

## Praise for Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford

*Collected & Compiled by A.E.M.W*

Modern Stratfordian orthodoxy attempts to undermine the case for Oxford as Shakespeare by insisting that he was a dishonourable man, a poor scholar and a feeble poet. The following selection of allusions to him amply demonstrates that before he was recommended as the most likely author of the Shakespearean canon in 1920, literary historians and many of his contemporaries thought otherwise:

### **Arthur Golding (1535-1606); translator of ‘Shakespeare’s Ovid’**

“I haue had experience therof myself, howe earnest a desire your honor hath naturally graffed in you, to read, peruse, and communicate with others, as well the Histories of auncient tyme, and thynges done long ago, as also of the present estate of thinges in oure dayes, and that not withoute a certayn pregnancie of witte and rypenesse of vnderstandyng....[May] your Prince and your country, for your well doings, embrace you and esteem you as a jewel and yourself thereby become equal to any of your worthy predecessors in advancing the honour and nobility of your noble house: whereof your great forwardness giveth assured hope and expectation ...”

Dedicatory letter to Oxford from *Trogus Pompeius* (1564)

### **Thomas Underdowne (fl. 1566-87); poet and translator**

“For such virtues be in your honour, so haughty courage joined with great skill, such sufficiency in learning, so good nature and common sense that in your honour is, I think, expressed the right pattern of a noble gentleman.”

Dedicatory letter to Oxford from *Aethiopian History* (1569)

### William Cecil, Lord Burghley (1520-98); Statesman, Sec. of State

“I confess to your Lordship I do honour him [Oxford] so dearly from my heart as I do my own son, and in any case that may touch him for his honour and weal, I shall think him mine own interest therein. And surely by dealing with him I find that which I often heard of your Lordship, that there is much more in him of understanding than any stranger to him would think. And for my own part I find that whereof I take comfort in his wit and knowledge grown by good observation.”

Lord Burghley, letter to Lord Rutland (28 July 1571)

“I think it a sound counsel to be given to her Majesty that this young nobleman [Oxford] being of such quality as he is for birth, office and other notable valours of body and spirit, be not discomfited ...”

Lord Burghley, letter to Francis Walsingham (3 August 1574)

### Lucas de Heere (1534-1584); Dutch painter exiled in England

Au Conte D'Oxford.

Dieu m'a donné cest heur, au lieu de me pouuoir  
 De trop des biens mondains que tout le monde adore,  
 Que iay este fourny, comme ie suis encore,  
 D'autant de bons amis qu'un homme puisse auoir.  
 Car bien que la rigueur m'en garde den auoir  
 En ma propre patrie (ainsi quelle y deuore  
 Tout ce qui est du bon) vous Seigneur, que i'honore,  
 Me seruez des amis de richesse & pouuoir.  
 Et me vault beaucoup plus vostre courtois bien fait  
 (Tant i'ayme la faueur d'un Seigneur si parfait)  
 Que tout ce que m'a prins ceste Espagnole rage:  
 Qui s'abuse par trop me pensant empirer  
 Quand elle me contraint de fuyr & retirer  
 Au desirable port de vostre bonne grace.

[“Instead of over-providing me with those worldly goods that everyone adores, God has, at this time, granted me with as many fine friends as a man can have; for although the strife prevents me from enjoying these things in my own land (as all good is swallowed up over there), you, honoured Lord, have provided me with rich and powerful friends and your courteous generosity (how I appreciate the favour of so perfect a lord!) is worth much more to me than all that the Spanish rage has taken from me – a rage which is mistaken to suppose me much worse off by compelling me to flee and to remove myself to the desirable safe-haven of your good grace.”]

From *Tableau Poetique*, MS Arbury Hall, Warwickshire (1572)

### George Coryate (d. 1607), poet and chaplain to Lord Pembroke

Ad illustrissimum Comitem Oxoniensem

*Clare Comes, generis summum decoramen aviti,  
 Insuper Angliaci magna Columna soli.  
 Da veniam tenui modulanti carmina plectro,  
 Quod nequit optatis verba referre sonis.  
 Te tua nobilitas commendat & inclyta virtus,  
 Fortiaque excimii corporis acta tui.  
 Nil opis externae quaeris, nec carmin (quamvis  
 Carmen amet quisquis carmine digna gerit)  
 Huc tamen adveniens cum Principe nobilis hospes  
 Carminibus nobis excipiendus eris.  
 Tum quia Musarum tanto capiaris amore,  
 Auribus his modulis occinit una tuis.  
 Tu velut hesterna cepisti carmina nocte,  
 Hac quoque sic capias carmina nostra die.*

Tuo Honori deditissimus,  
*Georgius Coryatus*

“Brilliant earl, highest adornment of an ancient clan and, above all, great pillar of our English realm, forgive the thin strain of these verses, which are unable to invoke the noblest sounding words. Your fame commends you as do your celebrated virtues and the mighty deeds of your exceptional person. You seek neither external wealth nor praise in poetry (yet he who loves poetry is he whose deeds are worthy of a poem); however, Noble Guest, arriving here with the Queen, you shall be praised with our verses, and since you attract so great a love of the Muses, one chirps in your ears with these lines. As you accepted poems last night, so shall you receive ours on this day, too.”

**Thomas Twyne (1543-1613); translator, physician and surgeon**

“Regarding your honor to be among the rest a very fit person for it [the dedication of his book] but in your flower and tender age and generally hoped and accounted of in time to become the chiefest stay of this your commonwealth and country [...] Hereon, when Your Honor shall be at leisure to look, bestowing such regard as you are accustomed to do on books of geography, histories and other good learning, wherein I am privy your Honor taketh singular delight, I doubt not that you shall have cause to judge your time very well applied [...] As Your Honor being already perfectly instructed ... [I pray that God will] always direct you in the commendable race of your virtue and learning, augment Your Honor with many degrees, and in the end reward you with immortal felicity.”

From dedication to Oxford of *The Breviary of Britain* (1573)

**George Baker (1540-1600); physician and scholar**

“I do not write these things to Your Honor by way of exhortation: but rather as a testimony of that which is already apparent to all men, namely to Your Honor’s careful study to join the commendation of virtue with your nobility of blood and lineage, whose desire is (with noble Themistocles) to advance the glory of your country [...] in the meantime, among infinite tokens this is one especial sign of Your Honor’s heroic mind: that is, in courage, activity, and chivalry you yourself seek to express Achilles and other noble personages. So also Your Honor doth heartily embrace all such as excel in any worthy virtue, whether it be to commend and adorn her with her seemly colors as Homer &c, or to attend like handmaides on her, as Hippocrates or Galen, with their needful

art of surgery. Neither doth your honor suffer them to pass unrewarded as may appear by the most part of them which Your Honor hath entertained into your service., as I myself have had experience since it pleased Your Honor to entertain me (though far unworthy) for my profession in the art of surgery [...] Your Honor can both read and understand in the first tongues wherein the authors have written [...] seeing your Honors courtesy and clemency is usually extended to all men ...”

From dedication to Oxford of *Oleum Magistrale* (1574)

“My Singular Good Lord [...] to whose learned view and favourable protection I offer this book [...] I have published this work under Your Honor’s protection, that it may more easily be defended against sycophants and faultfinders, because your wit, learning and authority hath great force and strength in repressing the curioius crakes of the envious and bleating babes of Momus charm”

From dedication to Oxford of *The Practice of the New and Old Physic* (1599)

### **Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon (1523-89); French Ambassador**

“...as the premier earl and Great Chamberlain of England and as the chief nobleman of the realm, with the most followers and being the object of greatest expectation of any man in the Kingdom, he asks you, Sire, that by your command he shall be honoured, favoured and respected as he passes through your realm; because, in addition to his merit, all England and this court would alike be infinitely grateful.”

Letter to Henri III, King of France (24 January 1575)

## Elizabeth I (1533-1603); Queen of England

[A] *“Cum Illustrissimus et ornatissimus iuuenis Edouardus Verus Comes Oxoniensis Vicecomis Bulbecensis Dominus de Scales et Badelsmore magnus Angliae Camerarius Consanguineus noster charissimus in partes transmarinas ad rerum usum colligendum, hominumque mores regionum et urbium maturas intelligendas, bona nostra cum gratia proficisse nunc cogitet. Nos itaque Seruientos Excellentas Magistras et humanitates vestras omnes summopere rogamus, ut cum in regna territoria Ditiones iurisdictiones vestras quascumque peruerint cum non solum libere morari et sine impedimento transire permittatis sed omni etiam humanitate in nostra gratiam tractetis et amplexemini sic vt vestram in nos amicitiam et benevolentiam in nobilissimo hoc Comiti consanguineo nostro orando (cui propter praestantes animi virtutis ex animo non vulgariter favemus) perspicere possimus. Hanc vestram humanitatem quanquam nobilissimus iuuenis suis moribus promereri cumulate poterit, nos tamen in excimiae et maximae gratia loco ponemus nec eam omni ratione largiter remunerari cum se res et occasio obtulerit unquam oblivissemur.”*

[“An illustrious and highly accomplished young man, our beloved cousin, Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford, Viscount Bulbeck, Lord of Scales and Badelsmore, Great Chamberlain of England, plans (with our good grace) to travel overseas to gain knowledge and understanding of the ways of men in different cities and regions. We therefore sincerely request your servants, your most excellent educators and your own favor, that when he comes into any kingdom, territory, land or jurisdiction of yours, not only will he be permitted to stay there freely and to pass through without impediment, but he will be treated with all kindness for our sake, and will be welcomed so that we may see your friendship and benevolence towards us reflected in your treatment of this most noble earl, our kinsman, whom we commend, not in the usual way, but from the heart, on account of his outstanding intellect and virtue. When this young nobleman shows himself worthy of your kindness by virtue of his manners, we too, as a sign of thanks for things great and small, shall never forget to repay you generously, and by any means, when the time and occasion may arise.”]

Letter of introduction to Crowned heads of state (24 Jan 1575)

[B] *“Proficiscitur hoc tempore ex Anglia Illustris et multis virtutibus ornatissimus iuuenis ex vetustissima Anglia procerum stirpe ortus Edouardus Verus Comes Oxoniensis Vicecomes Bulbecensis Dominus de Scales et Badelsmore magnus Angliae Camerarius subditus et consanguineus noster charissimus, ut principum multorum Vestramque imprimis Aulam inuisat urbesque et regiones imperij ad rerum usum acquirendum peraget: Is eo ingenio moribus virtute doctrina est praeditus, tum et etiam in nos fide et obseruantia, ut omnia in hac peregrinatione illi persona et laeta accidere sane vehementer cupimus. Rogamus igitur maiorem in modum Imperialem tuam Maiestatem ut nobilissimum iuuenem auctoritate protegas, fauore ornes, commendatione iues, et omni demum humanitatis ratione ita foueas, ut intelligi possit commendationem nostrum maximum apud Imperatoriam tuam Maiestatem pondus habere. Hoc nobis tam acceptum et optatum accidit ut nihil esse possit gratius. Deus Opt: Max: Imperatoriam tuam Magistatem quam diutissime florentem seruet & in columem.”*

[“An illustrious young man, greatly adorned with many virtues - Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford, Viscount Bolbeck, Lord of Scales and Badelsmere, Lord High Chamberlain of England, our most beloved subject and cousin - is presently setting out from England to visit your royal court of many princes and will be passing through the cities and regions of your empire, to benefit from the knowledge thereof. He is endowed, by his very nature, with manners, virtue and learning. We therefore earnestly desire your Imperial Majesty to protect this young nobleman by your authority, to grant him your favour, to help him with commendations, and to favour him with all kindness, so that he may understand that our greatest recommendation holds weight with your Imperial Majesty. Nothing else could give us greater joy. May God preserve your Imperial Majesty in health and safety.”]

Letter to Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor (24 Jan 1575)

**John Brooke (d. 1582); translator; scholar of Trinity College,  
Cambridge and one of that college's first nominated fellows**

“[...] For in the opinion of men there can be found no one more fit for patronage and defense of learning than the skilful (both wise and able to judge and discourse truly thereof), 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; and the University of Cambridge hath acknowledged in granting and giving unto you such commendation and praise thereof, as verily by right was due to 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 Honor, being learned and able to judge as a safe harbour and defence of learning, therefore one most fit to whose honourable patronage I might safely commit these my poor and simple labors.”

From dedication to Oxford of his translation of Guy de Bres, *The Staff of Christian Faith* (1577)

**Gabriel Harvey (1553-1631), poet, scholar**

[...] *tua splendida fama,*  
*Grandiloquum magis exposcit, Comes alte, Poetam.*  
*Non tua serpit humi Virtus, non carminis orbe*  
*Clauditur, aethereos penetrat mirabilis orbes [...]*  
*Anglia te Patrium iamque experietur Achillem [...]*  
*Pallas pectusque, animumque*  
*Instruet ipsatum: iampridem Phoebus Apollo*  
*Artibus excoluit mentem: Britannica metra*  
*Sunt cantata satis; testatur Epistola, quantum*  
*Excellas literis, ipso mage Castilione*  
*Aulica, compta magis: vidi tua plura Latina:*  
*Anglica plura exstant: Francasque, Italiasque Camanas,*  
*Et mores hominum multorum, artesque forenses*  
*Plenius hausisti: non frustra Sturmius ipse*  
*Cognitus est: non tot Francique, Italique politi,*  
*Non Germaniades; calamum, Memorande, pusillum,*  
*Exanguesque libros, vsuque carentia scripta*

*Abijce: nunc gladijs opus est: acuendus & ensis:  
 Vndique castra homines, arma vndique sana loquantur  
 [...] fernescit pectore sanguis;  
 Virtus fronte habitat: Mars occupat ora; Minerva  
 In dextra latitat: Bellona in corpore regnat:  
 Martius ardor inest: scintillant lumina: vultus  
 Tela vibrat: quis non rediuiuum iuret Achellem?*

["Thy splendid fame, great Earl, demands, even more than in the case of others, the services of a poet possessing lofty eloquence. Thy merit doth not creep along the ground, nor can it be confined within the limits of a song: it reaches in wonder as far as the heavenly orbs [...] England shall discover in you her homegrown Achilles [...] Pallas will be at hand to instruct your heart and mind. O great-hearted one, strong in thy mind and thy fiery will, thou wilt surpass thyself, thou wilt surpass others; thine glory shall spread in all directions even beyond the frozen ocean. For a long time Phoebus Apollo has cultivated thy mind in the arts. English poetical measures have been sung by thee long enough. Let that courtly epistle—more polished than even the writings of Castiglione himself witness how greatly thou dost excel in letters. I have seen many Latin verses of thine; yea, even more English verses are extant. Thou hast drunk deep drafts not only of the muses of France and Italy but hast learned the manners of many men, and the arts of foreign countries. It was not for nothing that Sturmius himself was visited by thee. Neither in France, Italy, nor Germany are any such cultivated and polished men. O thou hero worthy of renown, throw away the insignificant pen, throw away bloodless books and writings that serve no useful purpose. Now must the sword be brought into play. Now is the time for thee to sharpen the spear and to handle the great engines of war [...] In thy breast is noble blood. Courage animates thy brow, Mars lives in thy tongue, Minerva lies hidden in thy right hand, Bellona reigns in thy body, within thee burns the fire of Mars. Thine eyes flash fire, thy will shakes spears. Who would not swear that Achilles had come to life again?"]

From *Gratulationis Valdicensis* (1578)

## John Lyly (1554-1606); playwright, theatre director, secretary

[A] “And as God is my witness, and before whom for my speech I shall answer that all my thoughts concerning my Lord Oxford have been ever reverent and almost religious.”

From a letter to Lord Burghley  
(endorsed July 1581)

## Thomas Watson (1556-1592); poet, playwright, linguist, student at law

[A] “I fitly compare your honors person with Alexanders for excellencie.”

From dedicatory letter to Oxford in *Hecatompithia* (1582)

[B] *“Hic quoque seu subeas Sydnaei, sive Dyaeri scrinia, qua Musis area bina patet, dic te [...] et tamen exhibitum Vero, qui magna meretur virtute et vera nobilitate sua. Inde serenato vultu te mitis uterque perleget, et neavos condet uterque tuos. Dum famulus Verum comitaris in aurea tecta, officii semper sit tibi cura tua.”*

[“If you [his book *Hecatompithia*] enter the shelves of Sidney or Dyer - spaces kept clear for the Muses - tell them [...] that you have been shown to Vere, a man deserving of great reward for his virtue and true nobility, then they will ignore your blemishes and read you through kindly and with serene expressions, while you, as a servant, will attend upon Vere under that golden roof where duty may ever be your care.”]

From *Authoris ad Libellum suum Protrepticon* in *Hecatompithia* (1582)

## Robert Greene (1560?-1592); writer, poet, dramatist

“Wheresoever Maecenas lodgeth, thither no doubt will scholars flock. And Your Honor being a worthy favorer and fosterer of learning, that forced many through your excellent virtue to offer the first fruits of their study at the shrine of Your Lordship’s courtesy. But though they have waded far and found mines, and I gadded abroad to get nothing but mites, yet this I assure myself: that they never presented unto Your Honor their treasure with a more willing

mind than I do this simple trash, which I hope your Lordship will accept. Resting therefore upon Your Honor's wonted clemency, I commit your Lordship to the Almighty."

From dedicatory letter to Oxford in *Gnydonius* (1584)

### Angel Day (1560?-1592); writer, poet, dramatist

"My Honorable Lord: the exceeding bounty wherewith our good Lord hath ever wonted to entertain the deserts of all men and very appearance of nobility herself, well known to have reposed her delights in the worthiness of your stately mind, warranteth me; almost that I need not blush to recommend unto your courteous view, the first fruits of these my foremost labors and to honour this present discourse with the memory of your everlasting worthiness. And all be it by the learned view and insight of your L., whose infancy from the beginning was ever sacred to the Muses, the whose course hereof, may be found nothing such as [...] may appear in any sort answerable to so great and forward excellence."

From dedicatory letter to Oxford in *The English Secretary* (1586)

### John Soowthern (fl 1584) gentleman poet

And stand up Nymphes *Aganapide*,  
Stand up my wantons *Parnasside* [...]  
As Devere is both wise and virtuous [...]

'Come Nimphes while I haue a desire,  
To strike on a well sounding *Lyre*,  
Of our vertues *De Vere* the name.  
*De Vere*, that had giuen him in parte:  
The Loue, the Warre, Honour, and Arte,  
And with them an eternall Fame.  
Come Nimphes, your puissaunce is diuine:  
And to those that you shew no fauour;  
Quicklie they are depriude of honour,  
And slaues to the chaines *Cossitine*.

Amongst our well renowned men  
*De Vere* merits a silver pen  
 Eternally to write his honour [...]
   
And it pleases me to saye too,  
 (With a louange, I protest true)  
 That in England we cannot see,  
 Anything like *De Vere*, but he.  
 Onelie himselife he must resemble,  
 Vertues so much in him assemble.

[...] For who marketh better then he,  
 The seuen turning flames of the Skie:  
 Or hath read more of the antique.  
 Hath greater knowledge in the tongues:  
 Or vnderstandes sooner the sownes,  
 Of the learner to loue Musique.

From *Pandora* (1584)

**William Webbe, (fl. 1566-1591), author, translator, tutor**

“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 skilful; among whom the right honourable Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of most excellent among the rest.”

*Discourse on English Poetry* (1586)

### **Anthony Mundy (1553-1633); dramatist, poet and writer**

[A] “If *Palmerin* hath sustained any wrong by my bad translation, being so worthily set down in other languages, Your Honor (having such special knowledge in them) I hope will let slip any faults escaped.”

From his dedication to Oxford of his translation *Palmerin d’Oliva*, Part 1 (1588)

[B] “Promise is debt, My Good Lord [...] When I presented Your Honor the first part of this history, I promised to hasten the other to the self-same patron, whereto I have been vehemently induced by the gracious and affable receipt of the former [...] Howsoever it prove, I need not despair, having a judge so honourable who measureth goodwill far beyond ability.”

From his dedication to Oxford of his translation *Palmerin d’Oliva*, Part 2 (1588)

[C] “For you being the true heir of your honourable father’s matchless vertues and succeeding him in place of degree and eminency, who should inherit the father’s trophies, monuments, and ancient memories but his truly noble, hopeful and virtuous son? In whom, old Lord Edward is still living, and cannot die, so long as you breathe.”

From his dedication to Henry, 18th Earl of Oxford, of his translation of *Primaleon of Greece*, (1619)

### **Andrew Trollop (fl. 1560-1590), estate manager**

“From 10th to 21st year of Her Majesty [1568-1579] I was deputy to Thomas Gent esquire; then steward of the manors of the Right Honourable the Earl of Oxford, and during all that time being privy, not only of his public dealings but also of his private doings and secret intents, found and knew him imbued with special piety, perfect integrity, great care to discharge all trust reposed in him, and no less desire to do good in the commonwealth.”

Letter to Lord Burghley (1587)

**[George Puttenham?] (1529-1591), author, literary critic.**

“And in her Majesties time that now is are sprung up another crew of Courtly makers Noble men and Gentlemen of her Majesties owne 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* Earle of Oxford...That for Tragedie, the Lord of Buckhurst, & Maister *Edward Ferrys* for such doings as I haue sene of theirs do deserue the hiest price: The Earl of Oxford and Maister *Edwardes* of her Maiesties Chappell for Comedy and Enterlude [... ] *Edward* Earl of Oxford a most noble & learned Gentleman made in this figure of response an emblem of desire otherwise called *Cupide* which for his excellencie and wit, I set down some part of the verses, for example:

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.”

from *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589)

**Sir James Lea (1546-1625?); Attorney to the Court of Wards, Chief Justice**

De Vere, whose fame and loyalty hath pearst  
The Tuscan clime, and through the Belgike lands  
By winged Fame for valour is rehearst,  
Like warlike Mars upon the hatches stands.  
His tusked Boar 'gan foam for inward ire,  
While Pallas filled his breast with warlike fire.

From *An answer to the untruths published and printed in Spain* (1589)

Edmund Spenser (1552-1599); poet

Receive most Noble Lord in gentle gree,  
The vnripe fruit of an vnready wit:  
Which by thy countenance doth crane to bee  
Defended from foule envy's poisonous bit.  
Which so to doe may thee right well besit.  
Sith th'antique glory of thine auncestry  
Vnder a shady vele is therein writ,  
And ekethine owne long liuing memory,  
Succeeding them in true nobility:  
And also for the loue, which thou doest beare  
To th' *Heliconian* ymps, and they to thee,  
They vnto thee, and thou to them most deare:  
Deare as thou art vnto thy selfe, so loue  
That loues & honours thee, as doth behoue.

Sonnet to Oxford from *Faerie Queene* (1590)

### **Edward Webbe (c. 1554-?); traveller, Chief Master Gunner**

“Many things I have omitted to speake of, which I have seen and noted in the time of my troublesome travel. One thing did greatly comfort me which I saw long since in Sicilia, in the cite of Palermo, a thing worthy of memorie, where the right-honorable the Earle of Oxenford a famous man of Chivalrie at what time he travelled into forraine Countries, being then personally present, made there a challenge against al manner of persons whatsoever, and at all maner of weapons, as Turniments, Barriers with horse and armour, to fight a combat with any whatsoever in defence of his Prince and countrie: for which he was verie highly commended, and yet no man durst be so hardy as to encounter him, so that all Italy over, he is acknowledged the onely Chivallier and Noble man of England. This title they give to unto him as worthily deserved.”

From *Edward Webbe His Travailes* (1590)

### **Thomas Churchyard (c. 1520-1604); poet & soldier**

“I have lovingly and truly dealt with you for the Earl of Oxford, a nobleman of such worth as I will employ all I have to honour his worthiness.”

Letter from Thomas Churchyard to Lord Burghley (Jan 1591)

### **Sir John Davies (1569-1626); lawyer, poet and politician**

“... And you sweet Lady, virtue’s noble fayre,  
Whom when I name your grandsire, father, mother,  
Of all whose excellencies you are heir,  
I then extoll, and prayse above all other.”

*Epithalamion* addressed to Oxford’s daughter Lady Elizabeth Vere (1595)

### **Thomas Nashe (1567-c. 1601); pamphleteer, poet, playwright**

“The most copious Carminist of our time and famous persecutor of Priscian [...] you have been such an infinite Mecenas to learned men that not any that belong to them but have tasted of the coole streames of your liberalitie [...] thou art a good fellow I know [...] I love and admire thy pleasant wittie humor, which no care or crosse can make unconvertible.”

Dedicatory Letter to Oxford as “Gentle M. William” in  
*Strange Newes* (1592)

### **Francis Meres (1566-1647); author, divine, numerologist and translator**

“The best Poets for Comedy among the Greeks are these, *Menander, Aristophanes, Eupolis Atheniensis, Alexis, Terius, Nicostratus, Amipsias Atheniensis, Anaxandrides Rhodius, Aristonymus, Archippus Atheniesis* and *Callias Atheniensis*; and among the Latines, *Plantus, Terence, Naenius, Sext. Turpilus, Licinius Imbrex*, and *Virgilius Romanus*: so the best for Comedy amongst us bee *Edward Earle of Oxford* [...]”

*Palladis Tamia* (1598)

### **John Farmer (c. 1570-1601); madrigalist, composer**

Farmer referred to Oxford’s “great affection” for music in *Plainsong* (1591) and eight years later addressed him: “if your Lordship vouchsafe the protection of my first fruites, for that both for your greatness you best can, and for your iudgement in Musicke best may: for without flatterie be it spoke (those that know your Lordship know this) that using this science as a recreation, your Lordship hath overgone most of them that make it a profession.”

*First Set of English Madrigals* (1599)

**Nathaniel Baxter (c. 1569-1611); clergyman, author, poet and Greek tutor**

[Lord Oxford was] “a Paragon of mickle might: And worthily then termed *Albion’s Pearle*... Onely some think he spent too much in vain, That was his fault; but give his honour due, Learned he was, just, affable and plain; No traitor, but ever gracious, and true.”

*Sir Philip Sidney’s Ourania* (1606)

**George Chapman, (1559-1634); poet and playwright.**

[A] “By the long-since admirer of your matchless Father’s virtues”

Sonnet to Lady Montgomery in *Twelve Books of the Iliads* (1609)

[B] “A great famous earl of England, the most goodly fashioned man I ever saw; from head to foot in form Rare and most absolute...he was beside of spirit passing great, valiant and learned liberal as the sun, spoke and writ sweetly, or of learned subjects, of the discipline of public weals; And twas the earl of Oxford.”

*The Revenge of Bussy d’Ambois* (c. 1610; published 1613)

**Percival Golding (1579-1635); antiquarian, translator; cousin of Oxford**

“Of him [Oxford] of whom I will only speak what all mens’ voices confirme: He was a man in minde and body absolutely accomplished with honourable endowments. He died at his house at Hackney in the monthe of Junne Anno 1604 and lieth buried at Westminster.”

MS in the College of  
Heralds (c. 1616-19)

### **Sir George Buck (c. 1550-1622); antiquarian, writer, Master of Revels**

“And in much [shorter time than his] life’s time, that great and stately [earldom of Oxenford, with the] very opulent and princely patrimony was [dissipated] and wasted, and it was very suddenly *and swiftly used* and consumed, and *como sal en agua*, [as the Spaniar]ds say in the refrain. But not by the fault of *the Earl then* lord thereof, but rather by the fate of the *divine ordinance*. For certainly the Earl was *a devout* and a magnificent and a very learned and religious [nobleman,] and so worthy in every way, as I have heard some grave and [di]screet and honourable persons (who knew this Earl from his *youth* and could very well judge of the hopefulness and the *springtimes* of young men) say and affirm that he was much more like to raise and to acquire and to establish a new earldom than to decay *and* waste and lose an old earldom. And in a word, he was a *Vere* in deed as in name, *vere nobilis*. For he was *verily* and truly noble, and a most noble Vere.”

Damaged MS, British Library [MS Egerton 2216]

### **Henry Peacham (1578-1644); poet, writer, maker of emblems and devises**

“In the time of our late Queene *Elizabeth*, which was truly a golden Age (for such a world of refined wits, and excellent spirits it produced, whose like are hardly to be hoped for, in any succeeding Age) about others, who honoured Poesie with their pennes and practise (to omit her Maiestie, who had a singular gift herein) were *Edward Earle of Oxford* [...]”

*The Compleat Gentleman* (1622)

### **Gervase Markham (1568-1637); poet, author, playwright**

“This Nobleman breaks off his guise and both in Italy, France and other Nations, did more honour to his kingdome than all that have travelled since he took his journey to heaven. It were infinite to speak of his infinite expense, the infinite number of his attendants, or the infinite house he kept to feed all people; were his precedent now to be followed by all of his rank, the Pope

might hang himself for an English Papist; discontentment would not feed our enemies Armies, nor would there be either a Gentleman or Scholler to make a Masse-Priest or a Jesuite; that he was upright and honest in all his dealings the few debts he left behind to clog his survivors, were safe pledges; and that he was holy and Religious the Chapels and Churches he did frequent, and from whence no occasion could draw him; the almes he gave (which at this day would not only feede the poor, but the great man's family also) and the bountie which Religion and Learning daily took from him, are trumpets so loude, that all eares know them; so that I conclude, and say of him [...] that he was *Honestus, Pietas & Magnanimus.*”

From *Honour in his Perfection* (1624)

### **Sir Ranulph Crewe (1558-1646); Chief Justice of the King's Bench**

“I heard a great peer of this realm and a learned, say, when he lived there was no King in Christendom had such a subject as Oxford.”

1626 - quoted in Arthur Collins *Proceedings, Precedents and Arguments* (1734), p. 176.

### **John Aubrey (1626-1697); antiquary, philosopher and author**

“Nicholas Hill was one of thre most learned men of his time: a great mathematician an philospher and traveller and a poet. His writings had the usual fate of those not printed in the author's lifetime. He was so eminent for knowledge that he was the favourite of the great earl of Oxford, who had him to accompany him on his travels (he was his steward), which were so splendid that he kept at Florence a greater court than the Grand Duke. This earl spent in travelling the inheritance of ten or twelve thousand pounds per annum.”

From *Brief Lives* (c. 1690)

**Anthony a Wood (1632-1695); antiquary**

[A] “About this time [1592] he [Nicholas Hill] was a great favourite of Edward the poetical and prodigal Earl of Oxford, spent some time with him, while he consumed his estate beyond the sea and at home...This most noble Earl of *Oxon* was in his younger days an excellent Poet and Comedian, as several matters of his Composition, which were made publick, did shew, which, I presume, are now lost and worn out. All that I have yet seen are certain Poems on several Subjects, thus entit. (1) *His good name being blemished, he bewayleth.* (2) *The complaint of a Lover wearing black and tawnie.* (3) *Being in love he complaineth.* (4) *A lover rejected complaineth.* (5) *Not attaining to his desire, he complayneth.* (6) *His mind not quietly settled he complayneth thus;* with many such like things, that were highly valued in their time. He gave way to fate in a good old age 24 June 1604, and was, as I conceive, buried by the body of his Father, at *Earls Colne* in *Essex.*”

[B] *Henry de Vere Earl of Oxford* - He was Son of *Edw. de Vere* called by some *the Poetical Earl of Oxford*, and died at the Siege of *Breda* in the *Netherlands*, an. 1625.’

From *Athenae Oxoniensis* (1691)

**Robert Plumer Ward (1765-1846); historian, politician, novelist**

“Edward, Earl of Oxford, in the days of Elizabeth, united in his single person, the character of her greatest noble, knight and poet.”

from *De Vere, or The Man of Independence* (1827), p. 61

**William John Courthope (1842-1917); Professor of Poetry, Oxford University**

“[Oxford] was a great patron of literature and headed the literary party at Court which promoted the Euphuistic movement. His own verses are distinguished for their wit [and] his studied continuity of style is remarkable [...] he was not only witty himself but the cause of wit in others.”

from *A History of English Poetry* Vol 2, (1897), 312-3

**Sir Sidney Lee (1859-1926); Shakespearean scholar and editor**

[A] “[Oxford] evinced a genuine taste in music and wrote verses of much lyric beauty. A sufficient number of his poems is extant to corroborate Webbe’s comment that he was the best of the courtier poets in the Early years of Elizabeth’s reign and “that in the rare devices of poetry he may challenge to himself the title of the most excellent among the rest.”

‘Earl of Oxford’ in *Dictionary of National Biography* (1899).

[B] “To like effect runs the Earl of Oxford’s popular ditty: ‘When wert thou born, Desire? In pomp and prime of May. By whom sweet boy, wert thou begot? By fond conceit men say.’ Shakespeare’s ‘Tell me, where is fancy bred, Or in the heart or in the head?’ is in a kindred key.”

from *The French Renaissance in England* (1910), p. 227