

The biography below is partly based on original documents related to Oxford's life which can be found on the Documents page of this website. Numerous citations to Alan Nelson's *Monstrous Adversary* (2003) have also been included. All references to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* are to the online edition.

BEGINNINGS

Edward de Vere (1550-1604), 17th Earl of Oxford, heir to the second oldest continuously inherited earldom in England,¹ was born on 12 April 1550 to John de Vere (1516-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford, and his second wife, Margery Golding (d.1568). The name Edward, unique in the de Vere family, was perhaps a compliment to the young King Edward VI,² who bestowed a 'standing cup gilt' at Oxford's christening five days later on 17 April.³ Oxford had a younger sister, Mary,⁴ and an older half-sister, Katherine de Vere,⁵ the daughter of the 16th Earl's first marriage to Dorothy Neville (d.1548).

Beyond the fact that he was a sportsman, kept a company of players,⁶ served Henry VIII at Boulogne in 1544 as captain in the rear guard,⁷ received John (1537-1592), Duke of Finland, when he came to England to woo Queen Elizabeth as proxy for his brother, Eric of Sweden (1533-1577),⁸ and acted as the principal magnate of Essex,⁹ few records have survived of the 16th Earl's life.

In 1548, during the Protectorate of Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset,¹⁰ the 16th Earl was forced to enter into an agreement to marry his nine-year-old daughter Katherine to Somerset's son, Henry, and to entail the de Vere lands on their heirs. Somerset used coercion to blackmail the 16th Earl into this agreement, perhaps by threatening to take action against him because of the 16th Earl's bigamous marriage to a certain Joan Jockey

¹ May, Steven W., "Early Courtier Verse; Oxford, Dyer and Gascoigne", in Cheyney, Patrick, ed., *Early Modern English Poetry; A Critical Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 61.

² Ward, B.M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604 From Contemporary Documents* (London: John Murray, 1928), p. 9.

³ Nelson, Alan H., *Monstrous Adversary* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), p. 20.

⁴ Mary de Vere (d.1624) married, firstly, Peregrine Bertie (1555-d. 26 June 1601), Lord Willoughby de Eresby, and secondly, Sir Eustace Harte (d.1634).

⁵ Katherine de Vere (1538-1600) married Edward (1532?-1575), 3rd Lord Windsor. For the will of Katherine de Vere, see TNA PROB 11/95, ff. 186-7. For the will of Edward, 3rd Lord Windsor, see TNA PROB 11/57, ff. 216-19.

⁶ Ward, pp. 9-10; Nelson, pp. 13, 239, 444.

⁷ Nelson, p. 13.

⁸ TNA SP 12/7/1, ff. 1-2; TNA SP 12/7/2, ff. 3-4.

⁹ Nelson, p. 23.

¹⁰ Beer, Barrett L., "Seymour, Edward, Duke of Somerset (c.1500–1552)", ODNB.

after the 16th Earl and his first wife, Dorothy Neville, had separated. The agreement was reversed after Somerset's attainder and execution in 1552.¹¹ However, the Joan Jockey incident resurfaced in 1563 in a petition¹² to the ecclesiastical courts by Oxford's half-sister, Katherine, and again in 1585 in a lawsuit brought by Hugh Key against Richard Masterson for possession of one of Oxford's former manors.¹³

Shortly after he had entailed his lands on Somerset's heir, the 16th Earl secretly remarried. He was in love with Dorothy Foster, a Catholic gentlewoman attending on his young daughter, Katherine. Somerset and his henchmen, who included the 16th Earl's brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Darcy,¹⁴ were against the marriage because of its possible effect on Somerset's appropriation of the lands of the Oxford earldom, and forcibly separated the two. The 16th Earl determined to steal Dorothy Foster away, and to marry her in spite of Somerset. However, while he was on his way to effect this purpose, the Earl's chaplain, the vicar of Clare,¹⁵ persuaded him of the folly of marrying a Catholic against the Protector Somerset's wishes, and introduced him to Margery Golding, to whom he took an instant liking, and married that day.¹⁶

After Somerset's execution in 1552 and the death of the young King Edward VI, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland,¹⁷ caused his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey,¹⁸ to be proclaimed Queen. The 16th Earl threw his support behind Queen Mary,¹⁹ and was instrumental in her accession to the throne.²⁰ Despite this, the Earl seems to have been regarded with suspicion by Queen Mary and her advisors, and was given no preferment during her reign.²¹ Moreover, the execution of Northumberland which resulted in part from the 16th Earl's support of Queen Mary doubtless sowed the seeds for his son, Robert Dudley's,²² animosity towards the house of de Vere.

¹¹ For a discussion of Somerset's extortion against the 16th Earl, see Green, Nina, "The Fall of the House of Oxford", *Brief Chronicles: Volume 1* (2009), pp. 49-122. URL: www.briefchronicles.com.

¹² TNA SP 12/29/8, ff. 11-12; Nelson, pp. 40-1.

¹³ For depositions taken in this lawsuit, see Huntington Library EL 5870.

¹⁴ Loades, David, "Darcy, Thomas, first Baron Darcy of Chiche (1506–1558)", ODNB.

¹⁵ HL EL 5870.

¹⁶ For the entry in the parish register of Belchamp St Paul of the 16th Earl's marriage to Margery Golding, see Essex Record Office T/R 168/2.

¹⁷ Loades, David, Dudley, John, Duke of Northumberland (1504–1553)", ODNB.

¹⁸ Plowden, Alison, Grey [married name Dudley], Lady Jane (1537–1554)", ODNB.

¹⁹ Weikel, Ann, "Mary I (1516–1558), Queen of England and Ireland (1516-1558)", ODNB.

²⁰ For an account of the 16th Earl's support of Queen Mary, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, ed. & trans., "The Vita Mariae Angliae Reginae of Robert Wingfield of Brantham" in *Camden Miscellany XXVIII*, Camden 4th series, vol. 29, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1984), 181-301, at 263-4, 266.

²¹ Loades, David, *Mary Tudor; A Life* (Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 181, 184.

²² "Adams, Simon, "Dudley, Robert, Earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588)", ODNB. Leicester was Queen Elizabeth's most prominent favourite.

From about the age of four, the 16th Earl's only son, Edward de Vere, was educated by private tutors. One of the earliest of these private tutors was Thomas Fowle, a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, to whom the 16th Earl granted an annuity on 4 May 1558 'for service in teaching Edward Vere, my son, Viscount Bulbeck, done & to be done.'²³ In November of that year Oxford matriculated as an impubes or fellow-commoner of Queens' College, Cambridge.²⁴ His name disappears from the college registers in March 1559, and he did not receive a BA with his classmates in Lent 1562.²⁵ Oxford was also tutored by Sir Thomas Smith²⁶ and resided for a time in Smith's household.²⁷ The evidence as to when Oxford resided with Smith is unclear, however, and Smith was not among those granted annuities by the 16th Earl.²⁸

On 3 August 1562, Edward de Vere's life changed permanently. On 28 July 1562, only a few days before his death, the 16th Earl had made a will²⁹ in which he had named Robert Dudley a supervisor. Dudley, later to become Earl of Leicester, was already the favourite and the reputed lover of Queen Elizabeth, who had come to the throne after her sister Queen Mary's death in 1558. With the 16th Earl's sudden death, Oxford became Queen Elizabeth's ward. In the following year, the Queen, by a grant made on 22 October 1563 expressing her desire to 'benefit' Robert Dudley, turned over the core lands of the Oxford earldom to her favourite for an annual rent.³⁰ This grant is unprecedented in the annals of the Court of Wards. The usual procedure was for the Queen to dispose of a royal ward's lands outright for a cash sum. It would appear that Robert Dudley, who had limited financial assets at the time, was unable to come up with the necessary cash, so the Queen took liberties with the wardship system in order to benefit her favourite and alleged lover.³¹

This transaction laid the foundation for Oxford's later financial ruin. We have no direct evidence of Leicester's stewardship of the de Vere lands, but given other evidence of

²³ See the 16th Earl's inquisition post mortem, TNA C 142/136/12.

²⁴ Cokayne, George Edward (G.E. C.), *The Complete Peerage* (London: St Catherine Press, 1945), p. 250.

²⁵ Nelson, p. 25; Cambridge University Archives Matriculation Book I, p. 169, and Queen's College, *Journale*, Book 3, ff. 244, 245, 257v, 258v and 259v.

²⁶ Archer, Ian W., "Smith, Sir Thomas (1513–1577)", ODNB.

²⁷ BL Harleian 6992/21, ff. 41-2; Strype, John, *The Life of the Learned Sir Thomas Smith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1820), pp. 18-20; Dewar, Mary, *Sir Thomas Smith: A Tudor Intellectual in Office* (London: Athlone Press, 1964), p. 77; TNA SP 12/92/2, ff. 5-6v; Nelson, pp. 115, 145.

²⁸ Pearson, Daphne, *Edward de Vere (1550-1604): The Crisis and Consequences of Wardship* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), pp. 14, 222.

²⁹ For the 16th Earl's first surviving will, see BL MS Stowe Charter 633-4. For the 16th Earl's second surviving will, see TNA PROB 11/46, ff. 174-6.

³⁰ For the Queen's grant to Leicester of the core lands of the de Vere Earldom on 22 October 1563, see TNA WARD 8/13, Part 25.

³¹ Green, p. 61.

Leicester's practices in stripping lands of their assets and leaving them worthless,³² it seems likely that the de Vere lands were mismanaged during Leicester's tenure, and that the servants put in place by Robert Dudley served his interests, not Oxford's.

Given the anomalous nature of the Queen's grant to Robert Dudley, the question of whether Dudley had anything to do with the 16th Earl's death must be raised. Throughout his lifetime Leicester was repeatedly accused of being responsible for the deaths of persons whose continued existence hampered his ambitions and interests. When the question is raised as to who benefited from the 16th Earl's death, it is clear that the primary and only real beneficiary of the 16th Earl's death was Robert Dudley. The 16th Earl had been in good health and attending to his usual business affairs only a few weeks prior to his death,³³ and his sudden demise on 3 August 1562³⁴ cannot be explained as the result of a lingering illness.

On the death of his father on 3 August 1562, the twelve-year-old Oxford became the 17th Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain of England, inheriting an annual income of approximately £2250.³⁵ In his last will and testament, the 16th Earl appointed six executors, including his widow and his only son and heir; however administration of the will was granted on 29 May 1563 to only one of the executors, the 16th Earl's former servant, Robert Christmas.³⁶ Shortly after this appointment Robert Christmas entered Robert Dudley's service.³⁷ Margery Golding's surviving letters show that after the death of the 16th Earl she was not only prevented from administering her husband's estate or playing any role in her son Edward's life, but was persecuted by Robert Dudley's then servant, Robert Christmas.³⁸

WARDSHIP

Because the 16th Earl held land from the Crown by knight service, Oxford became a royal ward and was placed in the household of Sir William Cecil,³⁹ later Lord Burghley and Oxford's father-in-law, a leading member of Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council, and one of her chief advisors.

³² See *Leicester's Commonwealth* at <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/leicester.html>.

³³ Green, p. 58.

³⁴ TNA C 142/136/12; Nelson, p. 30.

³⁵ TNA C 142/136/12, WARD 8/13; Green, pp. 65-73; Paul, Christopher, "A Crisis of Scholarship: Misreading the Earl of Oxford", *The Oxfordian*, Vol. 9 (2006), pp. 91-112; Paul, Christopher, "Shorter Notices: Edward de Vere (1550-1604): The Crisis and Consequences of Wardship", *English Historical Review*, Vol. 120, No. 493 (September 2006), pp. 1173-4.

³⁶ Green, pp. 60-1; Nelson, p. 33.

³⁷ See TNA SP 15/13/5,

³⁸ See BL Lansdowne 6/34, ff. 96-7 and TNA SP 12/36/47, ff. 110-11.

³⁹ MacCaffrey, Wallace T., "Cecil, William, first Baron Burghley (1520/21–1598)", ODNB.

Oxford continued his education while a royal ward. Under Sir William Cecil's supervision, Oxford studied French,⁴⁰ Latin, writing, drawing, cosmography, dancing, riding and shooting. The program of studies drawn up for Oxford by Cecil indicates that at age 12 Oxford was sufficiently fluent in French and Latin to read the epistles and Gospels of the day in those languages.⁴¹ Among his tutors in 1563 was the antiquary Laurence Nowell, one of the founders of Anglo-Saxon studies and owner of the Beowulf manuscript.⁴² In June 1563 Nowell wrote to Cecil that 'I clearly see that my work for the Earl of Oxford cannot be much longer required',⁴³ indicating that Oxford's proficiency had reached a level at which Nowell felt Oxford needed no further instruction from him.

In 1563 the legitimacy of the marriage of Oxford's parents was challenged in the ecclesiastical courts by a petition to Archbishop Matthew Parker⁴⁴ filed by Oxford's half-sister, Katherine, then the wife of Edward (1532?-1575), 3rd Lord Windsor. On 28 June 1563 Oxford's maternal uncle, the translator Arthur Golding,⁴⁵ replied on behalf of Oxford and his sister, Mary, alleging that the Archbishop should stay the proceedings on the grounds that the petition contained grievous prejudice to the Queen, Oxford and Mary, and that a proceeding against a ward of the Queen could not be maintained in any other court without prior licence from the Court of Wards and Liveries.⁴⁶

At some time before October in the same year Oxford's mother, Margery, Countess of Oxford, remarried. Her second husband was the Queen's Gentleman Pensioner, Charles Tyrrell (d.1570).⁴⁷

Although his university degrees were honorary, Oxford's scholarly accomplishments are attested to by his contemporaries. In May 1564, Arthur Golding wrote of his 14-year-old nephew in the dedicatory epistle to *Th' Abridgement of the Histories of Trogus Pompeius*:

⁴⁰ For a letter in French written to Sir William Cecil when Oxford was 13 years of age, see BL Lansdowne 6/25, f. 79.

⁴¹ TNA SP 12/26/50.

⁴² Warnicke Retha M., "Nowell, Laurence (1530–c.1570)", ODNB.

⁴³ BL Lansdowne 6/54, f. 135. For a translation, see Ward, p. 20.

⁴⁴ Crankshaw, David J. and Alexandra Gillespie, "Parker, Matthew (1504–1575)", ODNB.

⁴⁵ Considine, John, "Golding, Arthur (1535/6–1606)", ODNB.

⁴⁶ TNA SP 12/29/8, ff. 11-12; Nelson, pp. 40-1.

⁴⁷ For the will of Charles Tyrrell, see TNA PROB 11/52, f. 105. It is stated on p. 250 of *The Complete Peerage* that the testator was the sixth son of Sir Thomas Tyrrell of East Horndon and Constance Blount, daughter of John Blount, 3rd Lord Mountjoy. However, Charles Tyrrell's will makes no mention of this branch of the Tyrrell family, and names only one brother, Philip, and three sisters, referred to by their married names of Church, Garnish and Felton. Since Sir Thomas Tyrrell of East Horndon had no son named Philip and no daughters who married into the Church, Garnish or Felton families, it is clear that Charles Tyrrell belonged to a different branch of the Tyrrell family.

It is not unknown to others and I have had experience thereof myself how earnest a desire your Honour hath naturally graffed in you to read, peruse and communicate with others as well as the histories of ancient times and things done long ago as also the present estate of things in our days, and that not without a certain pregnancy of wit and ripeness of understanding, the which do not only now rejoyce the hearts of all such as bear faithful affection to th' honourable house of your ancestors, but also stir up a great hope and expectation of such wisdom and experience in you in time to come as are meet and beseeming for so noble a race.⁴⁸

On 10 August 1564 Oxford was among 17 noblemen, knights and esquires in the Queen's entourage who were awarded the honorary degree of Master of Arts by the University of Cambridge.⁴⁹ On 6 September 1566 Oxford and others accompanying the Queen were granted honorary M.A. degrees by the University of Oxford.⁵⁰

In a letter dated 7 May 1565 to Sir William Cecil, Oxford's mother, Margery Golding, urged that the portion of her son's inheritance which was to come to him in his minority be entrusted to herself and other persons of substance so that, as his father the 16th Earl had intended, it would be available to Oxford when he reached the age of majority to meet the expenses of suing his livery and furnishing his household. The relevant clause in the 16th Earl's will of 28 July 1562 reads:

Item, I will, give and bequeath unto my son Edward, Lord Bulbeck, one thousand marks [=£666 13s 4d] of lawful money of England, to be paid unto him by my said executors as it may conveniently be levied of the manors, lands and tenements hereafter by me bequeathed to the use of this my last will⁵¹

There is no evidence that Margery Golding's offer was accepted.

On 1 February 1567 Oxford was admitted to Gray's Inn, where he studied law.⁵²

On 23 July 1567, the seventeen-year-old Oxford accidentally killed Thomas Brincknell, an under-cook in the Cecil household, while practising fencing with Edward Baynham in the backyard of Cecil House in the Strand. At the coroner's inquest held the following day, the 17 jury men found that Brincknell was drunk, and had caused his own death.⁵³

Sir William Cecil later recorded the event in a note in his retrospective diary:

⁴⁸ STC 24290.

⁴⁹ *Peerage*, p. 250; Nelson, pp. 42-3.

⁵⁰ *Peerage*, p. 250; Nelson, p. 45.

⁵¹ TNA PROB 11/46, ff. 174v-176.

⁵² Ward, p. 27; Foster, Joseph (1889), *Register of Gray's Inn: Admissions 1521-1669*, col. 36.

⁵³ TNA KB 9/619, Part 1, m. 13.

*Thomas Brinknell, an under-cook, was hurt by the Earl of Oxford at Cecil House, whereof he died, and by a verdict found felo de se with running upon a point of a fence sword of the said Earl.*⁵⁴

Cecil also later wrote that 'I did my best to have the jury find the death of a poor man whom he killed in my house to be found se defendendo'.⁵⁵

By an indenture of 1 July 1562⁵⁶ the 16th Earl had contracted with Henry Hastings, 3rd Earl of Huntingdon,⁵⁷ for a marriage for Oxford with one of Huntingdon's sisters. The indenture provided that when he reached the age of 18 in 1568 Oxford could choose to marry either Elizabeth (1556-1621) or Mary Hastings. However after the death of the 16th Earl the indenture lapsed. Elizabeth Hastings later married Edward Somerset, 4th Earl of Worcester,⁵⁸ while Mary Hastings died unmarried. In the same year Oxford's mother died on 2 December 1568.⁵⁹ She is said to have been buried at Earls Colne.⁶⁰

On 22 April 1569 Oxford received his first vote, cast by Charles, Lord Howard of Effingham,⁶¹ for membership in the Order of the Garter, a dignity he was never to attain, although he received many votes over the years.⁶²

Records of books purchased for Oxford in 1569 attest to his interest in literature, history and philosophy. Among them were editions of Chaucer, Plutarch in French, two books in Italian, and folio editions of Cicero and Plato, probably in Latin.⁶³ In the same year Thomas Underdowne⁶⁴ dedicated his translation of the *Æthiopian History*⁶⁵ of Heliodorus of Emesa to Oxford, praising his 'haughty courage', 'great skill' and 'sufficiency of learning'.⁶⁶

In November 1569 the Northern Rebellion broke out, and on 24 November 1569 Oxford, newly recovered from an illness, wrote to Cecil reminding him that in the past 'you have given me your good word to have me see the wars and services in strange and foreign

⁵⁴ Nelson, p. 47.

⁵⁵ Cecil Papers 9/92; Nelson, pp. 48, 151.

⁵⁶ Huntington Library HAP o/s Box 3(19).

⁵⁷ Cross, Claire, "Henry Hastings (1536?–1595), by unknown artist, 1588 Henry Hastings (1536?–1595), by unknown artist, 1588 Hastings, Henry, third Earl of Huntingdon (1536?–1595)", ODNB.

⁵⁸ Croft, Pauline, "Somerset, Edward, fourth Earl of Worcester (c.1550–1628)", ODNB.

⁵⁹ Morant, Philip, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex* (1748) ii, p. 328.

⁶⁰ Nelson, p. 49.

⁶¹ McDermott, James, "Howard, Charles, second Baron Howard of Effingham and first Earl of Nottingham (1536–1624)", ODNB.

⁶² Nelson, p. 50.

⁶³ Ward, pp. 31-3.

⁶⁴ Freeman, David, "Underdowne, Thomas (fl. 1566–1577)", ODNB.

⁶⁵ STC 13041.

⁶⁶ STC 13041; Ward, p. 31.

places [and] sith you could not then obtain me licence of the Queen's Majesty, now you will do me so much honour as that, by your purchase of my licence, I may be called to the service of my prince and country, as at this present troublous time a number are'.⁶⁷ The French ambassador to England, Bertrand de Salignac Fenelon, Seigneur de la Mothe (1523-1589), reported to King Charles IX of France (1550-1574) on 15 February and 21 March 1570 that Oxford was also seeking service in the French wars of religion at this time.⁶⁸ It was not until the following spring, however, that Oxford's request for military service was granted. On 30 March 1570 Cecil wrote to Sir William Damsell, Receiver-General of the Court of Wards, instructing him to deliver £40 to Oxford as the Queen was sending him 'into the north parts to remain with my Lord of Sussex,'⁶⁹ and to be employed there in her Majesty's service'.⁷⁰

On 7 March 1570, Oxford's stepfather, Charles Tyrrell, was buried at Kingston-upon-Thames.⁷¹ In his will he left bequests to Oxford ('unto the Earl of Oxford one great horse that his Lordship gave me') and to Oxford's sister, Mary.⁷² In the same year Oxford wrote 'favourable letters' for the mathematician and astrologer Dr. John Dee.⁷³ The letters have not survived, and are only known through Dee's reference to them in *A Compendious Rehearsal*, published in 1592.⁷⁴

About 1570 Edmund Elviden⁷⁵ dedicated to Oxford his *Most Excellent and Pleasant Metaphorical History of Pesistratus and Catanea*.⁷⁶

COMING OF AGE

In 12 April 1571 Oxford reached the age of majority and took his seat in the House of Lords.⁷⁷ In May he was one of the challengers in a tournament described in Stow's⁷⁸ *Annals*:

The first, second and third of May 1571 was holden at Westminster before the Queen's

⁶⁷ BL Lansdowne 11/53, ff. 121-2.

⁶⁸ *Correspondance Diplomatique de Bertrand de Salignac, de la Mothe Fenelon, Ambassadeur de France en Angleterre de 1568 a 1575*, 7 vols (Paris and London, 1838-40), Vol. I, pp. 197-8, 269-70.

⁶⁹ MacCaffrey, Wallace, T., "Radcliffe, Thomas, third Earl of Sussex (1526/7-1583)", ODNB.

⁷⁰ TNA SP 15/19/37, f. 88; Nelson, pp. 50-3.

⁷¹ Nelson, pp. 49, 450-1.

⁷² See TNA PROB 11/52, f. 105.

⁷³ Roberts, R. Julian, "Dee, John (1527-1609)", ODNB.

⁷⁴ Ward, pp. 49-50.

⁷⁵ Alsager Vian, rev. Elizabeth Goldring, "Elviden, Edmund (fl. 1569-1570)", ODNB.

⁷⁶ STC 7624; Nelson, p. 236.

⁷⁷ *Peerage*, p. 250.

⁷⁸ Beer, Barrett L., "Stow [Stowe], John (1524/5-1605)", ODNB.

Majesty a solemn joust at the tilt, tourney and barriers. The challengers were Edward, Earl of Oxford, Charles Howard, Sir Henry Lee,⁷⁹ and Christopher Hatton,⁸⁰ esquire, who all did very valiantly, but the chief honour was given to the Earl of Oxford.⁸¹

On 14 May 1571 George Delves, one of the defenders in the tournament, wrote to the Earl of Rutland⁸² that:

Lord Oxford has performed his challenge at tilt, turn [=tourney] and barriers far above the expectation of the world, and not much inferior to the other three challengers.⁸³

On 24 June Delves wrote again to Rutland, saying that 'There is no man of life and agility in every respect in the Court but the Earl of Oxford'.⁸⁴

Sir William Cecil had been raised to the peerage on 25 February 1571 as Lord Burghley, and by the summer of that year Oxford was betrothed to Burghley's 14-year-old daughter, Anne.⁸⁵ Lord St. John announced the news in a letter to the Earl of Rutland on 28 July 1571:

Th' Earl of Oxenford hath gotten him a wife – or at the least a wife hath caught him – that is Mistress Anne Cecil, whereunto the Queen hath given her consent, the which hath caused great weeping, wailing and sorrowful cheer of those that hoped to have had that golden day.⁸⁶

Lord Burghley himself wrote to Rutland on 15 August:

I think it doth seem strange to your Lordship to hear of a purposed determination in my Lord of Oxford to marry with my daughter, and so before his Lordship moved it to me I might have thought it if any other had moved it to me himself. For at his own motion I could not well imagine what to think, considering I never meant to seek it nor hoped of it. And yet reason moved me to think well of my Lord, and to acknowledge myself greatly beholden to him, as indeed I am.⁸⁷

The wedding took place on 16 December 1571 at Whitehall, and as Oxford's uncle, George Golding, noted, 'the same day, year and place the Lord Herbert, son and heir of the Earl of

⁷⁹ Fernie, Ewan, "Lee, Sir Henry (1533–1611)", ODNB.

⁸⁰ MacCaffrey, Wallace T., "Hatton, Sir Christopher (c.1540–1591)", ODNB.

⁸¹ Segar, William, *The Book of Honor and Armes* (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975) pp. 94-5; Nelson, pp. 69-70.

⁸² Jack, Sybil M., "Manners, Edward, third Earl of Rutland (1549–1587)", ODNB.

⁸³ HMC Rutland, i. 92.

⁸⁴ HMC Rutland, i. 94; Nelson, p. 70.

⁸⁵ May, Steven W., "Vere [née Cecil], Anne de, Countess of Oxford (1556–1588)", ODNB.

⁸⁶ HMC Rutland, i. p. 94; Nelson, p. 71.

⁸⁷ HMC Rutland, i. p. 95; Nelson, p. 72.

Worcester, did marry the Lady Hastings, sister to Henry, Earl of Huntingdon', one of the Hastings sisters whom Oxford's father, the 16th Earl, had chosen to be Oxford's bride.⁸⁸ Anne brought Oxford a dowry of £3000, and Oxford assigned Anne a jointure of £669 6s 8d.⁸⁹

Although he had reached the age of majority and had married, Oxford was still not in possession of his inheritance. After suing his livery,⁹⁰ Oxford was licenced to enter on his lands on 30 May 1572.⁹¹ However this privilege came at a price. The fines assessed against Oxford in the Court of Wards included £2000 for his wardship and marriage, £1257 18s 3/4d for his livery, and £48 19s 9-1/4d for mean rates, a total of £3306 17s 10d. To guarantee payment, Oxford entered into bonds to the Court of Wards totalling £11,000. Oxford's own bonds to the Court of Wards were in turn guaranteed by bonds to the Court of Wards in the amount of £5000 apiece entered into by two guarantors, John, Lord Darcy of Chiche, and Sir William Waldegrave.⁹² In return for these guarantees, on 6 July 1571 Oxford entered into two statutes of £6000 apiece to Darcy and Waldegrave.⁹³

Having sued his livery, Oxford was entitled to yearly revenues from his lands and the office of Lord Great Chamberlain of approximately £2250, although he was not entitled to the income from the estates comprising his mother's jointure until after her death in 1568 nor to the income from certain estates set aside to pay his father's debts until 1583.⁹⁴

In August 1571 Oxford attended on Paul de Foix (1528-1584), who had come to England to negotiate a marriage between the Queen and the Duke of Anjou, the future King Henry III of France.⁹⁵

On 20 October 1571 Arthur Golding dedicated a second book to Oxford, *The Psalms of David and others, with M. John Calvin's Commentaries*.⁹⁶

In early 1572 Oxford wrote a Latin epistle to Bartholomew Clerke's⁹⁷ *De Curiali*, a translation into Latin of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*,⁹⁸ and in the same year Thomas Twyne⁹⁹ dedicated his *Breviary of Britain*¹⁰⁰ to Oxford, noting that 'your

⁸⁸ ERO D/DRg 2/24; Nelson, pp. 74-5.

⁸⁹ Cecil Papers 159/113; Cecil Papers 146/7; Cecil Papers 160/99; Nelson, pp. 101, 106-7, 141.

⁹⁰ Hurstfield, Joel, *The Queen's Wards* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), pp. 169-176.

⁹¹ TNA C 66/1090, mm. 29-30.

⁹² TNA C 2/Eliz/T6/48.

⁹³ TNA PRO 30/34/14, No. 3; Green, p. 93.

⁹⁴ Green, pp. 65-73; Paul, pp. 95-104.

⁹⁵ Nelson, p. 73.

⁹⁶ STC 4395; Nelson, p. 236.

⁹⁷ White, P.O.G., "Clerke, Bartholomew (c.1537-1590)", ODNB.

⁹⁸ STC 4782; Nelson, p. 237.

⁹⁹ Moore, Norman, rev. Rachel E. Davies, "Twyne, Thomas (1543-1613)", ODNB.

¹⁰⁰ STC 16636.

Honour taketh singular delight' in 'books of geography, histories and other good learning.'¹⁰¹

A letter written by the French ambassador, Fenelon, to King Henri III of France on 28 May 1572 indicates that Oxford and Leicester were to meet a delegation headed by François (1530-1579), Duc de Montmorency, arriving in England to ratify the Treaty of Blois.¹⁰²

On 2 June 1572 one of Oxford's closest kinsmen, his first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk¹⁰³ was executed on Tower Hill. Oxford had petitioned both the Queen and Lord Burghley on Norfolk's behalf, and it was also reported that he had provided a ship to help Norfolk escape to Spain.¹⁰⁴

On 18 August Oxford ('a lusty gentleman with a lusty band of gentlemen') led the assault in a mock battle staged at Warwick Castle for the Queen's entertainment during her progress there.¹⁰⁵

In 1573 Oxford wrote a commendatory letter and verses for his friend Thomas Bedingfield's¹⁰⁶ *Cardanus' Comfort*¹⁰⁷, a translation from the Latin of *De Consolatione Libri Tres* by the Italian mathematician and physician Girolamo Cardano.¹⁰⁸

On 11 May 1573 Gilbert Talbot¹⁰⁹ wrote to his father, George Talbot, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury,¹¹⁰ of the Queen's favour towards Oxford:

*My Lord of Oxford is lately grown into great credit, for the Queen's Majesty delighteth more in his personage and his dancing and valiantness than any other. I think Sussex doth back him all that he can; if it were not for his fickle head, he would pass any of them shortly. My Lady Burghley unwisely has declared herself, as it were, jealous, which is come to the Queen's ear, whereat she has been not a little offended with her, but now she is reconciled again.*¹¹¹

Allusive language in a letter from Sir Christopher Hatton to the Queen in June 1573

¹⁰¹ Nelson, p. 237.

¹⁰² *Correspondance*, iv, pp. 463-7; Nelson, pp. 83-4.

¹⁰³ Graves, Michael A.R., "Howard, Thomas, fourth Duke of Norfolk (1538–1572)", ODNB.

¹⁰⁴ TNA SP 12/95/92, f. 202; TNA SP 15/21/23, ff. 42-3; Nelson, pp. 53-4, 80-2, 84.

¹⁰⁵ Ward, pp. 70-1; Nelson, pp. 84-6.

¹⁰⁶ Kelly, L.G., "Bedingfield, Thomas (early 1540s?–1613)", ODNB.

¹⁰⁷ STC 4607.

¹⁰⁸ Nelson, p. 67.

¹⁰⁹ Hicks, Michael, "Talbot, Gilbert, seventh Earl of Shrewsbury (1552–1616)", ODNB.

¹¹⁰ Goldring, Elizabeth, "Talbot, George, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury (c.1522–1590)", ODNB.

¹¹¹ Talbot Papers, Vol. F, f. 79; Nelson, p. 95.

suggests rivalry between Hatton and Oxford for the Queen's favour ('reserve it to the sheep; he hath no tooth to bite where the boar's tush may both raze and tear').¹¹²

A decade later, in 1584, Mary, Queen of Scots,¹¹³ in a letter to Queen Elizabeth filled with allegations of sexual misconduct against the Queen gleaned from conversations with Bess of Hardwick,¹¹⁴ wrote that 'even the Earl of Oxford dared not reconcile himself with his wife for fear of losing the favour which he hoped to receive by making love to you'.¹¹⁵ Nicolas suggests that Mary's accusation refers to 'the Queen's flirtation with Oxford in 1573'.¹¹⁶

In the summer of 1573 Oxford made plans to travel abroad. In a document prepared in anticipation of his foreign travel, he estimated his current debts to be £6000. For reasons which are unclear the trip did not transpire.¹¹⁷

In the same year Oxford sold his mansion at London Stone to Sir Ambrose Nicholas (d.1578).¹¹⁸

In 1574 Oxford's surgeon, George Baker,¹¹⁹ dedicated to him a work containing two translations, *The Composition or Making of . . . Oleum Magistrale, and The Third Book of Galen*.¹²⁰

In a letter to his father on 28 June 1574 Gilbert Talbot reported discord between Oxford and the Queen:

*The young Earl of Oxford, of that ancient and Very family of the Veres, had a cause or suit that now came before the Queen, which she did not answer so favourably as was expected, checking him, it seems for his unthriftiness. And hereupon his behaviour before her gave some offence.*¹²¹

¹¹² Nicolas, Harris, *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Sir Christopher Hatton* (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), pp. 28-9.

¹¹³ Goodare, Julian, "Mary [Mary Stewart] (1542–1587), Queen of Scots", ODNB.

¹¹⁴ Goldring, Elizabeth, "Talbot [née Hardwick], Elizabeth [Bess; called Bess of Hardwick], Countess of Shrewsbury (1527?–1608)", ODNB.

¹¹⁵ Mesme le Comte d'Oxford nosoit ce rappointer auveques sa famme de peur de perdre la faveur qu'il eseroit recepvoir par vous fayre l'amour. See Murdin, William, *A Collection of State Papers Relating to Affairs in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth From the Year 1571 to 1596* (London: William Bowyer, 1758), pp. 558-60.

¹¹⁶ Nicholas, pp. 15-16.

¹¹⁷ Cecil Papers 159/110; Cecil Papers 159/113; Nelson, pp. 99-104.

¹¹⁸ For the will of Sir Ambrose Nicholas mentioning 'my great messuage or house called Oxford House', see TNA PROB 11/60, ff. 165-7.

¹¹⁹ Ungerer, Gustav, "Baker, George (1540–1612)", ODNB.

¹²⁰ STC 1209; Nelson, p. 237.

¹²¹ Nichols, I, pp. 388-9, from 'Unpublished Talbot Papers'; Nelson, p. 108.

Three days later, on 1 July 1574, Oxford left England without licence, reportedly travelling to Calais in the company of Lord Edward Seymour (1548-1574), and from thence to Flanders, and 'carrying a great sum of money with him'. The Queen recalled him, and Oxford was back in England by 28 July. Although the Queen's displeasure was somewhat mollified by his return, it was reported that she 'doth not mean to wrap up his contempt without using some kind of reprehension, that he may not think but that his fault is not only to be reprov'd, but were also to be corrected'. By 21 August Oxford had won back the Queen's favour because of his loyalty to her when approached by her exiled rebel subjects in Flanders, and had secured from her a promise to grant him licence to travel.¹²²

FOREIGN TRAVEL

The Queen issued Oxford's licence to travel on 24 January 1575,¹²³ and provided him with letters of introduction to foreign monarchs.¹²⁴ Prior to his departure Oxford entered into two indentures. By the first indenture, dated 20 January 1575, he sold his manors in Cornwall, Staffordshire and Wiltshire to three trustees for £6000.¹²⁵ By the second indenture, dated 30 January, he entailed the lands of the earldom on his first cousin, Hugh Vere, giving as his reason that 'he hath not any issue of his body as yet born', and if he should die abroad without heirs the lands of the earldom would therefore descend to his sister, Mary, 'being next of his kin of the whole blood'. The indenture also provided for payment of debts in an attached schedule amounting to £9096 10s 8/12d, of which sum £3457 was owed to the Queen in the Court of Wards.¹²⁶

Oxford left England in the first week of February, and on 6 March was presented by Dr. Valentine Dale¹²⁷ to the French King and Queen, who 'used him honourably'.¹²⁸ In mid-March he travelled to Strasbourg, where he met with the scholar Sturmius,¹²⁹ and from thence he made his way to Venice via Milan.¹³⁰ On 3 January 1576 Oxford wrote to Lord Burghley from Siena mentioning that complaints had reached him concerning the

¹²² ERO D/DRg 2/24; *Correspondance*, vi, p. 177; BL MS Harley 6991/42, ff. 84-5; Sharp, Cuthbert, ed., *Memorials of the Rebellion of 1569* (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1840), p. 300, available online; Lambeth Palace MS 697, ff. 47-8; BL MS Cotton Titus B.2, f. 295; CSP Foreign, 1572-74, No. 1496; CSPD Addenda 1566-79, p. 469; CSP Rome, 1572-78, No. 336; BL MS Harley 6991/49, ff. 98-99; BL MS Harley 69991/50, ff. 100-1; TNA SP 12/45, p. 59; *Correspondance*, vi, p. 204; TNA SP 12/98/2, ff. 5-6v; CP 140/15(2); *Correspondance*, vi, p. 209; Nelson, pp. 108-116.

¹²³ TNA E 157/1, f. 1.

¹²⁴ Nelson, p. 119.

¹²⁵ Staffordshire Record Office D615/D45(1); Pearson, p. 44.

¹²⁶ ERO D/DRg 2/25; Pearson, pp. 43-4; Nelson, p. 120.

¹²⁷ Hicks, Michael, "Dale, Valentine (c.1520-1589)", ODNB.

¹²⁸ CSP Foreign, 1575-77, Nos. 35, 43; Nelson, p. 121.

¹²⁹ Ward, pp. 104-5; Nelson, pp. 125, 164, 176.

¹³⁰ Cecil Papers 160/74; TNA SP 12/105/50; Nelson, pp. 128, 130.

importunity of his creditors, including the Queen and his sister, and directing that more of his land be sold to pay his debts.¹³¹ On 2 March 1576 Oxford's licence to travel was renewed for a further year, but for unknown reasons Oxford left Venice on 5 March, intending to return home by way of Lyons and Paris.¹³² Oxford's continental tour had cost him a substantial sum according to a note indicating that Benedict Spinola¹³³ had caused £3761 4s 5d to be paid to Oxford in France and Venice.¹³⁴

On Oxford's return across the Channel in April, his ship was hijacked by pirates from Flushing, who according to the French ambassador, Michel de Castelnau (c.1520-1592), Sieur de Mauvissiere, took his possessions, stripped him to his shirt, and might have murdered him had not one of them recognized him.¹³⁵

During Oxford's absence from England, his wife, Anne, had given birth to a daughter, Elizabeth, on 2 July 1575.¹³⁶ The news of Anne's pregnancy had reached Oxford on 17 March 1575 while he was in Paris, at which time he wrote to Lord Burghley expressing his pleasure that what Lord Burghley had mentioned doubtfully in an earlier letter had turned out to be true:

*My Lord, your letters have made me a glad man, for these last have put me in assurance of that good fortune which your former mentioned doubtfully. I thank God therefore with your Lordship that it hath pleased him to make me a father where your Lordship is a grandfather. And if it be a boy I shall likewise be the partaker with you in a greater contentation. But thereby to take an occasion to return, I am far off from that opinion, for now it hath pleased God to give me a son of mine own (as I hope it is), methinks I have the better occasion to travel sith whatsoever becometh of me I leave behind me one to supply my duty and service either to my prince or else my country.*¹³⁷

Although Elizabeth was born at the beginning of July, for unexplained reasons Oxford did not learn of the birth until 24 September.¹³⁸ When he returned to England, he refused to live with his wife. Although he never named the cause openly, Oxford appears to have been told that Anne's daughter, Elizabeth, was not his child.¹³⁹ The most Oxford would allow himself to say on the subject to Lord Burghley was that:

¹³¹ Cecil Papers 8/12; Nelson, pp. 132-3.

¹³² TNA E 157/1, f. 1; Nelson, p. 134.

¹³³ Bennell, John, "Spinola, Benedict (1519/20–1580)", ODNB.

¹³⁴ Cecil Papers 160/91; Cecil Papers 146/12; Nelson, p. 134.

¹³⁵ See Nathaniel Baxter's *Ourania*, STC 1598; *Acts of the Privy Council*, ed. John Roche Dasent, 32 vols (1890-1964), Vol ix, p. 102; *Calendar of State Papers Foreign (1575-77)*, Nos. 735, 737, 799; Lettenhove, M.C. Baron Kervyn de, ed., (1882-1900), *Relations Politiques des Pays-Bas et de l'Angleterre sous le Regne de Philippe II*, 11 vols, Vol. viii, pp. 339-40; Nelson, pp. 135-7.

¹³⁶ Cecil Papers 140/14v; CP 334/2; Nelson, p. 127.

¹³⁷ Cecil Papers, 8/24; Nelson, p. 123.

¹³⁸ Cecil Papers 160/74; Nelson, p. 129.

¹³⁹ Nelson, p. 142.

*Until I can better satisfy or advertise myself of some mislikes I am not determined as touching my wife to accompany her. What they are, because some are not to be spoken of or written upon as imperfections, I will not deal withal; some that otherways discontent me I will not blaze or publish until it please me. And last of all, I mean not to weary myself any more with such troubles and molestations as I have endured.*¹⁴⁰

Numerous memoranda compiled by Lord Burghley at the time reveal a flood of complaints by Oxford against his wife's family, but the crux of the matter seems to have been his unspoken conviction that Anne's daughter, Elizabeth, was not his child.¹⁴¹ Oxford took rooms at Charing Cross. He allowed Anne to attend the Queen at court, but only when he himself was not present, and stipulated that Lord Burghley must make no further appeals to him on Anne's behalf.¹⁴²

COURTIER

In 1576 eight poems by Oxford were published in *The Paradise of Dainty Devises*, a collection in which all the poems were meant to be sung.¹⁴³ Oxford's eight poems in the *Paradise* 'create a dramatic break with everything known to have been written at the Elizabethan court up to that time.'¹⁴⁴

On 16 February 1577 Thomas Screven reported to the Earl of Rutland a rumour that Oxford's sister Mary would marry Lord Gerald Fitzgerald (1559–1580). By 2 July, however, the Duchess of Suffolk¹⁴⁵ reported in a letter to Lord Burghley that 'my wise son has gone very far with my Lady Mary Vere, I fear too far to turn'.¹⁴⁶ Although both the Duchess and her husband Richard Bertie¹⁴⁷ initially opposed the marriage,¹⁴⁸ and both Oxford and the Queen withheld their consent for a time, Mary was married to Peregrine

¹⁴⁰ Cecil Papers 9/1; Nelson, pp. 145-6.

¹⁴¹ Nelson, pp. 141-154.

¹⁴² Cecil Papers 9/15; Nelson, p. 154.

¹⁴³ May, Stephen W., ed., "The Poems of Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford and of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex", *Studies in Philology*, Vol. LXXVII (Early Winter 1980), LXXVII, Number 5, pp. 68-73; May, Steven W., *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets; The Poems and Their Contexts* (Columbia, Missouri: The University of Missouri Press, 1991), p. 53; May, Steven W., "Early Courtier Verse: Oxford, Dyer and Gascoigne" in Cheney, Patrick, ed., *Early Modern English Poetry: A Critical Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 66.

¹⁴⁴ May, 1991, p. 53.

¹⁴⁵ Wabuda, Susan, "Bertie [née Willoughby; other married name Brandon], Katherine, duchess of Suffolk (1519–1580)", ODNB.

¹⁴⁶ Cecil Papers 202/136.

¹⁴⁷ Wabuda, Susan, "Bertie, Richard (1517–1582)", ODNB.

¹⁴⁸ 8ANC 1/10; Nelson, pp. 172-3, 176.

Bertie,¹⁴⁹ later Lord Willoughby d'Eresby, sometime after Christmas 1577 and before 12 March 1578.¹⁵⁰

Although details are unclear, there is evidence that in 1577 Oxford was again attempting to see service in the French wars of religion on the side of King Henri III.¹⁵¹

In 1577 John Brooke¹⁵² dedicated to Oxford a translation entitled *The Staff of Christian Faith*,¹⁵³ 'the only work by the popular writer Guy de Brès to be printed in English'.

I, understanding right well that your Honour hath continually, even from your tender years, bestowed your time and travail towards the attaining of the same, as also the university of Cambridge hath acknowledged in granting and giving unto you such commendation and praise thereof as verily by right was due unto your excellent virtue and rare learning, wherein verily Cambridge, the mother of learning and learned men, hath openly confessed, and in this her confessing made known unto all men that your Honour, being learned and able to judge as a safe harbour and defence of learning, and therefore one most fit to whose honourable patronage I might safely commit this my poor and simple labours.

In July of the same year John Stanhope¹⁵⁴ wrote to Lord Burghley indicating that as a result of Oxford's suit to the Queen for the grant of Castle Rising, a property which had been forfeited to the Crown on Norfolk's attainder in 1572, 'some unkindness and strangeness ensueth betwixt my Lord of Surrey, my Lord Harry, and his Lordship'.¹⁵⁵

In 1577 Oxford invested £25 in the second of Martin Frobisher's¹⁵⁶ expeditions in search of the Northwest Passage.¹⁵⁷

On 15 December 1577 the Duchess of Suffolk wrote to Lord Burghley describing a plan she and Oxford's sister Mary had devised so that Oxford could see his daughter Elizabeth.¹⁵⁸ Whether the scheme came to fruition is unknown.

On 15 January 1578, the Queen's grant of Castle Rising to Oxford was finalized.¹⁵⁹ As

¹⁴⁹ Trim, D.J.B., "Bertie, Peregrine, thirteenth Baron Willoughby of Willoughby, Beck, and Eresby (1555–1601)", ODNB. For the will of Peregrine Bertie, see TNA PROB 11/98, ff. 144-7.

¹⁵⁰ HMC Rutland, I, p. 115; Nelson, p. 179.

¹⁵¹ Cecil Papers 160/129; Nelson, p. 169.

¹⁵² Kennedy, Kathleen E., "Brooke, John (d. 1582)", ODNB.

¹⁵³ STC 12476.

¹⁵⁴ Hicks, Michael, "Stanhope, John, first Baron Stanhope (c.1540–1621)", ODNB.

¹⁵⁵ Cecil Papers 9/70; Nelson, p. 173.

¹⁵⁶ McDermott, James, "Frobisher, Sir Martin (1535?–1594)", ODNB.

¹⁵⁷ Nelson, p. 187.

¹⁵⁸ BL MS Lansdowne 25/27, ff. 56-8; Ward, pp. 154-6; Nelson, pp. 176-7.

¹⁵⁹ TNA C 66/1165, mm. 34-7; NRO HOW 144; Nelson, pp. 178-9.

noted earlier, Oxford had sold his inherited lands in Cornwall, Staffordshire and Wiltshire prior to his continental tour. On his return to England in 1576 he sold his manors in Devonshire. Sales continued apace in the following two years, and by the end of 1578 he had sold at least 7 more manors, including his recent grant of Castle Rising.¹⁶⁰

In 1578 Oxford sank £3000 into the third Frobisher expedition. It appears he financed this investment by selling Castle Rising, which the Queen had granted him six months earlier.¹⁶¹ Oxford also sold the manor of Gaywood, parcel of the Castle Rising grant, and the manor of Easton Maudit at this time, probably for the same purpose.¹⁶² The 'gold' ore brought back by Frobisher turned out to be worthless, and Oxford lost his entire investment.¹⁶³

In the summer of 1578 Oxford attended the Queen on her progress through East Anglia.¹⁶⁴ The royal party stayed at Lord Henry Howard's residence at Audley End from 26-31 July,¹⁶⁵ where Gabriel Harvey¹⁶⁶ dedicated his *Gratulationes Valdinenses*¹⁶⁷ to the Queen. The volume consists of four 'books', the first addressed to the Queen, the second to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the third to Lord Burghley, and the fourth to Oxford, Sir Christopher Hatton, and Philip Sidney.¹⁶⁸ Harvey's encomium to Oxford is double-edged, praising his English and Latin verse and prose while encouraging him to 'put away your feeble pen, your bloodless books, your impractical writings'.¹⁶⁹ A contretemps occurred during the progress in mid-August when the Queen twice requested Oxford to dance before the French ambassadors Bacqueville and Quissy, who were in England to negotiate a marriage between the Queen and the Duke of Alencon.¹⁷⁰ Oxford refused on the ground that he 'would not give pleasure to Frenchmen'.¹⁷¹

On 23 December 1578 Geoffrey Gates¹⁷² dedicated to Oxford his *Defense of Military Profession*.¹⁷³

In a letter of 5 March 1579 Gilbert Talbot wrote to his father of a 'show' presented by

¹⁶⁰ Pearson, p. 229.

¹⁶¹ See TNA C 66/1165, mm. 34-7; Norfolk Record Office HOW 146 342 x 6; and TNA C 54/1043, Part 20.

¹⁶² See TNA C 54/1045, Part 22 and TNA C 54/1043, Part 20.

¹⁶³ TNA SP 12/149/42(15), f. 108v; Nelson, pp. 186-8.

¹⁶⁴ Nelson, pp. 180.

¹⁶⁵ Jameson, Thomas Hugh, *The Gratulariones Valdinensis of Gabriel Harvey*, unpublished Yale University dissertation (1938).

¹⁶⁶ Scott-Warren, Jason, "Harvey, Gabriel (1552/3–1631)", ODNB.

¹⁶⁷ STC 12901.

¹⁶⁸ Woodhuysen, H.R., "Sidney, Sir Philip (1554–1586)", ODNB.

¹⁶⁹ Nelson, pp. 181.

¹⁷⁰ Francois (1555-1584), Duke of Alencon.

¹⁷¹ CSP Spanish, 1568-79, p. 607; Nelson, p. 181.

¹⁷² Trim, D.J.B., "Gates, Geoffrey (fl. 1566–1580)", ODNB.

¹⁷³ STC 11683.

Oxford and his kinsmen before the Queen:

*It is but vain to trouble your Lordship with such shows as was showed before her Majesty this Shrovetide at night. The chiefest was a device presented by the persons of th' Earl of Oxford, th' Earl of Surrey, the Lords Thomas Howard & Windsor. The device was prettier than it had hap to be performed, but the best of it (& I think the best liked) was two rich jewels which was presented to her Majesty by the 2 Earls.*¹⁷⁴

On 8 April the Spanish ambassador, Bernardino de Mendoza (c.1540-1604), wrote to King Philip II of Spain that it had been proposed that if Alencon were to travel to England in connection with negotiations for his marriage to the Queen, Oxford, Surrey and Windsor should be hostages for his safe return.¹⁷⁵ Alencon himself did not arrive in England until the end of August, but his ambassadors were in England from the 15th to the 27th of that month. Oxford was sympathetic to the proposed marriage, but Leicester and his nephew Philip Sidney were adamantly opposed to it. This difference of opinion may have triggered the well known quarrel between Oxford and Sidney on the tennis court at Whitehall. The most detailed version of the quarrel survives in the account of Sidney's friend, Fulke Greville.¹⁷⁶ It is not entirely clear from Greville's account who was playing on the court when the quarrel erupted. What is clear is that Oxford 'scornfully call[ed] Sir Philip by the name of puppy', and that Sidney responded by giving Oxford the lie, averring that 'all the world knows puppies are gotten by dogs, and children by men'. All this was overheard by the French ambassadors, who 'had that day audience in those private galleries whose windows looked into the tennis court'. What happened next is not entirely clear from the conflicting accounts, but it appears that whether it was Sidney who challenged Oxford to a duel or the other way around, Oxford failed to take the duel any further, and the Queen personally took Sidney to task for not recognizing the difference between his status and Oxford's. Sir Christopher Hatton and Sidney's friend Hubert Languet (1518-1581) also tried to dissuade Sidney from pursuing the matter, and it was eventually dropped.¹⁷⁷

Oxford was also in confrontation with Leicester about this time. A memorandum from 1579 details 'Articles whereof Oxford would have accused Leicester', and Oxford was confined to his chamber at Greenwich for a time 'about the libelling between him and my Lord of Leicester'.¹⁷⁸

In 1579 Anthony Munday¹⁷⁹ dedicated to Oxford his *Mirror of Mutability*.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ Talbot Papers, Vol. F, f. 295; Nelson, p. 190.

¹⁷⁵ CSP Spanish, 1568-79, p. 662; Nelson, p. 190.

¹⁷⁶ Gouws, John, "Greville, Fulke, first Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court (1554-1628)", ODNB.

¹⁷⁷ Nelson, pp. 195-200.

¹⁷⁸ TNA SP 12/151/50, f. 110; Nelson, pp. 200-1, 203.

¹⁷⁹ Bergeron, David M., "Munday, Anthony (bap. 1560, d. 1633)", ODNB.

¹⁸⁰ STC 18276; Nelson, pp. 237-8.

In the summer of 1580 Gabriel Harvey, apparently motivated by a desire to ingratiate himself with Leicester,¹⁸¹ satirized Oxford in verses entitled “Speculum Tuscanismi” in *Three Proper and Witty Familiar Letters*.¹⁸² Over a decade later, Harvey's satire was pilloried in Thomas Nashe's¹⁸³ *Strange News* in 1592:

*Needs he must cast up certain crude humours of English hexameter verses that lay upon his stomach; a nobleman stood in his way as he was vomiting, and from top to toe he all-to-bewrayed him with Tuscanism.*¹⁸⁴

On 27 January 1580 Arthur Throckmorton (c.1557-1626) wrote in his diary that Oxford had written a challenge to Sidney, and that on the 29th Oxford had been commanded to keep his chamber, not being released until 11 February. The cause of the challenge and of Oxford's confinement to quarters by the Queen is unknown.¹⁸⁵

By April 1580, Oxford had taken over the Earl of Warwick's¹⁸⁶ playing company:

*The Duttons and their fellow-players forsaking the Earl of Warwick, their master, became followers of the Earl of Oxford and wrote themselves his comedian, which certain gentlemen altered and made chameleons.*¹⁸⁷

The company may have included the famous comedian, Richard Tarleton.¹⁸⁸ At this time Oxford also patronized boy actors, as indicated by an entry for 1580-1 recording payment for a performance in Bristol of 'my Lord of Oxford's players', consisting of '1 man and 9 boys'.¹⁸⁹ John Lyly,¹⁹⁰ the playwright and author of *Euphues*, was in Oxford's service from at least as early as 1580.¹⁹¹

On 9 June 1580 Lord Burghley wrote to John Hatcher, Vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge, requesting that Oxford's Men be allowed to 'repair to that university and there to make show of such plays and interludes as have been heretofore played by them publicly, as well before the Queen's Majesty as in the city of London'. Hatcher denied the request, citing various reasons.¹⁹²

¹⁸¹ Nelson, p. 228.

¹⁸² Nelson, pp. 225-6.

¹⁸³ Nicholl, Charles, “Nashe [Nash], Thomas (bap. 1567, d. c.1601)”, ODNB.

¹⁸⁴ Nelson, pp. 225-8.

¹⁸⁵ Rowse, A.L., *Raleigh and the Throckmortons* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1962), pp. 77-8; Nelson, p. 230.

¹⁸⁶ Adams, Simon, “Dudley, Ambrose, earl of Warwick (c.1530–1590)”, ODNB.

¹⁸⁷ Nelson, p. 239.

¹⁸⁸ Thomson, Peter, “Tarlton, Richard (d. 1588)”, ODNB; Nelson, p. 242.

¹⁸⁹ Nelson, p. 247.

¹⁹⁰ Hunter, G.K., “Lyly, John (1554–1606)”, ODNB.

¹⁹¹ Nelson, p. 247.

¹⁹² TNA SP 12/139/26, f. 76; Nelson, pp. 244-5.

On 15 June 1580 Oxford purchased a tenement and seven acres of land near Aldgate in London from the Italian merchant Benedict Spinola¹⁹³ for £2500. The property was known as the Great Garden of Christchurch in the parish of St Botolphs, London, and had formerly belonged to Magdalene College, Cambridge.¹⁹⁴

Sometime in 1580 Oxford also purchased a London residence, a mansion in Bishopsgate known as Fisher's Folly. According to Lord Henry Howard, writing to the Queen in early January 1581, Oxford had paid a large sum for the property and for renovations to it:

*Walking on the terrace at Howard House, I began to deal with him about the trimming up of Fisher's Folly, and no great portion of his Lordship's wisdom, considering the price he told me that he was in hand with it.*¹⁹⁵

In 1580 three works were dedicated to Oxford, John Hester's¹⁹⁶ *A Short Discourse . . . of Leonardo Fioravanti, Bolognese, upon Surgery*,¹⁹⁷ John Lyly's *Euphues and his England*,¹⁹⁸ and Anthony Munday's *Zelauto*.¹⁹⁹ In the dedication to *Zelauto*, Munday also mentioned having delivered the now lost *Galien of France* to Oxford for his 'courteous and gentle perusing'. Both Lyly and Munday were in Oxford's service at the time, Lyly dedicating his book to 'my very good Lord and master, Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxenford', and Munday identifying himself on the title page as 'Servant to the Right Honourable the Earl of Oxenford'.²⁰⁰ In addition, in his *A Light Bundle of Lively Discourses Called Churchyard's Charge*,²⁰¹ and *A Pleasant Labyrinth Called Churchyard's Chance*,²⁰² Thomas Churchyard²⁰³ promised to dedicate future works to Oxford.²⁰⁴

In a letter dated 11 January 1581 to King Henri III, the French ambassador, Mauvissiere, relayed a report that after his return from Italy in 1576 Oxford had made profession of the Catholic religion with some of his relatives and best friends, and that just recently, in late December 1580, Oxford had denounced three of his Catholic friends, Lord Henry Howard,²⁰⁵ Charles Arundel (d.1587), and Francis Southwell (d.1581), to the Queen.²⁰⁶

¹⁹³ Bennell, John, "Spinola, Benedict (1519/20–1580)", ODNB.

¹⁹⁴ TNA C 54/1080; TNA REQ 2/178/60; Pearson, pp. 46-51; Jones, N.G., "Kelke, Roger (1523/4–1576)", ODNB.

¹⁹⁵ BL Cotton Titus C.6, ff. 7-8; Nelson, pp. 230-1.

¹⁹⁶ Bennell, John, "Hester, John (d. 1592)", ODNB.

¹⁹⁷ STC 10881.

¹⁹⁸ STC 17068.

¹⁹⁹ STC 18283.

²⁰⁰ Bergeron, David M., "Munday, Anthony (bap. 1560, d. 1633)", ODNB; Nelson, pp. 238, 247.

²⁰¹ STC 5240.

²⁰² STC 5250.

²⁰³ Lyne, Raphael, "Churchyard, Thomas (1523?–1604)", ODNB.

²⁰⁴ Nelson, p. 238.

²⁰⁵ Croft, Pauline, "Howard, Henry, Earl of Northampton (1540–1614)", ODNB.

Both Howard and Arundel later received pensions from Philip II, and furnished Spain with intelligence against England, suggesting that Oxford's allegations against them in 1581 were not without merit.²⁰⁷

According to Bossy, Leicester had 'dislodged Oxford from the pro-French group',²⁰⁸ that is, the group at court which favoured Queen Elizabeth's marriage to the Duke of Alencon, and had 'persuaded him to make a public confession to the Queen in the ambassador's presence, accusing his former friends of becoming reconciled to Rome and conspiring against the state'. Peck concurs, stating that Leicester was 'intent upon rendering Sussex's allies politically useless'.²⁰⁹ The Spanish ambassador, Mendoza, writing on 9 January 1581 to King Philip II of Spain, was also of the view that Leicester was involved, and that the incident revolved around his opposition to the Queen's projected marriage to Alencon.

*A few days ago the Queen took into custody Milord Harry Howard, brother of the Duke of Norfolk, and two other gentlemen, Charles Arundel and Southwell, who were among the most esteemed in her court, and another gentleman having accused them, their great friend, of having received the Holy Sacrament and heard Mass [+and of] reconciling themselves to the Roman Catholic Church four years [+ago]. The three are suspected of treating with familiarity with the ambassador of France and to desire to effect the marriage with Alencon, [+along] with the ladies of the court who were of like affection, and favourites of the Queen. What adds to the mystery of the matter is that they were carried to the Tower, Leicester's having spread the rumour that they were plotting a massacre of the Protestants, beginning with the Queen. His object in this is to inflame the people against them and against the French, as well as against the Earl of Sussex who was their close friend.*²¹⁰

The Privy Council ordered the arrest of Howard and Arundel,²¹¹ but before they were arrested, Oxford met secretly with Arundel on the night of 25 December 1580 to enlist Arundel's support for Oxford's allegations against Howard and Southwell.²¹² According to his own later accounts of their meeting, Arundel refused Oxford's offer, and he and Howard sought asylum with the Spanish ambassador, Mendoza, who a year later, on 25 December 1581, wrote to King Philip of Spain that:

Howard and Arundel] had been in close communication with the French ambassador, but

²⁰⁶ Nelson, p. 249.

²⁰⁷ Archivo General de Simancas, Leg. 835, ff. 121-4; Paris Archives K.1447.130; Paris Archives K.1448.49.

²⁰⁸ Bossy, J.A., "English Catholics and the French Marriage 1577-1581", *Recusant History*, Vol. 5, pp. 2-16 at p. 8; Nelson, p. 250.

²⁰⁹ Peck, D.C., ed., *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), pp. 16, 19-20; Nelson, p. 250.

²¹⁰ Archivo General de Simancas, Leg. 835, f. 6; Nelson, p. 251.

²¹¹ Nelson, p. 252.

²¹² TNA SP 15/27A/46, ff. 81-2; Nelson, p. 252.

*they did not dare to trust him at this juncture, and feared that they would be taken to the Tower and their lives be sacrificed. They therefore came to me in their peril, and asked me to hide them and save their lives. As they were Catholics, I detained them without anyone in the house knowing of it excepting one servant until their friend the Councillor informed them that they would only be placed under arrest in a gentleman's house, whereupon they immediately showed themselves in public.*²¹³

After giving themselves up, Howard and Arundel were interrogated, and released from the Tower to the custody of members of the Privy Council.²¹⁴ During the first weeks after their arrest they issued a stream of allegations against Oxford in pursuit of a threefold strategy by which they would admit to minor crimes, discredit Oxford as a witness against them, and demonstrate that Oxford posed a danger to the Crown.²¹⁵ The charges against Oxford were not taken seriously at the time, although the libels found their way into some historical accounts, and Oxford's reputation was thereafter tarnished.²¹⁶ Charles Arundel later fled England in December 1583 for fear of arrest,²¹⁷ was declared guilty of high treason in 1585,²¹⁸ and died in exile in Paris in 1587. Lord Henry Howard was again arrested in 1583 and 1585,²¹⁹ but remained in England throughout Queen Elizabeth's reign, having made his peace with Leicester, and was created Earl of Northampton by her successor, King James I.

While Howard and Arundel were under house arrest in January, Oxford was at liberty, and won the prize at a tournament at Westminster on 22 January 1581.²²⁰ His page's speech at the tournament, describing Oxford's appearance as the Knight of the Tree of the Sun,²²¹ was published in 1592 in a pamphlet entitled *Plato, Axiochus*.²²²

Oxford's triumph was short-lived. On 23 March 1581 Walsingham advised the Earl of Huntingdon that on 21 March Anne Vavasour,²²³ one of the Queen's Maids of Honour, had given birth to a son,²²⁴ and that 'the Earl of Oxford is avowed to be the father, who hath withdrawn himself with intent, as it is thought, to pass the seas'. Oxford was

²¹³ Archivo General de Simancas, Leg. 835, ff. 121-4; Nelson, pp. 253-4.

²¹⁴ Nelson, pp. 254-9.

²¹⁵ Nelson, p. 259.

²¹⁶ *Peerage*, p. 251: 'Howard and Arundel retaliated by bringing extravagantly criminal charges against the Earl, which some writers have been much too ready to accept'.

²¹⁷ Paris Archives K.1561.

²¹⁸ Paris Archives K.1563.122; Paris Archives K.1563.122.

²¹⁹ Paris Archives K.1562; Paris Archives K.1563.72.

²²⁰ Segar, pp. 95-6.

²²¹ STC 19974.6.

²²² Nelson, pp. 261-5.

²²³ May, Steven W., "Vavasour [married names Finch, Richardson], Anne (fl. 1580-1621)", ODNB.

²²⁴ Sir Edward Vere.

captured and imprisoned in the Tower, as was Anne for a time.²²⁵ Oxford was released from the Tower to house arrest on 8 June 1581, as indicated in a letter of 9 June from the Privy Council to Sir William Gorges (d.1584).²²⁶ On 6 May 1581, while Oxford was in the Tower, Thomas Stocker²²⁷ dedicated to him his *Divers Sermons of Master John Calvin*, stating in the dedication that he had been 'brought up in your Lordship's father's house'.²²⁸ Oxford was still under house arrest in mid-July,²²⁹ but took part at an Accession Day tournament at Whitehall on 17 November 1581.²³⁰

After a five year separation, Oxford reconciled with his wife, Anne, at Christmas 1581.²³¹ However his affair with Anne Vavasour continued to have serious repercussions. In March 1582 there was a fray in the streets of London between Oxford and Anne's uncle, Sir Thomas Knyvet.²³² Richard Madox²³³ reported that 'my Lord of Oxford fought with Mr Knyvet about the quarrel of Besse Bavisar, and was hurt, and Gerret his man slain', while Nicholas Faunt wrote to Anthony Bacon (1558-1601) that both men were hurt, 'but my Lord of Oxford more dangerously' adding that 'Mr Knyvet is not meanly beloved in Court, and therefore he is not like to speed ill, whatsoever the quarrel be'.²³⁴ Over a decade later in a letter to Lord Burghley on 25 March 1595 Oxford mentions his lameness,²³⁵ but whether this resulted from the injuries sustained in this fray with Knyvet is unknown. There was another fray between Knyvet's and Oxford's men on 18 June, and a third on 22 June in which it was reported that Knyvet had 'slain a man of the Earl of Oxford's in fight'.²³⁶

In this troubled period Thomas Watson²³⁷ dedicated his *Hekatompathia or Passionate Century of Love*²³⁸ to Oxford, stating in the dedication that Oxford had taken a personal interest in the work:

²²⁵ Chambers, E.K., *Sir Henry Lee; An Elizabethan Portrait* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 155-6; Nelson, p. 266.

²²⁶ Ward, p. 211; Nelson, pp. 269-70.

²²⁷ Greaves, Richard L., "Stocker, Thomas (fl. 1563–1593)", ODNB.

²²⁸ Nelson, p. 380.

²²⁹ BL Lansdowne 33/6, ff. 12-13; TNA SP 12/149/69, ff. 160-1; Nelson, pp. 270-2.

²³⁰ Nelson, pp. 277-8.

²³¹ BL Lansdowne 104/63, ff. 164-5; BL Lansdowne 104/64, ff. 166-7; Ward, pp. 278-280.

²³² Nicholls, Mark, "Knyvett [Knyvet], Thomas, Baron Knyvett (1545/6–1622)", ODNB.

²³³ Bennell, John, "Madox, Richard (1546–1583)", ODNB.

²³⁴ Lambeth Palace MS 647, f. 123; British Library MS Cotton App 47, f. 7; Guildhall Library MS 4515; Nelson, p. 280.

²³⁵ Cecil Papers 31/45.

²³⁶ Nicolas, pp. 256-7; Nelson, pp. 281-2.

²³⁷ Chatterley, Albert, "Watson, Thomas (1555/6–1592)", ODNB; Sutton, Dana F., *The Complete Works of Thomas Watson*, Philological Museum, University of Birmingham, <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/>.

²³⁸ STC 25118a.

*For since the world hath understood (I know not how) that your Honour had willingly vouchsafed the acceptance of this work, and at convenient leisures favourably perused it, being as yet but in written hand, many have oftentimes and earnestly called upon me to put it to the press, that for their money they might but see what your Lordship with some liking had already perused.*²³⁹

Another of Oxford's men was slain on 21 February 1583,²⁴⁰ and on 12 March Lord Burghley wrote to Sir Christopher Hatton mentioning the death of one of Knyvet's men, and thanking Hatton for his efforts 'to bring some good end to these troublesome matters betwixt my Lord and Oxford and Mr Thomas Knyvet'.²⁴¹

On 6 May Nicholas Faunt²⁴² wrote to Anthony Bacon²⁴³ that 'God had sent my Lord of Oxford a son, but hath taken it away from him'. Oxford and Anne's infant son was buried at Castle Hedingham on 9 May.²⁴⁴

Oxford's two-year banishment from court ended a month after the death of his son. On 2 June 1583 Roger Manners²⁴⁵ wrote to the Earl of Rutland that Oxford had come to the Queen's presence, and 'after some bitter words and speeches, in the end all sins and forgiven, and he may repair to the court at his pleasure. Mr Raleigh²⁴⁶ was a great mean herein'.²⁴⁷ As May notes, however, Oxford never regained his position as a courtier of the first magnitude.²⁴⁸

MIDDLE YEARS

On 6 April 1584, Oxford and Anne's daughter, Bridget (1584–1630/31), was born.²⁴⁹

In 1584 two works were dedicated to Oxford, Robert Greene's²⁵⁰ *Gwydonius; The Card of Fancy*,²⁵¹ and John Southern's²⁵² *Pandora*.²⁵³ In the latter, Southern remarked on

²³⁹ Nelson, pp. 287, 381.

²⁴⁰ Nicolas, pp. 321-4; Nelson, p. 283.

²⁴¹ Nelson, pp. 284-5.

²⁴² Levin, Carole, "Faunt, Nicholas (1553/4–1608)", ODNB.

²⁴³ Stewart, Alan, "Bacon, Anthony (1558–1601)", ODNB.

²⁴⁴ ERO D/P 48/1/1; Nelson, pp. 289-90.

²⁴⁵ Jack, Sybil M., "Manners, Roger (c.1536–1607)", ODNB>

²⁴⁶ Nicholls, Mark and Penry Williams, "Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554–1618)", ODNB.

²⁴⁷ HMC Rutland, I, p. 150; Nelson, pp. 285-6.

²⁴⁸ May, *Elizabethan Courtier Poets*, p. 269.

²⁴⁹ Nelson, pp. 293, 322.

²⁵⁰ Newcomb, L.H., "Greene, Robert (bap. 1558, d. 1592)", ODNB.

²⁵¹ STC 12262.

²⁵² Smith, Rosalind, "Southern [Soowthern], John (fl. 1584)", ODNB.

²⁵³ STC 22928; Nelson, p. 381.

Oxford's knowledge of astronomy, history, languages and music:²⁵⁴

*For who marketh better than he
The seven turning flames of the sky,
Or hath read more of the antique,
Hath greater knowledge in the tongues,
Or understands sooner the sounds
Of the learner to love music?*

Oxford's financial situation was steadily deteriorating. By the mid-1580s Oxford had sold almost all his inherited lands, alienating his principal source of income.²⁵⁵ Moreover, as he stated in a letter to Lord Burghley on 30 October 1584, as a result of these sales he had:

*entered into a great number of bonds to such as have purchased lands of me to discharge them of all encumbrances, and because I stand indebted unto her Majesty, as your Lordship knoweth, many of the said purchasers do greatly fear some trouble likely to fall upon them by reason of her Majesty's said debt, & especially if the bonds of the Lord Darcy and Sir William Waldegrave should be extended for the same, who have two several statutes of great sums for their discharge, whereupon many of the said purchasers have been suitors unto me to procure the discharging of her Majesty's said debt, and do seem very willing to bear the burden thereof if by my means the same might be stalled payable at some convenient days.*²⁵⁶

Because Oxford's lands were security for his unpaid debt to the Queen in the Court of Wards, Oxford had had to enter into bonds to the purchasers as a guarantee that he would indemnify them if the Queen were to extend against the lands for his debt.²⁵⁷ To avoid this eventuality, the purchasers of his lands were willing to repay Oxford's debt to the Court of Wards if he could persuade the Queen to let them do so by instalments.²⁵⁸

During the mid-1580's Oxford's Men continued to perform at court, in the countryside, and in London. 'The Earl of Oxford his servants' received £20, paid to John Lyly for performances on 1 January and 3 March 1584, and on 1 January 1585 a troupe performed at court under the name of 'John Symons and other his fellows, servants to th' Earl of Oxford'.²⁵⁹ Oxford's Men also had success touring the provinces, as indicated by records of performances from the years 1580 through 1587,²⁶⁰ and in 1587 the company was one of four principal companies performing in London. On 25 January 1587 Maliverny

²⁵⁴ Nelson, pp. 59-60.

²⁵⁵ Pearson, p. 52.

²⁵⁶ BL Lansdowne 42/39, ff. 97-8; Nelson, p. 294.

²⁵⁷ TNA PRO 30/34/14, No. 3.

²⁵⁸ BL Lansdowne 77/80; TNA C 2/Eliz/T6/48; TNA PRO 30/34/14, Nos. 2, 4 and 5; Pearson, p. 35.

²⁵⁹ Nelson, pp. 247-8.

²⁶⁰ Nelson, pp. 245-6.

Catlyn complained to Sir Francis Walsingham that:

*The daily abuse of stage plays is such an offence to the godly and so great a hindrance to the Gospel as the papists do exceedingly rejoice at the blemish thereof, and not without cause, for every day in the week the players' bills are set up in sundry places of the city, some in the name of her Majesty's men, some the Earl of Leicester's, some the Earl of Oxford's, the lord Admiral's, & divers others, so that when the bells toll to the lectures, the trumpets sound to the stages, whereat the wicked faction of Rome laugheth for joy while the godly weep for sorrow.*²⁶¹

Oxford's company of boy players was also still in existence. On 27 December 1584 Henry Evans received payment 'for one play . . . by the children of th' Earl of Oxford'.²⁶² According to Chambers, the companies working at the Blackfriars under Lyly and Evans in 1583-4 were 'a combination of Oxford's boys, Paul's and the Chapel'.²⁶³ For a time Oxford held a lease of the premises used by the boy companies in the Blackfriars. In a document dating from about 1585, Sir William More of Loseley complained that his property in the Blackfriars had gotten into the hands of a succession of sub-lessees, including Oxford and Lyly, after More had leased it to Richard Farrant.²⁶⁴

*Immediately after, [Anne Farrant] let the house to one Hunnis,²⁶⁵ and afterward to one Newman or Sutton, as far as I remember, and then to Evans, who sold his interest to the Earl of Oxford, who gave his interest to Lyly, and the title thus was posted over from one to another from me, contrary to the said condition.*²⁶⁶

Oxford also patronized a company of musicians, as evidenced by payments in 1584-5 by the cities of Oxford and Barnstaple to 'the Earl of Oxford's musicians'.²⁶⁷

On 19 January 1585 Anne Vavasour's brother, Thomas, sent Oxford a written challenge, which Oxford appears to have ignored.²⁶⁸

In 1585 negotiations were underway for King James to come to England to discuss the release of his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, and on 4 March Mendoza wrote to the King of Spain that Oxford was to be sent to Scotland as one of the hostages for the King's safety.²⁶⁹

²⁶¹ Nelson, pp. 246-7.

²⁶² Nelson, p. 247.

²⁶³ Nelson, p. 248.

²⁶⁴ Bowers, Roger, "Farrant, Richard (c.1528–1580)", ODNB.

²⁶⁵ Ashbee, Andrew, "Hunnis, William (d. 1597)", ODNB.

²⁶⁶ Smith, Irwin M., *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Its Design* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 467; Nelson, pp. 247-8.

²⁶⁷ Nelson, p. 248.

²⁶⁸ BL Lansdowne 99/93, ff. 252-3; Nelson, pp. 295-6.

²⁶⁹ CSP Spanish, 1580-86, p. 533; Nelson, p. 296.

In late summer of that year Oxford was commissioned to command a company of horse in the Low Countries.²⁷⁰ On 9 September it was reported that 'Five or six thousand English soldiers have arrived in Flanders with the Earl of Oxford and Colonel Norris'.²⁷¹ However in October Leicester was appointed General of the English forces, and on 21 October William Davison²⁷² reported that 'My Lord of Oxford is returned this night into England, upon what humour I know not'.²⁷³

Additions²⁷⁴ to *Leicester's Commonwealth* published in 1585 alleged that Leicester had nourished discord between Oxford and his wife, Anne:

The same [practices] he attempted between the Earl of Oxford and his lady, daughter of the Lord Treasurer of England, and all for an old grudge he bare to her father, the said Lord Treasurer.

Although the circumstances referred to are unclear, the statement perhaps implies that Leicester was in some way involved in Oxford's refusal to live with his wife after his return from his continental tour in 1576.

On 25 June 1586 the Queen, who had played a significant role in Oxford's financial downfall,²⁷⁵ granted him an annuity of £1000 a year 'to be continued unto him during our pleasure or until such time as he shall be by us otherwise provided for to be in some manner relieved, at what time our pleasure is that this payment of one thousand pounds yearly to our said cousin in manner above specified shall cease'.²⁷⁶

In October of that year Oxford was at Fotheringay Castle in Northamptonshire for the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots, and was among the peers who on 13 October 'went unto her in her lodging', and 'remained with her almost the space of two hours, signifying unto her that if she would not come forth before the Commissioners they would proceed against her' in her absence.²⁷⁷

In 1586 Angel Day²⁷⁸ dedicated to Oxford his *The English Secretary*,²⁷⁹ the first epistolary manual for writing model letters in English, noting that Oxford was one 'whose

²⁷⁰ CSP Spanish, 1580-86, pp. 545-6.

²⁷¹ Paris Archives K.1563.122; Trim, D.J.B., "Norris [Norreys], Sir John (c.1547x50–1597)", ODNB.

²⁷² Adams, Simon, "Davison, William (d. 1608)", ODNB.

²⁷³ CSP Foreign, 1580-86, p. 104; Ward, pp. 252-5; Nelson, pp. 296-7.

²⁷⁴ For the 1585 additions, see <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/leicester.html>.

²⁷⁵ For a fuller discussion of the Queen's role in Oxford's financial downfall, see Green, *Fall of the House of Oxford*, pp. 73-93, and Green, Nina, "An Earl in Bondage", *The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* (Summer 2004), Vol. 40, no. 3, at 1, 13-17.

²⁷⁶ TNA E 403/2597, ff. 104v-105; Nelson, p. 301.

²⁷⁷ Nelson, p. 302.

²⁷⁸ Cerasano, S.P. "Day, Angell (fl. 1563–1595)", ODNB.

²⁷⁹ STC 6401.

infancy from the beginning was ever sacred to the Muses'.²⁸⁰ In the same year William Webbe²⁸¹ wrote in his *Discourse of English Poetry*²⁸² that:

*I may not omit the deserved commendations of many honourable and noble Lords and gentlemen in her Majesty's court which in the rare devices of poetry have been and yet are most excellent skilful, among whom the right honourable Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of the most excellent among the rest.*²⁸³

Oxford and Anne's daughter Susan (1587-1629) was born on 26 May 1587.

On 1 July 1587 the Queen granted Oxford lands which had belonged to Edward Jones, who had been attainted and executed for his part in the Babington²⁸⁴ plot. The grant was made in the name of two trustees in order to protect it from Oxford's creditors.²⁸⁵

On 25 July John Poole, then a prisoner in Newgate on suspicion of coining, made complaints against the Queen, Leicester and others during conversations with a government informant, John Gunstone, including an obscure reference to Oxford, saying that 'the Queen did woo him, but he would not fall in at that time'.²⁸⁶ Poole's vague statement may refer to the fact that Oxford, reported as being high in Queen Elizabeth's favour in 1573, quickly fell out of favour with his unauthorized flight to the continent in 1574.

On 12 September, Oxford and Anne's daughter, Frances, was buried at Edmonton. Although her birthdate is unknown, she must have been between one and three years of age at the time of her death.²⁸⁷

Earlier in the year a plan had finally been devised for the purchasers of Oxford's lands to pay his debt to the Court of Wards, and on 29 November 'the decree was made whereby the Earl's whole debt of £3306 18s 9-1/4d was appointed to be paid by the purchasers' over a five-year period, finishing in 1592.²⁸⁸ By 1 July 1591 only £800 remained unpaid.²⁸⁹

On 15 December 1587 Lord Burghley defended himself against accusations that he had

²⁸⁰ Beebee, Thomas O., *Epistolary Fiction in Europe, 1500-1850*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 32; Nelson, p. 381.

²⁸¹ Heale, Elizabeth, "Webbe, William (fl. 1566?-1591)", ODNB.

²⁸² STC 25172.

²⁸³ Nelson, pp. 386-387.

²⁸⁴ Williams, Penry, "Babington, Anthony (1561-1586)", ODNB.

²⁸⁵ TNA SP 12/201/3, ff. 4-6; TNA SP 12/210/16, f. 28; TNA C 66/1291, mm. 5-7; Nelson, pp. 303-6.

²⁸⁶ TNA SP 12/273/103, ff. 185-6; Nelson, p. 306.

²⁸⁷ Nelson, p. 306.

²⁸⁸ Nelson, p. 306.

²⁸⁹ Pearson, p. 35.

not tried to further Oxford's advancement, writing to Oxford in part:

*Secondly, that there hath been no ways prepared for your preferment I do utterly deny, and can particularly make it manifest by testimony of Councillors how often I have propounded ways to prefer you to services, but why these could not take place I must not particularly set them down in writing, lest either I discover the hinderers, or offend yourself in showing th' allegations to impeach your Lordship from such preferments.*²⁹⁰

On 5 June 1588 Oxford's first wife, Anne, died at court of a fever at the age of 31, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.²⁹¹

On 19 July 1588 England was threatened by the Spanish Armada. In his *Annals*, Camden²⁹² mentions Oxford as among those who hired ships at their own expense:

*But so far was [the Armada] from terrifying the sea-coast with the name of 'invincible', or with the terrible spectacle, that the youth of England with a certain incredible alacrity, leaving their parents, wives, children, cousins and friends, out of their entire love to their country hires ships from all parts at their own private charges, and joined with the fleet in great number, and amongst others the Earls of Oxford, Northumberland, Cumberland, Thomas and Robert Cecil, Henry Brooke, Charles Blount, Walter Raleigh, William Hatton, Robert Carey, Ambrose Willoughby, Thomas Gerard, Arthur Gorges and others of good note.*²⁹³

Richard Hakluyt²⁹⁴ also lists Oxford as among those 'great and honourable personages' who flocked to the English Channel to serve prince and country,²⁹⁵ and the manuscript of a pamphlet published in 1588 contains an interlineation in Lord Burghley's hand that 'the Earl of Oxford also in this time repaired to the sea-coast for service of the Queen in the navy'.²⁹⁶

The nature of Oxford's service is unclear. On 28 July Leicester advised Walsingham that Oxford had gone to London 'for his armour and furniture' and would return to Tilbury. Leicester asked for instructions, stating that 'I trust he be free to go to the enemy, for he seems most willing to hazard his life in this quarrel'.²⁹⁷ On 1 August Leicester wrote to Walsingham that the Queen had consented to allow Oxford to serve, and had appointed him to take charge of the port of Harwich, 'a place of trust & of great danger'. According

²⁹⁰ BL MS Lansdowne 103/38, ff. 91-2; Nelson, pp. 306-7.

²⁹¹ Nelson, pp. 309-10.

²⁹² Herendeen, Wyman H., "Camden, William (1551-1623)", ODNB.

²⁹³ STC 4496.

²⁹⁴ Payne, Anthony, "Hakluyt, Richard (1552?-1616)", OCNB.

²⁹⁵ Hakluyt, Richard, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffics and Discoveries of the English Nation*, ed. by Edmund Goldsmid, Vol. VII (Edinburgh: E. & G. Goldsmid, 1888), pp. 148-9, available online; Nelson, pp. 311-12.

²⁹⁶ Nelson, pp. 314-16.

²⁹⁷ TNA SP 12/213, ff. 92-3; Nelson, p. 316.

to Leicester, Oxford thought 'that place of no service nor credit', and went to court to persuade the Queen to change her mind. Leicester ended his letter with a postscript stating that 'I am glad to be rid of my Lord of Oxford seeing he refuseth this, & I pray you let me not be pressed any more for him, what suit soever he make'.²⁹⁸

By 20 December 1588 Oxford had secretly sold his London mansion of Fisher's Folly to Sir William Cornwallis (c.1551-1611).²⁹⁹

In 1588 Anthony Munday dedicated to Oxford the two parts of his *Palmerin d'Oliva*.³⁰⁰ The title page state that the original was 'written in Spanish, Italian and French and from them turned into English by Anthony Munday', and the dedication attests to Oxford's proficiency in these languages:

*If Palmerin hath sustained any wrong by my bad translation, being so worthily set down in other languages, your Honour, having such special knowledge in them, I hope will let slip any fault escaped in respect I have done my goodwill, the largest talent I have to bestow.*³⁰¹

On 14 April 1589 Oxford was among the peers who found Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel,³⁰² the eldest son and heir of Oxford's cousin, Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, guilty of treason.³⁰³

In that year *The Arte of English Poesie*,³⁰⁴ usually attributed to George Puttenham,³⁰⁵ placed Oxford among a 'crew' of courtier poets:

And in her Majesty's time that now is are sprung up another crew of courtly makers, noblemen and gentlemen of her Majesty's own servants, who have written excellently well as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble gentleman, Edward, Earl of Oxford; Thomas, Lord of Buckhurst,³⁰⁶ when he was young; Henry, Lord Paget; Sir Philip Sidney; Sir Walter Raleigh; Master Edward Dyer; Master Fulke Greville; Gascoigne; Breton; Turberville,

²⁹⁸ TNA SP 12/214, ff. 2-3; Nelson, pp. 317-18.

²⁹⁹ Cecil Papers 166/80; Cecil Papers 17/60; Nelson, pp. 319-20.

³⁰⁰ Bergeron, David M., "Munday, Anthony (bap. 1560, d. 1633)", ODNB.

³⁰¹ STC 19157.

³⁰² Elzinga, J.G., "Howard, Philip [St Philip Howard], thirteenth Earl of Arundel (1557-1595)", ODNB.

³⁰³ Nelson, p. 321.

³⁰⁴ STC 20519.

³⁰⁵ May, Steven W., "Puttenham, George (1529-1590/91)", ODNB.

³⁰⁶ Zim, Rivkah, "Sackville, Thomas, first Baron Buckhurst and first earl of Dorset (c.1536-1608)", ODNB.

*and a great many other learned gentlemen.*³⁰⁷

Puttenham also considered Oxford among the best comic playwrights of the day:

*Of the later sort I think thus, that for tragedy the Lord of Buckhurst & Master Edward Ferrers, for such doings as I have seen of theirs, do deserve the highest prize, th' Earl of Oxford and Master Edwards of her Majesty's Chapel for comedy and interlude.*³⁰⁸

In 1590 Edmund Spenser³⁰⁹ appended a sonnet to Oxford in his *Faerie Queen*,³¹⁰ referring to 'the love which thou dost bear/ To th' Heliconian imps and they to thee', likely in reference to Oxford's literary proteges Lyly, Munday, Greene and Watson, 'and now, at least prospectively, Spenser himself'.³¹¹

By July 1590 discussions were underway between Lord Burghley and Viscount Montague³¹² for a marriage between Oxford's daughter, Elizabeth, and the Earl of Southampton,³¹³ then a royal ward.³¹⁴

On 6 January 1591 Thomas Churchyard wrote to Juliana Penne (d.1592) concerning rent owing for rooms he had taken in her house on behalf of Oxford.³¹⁵

On 18 May 1591 Oxford, clearly weary of the unsettled life of a courtier, wrote to Lord Burghley outlining a plan to purchase the demesnes of Denbigh in Wales if the Queen would consent, offering to pay for the lands by commuting his £1000 annuity and relinquishing his claim to the Forest of Essex:

Whereas I have heard her Majesty meant to sell unto one Middleton, a merchant, and one Carmarden the demesnes of Denbigh which, as I am informed, is £230 by yearly rent now as it is, I would be an humble suitor to her Majesty that I might have had this bargain, paying the £8000 as they should have done, accepting for £5000 thereof the pension which she hath given me in the Exchequer, and the other £3000 the next term, or upon such reasonable days as her Majesty would grant me by her favour. And, further, if her

³⁰⁷ STC 20519; Willcock, Gladys Doidge and Alice Walker, eds., *The Arte of English Poesie by George Puttenham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1936, reprinted 1970), p. 61.

³⁰⁸ Willcock, p. 63.

³⁰⁹ Hadfield, Andrew, "Spenser, Edmund (1552?–1599)", ODNB.

³¹⁰ STC 23081.

³¹¹ Nelson, p. 383.

³¹² Elzinga, J.G., "Browne, Anthony, first Viscount Montagu (1528–1592)", ODNB.

³¹³ Honan, Park, "Wriothesley, Henry, third Earl of Southampton (1573–1624)", ODNB.

³¹⁴ Akrigg, G.P.V., *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968, pp. 31-2, 35, 39-40, 46.

³¹⁵ Lansdowne MS 68, f. 207r, f. 209r, f. 253r, f. 255r and f. 257r; Smith, Alan G.R., *Servant of the Cecils; The Life of Sir Michael Hicke, 1543-1612* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), pp. 87-8; Nelson, pp. 328-9.

Majesty would not accept the pension for £5000, that then she would yet take unto it, to make it up that value, the title of the forest which, by all counsel of law, and conscience, is as good right unto me as any other land in England. And I think her Majesty makes no evil bargain, and I would be glad to be sure of something that were mine own and that I might possess.

Oxford concludes: 'So shall my children be provided for, myself at length settled in quiet and, I hope, your Lordship contented, remaining no cause for you to think me an evil father, nor any doubt in me but that I may enjoy that friendship from your Lordship that so near a match, and not fruitless, may lawfully expect'.³¹⁶

In the spring of 1591 the plan by which the purchasers of Oxford's lands were repaying his debt to the Court of Wards was disrupted by extents by the Queen against some of the lands.³¹⁷ In the same letter of 18 May 1591 Oxford complained that his servant, Thomas Hampton, had fraudulently taken advantage of these extents by taking money from the tenants of the lands to his own use, and had also fraudulently colluded with another of Oxford's servants, Israel Amyce, to pass a document under the Great Seal of England to Oxford's detriment.³¹⁸ Although the details are unclear, Thomas Skinner (d.1596) was also involved in the fraud occasioned by the Queen's extents against Oxford's lands.³¹⁹ On 30 June 1591 Oxford wrote to Lord Burghley reminding him that he had agreed with the Queen to forebear his claim regarding the Forest of Essex for three reasons, including the Queen's reluctance to punish Skinner's felony:

*First in consideration of her promise, then for the forbearing of Skinner's felony, which was proved by witnesses examined, confessed by his fellow Catcher, and yet resting in the hands of her Majesty's Attorney. Last of all to disburden me of the £20,000 bonds and statute which the same Skinner had caused me to forfeit by procuring of his own land to be extended for the £400 which he did agree with the rest of the purchasers to pay for his portion into the Court of Wards, minding to benefit himself by the same.*³²⁰

In 1591 the composer John Farmer,³²¹ who was in Oxford's service at the time, dedicated to him *The First Set of Divers & Sundry Ways of Two Parts in One*,³²² noting in the dedication Oxford's love of music ('I was the rather emboldened for your Lordship's great affection to this noble science').³²³

REMARRIAGE AND SUITS TO THE QUEEN

³¹⁶ BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13; Nelson, pp. 331-2.

³¹⁷ BL Lansdowne 68/11, f. 24; Pearson, p. 35, Nelson, p. 334.

³¹⁸ BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13; Nelson, p. 330.

³¹⁹ BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13; Nelson, p. 334.

³²⁰ BL Lansdowne 68/11, f. 22; Nelson, pp. 332-3.

³²¹ Brown, David, "Farmer, John (fl. 1591–1601)", ODNB.

³²² STC 10698.

³²³ Nelson, p. 381.

On 4 July 1591 Oxford sold the Great Garden property at Aldgate to John Wolley³²⁴ and his future brother-in-law, Francis Trentham (d.1626).³²⁵ The arrangement was stated to be for the benefit of Elizabeth Trentham (d.1612), then one of the Queen's Maids of Honour, whom Oxford married later that year. An entry records a gift from the Queen to 'the Countess of Oxford at her marriage the 27 of December Anno 34'.³²⁶

In July of that year Oxford applied to the Queen for a licence to import oils, fruits and wools, citing the promise the Queen had given him when he had abandoned his suit for the Forest of Essex at her command.³²⁷

In 1591-2 Oxford disposed of the last of his large estates. In Michaelmas term 1591 he sold Castle Hedingham, the seat of his earldom, to Lord Burghley in trust for his three daughters by his first marriage, Elizabeth, Bridget and Susan.³²⁸ On 7 February 1592 he sold Colne Priory to Roger Harlakenden, who purchased in the name of his son, Richard.³²⁹ The sale resulted in lawsuits by Oxford for fraud against Roger Harlakenden which dragged on into the next generation.³³⁰

On 24 February 1593 Oxford's only surviving son and heir, Henry de Vere,³³¹ was born at Stoke Newington, where 'the Earl of Oxford is sometime resident in a very proper house'.³³²

On 25 October 1593 Oxford wrote to Lord Burghley concerning his suit for a licence to import oils, fruits and wools, again citing the Queen's promise made to him when she had commanded him to abandon his claim to the Forest of Essex:

My very good Lord, I hope it is not out of your remembrance how long sithence I have been a suitor to her Majesty that she would give me leave to try my title to the forest at the law, but I found that so displeasing unto her that, in place of receiving that ordinary favour which is of course granted to the meanest subject, I was browbeaten and had many bitter speeches given me.

³²⁴ Parry, Glyn, "Wolley, Sir John (d. 1596)", ODNB.

³²⁵ TNA SP 15/39, f. 141; Nelson, p. 335; Pearson, p. 49.

³²⁶ BL MS Add. 5751A, f. 225; Nelson, pp. 336-7.

³²⁷ Nelson, pp. 337-8.

³²⁸ TNA E 211/35; TNA CP 25/2/133/1707/29/30ELIZIMICH, Item 45; TNA C 66/1318, mm. 14-15; TNA C 66/1392, MM. 30-31; TNA C 66/1392, mm. 18-19; Nelson, pp. 335, 367.

³²⁹ TNA C 66/1392, mm. 23-4; ERO D/DU 256/1; Pearson, pp. 192-3.

³³⁰ TNA C 24/239/46; Huntington Library MS El 5871; Huntington Library MS El 5872; TNA C 78/104, mm. 27-8; TNA C 33/95; TNA C 24/277, Piece 77; TNA C 24/280, Piece 41; TNA C 2/JasI/O1/58; Pearson, pp. 192-6; Nelson, pp. 346-8.

³³¹ Stater, Victor, "Vere, Henry de, eighteenth earl of Oxford (1593-1625)", ODNB.

³³² Nelson, p. 343.

Oxford reminds Lord Burghley that the Queen had committed the matter to Sir Christopher Hatton for arbitration, but when Hatton was ready to deliver his report, the Queen:

*flatly refused therein to hear my Lord Chancellor, and for a final answer commanded me no more to follow the suit for, whether it was hers or mine, she was resolved to dispose thereof at her pleasure.*³³³

On 7 July 1594 Oxford wrote to Lord Burghley concerning abuses in his office of Lord Great Chamberlain which had prejudiced both himself and the Queen.³³⁴

On 25 September 1594, King Henry IV of France wrote to Oxford, thanking him for 'the good offices you have performed on my behalf in [the Queen's] presence'.³³⁵

About this time Anthony Munday dedicated to Oxford his *Primaleon; The First Book*. The dedication is lost; however, in the dedication of the second edition³³⁶ in 1619 to Oxford's heir, Munday recalls that 'these three several parts of *Primaleon of Greece* were the tribute of my duty and service' to 'that most noble Earl, your father'.³³⁷

In late 1594 negotiations for a marriage between Oxford's daughter, Elizabeth, and the Earl of Southampton came to an end. In a letter endorsed 19 November 1594, six weeks after Southampton turned 21, the Jesuit Henry Garnett³³⁸ wrote that 'the young Earl of Southampton, refusing the Lady Vere, payeth £5000 of present money'.³³⁹

On 26 January 1595 Oxford's daughter Elizabeth (1575-1627) married William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby.³⁴⁰ A few months later, on 24 April, Oxford wrote to his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Cecil,³⁴¹ stating that he had 'dealt with the Earl of Derby about my daughter's allowance', and that Derby had promised to assure his new bride £1000 a year but was now about to leave for Lancashire without having made any financial provision for her.³⁴²

From March to August of 1595 Oxford actively pursued a suit, in competition with Lord

³³³ BL Harley 6996/22, ff. 42-3; Nelson, pp. 343-4, 351-2.

³³⁴ BL Lansdowne 76/74, ff. 168-9; Paul, Christopher, "The Earl of Oxford's 'Office' Illuminated", *Brief Chronicles: Volume 2* (2010), pp. 171-211. URL: www.briefchronicles.com; Nelson, p. 348.

³³⁵ Nelson, p. 349.

³³⁶ STC 20367.

³³⁷ Nelson, p. 381.

³³⁸ McCoog, Thomas M., "Garnett, Henry (1555-1606)", ODNB.

³³⁹ Akrigg, p. 39; Nelson, p. 323.

³⁴⁰ Daugherty, Leo, "Stanley, William, sixth Earl of Derby (bap. 1561, d. 1642)", ODNB; Nelson, pp. 349-50.

³⁴¹ Croft, Pauline, "Cecil, Robert, first earl of Salisbury (1563-1612)", ODNB.

³⁴² Cecil Papers 31/106; Nelson, pp. 350-1.

Buckhurst, to farm the tin mines in Cornwall.³⁴³ On 20 March 1595 he wrote to Lord Burghley, summing up past years of fruitless attempts to amend his financial situation:

*[I] heartily desire your lordship to have a feeling of mine infortunate estate, which although it be far unfit to endure delays, yet have consumed four or five years in a flattering hope of idle words. But now, having received this comfortable message of furtherance & favour from your Lordship, although her Majesty be forgetful of herself, yet by such a good mean I do not doubt if you list but that I may receive some fruit of all my travail. This last year past I have been a suitor to her Majesty that I might farm her tins, giving £3000 a year more than she had made.*³⁴⁴

Oxford's letters and memoranda indicate that he pursued his suit into early 1596 and renewed it again in 1599, but was ultimately unsuccessful in obtaining the tin monopoly.³⁴⁵

On 20 October 1595 Oxford wrote to Sir Robert Cecil mentioning friction between himself and the Earl of Essex,³⁴⁶ partly over the Forest of Essex:

*[Lord Burghley] wisheth me to make means to the Earl of Essex that he would forbear to deal for it [i.e. the Forest of Essex], a thing I cannot do in honour sith I have already received divers injuries and wrongs from him which bar me of all such base courses.*³⁴⁷

The next day Oxford wrote again to his brother-in-law on the subject of his claim to the Forest, terming him 'the only person that I dare rely upon in the court'. Unlike Lord Burghley, however, Sir Robert Cecil seems to have done little to further Oxford's interests.³⁴⁸

On 28 March Oxford advised Michael Hickeys³⁴⁹ that he was unable to go to court because he had not yet fully recovered from an illness. On 4 June he wrote to Lord Burghley that

³⁴³ Pearson, pp. 56-7.

³⁴⁴ Cecil Papers 170/126; Nelson, p. 355.

³⁴⁵ Cecil Papers 170/126; Cecil Papers 25/106; Cecil Papers 31/45; Cecil Papers 31/52; Cecil Papers 31/54; Cecil Papers 31/68; Cecil Papers 31/79; Cecil Papers 31/83; Cecil Papers 31/93; TNA SP12/252/57, ff. 108-9; TNA SP12/252/69, ff. 133-4; TNA SP12/252/70, ff. 135-6; TNA SP12/252/76, ff. 144-5; TNA SP12/253/60, ff. 100-1; Cecil Papers 31/11; Cecil Papers 71/23; Cecil Papers 71/26; Huntington Library EL 2337; BL Lansdowne 86/66, ff. 169-70; Cecil Papers 25/76; TNA SP12/252/49, ff. 96-7; Huntington Library EL 2335; Huntington Library EL 2336; Huntington Library EL 2338; Huntington Library EL 2344; Huntington Library EL 2345; Huntington Library EL 2349; Nelson, pp. 357-8.

³⁴⁶ Hammer, Paul E.J., "Devereux, Robert, second Earl of Essex (1565–1601)", ODNB.

³⁴⁷ Cecil Papers 35/84; Nelson, p. 352.

³⁴⁸ Cecil Papers 172/81; Nelson, pp. 352-3.

³⁴⁹ Smith, A.G.R., "Hickeys, Sir Michael (1543–1612)",

'I have been this day let blood',³⁵⁰ and on 7 August he wrote to Burghley from Byfleet, where he gone for his health:

*I most heartily thank your Lordship for your desire to know of my health, which is not so good yet as I wish it. I find comfort in this air, but no fortune in the court.*³⁵¹

On 9 November Rowland Whyte wrote to Sir Robert Sidney³⁵² that 'Some say my Lord of Oxford is dead'.³⁵³ Whether the rumour of Oxford's death was related to the illness mentioned in his letters earlier in the year is unknown.

On 11 January 1597 Oxford wrote to Sir Robert Cecil concerning a petition to the Privy Council by Thomas Gurlyn against Oxford's wife, Elizabeth. The background to Gurlyn's petition is obscure, but appears to relate to events which transpired shortly after Oxford's arrival in the Low Countries on 27 August 1585. Gurlyn's claim was dismissed at trial.³⁵⁴

On 2 September 1597 the executors of Sir Rowland Hayward³⁵⁵ were authorized to sell King's Place in Hackney to Oxford's wife, Elizabeth, and three of her kinsmen.³⁵⁶

On 8 September Oxford again spoke of ill health, writing to Lord Burghley that 'I am sorry that I have not an able body which might have served to attend her Majesty in the place where she is, being especially there, whither without any other occasion than to see your Lordship I would always willingly go'.³⁵⁷ On 14 December 1597 Oxford attended his last Parliament, perhaps another indication of failing health.³⁵⁸

Oxford's father-in-law, Lord Burghley, died on 4 August 1598 at the age of 78, leaving substantial bequests to Oxford's two unmarried daughters, Bridget and Susan.³⁵⁹ Any hope Oxford might have had of assuming parental care of his daughters was dashed by Sir Robert Cecil, who wrote to Michael Hicke that 'whether he that never gave them groat, hath a second wife and another child be a fit guardian, consider you'.³⁶⁰

In his *Palladis Tamia*,³⁶¹ published in 1598, Francis Meres³⁶² adjudged Oxford as one of

³⁵⁰ TNA SP12/252/49, ff. 96-7.

³⁵¹ TNA SP12/253/60, ff. 100-1; Nelson, pp. 353, 357.

³⁵² Shephard, Robert, "Sidney, Robert, first earl of Leicester (1563–1626)", ODNB.

³⁵³ Nelson, p. 354.

³⁵⁴ Cecil Papers 37/66(a); Cecil Papers 37/66(b); TNA REQ 2/388/28; Nelson, pp. 361-7.

³⁵⁵ Slack, Paul, rev.; "Hayward [Heyward], Sir Rowland (c.1520–1593)", ODNB.

³⁵⁶ TNA C 66/1476, m. 19; Nelson, p. 368.

³⁵⁷ TNA SP12/264/111, ff. 151-1A ; Nelson, p. 369.

³⁵⁸ Nelson, p. 369.

³⁵⁹ Nelson, pp. 370-3.

³⁶⁰ BL MS Lansdowne 87/34, f. 96; Nelson, p. 373.

³⁶¹ STC 17834.

³⁶² Kathman, David, "Meres, Francis (1565/6–1647)", ODNB.

'the best for Comedy amongst vs'.³⁶³

On 28 April 1599 Oxford was sued by Judith Ruswell, widow of William Ruswell, for an alleged debt of £500 for services rendered by Ruswell as a tailor 18 or 20 years earlier. Oxford defended the suit, alleging that not only had he paid Ruswell, but that Ruswell had subsequently absconded with 'cloth of gold and silver and other stuff' belonging to Oxford worth £800. The outcome of the suit is unknown.³⁶⁴

Earlier negotiations for a marriage to William Herbert³⁶⁵ having fallen through, in May or June 1599 Oxford's 15-year-old daughter Bridget married Francis Norris.³⁶⁶

In 1599 John Farmer dedicated a second book to Oxford, *The First Set of English Madrigals*,³⁶⁷ alluding in the dedication to Oxford's own proficiency as a musician ('without flattery be it spoken, those that know your Lordship know this, that using this science as a recreation, your Lordship have overgone most of them that make it a profession'.³⁶⁸

Two entries in the Stationers' Register attest to the continued existence of Oxford's Men in the early 1600s. *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall* was registered on 23 October 1600 as having been 'sundry times played by the right honourable the Earl of Oxenford, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, his servants', while *The True History of George Scanderbeg* was registered on 3 July 1601 'as it was lately played by the right honourable the Earl of Oxenford his servants'.³⁶⁹ In the same year, George Baker dedicated a second book to Oxford, his *Practice of the New and Old Physic*,³⁷⁰ a translation of a work by Conrad Gesner, stating that he had published it under Oxford's 'honourable protection . . . because your wit, learning and authority hath great force and strength in repressing the curious crakes of the envious'.³⁷¹

In July 1600 Oxford wrote requesting Sir Robert Cecil's help in securing an appointment as Governor of the Isle of Jersey, once again citing the Queen's unfulfilled promises to him:

Although my bad success in former suits to her Majesty have given me cause to bury my hopes in the deep abyss and bottom of despair rather than now to attempt, after so many trials made in vain & so many opportunities escaped, the effects of fair words or fruits of

³⁶³ Nelson, pp. 386-7.

³⁶⁴ TNA C 2/Eliz/R8/29; Nelson, pp. 376-9.

³⁶⁵ Stater, Victor, "Herbert, William, third Earl of Pembroke (1580–1630)", ODNB.

³⁶⁶ Burns, F.D.A., "Norris, Francis, Earl of Berkshire (1579–1622)", ODNB; Nelson, pp. 369, 374-6.

³⁶⁷ STC 10697.

³⁶⁸ Nelson, pp. 381-2.

³⁶⁹ Nelson, p. 391.

³⁷⁰ STC 11799.

³⁷¹ Nelson, p. 382.

*golden promises, yet for that I cannot believe but that there hath been always a true correspondency of word and intention in her Majesty, I do conjecture that with a little help that which of itself hath brought forth so fair blossoms will also yield fruit. Wherefore having moved her Majesty lately about the office of the Isle . . .*³⁷²

On 2 February 1601 Oxford again wrote to Cecil for his support, this time for the office of President of Wales.³⁷³ As with his former suits, Oxford was again unsuccessful. About this time he was also listed on the Pipe Rolls as owing £20 for the subsidy.³⁷⁴

After the abortive Essex rebellion on 8 February 1601, Oxford was 'the senior of the twenty-five noblemen' who rendered verdicts at the treason trials of Essex and Southampton.³⁷⁵ After Essex's co-conspirator, Sir Charles Danvers,³⁷⁶ was executed on 18 March 1601, Oxford became involved in a complicated suit concerning the Queen's right to lands which had [escheated to the Crown at Danvers' attainder, a suit opposed by Danvers' kinsmen.³⁷⁷ On 7 August Lord Buckhurst and Sir John Fortescue³⁷⁸ wrote to the Attorney-General, Sir Edward Coke,³⁷⁹ that 'my Lord of Oxford doth desire that he may have a copy of the case as you have collected it out of the evidences showed before us to the intent he may consider thereof with his learned counsel for the benefit of her Majesty, as he affirmeth, the which we think fit he have'.³⁸⁰

While pursuing the Danvers suit, Oxford continued to suffer from ill health. On 7 October he wrote to Cecil saying that 'if my health had been to my mind, I would have been before this at the court'.³⁸¹ On 22 November he wrote again, saying that 'In that I have not sent an answer to your last letter as you might expect, I shall desire you to hold me for excused sith ever sithence the receipt thereof by reason of my sickness I have not been able to write', and asking that Cecil 'bear with the weakness of my lame hand'.³⁸²

On 4 December Oxford wrote again to Cecil, expressing shock that Cecil, who had encouraged him to undertake the Danvers suit, had now withdrawn his support:

I cannot conceive in so short a time & in so small an absence how so great a change is happened in you, for in the beginning of my suit to her Majesty I was doubtful to enter thereinto both for the want I had of friends and the doubt of the Careys, but I was encouraged by you, who did not only assure me to be an assured friend unto me, but

³⁷² Cecil Papers 251/28; Nelson, p. 394.

³⁷³ Cecil Papers 76/34; Nelson, pp. 396-8.

³⁷⁴ Nelson, p. 396.

³⁷⁵ Nelson, p. 397.

³⁷⁶ Hammer, Paul E.J., "Danvers, Sir Charles (c.1568–1601)", ODNB.

³⁷⁷ Cecil Papers 89/124; ERO D/DRg 2/26; Nelson, pp. 398-402, 407.

³⁷⁸ Lowe, J. Andreas, "Fortescue, Sir John (1533–1607)", ODNB.

³⁷⁹ Boyer, Allen D., "Coke, Sir Edward (1552–1634)", ODNB.

³⁸⁰ TNA SP 12/281/45, f. 90; Nelson, p. 399.

³⁸¹ Cecil Papers 88/101; Nelson, p. 400.

³⁸² Cecil Papers 89/124; Nelson, pp. 400-1.

*further did undertake to move it to her, which you so well performed that that after some dispute her Majesty was contented. In that good beginning I was promised favour, that I should have assistance of her Majesty's counsel in law, that I should have expedition, but for favour the other party hitherto hath found much more, and as for assistance of her Majesty's counsel, who hath been more, nay only against me, the expedition hath been such that what might have been done in one month is now almost a year deferred.*³⁸³

As with his other suits aimed at improving his financial situation, this last of Oxford's suits to the Queen ended in disappointment. On 22 March 1602 he wrote to Cecil: 'It is now a year sithence by your only means her Majesty granted her interest in Danvers' escheat. I had only then her word from your mouth. I find by this waste of time that lands will not be carried without deeds.'³⁸⁴

Oxford's only successful suit to the Queen during these years involved his playing company. On 31 March 1602 the Privy Council sent a letter to the Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Garrard (d.1546-1625):

*We received your letter signifying some amendment of the abuses or disorders by the immoderate exercise of stage plays in and about the city by means of our late order renewed for the restraint of them, and withal showing a special inconvenience yet remaining by reason that the servants of our very good Lord the Earl of Oxford, and of me, the Earl of Worcester, being joined by agreement together in one company, to whom, upon notice of her Majesty's pleasure at the suit of the Earl of Oxford, toleration hath been thought meet to be granted, notwithstanding the restraint of our said former orders, do not tie themselves to one certain place and house, but do change their place at their own disposition, which is as disorderly and offensive as the former offence of many houses, and as the other companies that are allowed, namely of me, the Lord Admiral, and the Lord Chamberlain, be appointed their certain houses, and one and no more to each company, so we do straitly require that this third company be likewise appointed to one place. And because we are informed the house called the Boar's Head is the place they have especially used and do best like of, we do pray and require you that that said house, namely the Boar's Head, may be assigned unto them, and that they be very straitly charged to use and exercise their plays in no other but that house, as they will look to have that toleration continued and avoid farther displeasure.*³⁸⁵

LAST YEARS

In the early morning of 24 March 1603 Queen Elizabeth died without naming a successor.³⁸⁶ A few days before the Queen's death Oxford entertained Henry Clinton, 2nd Earl of Lincoln, a nobleman known for his erratic and violent behaviour, at his house

³⁸³ Cecil Papers 89/148; Nelson, p. 401.

³⁸⁴ Cecil Papers 181/99; Nelson, p. 401.

³⁸⁵ Nelson, pp. 391-2; Chambers, p. 225.

³⁸⁶ Nelson, p. 408.

at Hackney, and after dinner:

*discourse[d] with him of the impossibility of the Queen's life, and that the nobility, being peers of the realm, were bound to take care for the common good of the state in the cause of succession, in the which himself, meaning the Earl of Lincoln, ought to have more regard than others because he had a nephew of the blood royal, naming my Lord Hastings, whom he persuaded the Earl of Lincoln to send for, and that there should be means used to convey him over into France where he should find friends that would make him a party, of the which there was a precedent in former times.*³⁸⁷

Lincoln relayed his conversation with Oxford to Sir John Peyton,³⁸⁸ Lieutenant of the Tower, who later defended his refusal to take Lincoln's report as a serious threat to King James' accession:

*At the first apprehension of my Lord of Lincoln's discovery I was much moved and troubled, but when he had made me understand what great person it was whom he meant, I knew him to be so weak in body, in friends, in ability and all other means to raise any combustion in the state as I never feared anything to proceed from so feeble a foundation.*³⁸⁹

In light of his discussion with Oxford, Lincoln was astonished to find Oxford's name among the signatories to the proclamation of James of Scotland as King immediately after the Queen's death.³⁹⁰

On 25 and 27 April 1603 Oxford wrote to Cecil:

*I have always found myself beholding to you for many kindnesses and courtesies, wherefore I am bold at this present, which giveth occasion of many considerations, to desire you as my very good friend and kind brother-in-law to impart to me what course is devised by you of the Council & the rest of the Lords concerning our duties to the King's Majesty, whether you do expect any messenger before his coming to let us understand his pleasure, or else his personal arrival to be presently or very shortly. And, if it be so, what order is resolved on amongst you, either for the attending or meeting of his Majesty for, by reason of mine infirmity, I cannot come among you so often as I wish, and by reason my house is not so near that at every occasion I can be present, as were fit.*³⁹¹

In the same letter Oxford expressed his grief at the late Queen's death, and his fears for the future:

³⁸⁷ TNA SP 14/4/14, ff. 27-9; Nelson, p. 414.

³⁸⁸ Evans, Helen M.E., "Peyton, Sir John (1544–1630)", ODNB.

³⁸⁹ TNA SP 14/4/14, ff. 27-9; TNA SP 14/3/77, f. 134; Nelson, p. 415.

³⁹⁰ Folger Library MX X.d.30(42); STC 8297; Larkin, James F. and Paul L. Hughes, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 1-4; Nelson, p. 415.

³⁹¹ Cecil Papers 99/150; Nelson, pp. 418-9.

*I cannot but find a great grief in myself to remember the mistress which we have lost, under whom both you and myself from our greenest years have been in a manner brought up, and although it hath pleased God after an earthly kingdom to take her up into a more permanent and heavenly state wherein I do not doubt but she is crowned with glory, and to give us a prince wise, learned and enriched with all virtues, yet the long time which we spent in her service we cannot look for so much left of our days as to bestow upon another, neither the long acquaintance and kind familiarities wherewith she did use us we are not ever to expect from another prince, as denied by the infirmity of age and common course of reason. In this common shipwreck, mine is above all the rest who, least regarded though often comforted of all her followers, she hath left to try my fortune among the alterations of time and chance, either without sail whereby to take the advantage of any prosperous gale or with anchor to ride till the storm be overpassed. There is nothing therefore left to my comfort but the excellent virtues and deep wisdom wherewith God hath endued our new master and sovereign Lord, who doth not come amongst us as a stranger but as a natural prince, succeeding by right of blood and inheritance, not as a conqueror but as the true shepherd of Christ's flock to cherish and comfort them.*³⁹²

Oxford fears were ill-founded, however. In letters to Cecil in May and June 1603 he again pressed his decades-long claim to be restored to the keepership of Waltham Forest and the house and park of Havering, and on 18 July 1603 the new King granted his suit.³⁹³ On 2 August 1603 the King confirmed Oxford's annuity of £1000.³⁹⁴

On 18 June 1604 Oxford granted the custody of the Forest of Essex to his son-in-law, Lord Norris, and his cousin, Sir Francis Vere.³⁹⁵ Six days later Oxford died on 24 June 1604³⁹⁶ of unknown causes at King's Place, Hackney, without leaving a will,³⁹⁷ and was buried on 6 July in the parish church of St. Augustine.³⁹⁸ In her will, his widow, Elizabeth, requested that she too be buried 'in the church of Hackney . . . as near unto the body of my late dear and noble Lord and husband as may be; only I will that there be in the said church erected for us a tomb fitting our degree'.³⁹⁹ Although the Countess's will and parish registers confirm Oxford's burial at Hackney, his cousin Percival Golding later stated that his body lies at Westminster:

*I will speak only what all men's voices confirm: he was a man in mind and body absolutely accomplished with honourable endowments. He died at his house at Hackney in the month of June anno 1604, and lieth buried at Westminster.*⁴⁰⁰

³⁹² Cecil Papers 99/150; Nelson, p. 419.

³⁹³ TNA SP 14/2/63, f. 160; TNA C 66/1612, mm. 27-28; Nelson, pp. 420-1, 423.

³⁹⁴ TNA E 403/2598; Nelson, p. 423.

³⁹⁵ TNA C 142/286/165; Nelson, p. 425.

³⁹⁶ TNA C 142/286/165.

³⁹⁷ Chambers, *Sir Henry Lee*, pp. 24102, 313, 315; Nelson, p. 431.

³⁹⁸ London Metropolitan Archive P79/Jn/21, f. 197; Nelson, pp. 423-4.

³⁹⁹ TNAPROB 11/121, ff. 74-5; Nelson, p. 347.

⁴⁰⁰ BL MS Harley 41, f. 89; Nelson, p. 431.

HEIRS AND INHERITANCE

By his first marriage to Anne Cecil, Oxford had a son and a daughter, Frances, who died young, and three daughters who survived infancy. The Earl's daughters all married into the peerage. Elizabeth married William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby. Bridget married Francis Norris, 1st Earl of Berkshire. Susan married Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke and 1st Earl of Montgomery.⁴⁰¹

By his mistress Anne Vavasour Oxford had an illegitimate son, Sir Edward Vere.⁴⁰²

By his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, Oxford had his only surviving legitimate son and heir, Henry de Vere, later 18th Earl of Oxford.

As noted earlier, 12 years before his death Oxford had sold his interest in Castle Hedingham to Lord Burghley in trust for his three daughters by his first marriage. After the death of Oxford's widow, Elizabeth, their son, Henry, inherited the remainder of Oxford's estate. Two inquisitions post mortem were taken after Oxford's death, the first in 1604 for his property in Essex, the second in 1608 for his Great Garden property in London.⁴⁰³ Magdalene College brought suit against Oxford's heir for the Great Garden property, and legal proceedings continued for decades.⁴⁰⁴ The value of the property to both Magdalene College and Oxford's heir is indicated by a 1615 case in Chancery stating that in 1575:⁴⁰⁵

[T]he Queen at the suit of the said College licensed them to alien . . . The same was accordingly performed by a conveyance to her Majesty, and from her Majesty to Spinola, and the rectory from Spinola to the College, after which Spinola and the Earl of Oxford, his assignee and his under-tenants have built upon the garden 130 houses, and therein bestowed £10,000, which assignee and his under-tenants have bonds and security given for the enjoyment thereof to the sum of £20,000.

REPUTATION

A stream of dedications attests to Oxford's intellectual reputation and his lifelong patronage of writers, musicians and actors. Stephen May terms Oxford 'a nobleman with

⁴⁰¹ Smith, David L., "Herbert, Philip, first Earl of Montgomery and fourth Earl of Pembroke (1584–1650)", ODNB.

⁴⁰² Nelson, p. 266.

⁴⁰³ TNA C 142/286/165; TNA C 142/305/103; Nelson, pp. 431, 486.

⁴⁰⁴ Purnell, Edward Kelly, *Magdalene College* (London: F.E. Robinson & Co., 1904), pp. 67-72; Pearson, p. 49.

⁴⁰⁵ Purnell, pp. 76-7; Pearson, pp. 48-9; *English Reports*, Vol. 77 (Edinburgh: William Green & Sons, 1907), pp. 1235-52; *English Reports*, Vol. 21, pp. 485-9.

extraordinary intellectual interests and commitments', whose biography exhibits a 'lifelong devotion to learning'.⁴⁰⁶ Concerning Oxford's patronage, he writes:

*The range of Oxford's patronage is as remarkable as its substance. . . . Among the thirty-three works dedicated to the Earl, six deal with religion and philosophy, two with music, and three with medicine; but the focus of his patronage was literary, for thirteen of the books presented to him were original and translated works of literature. Thus forty percent of the books offered to the Earl were literary, and even if we subtract all seven dedications by the prolific Munday, this category would still account of almost one fourth of the total. By contrast, peers of similar means and with some reputation for cultivating the arts were rather less sought after by Elizabethan men of letters.*⁴⁰⁷

As noted above, Oxford maintained companies of boy actors and men players in the years from 1580 to 1602, held the lease of the Blackfriars Theatre for a time, and patronized a company of musicians.

Oxford also had a high reputation as a poet amongst his contemporaries, and his verses were published in several poetry miscellanies. Both Webbe and Puttenham praised his poetic ability, and the latter quoted his verses:⁴⁰⁸

When wert thou borne desire?
 In pompe and pryme of May,
 By whom sweete boy wert thou begot?
 By good conceit men say,
 Tell me who was thy nurse?
 Fresh youth in sugred ioy.
 What was thy meate and dayly foode?
 Sad sighes with great annoy.
 What hadst thou then to drinke?
 Vnfayned louers teares.
 What cradle wert thou rocked in?
 In hope deuoyde of feares.

SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP QUESTION

In *Shakespeare Identified*,⁴⁰⁹ published in 1920, J. Thomas Looney, an English schoolteacher, proposed Oxford as a candidate for the authorship of Shakespeare's works.

⁴⁰⁶ May, Stephen W., ed., "The Poems of Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford and of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex", *Studies in Philology*, Vol. LXXVII (Early Winter 1980), LXXVII, Number 5, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁷ May, *The Poems of Edward de Vere*, p. 9.

⁴⁰⁸ Willcocks, 1936, p. 206.

⁴⁰⁹ Looney, J. Thomas, "*Shakespeare*" *Identified* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1920), available online at <http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/etexts/si/00.htm>.

His theory, based on perceived analogies between Oxford's life and poetic techniques and Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, gradually replaced Francis Bacon's⁴¹⁰ ascendancy in the field.

⁴¹⁰ Peltonen, Markku, "Bacon, Francis, Viscount St Alban (1561–1626)", ODNB.