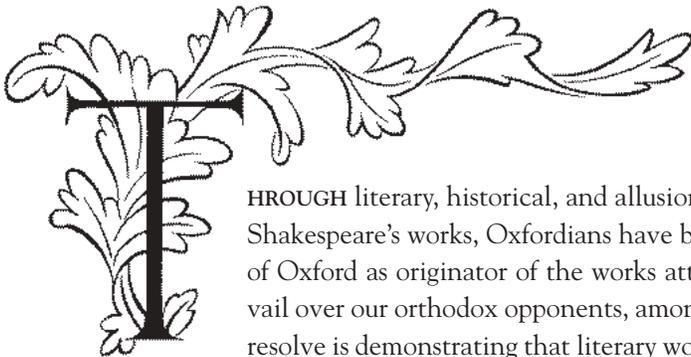


ANOTHER RARE DREAME: *Is this an “authentic” Oxford poem?*

W. Ron Hess



THROUGH literary, historical, and allusional evidence in contemporary references and in Shakespeare’s works, Oxfordians have built an impressive case for the seventeenth Earl of Oxford as originator of the works attributed to “Shakespeare.” But, if we’re to prevail over our orthodox opponents, among difficulties that the Oxfordian paradigm must resolve is demonstrating that literary works “authenticated” as by Oxford are reasonably comparable to the works of Shakespeare.

At first glance, this should be an advantage for Oxfordians, since no authentic literary works by the almost-certainly-illiterate Mr. Shakspeare of Stratford have ever been uncovered, while we do have works by Oxford. But in practice, our opponents have their *tabula rasa*—Mr. Shakspeare of Stratford “might have written” just like Shakespeare if they could only find samples of his writing—a position that gives them leave to hammer away at the differences between Oxford’s poetry and Shakespeare’s while ignoring the similarities. Thus, no drama and scarcely more than 450 lines of poetry have been “authenticated” as written by Oxford.

The authorship of much of the poetry from this period is hidden by the frequent use of pseudonyms, initials, or *posies* (Latin phrases). Even these can be misleading if the identities of the authors have been mistaken during the process of coterie distribution, i.e. sharing with fellow-poets (some of Oxford’s best poetry has been denied him by academics since it was found among the late Sir Philip Sidney’s papers). Worse, few of the now-authenticated poems can be fairly compared to Shakespeare’s because they are from a different era. If Richard Edwards was in fact the editor of the 1576 collection, *A Paradyse of Dainty Devises*, as the title page states, the seven poems in it by Oxford must have been written before 1566 when Edwards died and Oxford turned sixteen. Even if Edwards’s name was only honorary, and someone else actually made the collection, poetry from the 1560s and ’70s is difficult to compare to poetry from the mid-1590s to early 1600s, when Shakespeare’s works appeared, as spelling, punctuation, rhyme-schemes, line-endings, and the subject matter of poetry had changed in many ways. As a result, Oxford’s youthful poems are often termed “old fashioned.” It should be obvious that comparisons of a scant 450 of Oxford’s mostly-early lines with Shakespeare’s thousands of mature lines of poetry from the early 1590s and later is an “apples and oranges” fruitless exercise. Unfortunately what’s obvious to some is not to others.

Which brings us to an equally difficult problem for Oxfordians, namely that authentication remains in the hands of orthodox scholars such as Prof. Steven May (retired of Georgetown U., KY), who seems to do better at determining the Shakespearean nature of various works (in his own mind at least) than he is at explaining his criteria for the benefit of the rest of us. For example, during an April 19, 2003 panel debate at the Smithsonian Institution, May repeated his customary lament that despite his open mind and his secret desire that the Oxfordian theory be substantiated, he is unable to become an Oxfordian due to the fact that he has not yet found poetry by Oxford that’s “reasonably” comparable to Shakespeare. May has declined to authenticate several of Oxford’s best poems because “experts” (chiefly May himself) have labeled them as only “possibly” by Oxford. Hard as it may be to evaluate Oxford vs. Shakespeare, must we now grapple with Oxford vs. “Possibly” and then with “Possibly” vs. Shakespeare? If a combined Oxford and “Possibly” offer too few lines for conclusive arguments, May’s tactics yield two even shorter sub-groupings. Thus May’s inscrutable opinions have set the stakes even higher for Oxfordians.

Chambers to Riverside to Elliott

But May’s approach seems much more fair when compared with the exertions of Profs. Ward Elliott and Robert Valenza, whose inability to acknowledge error and correct for it in their “scientific” word studies suggests a most unscientific bias. In 1990, Peter Moore discussed the many deficiencies in their approach (7-10), as did this author again almost a decade later (“Hotwiring” 90-95, “Analysis” 25-59). Yet, Elliott in his response in 2000 (71-97) and again in his recent *very* long article in the *Tennessee Law Review* (323-453), shows that once again the obvious has passed him by. Is it so hard to grasp that comparing Oxford’s poetry, most of it from the 1560s, ’70s, and early ’80s, to post-1590 works by Shakespeare, Bacon, and others will yield unfair results unless properly “normalized” in order to compensate for the differences between the two eras? As long as no allowances are made for the early dates of Oxford’s poetry, no number of charts and graphs can hide such naked attempts to pass off bias as science. Is it hard to grasp that minimizing “Statistical dependence” (i.e., “circular reasoning”) is among the most important

Also possibly by Oxford

Romeus and Julliet, attributed to Arthur Brooke (1562) (Green 59-70)

Poems from *A Hundreth Sundry Flowres* signed *Meterum petere gravè* and *Ferenda Natura* (1573)

Hekatompathia, Latin poems attributed to Thomas Watson (1583)

Pandora, attributed to John Soothern (1584)

Willobie His Avis attributed to Henry Willobie (1594)

The Phoenix Nest (1593): some or all of its anonymous poetry (e.g., WCCE’s prequel “Alas my hart”)

duties of any statistical scientist? Elliott states: “Neither we, nor any Oxfordian scholar we know, has found as tight, steep, or smooth a trendline for any other indicator, under any set of Oxfordian assumptions, as we have found for the eight indicators treated here under Stratfordian assumptions” (388). This was nothing short of flim-flam magicians pulling statistical coins out of ears, since, as demonstrated in 1999 (“Analysis” 33-34), *Riverside* was itself dependent on E.K. Chambers who, lacking firm dates of composition and cramped by the necessity of working around the Stratford biography, turned to stylistics. Since Elliott and Valenza based their stylistics-graphing argument primarily on Chambers’s stylistics-infused system, their results are a classic case of circular reasoning, for which their “smooth trend-lines,” rather than “proof,” should be a warning signal of those old statistical bugaboos: *dependence*, *circular reasoning*, and *GIGO* (garbage in–garbage out).

When it comes to the authorship debate, any argument that relies heavily on assigning dates must encounter a factual vacuum since the only firm dates for all but one or two are dates of publication, which can occur as much as a decade after first performance. Because dates of “origination,” “sources,” “augmentation,” “correction,” “revision,” or “first performance” of any of Shakespeare’s plays can only be based on conjecture, Elliott and Valenza stick with *Riverside*’s guesswork. Despite evidence of topical allusions and style clues such as “Euphuism” that suggest that many of the works had early “origination” dates, they continue to follow Stratfordian biographers in using the latest possible dates.

More Oxford poems are needed

What Oxfordians chiefly need is to make a reasonable case for the poems that *sound like* Oxford, that show the kind of poetic forms he favors, with the kind of verve and original thought we’ve come to expect from works we can reasonably argue are his. Rather than depend on the opinions of academics who are biased in favor of the narrowest possible view of both Oxford’s and Shakespeare’s canons, we need to establish ways to “normalize” Oxford’s earlier poetry with the poetry of the 1590s. We need to develop our own experts and to reach out to those scholars capable of objective analysis who can help find better ways to compare poetry to poems by Shakespeare. Ultimately, we can propose a poetry canon for Oxford that will give scholars a rich pallet of comparisons to work with, even if they are not “authenticated” immediately by all academics.

During the aforementioned Smithsonian debate, Profs. May and Nelson were challenged by the author to examine a 60-stanza poem called *Another Rare Dreame* (ARD) from the 1593 *Phoenix*

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Nest anthology (see full text pp 68-73). ARD’s 420 lines are excellent candidates for adding to Oxford’s canon, nearly doubling his total. For ARD to be authenticated to Oxford, we must examine it closely for: 1) signs of the most likely period when it was written; 2) similarities with other poems authenticated as by Oxford; 3) similarities with poems from the same period by other poets; 4) clues that connect it to Oxford’s biography, and 5) similarities to works by Shakespeare.

The kind of in-depth examination possible would take more space than we have here, but we can make a start by comparing the long ARD poem to the short poem “What cunning can expresse” (WCCE), like ARD, first published in *Phoenix Nest* (1593) and later in *England’s Helicon* (1600) as “What Shepherd can Expresse” (Miller 1.564), a poem everyone assigns to Oxford (Crane 3.62-3, Miller and Looney 1.563-4, May 280-1).

Eleven themes

After getting over WCCE’s cloying last two lines (“These sunbeams . . . make me die,” which may be forgiven if intended to be sung),¹ we find eleven themes expressed in the poem, remarkable for a mere seven stanzas of short lines. Then we find the same eleven themes are to be found in ARD (here using original text as found in Crane; with stanza #s added):

1) *a worshiped lady with attributes of the virgin goddess Artemis* (Roman Diana, goddess of the silver moon, also called Cynthia or Sylvia): WCCE: 1.6-2.1 “her gentle eie. / From whence each throwes a dart”; 4.1 “Faire Cinthias”; 7.3 “Cinthias silver light”; ARD: 24.2 “portrait of the Saint”; 37.4 “you to Angels calling lift?”; 37.6 “advance yee to a Goddess seat”; 40.2 “So deepe your thrall”; 48.3 “Exempt from Love, I live in happiness”; 48.7 “And mind not Love”; 49.1 “you can from Love refraine”; 51.3 “with vertue, and mine honor stand.”

2) *emphasis on flowers*, especially the Lily, Carnation, and Rose (with similar emphasis in some of *the Sonnets*; and note that “flowers” can represent poems, aphorisms, or feminine favors: WCCE: 3.1 “Lillie in the field”; 5.2 “Damaske Rose”; 6.4 “carnation wise”; 7.1 “Lillie white”: ARD: 15.1-15.2 “garden plot . . . Carnation flowres”; 15.7 “lillies and the damaske roses”; 39.1 “those graces and those flowres.”

3) *classical imagery* (a typical device of Euphuism, the Court style popular in the late 1570s to early-80s; imported from Continental

What cunning can expresse,

1 *What cunning can expresse,
The favor of hir face,
To whom in this distress,
I doe appeale for grace,
A thousand Cupids flie,
About hir gentle eie.*

2 *From whence each throwes a dart,
That kindleth soft sweete fier:
Within my sighing hart,
Possessed by desier:
No sweeter life I trie,
Than in hir love to die.*

3 *The Lillie in the field,
That glories in his white:
For purenes now must yeelde,
And render up his right:
Heav’n pictur’d in hir face,
Doth promise joy and grace.*

4 *Faire Cinthias silver light,
That beates on running streames;
Compares not with hir white,
Whose haire are all sunbeames;
Hir vertues so doe shine,
As daie unto mine eie.*

"classicism" whereby Ronsard, DuBellay, and the other "Pleiades" poets reformed the French language to make it better able to express philosophical and love conceits: WCCE: 1.5 "Cupid's flie"; 6.1 "Phoebus"; 6.2 "Of Thetis"; 7.4 "fair Dea spread"; ARD: 13.4 "curious web Arachne spun"; 15.5 "Uncertaine Juno"; 16.1 "Vermillion morne"; 23.7 "conversation of the Muses"; 44.2-44.3 "Love's torments . . . he a mightie Tyrant is"; 60.1 "Morning entring at the glass."

4) *the whiteness of her skin*: WCCE: 3.1-3.5 "The Lillie . . . glories in his white . . . pictur'de in her face"; 4.3 "with hir white"; ARD: 14.1-14.3 "The forehead . . . for whiteness . . . snowe . . . smoothnes with Ivorie compares"; 19.1-19.2 "her skin, / A snow white lawne."

5) *the red gold of her glowing hair*: WCCE: 4.4 "Whose haire are all sunbeames . . . doe shine"; 5.1 "With this there is a Red"; 6.3 "The morning blushing red"; 7.2 "taint of roseate red"; 7.5 "sunbeames." ARD: 12.6-12.7 "raies of beautie . . . Sunshine light"; 13.1-13.7 "Hir Amber tresses . . . shining fire / Or flames"; 14.1 "these burnisht haire."

6) *her situation as prominent among the stars*: WCCE: 2.2 "kindleth soft sweete fire"; 3.5 "Heav'n pictur'de in her face"; 4.1-4.5 "Cinthias silver light . . . so doe shine"; 5.6-5.7 "no starre / That she surmounts not far." ARD: 9.1-9.2 "the night doth through the skie . . . with golden stars"; 14.5-14.6 "Under this firmament . . . Two powfull stars."

7) *allusions to Phoebus (or Phoenix, Phaeton, Dea, or other "fiery" mythical entities) noting that god of the Sun, Phoebus Apollo, was also god of healing, prophesy, and poetry, and was intimate with the inspirational Muses*: WCCE: 6.1 "When Phoebus . . ."; 7.4-7.5 "Dea spread / These sunbeames . . .": ARD: 4.5 "they recommend as Propheties"; 12.6-12.7 "Whose raies . . . Sunshine light"; 13.6-13.7 "shining fire, / Or flames by woonder"; 23.7 "daily conversation of the Muses"; 26.7 "visit the afflicted and the sick"; 27.2 "recoverie to you bring"; 42.6-42.7 "The Sun . . . his light."

8) *allusions to a sea nymph (as in Thetis, nymph mother of Achilles in the Iliad; or Aphrodite-Venus, mother of Cupid and the goddess of love, created out of sea foam on the coast of Cyprus)*. WCCE: 1.5-1.6 "Cupids flie, / About hir . . ."; 6.1-6.2 "from the bed / Of Thetis doth rise." ARD: 6.7 "Loves commandement"; 15.6 "Venus"; 19.6 "a tawny Cyprous . . . Angell woman goes"; 20.3 "imitate the gently moved Seas"; 22.2 "The tawnie cyprous . . ."; 34.7 "perish like the outcast

5 *With this there is a Red*
Exceeds the Damaske Rose;
Which in hir cheekes is spred;
Whence every favor groes,
In skie there is no starre,
That she surmounts not farre.

6 *When Phoebus from the bed,*
Of Thetis doth arise,
The morning blushing red,
In faire carnation wise,
He shewes it in hir face,
As Queene of every grace.

7 *This pleasant Lillie white,*
This taint of roseate red,
This Cinthias silver light,
This sweete faire Dea spread,
These sunbeames in mine eie,
These beauties make me die.

E.O.

in the Seas”; 42.1 “condiscending unto Love”; 44.5-46.6 “insnare me in this net . . . for fish, with fish to bait”; 45.1 “When Love (sweet Lady)”

9) *the author’s blindness from her brilliance* (what was supposed to happen in the Parthenon to beholders of Phideas’s gigantic gold and ivory statue of Pallas Athena): WCCE: 4.5-4.6 “so do shine, / As day unto mine eie”; 7.5 “sunbeames in mine eie.” ARD: 7.1 “Mine eyes, the first intreating messengers”; 12.6-12.7 “Whose raies . . . Sunshine light”; 22.7 “Sees some what further, than mine eies might see”; 42.6-42.7 “The Sun . . . his light.”

10) *the author’s intention to die for the sake of beauty and love*: WCCE: 2.5-2.6 “No sweeter life I trie, / Than in her love to die”; 7.6 “these beauties make me die”; ARD: 10.7 “Of purpose strait to make a finall end”; 33.4 “from this bodie would my life divide”; 34.5 “. . . in sight of helpe, must helpeles die”; 36.3 “Upon the beauties which your visage dies”; 52.1 “Love hath brought me to the grave”; 53.2 “And for you will not love (said I) I die”; 53.7 “Let not thy mistres be thy homicide”; 55.7 “with a kisse drew up my life againe.”

11) *most important, the lady in the powerful role of the author’s Queen or sovereign*: WCCE: 1.2-1.4 “hir face . . . I doe appeal for grace”; 3.5-3.6 “hir face, / Doth promise joy and grace”; 6.5-6.6 “hir face, / As Queene of every grace.”; ARD: 6.6 “Upon my soveraigne”; 9.2 “Hir sable robe” (regnal garb); 24.4 “Mistres of my hope, my feare, and plaint”; 27.7 “Bestow on me”; 36.6 “Yeelding favour”; 40.2 “so deepe your thrall”; 40.7 “Your beautie of it selfe is Conqueresse”; 41.5 “Your soveraigne beautie”; 48.6 “in the estate I live”; 49.2-49.3 “he holds his state within your eyes: / But I, the vassall . . .”; 52.5 “heere my servant lay”; 53.6 “servant (said she) abide.”

In isolation or combinations of a few themes at a time, each theme might be found in hundreds of other poems, certainly not all by Oxford. Yet, at least eleven close matches between two poems (WCCE and ARD) in the same 1593 anthology surely did not occur just by accident. Moreover, a future study should show that *Alas my hart*, the five-stanza prequel to WCCE, links ARD even closer to Oxford’s WCCE.

Links to Oxford’s biography

In ARD there are a number of intriguing links to Oxford’s biography. First, it’s obvious that these eleven themes pertain to the “virgin Queen,” famously vain about her red-gold hair, pale skin (painted white as she grew older), and the deliberate ties by herself (and others) of her own legend to myths of various virgin goddesses. Indeed, the 28.1-28.4 “Is’t in my garden” spoken by the poem’s mysterious Queen-deity, implies the action of the poem took place within Elizabeth’s garden or palace precincts. From his teens to his early thirties, the Court was Oxford’s second home, and all her palaces had gardens. Oxford had occasional bouts of illness throughout his life, and one of these was a report that he was gravely ill in the last part of 1569, during which he recuperated at the Windsor Palace grounds (Holmes 166, 171). That he might wish to attribute illness to passion

rather than to a more mundane cause would be a likely ploy for a poet, particularly one who sought favors from a royal mistress often receptive to such maneuvers. As late as 1573 it was reported the Queen was enchanted with Oxford's "personage and his dancing" such that his jealous mother-in-law objected (Ogburn 511). According to Oxford's cousin, Sir Henry Howard, while "in his cups" Oxford bragged of sexual adventures, including "something touching" her Majesty (Nelson 204-09). The reference to "Bedlam fits" suggests a familiarity with Bedlam, the insane asylum which lay just outside Bishopsgate, directly across the road from Fisher's Folly, the estate that was Oxford's home during the 1580s.

Most telling, the only identifying information about the author given by the editor of *The Phoenix Nest* was that ARD was: "learnedly set down by a worthy Gentleman, a brave Scholar, and M. of Arts in both Universities." It is a matter of record that Oxford had Master of Arts degrees from both Cambridge (1565) and Oxford (1566), something that few poets from that period could claim; authors Robert Greene and Francis Meres were the only two other notable examples. A review of *Phoenix Nest* at *bartleby.com* tentatively attributes ARD to Robert Greene: "it is possible that the longest poem in the volume, 'A most rare and excellent dreame,' is the work of Greene." Most Greene scholars note the similarities between Greene's poetry and early Shakespeare (Hughes 15). Yet Greene was dead in 1593, while Oxford was alive, matching the living author referred to in the description.

Comparisons with themes of Oxford/Shakespeare

The events that take place in ARD are described as having occurred in a dream. Dreams and other real or apparent "altered states" were frequently used by Shakespeare: in *The Tempest*, comparing them to life itself ("We are the stuff that dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep"), and in "Bottom's Dream" from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ("I have had a most rare vision; I have had a dream—past the wit of man to say what dream it was . . ."). Such states were also featured in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Shrew*, and *Julius Caesar*, with much of Shakespeare's poetry comprehensible as insights from a dream state. The author of ARD listed the possible causes of dreams, such as out-of-the-body experiences (known today as astral travelling) or prophecies of things to come, explanations derived from a study of the occult, a preoccupation of Oxford's suggested by the nature of some of the charges brought against him in 1581 by Howard and others (Nelson [http . . . /LIBELS](http://www.oxfordian.org.uk/LIBELS)).² Or, says the author of ARD, they may be caused by "celestial" influences, inferring a knowledge of astrology, another of Oxford's interests, as shown by John Soothern in his 1584 dedication to *Pandora* ("Who marketh better than he/ The seven turning flames of the Sky"), and also of Shakespeare, as shown by the frequent and accurate references to astronomy throughout the plays (Usher 132-46).

The energy and passion expressed in several ARD verses suggest the tone of other early poems by Oxford, in particular "Fain would I sing but fury makes me fret" (May 277) and "This loss of my good name," which even May terms, "a defiant lyric without precedent in English Renaissance verse" (53). The theme of the disdainful lover, though generally popular, takes a form seen in other

early Oxford poems reminiscent of ARD. In “Woe bis worth on me forsaken man” he accused his hard-hearted dame with causing his death (272-3). In “I am not as I seem to be,” he claimed a heart “by love slain dead.” In “The trickling tears that falls along my cheeks” he moaned, “In fine she hath the hand and knife / That shall both save and end my life” (276).

As for Shakespeare, ARD seems in many ways comparable to *Venus and Adonis*. There was the same theme of a failed attempt at seduction, although in ARD it was the man who wooed and the goddess who rejected, but with many of the same arguments that Adonis used against Venus. As in *V&A*, the lover fainted, to be revived in exactly the same way as Adonis roused Venus. In the same way, the progress of the seduction is given a step-by-step description and in the same arch tone. ARD’s author shared Shakespeare’s fondness for the sea and shipwrecks.

Oxfordians Helen Cyr and William Plumer Fowler made cases for similarities between the works of Shakespeare and those of Oxford. Fowler compared Oxford’s letters to the language and phrasing of Shakespeare’s plays and poems (1986).³ And Cyr in several articles noted WCCE’s “sun-beams in mine eye” (7.5) is a “parallelism” with *Love’s Labour’s Lost*: “once to behold with sun-beamed eyes . . . your sun-beamed eyes” (169-170).

“Leekes” for likes

Ironically, it is from Prof. Nelson that we may get our most solid evidence of Oxford’s authorship of ARD, since in Stanza 43 the word *likes* is spelled “leekes” and rhymed with “seekes”:

*No abject commons of those things he seekes,
Nor any way doth labor to induce
That lives to serve and honor hir he leekes,
In hope at last to make an happie truce, . . .*

Nelson argues against Oxford as Shakespeare in large part because of Oxford’s spelling of *like* as “lek” or “leke,” which he claims is due to Oxford’s provincial Essex ear for words: “He almost always (and very idiosyncratically) wrote ‘lek’ for like, not only in the simple verb, but in such combination forms as ‘misleke’ and ‘leklywhodes’ [likelihoods].” According to Nelson, “*These spellings alone are almost enough to identify a piece of writing as his*” ([http . . . oxspell/](http://oxspell/), emphasis added). Oxford also spelled *like* “leeke” (and once “leake”) elsewhere (*Monstrous* 64), thus assuring us that what the author of ARD was after was the sound that Oxford wanted when he spelled *like* as “lek” or “leke” (i.e. the sound of a “long e”) the sound required for rhyming *likes*, spelled “leekes,” with *seekes*, spelled “seekes.” Interestingly, the word was also spelled *like* in several other places in the poem, which shows that the author—Oxford we now presume—was aware that *both* pronunciations were in use among members of his audience at the time.

Therefore, thanks in large part to Prof. Nelson’s expertise, with confidence we can now add ARD to the list of Oxford’s authenticated poems, and at the same time suggest one more high-quality poem for the still-so-empty category: Shakespeare’s developmental works. _____ ❧

Another Rare Dreame or A most rare, and excellent Dreame*

learnedly set downe by a worthy Gentleman, a brave Scholar, and M. of Arts in both Universities.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 The while we sleepe, whereof may it proceed,
Our minde is led with dreames of divers sorts,
Some fearfull things, and discontentment breede,
Some merriment, and pretie idle sports,
And some of future things presage imports;
Some wounds the conscience with the former gilt,
Of outrage, wrongs, and bloud unjustly spilt.</p> | <p>6 Upon a dreame I had, I this prefer,
The which the sequell shall deliver strait:
That Love that first did make my reason erre,
Straitly one day commanded me to waite,
On paine to pine, and perish in conceite;
Upon my soveraigne, unto whom I went,
As dutie wild, and Loves commandement.</p> |
| <p>2 Some strange effects if not impossible,
As to be caried in the emptie aire,
Of transformations some incredible,
From forme to forme, and of their backe repaire,
Some pleasant shewes presents, and some dispaire:
Some graver things a sleeping can discusse:
And other, matters meere ridiculous.</p> | <p>7 Mine eies, the first intreating messengers,
By signes of sorrow openly did speake,
After my toong the humble suite prefers
Of my poore hart, with torments like to breake:
But little of my sufferings doth she reake:
Sooner the rocks their hardnes will forgo,
Than she acknowledge that which she doth know.</p> |
| <p>3 Men diversly do argue of the cause
Of dreames: Some their occasion thus recites,
The while the bodie takes his needfull pause
In sleepe to fresh and to restore the sprites,
Decaid by labor, or the daies delites,
The minde, the cogitations of the day do keepe,
And run them over when we are asleepe.</p> | <p>8 In fine, unto my chamber I retire,
A thousand fancies hamring on my wits,
Despaire, grieve, anguish, furie, and desire,
Doe exercise in turne their Bedlem fits,
Whereof to speake, or heare, best them befits,
That now enjoying, heretofore have tride,
The hell, and bitternes of Love denide.</p> |
| <p>4 Others our meates do charge with those effects
That indigested in the stomacke lies:
Other celestiall influence respects,
And fetch from them our sleeping fantasies;
The which they recommend as Prophesies:
For when our sprites are stirred with those charms,
We are foretold of good or future harms.</p> | <p>9 By this the night doth through the skie display
Hir sable robe, spangled with golden stars,
And voicelesse silence gan to chace away
Noyses and sounds, with their molesting jars:
And so the place to needfull sleepe prepares;
Who Motherlike, most tenderly asswages,
The daies aggreevances and damages.</p> |
| <p>5 But this conjecture cheefly I embrace,
Even as the sea enraged with the winde,
After the storme alaid will moove a space,
The selfe same reason may be well assignde,
Unto the nightly labors of the minde:
Who works in sleepe, our actions at a stay,
Upon th' occasions of the passed day.</p> | <p>10 Encumbred thus, I went unto my bed,
Love knowes, with little hope of taking rest,
Fancie and frenzie worketh on my head,
One while the one, then th'other gets the best:
Now eithers faction egarly address;
To hostile conflict furiously descend,
Of purpose strait to make a finall end.</p> |

*From D.E.L. Crane's *The Phoenix Nest*, 1973, v for u, etc.; stanza #s inserted.

- 11 *Extremitie proceeding on so far,
When eithers forces equally were spent,
They stinted of themselves this raging war,
And left with victorie indifferent:
Slumber that found the time convenient,
Seeing the slacknes of their wearied traine,
Upon th'advantage seased on my braine.*
- 12 *Who holding me under his shadie wings,
To mitigate the anguish of my thought,
Presented me with divers pleasant things,
Amongst the rest, a Ladie faire he brought,
Frō heaven no doubt those features there are wrought,
Whose raies of beautie admirable bright,
Filled my chanber with a Sunshine light.*
- 13 *Hir Amber tresses on hir shoulders lies,
The which as she doth move, divided run,
About hir bodie just in circle wise,
Like to the curious web Arachne spun;
Or else to make a fit comparison,
Like slender twist turned to shining fire,
Or flames by woonder wrought into a wire.*
- 14 *The forehead that confines these burnisht haieres,
For whitenes striveth with untouched snowe;
For smoothnes with the Ivorie compares;
And doth the Alabasters glistring showe,
Under this firmament you are to know,
Two powrfull stars which at their pleasure move,
The variable effects that followes love.*
- 15 *Hir cheekes resembleth right a garden plot,
Of divers sorts of rare Carnation flowres,
The which the scortching Sun offendeth not,
Nor boystrous winter with his rotting showeres;
Uncertaine Juno thereon never lowres:
Heere Venus with hir little loves reposes,
Amongst the lillies and the damaske roses.*
- 16 *Hir lips compares with the Vermilion morne,
Hir equall teeth in semicircle wise,
For orientnes selected pearle may scorne,
What may I of hir issuing breath devise,
That from this pearle and Synaber doth rise:
The francumsence and myrr, that Inde presents,
Within this aire leese their extolled sents.*
- 17 *The nose, the chin, the straight erected necke,
Supporter to the head: next shoulders stands,
The which discends into the arme direct,
And terminates their length upon the hands:
At each of these my wits amased stands:
For when I would their merits utter foorth,
I finde all words inferior to their woorth.*
- 18 *The garments wherewithall she was attyrde,
But slender in account, and yet were more
Than hir perfections needfully requyrde,
Whose every part hath of contentment store:
But as it was, thanks to my dreame therefore,
Who causde the apparition to be wrought,
As all lay open to mine eies or thought.*
- 19 *There was, as I observ'd next to hir skin,
A snowe white lawne, transparent as the aire,
And over this a garment wondrous thin,
Of networke, wrought in blacke, exceeding faire;
Whose masks were small, and thred as fine as haire,
Girt with a tawnie Cyprous* were hir clothes,
And thus attirde, this Angell woman goes.*
- 20 *Hir moving brests as equall Promontories,
Divided by an Indraft from the maine,
Doe imitate the gently moved Seas,
That rising fall, and falling rise againe:
As they, so did my life in every vaine:
My spirit issued as they waxed hier,
And as they settled, backe againe retier.*

*a sheer fabric used to cover the bosom

- 21 *Next neighbor heerunto in due discent,
Hir bellie plaine, the bed of namelesse blisse,
Wherein all things appeere above content,
And paradise is nothing more than this:
In which Desire was mov'd to doe amisse;
For when his eies upon this tree was cast,
O blame him not, if he requirde to taste.*
- 22 *What followed this, I cannot well report:
The tawnie Cyprous that forehanging fell,
Restrained mine eies in most malitious sort,
Which of themselves were else affected well,
Although as witnes nought thereof I tell:
I doubt not those that sine conceited be,
Sees somewhat further, than mine eies might see.*
- 23 *But of hir praises thus in generall,
Desirde perfection shewd in everie part,
Yet all appeerd in each one severall,
Unto the wonder of the eie and hart,
Of every private part to write apart.
Were worke and argument for him that uses,
The daily conversation of the Muses.*
- 24 *Who this should be, if any long to heare,
I say it is the portraict of the Saint,
Which deepe ingraved in my hart I beare,
The Mistres of my hope, my feare, and plaint,
And thou that with hir praises I acquaint,
If thou canst nothing else, yet with thou me,
Delivered of that beauties crueltie.*
- 25 *With unperceived motion drawing ny,
Unto the bed of my distresse and feare,
She with hir hand doth put the curtaine by,
And sits hir downe upon the one side there:
My wasted spirits quite amazed were,
To see the sudden morning of those eies,
Within the darke thus inexpected rise.*
- 26 *Being abrode (quoth she) I lately hard,
That you were falne into a sudden fever,
And solitarie in your chamber bard,
From companie you did your selfe dissever,
To charitie it appertaineth ever,
In duties to our neighbors for to sticke,
And visit the afflicted and the sicke.*
- 27 *Which Christian office hither hath me led,
Wishing I could recoverie to you bring,
Ladie (quoth I) as easly done as sed,
For you that have my life in managing,
What need you wish, when you may doe the thing:
For if you be disposd to charitie,
Bestowe on me this wisht recoverie.*
- 28 *Is't in my garden that may doe thee good?
(Quoth she) or in my closet of conserves,
Or may my kitchin any kinde of foode
Devise, that to thy taste and fancie serves,
Ladie (said I) no coolice, no conserves,
No herbe, no potion commeth nie that part,
That suffereth this anguish and this smart.*
- 29 *When further I would faine have spoken on,
With fearfulnes I felt my toong restrained,
And shamefastnes with red Vermilion,
My shallow cheekes and countenance distained:
Now by this meanes my hart more deeply pained,
Sent out a flood of weeping to betoken,
The rest of that my toong had left unspoken.*
- 30 *As soone as sighes had overblowne my teares,
And teares allaid my sighings vehemence,
Audacitie expulser of those feares,
Gave to the desire at last preheminece,
Who saw it now to be of consequence;
Sauced his tale with dutie and respect,
And thus began, or to the like effect.*

- 31 *It is no fever (Ladie) in the vaines,
Nor in the blood, of humors the excesse,
Nor stomacks vapor, that annoies the braines,
Nor ill contagion in the Arteries,
Nor any grieffe that Physicke remedies:
It is, &c. and heere my lips refusde to move,
Stopping the sentence ere I came to Love.*
- 32 *Haply (said she) as I doe judge thereon,
It is some toy or fancie in your head,
Some sicknes grounded on opinion,
Or else some error your conceit hath bred:
Then as suppose you to this anguish led,
By mine advice, if you list ruled be,
For health sake doe suppose the contrarie.*
- 33 *Were it within the compas of my wits,
(Leader of my desires) thus I replide,
To remedie the outrage of those fits,
That from this bodie would my life divide,
The rather should these cordials be applide,
That I might keepe my life in health, to doe,
The services that love commands me to.*
- 34 *But out alas, that waied downe with paine,
With hands erected up, that I should crie,
As doth the saylers blowne into the maine,
After the ship that fore the winde doth flie,
And yet in sight of helpe, must helpeles die:
So I, neere hir that can my woes appease,
Do perish like the outcast in the Seas.*
- 35 *Are you the woorser that I am so neere,
The Ladie said, and I not thereof ware?
Nay happie then (quoth I) that you are heere,
And haples too, bicause you are so farre:
She aunspered hereunto, these riddles are:
Can neere be far, can happy haples be?
As well (quoth I) as see, and not to see.*
- 36 *What is he (Madame) that doth baite his eies,
Be he of mortall or immortall kinde,
Upon the beauties which your visage dies,
And drawes not present death into his minde,
Unles your gracious lookes do proove so kinde,
As with a yeelding favour to prevent,
The dangers thereunto are incident.*
- 37 *Can it be possible you should not knowe
The powre and vertue of sweete beauties gift?
Can heaven and nature measureles bestowe
The things that you to Angels calling lift?
And you not understand their purpos'd drift?
Might they advance yee to a Goddesses seate,
And you be ignorant why they make yee great?*
- 38 *If this were true, which you of me suppose,
The praise of beautie, and commended parts,
I see no reason to esteeme of those,
That do complaine them of such pettie smarts,
Not incident to men of valiant harts:
The argument is dull, an nothing quicke,
Bicause that I am faire, you should be sicke.*
- 39 *Suppose I have those graces and those flowres,
And all the vertues that you can recite,
You looke, you like, and you must have them yours;
Forsooth, bicause they moove your appetite:
I see no reason to impart my right,
Before that God and men agreed be,
To let all things run in communitie.*
- 40 *An easie thing for you to overcome,
(Faire Ladie) him, that is so deepe your thrall:
For every syllable from your lips that come,
Beares wit, and weight, and vehemence withall:
Under the which, my subject spirits fall:
If you do speake, or if you nought express,
Your beautie of it selfe is Conqueresse.*

- 41 *With favour (Ladie) give me leave to speake,
(If you will listen a condemneds tale)
No pettie wound can make my hart strings breake:
Nor might a trifle worke this deadly bale:
Your souveraigne beautie doth me hither hale:
The stronger doth (even by a common course)
Over the weaker exercise his force.*
- 42 *Ladie, in condescending unto Love,
You do not share nor yet your right forgo,
In that you shall your servants sute approve,
And blesse him with those favors you can showe,
To higher place of dignitie you growe:
The Sun were not in my opinion bright,
If there were not eie witnes of his light.*
- 43 *No abject commons of those things he seekes,
Nor any way doth labor to induce
That lives to serve and honor hir he leekes,
In hope at last to make an happie truce,
And for this cause all other he refuse:
To exercise those parts with serious care,
Which to his Mistres fancie pleasing are.*
- 44 *But sir (quoth she) how can ye answer this?
You men complaine, Loves torments to be great;
Saying that he a mightie Tyrant is;
Such one as putteth reason from hir seat;
Why wish ye to insnare me in this net?
Better it is you suffer that you doe,
Then such extreames should happen upon two.*
- 45 *When Love (sweete Ladie) thorowly accords,
The Lovers and beloveds harts in one,
This amitie a perfect heaven affords,
Upon the instant of this union:
Banisht is thence all sorrow, care, and mone,
For they which in conspiring Love abide,
Live with continuall joies, unsatisfide.*
- 46 *This is beleev'd and knowne by common brute,
When of us Dames ye hap to get a graunt,
You give it to the cunning of your sute,
Using with your companions thus to vaunt:
These pretie fooles, tis nothing to enchaunt:
As fishers use for fish, with fish to bait,
These faire ones, so, faire speeches catches strait.*
- 47 *Let not (sweete Love) the fault of one or few,
Or sinister report of truthelasse fame,
Endamage the desart of him can shew
Many effects repugnant to the same,
Unworthie he of life, or Lovers name,
Shall dare unto hir honor, wrong, or scathe.
Of whom both life, and happines he hathe.*
- 48 *It is a prooffe (said she) of foolishnes,
To set that upon chaunce which may be sure,
Exempt from Love, I live in happines,
In which condition I will yet indure:
Griefes come apace, we neede not them procure:
In the estate I live, I am content,
And minde not Love, in dread of discontent.*
- 49 *I know (quoth I) you can from Love refraine,
Bicause he holds his state within your eies:
But I, the vassall of his hard disdaine,
Am so dejected, as I cannot rise;
Albeit my sute and service you dispise,
Yet give me leave to honor and admire,
Your beautie which afflicteth my desire.*
- 50 *Ther's little reason (said she then) to like
The thing which you affirme to vexe ye so,
If your desire such discontentment strike,
Such war, such anguish, agonies, and woe,
Let that fantastike I advise ye goe:
The man is much desirous of unrest,
That home intreates a knowne disquiet guest.*

- 51 Excepting Love, demaund you at my hand,
 Whatever is in my abilitie:
 And may with vertue, and mine honor stand,
 Ladie (said I) Love is the Maladie,
 And unto Love, Love's th'onely remedie:
 But sith you doe herein my sute destest,
 Then grant me this, the last I shall request.
- 52 When haples Love hath brought me to the grave,
 If so at any time you passe that way,
 Where my consuming bones their buriall have,
 Vouchsafe yee then for pitties sake to say,
 As I remember, heere my servant lay,
 Long time a Lover in affection true,
 Whom my disdain and rigor overthrew.
- 53 Altho yee die (quoth she) I will not love,
 And for you will not love (said I) I die:
 Then presently my spirits faild to move,
 Retiring backe themselves successivelie:
 But when she did the signe of death espie,
 She puld, she halde, servant (said she) abide,
 Let not thy mistres be thy homicide.
- 54 If thy affections doe from Love proceede,
 How canst thou die, and I thy lives life neere?
 If thou doost love, and honor me indeede,
 Why with this act dost thou defame me heere?
 If thou esteemst my Love and honor deere,
 O live, and see my rigour overthrowne,
 And come and take possession of thine owne.
- 55 And then unable weeping to withholde,
 She sundrie meanes assaies to make me live,
 My brests she strikes, she rubs my temples colde,
 And with such vehemence of labours strive,
 As life unto a Marble stone might give:
 My hand at last, she amorously doth straine,
 And with a kisse drew up my life againe.
- 56 This new sprong joy conceived in my hart,
 Of Loves assurance under hand and seale,
 Dilated thence abroad to every part,
 Telling how graciouslie my love did deale,
 My soule and spirit swelling with this zeale,
 So rowsed sleepe, that he his holde forsooke,
 And I through surfeit of the joy awooke.
- 57 Awaked thus, I presently perceiv'd,
 The vanitie and falshood of these joyes;
 Finding that fond illusions had deceiv'd
 My overwatched braine with idle toyes;
 Then I that freshly felt my first annoyes,
 Their woonted rage within my thoughts to keepe,
 Gan thus expostulate the cause with sleepe.
- 58 Thou ease of harts, with burth'nous woes opprest,
 Thou pitier of the cares of busie daie,
 Thou friend to lovers in their deepe unrest,
 Turning their anguishes another waie,
 Why may not I continue with thee aie,
 Sith that my destinie is so extreame,
 As not to have my good, but in a dreame.
- 59 Why art thou not (O dreame) the same you seeme?
 Seeing thy visions our contentment brings;
 Or doe we of their woorthines misdeeme?
 To call them shadowes that are reall things?
 And falslie attribute their due to wakings?
 O doe but then perpetuate thy sleight,
 And I will sweare, thou workst not by deceit.
- 60 And now the Morning entring at the glasse,
 Made of these thoughts some intermission;
 Thus have I tolde what things in dreame did passe,
 Upon the former daies occasion;
 And whence they come in mine opinion;
 But whether they tell truth, or nothing lesse,
 I shall resolve, upon my dreames successe.

Endnotes

¹ Editor's note: It should be taken into consideration when judging these early poems by Oxford that many of them are song lyrics rather than poems intended to be read or recited aloud. Song lyrics are generally simpler in meaning and in wording, as their purpose is primarily to enhance the sounds and emotions expressed by the music. The "poem" "Shall I die, shall I fly," discovered by Gary Taylor in 1985, who claimed it for Shakespeare, might have been more quickly accepted had he, or anyone, noted what should have been obvious, that the open syllables "die" and "fly" that sound so banal when read, are ideal for holding a long note. Shakespeare's *Sonnets to Sundry Notes of Music* should make it patently clear that much of Shakespeare's verse was meant to be sung.

² As evidence of Oxford's involvement with "altered states," there is Howard's claim that Oxford had bragged that he "had often tymes copulation with a female spirite in Sir George Howardes house at Grenwiche, that Charles Tyrrell apperid to him with a whippe after he was dead and his mother in a sheet foretelling things to come, that he saw Christ crucified between the priest's hands at sacringe [consecration of the eucharist], that he could conjure and had often conference with Satan (Nelson [http . . ./LIBELS](http://.../LIBELS)).

³ About Fowler's exhaustive (and exhausting) analysis of Oxford's letters and poetry in comparison to Shakespeare's works, it should be noted that Mrs. Cyr correctly criticized his work for not having checked concordances to verify that his findings were unique to Oxford and Shakespeare. Still, this is a minor objection to what is otherwise a most useful book.



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