

## The Northumberland Manuscript Revisited

The Northumberland Manuscript (NHMS) is a faded, charred, fragile folio of papers housed at Alnwick Castle. On the front cover someone has repeatedly written the name “William Shakespeare”. The NHMS was owned by Henry Neville (Burgoyne, 1904, xvi). The name ‘Nevill’ is visible, with the family motto, “Ne vile velis”, at the top left of the front page. This paper re-examines the manuscript for evidence of Neville’s authorship of the works of Shakespeare.

### The earliest manuscript versions of the name William Shakespeare

Whilst the name ‘William Shakespeare’ appeared in print for the first time in 1593 there are just three early hand written examples of the name.

In 1593 Richard Stoney bought a copy of the newly published *Venus and Adonis* and so became the first person to write the name ‘Shakspære’ as a **poet** in his account book (Schoenbaum, 1987, 176).

In 1595 someone made an entry in the accounts of the Royal Treasurer of the Chamber of a payment to “Will<sup>a</sup>m Shakespeare” as an **actor/manager**, for a performance before the Queen at Greenwich the previous December<sup>1</sup>. This is the only record of any payment to him for work in the theatre.

The NHMS is the earliest manuscript reference to William Shakespeare as a **playwright**. The NHMS has been dated to 1596-7<sup>2</sup>, just over three years after the appearance of *Venus and Adonis* (Burgoyne, 1904, xiv). The seven examples of the name “William Shakespeare” on the NHMS could have been written earlier but were certainly penned by 1597. The plays *Rychard the second* and *Rychard the third* are listed on the front cover of NHMS, just below the name “William Shakespeare”. As these are listed with other works that are contained in the NHMS folios, it would suggest they were manuscripts of the plays. In 1597 no play had been identified as by Shakespeare. It was 15 years before the first of the Stratford William’s own signatures appeared: the earliest being “Willm Shackp” on the Belott vs Mountjoy deposition of 1612. This may have been written by a legal clerk (Pointon, 2011, 79-85). Immediately it is clear that the writer of the NHMS spells the name correctly whilst the man from Stratford does not. Indeed none of the Shakspeare signatures are correctly spelt: the nearest he gets is the first signature on his will:

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<sup>1</sup> National Archives, reference: E 351/542 f. 207b. The superscript ‘a’ is above the final ‘m’.

<sup>2</sup> It contains documents written in 1580, 1584, 1589, 1592, 1595, 1596 and lists *The Isle of Dogs*, a play written in 1597.

“William Shackspere”. Thus right at the end of his life the Stratford man, despite many plays and poems being published as by ‘Shakespeare’, did not spell his name thus (see Pointon, 2011, for a thorough examination of this issue).

### **The Anonymous Period**

The *Henry VI* trilogy was certainly written between 1589-91 yet there is no reference or record of Shakspere (the actor/manager in London) or Shakespeare (the writer) until 1592-3. The attack on ‘Shake-scene’ in the *A Groatworth of Wit* appeared in 1592. It is cryptic and may be on an actor or a writer or neither (see Pointon, 2011, for a clear exploration of this). *Venus and Adonis* was registered on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1593, and is the very first time the name appears. This is just three months after the death of Neville’s father (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 98). Perhaps his death left his son free to publish this “first heir of my invention”. No play was published as by Shakespeare until 1598: ten years after the writing had begun. *Richard III* and *Richard II* were first printed in 1597 without any author being named. The second quartos of both plays were published as by “William Shake-speare” in 1598<sup>3</sup>. The same year the first quarto of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* appeared, as by “W. Shakespere”. The NHMS, which refers directly or indirectly to all three plays, was written during the anonymous period: Neville was thus the very first person to record any knowledge that William Shakespeare had written these plays or indeed any play. An alternative possibility is that Neville was indeed the playwright. For nearly a decade (possibly longer, see Casson, 2009) an anonymous author had been writing plays. Only the year after the NHMS received its last scribbles did the name of that author appear in print on any play.

In December 1595 Sir Edward Hoby invited Sir Robert Cecil to supper and to see a play about King Richard. It is not clear whether this is Richard II or III, probably the latter (Bradbrook, 2005, 94). Hoby’s mother was a sister of Henry Neville’s stepmother. In July 1597 Sir Walter Raleigh wrote to Cecil telling him that the Earl of Essex had been “wonderfully merry att the consait (conceit) of Richard the 2” (Nicholls & Williams, 2011, 125). It is not certain that this is a reference to Shakespeare’s play but the date is exactly when that play would have been on stage. Neville was related to Cecil: Cecil’s mother, Mildred Cooke, was a sister of Henry Killigrew’s first wife. Killigrew was Neville’s father-in-law.

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<sup>3</sup> Before this date no play had been officially identified as by Shakespeare though *A Groatworth of Wit* had hinted that *Henry VI* part 3 was by ‘Shake-scene’.

### **Further links to Neville**

The word ‘honorificabilitudine’ is written on the front cover of the NHMS. This is a shortened version of ‘honorificabilitudinitatibus’ which is in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (5.1.40). The play dates from 1594-6 and was printed in 1598. The title page of the quarto states it was performed during “this last Christmas”, which would be 1597. The writer of the Northumberland manuscript must therefore have had access to a manuscript of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* or seen the play and remembered this long word before the court performance. That the word is misquoted may be due to mis-remembering it, an earlier version of the script, or indeed the poet noting the word for use: the NHMS covers the entire period during which the play would have been written.

In *Love’s Labour’s Lost* there is an echo of the 1594 season at Gray’s Inn. On the NHMS front cover are listed “Orations at Graies Inne revells”... “By Mr. ffrauncis Bacon”. These may have been additional speeches for the infamous “Night of Errors” when Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors* was premiered. During the Gray’s Inn revels a Prince of Purpoole was said to have been to Russia fighting the Tartars: in *The Comedy of Errors* Dromio says of his master in prison: “he’s in Tartar limbo” (4.2.32). In *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (written 1594-6, i.e. after the Gray’s Inn revels) men appear in disguise as Muscovites. This echoes the “ambassador from the mighty Emperor of Russia and Muscovy who appeared in the Gray’s Inn revels,” (Woudhuysen, 2001, 243). Both *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* contain references to Henry of Navarre’s war in France. Neville was later to meet Henry as King when he was ambassador to France in 1599 but they may have met during Neville’s continental travels of 1578-82. One main character in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* is Berowne whom scholars believe is based on the Charles de Gontaut, Duc de Biron. Neville mentioned Marshall Biron in a letter dated 24/4/1600. Neville may previously have encountered Biron when in France, during his earlier travels of 1578-82. Biron stayed at Neville’s father’s house in Blackfriars and witnessed an occasion when Sir Henry Neville senior had been teaching Elizabeth I to hunt. This incident is replayed in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 124).

### **Francis Bacon**

The NHMS contains essays by Francis Bacon and repeatedly names him, so much so that the Baconians seized on this document as evidence that Bacon had written the works of Shakespeare. Neville had links with Francis Bacon, his step mother’s brother. They were both MPs and supporters of Essex at this time. There are also possible hints of Anthony

Bacon, Francis' elder brother, as the name Anthony occurs on the front cover of the manuscript and a verse (Multi annis iam transactis...) has also been found in a 1597 letter to Anthony (Burgoyne, 1904, xvii). Anthony was running an intelligence network for Essex on the continent and as Neville was Essex's preferred candidate to be ambassador to France, it would be strange if Neville and Anthony were not in touch. That Neville had involvement with the secret services of the time is evidenced by the existence of a copy of a letter (the original was signed by Walsingham) in the NHMS (written by Bacon) and Neville's own travels to Scotland with Walsingham and Essex in 1583. As ambassador to France, Neville was involved with spies and intelligence gathering 1599-1600.

Neville's links with Bacon explain why the performance of *The Comedy of Errors* at Gray's Inn may have been accompanied by a masque with speeches by Bacon (a lawyer) and why in 1597-8 Joseph Hall (in his *Satires*) and John Marston (in *Metamorphoseis of Pygmalion's Image* and *Certain Satires, book 1*) cryptically suggested that Bacon was the hidden author behind works by Shakespeare.

Bacon's essays copied in the NHMS were published in 1597, suggesting that the manuscript was completed before their printing as there would be no reason to hand copy what had been published. (Burgoyne, 1904, xiv).

### **Sir Philip Sidney**

The NHMS contains a copy of a letter to Elizabeth I about her marriage to the Duke of Anjou, by Sir Philip Sidney, dated circa 1580. In writing this letter Sidney was opposing Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who supported the Anjou marriage. The two men had quarrelled and Sidney challenged de Vere to a duel, which Elizabeth forbade. Sidney then wrote his letter and, in the face of the Queen's outraged disapproval, withdrew from court and spent his time writing poetry.<sup>4</sup>

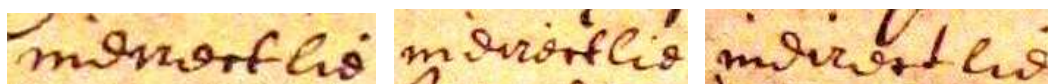
That Neville should have a copy of this dangerous letter is explained by the close friendship between his father and Philip's father. Neville himself travelled thorough Europe with Philip's brother Robert. Philip specifically commended Henry Neville in two letters of 1578 and 1580 to his brother. That Neville knew Philip and his writing illuminates the influence of Philip Sidney on Shakespeare which is evident in the sonnets, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *King Lear* and *Pericles*. I have also traced this influence back to what I suggest was Neville's first play, *Mucedorus* which I dated to 1584-5 (Casson, 2009, 49-50).

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<sup>4</sup> From: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip\\_Sidney](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Sidney) accessed 5/7/12.

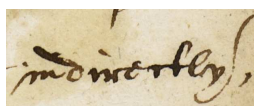
### Rare Vocabulary in Shakespeare's plays and Neville's letters

In *King John*, dated by scholars to 1596, the same year as the NHMS, Constance uses the word 'indirectly' (2.1.49), a word not used in earlier version of that play, *The Troublesome Raigne*. The word appears in *Henry IV* part 1 (1.3.65), also dated 1596; in *The Merchant of Venice* (2.2.41) which is dated 1596-8 and in sonnet 67. Neville had copied this word out in his manuscript of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (c 1585):



Worsley MSS 47, 3V

He also used the word in a letter of 1601, when he was returning to his role of ambassador in France:



Neville's letter 1601<sup>5</sup>

'Indirectly' is written upside down on the top left side of the Northumberland Manuscript (NHMS), underneath the name 'Nevill' and next to the family motto, "ne vile veils":



Indirectly<sup>6</sup>: NHMS, 1596

Shakespeare used this word nine times, the first being in *Richard III* (4.4.226), which is listed on NHMS. According to LION, between 1595-1601 only Thomas Lodge (in *The Divil Coniured*) and John Norden (in *Preparative to his Speculum Britanniae*), both in 1596, used the word 'indirectly'. Thus we can see that Shakespeare was using it most and Neville had written the word as early as 1585 and again in 1601. In *Richard III* Queen Elizabeth says, "indirectly give direction" (4.4.226). In *King John* the Pandulph also says:

Though indirect,  
Yet indirection thereby grows direct. (3.1.201)

<sup>5</sup> Cotton Manuscripts, Caligula EX folio 21, in the British Library

<sup>6</sup> For ease of reading I have flipped it over.

In his 1601 letter Neville wrote, “that either directly or indirectly”. According to LION no other writer put these two words together between 1594-1604 except Shakespeare, who used the phrase, “that indirectly and directly” in *The Merchant of Venice* (4.1.355) which is believed to have been written between 1596-8, namely about the time of the NHMS.

In *Edward III* the French ambassador uses the word ‘indirectly’ (1.1.37). *Edward III* was written 1590-5, being registered in December 1595, a first quarto being published in 1596, the very date of the NHMS. Immediately above the upside down ‘indirectly’ on the NHMS are the words “for profit”: these also occur in *Edward III*. These words are spoken by Villiers (whose name is partly Neville):

**For profit** must with honor be comixt,  
Or else our actions are but scandalous.

On the NHMS, just below ‘indirectly’ and “for profit” is the word ‘places’ which also occurs in *Edward III*. The play opens with the battle of Neville’s Cross and has a number of hidden Neville connections (Casson, 2010, 176). It is only recently that *Edward III* has been accepted into the canon. Neville’s use of this vocabulary points to his authorship.

On the verso of the front page there are what seem to be random words including ‘Thomas’, ‘Imprisonm<sup>t</sup>’, ‘Imitatio’ and ‘Anthonie ffitzherbert’. When we put Neville and his secret authorship into the picture some sense emerges. Thomas Nashe (whose name occurs on the front page) was threatened with imprisonment for his part in writing *The Isle of Dogs*. ‘Imitatio’, as Bate (2001, 9; 83; 100) elucidated, was the rhetorical and creative method which Shakespeare used, imitating Ovid, Plautus, Virgil and other writers whilst also varying, embellishing and diverging from these models.

Scholars have long remarked on Shakespeare’s knowledge of the law: Neville, in referring to Sir Antony Fitzherbert (1470-1538), shows his awareness of one of the most important legal authorities of the previous reign. Fitzherbert wrote the first systematic attempt to summarise English Law: *Le Graunde Abridgement*<sup>7</sup>. I have already shown that Neville had referred to John Rastell’s three volume legal encyclopaedia, the *Graunde Abridgement*, in his Worsley MS47 copy of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* (Casson, 2010, 167). From 1583 Neville was involved in legal cases as a

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<sup>7</sup> See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony\\_Fitzherbert](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Fitzherbert) accessed 27/6/12

J.P. and from 1584, as an M.P., he would also have been aware of lawmaking.

### **Thomas Nashe**

Thomas Nashe dedicated *The Unfortunate Traveller* to The Earl of Southampton in 1593, “It is evident from this dedication that Nashe knew of Shakespeare’s dedication to Southampton when he wrote it” (Stopes, 1922, 57). It is possible that Southampton’s bailiff, Richard Nash, was a relative to the satirist (Stopes, 1922, 55). Nashe wrote some verses, *The Choice of Valentines* which he also dedicated to Southampton and he referred to Ovid, perhaps also meaning Shakespeare. There are clear connections between Neville and Southampton (Casson, 2011) and the NHMS is evidence of a connection between Neville and Nashe as he is listed with the title of his banned and now lost play *The Isle of Dogs*.

“In 1597 Jonson was employed to finish a fragment of a satiric comedy *The Isle of Dogs*, which Nashe had begun. On 28<sup>th</sup> July the Privy Council was informed of ‘a lewd plaie that was plaied in one of the plaie houses on the Bancke Side, contaynyng very seditious and scandrous matter’ They promptly had ‘some of the Players’ locked up in the Marshalsea, ‘whereof one... was not only an Actor, but a maker of parte of the said Plaie’. Nashe had fled to Great Yarmouth, but the two players, Gabriel Spencer and Robert Shaa, stayed in prison until 8 October, along with ‘Benjamin Jonson’ the offending co-author” (Vickers, 2004, 25). Nashe’s 1599 account of *The Isle of Dogs* affair, dismissing his creation as ‘An imperfect Embrion’, saying he had only written the first act and the rest had been supplied by the players (Vickers, 2004, 27). This explains the NHMS reference to “Ile of Dogs frmnt by Thomas Nashe inferior plaiers”. It also provides the latest date for the NHMS, 1597.

Elizabeth’s chief interrogator, Richard Topcliffe, referred to the play in a letter of August 10<sup>th</sup> 1597. “Nashe fled at once to the safety of Great Yarmouth in Norfolk. In his absence, his lodgings in London were raided and papers seized, but the play, like its co-author, had vanished without trace” (Donaldson, 2011, 111). Jonson however was arrested and imprisoned. The actors left London and went to Bristol. The result of this affair was an edict banning plays and ordering the destruction of theatres. Henslowe’s diary in August 1597 confirms that the “restraint is by means of playing *The Isle of Dogs*” (Donaldson, 2011, 116). However this edict was ignored in practice and the theatre survived. Nashe is believed to be playfully represented by Moth in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, which is also implicitly referred to on the front cover of the NHMS.

The NHMS shows that Neville had copies of two banned political works: *Leicester's Commonwealth* and *The Isle of Dogs*. Philip Earl of Arundel's letter to Elizabeth is also listed on the front page: this was another incendiary document. Philip spent the last years of his life in the Tower under sentence of death 1585 - 96: dying of dysentery the very year of the NHMS. These, coupled with Shakespeare's *Richard II*, shows Neville had access to dangerous political material and so needed his anonymity to protect himself.

### ***Leicester's Commonwealth***

The NHMS contains a portion of the 1584 banned political tract attacking the Earl of Leicester. Neville in fact had two other copies of this document, Worsley MSS 47 and MSS 36, which are in the Lincoln Archives and were discovered and identified by Brenda James. I have examined these in detail and shown how *Leicester's Commonwealth* was a source for Shakespeare's history plays. I have also revealed the links between Worsley MSS 47, MSS 36 and NHMS (Casson, 2010, 115). I confirmed James' view that Worsley MSS 47 was copied out by Neville and suggested, from evidence in the text, that Worsley MSS 36 was made by Neville's wife, Anne. I found evidence that the NHMS version of *Leicester's Commonwealth* was copied out from Anne's neater manuscript by comparing some of the surviving marginal annotations on the Northumberland Manuscript with those on Worsley MSS 36. We can see that they are closer than those of the printed version or Worsley MSS 47.

**NHMS Folio 81:** 1 ye nature of ambition

**Worsley MSS 36:** 1, y<sup>e</sup> nature of ambition

**Printed:** The first argumēt The Nature of ambttion.

**Worsley MSS 47:** 1 argum<sup>te</sup> the nature of Ambicōn

Anne, in Worsley MSS 36, and the Northumberland Manuscript scribe are the only annotators to use the words, "1 ye", and they use the same spelling of 'ambition'.

**NHMS Folio 81:** his pticuler disposition.

**Worsley MSS 36:** his pticuler disposicon

**Printed:** Leycester particular disposition.

**Worsley MSS 47:** his particular disposicon

Anne and NHMS are the only annotators to use the abbreviated spelling 'pticuler'



**NHMS Folio 83:** y<sup>e</sup> practice of K.R.3. for dispatching of his wief  
**Worsley MSS 36:** The practice of K.R.3. for dispatching of his wief  
**Printed:** The practice of K. Richard for dispatching his vvyfe.  
**Worsley MSS 47:** The practise of Ri: 3 for dispatching his wief

Anne and NHMS are the only annotators to use the abbreviations “K.R.3.” and write “**of** his wief”.

**NHMS Folio 83:** a new triuni = betwene Leyc Talb & y<sup>e</sup> old Coun of Shrew

**Worsley MSS 36:** A new triumvirat, betweene Leyc: Talbot, & the old Coũtesse of Shrousbury.

**Printed:** A nevv Triumvirate betvvẽ Ley. Talbot, & the Coũtesse of Shreusbury.

**Worsley MSS 47:** the triumvirate betwene Leic: talbott, and the countess of Shrewsburie

Anne and NHMS are the only annotators to use the word ‘old’ of the Countess and spell the abbreviated ‘Leyc’ the same way.

**NHMS Folio 83:** his sleight to bring ye crowne to himself

**Worsley MSS 36:** His sleight to bring the crowne to himselfe.

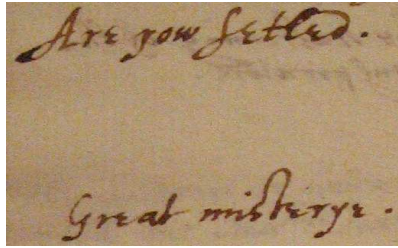
**Printed:** The sleightes of Lei. for bringing al to himself.

**Worsley MSS 47:** His strength to bring all to himselfe.

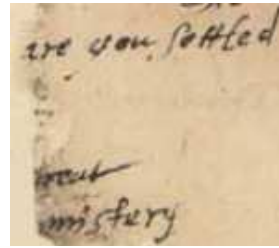
Anne and NHMS are the only annotators to use the singular ‘sleight’ and the word ‘crowne’.

There is only one annotation used in the NHMS and the printed version that is not in Worsley MSS 36 or 47: “Papistical blessing” (folio 85). This means NHMS cannot be based solely on Worsley MSS 36. The scribe must have had access to the printed version at some time whilst basing his copy mostly on Worsley MSS 36.

A comparison of the handwriting (and spelling) makes it clear that the annotators of Worsley MSS 36 and Northumberland MS are two different people. It is however notable that neither of these annotations are copied by Neville in Worsley MSS 47.



Worsley MSS 36, 39V

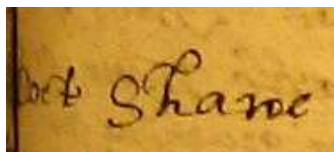


NHMS

The printed annotations are: “ARE YOY SETTLED?” (in capitals) and “A great misterye.” It is clear that Anne is closer to the printed version, in having just one ‘t’ in ‘setled’ and a final ‘e’ on ‘misterye’. Therefore I am able to assert that Worsley MSS 36 was the prior copy and the Northumberland Manuscript based on it.

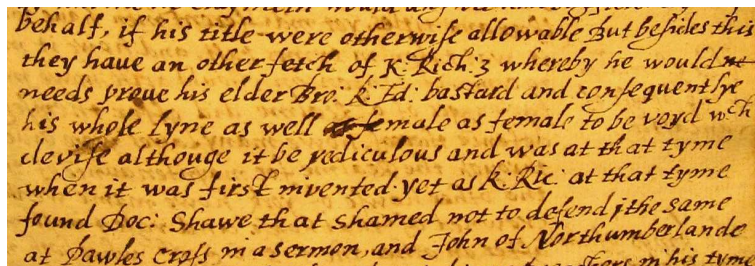
Whilst there may have been different scribes employed to make the Northumberland Manuscript there is a demonstrable relationship between the annotators of Worsley MSS 36 and the NHMS.

Furthermore as *Richard II* and *Richard III* are both listed on the front cover of the NHMS it is especially interesting to note that Neville’s copy of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* (Worsley MSS 47) shows his interest in the reigns of both these kings, especially the latter. He annotates and adds to the text with information we later find in the play. For example, Neville is the only annotator who notes “Doct Shawe” against a passage about Richard III (Peck, 146/98).



Worsley MSS 47, 41

This is against the text:



Worsley MSS 47, 41

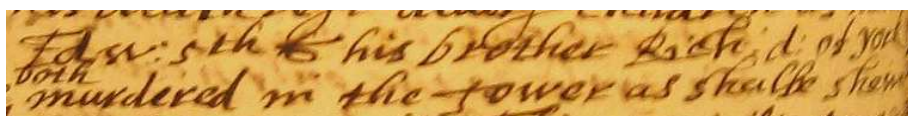
“...behalf, if his title were otherwise allowable. But I know besides this they have an other fetch of K: Rich: 3 whereby he would needs prove his elder Bro: K: Ed: bastard and consequently his whole lyne as well male as female to be voyd wch devise, although it be rediculous and was at the tyme when it was first invented, yet as K: Ric: at that time found Doc: Shawe that shamed not to defend the same at Pawles Cross in a sermon...”

In the First Folio edition (1623) of *Richard III* we find Richard saying:

Go, Lovel, with all speed to Doctor **Shaw**...” (3.5.97)

Dr. Ralph Shaw delivered a sermon on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1483 in which he said that Edward IV was illegitimate (Given-Wilson & Curteis, 1984, 3). Neville, being illegitimate himself, had reason to be interested in this detail (Casson, 2010, 62).

In the printed text of *Leicester's Commonwealth* we read, “Edward V and his brother, who after were both murdered in the Tower,” (Peck, 151/101). Neville however names the brother as “Rich: d: of york”.



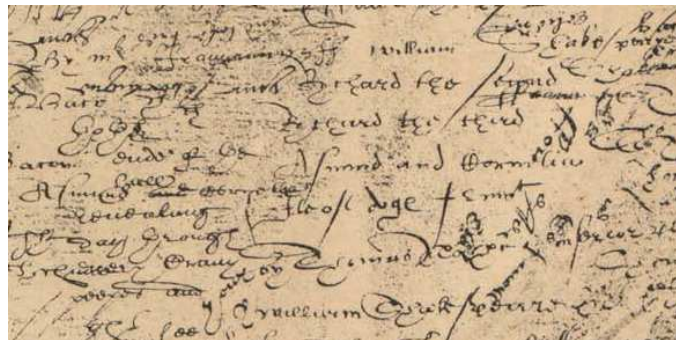
MSS 47, 43V

In *Richard III* the young Prince Edward greets his brother, naming him, “Richard of York” (3.1.96). We later hear of their murder in the Tower (Casson, 2010, 97). Neville is the only annotator who names “Rich 3 of the howse of Yorke” (Worsley MSS 47, 42V: Casson, 2010, 214) and on the next page is again the only one who notes “Rich 2” (Richard II).

In one annotation Neville refers to his father, spelling the name ‘Nevill’, just as it is spelt at the top left corner of the front cover of the NHMS and the same spelling is used on folio 80 of the NHMS text of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (Worsley MSS 47, 32: Casson, 2010, 207).

***Asmund and Cornelia***

On the front page of the NHMS there is a list of plays which can, with some difficulty be made out:



By Mr. ffrancis	William	Shakespeare
Bacon	Rychard the second	Shakespear
	Rychard the third	
Bacon end of the	<b>Asmund and Cornelia</b>	Thomas
hall		
<b>Asmund and Cornelia</b>		
revealing	Ile of Dogs frmnt	Thom Thom
day through		inferior plaiers
every crany	by Thomas Nashe	Thomas
peepes and		
see	William Shakespeare	

*Asmund and Cornelia* is an unknown work. It is not entirely clear whether this is by Bacon, Nashe or Shakespeare but the logic of its position in the list is that this is an unknown work by William Shakespeare. It is listed twice: immediately below *Richard III* by Shakespeare and immediately above a quotation from *The Rape of Lucrece*: “revealing day through every crany peepes and see...” which is a misquotation of stanza 156. Cornelia is mentioned twice in *Titus Andronicus*<sup>8</sup> (4.1. 12; 4.2.143) but these are two different women: one the mother of the Gracchi (as a mother dedicated to her sons), the other a midwife. The name Asmund is an invention with no precedent in Roman history or myth. Asmund is a Norse name. The English equivalent is Osmund. ‘Asmath’ is a fiend evoked by Margaret Jourdain in *Henry VI* part 2 (1.4.23), though this First Folio spelling may be a mis-reading of Elizabethan secretary script for ‘Asmode(us)’ (Warren, 2003, 144).

<sup>8</sup> Performed and printed anonymously in 1594, two years before the final additions were made to the NHMS.

Only in one other place is Lucrece associated with Cornelia: in a funerary poem by 'W. Har.' who is believed to be William Hervey, Baron of Kidbrooke and Ross. Published in 1594 it predates the NHMS and refers to *The Rape of Lucrece*:

You that haue writ of chaste Lucretia,  
Whose death was witness to her spotlesse life:  
Or pen'd the praise of sad Cornelia,  
Whose blamelesse name hath made her fame so rife,  
As noble Pompey's most renowned wife...

It is not clear here if 'you' refers to just one writer or to two different poets but Ocham's razor would suggest one poet and the NHMS reference to *Asmund and Cornelia*, immediately adjacent to a quotation from *The Rape of Lucrece*, identifies that poet as Shakespeare.

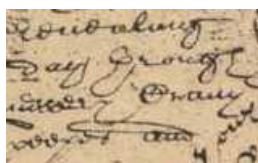
Hervey married Mary, daughter of Anthony Browne first Viscount Montagu and the widow of Henry Wriothesley, the second earl of Southampton and of Thomas Heneage. Mary was therefore the mother of the Henry Wriothesley to whom *The Rape of Lucrece* had been dedicated. Hervey was in that circle and a supporter of Essex. After Mary died, Hervey married Cordella, daughter of Brian Annesley in 1608. Due to her struggle with his sisters over her senile father, 1603-4, Cordella has been seen as a model for Cordelia (*King Lear* was written in this period, the earliest recorded performance being in 1606). Neville was "in an excellent position to know of the Annesley case" (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 175).

This coupling of Lucrece and Cornelia suggests that Shakespeare may have written a poem or play on Cornelia which is listed on the NHMS front page. Alternatively Hervey may have been referring to Thomas Kyd, as the year before the NHMS, in 1595, Kyd had published *Pompey the Great, his fair Cornelia's Tragedy*, an English translation of a French poem by Robert Garnier (which may have circulated in manuscript before being printed). This however makes no mention of Asmund and in any case was published after Hervey's poem. It is possible that Shakespeare may have written a play based on Kyd's translation, adding a new character called Asmund. Whatever the nature of *Asmund and Cornelia*, Neville, in the NHMS, seems to have special knowledge of Shakespeare's work matched by no one else at the time.

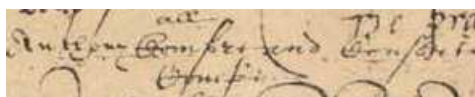
### **Capital 'C'**

Shakespeare (in the quartos of *Titus Andronicus*, *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Edward III*, the First Folio *Henry V* and in Hand D) and Neville (in

letters and notebooks) share the habit of using a capital ‘C’ rather than the lower case (Casson, 2012). There are examples of this in the NHMS:

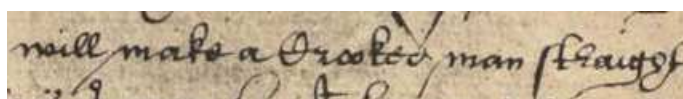


NHMS front page:  
“Revealing day through every Crany<sup>9</sup> peepes and”.



NHMS front page: “Anthony Comfort and Consorte”.

In the NHMS Neville repeatedly uses a capital ‘C’ for ordinary words within sentences.



NHMS folio 6: “will make a Crooked man straight”.

### **The Handwriting on NHMS compared with Neville’s and Hand D**

Burgoyne (1904, xx) stated that the identity of the penman who actually wrote the manuscript is unknown. Having studied it and other Neville manuscripts I can offer the opinion that much of the NHMS is in Neville’s own hand. Burgoyne suggested there might be several writers and I agree that the handwriting varies. Indeed I had previously suggested the annotations in the margins of the NHMS copy of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* were not by Neville, and Burgoyne identified two or more handwritings in the body of that work, the difference being especially noted in *Leicester’s Commonwealth* “which appears to have been written in a hurry”, as one might expect of a banned document (Casson, 2010, 235)! On folios 61, 64, 66 and 88 “the difference in penmanship... is especially remarkable” (Burgoyne, 1904, xxi) but it is still possibly the same person writing in different styles. Neville did vary his handwriting, as is evident in extant letters and notebooks. On the NHMS he used spurred ‘a’s and long upstrokes on ‘w’, ‘m’, ‘n’, ‘u’, ‘i’, as did the writer of Hand D in *Sir Thomas More* (Casson, 2012). The whole manuscript deserves to be studied and the handwriting of Neville and his

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<sup>9</sup> The word ‘cranny’ occurs in the quarto of *Edward III* (Sams, 1996, line 1212; Melchiori, 2001, who changed this to ‘crannied’: 3.1.164). The play has many links with *The Rape of Lucrece* in which the word is spelt ‘crannie’ (line 1086, stanza 156). Neither play nor poem has a capital C for ‘cranny’.

secretary John Parker compared to confirm or nuance my identification of Neville as the main writer.

## Conclusion

There are only two Shakespeare play manuscripts from the writer's life time: the Hand D section of *Sir Thomas More* MS, 1603, and the Dering MS of *Henry IV*, circa 1613 (the latter being written in the handwriting of Edward Dering). Henry Neville was thus the first named individual who owned two lost Shakespeare manuscripts in 1596, *Richard II* and *Richard III*. Indeed before the editors of the First Folio worked from play manuscripts, Neville is the only named person known to have owned a Shakespeare play manuscript and he did so before anyone else. Another person who was later known to have a manuscript of Shakespeare's second sonnet<sup>10</sup> was Robert Killigrew, Neville's wife's uncle's son, who lived with Neville and Anne at Lothbury (James, 2008, 266). Robert's son, Thomas Killigrew, became a playwright. In 1669 a royal warrant gave the King's players, the company established by Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant, the exclusive right to perform twenty of Shakespeare's plays (Halliday, 1977, 266). Thus for over 73 years members of the extended Neville family were connected somehow to Shakespearean manuscripts and plays, whereas the Stratford Shakspeare family had no connection with the plays and were never documented as holding any manuscript.

The Northumberland manuscript is thus the earliest extant manuscript to mention works by Shakespeare, as a playwright. As this manuscript was written and owned first by Henry Neville, this means he knew of *Richard II*, *Richard III* and *Love's Labours' Lost* before they were published the next year. He knew these works were by "William Shakespeare" before anyone else did. This manuscript is proof that Neville was interested in courtly entertainments such as speeches by the Earls of Essex and Sussex at tilts (jousting tournaments), in theatre, indeed radical political theatre and radical political argument and controversy (*The Isle of Dogs* and *Leicester's Commonwealth* and the letters to Elizabeth I by Philip Sidney and the Earl of Arundel). He knew *The Rape of Lucrece* and was the first person to quote from that poem. He also knew about a lost work: *Asmund and Cornelia* by Shakespeare, unknown to any other person. He was the first person to write out the full name, William Shakespeare, correctly spelt. An explanation for all this, using Ocham's razor, is that Henry Neville was William Shakespeare.

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<sup>10</sup> This is now in the British Library, Sloane MSS 1792

## **Appendix 1: The History of the document**

Burgoyne (1904, x) suggested the NHMS papers may have been acquired from a sale of “the two Garters Anstis, father and son,” in 1768. This family dated back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century: John Anstis was an antiquarian who collected papers and became Garter King at Arms in 1718. He worked for the Howard family and was an M.P.. Many of the Anstis papers ended up in the British library and the Bodleian<sup>11</sup>. The NHMS papers were damaged in a fire at Northumberland House in 1780.

## **Appendix 2 1592-1598**

To put this 1596 manuscript in context I review the earliest references to William from Stratford in London, to Shakespeare the writer and what Henry Neville was doing during this time.

### **The earliest references to Shakspere<sup>12</sup> from Stratford in London**

In **1592** Shakspere was probably in London as he lent John Clayton £ 7 (in 1600 “Willelmus Shackspere” went to court for this debt). This year also saw Greene’s attack on ‘Shake-scene’ (though this was possibly written by Chettle).

On December 28<sup>th</sup> **1594** he performed before the Queen at Greenwich.

On March 15<sup>th</sup> **1595**, for the performance in the previous December, there is the first written record of ‘Will<sup>a</sup>m Shakespeare’ as an actor or company manager, and it is the only recorded payment to him as such.

In **1596** Hamnet, his son died. ‘Shakspere’ applied for a coat of arms. He was recorded as living in Bishopsgate, London. On 29<sup>th</sup> November W. Wayte accused “William Shakspere” of threatening him.

In **1597** he bought New Place in Stratford for £ 60. He was listed as tax defaulter in Bishopsgate, London.

On January 24<sup>th</sup> **1598** Abraham Sturley wrote to his brother-in-law that “our countriman mr Shaksper is willing to disburse some monei upon some od yardland or other Shottrei or neare about us...”

On February 4<sup>th</sup> Shakspere was named as having illegally held 10 quarters (80 bushels = 3 tons) of malt etc during a shortage.

On October 1<sup>st</sup> he was listed as a defaulter on London taxes in Billingsgate.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> October Adrian Quiney wrote to his son Richard Quiney: “yff yow bargin with Wm Sha or recover money therefor, brynge youre money home”. On 25<sup>th</sup> October Richard Quiney wrote a letter asking Shakspere for a £30 loan. It was never posted. It is written “To my

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<sup>11</sup> From: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Anstis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Anstis) accessed 11/6/12.

<sup>12</sup> I have used the spelling ‘Shakspere’ to denote William from Stratford and distinguish him from Shakespeare, the bard. I have used the spelling ‘Shakespeare’ to denote the man who wrote the plays.



Loveinge good ffrend & contreyman mr wm Shackespre”. It is the only letter ever found that was addressed to Shakspere. On October 30<sup>th</sup> Adrian Quiney wrote to his son asking him to bring the money from William. On November 4<sup>th</sup> A. Sturley wrote to Richard Quiney urging pursuit of William’s loan.

On December 1<sup>st</sup> Wyllyn Wyatt Chamberlin paid ten pence to “Mr. Shakespere for one load of stone”.

On December 28<sup>th</sup> he assisted in transferring the timbers to build the Globe Theatre in Southark (Pointon, 2011, 270-1).

Other undated records for the year state that he received 20d for wine to host a visiting preacher; was recorded in “Enrolled Subsidy Accounts” at Stratford; was living in St. Saviour’s parish, London.

In **1598** “Will Shakespeare” performed as a “principall Comœdian” in Ben Jonson’s *Every Man In His Humour*<sup>13</sup>, though this cast list was only published in 1616.

This evidence confirms William was an actor and making money.

### **The earliest references to the writer William Shakespeare**

In **1593** *Venus and Adonis* published (registered in April) by William Shakespeare. **This was the very first use of this name.** Richard Stoney bought a copy of *Venus and Adonis* and so became the first person to write the name ‘Shakspaere’ in his account book (Schoenbaum, 1987, 176).

In **1594** *Rape of Lucrece* was published as by William Shakespeare; *Henry VI* part 2 and *Titus Andronicus* (the latter co-written with Peele), were published anonymously. There was the first mention by another author of ‘Shake-speare’, in *Willobye His Avis*, referring to *Lucrece*. *The Comedy of Errors* was performed at Gray’s Inn on December 28<sup>th</sup>.

In **1595** *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (*Henry VI* part 3) was published anonymously. William Covell in an epistle in *Polimanteia* noted “Sweet Shakspeare” for “All praise worthy Lucrecia”. *Lochrine* was published as by ‘W. S.’ (I have identified this play as an early work by Neville, dated 1586-9: Casson, 2009, 102).

In **1596** *The Raigne of King Edward III* was published anonymously.

In **1597** *Richard II*, *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet* were published anonymously.

In **1598** *Richard III* Q2 and *Richard II* were published as by William Shake-speare; *Love’s Labours Lost* as by W. Shakespere: **These were the first plays to be identified as by Shakespeare.** *Henry IV* part 1 was published anonymously. Barnfield praised Shakespeare’s poetry in his

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<sup>13</sup> From: <http://fly.hiwaay.net/~paul/shakspere/evidence1.html> accessed 24/3/2012

*Poems in Diverse Humours*. Francis Meres listed Shakespeare's plays in *Palladis Tamia*.

### **Henry Neville during this period**

In **1593** Neville's father died so Neville inherited Billingbear near Windsor. Neville became M.P. for New Windsor.

In **1596** Neville was made Deputy Lieutenant of Berkshire.

In **1597** Neville becomes M.P. for Liskeard, Cornwall, and sat on parliamentary committees concerned with recruitment of soldiers and abuses committed by soldiers (James, 2008, 340).

In **1598** Neville was chosen as ambassador to France and was knighted. He sold his iron works and cannon factory.

Whereas Shakspeare from Stratford during this period is concerned with sums of money the evidence shows that the writer Shakespeare was concerned with history, law and politics: Neville's main recorded activities are those of a politician and as Deputy Lieutenant of Berkshire he had a legal role. The sale of his cannon factory in 1598 meshes with *King John* (1596) in which cannon are frequently and anachronistically mentioned. This sale was in preparation for his ambassadorship in France (1599). In *Henry V* (1599) Bardolph says, "We must to France" (2.1.90).

### **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to Andy Smith for his help; and to Dave Ewald for spotting the capital 'C' in the Lucrece quotation on the NHMS.

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[http://www.ericams.org/sams\\_letterstojohnidrisjones1.htm](http://www.ericams.org/sams_letterstojohnidrisjones1.htm)

Dr. John Casson 2012