Journal of Scientific Exploration
Anomalistics and Frontier Science

ESSAY

Why William Shakespeare Did Not Write the Works Attributed to Him, and Why Sir Henry Neville Did

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HIGHLIGHTS

Many literary scholars think "William Shakespeare" was a pseudonym, with some evidence suggesting the real author was Sir Henry Neville (1563–1615)—an important English courtier, politician, and diplomat.

ABSTRACT

This article complements those published in the special issue of this *Journal* (Summer 2023) about the Shakespeare Authorship Question. After making some important points about why William Shakespeare could not have written the works attributed to him, the present paper argues the case for Sir Henry Neville (1563–1615) as the real author. Of particular interest is the fact that Neville's handwriting, in letters and in annotations in books, appears to be identical with the handwriting in "Hand D" of the play *Sir Thomas More*, the only manuscript source believed to be in the handwriting of "William Shakespeare". Twelve key points are then advanced as to why Neville was the real author of Shakespeare's works.

SUBMITTED November 13, 2024
ACCEPTED March 16, 2024
PUBLISHED June 30, 2024

https://doi.org/10.31275/20243243

KEYWORDS

Shakespeare authorship question, Sir Francis Bacon, Edward De Vere (Earl of Oxford), Robert Devereux (Earl of Essex), Sir Henry Neville, Sir Henry Savile, Sir Henry Wriothesley (Earl of Southampton), Essex Rebellion, First Folio, London Virginia Company.

INTRODUCTION

The contributors to the 2023 August issue of the *Journal* outlined many of the main reasons why skeptics have questioned whether William Shakespeare was the real author, but there are other salient reasons as well that must be considered. In particular, there are simply vast areas of our continuing ignorance about the most important aspects of his life and career, which even centuries of research by eminent, dedicated scholars have been unable to clarify. These vast areas of ignorance do not concern simply another famous writer, but the man who is arguably the most intensively studied human being in history. Literally, every scrap of paper from his lifetime has been identified and read by scholars in order to find something—literally anything—which bears in any way on his life and career, and especially on his life and career as a playwright and poet. Despite these her-

culean efforts, nothing new is ever found. The countless biographies of Shakespeare, many by university professors and experts on Elizabethan and Jacobean history, which pour off the printing presses with the regularity of clockwork, contain not one new fact about the 'Bard of Avon'. Arguably, the last significant documented fact directly relating to William Shakespeare's life was discovered in 1909 by the American husband-and-wife team of amateur researchers William and Hulda Wallace in the Public Record Office in London, namely a transcript of a lawsuit brought in 1612 by a Stephen Bellott against his father-in-law, Christopher Mountjoy; Shakespeare had been a lodger in Mountjoy's house in the City of London, and was called to give evidence. Shakespeare said, in effect, that he could remember nothing about the matter, signed his name on the court deposition, and walked out. That was it; since then, nothing has been discovered in any source or archive about William Shakespeare that was not already known in 1909. As has been repeatedly noted by those who have questioned Shakespeare's authorship, not a single book known to have been owned by Shakespeare or a single letter, diary, or literary document written by him has ever been discovered. No handwritten manuscript of a play or poem written by Shakespeare has ever been found, the sole exception being his contribution to the play *Sir Thomas More,* written by five different authors referred to by scholars as "Hands"; Shakespeare's portion is known as "Hand D." Shakespeare's plays contain numerous eye-witness descriptions of Italian cities and towns, descriptions which are regarded as accurate, although Shakespeare is not known to have ever left England (Roe, 2011; Waugh, 2013). Shakespeare's plays and poems contain references to around 500 printed works, several in untranslated foreign languages, which must have required the author to have owned many books or had access to a large library, but neither has ever been found. It should also be remembered that despite the fact that Shakespeare was traveling back and forth between London and Stratford-on-Avon, acting night after night on the stage, and journeying throughout England with his acting company on horseback or in some primitive cart on unpaved roads in English weather, he somehow managed to write thirty-seven plays, several long poems, and 154 Sonnets in only about twenty-three years, a feat which beggars belief.

In the absence of any new evidence and with vast areas about which nothing is known, all of the "biographies" of the Bard have had to improvise and, in effect, invent or embroider accounts about most aspects of Shakespeare's life, filling in the gaps with imaginative exercises or expanding upon a few lines of alleged facts about him. An excellent example of this is how the young Shakespeare came from Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire in the English Midlands to London. The period from about 1580, when Shakespeare was fifteen or sixteen, until 1592 when he was attacked in print by a rival dramatist, Robert Greene, are years when nothing whatever is known for certain about his life, apart from the fact that in 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, and had a daughter born in 1583, and twins, a boy and a girl born in 1585, all in Stratford-on-Avon. What Shakespeare was doing during these years, and, in particular, how and why he moved to London and became a writer and an actor, remain unknown, despite centuries of searching for convincing answers. In the absence of real evidence, two rival and completely dissimilar theories have been put forward. The earlier and better known, first advanced in the late seventeenth century, is that "Shakespeare was much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits, particularly from Sir [Thomas] Lucy who oft had him whipped and sometime imprisoned and at last made him fly his native county to his great advantage." Another, independent account of this alleged matter, published in 1709 by Nicholas Rowe, stated that Shakespeare had "fallen into ill Company … and made a frequent practice of Deer-stealing … more than once robbing a Park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that Gentleman … [and] he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire … and shelter himself in London." Sadly for the veracity of this oft-repeated story, there is no record of any such prosecution brought by Lucy against Shakespeare, while it was found by a more recent researcher that although Sir Thomas Lucy owned a rabbit-warren (where rabbits were bred for food) near Stratford, his deer park was actually located at Sutton, near Tenbury, Worcestershire, located fifty-seven miles from Stratford (Shakespeare, 2007).

The other, entirely different account of Shakespeare's "lost years" is that he spent two years as a combination of tutor and entertainer in the households of two Roman Catholic members of the Lancashire gentry: Alexander Houghton primarily but also the latter's relative Thomas Hesketh. In other words, the young Shakespeare did not flee to London as a "deer poacher" but went in precisely the opposite direction, northwards. According to this theory, Shakespeare received a legacy in Houghton's will, where he was referred to as "William Shakeshafte". Proponents of this theory, especially the distinguished scholar Honigmann (1998), in his *Shakespeare: The "Lost Years"* pointed out that John Aubrey (1626–1697), writing many years later, stated that in his youth Shakespeare was a schoolmaster in the country, and that one of Shakespeare's teachers at Stratford Grammar School, John Cottom, came from Preston, Lancashire and was a

Roman Catholic. It was suggested that Cottom procured this position for his talented young student. Shakespeare was, thus, from a secretly Catholic family. After two years in Lancashire, according to this theory, Shakespeare joined the acting company named for Lord Strange (later the Earl of Derby), its patron, a major landowner in Lancashire, and, as a result, became an actor in London. This version of events has many deficiencies. There is no evidence that Shakespeare was a Roman Catholic, having been baptized, married, and buried as a conforming Anglican, nor that he was the "William Shakeshafte"—a common surname in Lancashire—mentioned in the will, nor that he was ever a member of Lord Strange's acting company. Furthermore, as noted, Shakespeare must have been in Stratford in November 1582 when he was married and, presumably, in 1583 and 1585 when his children were baptized. Honigmann (1998) discovered, however, that there was an authentic oral tradition in the Houghton family, predating its appearance in print, and that, as a youth, William Shakespeare worked for them. Since, apart from this account, there is absolutely nothing to connect Shakespeare with Lancashire, this oral tradition should be given some credence. On the other hand, even if true, that he worked for two years in Lancashire, of course, does not prove that he wrote the plays—there is nothing in this account to suggest that he wrote anything—only that he worked in Lancashire as a youth.

These competing and contradictory theories, made without real evidence, are typical of most biographical accounts of Shakespeare's life. While these deficiencies in Shakespeare's biography are serious, they are arguably less important than the anomalies which arise if the facts of the generally accepted chronology of Shakespeare's plays and poems are compared with what is actually known of his life. It is very often the case that the dating of Shakespeare's plays cannot be meshed in with the known events of his life. Three important examples will illustrate this. Around 1601, there was a great change in the nature of Shakespeare's oeuvre. At that point—and not earlier—he wrote the Great Tragedies, starting with *Hamlet* in 1601–1602, *Othello* in 1602, and *King Lear* and *Macbeth* in 1605. To account for so great a change in his outlook, one which transformed him from a very good playwright to arguably the greatest figure in literature, it would appear that some traumatic event must have occurred to the author around 1600–1601. But no mainstream biographer has ever suggested a plausible explanation for this great change. Orthodox biographers normally account for it by delayed grief for the death of his son Hamnet, who died in August 1596, five years earlier, although in the interim Shakespeare allegedly wrote such comic works as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (c.1598) and *As You Like It* (c.1599). (Hamnet Shakespeare was named for his godfather, Shakespeare's neighbor and friend Hamnet Sadler (d. 1624), a baker in Stratford; it has no connection with the play *Hamlet*.) Alternatively, the great change of 1601 was the result of grief for the death of his father, John Shakespeare, who died in September 1601. At that date, however, William Shakespeare was thirty-seven; men of that age do not normally go to pieces when their father dies; William Shakespeare was apparently not close to his father and did not follow in his trade as a wool merchant and glove maker. It is also sometimes explained, with greater accuracy, by Shakespeare's sympathy for the Earl of Essex, who was executed in 1601, and for his followers, especially the Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's supposed patron, despite the fact that no evidence exists that Shakespeare had any connection with the Essex rebels or that the Essex rebellion had any effect upon the activities of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare's acting company. In fact, no good explanation has ever been given to account for the great alteration in Shakespeare's oeuvre, or the deep pessimism apparently underlying it. But once Sir Henry Neville is regarded as the real author, this mystery is resolved.

Equally opaque are the reasons for the wording and meaning of the famous Dedication of *Shake-spears Sonnets*, published in May 1609:

To. The. Onlie. Begetter. Of.
These. Insuing. Sonnets.
Mr. W.H. All. Happiness.
Promised.
By.
Our. Ever-Living. Poet.
Wisheth.
The. Well. Wishing.
Adventurer. In.
Setting.
Forth. T.T.

There are so many mysteries and anomalies about this small but universally known volume of poems that one hardly knows where to begin. Rather curiously, its title is *Shake-spears Sonnets*, with Shakespeare's name hyphenated, not *The Sonnets of William Shakespeare*. "T.T." is always taken to be Thomas Thorpe, the book's publisher, although it is not the publisher of a book who writes its dedication, but its author, who signed the dedication with his initials rather than his full name. Who is "Mr. W.H."? In what sense was he the book's "onlie begetter"? And what does this term mean? Even more basically, the book consists of 154 sonnets (with another longer and little-known poem, *A Lover's Complaint*, printed in the

book following the sonnets). Were they published with the knowledge and approval of William Shakespeare or without his knowledge and approval? If the latter, how and from whom did Thorpe obtain *all* of the 154 sonnets, and why did their author not object? If they were obtained from their author with his knowledge and approval, why did he not sign his full name or write its dedication? Finally, what is meant by "the well wishing adventurer", and how was this relevant to the publication and sale of this small volume of poetry? Each of these questions has been asked countless times over the centuries, with no satisfactory answers ever given. However, if Sir Henry Neville is posited as the author of *Shake-spears Sonnets,* these mysteries are clarified.

The third authorship mystery which should be noted here is William Shakespeare's knowledge of the Strachey Letter, one of the main sources for *The Tempest,* a play first performed in November 1611. This work was certainly based in significant measure on what was later published as *A True Reportory of the Wracke and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, knight,* a lengthy letter reporting on a ship sent out to Virginia by the London Virginia Company in 1609, which was wrecked on Bermuda, and whose crew subsequently and almost miraculously returned to England. The letter was written by William Strachey (1572–1621), one of the survivors, and is known as the Strachey Letter. It existed in manuscript from 1610 but was not published until 1625. The Strachey Letter is unquestionably one of the main sources for the dialogue of the play, with dozens of passages in *The Tempest* clearly drawn from the Letter (Cawley, 1926; Culliford, 1965; Kuhl, 1962; McCrea, 2005). However—and here is the mystery—the Strachey Letter could only be read by directors of the London Virginia Company, who took an oath to keep the Letter confidential and not let anyone else read it (Clarke, 2011). But William Shakespeare had no connection of any kind with the London Virginia Company. He was not among the 500 or more men who bought a share in the Company (costing £12 10 shillings) and was obviously not a director of the Company. Yet he had clearly not only read the Strachey Letter but was allowed to copy out significant passages from it to use in a play. How was this possible, and why was he not stopped? And why would William Shakespeare have had any particular interest in this Bermuda shipwreck or in the affairs of the London Virginia Company, when he had no connection or association with it? No one knows, and, again, many theories have been proposed, especially that he was shown the Letter to read and copy out by a director with whom he was friendly, although the Letter was presumably kept at all times in the offices of the Company. Once again, this mystery is resolved if Sir Henry Neville is posited as the play's author. It should be noted that well-known Oxfordian researchers have argued that the "Strachey Letter" was not used as a source for *The Tempest*. The most important work that argues this contention, at length and with many contemporary sources is Stritmatter and Kositsky (2013).

Why Not Sir Francis Bacon or the Earl of Oxford?

Because so much of our knowledge of William Shakespeare is dubious—indeed, little more than guesswork—by the middle of the nineteenth century, a number of writers and researchers had become convinced that someone else, someone far better qualified than William Shakespeare, had written the plays and was their real author. The first alternative "candidate" proposed was Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626), the great lawyer and philosopher who served as Lord Chancellor (as Lord Verulam) from 1617 till 1621. Although Bacon was apparently well qualified by his learning to write the plays, as the 'real Bard' he has many deficiencies. His pompous and dense prose style is nothing like Shakespeare's; he was a strong opponent of the Earl of Essex and his supporters, while the real author—whoever he was—was apparently sympathetic to Essex. Bacon lived until 1642, although Shakespeare wrote his last play in 1613, leaving nearly thirty years of silence from the prolific author of the plays. Although he was first proposed over 150 years ago, no real evidence has ever been found in support of the Baconian theory.

Since the case for Bacon is unconvincing, other "candidates" have been put forward. Today, apparently, the most popular alternative Bard is Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550–1604), who has a large following. De Vere was certainly associated with the theatre, was a poet, and apparently a playwright (although none of his plays survive, some of which, given his birth date, must have been written before "Shakespeare" began writing plays around c. 1590), highly regarded, it seems, in his lifetime—although some of this praise may well be due to his aristocratic rank. Since none of the plays he certainly wrote before c. 1590 survive, one cannot judge his ability as a writer or his resemblance in style to Shakespeare. The case for Oxford also has many blatant deficiencies. In particular, Oxford died in 1604, while, according to all mainstream scholars, no fewer than eleven of Shakespeare's plays, among them *Macbeth, King Lear, Anthony and Cleopatra,* and *The Tempest,* were written after 1604. Oxfordians (naturally) claim that these plays were actually written before 1604 and later "released" and attributed to William Shakespeare. Apart from the inherent implausibility of this suggestion—why were these great classics not presented in Oxford's lifetime?—there is compelling

evidence that at least several of the plays were irrefutably written after 1604 and contain clear references to events that occurred after Oxford's death. *Macbeth,* probably written in 1605–1606, contains (Act II, Scene III) an apparent reference to the Gunpowder Plot of 5 November 1605 and to its Jesuit leader Henry Garnet (1555–1606); *The Tempest,* dated to 1611, was, as spelled out above, clearly derived in substantial measure from the Strachey Letter of 1610; *Cymbeline* (Act V), usually dated to 1610, contains apparent references to the newly discovered four moons of Jupiter. These were first seen by Galileo in November 1609, using a telescope. Galileo reported his discovery in a book in Latin published in the same year. The moons of Jupiter can only be seen through a telescope, which was invented in 1607 or 1608 (Falk, 2014; Usher, 2019). Sir Henry Savile (see below) had a copy of this book in his library. Savile was a noted astronomer who endowed the Savilian Professorship of Astronomy at Oxford; it was probably read soon after its publication by his close friend Sir Henry Neville, who also had a keen interest in astronomy. Finally, it should be noted that Thomas Heywood (1573–1641), an actor and author, in 1612 wrote *An Apology For Actors,* in which he attached an "Epistle" to the printer William Jaggard, protesting against the incorporation of two *Love Epistles* in his reprint of *The Passionate Pilgrim,* a work attributed to Shakespeare, and stated that "the Author I know [was] much offended with M. Jaggard that (altogether unknown to him) presumed to make so bold with his name" (Heywood, 1841, p. 62). The [unnamed] "Author" must, therefore, have been alive in 1612. Oxfordians respond to these points by claiming that the chronology of the plays was different from that accepted by scholars, a claim for which there is no evidence and is contrary to common sense. In addition, Oxford was born in 1550, and was thus around forty when the earliest plays by "William Shakespeare" were written. Oxfordians claim that earlier plays—now lost, with similar titles to those by "Shakespeare"—were actually written by Oxford and later revised, but, again, this implausible assertion is unsupported by any evidence.

Sir Henry Neville, the Real Author

The backgrounds of Sir Henry Neville (1563–1615) and William Shakespeare were very different. Neville was descended from several aristocratic families, although his father, also Sir Henry Neville (and later he himself) was "merely" a knight rather than a peer. Just as importantly, our man's mother was the niece of Sir Thomas Gresham, the great London merchant who founded the Royal Exchange and Gresham College, London. Our Sir Henry Neville was born in 1563 (not, as often claimed, in 1564). Most of our man's childhood was spent at their country residence, Billingbear House, at Waltham St. Lawrence, Berkshire, about nine miles from Windsor. He was educated at Merton College, Oxford, where he was the star pupil and later close friend of Sir Henry Savile (1549–1622), known as the greatest Classical scholar of his time and also a significant mathematician and astronomer. In 1578–1582, Neville accompanied Savile and other young, well-born students on a four-year tour of the Continent, visiting many towns, including many places in Italy, which were later the settings of some of Shakespeare's plays. In 1581, Neville traveled through northern Italy, visited Padua, Venice, and Florence, and then passed through Vienna. Incidents in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Measure For Measure* have been traced to France in 1578 and 1582, respectively, when Neville was in that country. In 1583, he traveled to Scotland. There is, of course, no evidence that William Shakespeare ever left England.

To his contemporaries, Neville was noted for his erudition and Classical learning. He served as an MP, mainly for New Windsor, during most of the period between 1584 and his death. He was also a landowner and (unexpectedly) a cannon manufacturer. He served as Ambassador to France in 1599–1600. On a short return visit to London, he became involved in the Essex rebellion and would probably have become Secretary of State had it succeeded. When it failed, he and his friend, the Earl of Southampton, were sent to the Tower of London and stripped of their titles, with Neville sentenced to remain there until he paid an enormous fine of £10,000. (Neville's role in the Essex rebellion was unknown until Southampton revealed it at his trial.) In the Tower, Neville could still write, and basically do anything he wished except leave. When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 and James I came to the throne, both were released and their titles restored. Neville expected high office, but the King apparently took a dislike to him and he never held any important position. He also had to find ways of restoring his diminished fortune, and became a director of the London Virginia Company. He was also involved in other political matters, generally favoring a "mixed Constitution" in which the Monarch, Parliament, and the people would all possess powers. He died on 10 July 1615, aged only fifty-two. It will be seen that Neville was an almost exact contemporary of William Shakespeare, who lived from 1564 until 1616. The similarity in their dates has helped to disguise Neville's role, although it also means that he did not die too early (unlike Oxford) or too late (as did Bacon) to have been the real Bard.

Although the theory of Neville as the real author is only twenty years old, a significant number of telling points have been amassed by researchers, strongly sug-

gesting that he was the real author. One point which should be made clear is that pro-Neville researchers always accept the standard chronology of Shakespeare's works and never invent a new one because the accepted chronology is contrary to the known facts of their candidate's life. The chronology of Neville's life and career always mesh in perfectly with the accepted dating of Shakespeare's works. The most significant evidence about Neville as Shakespeare includes the following points:

1. Neville's Library and Handwriting

In 1780, the large library accumulated by Neville and his successors was taken from Billingbear Park to Audley End near Saffron Walden in Essex, the home of Lord Braybrooke, Neville's descendant. A handwritten list of the books taken to Audley End was compiled at the time, and is now held by the Berkshire Record Office. It contains the book titles and author's names of about 500 books in many languages, of which about 150 were published before Neville's death in 1615. Ken Feinstein, a Neville researcher who has discussed these books on his blog "Ken Feinstein's Neville Research", has shown that some of these books are known as the sources of some of Shakespeare's plays, although it is unclear if these particular volumes were those actually used by Neville when writing. Many of these books have handwritten marginalia, apparently written by Neville. These books and others were also discussed in the book I co-authored with John Casson, *Sir Henry Neville Was Shakespeare: The Evidence* (Casson & Rubinstein, 2016). Perhaps the most striking evidence that exists in favor of Neville as Shakespeare are photographs of the handwriting in "Hand D" of *Sir Thomas More*, the only surviving manuscript of Shakespeare's literary works, and photographs of the same words in Neville's handwritten letters and the marginalia in books that he owned. Examples of these are given in Casson and Rubinstein (2016), and also in Casson's (2010) *Much Ado About Noting*. These are reproduced at the end of this article. The Worsley Manuscripts include papers and annotated books in Neville's handwriting which were inherited by his descendants in the Worsley family and are currently held in the Lincolnshire Record Office. The examples given here show that the words in "Hand D" and in other writings of Neville are identical and were obviously penned by the same man. Many other examples of this can be given, especially similar photographs of the identical words in "Hand D" and in Neville's letters, compiled by the Neville researcher John O'Donnell.

2. The Great Change of 1601

As noted above, a great change in Shakespeare's oeuvre occurred in 1601, when he wrote the Great Tragedies, beginning with *Hamlet* in 1601 and *Othello* in 1602. Nothing in the known life of William Shakespeare provides a cogent explanation for this alteration. In complete contrast, the life of Sir Henry Neville offers a convincing explanation: Neville became involved in the Essex rebellion and spent three years in the Tower of London alongside his friend the Earl of Southampton. Clearly traumatized, there he wrote several of his most famous plays, as well as other works. That *Hamlet* is "about" the Essex rebellion, with the Earl of Essex depicted as Hamlet, was first suggested by Winstanley (1921) in her *Hamlet and the Scottish Succession*. One point of interest is that Neville inherited an ordnance and canon manufacturing business from his great-uncle, Sir Thomas Gresham. Many of his canons were shipped to Elsinore on the Danish coast. See James's (2008), *Henry Neville and the Shakespeare Code*. Similarly, *Othello* is really "about" Essex and Elizabeth. In my opinion, it has nothing to do with race relations. Othello was depicted as a Moor purely to disguise the fact that he was writing about the Earl of Essex, who was, like Othello, a famous military leader. Iago is clearly based on Henry Cuffe, Essex's secretary, who lured Neville into joining the ill-fated conspiracy. Another product of this time was the poem *The Phoenix and the Turtle,* written in 1601. Again, it was obviously based on Elizabeth and Essex and mourns the fact that they could not have collaborated for the betterment of England. It was buried in a longer book consisting of many poems, *Love's Martyr,* edited by Robert Chester, again to disguise the fact that Neville was writing about the Queen and the executed traitor. Many critics suggest that the poem was "about" Sir John Salusbury (1567–1612), a Welsh political figure and minor poet, but his life bears no relationship to the facts which may be inferred from the poem (Casson & Rubinstein, 2014; Honigmann, 1998). Salusbury was a noted opponent of Essex, which makes it likely that Neville buried his poem in a collection of poems "about" the Welshman, where the poem's strongly pro-Essex intent would not be readily deduced. Neville's mood of creating great tragedies and great tragic figures continues with *Macbeth* and *King Lear* and then apparently becomes more balanced.

3. Shakespeare's Silence at the Death of Queen Elizabeth

When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, her life was praised in print by every significant author and poet of the day—with one exception: William Shakespeare. His silence about the Queen's death was remarked upon at the time, but characteristically, no mainstream biographer has been able to account for it. During her reign, William

Shakespeare rose from the son of an unknown provincial wool merchant to a well-known and respected author, who was certainly not poor. Shakespeare had no rational reason not to pay tribute to her. However, if Neville was the real author, his silence, writing either as "William Shakespeare" or under his own name, has a rather good explanation: he was incarcerated for an indefinite period in the Tower of London (along with the Earl of Southampton) for his role in the Essex rebellion, and was, indeed, fortunate not to have been made shorter by the head for what was regarded as treason. Queen Elizabeth took a particular dislike to the treachery of the greatly respected Ambassador to France and was only persuaded with difficulty to spare his life. Neville's real thoughts about the Queen were expressed in Sonnet 107, almost certainly written shortly after he was released in 1603, where he lamented his "confined doom" in the Tower of London.

4. The Northumberland Manuscript

The so-called Northumberland Manuscript is a faded and charred folio of papers held at Alnwick Castle in Northumberland, the seat of the Dukes of Northumberland. On its front cover, the name "William Shakespeare" has been repeatedly written. According to the scholar Burgoyne (1904), who was the first to discuss it in print, it was owned by Sir Henry Neville. Also written on it are the name "Neville" and the family's motto *Ne Vile Velis*. Burgoyne dated the manuscript to 1596–1597. Its cover also contains the earliest known references to William Shakespeare as a playwright: before 1598, all of his plays were published anonymously. Just below Neville's name are the words "Rychard the Second" and "Rychard the Third", as well as other references to Shakespeare's works. The folio was apparently meant as a wrapper for other works, including several essays by Sir Francis Bacon. Its provenance before it was discovered in the nineteenth century is unknown; possibly it was brought to Alnwick by a descendant of Neville who had married into the Duke of Northumberland's family. Short of a handwritten autobiography by Neville, this is clear evidence that he was "William Shakespeare".

5. The Encomium of Richard III

In 1603, apparently while both were still imprisoned in the Tower of London, the Earl of Southampton copied out by hand a book titled *The Encomium of Richard III,* which was written by William Cornwallis the Younger (Kincaid, 1977). (Southampton's handwritten copy is held by the British Library.) Cornwallis's book was one of the first works to depict Richard III not as a diabolical villain but as a wronged and able ruler. Southampton's handwritten copy includes a flowery dedication by "Hen. W." to Sir Henry Neville. The relevant question is just why Southampton would care whether Richard III was a monster or a saint. Southampton was Neville's closest friend. The answer is obvious: Southampton knew of Neville's career as a playwright, thought that his depiction of Richard III as a villain was quite wrong, and wanted to set the record straight. It is very important to note that, so far as anyone knows, Southampton did *not* copy out *The Encomium* and send it to William Shakespeare, the play's supposed author, but only to Neville, and despite the fact that Southampton was allegedly Shakespeare's "patron" (for which no evidence exists). Even if Southampton did have another copy of *The Encomium* sent to William Shakespeare—for which, again, no evidence exists—it is a mystery why he also had a copy prepared for Sir Henry Neville, who had no known connection with the play. First published with William Shakespeare given as its author in 1598, the play was reprinted as by Shakespeare in 1602. It is likely that Southampton may have read the 1602 edition and then written out the *Encomium* while he and Neville were both in the Tower. (On the *Encomium* see the Introduction to Kincaid, A. N. (Ed.). (1977). *The encomium of Richard III: By Sir William Cornwallis the younger*. Turner & Devereux.)

6. Shake-spears Sonnets

Some of the many mysteries about this renowned volume were set out above. While much remains opaque—and will always remain so—a great deal can be clarified if it is supposed that Sir Henry Neville rather than William Shakespeare was their real author. First, the circumstances and meaning of the famous Dedication becomes clear. The Dedication is signed "T.T.", which is always taken to be Thomas Thorpe, it's publisher. But why would the publisher, rather than the author, of a book of poems, write its dedication if its author was still alive? Why would its publisher dedicate the book to a "Mr. W. H.", described as its "onlie begetter"? How did Thorpe obtain all the 154 sonnets printed in the book, and from whom, given that these must have been written over a long period of time and addressed to many different recipients? And why did Shakespeare not object to their publication? (As seen above, in 1612, only three years later, "Shakespeare" objected to the publication of someone else's poem without his permission.) In my view, only one person could have owned copies of all 154 sonnets: their author, just as only he could legally authorize their publication. Thus, Sir Henry Neville was certainly the author of the book's Dedication as well as of the sonnets themselves. Since Neville's endeavor throughout his life was to remain anonymous, he signed the Dedication as from "T.T." (and not from

Thomas Thorpe, who may well not have given his permission to use his actual name). Similarly, Neville may have lacked William Shakespeare's permission to use the latter's name for any works other than plays, and so titled the book *Shake-spears Sonnets* rather than *The Sonnets of William Shakespeare*. "Mr. W.H.", the likely subject of some of the sonnets, was almost certainly Neville's close friend Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, in remembrance of the three years the two spent together in the Tower for their roles in the Essex rebellion, when they were stripped of their titles, making Southampton simply Mr. Henry Wriothesley. Their reversed initials, W.H. rather than H.W., probably was a private joke between them. By "onlie begetter," Neville may well have meant that it was Southampton who advised him to have his *Sonnets* published for others to read.

That Neville was the author of the sonnets also fits in extremely well with wider but highly relevant events which occurred at the same time. On 20 May 1609 *Shakespears Sonnets* was recorded on the Stationer's Register (i.e., was officially published). On 23 May 1609, King James officially approved the Charter of the London Virginia Company. A few weeks earlier, on 2 May 1609, Neville's eldest son, also named Henry, married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Smyth (or Smith), at St. Margaret's Lothbury Church in the City of London. Smythe was an MP, a wealthy landowner, and a City merchant. The dedication of the *Sonnets* was almost certainly connected with the official launch of the London Virginia Company three days after their publication. Apart from the references in the dedication to "the well-wishing adventurer"—an "adventurer" was an investor in a risky business venture (echoed today in "venture capital")—at the same time (Revd.) Robert Gray published *A Good Speed to Virginia,* based on a sermon he delivered at his church, St. Benet Sherehog (sic), where he served as its rector from 1606 until 1612. This work's dedication reads:

> To the Right Noble and Honourable Earls, Barons, and Lords, and to the
>
> Right Worshipful Knights, Merchants, and Gentlemen, Adventurers to the
>
> Plantation of Virginia, all happy and prosperous success, which may either
>
> augment your glory, or increase your wealth, or purchase your eternity ...
>
> Your Honours and Worships in all affectionate well-wishing. (Gray, 1969, p. 314)

It seems clear that the author of the *Sonnets'* dedication drew on Gray's work. The strangely named St. Benet Sherehog, located at the center of the City of London, was near the offices of the London Virginia Company. It seems likely that many of the directors and other officials of the Company heard Gray's sermon or read his work, a theological justification for the colonization of Virginia that was directed specifically at the directors of and shareholders in the Company. As noted above, William Shakespeare was not a director of the Company, and had no connection with it. Similarly, Thomas Thorpe ("T.T.") had no connection with the Company. In complete contrast, Neville was a director of the Company and had a strong financial interest in its success. The publication of the *Sonnets* three weeks or so after the marriage of Neville's eldest son to the daughter of a wealthy landowner and merchant also strongly suggests that the first seventeen sonnets apparently addressed to a young man and advising him to marry "for love of me" and stating "you had a father, let your son say so" suggests that these Sonnets were written by Neville to his son, advising him to marry—which he did. The fact that these sonnets were published first in the collection also suggests that the publication of the book was a celebration of his son's fortunate marriage.

Although the real meaning of a great many of the sonnets remains unclear, and probably always will, the identification of Sir Henry Neville as their author provides clarification of what was meant by many of them. A particularly striking example is the little-known Sonnet 81:

> Or shall I live, your epitaph to make;
> Or you survive, when I in earth am rotten;
> From hence your memory death cannot take,
> A though in me each part will be forgotten.
> Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
> Though I, once gone, to all the world must die;
> The earth can yield me but a common grave,
> When you entombed in men's eyes shall lie.
> Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
> Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,
> And tongues to be your being shall rehearse,
> When all the breathers of this world are dead.
> You still shall live, such virtue hath my pen,
> Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.

There, in the words "your name from hence immortal life shall have ... Your monument shall be my gentle verse", Neville is clearly and certainly addressing William Shakespeare, whose "name ... immortal life shall have". This is a precise description of what actually occurred: William Shakespeare became known from that day as the immortal writer, while Neville was totally unknown until recently. *If* the author of this sonnet was

not Neville but William Shakespeare, the poem makes absolutely no sense: it is William Shakespeare's "name" which has unquestionably achieved "immortal life", *not* someone else's. Stratfordians try to explain this—if they ever try—with explanations that are clearly unconvincing. For instance, the Folger Library's online presentation of this sonnet states that "the poet, imagining a future in which both he and the beloved are dead, sees himself as being completely forgotten while the beloved will be forever remembered because of the poet's verse." But the author of this sonnet has said nothing about his addressee being his "beloved", and, even more importantly, has emphasized that it is the "name" of the addressee which will have "immortal life". It is precisely that name which is never stated in this or any other sonnet. In the Arden Shakespeare edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones, Katherine claims that it is the "fair youth" who is the addressee and whose "name" will have "immortal life"; once again, Sonnet 81 says nothing about a "fair youth", while again it is precisely the "name" of the addressee which remains unknown throughout the *Sonnets* (Shakespeare, 2016). The title page of this work states that "Shake-spear" was their author; Sonnet 81 clearly states that he will be given the credit, then and down the ages, for the real author's work.

The meaning of many other sonnets also becomes clear once it is known that Sir Henry Neville was their author. A very clear example of this occurs in Sonnet 107:

> Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
> Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come,
> Can yet the lease of my true love control,
> Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.
> The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,
> And the sad augurs mock their own presage;
> Uncertainties now crown themselves assured,
> And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
> Now with the drops of this most balmy time
> My love looks fresh, and death to me subscribes,
> Since 'spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,
> While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes;
> And thou in this shalt find thy monument
> When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

The lines "The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured" is almost always presumed to be a reference to the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, but the line "supposed as forfeit to a confined doom" has remained mysterious—that is, until it is realized that this is clearly a reference to Neville's release from the Tower (along with Southampton) by James I soon after the Queen died and he came to the English throne. In contrast, William Shakespeare experienced no known "confined doom"; his status was not changed in any way by the accession of James I, the only exception being that his acting company, the "Lord Chamberlain's Men" then became the "King's Men".

Neville's family motto *Ne Vile Velis* ("Do not do anything base [or vile]") is clearly referred to in several of the sonnets and elsewhere. The clearest example is Sonnet 121, which begins:

> Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed
> When not to be receives reproach of being,
> And the just pleasure lost, which is so deemed
> Not by our feelings, but by others' seeing ...

The term "vile" seems very unusual in this context, and appears to have been employed because it has a special meaning to the author. (Nothing in this sonnet relates in any way to William Shakespeare.) Another significant use of this term is to be found in the two-line Latin quotation found at the beginning of Shakespeare's long poem *Venus and Adonis,* one of his earliest works, published in 1593:

> Vilia mirentur vulgus, mihi flavus Apollo
> Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.
> This was translated into English by Christopher Marlowe as
> Let base-conceited wits admire vile things,
> Fair Phoebus lead me to the Muses' springs.

The Latin lines used in *Venus and Adonis* have nothing to do with the substance of Shakespeare's long poem but must have made an impression upon Neville owing to their echoing of his name and his family motto.

Another sonnet which appears clearly to relate to Neville's life is Sonnet 35, which begins:

> No more be grieved at that which though hast done;
> Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud.

This sonnet was very likely to have been written by Neville shortly after he was sent to the Tower in 1601 and addressed to his fellow prisoner the Earl of Southampton, whose surname, Wriothesley, was pronounced "Rose-ly". At his trial, Southampton had stated that Neville was involved in the Essex Rebellion, something which had not been known before, leading to Neville's arrest and imprisonment.

7. Three Men Who Knew the Truth—And Said So

Three men, all of whom were close to Neville and his circle, actually stated that he was a notable writer or that "William Shakespeare" was a pseudonym. The first and most remarkable was John Chamber (1546–1604), a noted astronomer, philosopher, and opponent of astrology. Chamber was educated at Merton College, Oxford, where Neville was educated, and which was also the home of Sir Henry Savile, Neville's mentor and friend. Chamber graduated with a B.A. from Merton in 1564 and was a Fellow of the College. He later became Canon of Windsor; Windsor is located eleven miles from Billingbear House, Neville's country home. In 1583 Chamber was appointed to a committee convened to decide whether the Gregorian calendar should be adopted by England. Its other members were Savile and Dudley Digges, a relative by marriage of Neville, and the father of Leonard Digges, who wrote commendatory verse published at the beginning of the First Folio. When, in 1582, Neville and Savile returned from their four-year journeys around Europe, they had obtained for Chamber the manuscript of a work by Barlaam of Calabria, a fourteenth-century mathematician, which Chamber had wished to see. In 1600, Chamber published this book (in Paris, where Neville was Ambassador) as a printed work. It began with the dedication "To the most distinguished man, the Lord [sic] Henry Neville, Ambassador of the Most Serene Queen Elizabeth to the King of France." The first three paragraphs of this dedication, translated from the original Latin, read as follows:

> You may count your family and ancestors in long succession, so that kings' high courts grant you access. Yet nothing in such great good fortune is so greatly deserving as the admirable quality of your character and the glory of your genius. It is with these qualities that you manage all your royal duties and conduct such high negotiations, and in the same spirit, leaving the earth behind, you joyfully enter the realm of the stars. Joyfully, you go to the stars. Where your many faceted qualities make you immortal and admit you amongst the gods before your time. Too little is your excellence seen by the common people of the earth, were it not for the kindly company of the Muses who sing through you, granting you various arts; the refined Muse of Comedy ["Thalia" in the original] giving you the eloquence to pour forth what you will". (Casson & Rubinstein, 2016, p. 118)

This dedication is truly remarkable. Neville had written nothing whatever under his own name, let alone "Comedies", while William Shakespeare had already written eight of his Comedies. He did not write *Hamlet* until the following year. The last word given here is written in Latin as "Velles", clearly a pun on Neville's family motto, while the phrase "what you Will" (Will written with a capital "V") strongly suggests that Chamber knew all about his pseudonym. The second Man in the Know was George Carleton (1559–1628), later Bishop of Llandaff and the Bishop of Chichester. From 1580 he was a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, and from 1589 until 1605 was Vicar of Mayfield, Sussex, where Neville had lived from 1582 until 1598. After Neville's death in 1615, Carleton married his widow Anne. In 1603 Carleton published *Heroici Characteres,* written in Latin verse, which was dedicated (in Latin) "To the most distinguished Knight, Henry Neville", and which exhorted Neville to "grasp firmly the rewards of your achievements, you who will have the Muses to bear witness and your unspotted excellence to guide you." The book contains two poems in Latin praising Neville, which refer to the Muses and to the theatre of Comedy and Tragedy. One of these poems asks (in Latin), "Who would deny that these should not be exalted on stage in Tragedy?" Again, Neville had no public connection with the "Muses" or with the theatre, a connection which would have been known only to his closest associates. The third member of the knowledgeable trio was (Revd.) Thomas Vicars (1589–1638), also an Oxford graduate and a noted theologian, who, in the 1620s, married Carleton's daughter Anne; he had previously lived in Carleton's household. In 1628, Vicars published the third edition of a book (in Latin) on Rhetoric. In this edition, he added the following to the original Latin text, which contained a list of noted English writers: "To these I believe should be added the famous poet who takes his name from shaking and spear" ("quassatione" and "hasta" in the original). Vicars thus apparently knew that "Shakespeare" was a pseudonym. He was, therefore, probably the first person to question the identity of the Bard of Avon, two centuries or so before anyone else. It will be seen that these three men all had close associations with Neville and with Merton College or his family and were thus in a clear position to know the truth.

8. Connections Between Neville and Shakespeare

Thomas Digges (1546–95) was a well-known astronomer and mathematician. He was married to Anne St. Leger (1555–1636), the daughter of Sir Warham St. Leger and Ursula Neville (d. 1575), Sir Henry's cousin, a fact never made clear in previous discussions of the Digges family and Shakespeare. Digges was an important astronomer who did much to popularise the Copernican Theory of the

Solar System and who must have known Sir Henry Savile, Neville's mentor and another leading astronomer. Among Digges's sons were Sir Dudley Digges (1583–1639), an MP and a director of the London Virginia Company along with Neville, and also Leonard Digges (1588–1635), who, as noted, wrote a commendatory poem published at the beginning of the First Folio (FF). Its author was a close relative of Neville's. Leonard Digges was a minor poet who translated works from Spanish to English and an Oxford graduate (B.A., University College, 1603) who was close to others involved in the publication of FF, but the choice of Digges to write a commendatory poem for that volume seems somewhat curious unless it is known that he was a relative of the actual author. The plot thickens still further. After the death of Thomas Digges in 1595, his widow Anne in 1603 remarried Thomas Russell (1570–1634), who was—believe it or not—one of the two "overseers" of the will of William Shakespeare! (The other "overseer" was a local Stratford solicitor.) An "overseer" of a will was appointed to supervise the work of the will's executor or executors. The executors of Shakespeare's will were his daughter Susanna and her husband, Dr. John Hall. Shakespeare apparently did not trust them and appointed two other men to supervise their handling of the probate. Shakespeare, however, must have known and trusted Russell to have appointed him. If Sir Henry Neville was the real author, Shakespeare must also obviously have known him in order to allow Neville to use his name—for which he was presumably paid—and to act as his producer/director in the theatre. (See also below for an even more startling claimed connection.)

9. The Performance of Richard II

The day before the Essex Rebellion of 1600. Shakespeare's *Richard II* was performed at the request of participants in the rebellion, especially Gelly Meyrick, who would be hanged as a result of his involvement in the uprising. The play depicts the deposition of an English monarch. The request by Essex's supporters was made to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare's acting company, who were surprised at the request and described the play as "old and out of use". Neville had agreed to support the rebellion five days earlier. If he was indeed the play's real author, it may well have been he who suggested its performance. He also knew that it had been initially performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Men rather than any of the other acting companies. Significantly, its supposed author, William Shakespeare, was never questioned, let alone punished, for the play's performance just before a treasonable insurrection. This fact has always puzzled historians. And neither were any of the other Authorship "candidates". Neville was fortunate not to be charged for requesting its performance, although he was severely punished for his role in the rebellion.

10. "By the Dimme Light of Nature"

A famous but mysterious passage in a poem concerning Shakespeare, apparently written by Francis Beaumont to Ben Jonson in 1615, the year of Neville's death, states that "our heirs shall heare/Preachers apte [sic] to their auditors to showe/ how farr sometimes a man may go/by the dimme light of Nature". It is followed by the lines "What do you thinke of his/state, who hath now the last that hee [sic] could make/in white and Orange tawny on his backe/ at Windsor?" This may well be a description of Neville's funeral at or near Windsor—Billingbear was eleven miles from Windsor—where Neville may have been laid out "in white and Orange tawny", the colors of the livery worn by the English Ambassador to France, the highest position Neville ever held. (Until the Second World War, most European ambassadors wore a distinctive uniform or livery when on official diplomatic business.) (Bland, 2005).

11. Ben Jonson, Gresham College, and the Publication of the First Folio

Ben Jonson (1572–1637) knew Neville and wrote an Ode in his honor. Jonson contributed a commendatory poem to the First Folio (FF) and is often seen as its editor. On 20 October 1623, a month before the preliminary material in FF was believed to have been printed, Jonson appeared in the Court of Chancery to give evidence about the settlement of an estate. There, he signed himself as "Benjamin Jonson of Gresham College, gent." What Jonson was doing at Gresham College is unknown; he had no known previous connection with this institution. Gresham College, which spread the "new learning" in England, was founded in 1597 at the will of Sir Thomas Gresham (c.1518–1597) and was physically located in Gresham's mansion in Bishopsgate in the City of London. Gresham, who founded the Royal Exchange and was a great London merchant, was the uncle of Neville's mother. Neville's father was the Chief Mourner at Gresham's funeral, and the Neville family had certain rights of appointment to its staff. It is a reasonable inference that Sir Henry Neville's family—presumably his eldest son—secured a post there for Ben Jonson (which Jonson greatly prized, as he very much wanted some academic recognition) as a reward for editing FF and fulfilling his wish to have Shakespeare credited with writing his works. Presumably, too, he was also paid for his efforts. It is otherwise difficult to see what Jonson was doing there.

The financial expenses of producing FF were colos-

sal. It was recently estimated that the cost of printing 750 copies of FF was around £250, an enormous sum, and in realistic terms, the equivalent today of hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds, and was described recently by one historian as "enormously expensive" (Rasmussen, 2016). An estimated 333 copies would have had to be sold for the printer to break even (Rasmussen, 2016). Although it is now universally regarded as one of the most important works ever published in the history of Western civilization, it must not be forgotten that it was not necessarily so regarded at the time and might well have failed to sell more than a handful of copies, leaving its printers with enormous debts. The only precedent for the publication of the works of a playwright was the publication of Ben Jonson's *Works* in 1616, which did not see a second printing until 1640 (Rasmussen, 2016). Moreover, the printer of FF, Edward Blount (1562–1632), was in severe debt at the time (Laoutaris, 2023). Agreeing to print what might have been an enormous flop at that time might well have bankrupted him, with all of the negative consequences of bankruptcy. It seems clear that a wealthy man or family *must* have paid the expenses of printing FF; these expenses might, perhaps, have been paid by Shakespeare's acting Company, but no evidence exists for this, and it is unclear why they would have risked losing a good deal of money on their venture. Again, positing that Neville's family paid for the printing of FF provides a clear explanation for what happened.

12. William Shakespeare and Sir Henry Savile

I now come to something so remarkable that one hardly knows what to make of it. I learned about this only recently and am grateful to the Neville researcher David Ewald for bringing it to my attention; Ken Feinstein, an excellent Neville researcher, also included it in his online blog some years ago, but I had missed it. In 1889 James Walter published an attractive, well-illustrated book, *Shakespeare's True Life.* Walter (2000) noted that Shakespeare, when traveling to and from Stratford once or twice a year, "made a point of taking Oxford on his route, both going and returning, and that he on every such journey rested some days at [Sir Henry] Savile's house in Oxford" (p. 61). Walter asserted that this statement was based on what "family traditions assert" and what he heard from the Roman Catholic order at Woolton Wawen, which is a suburb of Stratford-on-Avon. According to Walter (2000), Roman Catholic Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman (1802–1865) was also "satisfied that Shakespeare and Savile were in close intimacy during the period of the dramatist's residence in London" (p. 61).

I will set out what I know about this truly extraordinary claim. First of all, little could be found in any source about James Walter. He was born in 1817 in Bristol, the son of another James Walter, and died in January 1900 in Twickenham, Middlesex, a leafy suburb about ten miles from central London. By profession, according to several Censuses, he was a major in the 4th Lancashire Artillery Volunteers; it is unclear as to whether he had any form of employment besides being an officer in a Volunteer regiment. Throughout this time, he lived at Stratford Lodge, St. Peter's Road, Twickenham. Walter had published an earlier volume about Shakespeare in 1878. Although his house and effects were auctioned off shortly after his death, and he must have been affluent, he does not appear in the English probate records, which is very unusual. Nothing else about him could be traced, and, in particular, nothing could be found about his interest in Shakespeare or his alleged knowledge of Shakespeare's connection with Savile. Cardinal Wiseman—who, one hopes, lived up to his name—was born in Spain to English parents and, in 1850, was made the first Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster when the Catholic hierarchy was re-established in England. A controversial figure, he wrote a book about Shakespeare, published in the year of his death. Judging by his book, James Walter was apparently an enthusiastic Roman Catholic. In recent times, Shakespeare has frequently been depicted by biographers as a secret Catholic at a time when this was regarded in England as virtually treasonable, although he was (as noted) baptised, married, and buried as an Anglican. Savile, like Neville, was an emphatic Protestant; both men were attracted to the Earl of Essex because he, and they, wanted to ensure a Protestant succession to the throne after Queen Elizabeth's death. Neither is known to have been particularly sympathetic to Catholics apart from the universal empathy expressed in Shakespeare's works.

Let me now set out what I know and do not know about this extraordinary claim. So far as I am aware, it has never been set out or discussed in any of the endless number of biographies written about the Bard, or anywhere else. Secondly and centrally, it is difficult to believe that Savile, the greatest and most learned classical scholar in England, and William Shakespeare, who had no education past the age of thirteen or so, had any reason to meet, or the slightest interest in meeting. There is no evidence that Savile ever attended a play in London, or had the slightest interest in the theatre. It is even less likely that, if they met, Shakespeare lit up with enthusiasm when discussing Savile's *magnum opus,* an eight-volume edition of the complete works of St. John Chrysostom, which occupied his time for years. It seems to me obvious that the real reason for Shakespeare staying with Savile, if this account is accurate, was to meet

with another Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, Sir Henry Neville, where they could discuss Neville's next plays, and where Shakespeare could give his opinion about whether Neville's suggestions were good ones, whether actors appropriate for the parts were available, what sources could be used, and so on, and where Shakespeare was probably paid for the use of his name and for acting as Neville's producer-director in the theatre. If Neville wanted to keep his authorship a secret, meeting in Oxford, where he was a Fellow of Merton College, was clearly superior to meeting in London. It seems very likely that Savile was also included in these discussions, both to give a second opinion about Neville's proposals and to suggest possible sources for future plays which would be known to Savile, the great Classicist; he thus may have been considerably more important in this venture than has ever been suggested—of course, no other source has ever suggested that Savile had any connection of any kind with Shakespeare's plays. Savile would certainly have known that Neville, his student and then close friend, was a secret playwright in common with the men discussed in Point 7 above. *If* all of this was indeed the case, we have just learned more about how "Shakespeare" actually operated in practice than had been learned in the previous four hundred years. Keep in mind that the suggestion that there were frequent meetings between Savile and Shakespeare is from a source written in the 1880s by an author who unquestionably believed that William Shakespeare wrote the works attributed to him.

What Walter wrote is, on the face of it, bizarre and unexpected, improbable, and arcane: there is nothing whatever to link Shakespeare and Savile, who is nevertheless specifically mentioned, and there is nothing whatever to link Savile with the London theatre or with Shakespeare's acting company or any other. Every literate person has heard of William Shakespeare, but everyone on Planet Earth who has ever heard of Sir Henry Savile could be seated together comfortably in any McDonald's on a Monday morning. It is difficult to see how anyone would or could invent this story. It is also crucial to note that Savile was Neville's intellectual mentor, while Neville was Savile's star pupil and close friend for over thirty years. In contrast, there is nothing whatever to link Savile with any of the other Authorship candidates. Anything known further about this claim should certainly be shared with other researchers.

DISCUSSION

It seems clear that the case for Sir Henry Neville is very strong and lacking in any aspects which must be explained away, often implausibly. For instance, one does not have to explain how he could have written a play based on sources only available after his death, as supporters of the case for the Earl of Oxford, who died in 1604, have to do with *The Tempest*, written in 1611, and based, according to nearly every mainstream scholar, on the Strachey Letter of 1610. Apart from this, perhaps the most striking type of evidence in support of Neville is his handwriting. When this is compared with "Hand D" of Sir Thomas More, the only manuscript source widely believed to be in the handwriting of "William Shakespeare," it will be seen that they are identical and were certainly written by the same man. Positing Neville also, among other things, satisfactorily explains the reason for the great break in Shakespeare's oeuvre around 1601, when —and not before —he began to write his *Great Tragedies*, starting with Hamlet in 1601–1602. As noted, nothing is known to have occurred to William Shakespeare at that time to account for this radical break, while Neville's sudden and traumatic transformation from respected Ambassador to convicted traitor clearly explains and accounts for it. Similarly, Shakespeare's remarkable erudition and knowledge of Classical and recent sources in many languages, as well as his access to hundreds of books he used in writing his plays, are fully explained if Neville was the real author.

The case for Neville as Shakespeare has no obvious deficiencies, but, if he was indeed the real author, one must explain how he remained unknown as a "candidate" for the Authorship for so long. As this article points out, several of his friends and associates were, during his lifetime, aware of his authorship role, but no one suggested it in recent times, more than a century after Sir Francis Bacon was first proposed as the real author. Neville apparently wanted his role to remain a secret, probably because this fact would have impacted negatively on his political career. In addition, the fact that none of the "candidates" as the real author advanced in the last century or more has had their case supported by real and convincing evidence has almost certainly deterred further investigation by even open-minded scholars, who have concluded that there is no "authorship question," although in fact, the real author was hiding in plain sight, undiscovered.

Of the points made in this article, the most intriguing —it has been described to me as "mind blowing" — Point 12, that William Shakespeare met regularly in Oxford with Sir Henry Savile, Neville's mentor, and close friend. Since Savile had no known connection with Shakespeare or with the London theatre, and indeed has never previously been mentioned by anyone in connection with Shakespeare or his literary works, it is a reasonable inference that, if Neville was indeed the real author, the three men met regularly at Merton College, Oxford to discuss what "Shakespeare" would write next and be performed by his

acting company. This otherwise unknown and implausible connection between Shakespeare and Savile must surely be investigated in detail and, if successfully researched, may revolutionize our knowledge of the world's greatest writer.

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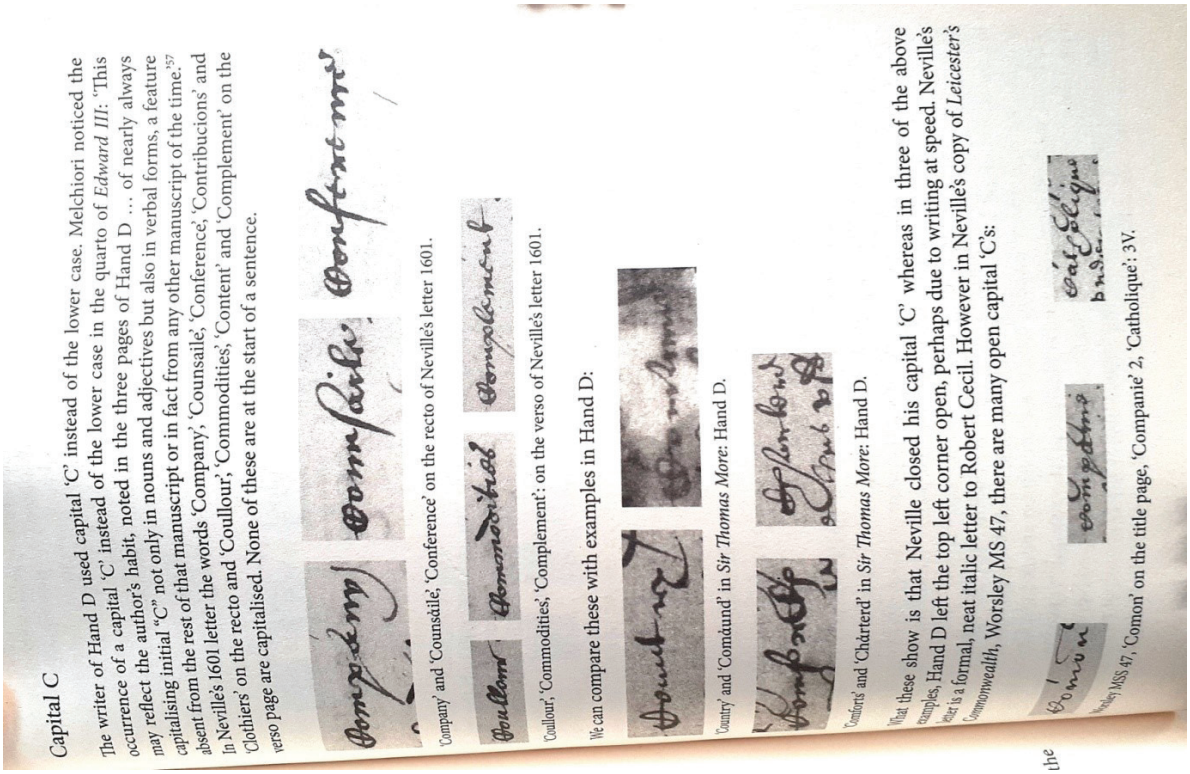
Appendix A: Casson and Rubinstein, *Sir Henry Neville was Shakespeare*, p.15



Capital C

The writer of Hand D used capital 'C' instead of the lower case. Melchiori noticed the occurrence of a capital 'C' instead of the lower case in the quarto of *Edward III*: 'This may reflect the author's habit, noted in the three pages of Hand D ... of nearly always capitalising initial "C" not only in nouns and adjectives but also in verbal forms, a feature absent from the rest of that manuscript or in fact from any other manuscript of the time.'[57] In Neville's 1601 letter the words 'Company', 'Counsaile', 'Conference', 'Contribucions' and 'Clothiers' on the recto and 'Coullour', 'Commodities', 'Content' and 'Complement' on the verso page are capitalised. None of these are at the start of a sentence.

'Company' and 'Counsaile', 'Conference' on the recto of Neville's letter 1601.

Coullour', 'Commodities', 'Complement': on the verso of Neville's letter 1601.

We can compare these with examples in Hand D:

'Country' and 'Comaund' in *Sir Thomas More*: Hand D.

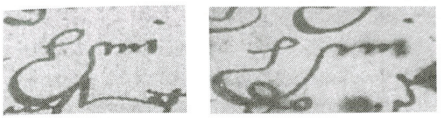
'Comforts' and 'Charterd' in *Sir Thomas More*: Hand D.

What these show is that Neville closed his capital 'C' whereas in three of the above examples, Hand D left the top left corner open, perhaps due to writing at speed. Neville's letter is a formal, neat italic letter to Robert Cecil. However in Neville's copy of *Leicester's Commonwealth*, Worsley MS 47, there are many open capital 'C's:

Worsley MSS 47, 'Comon' on the title page, 'Companie' 2, 'Catholique': 3V.

Appendix B: Casson, *Much Ado About Noting*, p.72

In *Sir Thomas More* the word 'him' is spelt 'hmi' three times in three lines and 'hmisealfe' once. (*The Sir Thomas More* manuscript is in secretary script whereas the Worsley annotations are in italic but this spelling is still clearly 'hmi'.)



Sir Thomas More: hmi (him, lines 10 and 8)[12]

Furthermore we can compare these with examples of 'hmi' in secretary script sections of Worsley MSS 47 (which were written perhaps 7 years earlier):

Worsley MSS 47, 2V: hmi; 6V

This opens the way for a palæographer to compare Neville's hand writing in his letters, Worsley MSS 47, Halle *Chronicle*, *Sir Thomas More* and Northumberland manuscripts.