
OXMYTHS: SECTION I

The Oxmyths described below are arranged chronologically in terms of events in Oxford's life. No attempt has been made here to specify the publications in which the various myths have appeared over the years. Rather, attention is focused on specific references which disprove the myth in question. Many of the manuscript references cited are available in modern spelling versions at <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/>.

MYTH: Oxford and his sister Mary were twins.

The myth that Oxford and his sister Mary were both 14 years old in 1563, and therefore twins, arose because the phrase *minorem quatordecem annorum* is applied to both of them in Arthur Golding's petition of June 28, 1563. Louis Thorn Golding incorrectly translated the Latin as 'a minor of fourteen years', which, since the phrase is applied to both Oxford and Mary, would have made them both 14 years of age in 1563. The correct translation, however, is 'less than 14 years of age', or 'under 14 years of age', which merely means that both Oxford and Mary were under the age of 14 in 1563.

Further evidence that Oxford and Mary were not twins is found in the two extant wills of the 16th Earl of Oxford. The 1552 will of the 16th Earl contains bequests to 'Edward my son', but does not mention his daughter Mary, indicating that Mary had not yet been born. Nor does a codicil of January 28, 1554 make any mention of Mary. The first mention of the 16th Earl's daughter, Mary, is in his will of 1562.

References:

- (1) Black, Henry Campbell, *Black's law dictionary*, 4th ed. rev. (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing, 1968) p.1148.
- (2) Arthur Golding's 1563 petition regarding Oxford's legitimacy, TNA SP12/29/8, ff. 11-12.
- (3) First surviving will dated 21 December 1552 of John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford, BL MS Stowe Charter 633-4.
- (4) Second surviving will dated 28 July 1562 of John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford, TNA PROB 11/46, ff. 174-6v.

MYTH: Oxford was educated in the household of Sir Thomas Smith at Ankerwyke from 1554 until the death of Queen Mary on 17 November 1558

The evidence adduced in support of this claim is that in inventories taken in 1561 and 1569, Sir Thomas Smith listed the contents of a chamber at Ankerwyke which he referred to as 'my Lorde's chamber'. However Andrew (1467-1543), 1st Lord Windsor, had earlier owned Ankerwyke, then known as the manor of Parnish. Henry VIII granted Ankerwyke to Andrew, Lord Windsor, for life in 1539, with remainder to his sons William, Edmund and Thomas. William (1498-1558), 2nd Lord Windsor, sold this manor and others to the King for £1000 in 1544. The likelihood that the designation 'my Lorde's chamber' refers to a chamber once occupied by Lord Windsor is strengthened by the fact that the date '1543', the year of Lord Windsor's death, occurs after the first items listed in that chamber in the 1569 inventory.

References:

(1) Queen's College MS 49, f. 83r and MS 83, f. 123r, available online at <http://politicworm.com/blog/>.

(2) 'Parishes: Egham', *A History of the County of Surrey: Volume 3* (1911), pp. 419-427 at pp. 422-3. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42999>.

MYTH: Oxford matriculated at Queen's College, Cambridge as 'impubes' on 14 November 1558, but left within a year to be educated in the household of Sir Thomas Smith

There is no evidence that Oxford left Cambridge within a year of matriculating in 1558.

MYTH: Arthur Golding was Oxford's tutor.

Although Arthur Golding lived in the Cecil household while Oxford was living there as a ward of the Queen, there is no evidence that Golding was Oxford's tutor.

MYTH: Henry Howard reported that the Queen called Oxford a bastard.

The allegation that the Queen called Oxford a bastard ('that the Queen said he was a bastard, for which cause he would never love her, and leave her in the lurch one day') is found in Charles Arundel's allegations against Oxford, not in Henry Howard's allegations.

References:

(1) TNA SP12/151/46, ff. 103-4.

MYTH: Oxford was a ward of Lord Burghley.

Although he resided in Lord Burghley's household from the age of 12 during his wardship, Oxford was a ward of the Queen, not a ward of Lord Burghley.

References:

(1) TNA WARD 8/13.

MYTH: Oxford inherited income of £3500 per annum.

The inquisition post mortem taken after the 16th Earl of Oxford's death values the annual income from the 16th Earl's estates at only £2050 per annum.

References:

(1) Inquisition post mortem dated 18 January 1563 of John de Vere, 16th earl of Oxford, TNA C 142/136/12.

(2) TNA WARD 8/13.

(3) Stone, Lawrence, *The crisis of the aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966) pp. 582, 760.

MYTH: Lord Burghley controlled Oxford's lands during Oxford's minority.

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, controlled Oxford's lands during Oxford's minority via a grant from Queen Elizabeth dated 22 October 1563.

References:

(1) TNA WARD 8/13.

(2) Bowen, Gwynneth, "What happened at Hedingham and Earls Colne?", *Shakespeare Authorship Review*, no. 23 (Summer 1970), pp.1-11.

MYTH: Oxford received honorary degrees from Cambridge and Oxford universities.

There is no evidence that the degrees were merely honorary.

MYTH: On 23 July 1567, Oxford 'killed' an unarmed man, Thomas Brincknell, with a rapier.

There is no evidence that Oxford 'killed' Brincknell. The coroner's inquest which inquired into the death of Thomas Brincknell found that Brincknell, who was drunk, was the author of his own death when he ran onto Oxford's unbated rapier while Oxford and Edward Baynham were practising the art of fencing in the back garden of Cecil House. The finding by the coroner's inquest was that Brincknell received a fatal wound in the thigh, and died instantly. Although the report does not state the medical cause of death, it seems likely that the femoral artery was severed, and that Brincknell rapidly bled to death.

References:

(1) Verdict of coroner's inquest of 24 July 1567 into the death of Thomas Brincknell, TNA KB 9/619 (part 1) 13.

MYTH: Oxford is the sword-bearer in the Gheeraedts engraving of a Garter procession.

There is no evidence of this. The engraving by Marcus Gheeraedts the Elder depicts Henri III of France, who was not nominated as a Garter Knight until 23 April 1575 and Maximilian II, who died on 12 October 1576. The presence of these two individuals suggests that the engraving dates from the period April 1575-October 1576, between Henri III's nomination and Maximilian's death. There was only a single installation of a Garter Knight during this time, the installation of Charles, Lord Howard of Effingham, on May 8, 1575. Oxford was not in England in May, 1575. From February, 1575 until April, 1576, Oxford was away from England on a continental tour.

References:

(1) Cokayne, George Edward, *The complete peerage*, vol. 2, Appendix B (London: St. Catherine Press, 1912) pp.551-2.

MYTH: *The sword-bearer in the Gheeraedts engraving of a Garter procession is a 'little fellow'.*

The sword-bearer is approximately the same height as the other male persons depicted in the engraving.

References:

(1) Reproduction of the Gheeraedts engraving on Robert Brazil's website at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Thebes/4260/garterparade.html>.

MYTH: Oxford was nicknamed 'Phoebus', 'Cupid', 'Will', and 'the Boar'; the Queen called him her 'Turk'.

There is no evidence of this.

MYTH: Queen Elizabeth was referring to a marriage between herself and Oxford when she said that she 'would be ashamed to lead so young a man as Oxford to church'.

The Queen's remark is reported in a postscript to a letter to King Charles IX of France (1550-1574) written on 20 July 1571 by the French ambassador to England, Bertrand de Salignac Fenelon, seigneur de la Mothe (1523-1589). The postscript is addressed to the King's mother, Queen Catherine de Medici. The remark was made in reference to Queen Elizabeth's proposed marriage to Henri (1551-1589), Duke of Anjou, a younger brother of King Charles IX. After Charles' death on 30 May 1574, Henri reigned as King Henri III until his assassination in 1589. Henri was born at Fontainebleau on 19 September 1551, so he was only 19 years old at the time of these marriage negotiations. Fenelon reports that he and Queen Elizabeth were discussing various matters when the Queen brought up the subject of the portrait of Henri which she had been sent. She was pleased to note that he looked mature because of the embarrassment that marriage to such a young man would bring her. Fenelon writes:

Madame, en discourant avec la Royne d'Angleterre des choses que je mande en la lettre du Roy, nous sommes, de propos en propos, venuz à parler du pourtraict de Monseigneur vostre filz, et elle m'a dict qu'encor que ce ne soit que le créon, et que son teint n'y soit que quasi tout chafouré de charbon, si ne layssoit ce visaige de monstrer beaucoup de beaulté et beaucoup de merques de dignité et de prudence; et qu'elle avoit esté bien ayse de le veoyr ainsy meur comme d'ung homme parfaict, car me vouloit dire tout librement que mal vollontiers, estant de l'eage qu'elle est, eust elle vollu estre conduit à l'esglise pour estre maryée avec ung qui se fût monstré aussi jeune comme le comte d'Oxford, et que cella n'eust peu estre sans en avoir quelque honte, et encores du regret

[=Madam, in discoursing with the Queen of England of the things which I send information of in the King's letter, we came, in passing from one subject to another, to

speak of the portrait of Monsieur, your son, and she said to me that, although it is but a pencil drawing, and that his complexion is, as it were, all disfigured by charcoal, that does not prevent the countenance from showing a great deal of beauty and many marks of dignity and wisdom, and that she had been well pleased to see him as mature as a perfect man, because she wished to tell me very freely that not willingly, being the age that she is, would she have wanted to be brought to church to be married with one who would have looked as young as the Earl of Oxford, and that that could not have been [+done] without her experiencing some embarrassment in doing it, and moreover, some repining]

In fact, Henri not only looked as young as the Earl of Oxford, he was actually a year and half younger than Oxford, who was born on 12 April 1550. Queen Elizabeth was born on 7 September 1533, and was thus 37 years of age when this letter was written. Although it is clear from other documents that Queen Elizabeth did not actually intend to go through with the marriage to Henri, Duke of Anjou, and that the negotiations were merely a political manoeuvre, it is nonetheless small wonder that she felt embarrassment at the prospect of public reaction to the idea that she would wed a young man half her age.

References:

(1) *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) at iv, p.186.

(2) The letter can also be found online at:

http://books.google.ca/books?id=oLIUAAAAQAAJ&pg=PP7&lpg=PP7&dq=%22correspondance+diplomatique%22&source=bl&ots=UtrM3upXpY&sig=hepw04g2ooP6A-_r5mfwm-NL9Fk

MYTH: Sir George Buck wrote of Oxford that ‘there were certain rich and prosperous men who desired to farm a part of his earldom, who offered to pay him yearly the sum of twelve thousand pounds, and to leave to his use and occupation all castles and manor houses and wonted places of residences of the ancient earls, with all the parks and woods or forests’.

According to Kincaid, the word ‘twelve’ is missing in the relevant passage in Sir George Buck’s manuscript *History of King Richard the Third*, and Kincaid has supplied the word ‘twelve’ from a mid-17th century scribal copy, BL Egerton 2216. It seems likely that the scribe of BL Egerton 2216 misread either the numeral ‘2’ or the word ‘two’ in Buck’s original manuscript as ‘12’ or ‘twelve’. No reliance can thus be placed on it. Moreover the figure of £12,000 per annum is a completely fantastic one, since the lands Oxford inherited from the 16th Earl were worth only £2250 in revenue a year. The ‘clear yearly value’ of the 16th Earl’s lands on 1 July 1562 when the 16th Earl entered into a contract

for the marriage of his son and heir with a sister of the 3rd Earl of Huntingdon was stated to be £2000. The annual rental value of the 16th Earl's lands in the 16th Earl's inquisition post mortem dated 18 January 1563 totals £2187 2s 7d. WARD 8/13, a Court of Wards accounting document for the period 29 September 1563 to 29 September 1564, gives the total value of the 16th Earl's lands as £2233 13s 7d. When Oxford sued his livery in 1572, the sum charged by the Court of Wards as the fine for his livery was £1257. According to Hurstfield, the fine for suing a special livery was slightly more than half the value of the ward's lands.

References:

- (1) Kincaid, Arthur Noel, ed., *The History of King Richard the Third (1619) by Sir George Buck* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1979), p. 170.
- (2) Contract between the 16th Earl and the 3rd Earl of Huntingdon for a marriage between Oxford and a sister of the Earl of Huntingdon, HL HAP o/s Box 3(19).
- (3) 16th Earl's inquisition post mortem, TNA C 142/136/12.
- (4) Court of Wards accounting document for the period 29 September 1563 – 29 September 1564, TNA WARD 8/13.
- (5) Payment schedule for Oxford's fines in the Court of Wards, Cecil Papers 25/105.
- (6) Hurstfield, Joel, *The Queen's Wards* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), pp. 172-3.

MYTH: John Poole, while a prisoner in Newgate in July, 1587, said that 'the Queen made love to the Earl of Oxford'.

The statement actually made by Poole was that the Queen 'wooed the Earl of Oxford, but he would not fall in'.

References:

- (1) TNA SP 12/273/103, calendared on p.372 of CSP Domestic, Elizabeth 1598-1601 under the year 1599.

MYTH: Oxford owned Havering in 1574.

Oxford never owned the royal manor and park of Havering, and it was not until the reign of King James that Oxford regained the keepership of Waltham Forest and of the King's house and park of Havering.

References:

(1) Oxford's letter dated 7 May 1603 to Robert Cecil, CP 99/161.

MYTH: When Queen Elizabeth dropped her glove during a performance in which Oxford was acting, Oxford retrieved her glove ‘while improvising in the same metre as his interrupted speech’:

*Although engag'd on this high embassy,
Yet stoop we to pick up our cousin's glove.*

In *This Star of England* (p. 106), Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn substituted Oxford's name for that of Shakespeare in an anecdote which appears to have originated in Oxberry's *The Actor's Budget* and Ryan's *Dramatic Table Talk*.

References:

- (1) *This Star of England* at <http://www.sourcetext.com/sourcebook/Star/ch10.html>.
- (2) Oxberry, William, *The Actor's Budget* (Columbian Press, 1824), p. 207, available online.
- (3) Ryan, R., *Dramatic Table Talk, or Scenes, Situations & Adventures Serious & Comic in Theatrical History & Biography*, Vol. III (London: John Knight and Henry Lacey, 1825), pp. 156-7, available online.

MYTH: Oxford departed on his continental tour on 7 January 1575.

Oxford left England on his continental tour on or about 7 February, 1575.

References:

- (1) Oxford's licence to travel for one year issued in January 1575, TNA 3/1571, f.1.
- (2) Oxford's indenture dated 30 January 1575, ERO D/Drg2/25.
- (3) Letter dated 7 February 1575 from Edward Bacon to his brother Nathaniel, A. Hassall Smith (ed.), *The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey*, vol. I, 1566-77, Norfolk Record Society 46 (Norwich, 1979), pp.185, 304, cited in Nelson, Alan H., *Monstrous Adversary*, Liverpool University Press, c2003, p. 121.

(4) Memo by Lord Burghley dated 10 July 1576, CP xiii, p.144 (140/15(2)), cited in Nelson, Alan H., *Monstrous Adversary*, Liverpool University Press, c2003, p. 119.

MYTH: Oxford personally wrote verses in a copy of a New Testament belonging to Anne Cecil.

The New Testament itself is no longer extant, and the copy of the verses is not in Oxford's hand.

References:

(1) CP 140/124.

(2) E-mail message of 11 June 1999 from Dr. Alan Nelson.

MYTH: Clemente Parretti was an Italian banker from whom Oxford was to receive funds while in Venice.

Clement Parrett was Oxford's servant.

References:

(1) CP 7/106, Clement Parrett to Lord Burghley, 23 September 1575.

(2) TNA SP 70/134, ff. 186-7, William Lewin to Lord Burghley, 4 July 1575.

It is likely that he went to Rome before sailing up the Mediterranean to Genoa, where he spent some time; he certainly went to Padua, Mantua, Florence, and Siena; then he returned to Venice. From here the banker, Clemente Parretti, through whom he was to receive funds,

MYTH: While in Venice in 1575, Oxford 'took up with Virginia Padoana, a courtesan'.

On 27 September 1587, Stephen Powle wrote to John Chamberlain from Venice mentioning that he was lodged near the residences of several well-known Venetian courtesans.

If to be well neighboured be no small part of happiness, I may repute myself highly fortunate, for I am lodged amongst a great number of Signoras. Isabella Bellochia in the

next house on my right hand and Virginia Padoana, that honoreth all our nation for my Lord of Oxford's sake, is my neighbour on the left side. Over my head hath Lodovica Gonzaga, the French King's mistress, her house. You think it peradventure preposterous in Architecture to have her lie over me? I am sorry for it, but I cannot remedy it now. Pesarmia with her sweet entertainment and brave discourse is not two canals off. Ancilla (Master Hatton's handmaid) is in the next Campo; Paulina Gonzaga is not far off; Prudencia Romana with her courtly train of French gentlemen every night goeth "a spasso" by my pergola. As for Imperia Romana, her date is out which flourished in your time. I must of force be well hallowed amongst so many Saints. But in truth, I am afraid they do condemn me of heresy for setting up so few tapers to their high altars.

It was the custom at the time for the wives of prominent Venetians to remain secluded at home, and it was these accomplished and polished courtesans who were the female companions of wealthy and titled Venetians at public events and entertainments. It would have been difficult for Oxford, as a nobleman visiting Venice, to have avoided meeting these courtesans in the company of the men whose mistresses they were. Powle's remark about Virginia Padoana is evidence of nothing more than the fact that Virginia Padoana still remembered and admired Oxford eleven years after his visit to Venice.

It is also worth noting that Stephen Powle was the son-in-law of John Turner (d.1579), a trusted servant of John de Vere (1516-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford, named as an executor in the 16th Earl's will. John Turner also held a lease of the manor of Crepping Hall from Edward de Vere (1550-1604), the 17th Earl, and left him a bequest of £40 in his will. Turner's widow, Christian, purchased two manors from Oxford, Lamarsh and Colne Wake. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography* in late 1593 Powle married John Turner's daughter, Margaret Smyth (nee Turner) 'and settled with her at Smyth Hall, Blackmore, Essex, where he lived the life of a country gentleman and served as a JP'.

(1) Stern, Virginia F., *Sir Stephen Powle of court and country; Memorabilia of a government agent for Queen Elizabeth I, chancery official, and English country gentleman* (Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania: Susquehanna University Press, 1992), p. 83.

(2) Transcript of Stephen Powle's letter, and of records of Virginia Padoana's transgressions of the sumptuary laws (i.e. laws regulating expenditure on dress), posted on Dr. Alan Nelson's website.

(3) Entry for Sir Stephen Powle (c.1553-1630), *Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition.

(4) TNA PROB 11/61, ff. 274-7, will of John Turner.

MYTH: While in Venice in 1576, Oxford 'took up with' Orazio Cuoco, a Venetian choirboy, and on his return to England he 'lived with' Cuoco.

This loaded language misrepresents Orazio Cuoco's testimony before the Inquisition in Venice on 27 August 1577. According to his testimony, Cuoco was the son of an altarist at the church of Santa Marina. While in Venice, Oxford heard Orazio sing in the choir of Santa Maria Formosa, and asked him whether he would like to go to England. Orazio sought the advice of his parents, and both parents advised him to go. While in England, he lived as a page in Oxford's household, where, along with other of Oxford's servants, he was permitted the practice of his Catholic religion. On at least one occasion, he sang before the Queen. Eventually a Milanese merchant, who feared the youth would lose his faith if he remained in England, gave him money to return home. On his arrival in Venice, Orazio was examined by the Inquisition to determine whether he had lived as a Catholic during his absence, and whether the English had attempted to convert him to the Protestant religion.

References:

(1) Testimony of Orazio Cuoco on 27 August 1577 before the Inquisition, Venice, Archivio di Stato: Santo Uffizio, busta 41, fasc. 'Cocco Orazio': 1577.

(1) Translation by Dr. Noemi Magri of Orazio Cuoco's testimony.

MYTH: On 11 December 1575 Oxford received money in Venice from Pasquino Spinola.

There does not appear to have been any individual named 'Pasquino' Spinola, and in any event the original document establishes that the person from whom Oxford received money was Pasquale Spinola (see TNA SP 70/136, ff. 113-14).

The erroneous designation of 'Pasquale' as 'Pasquino' originated with B.M. Ward:

On December 11th Lord Oxford received his money from Pasquino Spinola at Venice, and left for Florence on the following day.

The error was repeated by Charlton Ogburn:

On December 12th, says Ward, the day after receiving a remittance through Pasquino Spinola in Venice, Oxford was off for Florence.

More recently, Alan Nelson repeated the error, and compounded it by erroneously stating that Pasquale Spinola sent money to Oxford from somewhere outside Venice, whereas Spinola, like Oxford, was in Venice at the time:

On 11 December money sent by Pasquino Spinola reached Oxford at Venice.

References:

(1) TNA SP 70/136, ff. 113-14.

(2) 'Elizabeth: December 1575, 11-20', *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, Volume 11: 1575-1577* (1880), pp. 198-206. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=73226&strquery=Oxford>.

(3) Ward, Bernard Mordaunt, *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604 From Contemporary Documents*, (London: John Murray), 1928), pp. 109-10.

(4) Ogburn, Charlton, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., (McLean, Virginia: EPM Publications, 1992), p. 547.

(5) Nelson, Alan. H., *Monstrous Adversary*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), p. 131.

MYTH: Oxford was given 'a spear of sorts to shake' at a mock tournament in Italy.

The words 'a spear of sorts to shake' do not appear in the original of Andrea Perrucci's *Dell' Arte Rappresentativa Premeditata ed all' Improvviso* (Naples, 1699) describing the mock tournament involving Oxford. The words 'a spear of sorts to shake' are descriptive commentary used by Julia Cooley Altrocchi in her article on the mock tournament.

References:

(1) Perrucci, Andrea, *Dell' Arte Rappresentativa Premeditata ed all' Improvviso* (Firenze: Edizioni Sansoni Antiquariato, 1961), pp. 201-7.

(2) Altrocchi, Julia Cooley, "Oxford and the Commedia dell' Arte", *Shakespeare Authorship Review*, No. 2 (Autumn 1959), reprinted in Clark, Eva Turner, *Hidden allusions in Shakespeare's plays* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1974) pp.134-5.

MYTH: Rowland Yorke was Oxford's receiver.

There is no evidence that Rowland Yorke was ever Oxford's receiver. The receiver mentioned in Lord Burghley's note of 25 April 1576 was Edward Hubberd.

References:

(1) E-mail message of June 10, 1999 from Dr. Daphne Pearson.

(2) Alan H., *Monstrous Adversary* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), p. 142.

MYTH: The word 'tela' in Gabriel Harvey's Gratulationes Valdinenses speech to Oxford means 'spear'.

The Latin word 'tela' includes a variety of weapons, both thrown and hand-held. The phrase *vultus/Tela vibrat* in Gabriel Harvey's 1578 *Gratulationes Valdinenses* speech to Oxford can therefore be translated in more than one way. B.M. Ward translates it as 'thy countenance shakes a spear', T. H. Jameson as 'your glance shoots arrows'.

References:

(1) Jameson, Thomas Hugh, *The Gratulationes Valdinenses of Gabriel Harvey*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1938, p.127.

(2) Excerpt from T.H. Jameson's translation of Gabriel Harvey's 1578 *Gratulationes Valdinenses* at <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/nashe.html>.

(3) Ward, B.M., *The seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604 from contemporary documents* (London: John Murray, 1928), p.158.

MYTH: In his Gratulationes Valdinenses speech, Gabriel Harvey identifies Oxford's literary pursuits with the goddess Minerva.

In his *Gratulationes Valdinenses* speech to Oxford, Gabriel Harvey associates Oxford's literary pursuits with Phoebus Apollo.

References:

(1) Jameson, Thomas Hugh, *The Gratulationes Valdinenses of Gabriel Harvey*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1938, p.127.

(2) <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/nashe.html>

(3) Excerpt from T.H. Jameson's translation of Gabriel Harvey's 1578 *Gratulationes Valdinenses* at <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/nashe.html>.

MYTH: In 1579, in a quarrel with Sir Philip Sidney, Oxford 'threatened violence until the Queen intervened'.

This is a misrepresentation of the evidence. According to Fulke Greville's manuscript life of Sidney, after a quarrel erupted between Sidney and Oxford at the tennis court at Whitehall while the Queen's suitor, Alencon, and the French commissioners negotiating the Queen's marriage were visiting, Sidney (who had not yet been knighted) challenged Oxford to a duel. Oxford did not respond to Sidney's challenge, but Sidney refused to let the matter rest. The Queen, forced to intervene, laid before Sidney 'the difference in degree between Earls, and Gentlemen; the respect inferiors ought to their superiors; and the necessity in Princes to maintain their own creations, as degrees descending between the peoples licentiousness, and the annoyned Sovereignty of Crowns; how the Gentlemans neglect of the Nobility taught the Peasant to insult upon both'. In short, it was Sidney, not Oxford, who threatened violence, and the Queen intervened to remind Sidney that it was not the place of a mere gentleman to challenge a member of the nobility to a duel. It is also possible that Fulke Greville's account of the tennis-court quarrel is biased against Oxford, not only because of Greville's friendship with Sidney, but also because Fulke Greville was the son of Anne Neville (d.1583), one of the daughters of Ralph Neville (1498-1549), 4th Earl of Westmorland, and thus a sister of the 16th Earl of Oxford's first wife, Dorothy Neville (d.1548), who separated from the 16th Earl several years before her death.

References:

(1) Nelson, Alan H., *Monstrous Adversary*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003) pp.196-7.

(2) Entries for Ralph Neville (1498-1549), 4th Earl of Westmorland, and Fulke Greville (1554-1628), 1st Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court, in the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*.

MYTH: Oxford knew Giordano Bruno.

There is no evidence of this.

MYTH: Oxford owned the ship Edward Bonaventure.

Although Oxford was interested in purchasing the *Edward Bonaventure* in October, 1581, there is no evidence that he went through with the purchase.

MYTH: Oxford sold the manor of Battles Hall to the composer, William Byrd (1539x43–1623).

Oxford did not sell the manor of Battles Hall to the composer, William Byrd. However Oxford did grant the composer a 31-year lease of the manor in 1574, to commence after the death of Oxford's uncle, Aubrey Vere (d.1580), who held a life estate in the manor. William Byrd made an oral agreement with William Lewin, who was acting on behalf of his brother-in-law, Anthony Luther, for the sale of the lease. Later, considering the oral agreement not binding, William Byrd transferred the lease to his brother, John Byrd. Luther obtained a verdict against Byrd in the Court of Queen's Bench, but Byrd alleged the jury was packed. The matter was then referred to arbitration, and an award in favour of Luther was handed down in December 1580. In the meantime, Oxford had sold the manor to John Byrd in April 1580.

References:

(1) 'Stapleford Abbots: Manors', A History of the County of Essex: Volume 4: Ongar Hundred (1956), pp. 223-228. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=15673>

(2) TNA CP 25/2/131/1677/22ELIZIEASTER, Item 9
Fine of 18 April 1580 by which Oxford transferred clear title to the manor of Battles Hall in Essex to John Byrd for 400 marks.

(3) TNA C 54/1093, Part 23
Recognizance of 18 April 1580 from Oxford to John Byrd in connection with the sale of the manor of Battles Hall in which Oxford's lease to the composer, William Byrd, is mentioned.

MYTH: Oxford used the modern Bolebec crest of a lion rampant shaking a broken spear.

The Bolebec crest of the lion rampant shaking a broken spear does not date from Oxford's lifetime.

References:

(1) E-mail message of 15 February 1999 from John Rollett.

(2) Papers of Canon Gerald Rendall, Liverpool University archives.

(3) Article by Christopher Paul.

MYTH: Oxford purchased Fisher's Folly in 1584.

Oxford purchased Fisher's Folly prior to February 24, 1580, not in 1584.

References:

(1) Letter from Lord Henry Howard to Queen Elizabeth containing allegations against Oxford, written by Howard at the Queen's commandment shortly after 30 December 1580, BL Cotton Titus C 6, ff. 7-8.

MYTH: Oxford turned Charles Arundel in as a Spanish secret agent in December, 1580.

Mauvissiere's letter of 11 January 1581 to the French King says nothing of Oxford having 'turned Charles Arundel in as a Spanish secret agent'. Mauvissiere merely claims that Oxford 'proceeded to accuse his best friends . . . of having conspired against the state by having made profession of the Catholic faith'.

References:

(1) Letter from Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de Mauvissiere, to King Henri III dated 11 January 1581 mentioning Oxford's allegations against Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel, BN 15973, ff. 387v-392v.

(2) Le Laboureur, Jean, *Les memoires de Messire Michel de Castelnau*, edited by Jean Godefroy, 3 vols, Brussels, 1731.

(3) Pollen, John Hungerford, and William MacMahon (eds.) (1919), *The Venerable Philip Howard Earl of Arundel, 1557-95*, Catholic Record Society, vol. 21, pp.29-30.

MYTH: Oxford was nicknamed 'Ox'.

The examples of 'Ox' in Charles Arundel's allegations in the Howard/Arundel documents are merely abbreviations for 'Oxford', as, for example, 'my L of Ox', rather than a nickname.

References:

(1) TNA SP12/151/44, ff. 98-9.

MYTH: Oxford's comment about 'jacks' was made at the time of the execution of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex in 1601.

Oxford's comment that 'they smiled to see that when jacks went up heads went down' dates from a time when 'Queen Elizabeth had advanced Raleigh', i.e. the early 1580s.

References:

(1) Bacon, Sir Francis, *Collected works*, edited by J. Spedding, R.L. Ellis, and D.D. Heath, 14 vols, London, 1857-74, vol. 7, p.124.

(2) Naunton, Robert, *Fragmenta regalia*, edited by John Cerovski (Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1985) pp.72, 103.

MYTH: In 1585, 'disgraced and bankrupt, Oxford was called before the Queen and on a pledge of good behaviour was readmitted to court'.

There is no evidence of this.

MYTH: Oxford's £1000 grant was for secret service work.

Queen Elizabeth's Privy Seal warrant of 26 June 1586 granted Oxford an annuity of £1000 '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'. The wording of the grant states clearly indicates that its purpose was Oxford's financial relief, not payment for secret service work. At the time, Oxford was in severe financial straits, occasioned by the Queen's actions with respect to his debt to the Court of Wards.

References:

(1) TNA E 403/2597, ff. 104v-105.

MYTH: Oxford's £1000 grant was paid out of the revenues of the vacant See of Ely.

Although Thomas Wilson, in an unpublished manuscript written in 1600, claimed that Oxford's 1586 grant of £1000 per annum was paid out of the revenues of the See of Ely, the historical evidence indicates that income from the See of Ely went into the Crown's general revenues, and that Oxford's grant was paid quarterly from the Exchequer.

References:

- (1) E-mail message of 23 February 23 1999 from Dr. Daphne Wilson.
- (2) Writ of Privy Seal Dormant of July 26, 1586, Roll of Issue (Privy Seal Book E. 403/2597).

MYTH: There is an extant letter of Oxford's dated 25 June 1585.

Oxford's letter to Lord Burghley regarding an unnamed suit is endorsed 25 June 1586, not 1585.

References:

- (1) BL Lansdowne 50/22, ff. 49-50.

MYTH: Albert Feuillerat wrote that Oxford was 'le meilleur acteur comique de son temps'.

This statement is attributed to Feuillerat in both editions of *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays* and in *This Star of England*. No source is provided. It is almost certain that Feuillerat actually wrote that Oxford was 'le meilleur auteur comique de son temps', relying on Puttenham's statement in *The Art of English Poesie* (1589) that Oxford deserved 'the highest prize' for 'comedy and interlude'. It would appear that Clark misread 'auteur' as 'acteur', turning the best comic author into the best comic actor.

References:

- (1) Willcock, Gladys Doidge and Alice Walker, eds., *The Arte of English Poesie by George Puttenham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936, reprinted 1970), p. 63.
- (2) Clark, Eva Turner, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays; A Study of the Oxford Theory Based on the Records of the Early Court Revels and Personalities of the Times* (New York: W.F. Payson, 1931), p. 217.
- (3) Miller, Ruth Loyd, ed., *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays; A Study of the Early Court Revels and Personalities of the Times by Eva Turner Clark*, 3rd ed. rev., (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1974), p. 361.

(4) Ogburn, Dorothy and Charlton, *This Star of England* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1952), p. 253.

MYTH: Oxford refused a post at Harwich during the Armada invasion because he thought it 'beneath him'; Lord Burghley 'covered' for Oxford's refusal to accept this post, but his refusal to accept it resulted in his never receiving another Garter vote until the year of his death.

There is no evidence of this.

MYTH: The 'Heliconian ymps' in Spenser's sonnet to Oxford are the nine Muses.

In Spenser's 1590 sonnet to Oxford in *The Faerie Queen*, the 'Heliconian ymps' are not the nine Muses. They are poets, the 'offspring' of the nine Muses.

References:

(1) 'Imp', *Oxford English dictionary, second edition, on compact disc*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

MYTH: The 1594 stoneware vessel with a boar's head stopper at the Rosenbach Museum belonged to Oxford.

The boar's head stopper is firmly dateable to the 19th century, and has no connection with the 1594 stoneware vessel.

References:

(1) E-mail message of 14 April 1999 from John Foelster after personal communication with Elizabeth E. Fuller, Librarian at the Rosenbach Museum, Philadelphia.

MYTH: Oxford held the Office of the Ewery.

As Lord Great Chamberlain, Oxford traditionally presented water to the monarch at coronations; however, there is no evidence that he held the Office of the Ewery, which provided water, basins and ewers to the monarch on a daily basis

References:

(1) E-mail message of 22 March 1999 from Dr. Daphne Wilson.

MYTH: Oxford signed his letters with a so-called ‘crown signature’ which he dropped when King James ascended the throne in 1603.

Diana Price demonstrated conclusively that the so-called ‘crown’ is not a crown, but rather a representation of an Earl’s coronet. See Figures 2 and 3 on p. 15 of her article referenced below. It is not known why Oxford dropped the signature in 1603, although it seems not unreasonable to surmise that it was a diplomatic move on his part considering that King James had brought many ‘new’ men with him from Scotland who were not members of the nobility and who might have been antagonized by displays of rank by members of the English nobility.

References:

(1) Price, Diana, 'Rough Winds Do Shake: A Fresh Look at the Tudor Rose Theory', *The Elizabethan Review*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Autumn 1996), pp. 4-23.

MYTH: Oxford died of the plague.

There is no evidence that Oxford died of the plague. The last death attributed to ‘ye plague’ in the Hackney parish register occurred at least a month before Oxford's death.

References:

(1) E-mail message of 4 August 2000 from Dr. Alan Nelson.

MYTH: Oxford was buried in a stone coffin in the floor of Westminster Abbey's Chapel of St. John the Evangelist.

The stone coffin in the floor of the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist near the monument to Oxford's cousins, Francis and Horatio Vere, was opened in 1913. It contained the bones of an ecclesiastic, perhaps those of Richard de Berkyng, who died in 1246.

References:

(1) Altrocchi, Paul Hemenway, "Stone coffin underneath", *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, vol. 36, no. 4 (Winter 2001), p.19.

(2) Westlake, H.F., "An early pewter coffin-chalice and paten found in Westminster Abbey", *Antiquaries Journal* (January 1921), pp.56-7.

MYTH: The 'Benezet test' contains only poetry by Oxford and Shakespeare.

Louis P. Benezet's 'test' of Oxford/Shakespeare's poetry contains four lines from a poem entitled *Sonetto* in Robert Greene's *Menaphon* (1589).

References:

(1) Grosart, Alexander, *The life and complete works in prose and verse of Robert Greene, M.A.*, 15 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), at vol. 6, p.140.

(2) Elliott, Ward E.Y. and Robert J. Valenza, "Can the Oxford Candidacy be Saved?", *The Oxfordian*, vol. 3 (October 2000), pp.71-97, at p.71.

MYTH: The word 'ever' in Elizabethan and early Jacobean dedications and literary works is an anagram for 'Vere' and an allusion to Oxford as the author of the Shakespeare canon.

Throughout his lifetime Oxford signed documents as 'Edward Oxenford', never as 'Edward Vere'. It is alleged by Fowler and in the Frontline documentary *The Shakespeare Mystery* that Oxford closed a holograph letter to Lord Burghley dated 18 May 1591 with a capitalized or enlarged letter 'V' in the phrase 'yowre Lordships eVer to Command'; however in the original document (BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13) the letter 'v' is not capitalized and is the same size as other examples of the letter 'v' which occur in the document.

Moreover, although other family members used the name 'Vere', the Earls of Oxford were almost invariably referred to as 'De Vere'. Oxford was referred to as 'Edward De Vere' in both the dedication and an acrostic poem in Anthony Munday's *The Mirror of Mutability* (STC 18276) published in 1579, and in the dedications to several other literary works.

In addition, the name 'Vere' was frequently spelled 'Veere' and in other ways for which 'ever' is not an anagram. Oxford's daughter Bridget, for example, signed a letter on 12 October 1598 as 'Bridget Veayr', and Sir Robert Cecil's secretary endorsed the letter as from 'Lady Bridgett Veere' (TNA SP 12/268/74, f. 120). In the 16th Earl of Oxford's Latin inquisition post mortem (TNA C 142/136/12) dated 18 January 1563, reference is made to Oxford as 'Edwardum Veere' (the only known example of a reference to Oxford as other than 'De Vere' in his lifetime), a spelling, however, for which 'ever' is not an anagram. There is a single instance of a play on the name 'Vere' in Oxford's lifetime, the poem 'Sitting alone upon my thought in melancholy mood', in which the name 'Vere'

serves as an echo at the end of four lines. However this play on the name 'Vere' is not an anagram.

References:

(1) Transcript of the Frontline documentary *The Shakespeare Mystery* at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/debates/gtedebate.html>.

(2) Fowler, William Plumer, *Shakespeare Revealed in Oxford's Letters*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Peter E. Randall, 1986), p. 412.

(3) 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, Number 5, (Early Winter 1980), pp. 68-73, at pp. 38-9.