

Waite wondreth, Peace in Spaine and Fraunce to see,
 Brave Eckenberg, the dowty Bassa shames.
 The Christian Neptune Turkish Vulcane tames.

Navarre woos Roome: Chartmaine gives Guise the Phy:
 Weep Powles, thy Tamberlaine voutsafes to dye.
 L'envoy.

The hugest miracle remains behinde,
 The second Shakerley Rash-swash to binde.

A Stanza declarative: to the Lovers of Admirable Workes

Pleased it hath a *Gentlewoman rare*,
 With *Phoenix* quill in diamont hand of *Art*,
 To muzzle the redoubtable Bull-bare,
 And play the galliard *Championesses* part.
 Though miracles surcease, yet wonder see
 The mightiest miracle of *Ninety Three*.

'Tis consiliz experts, mole ritit sua.
 GABRIEL HARVEY.¹

THE MIGHTIEST MIRACLE OF NINETY THREE" was, in Harvey's estimation, the muzzling of the great "Bull-bare"—which was as near as he dared come to Ox-boar—by the "Phoenix," who is, of course, Elizabeth, his Championess. This was the year of the first appearance in print of the *nom de plume*, "William Shakespeare." We judge from what Harvey says that the Queen, although allowing him freedom to write what he wished (or it may even be, saving his works from destruction), signed the fiat of Lord Oxford's anonymity. He had been anonymous for a long time, but this act made his anonymity not only official but permanent.

In a prefatory letter to *Pierce's Supererogation*, Harvey cites many reasons why "any respective or considerate person" should wish to publish his works in his own name and thus "stand upon his own defence according to Equity," before posterity, remarking parenthetically that "mighty men may finde it a Policy, to make a singular, or extraordinary course."

Evidently these two significant pieces of information from the knowing Dr. Harvey's pen eluded the authorities when, in 1599, they ordered all his and Nashe's works "taken whersoever . . . found" and "none of their books be ever printed hereafter."

Venus and Adonis was recorded in the Stationers' Register under date of April 18, 1593. Published by John Harrison, who had formerly published a book dedicated to the Earl of Oxford, it was printed by Richard Field of Stratford-on-Avon, who had only recently printed a handsome new edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Gold-

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN



Wonders enhance their powre in numbers odd:
 The fatall yeare of yeares is Ninety Three:
 Parma hath kist; De-maine entreats the rodd:

¹ See Johnson's parody of *L.L.L.*, in which Southampton is Asotus, and note 18, Chap. Eighteen.

¹ From *The Works of Gabriel Harvey*, ed. by Alexander Grosart.

ing's translation. This is the first evidence of any connection between the Earl of Oxford and Stratford, although his Warwickshire estate, Bilton, was situated on the Avon, with some miles of forest separating it from the little town which was in those days said to be one of the filthiest in all England.²

No author's name was given upon the title-page of the long poem, but the dedication of "the first heir of my invention" was signed, "William Shakespeare." Since such an elaborate literary exercise could scarcely represent the initial work of a budding poet, and especially since the poem so strikingly paralleled some of Lord Oxford's earlier verse, the phrase must have referred to the pseudonym which now appeared for the first time in print, although it may have been previously made known to certain members of the literary set, if not, indeed, for some time have been used informally.

But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed . . .

Here the word "deformed" looms again. Did the poet mean that if, once more, he was "sham'd by that which I bring forth," he would be sorry he had connected Lord Southampton with it and would never again "ear so barren a land"?

Of further significance is the Latin quotation from Ovid preceding the dedication, which has been translated: "Let the common herd admire common things, so long as to me *Apollo's self* hands goblets brimming with the waters of Castalia." Because Castalia was one of the fountains of Parnassus sacred to the Muses, the poet is saying that "Apollo's self" furnishes the inspiration for his verse. And this is precisely what he says again and again in the Sonnets that the Fair Youth does. Therefore, if proof were needed, here surely is final proof that the Fair Youth is Southampton.

The following year appeared *The Rape of Lucrece*, dedicated to the same young Earl in terms far more familiar and having much in common with the Sonnets. The inference is inescapable that, between 1593 and 1594, Southampton had learned that Oxford was his father. Both poems could be said to have been designed with an eye to moral influence, almost to say, "Do not behave as I have done." The poet has been almost shockingly personal in both. And it is essentially for this reason that he begins the dedication of *Venus and Adonis*, "I know not how I shall offend"; not, as superficially appears, because of false modesty for the quality of his verse. If he is willing to have it understood that he is a simple poet addressing a

great Earl, he abandons that pretense with *Lucrece*: now he addresses his beloved son.

Actually, only a person of great influence could have published *Venus and Adonis* at all. Even so, permission must have been granted by the Archbishop of Canterbury only upon condition that a pseudonym would be used. That the Queen was behind this is implied in Harvey's heavily symbolic lines. We have said that in 1599 the Bishops of Canterbury and London ordered Marlowe's translation of Ovid's *Elegies* destroyed. Censorship was absolute.

Oxford had undoubtedly told the story of his experiences with the Queen—Adonis to her Venus—in an elaborate poem, just as he translated all his experience into poetry and drama, within a relatively short space of its occurrence. He had probably never expected he would be able to publish it. But when the whittigig of time brought a vain, somewhat lascivious youth whom he loved, another Adonis, into a similar relationship with an older woman, another seducer, he saw his opportunity. He simply made changes here and there, adaptations and additions, "moralized" it, polished the lines with a practiced hand, and dedicated it to "Apollo's self." Thus he dodged the danger. Whereas *before* all the world would have known who Venus and Adonis were, *now* the poem was simply a highly artificial allegory dedicated to a beautiful young courtier, who had elsewhere been called Narcissus and compared to Apollo.

The case of *Lucrece* was slightly different. For not only was the poet, in 1594, able to show a wayward young *amorous* that the price of unbridled lust is shame and obloquy, he had a contemporary instance ready to hand in Raleigh's tempestuous affair with Elizabeth Throgmorton, which had so infuriated the Queen that she had thrown him into the Tower. In the midst of making love to her, the Queen, he had committed the "brutish" act in her own private apartments—within, it might be said, the very domain of the chaste Lucrece herself. Oxford was certainly not the man to resist such an opportunity as this. His own indiscretion of twenty years before was happily obscured by this storm of scandal; and the irrepressible Earl made the most of his luck.

It had happened while he was polishing *Venus and Adonis*. He promised "some graver labour." And here it was.

That the followers of Raleigh assumed *Lucrece* to be based partially upon their patron's rash behavior and consequent disgrace is all too evident from the publication in September of the same year, 1594, of *Williothe His Arise*, a counterblast to both *Venus* and *Lucrece*, written, apparently, by Roydon, a follower of Raleigh. This poem also bore two dedications, and they were signed "Hadrian Dorrell"; an anagram for *Lord and Earl Hair* (Hein). The first, "To all the Con-

² In *England Within and Without*, p. 21, Richard Grant White states: "Stratford then [in Elizabeth's reign] contained about 1800 inhabitants, who dwell chiefly in detached cottages, which straggled over the ground. . . . The streets were foul with offal, mud, muck heaps and reeking stable refuse."

stant Ladies and Gentlewomen in England that fear God," says, "mine author have found a Britain Lucretia," and is accompanied by a pair of prefatory verses:

In Lavine Land though Livy boast
There hath been seen a constant dame,
Though Rome lament that she hath lost
The garland of her rarest fame,
Yet now we see that here is found
As great a faith in English ground.

Though Collatine have dearly bought,
To high renown, a lasting life,
And found that most in vain have sought,
To have a fair and constant wife,
Yet Tarquin plucks his glistening grape,
And *Shakespeare* paints poor Lucrece rape.

This, incidentally, is the first use by a contemporary of Oxford's pseudonym. The fact that it is hyphenated is proof that the writer knew it was a made name.

The writer also knew perfectly well that the original Venus had been Queen Elizabeth, and no doubt Lucrece too. And his skill in making Avis a composite of the Queen and Anne Vavasor, with just enough disguise for protection, is subtle and masterly; it is a typically Elizabethan *tour de force*. Henry Willobie is obviously Henry Wrothesley, whose stage-name was Will. *O be Will*.

"Hadrian Dorrell" asserts that he is merely the publisher, the real author being H.W., "Henrico Willobego, Italo-Hispalenses" (another "Italianate Englishman, with a dash of Spanish, like Armado), who had left the manuscript in his rooms upon going abroad.

The poem is far too long to discuss here, hundreds of stanzas in ballad form. Suffice it to say that Avis is professionally, one might say, notoriously, virtuous; she repels the advances of five suitors who exercise various types of seduction, yet even though she marries, she still retains an abnormal power to attract men and cause them to assail her somehow never-too-convincing virtue. This is precisely what Anne Vavasor did, of course. And the name Avis suggests Anne Vavasor. *Avis* is French for advice, or counsel. But *Avis* is also Latin for bird; and Queen Elizabeth was the "Arabian bird," the phoenix. That the author took cognizance of all this appears in his long preface, signed by the supposed publisher, Hadrian Dorrell.

This preface is, in itself, full of pungent allusion. The "publisher" is "driven to think that there is something of *truth* hidden under this *shadow*." Here one who is familiar with Oxford's Sonnets begins to look sharp. The author, he continues, has left this comment:

Yet I would not have Avis to be thought a *poetic* fiction, nor a *truthless invention*, for it may be that I have at least heard of someone in the *west* of England, in whom the substance of all this hath been verified, and in many things the *very* words specified, which hath endured these and many more and greater assaults, yet, as I hear, *she stands unspotted and unconquered*.

Who was this but the chaste Elizabeth, the "vestal throned by the *west*"?

The publisher solemnly avers that he thinks it "almost impossible that any man could *invent* all this without some ground or foundation to build on." But he becomes even bolder when he expresses the wish "that there were more would spring from her [Avis's] *ashes* [i.e., since she is a phoenix] and that all were such"; and he adds that "if all women were in deed such as the *woman figured under the name of Avis either is, or at least is supposed to be*," they would be restored to "their ancient credit and glory which a few wicked *wantons* have thus generally obscured." (Here we have Elizabeth and Anne combined.)

However, Canto XLVII puts the finishing touch upon the whole story. It is headed "W.S." (for William Shakespeare). And it is simply a travesty upon those of Shakespeare's Sonnets addressed to the Fair Youth regarding the latter's affair with his own mistress, which would have been seen in manuscript by other writers, as the custom was. The only reason there has been such mystery connected with *Willobie His Avis* is that persistent ignorance about the author of *Lucrece* and his relationship with the Fair Youth, Southampton, has obscured the meaning of the Sonnets and of the poems and plays as well. This Canto goes as follows:

Well, say no more, I know thy grief,
And face from whence these flames arise.
It is not hard to find relief,
If thou wilt follow good *advice*.
She is no Saint, she is no Nun,
I think in time she may be won.

"Advice" is *Avis*: the poet's advice to the Fair Youth.

He suggests wiles and devices which the young man may employ to win Avis's compliance. Then the fourth stanza begins:

Look what she likes; that thou must love;
making sly use of an Oxfordian locution occurring in Sonnet 37,
line 13,

Look what is best, that best I wish in thee;
in Sonnet 77, line 9.

Look, what thy memory cannot contain;
and in Antonio's speech in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1.3.74.)

Willobie His Avisa went into several popular editions and then was summarily suppressed by the Privy Council: a highly significant fact in itself.

Now that the foremost among them had a name, the fun began. After this, Oxford, whose worth most of them recognized and many of them envied, figured in numerous plays and satires. He came to represent the School of Day, as opposed to Chapman's School of Night—at which he is supposed to have had a fling in the nocturnal imagery of *Lucrece*. Within a few years the *poetomachia*, or war of the theatres, was in full swing, and all the plays were pimed with satire or with pointed innuendo.

The Earl had evidently found that he must have a name, if only for a protective disguise. Because of his nickname, "Will," a pun on Ver, he came to be called "Gentle Master William," the "William" perhaps now used to differentiate him from Will, who seems to have been the actor, his son. For the choice of "Shakespeare"—or "Shakespeare," hyphenated, as it was written not only on the Sonnets, but also on seventeen or eighteen of the published plays—there were many reasons. In fact, this name would seem, all things considered, to have been the inevitable choice.

To begin with, it was a convention in which the young Edward de Vere had been steeped in boyhood that Harlequin wore a visor and carried a lathe sword. When the Morality plays succeeded the Miracle plays in England, a figure appeared called Vice, moving among a motley aggregation of abstract characters—Science, Conscience, Luxuria, Abominable Living, Ignorance, etc.—in company with the Devil. Symonds calls him "that tricky incarnation of the wickedness which takes all shapes, and whose fantastic feats secure a kind of sympathy. . . . He appears to have been a native growth . . . [and] by gradual deterioration or amelioration, he passed at length into the Fool or Clown of Shakspeare's [sic] Comedy. . . . Like Harlequin he wore a visor and carried a lathe sword."³

These Morality plays would have been performed at Castle Hedingham by the Sixteenth Earl's own company of actors; perhaps the precocious little Lord Bolebec was allowed on occasion to take the part of the nimble Vice. We make no doubt that the scene in *Sir Thomas More* (IV.1) in which More welcomes, much in Hamlet's manner, the Cardinal's players who have come to entertain his guests, is based upon just such a situation at Castle Hedingham. (It can be demonstrated from textual evidence that Oxford wrote much of this play.)

Besides this, from his twenty-first year the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford had been the champion spear-shaker of the lists, having borne

³ *Shakspeare's Predecessors in the Eng. Drama*, pp. 119-20.

away the prize in the three tournaments he participated in: 1571, 1581, 1584. In the second of these he had been the outstanding figure, the Knight of the Sun, brandishing a shining spear—the true Crispinus. Then, during the period of his highest favor, the young Earl had been enjoined, in a formal oration by Gabriel Harvey delivered in the presence of the Queen and her court, to eschew literature, in which he already excelled, and follow the example of his forefathers, in exploits of martial glory. "Thine eyes flash fire, thy countenance shakes a spear."

The Earl had certainly expected and even preferred a martial career, feeling it incumbent upon him; but Queen Elizabeth, recognizing his genius, thwarted him in this. So that, instead of exerting himself further on the battlefield, after taking part in a brief campaign with Sussex in the north and another still briefer one, it would seem, in Flanders in 1571, he was forced to content himself with shaking his spear in the lists of literature, quite as the lion seems to be shaking his broken spear on Edward de Vere's shield as Lord Bolebec. This was the title by which he was known, and the shield which was essentially his, before he came into the earldom. (Hence the lion-or Leo-motif continually employed for characters representing himself in the plays.) He was Elizabeth's jester, or "allowed fool," her Harlequin, wearing a visor and wielding the sword, or spear, of his wit.

The picturesque idea was given special validity by the fact that Pallas Athena, patron goddess of the Athenian theatre, held a spear—*pallein*—as her insignium. Oxford was clearly entitled to the same emblem for the position in which he stood towards the English theatre. Moreover, the helmet she wore conferred invisibility. All this harmony of suggestion would have had a strong appeal for an Elizabethan. To Oxford it was irresistible. It is thoroughly consistent with his habitual manipulation of words and ideas.

Interesting furthermore is the fact that the *Gesta Grayorum* explains, concerning "the order of the Helmet, [that] . . . in regard as the Helmet defendeth the chiefest part of the body, so did he [the Knight of the Helmet] guard and defend the sacred person of the Prince, the head of the state"—quite as Edward de Vere, like Castiglione's perfect courtier, conceived of himself as doing. We may be sure that the Earl of Oxford—himself a member of the order—had this in mind when naming the Prince of Denmark, the "chiefest courtier," who stood for himself, Hamlet. The similarity of the name to his emblem of invisibility would have guided him in adapting that of the legendary Amleth.

So the champion spear-shaker of the lists, the Queen's chief jester, who more than any other man was responsible for the creation of the great Elizabethan drama, called himself "Shakespeare"—or "Shake-

speare," hyphenated. Such names were the fashion of the time—Oxford's own creation of Bel-Imperia in *The Spanish Tragedy* antedating Spenser's Belphebe and Britomart, as well as the later names, Histriomastix, Martin Marprelate, and others.

Visible proof of the pictorial idea which lay behind this chosen *nom de plume* is found in the decoration stamped upon the book Shakespeare holds in his hand in the Ashbourne portrait, now known to have been originally a portrait of the Earl of Oxford. The famous art-critic, Spielman, states that this has been designated "a mask and crossed spears." We have often wondered if the *memento mori* at the poet's elbow may not stand for the skull of Yorick, the Court Jester, thus identifying him with Hamlet and giving us, in this portrait, a full presentment of the immortal Edward de Vere, who was at once the prince of tragedy and Elizabeth's "allowed fool" and "corrupter of words," who was finally to be revealed as the King Earl—King Lear—his forearm resting upon the relic of the jester, the poor strangled Fool, who had been "Lear's shadow."

Thus we have pictorially epitomized the life of William Shakespeare, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, Man of the English Renaissance.