd, wherein I am attainted.
> . . . . . .
> Such is my love, to thee I so belong
> That for *thy right* myself will bear all wrong.

No. 112 speaks plainly too:

> Your love and pity doth the impression fill
> Which *vulgar scandal* stamp'd upon my brow;
> For what care I who calls me well or ill,
> So you o'er-green my bad, my good allow?
> *You are my all-the-world,* and I must strive
> To know my shames and praises from your tongue;
> None else to me, nor I to none alive,
> That my steel'd sense or changes right or wrong.
> . . . . . .
> You are so strongly in my purpose bred,
> That all the world besides methinks are dead.

Surely this is the same youth to whom he says: "The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end. . . . What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours." And in *The Rape of Lucrece,* he proceeds to "set down a story" of the "faults conceal'd," of his "bewailed guilt," wherein he is "attainted." It is all, as we say, exceedingly complex, yet it has an organic unity: everything fits, there are no loose threads. The pieces can be joined together, and the rich picture emerges, with its highlights and its shadows, its beauty and shame, violence and tenderness, but portrayed in every detail with a passionate devotion to truth.

Venus and Adonis tells of a woman's lust, *Lucrece* of a man's. With the 1609 edition of the Sonnets was printed William Shake-speare's *A Lover's Complaint.* The Sonnets tell of the frustrated father's love for the son he may not acknowledge: the *Complaint* gives the side of the woman who was seduced by the charms of her young lover (described realistically as the Earl of Oxford) and was, by him—although already a Queen and often called a goddess—"newly deified."

Venus and Adonis shows signs of having been written long before it was published, in 1593. Like the plays, it had certainly been altered and revised from time to time; a number of passages would seem to have been superimposed. Oxford himself was Adonis in the beginning, then later Southampton was. The two merge.

> Upon *his hurt* she looks so steadfastly,
> That her sight dazzling makes *the wound seem three;*
> . . . . . .
> *His face seems twain,* each several limb is *doubled;*
> For oft the eye mistakes, the brain being troubled.
>
> 'My tongue cannot express my grief for one,
> And yet,' quoth she, 'behold *two Adons* dead!' (178-9.)

Venus exhorts Adonis to breed (*stanza* 28):

> Things growing to themselves are growth's abuse:
> Seeds spring from seeds, and *beauty breedeth beauty;*
> *Thou wast begot; to get it is thy duty;—*

precisely as the father urges the son, in the Sonnets, to

> Make thee another self, for love of me,
> That *beauty still may live* in thine or thee (10),

and

> *You had a father:* let your son say so. (13.)

(The objection that the past tense implies that the father was dead seems far-fetched; however, Oxford, never having been permitted to claim paternity, could certainly be said to be defunct as a father. He was the father only when the son was begotten, never since.) This is

the whole burden of the first seventeen Sonnets, which have been justly described as "dynastic" in tone; and it recurs in *Venus and Adonis,* 126-7-8, in much the same language.

In the composition of this poem every book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was drawn upon—the classical work which Canon Rendall called Lord Oxford's "chapbook," translated by his uncle, Arthur Golding, while tutoring the young Earl at Theobalds.[2] Canon Rendall stipulates that it is not in verbal repetition that the poet follows Ovid, but the work is "saturated with reminiscences" of the *Metamorphoses.* "Few details are drawn from the *Venus* episode—warning against the chase of dangerous beasts, the birth of the purple flower from the blood of Adonis (*Metam.* X.728-39), and the silver doves from the 'swans' (*Metam.* X.708, 720) almost exhaust the list."

Venus is an allegorized Elizabeth, who, like the earth, is in love with Adonis. It is fairly safe to have Adonis say, since he is talking to the goddess of love,

> I hate not love, but your device in love,
> That lends embracements unto every stranger. (132.)

There could scarcely be a better description of the Queen, whose procrastination and vacillation were so inveterate as actually to have become a state policy, than the following:

> A thousand spleens bear her a thousand ways,
> She treads the path that she untreads again;
> Her *more than haste* is mated with *delays,*
> Like the proceedings of a drunken brain,
> Full of respects, yet nought at all respecting,
> In hand with all things, nought at all effecting. (152.)

Oxford had once written of her: "For she is nothing of her own disposition . . . so ready to deliver as *speedy* to commit, and every little trifle gives her matter for long *delay.*"

Venus says:

> Unlike myself thou hear'st me *moralize,*
> Applying this to that and so to so. (119.)

Elizabeth was always prone to "moralize," quoting proverbs to make her point, as Portia did.

The poet presents the strange duality of his own nature in Adonis and the boar. "Nature," he says, should be "condemn'd of treason," for she has

> . . . fram'd thee in high heaven's despite,
> To shame the sun by day and her by night.
> . . . . . .
> To mingle *beauty* with *infirmities,*
> And *pure perfection* with *impure defeature;*

[2] *Personal Clues;* pp. 50-1.

> Making it subject to the tyranny
> Of *mad mischances* and *much misery.* (122-3.)

Even if it were not immediately plain that only a man in a highly privileged position could have written, and received the license of the Archbishop to publish[3] this poem, it would be obvious that the Earl of Oxford was the author, not only because of his personal symbolism, characteristic imagery, and all the identity-clues, but also specifically because *stanza* 139 is written in his recognizable early vein:

> And now she beats her heart, whereat it groans,
> And all the neighbour caves, as seeming troubled,
> Make verbal repetition of her moans;
> Passion on passion deeply is redoubled:
> 'Ay me!' she cries, and twenty times, 'Woe, woe!'
> And twenty echoes twenty times cry so.

This, as we have noted heretofore, is clearly reminiscent of Oxford's *Echo* poem.

> As falcon to the lure, away she flies (*line* 1027)

is related to lines in *Woman's Changeableness,* signed *Erle of Oxenforde:*

> Unsettled still like haggards wild they range,
> These gentle birds that fly from man to man.

It is one of his favorite metaphors. Then too the typical de Vere "white-and-red, lilies-and-roses" simile occurs frequently—and more so in *Lucrece,* where there are many references to falconry.

The whole mythological poem is rich in allusion. And here again Oxford does not spare himself, but shows the dark side of his nature —the libertine given to lust, the melancholy *boar,*

> Whose downward eye still looketh for a grave. (185.)
> . . . the boar, that bloody *beast,*
> Which knows no pity, but is still *severe.* (167.)
>
> 'Tis not my fault: *the boar provok'd my tongue;*
> Be wreak'd on him, *invisible commander;*
> 'Tis he, foul creature, that hath done the wrong;
> I did but act: *he's author of my slander.* (168.)

Here we seem to have another reference to Oxford's *daimon,* his genius, the secret of Hamlet's "madness," that he blames for the injury he has done Sidney and the House of Cecil, when he apologizes to Laertes (V.2):

> Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it.
> Who does it then? His madness;

which is simply another way of saying, "the boar provok'd my tongue. . . . 'Tis he, foul creature, that hath done thee wrong," and which

[3] In 1599, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London ordered Marlowe's translation of Ovid's *Elegies* burned.

recalls the "melancholy" Jaques's being "transform'd into a beast." It is all mixed up with the violence of the poet's temperament, his *furor poeticus,* or creative frenzy, with his storms of rage and moodiness, his passionate loyalty, or resentment, or love.

Aeschylus says that

> . . . for the man of all-too-prosperous fate
> Springs from a bitter seed some woe insatiate.

And the Earl of Oxford himself recognizes this truth in Hamlet's speech about "some vicious mole of nature . . . the o'ergrowth of some complexion, Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason;" so that no matter if a man's virtues be "as pure as grace," they "take corruption From that particular fault."

In the case of Edward de Vere, his "all-too-prosperous fate" was his genius, such a brand of creative fire as is seldom entrusted to mortals and is almost too potent, too incandescent, to be supported by them.

He visualized the humanly unworthy, the baleful, protean side of his nature as literally dark, "stained," and showed himself as black when portraying the deeds of which he was ashamed. Thus Othello became the dark side of his own being when he smothered the life of his chaste wife. Thus even his worst villain, Aaron, of *Titus Andronicus,* became, for a brief period, himself, as the begetter of a boy who was stained by bastardy, born of the lust of his father and his mother, the latter a queen.[4] This story had perforce to be elaborately disguised, but with his passion for revealing the truth, Oxford was bound to tell it.

> A Nurse enters with a blackamoor Child (*Tit. And.:* IV.2.56.)
> *Nurse.* O gentle Aaron! we are all undone.
> Now help, or woe betide *thee ever*more.

(It is interesting that she calls him "gentle Aaron," a term this villain had never deserved but one used in Elizabeth's day for the highborn. So Aaron, we see, has momentarily changed his character.)

> *Aaron.* Why, what a caterwauling dost thou keep!
> What dost thou wrap and fumble in thine arms?
> *Nurse.* O! that which I would hide from heaven's eye,
> *Our empress' shame, and stately Rome's disgrace!*
> She is deliver'd, lords, she is deliver'd.
> . . . . . .
> A joyless, dismal, black, and sorrowful issue.
> . . . . . .
> *Aaron.* 'Zounds, ye whore! is *black* so *base a hue?* [5]
> Sweet blowse, you are a beauteous *blossom,*[6] sure.

[4] Cf. *King John* (II.1.114): "the *blots* and *stains* of right."

[5] The word "hue" is used again and again in connection with the Fair Youth in the Sonnets and will be discussed later.

[6] Note "blossom"—i.e., "flower," again.

The brothers of Queen Tamora wish to destroy the babe, but Aaron protests:

> Stay, murderous villains! will you kill your brother?
> . . . . . .
> He dies upon my scimitar's sharp point
> That touches this, *my first-born son and heir.*
> . . . . . .
> Coal-black is better than another *hue,*
>
> In that it scorns to bear another *hue;*
> . . . . . .
> Tell the empress from me, *I am of age*
> *To keep mine own,* excuse it how she can.

(This sounds more like the young Oxford, accepting responsibility, despite his "fickle head," than like the experienced villain, Aaron.)

> *Demetrius.* Wilt thou betray *thy noble mistress* thus?
> *Aaron.* My mistress is my mistress: *this myself.*
> . . . . . .
> This before *all the world* do I prefer;
> This maugre *all the world* will I keep safe,
> Or some of you shall smoke for it in Rome.
> . . . . . .
> Look how the black slave smiles upon the father,
> As who should say, "Old lad, *I am thine own.*"

One is inevitably reminded of the Sonnets mentioned a while back:

> *'Tis thee, myself.* (No. 62.)
>
> You are my *all-the-world.* (No. 112.)
>
> You are so strongly in my purpose bred,
> That *all the world* besides methinks are dead. (No. 112.)
>
> . . . *thou mine, I thine.* (No. 108.)

This exact correspondence, we may be sure, is anything but accidental.

Aaron felt about his dark-stained son precisely as the poet felt about the Fair Youth, blemished by the stigma of being unacknowledged.

> *Demetrius.* How many women saw this child of his?
> *Aaron.* Why, so, brave lords! when we join in league,
> I am *a lamb;* but if you brave the Moor,
> *The chafed boar,* the mountain lioness,
> An ocean swells not so as Aaron *storms.*
> But say, again, how many saw the child?
> *Nurse.* Cornelia the midwife, and myself,
> And no one else but the deliver'd empress.
> *Aaron.* The empress, the midwife, and yourself:
> Two may keep counsel, when the third's away.
> . . . . *(Stabbing her.)*

O lord, sir, 'tis a deed of policy:
Shall she live to betray this guilt of ours,
A long-tongu'd babbling gossip? no, lords, no.
And now be it known to you my full intent.
Not far, one Muli lives, my countryman;
His wife but yesternight was brought to bed.
His child is like to her, fair as you are:
Go pack with him and give the mother gold,
And tell them both the circumstance of all,
And how by this their child shall be advanc'd,
And be received for the emperor's heir,
And substituted in the place of mine,
To calm this tempest whirling in the court.
. . . . . .
But send the midwife presently to me.
The midwife and the nurse well made away,
Then let the ladies tattle what they please.

While this is not of course to be taken literally, we may play with the suggestion that Elizabeth, and no doubt Leicester too, wished to make way with the baby and Oxford insisted on keeping his own, his "first-born son and heir." We have spoken before of the arrangements which were made at the time of Arthur Dudley's birth for placing him with people of lowly station and having him brought up as their own child; and we have noted the similarity of the arrangements made for Aaron's and Tamora's son. It is especially striking that Southampton, although placed in a nobleman's home, seems indeed to have been substituted for a child who had either died or been somehow disposed of.

If the royal infant was born at Havering, very few persons would have known. In any event, we certainly have here the "little changeling boy" again, who was born in "India"—or fairyland.[7] Oberon-Oxford was king of the fairies: "king of shadows," as Puck calls him (III.2.347), which means king of the stage, as is clear in Puck's final speech:

If we *shadows* have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here. . . .

Puck has explained that "Oberon is passing fell and wrath" with Titania,

Because that she as her attendant hath
A lovely boy, stol'n from *an Indian king;*
She never had so sweet a changeling. (II.1.20-3.)

In the "Indian king" there is also the suggestion again of dark skin, or *stain.*

[7] There is a character called Demetrius in both *Tit. And.* and *The Dream.*

Here we must make a digression in order to bring in an important piece of evidence which seems to corroborate the suggestion in the last line of Puck's speech just quoted, while giving special point to Aaron's "Then let the ladies tattle what they please." Allen and Ward[8] quote an extraordinary excerpt from the *Life of Sir Walter Raleigh* (Vol. I), written by J. A. St. John, who had read the Howard-Arundel State-Papers:

> At the period of which we are speaking Oxford possessed two mysterious and dangerous books, one called the *Book of Babies,* the other the *Book of Prophecies.* In the former the author had probably collected all the rumours then circulated . . . of Elizabeth's offspring by Leicester. The general belief appears to have been that *when the Queen found herself enceinte, she left London and went on a progress into the country,* where *secretly, in some remote castle,* she gave birth to her child, which was spirited away. . . . Merely to have seen this *Book of Babies* was looked upon as a kind of treason.

There has been a legend—widely believed, in spite of the recorded statement of Elizabeth's doctor that he would guarantee she could have ten children—that the Queen was incapable of bearing a child. (Even the malicious Lady Shrewsbury did not necessarily imply that.) This belief stems largely from Ben Jonson's statement that she "had a membrana." Ben Jonson seems to have been a man who would say anything, if it were made worth his while to do so. No doubt someone paid him for saying this and for sponsoring the legend of the Virgin Queen, as he sponsored a legend of an almost illiterate Shakespeare. It is high time to discount Ben Jonson, who can make almost any story sound convincing. He was never, at best, conspicuous for integrity.

Of course if the Queen stayed at Havering only six days in June 1574, her baby and Oxford's could hardly have been born there. However since the only authority for this statement seems to be young Talbot's gossipy letters, we cannot be sure; he may have been purposely misinformed. Oxford was certainly "king" at Havering of the Bowre, which was indeed like fairyland, with its magnificent park of a thousand acres, commanding a view over five counties and a stretch of the Thames.

Naturally, any evidence of the Queen's having gone to Bristol or Bath before, as Talbot wrote, "she came to Woodstock," would have been destroyed. She seems to have been bent on going to Bristol; and the Fair Youth is always called the "little western flower." The city of Southampton is considerably southwest of London, and Woodstock northwest. We shall probably never know exactly where the *accouchement* took place, but that is only a detail, of course.

[8] *An Enquiry.*

Before we leave the subject of this strange and unmistakable symbolism, we should like to call attention to its application to certain characters in the plays. To begin with, we have shown that Antonio, of *The Merchant of Venice,* is Oxford, who had recently given his bond for three thousand pounds. Besides his having apparently used "Shepherd Tony" or "Shepherd Tonie" as an early posy, he was Antony to Elizabeth's Cleopatra. Now, although Antonio is so devoted to Bassanio that he is willing to sacrifice his life for the younger man's happiness, their relationship is never defined. However the situation may have been treated in the early acting version of the play, it seems only too evident that, in the final form, Bassanio was the Fair Youth, the *base son of E.O.*: *Bas-san-i-o.* The name is the dramatist's own invention.

In *The Two Gentlemen,* Antonio is a devoted father. And in *Much Ado,* Antonio acts in a fatherly role toward Hero, for he says (V.4.54):

> This same is she, and I do give you her.

He is also shown by word-clues (II.1.113-23) to be the elder Oxford, while "Hero" is used in a masculine sense in the Song. (V.3.)

In *Twelfth Night,* Olivia stands principally for Queen Elizabeth. She falls in love with Viola—another form of herself, since the name *Viola* lacks only one letter of being a perfect anagram for *Olivia;* but she is equally enamoured of Viola's twin, who is again the beloved protégé of an Antonio, named Sebastian. And *Sebastian* is a perfect anagram for *Base stain.* (The only Antonio who is an unsympathetic character appears in *The Tempest,* a play which shows another hand than Oxford's.) It must be remembered that no word-play was too fantastic for the Elizabethans.

The Fair Youth was called Florizel in *The Winter's Tale.* He says (IV.3.380-1):

> . . . were I the *fairest youth*
> That ever made eye swerve—

and this suggests *flower:* the "beauty's rose" of the Sonnets and the "blossom" which was applied to Falstaff's Page, as well as to Aaron's son by the Queen.

Rosalind, in *As You Like It,* is frequently called the "fair youth." There are many cryptic allusions, of which we quote a few:

> Sweetest nut hath sourest rind,
> Such a nut is Rosalind.
> He that sweetest *rose* will find
> Must find *love's prick* and Rosalind. (III.2.108-11.)

Phebe's long speech (III.5.109 *et seq.*) is full of innuendo:

> 'Tis but a peevish boy, yet he talks well;
> . . . . . .
> He'll make a proper man: the best thing in him
> Is his *complexion;* and faster than his tongue
> Did make offence *his eye did heal it up.*

("Complexion" refers to his "hue" or his "colors," Tudor and Vere. And Sonnet 93 says: "For there can live no hatred in thine eye.")

> He is not very tall; yet for his years he's tall;
> . . . . . .
> There was a pretty redness in his lip
> . . . . . .
> Between the *constant red* and *mingled damask.*

Finally, the Epilogue, spoken by Rosalind, was patently spoken in the character of a "fair youth." Toward the end he says,

> If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me. . . .

Even the name, Ganymede, which Rosalind assumes, is significant. Ganymede was a Trojan boy—a son of Troy: Truth, or of Troilus-Oxford—whom Jupiter seized and carried off to replace Hebe as cupbearer to the gods.

In the early version of *2 Henry IV* the Fair Youth was the Page; in the final version, belonging almost certainly to the last year of Oxford's life, he had become the young Prince, while Oxford himself was the dying king.

One passage in *2 Henry IV* (II.2.70 *et seq.*) has several expressly pointed lines. First, Bardolph calls the little Page a "whoreson upright rabbit" (l. 86), which being another word for "hare," is the customary Elizabethan pun for "heir." Oxford's contemporaries made innumerable puns on "hare" and "heir," in reference to his cherished son. His own pun in *Much Ado* (II.1.264) about the "hair off the Great Cham's [Chamberlain's] beard" would have amused the initiate, for in the course of time Lord Oxford's paternity was discovered. That it did, we have proof in Jonson's allusion to this very passage in *Every Man Out* (IV.4), where Puntarvolo-Oxford says,

> . . . myself am to bring thence a *Turk's* mustachio, my *dog,* a *Grecian hare's* lips, etc.

The "Turk" refers to Oxford, the "great Cham," the "dog" to his plays, and the "hare" to his heir. "A Grecian hare" points to the dual presentment of the Fair Youth as Viola-Sebastian in the Greek setting of *Twelfth Night,* "the master-master mistress of my passion" (Son. 20): "your master's mistress" (in the Duke's words to Viola).

At some time—it must have been in the late 1590's—Oxford made a significant alteration in what might with a certain precision be

called the pregnant scene in *Much Ado.* (III.4.38-90.) While in 1582 Beatrice had represented, topically and predominantly, Anne Vavasor, the dramatist later, in his zeal to disclose the true identity of the Fair Youth, seems to have merged her with Elizabeth. Thus when Margaret asks Beatrice if she is ill "for a hawk, a horse, or a husband," and she replies,

> For the letter that begins them all, H,

she means, of course, Henry. So that Beatrice becomes, at least transiently, for the record, the expectant Queen. If Hamlet were perhaps referring partly to the birth in the "northwest" of the "little western flower," *South*ampton, when he said, "I am but mad *north-northwest:* when the wind is *south*erly, I know a *hawk* from a handsaw," it is at least arresting that, in this significant scene from *Much Ado,* we find stress laid upon the words beginning with H, "a *hawk,* a horse, or a husband."

Jonson caught all these allusions. It was by such clues in the plays that he and the others learned the truth, and he was quick to capitalize upon his exciting discoveries.

Poins's remark in 2 *Henry IV* (II.2.95),

> O! that this good *blossom* could be kept from cankers,

ties in directly with the Sonnets: viz., No. 35. So does the "bud bit with an envious worm" (I.1.152) of the final version of *Romeo and Juliet,* which incorporates much of the imagery of the Sonnets; while Juliet's highly allusive speech, where the word "name" occurs six times within ten lines (II.2.38-48), comes close to dangerous revelation with,

> What's in a *name?* that which we call a *rose*
> By any other *name* would smell as sweet.

In effect, he whom we call Wriothesley (pronounced Rosely, and sometimes written Wroseley [9]) would be no less sweet if called by his rightful name, de Vere, or by Tudor, or any other. This undoubtedly provoked Jonson's line: *"Smelling* on *roses* and on purple flowers."

By the middle or late 1590's, many people seem to have known the secret. Thomas Nashe was actually so reckless as to address the Prologue of *Choice of Valentines* to Southampton in these words:

> Pardon, *sweete flower* of *matchless Poetrie*
> And *fairest bud* that *red rose ever bore.*

He got it all in: the (little western) "flower," or the "rose" that by any other name would smell as "sweet"; the "fair(est)"; the "bud"; the "red [Lancastrian and Tudor] rose"; the "E.Ver": and the birth: the Tudor rose that bore E.Ver the fairest bud—as well as the "flower's" being the subject of the "matchless Poetrie" of the Sonnets. But the foolhardy Nashe went even further, adding:

> Ne blame my verse of *loose unchastity*
> For painting forth *the things that hidden are.*

It is evident that this offering was unacceptable to either Southampton or the Censor—as Mrs. Stopes points out—since "it remained in manuscript until just lately." Canon Rendall says Southampton "turned his back on it."

We have gone some distance afield in following the younger Will o' the Wisp, but before leaving too far behind the subject of *Venus and Adonis,* we must glance back at the wording of the dedication. It was of course composed by the author with his tongue in his cheek, following the accepted form. But when he said, "I know not how I shall offend," he meant more than a modest author usually implied by such a phrase; for this was a delicate subject to offer the son of the prototypes of the two great pagan figures. "The first heir of my invention" merely meant the first work to be published under the invented *nom de plume.*

In *The Rape of Lucrece,* the story of a lustful man's assault upon a chaste woman, nothing is even remotely hinted at which might suggest that she for whom Lucrece stands had been behaving like Venus and had goaded the man for whom Tarquin stands; the poet deals fairly with the legend.[10] But by now we know what we know. It was a more or less casual thing for Elizabeth to indulge in amorous play with older experienced men, but in so voluptuously courting and arousing a youth as potentially passionate as was her boyish favorite of the late 1560's and early 1570's, she took a serious responsibility for which she paid in full measure.

He has provided plenty of sidelights; for example, Sonnet 66:

> Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry
> As to behold desert a beggar born,
> And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
> And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
> And gilded honour shamefully misplac'd,
> And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
> And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
> And strength by limping sway disabled,
> And art made tongue-tied by authority,
> And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,

[9] Stopes: *The Third Earl of Southampton;* p. 313.

[10] It is not without significance that Malvolio says, apropos of Olivia-Elizabeth: ". . . the impressure of her Lucrece, with which she uses to seal: 'tis my lady." (*T.N.:* II.5.96-7.)

And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill:
Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

(This may well have been re-written in 1590, when "authority" had made his art "tongue-tied." It is an autobiography, in miniature, of the Earl of Oxford at Elizabeth's court.)

Sonnet 129 defines lust as only one who had been shamed by it could define it, and is a kind of brief for *Lucrece*. Furthermore, this long, harrowing poem could have been written, we are convinced, only from the point of view of a nobleman with a feudal background. To substantiate this belief we shall quote from Canon Rendall's eloquent disquisition:

> As in *Venus and Adonis* psychological interest was concentrated on Adonis, so too in *Lucrece* (as compared with the Ovidian and other renderings) the centre of interest lies not in the chastity and heroism of Lucretia, but on the guilt of Tarquin, and the consequences it entailed . . . The arguments throughout are based upon *noblesse oblige*. The poem is no parable of chastity, in depreciation of sexual incontinence; the finger of reproof is lifted against the disregard of rival obligations—the violation of good faith and the ties of friendship (231-7), the stain on family or knightly honour, the breaches of the moral code incumbent upon given grades of rank and standing. The poet, Lucrece, Tarquin himself, measure disgrace in terms of heraldry (55-72)—by abatements of honour, by the bar sinister (204-6), by the blot upon the scutcheon, or indelible attaint (535-7.)[11]

Lucrece, like *Venus and Adonis,* gives evidence of early composition, even at times of earlier than the first-published poem, though of later revision. There is more of the "red-and-white, lilies-and-roses" imagery, and of such euphuistic phrases—found in abundance in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres,* by the way—as "darkness daunts them with more dreadful sights" (462) and "muster thy mists to meet the eastern light." (773.) There are lines reminiscent of *Hamlet, 2 Henry IV,* and above all of *Macbeth,* with its poetic broodings upon the "black agents of foul Night." We have again the "worm-in-the-bud," and another statement of the "mole-of-nature" idea, in *stanza* 122. But a really startling resemblance is drawn between Tarquin and that other victim of self-destruction-through-vaulting-ambition, Macbeth; for Tarquin visualizes his lust as ambition for gain (*stanzas* 19, 20, 21, 22)—"this ambitious foul infirmity"—and even, metaphorically, for a "throne":

These worlds in Tarquin *new ambition bred;*
Who, like a foul usurper, went about
From this fair *throne* to heave the owner out. (59.)

[11] *Personal Clues;* p. 131.

As Macbeth and his wife planned to "gild the faces of the grooms withal" to make it "seem their guilt" (II.2.57-8), so Tarquin:

That done, some worthless slave of thine I'll slay (74),

and

Unto the base bed of some rascal groom,
To be thy partner in this shameful doom. (96.)

Tarquin speaks of Collatine, the husband, whom he means to wrong—

But *as he is my kinsman,* my dear friend (34)—

in precisely the same terms Macbeth uses in regard to his intended victim, Duncan, his sovereign:

First, *as I am his kinsman,* and his subject. (I.7.13.)

Tarquin says:

Who . . .
Shall by *a painted cloth* be kept in awe (35),

while Lady Macbeth sneers,

. . . 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears *a painted devil.* (II.2.55-6.)

In both play and poem there is a comment upon the fact that villainy does not show in a man's face—*Lucrece: stanzas* 29, 219 and 220; and *Macbeth:* I.4.11-12. (Ben Jonson obviously marked this theory of Oxford's, for in *Cynthia's Revels* Amorphus tells Asotus

> how well I can refel that paradox, or rather pseudodox, of those which hold the face to be the index of the mind, which, I assure you, is not so in any politic creature.—II.1.)

Then in *Lucrece* we have again an allusion to the boar:

Yield to my love; if not, enforced hate,
Instead of love's coy touch, shall *rudely tear thee.* (96.)

And evidence is not lacking that the poet used Tarquin's guilt to prophesy with uncanny prescience his own obloquy:

Yea, though I die, *the scandal will survive,*
And be an eye-sore in my golden coat;
Some loathesome dash the herald will contrive,
To *cipher me how fondly I did dote;*
That *my posterity* sham'd with the note,
Shall curse my bones, and *hold it for no sin*
To wish that I their father had not been. (30.)

The mightier man, the mightier is the thing
That makes him honour'd or begets him hate;
For greatest scandal waits on greatest state,

The moon being clouded presently is miss'd,
But little stars may hide them when they list. (144.)

The picture provided by the poems *in toto* is astonishingly complete. If there is any doubt, for instance, that Adonis is a fanciful, poetic representation, in the original conception, of one aspect of the young Oxford, *A Lover's Complaint* supplies the connecting link and clinches the proof. (*Stanzas* 12-21 inclusive.)

He is described unmistakably in the following lines:

Of one by nature's outwards so commended
That maidens' eyes stuck over all his face. (12.)

When the young Earl's marriage was announced, there was said to be "great weeping, wailing, and sorrowful cheer of those that had hoped to have that golden day."

Small show of man was yet upon his chin. (14.)

The Queen had taunted her youthful favorite for having almost no beard.

His qualities were beauteous as his form,
For maiden-tongu'd he was, and therefore *free;*
Yet, if men mov'd him, was he *such a storm*
As oft 'twixt May and April is to see;
. . . . . .
His rudeness so with his authoriz'd youth
Did livery *falseness* in *a pride of truth.* (15.)

The young Oxford stood upon his freedom, writing Burghley that he was "near to your Lordship but free." He gave way to "storms" of temper. He was "authorized" by Elizabeth to be blunt or rude. He dressed up "falseness" (of himself and others) in a "pride of truth," as has been repeatedly demonstrated in this study.

"Well could he ride . . ." (16); he was "Accomplish'd in himself." (17.) Like Hamlet, it is said "he did in the general bosom reign." (19.) But there is a more graphic description still:

So on the tip of his subduing tongue
All kind of arguments and question deep,
All replication prompt, and reason strong,
For his advantage still did wake and sleep:
To make the weeper laugh, the laugher weep,
He had the dialect and different skill,
Catching all passions in his craft of will. (18.)

Here, surely, we have Lord Oxford and William Shakespeare revealed in their ineluctable unity!

Upon the subject of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* many thousands of words have been written in eloquent, and sometimes in tedious, commentary. But so far as we know, very little has been said

about the hidden story which furnished the motive for these glittering flights into the realm of classical fantasy and legend. Such perfect correspondence of themes could not be fortuitous. Of course we do not suggest that Venus represents Elizabeth, or Tarquin Oxford, in a literal sense, but we do maintain that the essential emotional implications of the two long poems are one with the essential emotional features of their relationship—a relationship which set the minor key of the poet's life and explains his tragedy, if not to some extent his obliteration.

It would seem that the voluptuous blandishments of the mature Queen had shocked and bewildered the sexually undeveloped youth; but suddenly his naïveté was shattered, the beauty of innocence extinguished, and the Queen found herself confronted by a Boar, ruthless and insensate. The result of the Boar's rude "kiss" which slew the artless boy was the birth of the "purple flower" [12] from his blood. Venus, who had coveted only the innocent youth, withdraws, grieving for his loss, "yokes her silver doves" and "is convey'd" by them

. . . to *Paphos,* where their *queen*
Means to immure herself and not be seen. (199.)

This Elizabeth was obliged to do for the birth of her son. And it is startling to find that Paphos was on the *southwest* coast of Cyprus in the Mediterranean.

That is the first allegory, in which the Queen of Love has been the aggressor. In *Lucrece,* the Boar, the "invisible commander," stalks his prey. Here we have a woman "famous for chastity" assaulted by a man of "excessive pride," whose lust has been inflamed by her beauty: a lust which, as we are bound to see, is whetted by her inaccessibility and thus sharply tinctured with ambition. When Macbeth's ambition became thoroughly aroused, by a woman of "undaunted mettle," merciless in her "fell purpose," he changed from the sensitive, reflective poet-warrior that he was by nature into a fiend rushing headlong to his doom. Tarquin, bred in the code of knighthood, is driven by his aroused passion, which is not merely sensual but also egoistic, to ultimate tragedy. Although he knows with every fateful step he takes that he is heading toward annihilation and the downfall of his great house, although he views his act

[12] Note the point he makes that it was amorous dalliance on the Queen's part:

It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it *Love-in-idleness.* (*M.N.D.:* II.1.166-8.)

"Nay then," quote Adon, "you will fall again
Into your *idle* over-handled theme." (*V. and A.:* 129.)

with horror and repulsion, yet he is powerless in the grip of the "invisible commander."

Because we had not, at the time we discussed *Macbeth,* recounted how Elizabeth had wooed her young favorite and met with a delayed though violent response, we were unable to show the fundamental correspondence between the tragic drama of ambition and the tragic poem of lust. But the two are closely related. They were so closely related in the poet's consciousness that one gave rise to the other, and this because he was honest enough to admit that the lust the Queen had provoked in him had been whetted by ambition.

Venus and Adonis is a poem of the *day,* voluptuous, vibrant, glowing: much is said about breeding; Venus is symbolically the earth.

Lucrece is, on the other hand, like *Macbeth,* pervaded with the darkness, the foreboding silence, of night, with its "black agents" which "to their preys do rouse." Such is Tarquin with his "stealthy pace"; such is Macbeth, pursuing his lust for power: "Hear not my steps, which way they walk."

Nocturnal birds and creatures of prey set the ominous note in both tragedies: the croaking "raven," the "owl—the fatal bellman"—the "wolf," the "falcon," the "gorged hawk," the "night-weasels" which "shriek to see him there." The tension and the horror, the sense of evil stalking the place, are almost unendurable. To produce this powerful effect, the poet had to feel it all, profoundly, in himself; and so, of course, he did. It is appalling to think what his imagination could do to him.

When Oxford wrote *Macbeth,* in 1589, he was facing his life with despair. It had been only a few months since Anne Cecil had died, and he was castigating himself for having "put out the light" of her life, as his tortured fancy taunted him that he had. Portraying himself as Othello and idealizing Anne as Desdemona, in a revision evidently made at that time, seems not to have laid the demon of remorse. He tells himself that he has been no better than a murderer, that it has all been for ambition, and he is, in the end, balked of everything. He finds himself balked of his right to acknowledge his son, bereft of his wife, of his good name, his property gone, himself repudiated, and all because of ambition, which demoralizes and destroys a man as lust does. He broods upon his "bewailed guilt." When he prophesies the ruin of the house of Tarquin, he is prophesying his own ruin:

> That my posterity . . . shall hold it for no sin
> To wish that I their father had not been.

This was the state of mind in which the two terrible poems of night were written. *Lucrece* had been begun, we cannot but suppose, long

before and returned to during black moods. *Macbeth* was much more complex and was, as we have seen, partially an abstract and brief chronicle of the time. Both, at the core, were bitterly personal to Lord Oxford.

The passage conveying the clue, in *Macbeth,* which we forbore to speak of earlier, since it would have been premature, is so skilfully disguised and presented that it seems to be directed solely at James of Scotland. It is the passionate soliloquy (III.1.47 *et seq.*) beginning, *To be thus is nothing:*

> But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo
> Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature
> Reigns that which would be fear'd; 'tis much he dares,
> And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,
> He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
> To act in safety. There is none but he
> Whose being I do fear; and *under him*
> *My genius is rebuk'd as it is said*
> *Mark Antony's was by Caesar.* He chid the sisters
> When first they put the name of king upon me,
> And bade them speak to him; then prophet-like,
> They hail'd him father to a line of kings.
> Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,
> And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
> Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
> *No son of mine succeeding.* If 't be so,
> *For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;*
> For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;
> *Put rancours in the vessel of my peace*
> Only for them; and *mine eternal jewel*
> *Given to the common enemy of man,*
> To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!
> Rather than so, *come fate into the list,*
> *And champion me to the utterance!*

"To the utterance." Surely this is a significant phrase! Rather than be eternally frustrate, he will bid fate decide, bid fate "champion" him "to the utterance" of the truth, the revelation.

James, by a sort of courtesy, was held to be a descendant of Fleance, the son of Banquo, who escaped when his father was murdered. Therefore Macbeth is ostensibly protesting against the fate which has led him to defile his mind, his immortal soul, in order to make the heirs of Banquo—who are James of Scotland and his descendants—kings: "the seed of Banquo kings!"

But actually this is a highly complicated and reckless passage. Banquo, while historically representing the ancestor of James Stuart, stands also for Leicester here—the man under whom Lord Oxford's

> genius is rebuk'd, as it is said
> Mark Antony's was by Caesar.

Leicester had died the year before and could now be given a fairer report. (Elizabeth would not have had it otherwise.) Here is a strong clue; for it is Oxford and Leicester to whom the Soothsayer is alluding when warning Antony not to contend against Caesar in *Antony and Cleopatra*. (II.3.10-40.) Oxford has of late had a new and bitter illustration of the way he has consistently been thwarted by his older rival—in the matter of his command after the battle of the Armada. Leicester got the glory: he himself was fobbed off with a place of "no service or credit"; and this was typical. But beyond this, there is the striking fact that Fleance escaped to Wales, while Arthur Dudley had also fled to Wales [13] a coincidence which certainly caps the allusion and illuminates the intention.

So we see that the Earl of Oxford is not only afraid that James Stuart will inherit the throne of England, he is afraid that the son Elizabeth had by Leicester in 1561 may even step in ahead of him. In either event, the Fair Youth, whom he considers the rightful king, will be superseded. And it will have been for such a terrible, eternal frustration as this that he has, as Macbeth seems to mean, defiled his mind. But Oxford means literally "filed," as well as defiled. He has, in order to serve Elizabeth and the compulsions of ambition, stooped from his high estate, sacrificing his great name, as well as his property; to serve her, he has written plays, dramatizing the events of her reign, warning her of dangers, fostering her schemes, extolling her, creating patriotism among the populace for her causes, perhaps at times with a tormented sense that he was prostituting his art no less than his manhood. He has foregone glory and distinction to whet and file his mind in her interests and for ambition's sake. (In Sonnet 110 he puts it, "Gor'd mine own thoughts." And both Jaques and the Bastard were admittedly activated by ambition.) Of course all the while the Queen may have given him secretly to understand that his son, who is also her own, will, when the time comes, succeed her.

But in 1587 Leicester's son, Arthur Dudley, had turned up in Spain, had told of having been to England and conferred with his father. Meanwhile Elizabeth has been writing letters to James, advising, encouraging him. All this has added anguish to uncertainty in Lord Oxford's already harassed and gloomy mind. It is because he himself is tortured that he can give Macbeth the scarifying words,

> O! full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife. (III.2.36.)

He is suffering unendurable pangs of remorse about his wife and has taken up *Othello* again to portray his own blackness. He has defiled his mind in writing as he has about his wife and about his father-in-

[13] Appendix, Note 3, par. 3.

law, who may here, in this low moment, be "the gracious Duncan"; and he tells himself that he has done it all for ambition.

In both *Lucrece* and *Macbeth* a man is goaded by ambition to commit unworthy and wicked deeds. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, it is Proteus who says to Silvia (V.4.57-8):

> I'll woo you like a soldier, at arms' end,
> And love you 'gainst the nature of love,—force ye.

Macbeth commits murder for the sake of prestige, to win the throne. The drama and the poem exemplify the demoralizing effect of ambition upon men of poetic natures, the havoc wrought in their souls when their ideals become perverted. Both Macbeth and Tarquin are poets as well as soldiers. Both have the same tendency to weigh, reflect, and visualize before taking action, that Hamlet has. It is the terrible personal involvement that the dramatist has in *Macbeth* which, stirring him to poetic eloquence, gives the play its powerful intensity, while the wide historical reference and high significance give it the exalted pitch, the epic quality, which make it timeless and endow it with grandeur.

A passage in Chettle's *England's Mourning Garment*, which has been generally interpreted as an entreaty to Shakespeare, upon the death of Queen Elizabeth, to break his silence and make some public expression of grief, reads as follows:

> Nor doth the silver-tongued Melicert
> Drop from his honied muse one sable teare
> To mourn her death who graced his desert,
> And to his laies opened her Royal eare.
> Shepherd, remember our Elizabeth
> *And sing her rape, done by that Tarquin, Death.*[14]

[14] In addressing this to "Shakespeare," the pseudonymous author of *The Rape of Lucrece*, Chettle, while showing how much he understood, was at the same time playing the game for the public's benefit, as other writers did. He revealed, in the opening lines of his poem (4-18), that he well knew the true identity of England's great poet. (See conclusion of Chap. Eighty-four.)