

that always upon my letter to authorize your Lordship to sell any portion of my land, that you will sell one hundred pound a year more of my land where your Lordship shall think fittest, to disburden me of my debts to her Majesty, my sister, or elsewhere I am exclaimed upon. (CP 8/12)

As one may gather, Oxford was well aware of the discredit cast upon his dignity by his outstanding debts and, as observed by Daphne Pearson in *Edward de Vere (1550-1604): The Crisis and Consequences of Wardship*, his ultimate dishonor lay in his repudiation of the “old honour code” by allowing his debts to be paid by others. Substantially diverse viewpoints of Edward de Vere’s personality have been rendered in several biographies over the last eighty years running the gamut from hagiography to character assassination, the polar representations of these being B.M. Ward’s overly sympathetic characterization in 1928 and Alan H. Nelson’s demonization of Oxford in 2003.¹ Pearson paints still another portrait of the earl, one that discusses his enigmatic character, tumultuous relationships, religious vacillation, and his position in Elizabethan society. It is Oxford’s finances, however, and the impact upon them of wardship, which is her main concern. For this study, Pearson uses as her springboard the groundwork done by H.E. Bell (1953), Joel Hurstfield (1958), and Lawrence Stone (1965). While these seminal works represented broad studies, Pearson’s aim is narrower. Her ostensible goal, stated at the outset, is that “no similarly comprehensive examination has yet been undertaken through a specific case-study to test either the accuracy of Stone’s assertion, or the effect of the institution of wardship and its regulation or lack of it, in an era of economic transition, on an individual nobleman who was a ward in his minority” (2-3). Surprisingly, and with no small degree of frustration, it is not the accuracy of Stone’s assertion/s, but Pearson’s that must be tested.

For anyone possessed of detailed knowledge of Oxford’s finances and wardship (admittedly few), it is quite easy to detect the flaws in Pearson’s work, and equally difficult to comprehend how she could have landed so wide of the mark. Having reviewed most of the relevant records, Pearson was perfectly positioned to shed new light on Oxford’s long-held reputation as a capricious spendthrift who “set his patrimony flying.” Instead, the opportunity is squandered and Pearson perpetuates the myth, exacerbating it further with misinformation couched in scholarly-sounding jargon that will easily mislead the uninformed. Her presentation of the “records” comes across as knowledgeable and authoritative, but the unfortunate reality is that she has spun a web so convoluted that retracing her steps is the only solution to untangling it. In order that the truth be revealed, along with the magnitude of imprecision in Pearson’s work, it is necessary—indeed, demanded—that we do just that.

The most egregious and fundamental error undermining Pearson’s entire thesis, stated on the first and last pages of her book and repeated throughout, is that Oxford’s landed inherited income at the death of his father in 1562 was £3,500 per year.² This astonishing assertion, the foundation upon which Pearson launches her disparagement of Oxford as a hopeless wastrel, is a fallacy contradicted by every historical document she cites, and then some.

Part I: Oxford's finances

Pearson sets the stage by referring to the 1559 subsidy assessment of the income of Edward de Vere's father: "In 1559 the duke of Norfolk was assessed at £1,200, but his more likely income at the time has been calculated as £2,815. The sixteenth earl of Oxford was one of only two peers known to be richer than the duke and his assessment was £1,600, a figure that would have been as out of date as the duke's" (34). Pearson gleaned this from a passage in Neville Williams's biography of Norfolk:

In 1559 the assessors for the peerage estimated Norfolk's landed income at £1,200; as with the system for assessing the amount of subsidies to be paid by commoners it was known to be out-of-date, and we know the duke's landed income at that time was in fact £2,815. . . Only two peers exceeded Norfolk's figure in 1559: Derby was rated at £2,000 and Oxford at £1,600. . . By 1566 Norfolk was still assessed at £1,200, though Derby's figure had nearly halved . . . while Oxford had dropped out of the picture entirely. (124)

Although other records corroborate £1,600 as a fairly accurate appraisal of net income for the de Vere lands in 1559, Williams's other figures are evidently as erroneous as some of Pearson's. Helen Miller, a reputable and more reliable scholar, citing the same sources as Williams, includes a table of the twenty surviving subsidy assessments of the peerage from 1523 to 1601 in her article "Subsidy Assessments in the Sixteenth Century." Miller's data show that the earl of Derby was rated at £2,600 and £2,400 in two subsidy assessments for 1559 (18), whereas Williams claims Derby was rated at only £2,000 that year; in 1566, Derby was rated at £2,200, whereas Williams claims Derby's £2,000 (sic) had nearly halved. Williams was obviously in error, and Pearson—aware of Miller's work—errs in relying on Williams.

Miller's table is set up to show only the member of the peerage with the highest assessed income from lands, fees and annuities for each of the years from 1523 to 1601 for which subsidy assessments survive, and the Oxford earldom never made it into that category. It would have done so in 1534, when the Marquis of Exeter was rated highest at £2,266 13s 4d, had it not been for the fact that the de Vere subsidy assessment of £2,725 that year included £1,100 assessed on the income of the dowager countess of Oxford, which Miller stipulates "was [the property] of her former husband, Viscount Beaumont, granted to her by Henry VIII for term of her life only, and formed no part of the de Vere estates" (18).

When the income of the dowager countess is subtracted, the 1534 subsidy assessment on the de Vere estates proper was only £1,625, a figure that remained consistent with the valuation taken six years later, this one likely prepared with a view to the livery of lands obtained by the twenty-three-year-old sixteenth earl of Oxford on December 3, 1540, following the death of his father (the fifteenth earl) the previous March (LP 15.[380].148-49). Pearson apparently never

consulted the calendar or the original record—a paper roll of seven sheets stitched together that lists the clear yearly value of each of the manors held by the Oxford earldom—the total gross value of which comes to £2,063. After subtracting the “Fees of officers and other charges thereon” (£135) and various life estates, or “Lands in reversion” (£290), the net value comes to £1,638. There was thus a difference of only £13 between the 1534 subsidy assessment and the 1540 valuation of the de Vere lands, which rather than being “out of date”, as Pearson claims (pace Williams), accords with Miller’s conclusion that, in the reign of Henry VIII at least, subsidy assessments were fairly reliable indicators of a peer’s real income:

Each type of document has its limitations as a source of information on the actual income of the nobility. Nevertheless, even with these reservations in mind it seems clear that subsidy assessments of the peerage in the reign of Henry VIII were more than mere formal assessments; that considerable efforts were made by the subsidy commissioners to reach a genuine assessment; and that on the whole they were not unsuccessful. (30-1)

In summary, Miller’s data on the subsidy assessments, along with the “Roll of the lands of John now Earl of Oxford, inherited from his father John, the late Earl” show that the figures in 1534 and 1540 are reasonably accurate statements of the actual income of the Oxford earldom at that time. What then was the value twenty to twenty-five years later at the time of the sixteenth earl’s death?

Referring to Thomas Wilson’s outrageous claim that Earl Edward was rated at £12,000 per year in 1575 and vanished from the subsidy assessments within two years thereafter (Fisher 21-2),³ Miller clarifies that Oxford “was certainly never rated so high in the subsidy book, being assessed for the subsidies of 1571 and 1576 at £1,000, for the subsidy of 1581 at £200, and thereafter at £100 per annum” (24).

Pearson, who also consulted Miller but opted to rely on Williams previously, nevertheless follows Miller’s lead when she writes: “After Oxford succeeded to the title he was assessed at around £1,000 in both 1571 and 1576 which would still seem an under-assessment even allowing for the 1575 sales. However, in 1581 his assessment had declined to £200 and afterwards he was valued at £100; these estimates seem to be near the mark” (36). Although Pearson rejects all the earlier assessments, she is satisfied that the figures are accurate once Oxford hit rock bottom at £200 and £100 assessments, apparently for no other reason than that these amounts meet her personal objective of showing Oxford as having blown his patrimony.

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Oxford's inherited income

The realities of Oxford's inherited income are clearly stated in several documents. The first of these is John de Vere's indenture of July 1, 1562 (HL HAP o/s Box 3[19]), contracting a marriage between his son Edward and either one of two sisters of Henry Hastings, the third earl of Huntingdon, in which Earl John covenants that he will convey lands worth £2,000 annually to Edward and his male heirs by Elizabeth or Mary Hastings (with conditions that lands worth £1,200 annually would be inherited by Edward immediately after his father's death, while receipt of the other £800 must await expiry of various life estates and a 21-year period). Although the sixteenth earl was using rounded figures, this sum of £2,000 represented the entire landed inheritance of the Oxford earldom. Pearson never mentions this sum, and refers to this source only as "HMC Hastings MS. p. 319" (31, note 45), indicating she saw only the calendar abstract, not the original.

A second very important document is John de Vere's *inquisition post mortem* (TNA: PRO, C 142/136/12; hereafter *ipm*), taken on January 18, 1563, five months after his death. Researcher/scholar Nina Green has translated the entire document from the original Latin, which lists all the lands and offices left by the sixteenth earl that were inherited by his son Edward. Included are the annual net rental values for each property, annuities granted by the sixteenth earl to be paid from the rentals of those lands, and the value of the office of Lord Great Chamberlain. The total net value of Edward de Vere's inheritance listed in his father's *ipm* amounts to £2,187 2s 7d per year.

After the *ipm*, the document that serves as the foundation in any assessment of Oxford's inherited income is TNA: PRO, WARD 8/13 (hereafter WARD 8/13). This record is a detailed manorial survey prepared by the feodaries (local representatives of the Court of Wards) listing the value and revenues from Oxford's lands for one year from Michaelmas (September 29) 1563 to Michaelmas 1564. It also includes the Queen's grant of her portion of Oxford's land to Leicester of October 22, 1563.

One of several anomalies about this grant, which Pearson never broaches, is that although the Queen was legally entitled to one-third of a royal ward's lands, she took more than that in Oxford's case. This is evident from the statement in WARD 8/13 that certain annuities "shall be paid out of such of the manors, lands and tenements as be appointed to her Majesty for her third part, *for that her Highness hath more then a full third part*, and for that also the Queen's Majesty's pleasure is they should so be paid according to the tenor of her Highness' said warrant..." (emphasis added). The Queen subsequently granted her share of the lands to Robert Dudley, later earl of Leicester. The exact form Leicester's profits took from this grant is among its many ambiguous characteristics. However, Pearson believes Leicester was "allowed to retain around £56 from the calculated revenue of some £859" (21), and that this was the extent of his profit, when this amount was, in fact, a *fixed expense* which Leicester himself was required to pay.⁴

The individual allocations in WARD 8/13 can be seen on Green's website, along with further illuminating details. In this document, the net value of the lands and offices total £2,228 8s 7d, which is only £41 6s more than the total in the *ipm*. (I will elaborate on "rental increases" in WARD 8/13 below.)

Although Pearson refers to the foregoing documents, she never mentions their actual totals. The closest she comes is tucked away in an endnote, where she writes: “The sums detailed in the *inquisition post mortem* on the sixteenth earl also indicate a similar total [£2,000], but again, the values of a number of estates are shown as unknown” (60, note 35). By claiming a number of estates are shown in the ipm as “unknown”, Pearson misleads her readers into thinking that the total in the ipm is greater than it is. The fact is, there is no estate in the ipm for which the value is marked “unknown.” There are, however, a few manors in the ipm for which the value has been left blank. The reason for this is because *their value has already been included in the valuations of other manors*, as specifically spelled out in WARD 8/13. One can’t help but wonder whether Pearson actually read these.

Furthermore, Pearson fails to point out that Oxford never in his lifetime received his total inherited revenues. During his nonage, he was allotted only £643 5s 1¹/₄d per year (£717 17s 3³/₄d after rental increases had taken effect). Following Oxford’s mother’s death in 1568, he should have received her jointure for the remaining three years of his minority, which totaled between £444 and £471 per year,⁵ but the Queen claimed this portion under wardship to add to her already greater than one-third share. It was not until the matter was tried in 1571 that Oxford received it. A further £333 per year was reserved until 1583 for payment of the sixteenth earl’s debts and fulfillment of the legacies in his will. Additionally, Oxford’s three uncles had life estates in the revenues of certain manors amounting to just over £130 per year, and the Archbishop of Canterbury received one-third of the income from Oxford’s manor of Flete. It must also be borne in mind that after Oxford came of age there continued to be hundreds of pounds in fees and lifetime annuities paid out every year. Finally, Oxford was strapped with exorbitant fines of thousands of pounds for his livery, wardship, and marriage as soon as he reached his majority.

Pearson’s book addresses little of this, yet awareness of these facts can enlighten us as to why Oxford experienced cash flow problems from the onset of his inheritance, and why—if he was to maintain the lifestyle of an earl and a courtier—he had little choice but to begin selling off his estates, an expedient that we see in the biographies of many of his noble contemporaries.

Pearson’s inflated £3,500

Pearson frequently complains of the difficulties involved in working with primary documentation, particularly financial records, and that these are often ambiguous with conflicting data. While this can be the case in some instances, the records that deal with Oxford’s inherited income are clearly not conflicting. In these, there is a remarkable consistency—and clarity—which reveal that Oxford’s inherited annual income was around £2,200, nowhere near Pearson’s exaggerated figure of £3,500. Yet Pearson inexplicably either ignores what they say, disputes them with chopped logic, or else utterly misunderstands them. This is nowhere more evident than when Pearson writes: “Many of the records detailing revenue from various lands for the seventeenth earl of Oxford are either contradictory or it is impossible to comprehend their significance” (34). Her endnote for this sentence reads:

One example of this is P.R.O., SP 12/44, f. 49/50 which appears to detail income received by the Court of Wards from Oxford's estates not in wardship. It is very unclear as some estates are included twice with different figures and cannot be relied on. Although supposed to be for all Oxford's lands it omits several. (59, note 20)

Pearson completely misunderstands this document, so clarification is in order. To begin with, "SP 12/44, f. 49/50" should be listed as "SP 12/44/19 fos. 41-50." Folios 49/50 are but two of ten that comprise this document. Contrary to Pearson's claim, every estate listed in this document was included in Oxford's portion of the inheritance that fell into wardship, the income from which was paid into the Court of Wards for his maintenance during his minority. Pearson is also mistaken in claiming that some estates are included twice, when each estate is actually listed six times with slightly different figures, nor is there anything "unclear" about why this is so. SP 12/44/19 fos. 41-50 is a declaration of the account of the receipt and revenues of Oxford's lands and possessions in various counties listed on a year-by-year basis from 1562 through 1567. The sums collected for each of the properties for 1562 are less than the subsequent five years since John de Vere did not die until August of that year. The incomes listed from 1563 to 1567 are fairly consistent. After each property is listed with its income for *each of six years*, it is followed by a sum total, along with names of the individuals who collected portions of it, and how much they received *per property* for each year. At the very end of the document (specifically folios 49/50 to which Pearson refers), the same individuals who received the disbursements are again listed, this time with a *combined total* of the amounts each of them received from *all the properties* over all six years. Thus, the amounts in the document are re-calculated several different ways; when cross-referenced, they balance to the penny in every instance.

Unfortunately, Pearson's misunderstanding of SP 12/44/19 does not end here. In finagling to arrive at £3,500 for Oxford's inherited income, she refers to it again later in conjunction with other documents with such convoluted reasoning that it is a wonder to sort it all out. It is necessary to unravel Pearson's interpretations for the unwary reader by considering in some depth what she writes in this regard, therefore we will return to this later.

After admitting her difficulties in nailing down an accurate assessment of income from the feodaries' surveys (basically a "snap-shot" on one particular day of ever-changing accounts, about which more will be said in due course), Pearson writes:

However, the figures returned to the Court of Wards give us something on which to base a calculation. From a brief declaration of revenue made to William Danzell in 1563 the court considered the sixteenth earl to have been worth just under £2,000 annually. When considering this sum we have to take into account various discrepancies in arithmetical calculations which seem always to accompany documents of this kind. (36)

The irony of Pearson's statement will be lost on most readers. The only discrepancies in arithmetical calculations are entirely her own. Pearson's source for the "brief declaration of revenue" is TNA: PRO, SP 12/33/32. Further down on the same page she cites an exact figure of £1,999, which one can only assume is the "just under £2,000 annually" she's claiming to get from this document. Although £2,000 annually as the net worth of the Oxford earldom is close to accurate, how Pearson derived this figure from TNA: PRO, SP 12/33/32 is anybody's guess.

TNA: PRO, SP 12/33/32 is an accounting document for the period from Lady Day (March 25) 1562 to Lady Day 1564 for several of the manors from which Oxford was maintained via the Court of Wards during his minority. That the accounting was for a two-year period is stated plainly at the top of the first folio. The sum total for gross income for these two years comes to £905 13s 7¹/₂d, which, when halved, is £452 16s 9³/₄d for one year. Unfathomable as it seems, in order for Pearson to have arrived at £1,999 for one year, she had to quadruple (and more) the annual amount in TNA: PRO, SP 12/33/32! She goes on:

Moreover, the income shown was from Wiltshire, Devon, Staffordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cornwall and two manors in Cambridgeshire alone. As we know that the income from Leicester's grant was more than £800 this gives a total nearer £3,000 and estates in Kent, Cheshire, Berkshire and Warwickshire have not yet been included. (36).

Even if Pearson's calculation of nearly £2,000 were correct (which it is not; it's too much times four), she adds Leicester's £800—the gross amount of the Queen's grant to him of her (more than) third share of Oxford's estates—and rather than calling it £2,800, indiscriminately adds another £200 to call it "nearer £3,000."

Considering those estates in Kent, Cheshire, Berkshire and Warwickshire that were not included in the document, Pearson continues, "We can therefore estimate that the total income of Oxford estates in 1562 was nearer £3,500 than £2,000 and that the lay subsidies were an under-valuation of some seventy-five per cent" (36).

How and why Pearson chose these particular estates as not having been included in TNA: PRO, SP 12/33/32 is, again, anybody's guess. The land in Berkshire, at a total of £48 per annum, had been assigned to Oxford's uncle, Robert de Vere. Bilton, which was the only Oxford manor in Warwickshire, valued at just over £15, was part of the dowager Countess of Oxford's jointure (although these must still be included when calculating total income of the Oxford earldom). Nevertheless, Pearson never states what the additional amounts were for Kent, Cheshire, Berkshire and Warwickshire. The fact is that the net annual income from these lands totaled £233 17s 5d, which, if added to the already imagined £3,000 arrived at so far, would have only totaled £3,233 and some change. So here again, Pearson added an additional £267 to achieve her £3,500, which, in any case, she had arrived at erroneously from the outset.

One could figure in *all the Oxford lands* that are missing from TNA: PRO, SP 12/33/32 using amounts consistent in all the other extant financial documents, of which there are many, and *never arrive at £3,500*. The figure is a total concoction. Pearson gets to point B from point A, which is

itself an incorrect assertion, and so continues forward, building subsequent arguments upon fallacious data, until her analyses—directly contradicted by the very sources she cites—become convoluted well beyond any possible point of comprehension. Unwary readers, of course, will never realize the maze of misconstruction into which they have wandered; only a scholar who has consulted the documents themselves can appreciate how seriously Pearson has misrepresented them.

After claiming that Oxford's subsidy assessments were an under-valuation of seventy-five per cent (a brazen assertion), she writes:

Taking the more likely £3,500 as the income Oxford inherited, it is apparent that when his mother's jointure, his father's estates in lease, the grant of his income to the earl of Leicester and the income to his uncles from their estates, are deducted (a total of £1,429), £2,071 remained for his support, a position continuing at least until the death of Lady Marjory in 1568. This calculation of £2,071 falls not far short of the income, £1,999, given for the manors above but the original addition is incorrect by several hundred pounds, the correct calculation being £1,450. From the declaration of income returned to the Court of Wards, which sets out these calculations, it looks as if £451 went to Danzell as auditor of the court and just over £1,000 to Thomas Wiseman, Oxford's auditor. (36/38)

First: "the more likely £3,500" is "more likely" only to Pearson.

Second: the Countess of Oxford's jointure, the sixteenth earl's estates in lease, the grant of his income to the Earl of Leicester and the income to Oxford's uncles from their estates do not total £1,429, nor did £2,071 remain for Oxford's support; he received £643 5s 1¹/₄d for maintenance, which was raised to £717 17s 3³/₄d after rental increases had taken effect. Here again, it's difficult to know where Pearson arrived at these figures when the amounts are plainly stated in John de Vere's ipm, WARD 8/13, and other documents besides.

Third: Pearson returns to her imaginary figure of £1,999 allegedly gleaned from TNA: PRO, SP 12/33/32, but then states this figure "is incorrect by several hundred pounds, the correct calculation being £1,450." Pearson, obviously confused, succeeds only in compounding error upon error. The figures in TNA: PRO, SP 12/33/32 are added perfectly, and to reiterate, total £905 13s 7¹/₂d in gross income for a two-year period, hence £452 16s 9³/₄d for one year. Pearson has more than quadrupled this amount by claiming that this document totals £1,999 for one year, and then says this is wrong and should be £1,450. So now Pearson is only over-tripling the actual annual total of £452 indicated in this record.

Fourth: for her claim that "£451 [of this sum] went to Danzell as auditor of the court and just over £1,000 to Thomas Wiseman," which she says is from "the declaration of income returned to the Court of Wards, which sets out these calculations," Pearson offers the following source: "SP 12/44 f. 49, declaration of income, 1562" (60, note 40).

Recall that "SP 12/44 fo. 49" (i.e. SP 12/44/19 fos. 41-50) has already been discussed once above in relation to an entirely different set of mistakes by Pearson, who dates the document to

1562, never comprehending that it was a declaration of income for six years drawn up after September 29, 1567. Setting aside Pearson's earlier misconceptions about the document, the steps she apparently took in claiming that £451 went to William Danzell and just over £1,000 to Thomas Wiseman can be traced as follows: The penultimate folio page from SP 12/44/19 (fo. 49r) shows the totals from the estates collected by William Danzell (£153 19s 3/4d), Robert Groves (£23), and Stephen Bagot (£158 19s 11d), all of which total £452 2s 9³/₄d, a figure given at the bottom of the page. Pearson seems to have conflated all three accounts into one, assigning the entire sum total on that page to William Danzell. On the other hand, Pearson somewhat more correctly claimed that Thomas Wiseman collected "just over £1,000" as the exact figure given for him on the flipside (fo. 49v) was £1082 4s 5¹/₄ d. But here again, it must be borne in mind that these totals were for six years, not one year, as Pearson would have it, rendering her calculation of £1,450 for one year absolute nonsense. Moreover, she chose to ignore the fact that just above Wiseman's name is William Cecil's, who collected £302 19s 5d (over six years). And just above Cecil's name is William Cooke's, who collected £161 14s 3³/₄d (over six years). Why did Pearson ignore these figures? One way or the other, Pearson seems to have chosen the figures that suited her, and then proceeded to misinterpret them.

Expostulating about the difficulties involved with estimating the income of a sixteenth-century aristocrat, "not necessarily through lack of information itself ... but for lack of knowledge of what it all means" (33), Pearson comes close to admitting her own shortcomings. There is no more vivid example of ironic contradiction than when she complains about "the usual poor accounting" (23) and "the lack of simple arithmetical skills" (33) during the period in question. It is no exaggeration to say that Pearson amply demonstrates her own want of math and incomprehension of the primary source material with which she's working throughout her book.

There is not enough space in this article to lay bare all of Pearson's confusion, but to set the record straight, some additional examples are nevertheless in order. She writes:

The difficulty encountered by the historian is that the accounts, which should give a clear picture of income, are merely "in and out" records, designed to give the steward a picture of what income he could expect from a particular estate and what recurring charges were assigned to that estate. Coupled with this is the fact that the tenant did not necessarily pay what he owed on the due date. He might pay, perhaps, half the amount expected, but this is not clearly noted; the account says merely, "on account." But on account for what? In December 1563 William Danzell, receiver at the Court of Wards, received £40 16s 5¹/₂d from Christian Malford, Robert Treves collected £23 from the same estate, but £74 19s 5d was sent to Thomas Wiseman. Similarly, from Colbrooke in Devon £15 was collected by the bailiff, £40 19s 7¹/₄d sent to the Court of Wards and £87 4s 11d to Wiseman from an estate valued at just under £32. The following year Stephen Bagot, feodary of Staffordshire, collected £140 3s 10d from Acton Trussell but only £14 5s 8d was sent to London and £27 3s 1d to Wiseman. (33)

Pearson offers three sources for the preceding information: TNA: PRO, SP 12/31/20; SP 12/34/29; and SP 12/30/7; writing in her endnote: “These are all receipts for rents from Oxford’s estates and in each case the sums received are well in excess of the amounts detailed in the *inquisition post mortem* taken on John de Vere” (59, note 8).

Where to begin? None of the information in the foregoing statement is accurate. Let’s review Pearson’s three sources.

First: SP 12/31/20 has absolutely no connection with the data specified in Pearson’s paragraph; it is a letter written from Robert Newdigate, feodary in Buckinghamshire, to William Cecil, informing him that he has collected £60, “which I assure your Honor is all that I have as yet received of Michaelmas revenue; but I am now riding about the country to gather up the rest.” Did Pearson include this extra source reference to give the endnote more weight, or was this simply an accident?

Second: SP 12/34/29 is an account of “certain sums of monies” received by William Cooke, the first section dated June 21, 1564, with subsequent entries on May 9 and June 11, 1565. This is apparently the document Pearson refers to when she writes “[the tenant] might pay, perhaps, half the amount expected, but this is not clearly noted; the account says merely, ‘on account.’ But on account for what?” There’s no great mystery here: the receipts recorded by Cooke are from various bailiffs and feodaries of some of Oxford’s estates that were under the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards, and it is upon their accounts (“upon accompts”) that the individual sums are recorded alongside the corresponding property. According to this document, Henry Golding, bailiff of Castle Camps, received £43 18s 10d, which was slightly over one pound of this property’s rating in the ipm (£42 17s). William Bugby, feodary of Cambridgeshire, received £12 15s 5³/₄d for Abingdon, which was 15s 1¹/₄d less than this manor’s rating in the ipm (£13 10s 7d). Jerome Balborough, bailiff of Christian Malford in Wiltshire, is shown in receipt of £17 for that manor, with a further £20 paid on June 11, 1565, for a total of £37, whereas this manor was rated £37 9s 3³/₄d in the ipm. Robert Newdigate, feodary of Buckinghamshire (not Bedford, as mistakenly listed in the document), received £68 pounds, probably for Chesham Higham and Chesham Bury, as these were rated at £69 15s 4¹/₄d in the ipm. As can be seen, none of the properties listed in this document “are well in excess of the amounts detailed” in John de Vere’s ipm, as claimed by Pearson.

Third: SP 12/30/7 is an account of Thomas Lee (Jerome Balborough’s deputy bailiff of Christian Malford), “for one year entire ending Michaelmas [September 29] in the fifth year of Queen Elizabeth [=1563].” The collected sum total comes to £52 7s 1d, but £5 13s 8d of this figure was for fees of the bailiff and steward of the manor and the expenses of holding the manor courts, leaving £46 13s 5d in net revenue. As noted above, the rating for Christian Malford in the ipm was £37 9s 3³/₄d. However, this amount was raised to £48 9s in WARD 8/13 after Robert Groves, feodary in Wiltshire, had increased the rent, making Thomas Lee’s receipt £1 15s 7d less than the given rate.

Based upon these three sources, recall that Pearson wrote: “In December 1563 William Danzell, receiver at the Court of Wards, received £40 16s 5¹/₂d from Christian Malford, Robert Treves collected £23 from the same estate, but £74 19s 5d was sent to Thomas Wiseman.” Contrary to Pearson’s assertion, neither William Danzell nor Thomas Wiseman are ever named in any of her

three sources; neither are the sums £40 16s 5¹/₂d or £74 19s 5d. Moreover, “Robert Treves” is a mistranscription by Pearson for Robert Groves, who indeed collected £23 for Christian Malford, which was paid “to the hands of the Master of the Wards [William Cecil]” on November 25, 1563 (not, as Pearson implies, to Danzell in December of that year, or to Wiseman).

Pearson goes on: “Similarly, from Colbrooke in Devon £15 was collected by the bailiff, £40 19s 7¹/₄d sent to the Court of Wards and £87 4s 11d to Wiseman from an estate valued at just under £32. The following year Stephen Bagot, feodary of Staffordshire, collected £140 3s 10d from Acton Trussell but only £14 5s 8d was sent to London and £27 3s 1d to Wiseman.” Once again, neither these individuals, nor these amounts, are named in any of the three sources listed by Pearson.

Reiterating her argument that the revenues from Oxford’s lands were higher than their value listed in his father’s ipm, Pearson writes: “Even the records of the *inquisition post mortem* had to be supplemented by surveys, as they were found to reveal higher values” (34). Not surprisingly, Pearson gives no details regarding these “higher values.” The accounting document WARD 8/13, which, as mentioned above, consists of the financial records for Oxford’s lands for one year (1563-64), always includes first the value of each estate exactly as it was listed in the sixteenth earl’s ipm (excepting a £41 6s difference), and then includes the amount of any increase in yearly rents, if one was so deemed by the feodary. These increases are clearly spelled out within each section dealing with the specific estate. Again, the total net value of the lands and offices inherited by Edward de Vere listed in the ipm amounts to £2,187 2s 7d per year. The total net value of the lands and offices set out in WARD 8/13 before rental increases equals £2,228 8s 7d, and after rental increases comes to £2,409 8s 10¹/₄d, meaning there was an increase in rents of £181 0s 3¹/₄d. But even this must be considered in proper perspective.

Forget for the moment that this “after increase” figure is still £1,100 less than Pearson’s overblown £3,500. First of all, the ipm was always the basis for calculating an heir’s inheritance. Second, whereas the accounting for any estate could vary from year to year, depending on whether rents were increased or whether they “decayed” (to use the Elizabethan term, as properties were in constant need of repair), the accounting document SP 12/44/19, discussed above, reveals that the revenues of the Oxford estates from 1562 through 1567 remained consistent with the figures in the ipm and WARD 8/13. Moreover, SP 12/47/86—another document never consulted by Pearson—shows the income of the Oxford estates in Wiltshire, Devonshire, Cornwall, Buckinghamshire, and Cambridgeshire for seven years (1562-1568), which, again, are consistent with the previous figures.

A final consideration is that the rental increases of £181 in the first year after John de Vere’s death were more than offset by the fact that Earl Edward, “now in ward, evermore in subjection,” was consequently living in London at far greater expense. Yet Pearson, writing of the apparent inability of William Cecil “to curb Oxford’s extravagance while at Cecil House” considers the young earl’s lifestyle in London to have been wasteful and excessive:

That [Oxford] was a heavy spender while still young is indicated by some accounts for 1570 which show expenditure on ten pairs of Spanish leather shoes, various capes, caps, doublets and velvet hose and garters embellished with silver. Burghley must bear some of the responsibility for allowing this extravagance while Oxford was in his care

because, in his capacity as Master of the Court of Wards and Liveries, he was well placed to know every detail of the earl's income and expenditure. At twenty, Oxford had no mitigating circumstances, such as building, or the marriage of a daughter, as expenditure likely to lead to noble overspending, to account for his extravagance. (32)

Pearson offers as her source for the 1570 accounts of Oxford's expenditures the abstracts from the printed *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* (Addenda 1566-79, 327). However, the specific items Pearson names (shoes, capes, garters, etc.) are not included in the abstracts, so one may assume she has either seen the original documents or been shown a transcript by someone who has. Pearson doesn't bother to inform her readers that the majority of Oxford's expenditures in these same accounts were payments for servants' liveries and wages, blacksmiths for shoeing horses, medicines from an apothecary "in time of his sickness," rewards to physicians "during his being sick at Windsor," and items such as the hire of a hot house, keeping stables, horse hire, carriages, boat hire, wood, coals, victuals, Italian books, paper, ink, house rent, board and diet at Cecil House, "and other necessaries and charges" (TNA: PRO, SP 15/19/38, 39, 40). Immediately adjacent to the accounts for Oxford are similar accounts for other royal wards. The only other earl among them, however, was the young Rutland, whose expenses on items such as satin for cloaks girded with velvet, leather hose with silver lace, taffeta caps with gold bands, Spanish leather shoes, etc., totaled only slightly less than Oxford's spending on comparable items (TNA: PRO, SP 15/19/34, 35, 36). Supplying her readers with this information would put Oxford's so-called "extravagance" into context and perspective, something Pearson is apparently not interested in doing. Instead, determined to paint a picture of "conspicuous consumption", she later reiterates: "It is interesting to speculate, although difficult to quantify, what Oxford spent his money on. We know, from the schedules of debt, that prodigious sums of money went on personal adornment . . ." (58). In actual fact, the sums spent on personal adornment were but a small percentage of the schedules of debt, and the amounts were not exceptional when compared to those spent by other young noblemen who were courtiers.

One of Pearson's many red herrings for the supposed difficulties in dealing with the documents at hand is set out in her complaint that "we have scraps of information which, even if they refer to the same estate, do not seem to bear any relation to each other, in that the sums of money differ" (33). The sources in her endnote that allegedly support this statement are: "E.R.O, D/DU 65/72A, feodary's return, 1562; P.R.O., SP 12/25 ff. 105-11 (Lat.);" (59, note 10). But once again Pearson misrepresents the records before her. First, the reference "SP 12/25 ff. 105-11" should be "SP 12/26 fos. 105-11" (only the difference of a volume). Ideally, it should include the item number from the printed CSPD, to read "SP 12/26/49 fos. 105-11," but Pearson is rarely consistent in how she lists her sources. Second, she fails to understand why there is no relationship between this document and ERO, D/DU 65/72A. The latter is a survey of Oxford's lands in Essex by the feodary John Glascock.⁶ SP 12/26/49 fos. 105-11, on the other hand, is a document listing the extents of various knights' fees⁷ belonging to John de Vere in Essex, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Norfolk. These fees had nothing to do with rents, and are completely separate from the amounts listed in Glascock's survey with which Pearson tries to compare them; the

document lists the names of the tenants who held lands from Oxford by this service, along with their properties in the given counties. The most any one tenant owed was a few shillings, with most no longer required to pay anything. The sub-total for Essex comes to £3 19s 2d, for Suffolk 17s 8d, for Cambridge 10s 8d, for Hertford 4s, for Buckingham 10s 4d, and for Norfolk, nothing. The sum-total is £6 1s 10d. The document is in Latin, but should that excuse Pearson's failure to comprehend it, and construe from it a false dichotomy with another document?

Still another all-encompassing document of the possessions and hereditaments of the sixteenth earl of Oxford inherited by Edward is TNA: PRO, SP 12/31/29, fos. 53-55. Pearson refers to this document three times (34, 35 [59, notes 16 and 30], and 42), never once citing the sum total listed at the end of the document. Instead, she elects to concentrate on one section only: the estates set aside by Act of Parliament for twenty years for the performance of John de Vere's debts and legacies. On page 35, Pearson says this amount is "just over £335". On page 42, she includes a table of this section, which is there totaled £334 2s 3d, then inexplicably appends a note immediately beneath the table that says: "The figures in P.R.O., SP 12/31, item 53 (sic) give a total of £335 12s 4d." Why the discrepancy? Whatever the cause, Pearson is wrong in both instances. The exact sub-total from this section of said document actually comes to £335 7s 4d. Although Pearson is off a mere 5 shillings in the figure she gives in her note, one is left to wonder why this is the only amount selectively cited from this document, when the Queen's portion is also given, as is the countess of Oxford's jointure, along with the lands assigned to the sixteenth earl's brothers by Act of Parliament and indenture, and the lands descended to Earl Edward in tail—the total value listed at the end being £2331 21s (=£2332 1s 0d), which, like the similar totals in John de Vere's ipm and WARD 8/13, goes entirely unacknowledged by Pearson. The difference in pounds between these three documents is negligible when compared to Pearson's fantastic £3,500.

As we've seen, there are several peremptory documents extant that proclaim the value of the Oxford earldom inherited by Edward de Vere, all of them making it crystal clear that it was around £2,200 per year, give or take £200. Regardless of the tortuous spin Pearson foists upon them, the documents in question are not open to interpretation or subject to other calculations. That Pearson evades these very tangible figures, and instead repeatedly expostulates on the difficulties of estimating a sixteenth-century nobleman's income—all in order to mislead her readers into accepting her preposterously inflated figure of £3,500—is a disservice to her academic effort.

Part II: haphazard history

Although Pearson's miscalculations extend well beyond the foregoing examples, no journal has the space to elucidate all of these. There are, nevertheless, other areas of Pearson's work also in need of critical comment, several of which are too complex to fully flesh out here, including her misrepresentation of the duke of Somerset's extortion of Oxford's father (13, 24, 207), which flies in the face of historical evidence, and her questionable takes on both the Skinner and Harlackenden frauds, in which she portrays them as the victims rather than Oxford: "Thomas Skinner was the most unfortunate of all" (86); "[N]one was affected so badly as Harlackenden. . . . It is quite likely

Harlackenden was demonized” (203).

There are, however, mistakes in Pearson’s book basic enough that some can be enumerated in less space. These errors run the gamut from minor to major. Skipping a stone across the surface, the following baker’s dozen are representative of the author’s slipshod research throughout:

1. Pearson writes: “The sixteenth earl succeeded to the title of earl of Oxford in 1540 and was granted the office of Lord Great Chamberlain” (13). In fact, the fifteenth earl of Oxford was only granted this office for life; upon his death in 1540, Henry VIII granted it to Thomas Cromwell, then earl of Essex. After Cromwell’s death the Crown continued to grant the office at its pleasure, despite the sixteenth earl’s strenuous efforts to regain it. It was not until 1553 that he officiated as Lord Great Chamberlain at Mary’s coronation, upon what plea is unknown. At Elizabeth’s coronation in 1558, his petition for the office was officially sanctioned (*Complete Peerage*, X.App.F.65, 72.).

2. Pearson claims that a letter (TNA: PRO, SP 12/37/68) dated 1569 shows that Oxford’s mother, the Countess Margery, died without informing anyone where the keys were that unlocked chests and cupboards at Castle Hedingham and Earls Colne containing title deeds to the earldom (25). The letter does indicate that these keys were in the countess’s keeping, but is dated November 10, 1565, not 1569, as Pearson claims. Considering that Oxford’s mother died in 1568, the letter, written three years before her death, is merely a record of where these papers were being kept, and who had the keys at that time. Pearson repeats the error later, writing: “It had been thought sufficiently important in 1569 to note where all the ‘evidences,’ or rights to title and records of leases were kept” (74). While Pearson also dates the document to November 10, 1569 in the endnote attached to this sentence, she inexplicably refers to it again on the same page in another endnote, this time with the correct date of November 10, 1565 (93, notes 55 and 58).

3. Expounding on Oxford’s livery and wardship fees, Pearson writes: “What seems to have happened is that both fines were divided into ten installments, with all payments ending in 1583” (27). The relevant document (CP 25/105) clearly shows that the fine for Oxford’s wardship was divided into ten installments, while the fine for his livery was divided into thirteen installments. Pearson repeats the ten installments error later (35). Additionally, the payments for the wardship fine ended in 1581, not 1583, as Pearson claims. Although Pearson references the calendar abstract from the *HMC Salisbury MSS.* (31, note 40) rather than the original in the Cecil Papers as her source, even the abstract includes the correct information.

4. Referring to the January 23, 1552 Private Act of Parliament which returned the lands to John de Vere that had been illegally extorted by the duke of Somerset (although she does not grant that), Pearson writes that the Act itself “has not survived” (37). Not only is the original Act extant, there are additionally surviving contemporary copies (HLRO, HL/PO/PB/1/1551/5E6n35; TNA: PRO, C 89/4/[12 & 18]).

5. Pearson writes that the 1608 ipm on Oxford’s Great Garden property within the parish of St. Botolph outside of Aldgate in London “found that Oxford had purchased the lease of the land

containing one message from Spinola and in 1591 had sold it to John Woolley and Francis Trentham, with assurance to Trentham for life” (49). In fact Woolley and Trentham are never named in the ipm. Instead, Pearson’s source is a petition filing for license to reclaim the property presented by the Master of Magdalene College dated November 26, 1609—fifteen months after the ipm (CSPD Addenda 1580-1625.520; TNA: PRO, SP15/39/105). The petition itself contained the information, inconsistent with the ipm, to which Pearson relegates it. Furthermore, Pearson’s entire discussion of Oxford’s acquisition of this property, referring to it as a “lease” and claiming that Oxford “forfeited” his “bond” to Spinola, when in fact Oxford had purchased the property outright, demonstrates an utter lack of understanding of the transaction from beginning to end (cf. 46-50).

6. Pearson claims that among Sir John Popham’s papers is a list of Oxford’s acknowledged recognizances and statutes “that remained neither satisfied nor cancelled, together with a letter from Oxford to Sir Christopher Hatton and draft notes” (84). She goes on to write that the sum of the recognizances “is a staggering £92,583 6s 8d” with the clarification that “these were not actual sums of money owed by Oxford, as many had been entered into as warranties during sales transactions, but it does indicate how casually the earl gave his pledge . . . [t]he statutes totalled £51,000 and include the bonds made to D’Arcy and Waldegrave: they are the only record of the date, 13 July 1571.” Pearson describes a few more details from what she again calls “Oxford’s letter” to Hatton, citing TNA: PRO, PRO 30/34/14 as her source for these “papers” (96, note 137). First, the unsigned letter to Hatton is not written by Oxford, who is referred to in it three times in the third person. Second, the sum of the recognizances is not £92,583 6s 8d, but £98,583 6s 8d, which is as clearly written as possible. Third, the date of Oxford’s statutes to D’Arcy and Waldegrave (mistakenly referred to by Pearson as “bonds”) was not July 13, 1571, but July 6, 1571—again, clearly spelled out. Earlier, Pearson had twice given the correct date of July 6, 1571, although in both instances she incorrectly refers to them as punitive bonds of £6,000 apiece taken out by D’Arcy and Waldegrave as guarantors of Oxford’s debt to the Court of Wards (27, 35). In fact, the two men’s bonds were for £5,000 *in total*. It was rather Oxford’s statutes of indemnification that were for £6,000 *apiece* (i.e. £12,000 in total), which he made to save the two men from harm should the Queen ever take action on their bond of £5,000. These terms are clearly stipulated in another document (TNA: PRO, C 2/Eliz/T6/48) not consulted by Pearson.⁸

7. Pearson writes that the manuscript Lansdowne 68/11 fo. 24 refers to a debt “to be paid by the purchasers at the next five successive Lammastides” (86), when the document clearly says the five successive installments were to be paid on Candlemas. Lammastide was August 1st. Candlemas was February 2nd.

8. Pearson considers Oxford’s desire to have Castiglione’s *Il Cortegiano* (*The Courtier*) translated from Italian into Latin in 1571 as being elitist, since it had already been translated into English by Thomas Hoby ten years before; her reasoning being that Hoby’s English translation had made the work accessible to many, whereas Latin would have been of interest only to the very educated. Pearson would have done well to consult the expertise of J.W. Binns, who writes: “Clerke’s version

was the one which held sway in Elizabethan England. It was printed more often in England than Hoby's version; it was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth herself, who read it and approved of it; prominent noblemen at her court encouraged Clerke in his endeavours; it was esteemed in learned circles both in England and on the continent, where it was also several times reprinted; and it gained for Clerke a reputation as one of England's most elegant and accomplished Latinists" (258). Pearson further tasks Oxford for being innovative enough to initiate a new kind of verse in the vernacular, but "not modern enough . . . to support the use of the English language in prose at court so that it could be understood by all the queen's subjects." She then goes on: "In spite of this, the preface [to *The Courtier*], written by Oxford, was in English . . . very well expressed in the rhetorical style so popular at the time" (136, emphasis in original). Pearson's emphasis notwithstanding, Oxford's prefatory letter was also written in Latin. It is B.M. Ward's English translation of 1928 that she unwittingly compliments.

9. Referring to George Chapman's famous encomium of Oxford in the 1613 play *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, Pearson writes: "[A]lthough usually considered to refer to the seventeenth earl, if written in the year of publication it could have been based on the eighteenth earl, who was twenty-two years old at this time" (145). First, Henry de Vere was twenty years old in 1613, not twenty-two. Second, considering that the play already had a performance history when it was published (apparent from Chapman's dedication), that Earl Henry had just left for Italy that year, and the actual words of Chapman's encomium, in which Clermont D'Ambois describes Earl Edward in minute detail (how he "Spoke and writ sweetly" and of his encounter with Duke Casimer in Germany)—Pearson's suggestion is unfounded, even impossible.

10. In her discussion of Oxford's grant of the stewardship of Waltham Forest, Pearson declares that "the earl only lived for five months to enjoy his new grant" (172). Once again, Pearson has trouble counting; Oxford lived for eleven months after he received the grant on July 18, 1603.

11. Pearson refers to the lawyers Theophilus Adams and Thomas Butler as the recipients of the Queen's grant of the reversion of Colne Priory, writing that they "were well known as hunters of so-called 'concealed' lands, but their association in this transaction was unusual as they normally worked in partnership with others" (196). Pearson offers no rhyme or reason, let alone relevance, for her assertion that Adams and Butler did not ordinarily work together, while no more than a superficial search reveals them working in partnership on a dozen separate cases.⁹

12. On three occasions, Pearson refers to TNA: PRO, SP 12/36/47—a letter dated May 7, 1565 written by the Countess Margery (30, 58, 220). In each instance, she indicates that the letter is written to an unknown correspondent, although she thinks it is "probably Sir William Cecil." Pearson also writes that this letter "is in a different hand" than the countess's, giving the impression she has seen the original. One can only surmise then how it is that she missed the letter's address: "To the Right Honorable Sir William Cecil, Knight, Master of the Wards and one of the Queen's Majesty's Privy Council, deliver these." It is then endorsed in Cecil's own hand: "7 May

1565. The Countess of Oxford; the Earl of Oxford's money." Moreover, even the entry in the *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* indicates that the letter is addressed to Cecil (CSPD 1547-1580.252).

13. Without offering a source, Pearson writes: "Roger Harlackenden died on 26 January 1603" (199). Yet according to Harlackenden's ipm, he died on January 1, 1603 (TNA: PRO, WARD 7/38/163; TNA: PRO, C 142/280/44).

Two or three mistakes such as the foregoing in a purportedly scholarly work might be acceptable, but these are more than a few, and the illustrations given here unfortunately only skim the surface. Financial errors and inept arithmetic aside, the inconsistencies, contradictions, incorrectly referenced sources, selective or disingenuous quoting of documents, and very basic historical mistakes that pervade this book, are too numerous to discuss here. A full enumeration of errata in this book would be long enough to prove an embarrassment, not only to Pearson, who ought—in the several years she spent working on her doctoral thesis upon which this material is based—to have gotten it right more often than she does, but to the University of Sheffield's History Department, which awarded her PhD based upon the same. Ashgate Publishing should, as well, have undertaken its part of the editorial task more conscientiously. Only a complete rewriting, however, could really cope with its deficiencies.

Part III: Conclusion

Pearson's book begins promisingly enough when she writes in her Introduction that "Oxford's life demonstrates a paradox of personality, position and attitudes at its heart . . . but Oxford's attitude has remained an enigma" (8). With this there can be little argument. Unfortunately, the material quickly devolves into the author's real agenda. After pointed allegations of "extravagance" and Oxford's "lack of financial acumen" (32, 45), Pearson relentlessly and redundantly denounces her subject: "[T]hroughout his life the earl put his own needs first" (46); "Oxford was never logical" (137); "[The honour code] was seen by Oxford as justification for doing whatever he wanted" (138); "The earl's overwhelming concern throughout his life was short-term self-interest" (140); "His concerns were for himself" (142); "[His faults] included his care for himself above all others, that is, selfishness" (144); "Self-interest motivated him above all" (147); "[His] concerns were always for himself" (208); "Oxford always, in his letters, portrayed himself as more sinned against than sinner" (210); and "His concern was for himself, then and always" (211). Even at the end of his life, "it is not possible to see any reduction in the earl's appreciation of himself" (216). Needless to say, Pearson's sympathies lie elsewhere, obvious in her reiterated commiseration with "poor Burghley" (46, 57, 161); "poor little Anne Cecil" (165, 181); and that "it is possible to feel some sympathy for the queen, dogged by the importunate Oxford everywhere she went" (146).

One senses a theme, which is to cast Oxford in as poor a light as possible. For example, referring to Oxford's £1,000 pension granted to him in 1586 by the Queen, Pearson writes: "The fact that it was payable in four installments was intended to prevent Oxford receiving—and squander-

ing—the annual capital sum” (53). This serves as a vivid but typical illustration of Pearson’s disingenuousness, since it was the Exchequer’s standard operating procedure to pay pensions and annuities in four installments, that is, on the quarterly feast days (some were paid biannually, although not as many). As one example piles on top of another, Pearson’s bias becomes all too apparent.

In calling Pearson to account, one need not argue that Oxford was a financially savvy wizard or that he did not over-spend; that is beside the point. The additional but nonexistent £1,100 to £1,300 Pearson lumps onto Oxford’s inherited annual income may not sound like all that much to modern ears, but this would have been an enormous sum, amounting today to hundreds of thousands of pounds. Pearson is surely not far wrong when she reiterates that talk of revenue probably bored Oxford, but admits that one can only speculate what most of his money was spent on, vainly consigning it to “the black hole of [his] expenditure” (83). However, because Oxford actually had a great deal less money than Pearson credits him with, this margin of speculation can be narrowed considerably, and even then, Spanish leather shoes can be discounted. Although there has been a great deal of controversial speculation about this particular earl of Oxford in modern times, there needn’t have been when it came to his finances. Had Pearson presented the available material with forthright diligence and integrity, rather than with an appalling disregard for accuracy, her conclusions that Oxford’s fiscal ruin was entirely his own doing, and that the Queen’s political neglect of him came about because of his financial recklessness, would (perforce) have been quite different.

In the end it is unfortunate that the first published case-study of Oxford’s finances and wardship has so little merit and so great a potential to confuse and mislead. Pearson’s misrepresentation and failure to comprehend her primary sources inspires little confidence in whatever original insights she purports to offer regarding the Court of Wards and Liveries, and the effects it had on an individual unfortunate enough to be burdened under its yoke. As it stands, there is nothing here to recommend in the way of further understanding Oxford, the difficult financial circumstances in which he found himself, or the wardship system itself. For a book professing to be about this very subject, one would do much better to continue to rely upon the scholarship of Bell, Hurstfield, Stone, and Green. _____



Notes

¹ For his assessment of Oxford's finances, Nelson relied entirely upon Pearson's doctoral thesis.

² In order to appreciate the immensity of this sum, one must try to comprehend the inflation rate over the past four and a half centuries. There is unfortunately no simple method in determining what money was worth at a distant point in the past in comparison with today, and one is relegated to the vagaries of percentages in price indexes. Nevertheless, with due consideration of the changes in property and land values, an approximate estimation of landed income worth £3,500 in Elizabethan England might be equivalent to £1,000,000 (\$1,870,000) or more today.

³ One might consider a passage regarding Oxford written by Sir George Buc in his *History of Richard III* as corroborating Wilson's claim. In Arthur Kincaid's intricately transcribed 1982 edition of this work, we find the one time Master of the Revels writing 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" (170).

Buc's original manuscript (ms.), written c.1619-20, survived a fire but was badly burned, resulting in the loss of a large proportion of the text in the margins and the beginnings and endings of pages. His great-nephew, also named George Buc (whom I will term "Junior" here to avoid confusion), copied it out many years later, editing and revising it heavily to suit his political agenda. Several ms. copies survive, all in Buc Jr.'s handwriting (possibly additional copies made whenever he found a new patron to "dedicate" it to). Kincaid compared all the extant mss. and noted any and all differences. Using Buc Sr.'s ms. as his main source, Kincaid's method of transcription was to use square brackets for emendations from Buc Jr.'s ms. copies, indicating that the word was not there at all in Buc Sr.'s ms. due to the marginal burning. Or if any part of a word was visible in the original, Kincaid gives the letters that were and fills in the remainder (in brackets) from the copy.

I noted that in the citation, the word "twelve" was bracketed ("the sum of [twelve] thousand pounds"), and contacted Kincaid to see if any light might be shed on the matter, since this figure simply cannot be reconciled with the actual value of Oxford's earldom, and it beggars belief that these men, no matter how prosperous, would offer Oxford such a deal to farm it out to them. Kincaid was kind enough to retrieve his original transcripts and reconsider the matter. Yes, the word "twelve" was not in the original ms., but was in Buc Jr.'s copies, along with the words "by some, 12 m.£ per Annum" in the margin beside the passage in question (i.e. "by sum, £12,000 per Annum"). Moreover, Buc Jr. copied out Buc Sr.'s ms. before it was burned. That would seem to clinch the matter as to what Buc Sr. had written in the original.

But this is not necessarily the correct conclusion. The caveat, as I suggested to Kincaid, is whether Buc Jr. may have misread the word or numerical figure that his great-uncle had originally written before the word "thousand" and subsequently carried the mistake over in all of his copies. Since "two thousand pounds" would have been the accurate figure, I asked Kincaid if Buc Sr. might have written "ij thousand pounds" or "ij m.£"—his Roman "ij" (i.e. "ii", equaling "2") resembling an Arabic "12"—and consequently read that way by his great-nephew. Kincaid granted not only the possibility, but also the probability that this was the case. He told me that even before the original ms. was burned, "Buc Sr.'s awful handwriting and his many revisions would have made it very, very difficult to decipher—apart from which George [Jr.] seems to have been much more careless than his great-uncle." After considering the matter, Kincaid thought that perhaps Buc Jr. "mistook a line or squiggle", concluding: "That seems to me the most likely explanation." (email)

⁴ The total rental of Oxford's lands in Essex, Cambridge, and Suffolk, as stipulated in WARD 8/13, amounted to the yearly value of £859 9s 8d, of which £803 9s 8¹/₂d was earmarked "to her Highness' use,"

leaving a difference of £55 19s 11¹/₂d—or Pearson’s £56 that Leicester was “allowed to retain.” While the Queen turned her portion over to Leicester’s control, it is obvious from even the most perfunctory perusal of this section of the grant that the £56 consisted of “deductions & reprises” that Leicester had to pay to various park keepers, stewards, auditors’ clerks, and bailiffs—all listed by name, with the amounts due to each individual broken down very specifically, and adding up to the penny. How Pearson saw this as a profit to Leicester is incomprehensible.

5 WARD 8/13 valued the jointure of the dowager countess of Oxford at just over £444. TNA: PRO, SP 12/66/49 indicates the countess had improved the manor of Worleston in Chester by £20 per year, and rates her jointure at just over £468. TNA: PRO, SP 12/31/29 and SP 12/66/48 rate the same at just over £471.

6 RO, D/DU 65/72A is actually a transcript made in 1900; the original document (ERO, D/DU 65/72) is available, but Pearson did not consult it.

7 In brief: The Crown owned the lands, but granted them to nobles, who were allowed to use them in exchange for knight’s service—originally supplying soldiers in time of war. The nobles sub-granted portions of their land to lesser gentry in exchange for a share of the military service owed. The number of knights was more or less determined by the value of the territory infeudated, so it was not the knight’s fee that was valued for itself, but the land with which the fee was associated.

8 See also BL Lansdowne MS. 103/47 fo. 109, in which Lord Burghley refers to the “2 statutes made to the Lord Darcy and Sir William Wal[de]grave of £12,000 by the earl of Oxford.”

9 See ERO, D/DPt/168; TNA: PRO, E 134/16Jas1/Mich20; TNA: PRO, PRO 30/34/9; Corp. of London Records Office CLA/007/EM/02/K/027; Birmingham City Archives MS 3154/Acc 1933-025/412968; Manchester University, John Rylands Library: Crutchley Muniments CRU/787; Derbyshire Record Office D3155/7764; East Sussex Record Office SAS-M/1/247; Harvard Law Library, Deed 434, HOLLIS No. AQF0743; CSPD 1595-1597, Vol. CCLXIII, p. 434; CSPD 1591-1594, Vol. CCL, p. 554; HMC Salisbury MSS. Vol. V, pp. 63-4; and *The Victoria history of the county of Oxford*, Volume 12, p. 22.



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ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library.
CP	Cecil Papers.
CSPD	Calendar of State Papers Domestic.
ERO	Essex Record Office.
HL	Huntington Library.
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office.
LP	Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII.
TNA: PRO	The National Archives: Public Record Office.

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- NOTE: I am indebted to Nina Green, who (in addition to my own primary research) has transcribed and analyzed in painstaking detail many of the relevant documents concerning Oxford's inherited income and wardship, which she has generously made accessible to the public at: <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com>