THE EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON, RICHARD III, SHAKESPEARE AND HENRY NEVILLE

Introduction
For those unfamiliar with Henry Neville as the recently discovered writer of the works of Shakespeare, this paper will be startling. Nevertheless the discovery, announced in 2005, is based on solid evidence. Indeed Professor Rubinstein, in a forthcoming book, reviews all the authorship candidates, including William Shakspere from Stratford, and concludes that Henry Neville has the strongest evidence base as the real writer of the works of Shakespeare (see appendix 7 for further material on Henry Neville’s authorship). This paper provides further evidence.

The Third Earl of Southampton and Henry Neville
From 1601-1603 the third Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley, was incarcerated in the Tower of London as a result of his part in the Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux’s rebellion. Also imprisoned there was Sir Henry Neville. He had been implicated by Essex at his trial on February 21st 1601. At Neville’s subsequent trial, “It was Southampton whose testimony… provided confirmation for Essex’s original, highly unexpected claim that Neville, the respected Ambassador to France, was involved in treasonable conspiracy” (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 145, 159). In his confession Southampton confirmed Neville’s involvement (James, 2008, 359; Stopes, 1922, 229).

Neville had originally met Southampton when he was a child, at Burghley’s house, at some time between 1583 - 5. He told his secretary of an assault on Southampton in a letter dated 29/1/1601 (Winwood, 1725, Vol 1, 292). He certainly met Southampton on 2/2/1601 during the lead up to the Essex rebellion. In 1613 John Chamberlain wrote that Southampton was Neville’s “great patron” because he was the foremost supporter in the latter’s bid to become the Secretary of State (McClure, 1939, Vol 1, 401). In a letter dated 6/8/1613 Southampton expressed his confidence that “Sir Henry Neville” would become Secretary (Stopes, 1922, 363). Their close friendship was acknowledged by Henry Howard, the Earl of Northampton who, in a letter dated November 1613, wrote to Rochester describing Neville as Southampton’s “Dear Damon”. The Earl appeared to be referring to the play Damon and Pythias by Richard Edwards” which had been published in 1571 (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 246). Hamlet calls Horatio, “O Damon dear”, (3.2.275) in what is believed to be a reference to this play (Thompson & Taylor, 2006, 318). Since the Greek legend tells of two friends, both of whom were imprisoned and under threat of execution, and were later pardoned, this reference in Hamlet resembles Neville and Southampton’s situation in 1601-3 (see Appendix 3 on Hamlet, Neville and the Essex rebellion and Appendix 4 on Damon and Pythias and The Comedy of Errors, Southampton and Neville).

“Neville and Southampton were related because both of them sprang from a common Neville ancestor – Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmoreland” (James, 2008, 124). Westmoreland appears on stage in Shakespeare’s Henry IV parts 1 & 2 and Henry V. Furthermore Southampton was also descended from John Neville, a younger brother of Richard Neville, the Kingmaker. John appears on stage as the Marquess of Montague in Henry VI part 3. (For more genealogical information showing Southampton’s descent from the Nevilles see Stopes, 1922, 18, 488.)

1 I am using this spelling to distinguish the man from Stratford from the writer: the famous six signatures, dated 1612 - 15, are each spelt differently but the main variant is ‘Shakspere’.

2 Cambridge University Library: MSS Dd. 3. 63, on folio 50 verso
The Encomium of Richard III

Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, dedicated a document about Richard III to “Sr Henry Nevill” (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 320). He signed it, “Your Honoure most affectionat Servante” (see Appendix 1). This is to be found in the British Library (Additional MS 29307). It has been dated to circa 1600 by previous scholars. However having examined it carefully, I found it was written on paper watermarked 1603: the date is very clear on the last sheet but the same watermark can be seen on the dedication page and folios 3 and 15. The date is just visible on the first two. This watermark, of two columns surmounted by a bunch of grapes, (the grapes are visible on folios 7, 8, 11 and 14) is listed in two books the British Library holds on watermarks (Heawood, 1950 and Churchill, 1935). The earliest dates for examples of this watermark are 1615/1625. Therefore the watermarks of Additional MS 29307 predate these by at least 12 years. Dr. Arnold Hunt of the British Library Manuscripts Department, commenting on the paper used in this manuscript, wrote:

“Most of the paper used in England at this period came from France, where the new year officially began on 1 January, so this paper could have been made at any time after 1 January 1603.”

(e-mail, received 17/9/2010)

Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, and Henry Neville were released from the Tower of London by James I on April 9th 1603 (Stopes, 1922, 260). The document could therefore have been written in the Tower of London before their release, indeed this is more likely, for after their release Southampton would not have had so much time on his hands to write such a long document. That Wriothesley signed the dedication to Neville as plain “Hen: W:” in small letters, without any title, when he signed letters after his release with a large “H. Southampton”, suggests that it was written during his incarceration, when he had been stripped of his titles and reduced to plain Mr. Henry Wriothesley. Two documents written by Southampton whilst in prison were signed “H. Wriothesley” (Salisbury, 1906, Vol XI, 72 - 3).

The document is actually based on an Encomium in support of Richard III written by Sir William Cornwallis. Zeeveld (1940, 949) established the document must have been written between 1583 - 1603. As Cornwallis was born circa 1579 it is likely he wrote it at the end of this period. He published essays in 1600 and 1601, but these did not include his defence of Richard III, so it is possible that the Encomium was written as late as 1601. This late dating could suggest a possible political motive for the essay: if Richard III was not all bad perhaps the disgraced Essex, who was executed in 1601, might also be rehabilitated. Whilst not apparently involved in the Essex rebellion Cornwallis “lived quietly for the rest of Queen Elizabeth’s reign and was for a time in Edinburgh where he introduced Sir Thomas Overbury to Robert Carr” (ODNB, Kincaid, 2004, Vol 13, 488). Overbury became a friend of Henry Neville. John Chamberlain wrote, in a letter dated 18/12/1604, that “Here is speech that… Sir Henry Neville” was a possible Ambassador “for Spaine” (Casson, 2010b). It was Cornwallis’s father, Sir Charles, who instead went as ambassador to Spain in 1605.

Kincaid (1977) who undertook a major study of the Encomium, was unsure of the date but suggested it was written in the late 1590s and that the earliest extant copy was at Chatsworth House. This is the Hardwick Mss 44 and it is undated. I examined it and found a previously unnoticed watermark.
This discovery offers the possibility that we can tentatively date the document. Though visible, the watermark is obscured on the pages which are written over on both sides, but on the final sheet, where there is no writing, it is clear enough to identify it as one of the pot motifs illustrated by Heawood (1950).
It seems to be a one handled pot, with the handle on the left side as in illustrations 3549-3554 (Heawood’s Plate 480). There is a small flower on the top left of the handle like that in 3549, 3551, 3552 and 3554. The uneven base is most like 3550 and 3554. What seems like a curved lid on the pot looks like 3550, 3551, or 3553. The possibility of a crown at the top looks like 3549-3554. The lines across the body of the pot which contain letters look like those in 3549-3553. All these watermarks have capital letters running across the centre of the pot: the Hardwick Mss 44 watermark seems to have the letters NF (or possibly NP) in this place. These watermarks are dated between 1589-1598. It seems reasonable to see this version in Hardwick Mss 44 as an image that is developed from the simpler versions of Plate 480: the crown in Hardwick Mss 44 seems as if it may be more elaborate and there appears to be roses above the pot and below the rim. It would therefore be possible to suggest a date in the second half of the 1590s: between 1595-1600. Heawood locates all these watermarks in London. The paper is brown and English paper was coarser than the whiter papers made in France.

The watermark on Southampton’s version of the Encomium is of columns enclosing the date 1603, surmounted by grapes. The grapes watermark (without columns or date) is to be found on a letter from Henry Neville to Robert Cecil, written, partly in cipher, from Paris, on January 14th, 1600 (National Archives at Kew, PRO 30/50/70/8). The Bodleian Library copy of the Encomium (Rawlinson D 718) likewise has the grapes watermark. Heawood (1950) has a watermark (2090) from a letter dated 1604 that is very close in design to the Rawlinson D718 mark. This manuscript predates Southampton’s version but depends on the Chatsworth manuscript, indeed Kincaid (1977, v) thought it might have been a revision by Cornwallis himself. The grapes watermark may therefore suggest Rawlinson D 718 could be dated circa 1600. It seems likely that this, or some other lost copy of the manuscript, was the original which Southampton copied in his version.

Shakespeare’s play Richard III was written in c1592 but may not have been seen in London until the theatres re-opened after the plague in 1594. The Encomium could therefore have been a response to the play: so dark a portrait of a king who had reigned just 100 years earlier was bound to provoke a reaction. This matches the possible dating of the Chatsworth watermark, suggesting the Encomium was written between 1595-1601. The fact that Shakespeare is not named in the Encomium might point to it having been written before 1598 when the second quarto of Richard III first identified the author as “William Shake-speare”. Indeed the fact that the Encomium does not depend on the text of Shakespeare’s play would suggest the writer might have seen the play but did not have the text to hand: this would suggest a dating for the Encomium before the play was first printed in 1597. Cornwallis did enjoy the theatre. In a verse epistle to John Donne he wrote (circa 1598 - 1600):

If then for change, of howers you seem careless
Agree w th me to lose them at the playes.  (Whitt, 1932, 161)

A sequence can therefore be suggested:
1592 - 4 Shakespeare’s Richard III written and first performed.
1595 - 1601 Cornwallis composed the Encomium: Hardwick Mss 44, Chatsworth.
c1600 - 1 Second copy of the Encomium: Rawlinson D 718, Bodleian, Oxford.
Southampton and the Encomium

Morton, the Bishop of Ely, appears on stage in Richard III. He is a supporter of Richard, indeed abjectly fawns on him, immediately rushing off to satisfy him when Richard asks for some strawberies. This incident was reported by Sir Thomas More in his History of King Richard III. More had been a page in Morton's household (Hammond, 1985, 338). A possible lost source for the Encomium was a manuscript by John Morton, Bishop of Ely, said by Sir George Buck to have been in the possession of “Mr. Roper of Eltham”. According to another note by Buck, Sir Edward Hoby saw the book, and this is thought to have been at some time before 1596 (Kincaid, 1977, iii). In 1596 Sir John Harrington said he had heard that Sir Thomas More’s History of King Richard III was based on Morton’s manuscript. The Ropers were More’s relatives: More’s daughter married William Roper. The Ropers of Eltham leased a house in Holborn from the Earl of Southampton. “The Ropers had substantial legal connections with Southampton” (Kincaid, 1977, iv). Cornwallis also lived in Holborn. This evidence would seem to confirm the Encomium was written between 1596 – 1600.

In dedicating the earliest manuscript of the Encomium to the poet John Donne, Cornwallis stated that he wanted to restore “this defamed Prince, whose life lately reading…”: this suggests he had been reading a biography, most probably works by Morton and/or More. John Donne’s mother was related to Sir Thomas More. In the late 1590s Donne emerged in London society, becoming secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton in 1597-8. From 1597 Cornwallis was the Member of Parliament for Lostwithiel. Donne, Cornwallis and Henry Neville were, with Southampton, supporters of the Earl of Essex. Cornwallis was knighted in 1599 for his part in Essex’s Irish campaign (ODNB, Kincaid, 2004, Vol 13, 488). In James I’s reign Cornwallis and Neville were both especially involved in the Union with Scotland. Donne and Neville were members of the Mitre Club 1608 - 11 (Gayley, 1914, 147-8). Katherine, Southampton’s aunt (his father’s sister) married Sir Thomas Cornwallis (Stopes, 1922, 5, 46, 311).

We know Southampton was keen on the theatre. In 1599 Rowland White wrote to Sir Robert Sydney, “My Lord Southampton and Lord Rutland come not to the court ... they pass away the time in London merely in going to plaies every day” (Sydney Papers, ed. Collins, ii. 132). In January 1605 Southampton staged Love’s Labour’s Lost for Queen Anne (Stopes, 1922, 173, 289).

Southampton changed the text of Cornwallis’s Encomium in two places that show his interest in theatre. Half way through (on folio 8) he altered the text from:

“the partiall writings of an vndiscreete Cronicler a fauorer of the Lancastrian familye, then his lawes and actions…”

to:

“the partiall writings of undiscreete Croniclers and witty Play-makers, then his lawes and actions…”

On the penultimate page (f 16v) Southampton added:

“but that wee must still make him more Cruelle infamous in pamphletts and playes.”
These additions suggest Southampton was referring to Shakespeare’s plays *Richard III* and *Henry VI* parts 2 and 3 (in which Richard also appears). *The First Part of the Contention* (*Henry VI* part 2) had appeared in quarto in 1594; *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (*Henry VI* part 3) was published in 1595 and the first quarto of *Richard III* appeared in 1597. All three were published anonymously. It was the following year, in 1598, that the second quarto of *Richard III* appeared as by “William Shake-speare”⁴: this was the very earliest that any play had been attributed to this name. The name ‘Nevil’ occurs eight times in *Henry VI* part 2, which is the first play in which Richard appears.

In 1594 *Rape of Lucrece* had been published as by William Shakespeare. In the dedication to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, the bard refers to this work as a ‘pamphlet’. Roe (1998, 140) stated that “in Shakespeare’s day ‘pamphlet’ could mean any form of publication including all literary genres”. Therefore we might infer that by stating that Richard III’s infamy was broadcast “in pamphletts and playes” Southampton could be referring to the printed quartos and the performances of the plays.

Southampton added more passages to Cornwallis’s original, quite changing the nature of the document. Whereas Cornwallis had written a historical study and was attempting to redress the balance in Richard’s favour, Southampton distorted this document for a political purpose: he was using the history as a metaphor for the present. Kincaid (1977, v-vi) analysed these changes and concluded that the document had been sent to Neville to persuade him to join the Essex rebellion in 1600. However the watermark dating of 1603 means that we must now see it as a belated self justification with Southampton offering arguments to support taking action: he wrote, “new necessitie require new remedies” and the ancient nobility should challenge “new Statistes” (which Kincaid took to be a reference to the Cecils). Southampton however is cautiously cryptic and ends this attempt to rehabilitate the last Plantagenet King who had Neville blood in his veins, playfully writing, “I hold this but as a Paradox”.

This use of history as metaphor for the present is to be seen in Shakespeare’s history plays and in Henry Neville’s own manuscript copy of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* (Worsley MSS 47, Casson, 2010). Richard III is referred to several times in the latter and Henry Wriothesley’s father, the second Earl of Southampton, also figures. Southampton’s great, great grandfather, John Writhe, as the Garter King of Arms, officiated at the coronation of Richard III. His younger son Thomas’s “last public work was to superintend the gorgeous ceremonial of the coronation of Anne Boleyn” (Stopes, 1922, 485). This scene is represented in Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII* with the Garter King of Arms “wearing his coat of arms and a gilt copper crown” (4.1.36.13). Sir Thomas changed the family name to Wriothesley. His brother’s son, another Thomas, became the first Earl of Southampton and was an executor of Henry VIII’s will (Stopes, 1922, 486). Henry Neville’s father was also a signatory of that testament.

**Shakespeare, Neville and Southampton**

In Shakespeare’s *Richard III* there are unnamed members of the Neville family, identified by their titles, who appear on stage or are mentioned in passing. Richard was son of Cecily Neville (daughter of Ralph Neville, 1st Earl of Westmoreland, and

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³ The same spelling, with a hyphen, was used on the front page of the Sonnets.
great, great aunt of Sir Henry Neville). Cecily appears on stage in *Richard III* as the old Duchess of York. In an outrageous, bravura performance Richard woos Anne Neville on stage. She was a daughter of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, the Kingmaker (who is mentioned in the play by Clarence) and widow of Edward Plantagenet, Prince of Wales, the only son of Henry VI.

*Rychard the third* is listed on the Northumberland Manuscript, just below the name William Shakespeare. This manuscript was owned by Henry Neville (the name ‘Nevill’ is visible, with the family motto, at the top left of the page) and it has been dated to 1596. Another Shakespeare play is listed on the Northumberland manuscript: just above *Rychard the third* is *Rychard the second*. The very same year, 1596, 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). Hoby’s mother was a sister of Henry Neville’s stepmother. James (2008, 68) has shown there are numerous connections between the Hobys, Neville and Shakespeare.

In dedicating his version of the Encomium to Henry Neville, Southampton seems to point to his authorship of *Richard III*. We can compare his dedication of the Encomium to Neville, with Shakespeare’s dedications to Southamp ton in *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. Both writers are self deprecatory: Shakespeare in *Venus and Adonis* writes of his “unpolished lines” and in *The Rape of Lucrece* “untutored lines”. Southampton regrets his work is “not trickt up with elegancie of phrase” and describes it as “this small porcion of my privat Laboures”. Shakespeare in *Venus and Adonis* writes, “But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry…”; “if your honour seem but pleased” and promises “some graver labour”. Southampton states, “But howsoever if you please to accept I shall think my Labours well bestowed…” Both use the words “your honour”. Both begin with the words:

Shakespeare: “To the Right Honourable…”
Southampton: “To the Honourable…”

Both end their dedications similarly:

Shakespeare (*Venus & Adonis*): “Your Honour’s in all duty.”
Southampton: “Your Honoures most affectionat Servante.”

Whilst these similarities may be due simply to convention it is nevertheless possible that Southampton was recalling Shakespeare’s dedications. (See appendix 1 for Southampton’s dedication to Neville.) James (2008, 239) found the rough draft of a letter written by Neville in the Berkshire Records Office Archives, which she identified as due to be sent to Southampton c1604, asking for help in recouping his financial losses. She showed how the language of this letter matched that in the dedication to *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Hamlet*.

Shakespeare certainly loved Wriothesley, as is evident in his sonnets and the dedications of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). Southampton returned that love: in his dedication he describes the Encomium as “an ernest peny of my love”. No evidence has ever been found that shows any connection whatsoever between the Earl and William from Stratford.
The dedication to the 1609 Sonnets refers to a “Mr. W.H.” and scholars have speculated about the identity of this man. In 1999 Dr. John Rollett published his discovery of the names Henry and Wriothesley in the dedication. He had placed the 1609 Sonnets dedication “TO THE ONLIE BEGETTER OF THESE INSVING SONNETS” in grids of 15 and 18 letters across and found these names.

**HENRY**

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In the original 1609 printing the capital VV is two Vs. V is the roman numeral for 5. 5+5 = 10 and we can see that the I of IOTH is ten squares from (and including) the W.

In 2005 Brenda James announced that her own deciphering of the dedication had led her to identify Henry Neville as the hidden poet behind the name William Shakespeare. She found the names ‘Henry’ and ‘Nevvell’ centred around the word POET in the 15 across grid.

**HENRY NEVVELL POET**

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James (2008, 34) had originally set the dedication out in a grid 12x12 and she now re-examined this and found “Haree Nevell”, and the name ‘Rislie’ (Wriothesley). It was common to call men named Henry, ‘Harry’ (as Henry V is in Shakespeare’s play). Furthermore, when she made two further separate transformation of this grid, she found ‘Nevil’ surrounded by ‘Henry’ (for the complete grids see Appendix 2):

In the 1594 First Quarto edition of Henry VI part 2 (The First Part of the Contention), the name Neville is spelt ‘Nevil’ or ‘Nevel’. In the 1623 First Folio the name is spelt ‘Nevil’ in Henry IV part 2. Goding and Leyland (2008) have confirmed James’ discoveries with their own decryptions resulting in the statement, “Your Sonnets ever-living poet, he’s Mr. Sir Henry Neville”. Both Neville and Wriothesley are referred to as Mr. because, during their incarceration in the Tower, Wriothesley and Neville were stripped of all their titles. The reversal of the initials W. H. was a way of further disguising Southampton’s identity. James (2008, 34) suggested there was the instruction “Reverse it” running along line 8 and diagonally up into lines 6 and 7 in the 12 x 12 grid. Goding and Leyland (2008) suggested that the word ETERNITIE contained the instruction “Tern it” (Turn it). Both of these meaning that W.H. should be reversed/turned to read H.W. = Henry Wriothesley.

James I and Southampton were in Oxford when Henry Neville was awarded an M.A. in August 1605. During James’s visit Matthew Gwynne presented his Tres Sibyllae, a Latin poem which referred to the prophecy that Banquo’s descendants would inherit an endless empire (a possible source for the three witches of Macbeth). This event links James I, Neville, Southampton and Shakespeare’s Macbeth (Stopes, 1922, 296; Casson, 2009, 193).

Southampton and Neville were both investors in the London Virginia Company which was given its royal charter in 1606. James I granted the charter to the second Virginia Company on May 23rd 1609: this was just three days after Shake-speare’s Sonnets were recorded in the Stationer’s Register (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 184). In the dedication to the Sonnets “the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth” is possibly a reference to the investors as they were called ‘adventurers’ (James, 2008, 15) but it may also be a direct reference to the voyage of the company’s new ship the Sea Venture which set out in 1609, as the flagship of a fleet of 9 ships (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 195). These were later wrecked by a great storm, as reported in the Strachey letter, which became a source for Shakespeare’s Tempest. The “majority of the writers of the Commendatory Verses (in the First Folio) were not well-known poets but were members of the Virginia Company”. Brenda James further explored the relationship between Shakespeare, Neville, Southampton, the Virginia Company and the founding of America (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 260, 293-297).

In the summer of 1599 Elizabeth, Countess of Southampton, wrote to her husband that “Sir John Falstaffe is by his mrs. dame pintpot made father of a godly millers
thumb, a boye that’s all head and a litel body\(^4\) – but this is a secret”. Neville had a new born son at this time but reported to Cecil that the baby died in September (James and Rubinstein, 2005, 114). James (2008, 58) suggested that this mysterious reference to Falstaff was indeed to Neville, who was portly and complained of gout. Falstaff had originally been called Oldcastle, perhaps a pun on the name Neville (Old Castle for New Town).

**Neville and the Encomium**

Kincaid (1977, i) traced the history of the Encomium to Sir Thomas More’s *History of King Richard III* which was published by John Rastell. More’s *History* was the most important source for Shakespeare’s *Richard III* (Jowett, 2000, 1; Hammond, 1985, 75-78). As I have shown in my previous book, Neville was aware of John Rastell’s three volume legal encyclopaedia, the *Graunde Abridgement*, referring to it in his copy of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* (Casson, 2010, 98, 167). John Rastell was Sir Thomas More’s brother-in-law, a lawyer, playwright and publisher. More, Rastell and Neville’s grandfather, Edward, were all present at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520. Southampton’s great uncle Sir Thomas Wriothesley was also there. In Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII* the Duke of Norfolk describes the “earthly glory” of this splendid diplomatic extravaganza to Lord Abergavenny, George Neville, brother of Edward. George Neville, Baron Bergavenny, was son-in-law to the Duke of Buckingham, who is also present in this scene. Later we witness Buckingham’s fall. Thomas More’s father, John, who had been Buckingham’s solicitor, was one of the judges at his treason trial (Guy, 2009, 71).

Neville’s great uncle, Thomas Neville, was elected Speaker of the House of Commons in 1515, knighted and became a royal counsellor (Guy, 2009, 56, 165). More and Thomas Neville were friends: Neville’s servants were mentioned in a comic Christmas entertainment at More’s house in 1525 (Guy, 2009, 165). Thomas Neville had a successful career, unaffected by the disgrace of one brother (George) and the execution of another (Edward). He became wealthy and Charles Brandon, the Duke of Suffolk, pawned jewels worth £ 700 with him (ODNB, Davies, C. Vol 40, 543).

Henry Neville specifically named Charles Brandon in his annotations to his copy of *Leicester’s Commonwealth*. Brandon appears on stage in *Henry VIII*. His father William, appears as Henry VII’s standard bearer at Bosworth in *Richard III* (5.4.4.) and is killed at the battle of Bosworth (5.7.14). The Encomium recounts that it was Richard III himself who slew Sir William Brandon. Southampton added the detail that he was ‘stout’ (f 16). This suggests some personal knowledge: Charles Brandon was godfather to Southampton’s father.

At about the same time as he wrote *Richard III*, Shakespeare was involved in writing the play *Sir Thomas More*. The section he wrote is labelled ‘Hand D’ and I have shown how the handwriting on this manuscript matches Neville’s handwriting in his copy of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* (Casson, 2010, 171 - 4). One unique annotation in that document is, “Doct Shawe”. Shakespeare mentions Doctor Shaw in *Richard III* (3.5.97). Shaw is also mentioned in the Encomium.

Neville was conducting historical research whilst imprisoned in the Tower: indeed his notebook, Worsley MSS 40, dated 1602, is in the Lincoln Archives. This contains Neville’s annotations about laws, coronation ceremonial, noble families’ pedigrees

\(^4\) perhaps symptoms of hydrocephalus.
and the history of Parliament. In the latter he refers to Grafton, who was one of Shakespeare’s sources for *Henry VI* part 2. He lists statutes dating from Edward I, through many reigns including Richard II, Henry IV and V. He briefly refers to Richard III when he was “d. Gloaster in nominee Rex”. He cites King John and “magna cart”. On another page he notes a man surnamed “de fawconbridge”. In Shakespeare’s *King John* the bastard Faulconbridge is a central figure. Fauconberg was a Neville family name since William Neville, Earl of Kent, married Joan de Fauconberg in 1429. Thomas, the Bastard of Fauconberg, was an illegitimate son of William Neville. Shakespeare changes Fauconberg to Faulconbridge in *King John*, though the spelling used in the *Troublesome Raigne of John* is ‘Fawconbridge’. In *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (the first quarto of *Henry VI* part 3, published anonymously in 1595) the spelling is identical to that in the Tower notebook: “Sterne Fawconbridge commands the narrow seas”. This is a clear reference to the Thomas Fauconberg, who received the freedom of the City of London in 1454 for his part in removing pirates from the North Sea and the English Channel. He was made Vice-Admiral of the Fleet by his cousin Richard, Earl of Warwick (another Neville) of whom he was a zealous supporter. He had also played an active part in placing Edward IV (whose mother was Cecily Neville) on the throne in 1461 and stayed with Warwick when the ‘Kingmaker’ changed allegiance. In the ensuing debacle he was arrested and beheaded in 1471 (Casson, 2009, 21-2; 2010, 127-8).

We may therefore reasonably infer that Neville and Wriothesley discussed history during their sojourn in the Tower. This period in the Tower would have been full of ominous meaning for Neville; many of his ancestors had been imprisoned there and his grandfather Edward was buried in the chapel.

Neville himself mentioned Richard III in a speech he made to the House of Lords in 1607. He had been chosen to represent the Commons in discussions about the Union of England and Scotland. He warned the Lords that if the Scots continued their special relationship with the French this could endanger the union: “how dangerous this may be we may guess by the example of Richard III”, he said (Duncan, 1974, 209).

The Neville and Cornwallis families eventually intermarried. Richard Neville, third Baron Braybrooke (1783–1858), published anonymously in 1842 *The Private Correspondence of Jane, Lady Cornwallis, 1613–1644*. In 1608 Jane (Bacon, née Meautys) had married Sir William Cornwallis (the elder, William Cornwallis’s uncle, who died in 1611). Richard Cornwallis Neville was the 4th Baron Braybrooke, 1820-1861. Henry Neville’s portrait still hangs in the Braybrookes’ Audley End House.

**Publication of Southampton’s version of the Encomium**

The *Encomium* was eventually printed in a collection of *Essays of Certain Paradoxes* in 1616 by Thomas Thorpe, who had published Shakespeare’s Sonnets in 1609. The date of publication of the *Encomium*, 1616, is one year after Neville died, two years after Cornwallis had died. It must have been popular as it was re-printed in 1617.

The printed version is based on The Earl of Southampton’s copy: it includes virtually all the additions he made to the text, including those of “witty Play-makers” and “but that we must still make him more cruelly infamous in Pamphlets and Playes”. It does not have any dedication. It was also anonymous. “The author hateth nothing more than coming in publick”’ wrote Henry Olney in his dedication to Cornwallis’s Essays. Cornwallis himself wrote in a letter to Sir John Hobart, who had commended the
Paradoxes, that “in keeping them secret, he had shown some little discretion” (Whitt, 1932, 161). He was not the only one who preferred to keep his writing secret, though such secrecy resulted in the authorship being attributed to another man.

**Conclusion**

There is documentary evidence associating Henry Neville with the Earl of Southampton over 30 years. We can see that the following sequence of documents and events tie Shakespeare, Neville, Southampton and Richard III together:

1583-5: Neville met Henry Wriothesley, the third Earl of Southampton when the latter was a boy and a ward of Burghley.
1584-6: Neville copied out *Leicester’s Commonwealth* which includes references to Richard III and members of the Neville and Wriothesley families (Worsley MSS 47 in the Lincoln Archives: Casson, 2010).
1590-91: *Henry VI* parts 2 and 3 were written and performed. The plays include Richard as a scheming prince, and members of the Neville family.
1592-4: The play *Richard III* was written by Shakespeare. Members of the Neville family appear on stage in the play.
1592 onwards: Shakespeare’s early sonnets were written to encourage Southampton to marry and have children.
1593: *Venus and Adonis* was dedicated to Southampton by Shakespeare.
1594: *The Rape of Lucrece* was dedicated to Southampton by Shakespeare.
1594: Southampton may have attended *The Comedy of Errors* at Gary’s Inn and did attend another entertainment at the Inn that season (see Appendix 4).
1596-7: The Northumberland Manuscript, owned by Neville, lists “Rychard the third”, names William Shakespeare and quotes from *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.
1596-1600: William Cornwallis wrote his *Encomium on Richard III*.
1597: *Richard III* was published anonymously.
1598: *Richard III* was published as by “William Shake-speare”.
1599: Southampton’s wife wrote to him about ‘Falstaff’s’ handicapped baby son and Neville’s newborn son died soon afterwards.
1601: Neville met Southampton during the build up to the Essex rebellion.
1601-1603: Neville and Southampton were both imprisoned in the Tower of London.
1603: Southampton dedicated his copy of *The Encomium on Richard III* to Sir Henry Neville.
1604: Neville and Southampton were arrested and spent a night in prison due to unfounded rumours of a plot (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 163).
1605: Southampton staged *Love’s Labour’s Lost* for Queen Anne. James I and Southampton were in Oxford when Henry Neville was awarded an M.A..
1606: The First London Virginia Company was founded: Neville and Southampton were investors and members of the council.
1607: Neville mentioned Richard III in a speech he made to the House of Lords.
1609: The dedication to the ‘Shake-speare’ Sonnets encodes the names of Henry Wriothesley (Southampton) and Henry Neville. James I granted the charter to the second Virginia Company.
1611: Southampton and Neville, as members of the Virginia Company, had access to the Strachey letter that is a recognised source for Shakespeare’s *Tempest*.
1612-13: Southampton supported Neville’s candidacy to be Secretary of State. Southampton was identified as Neville’s “great patron” by Chamberlain in 1613.
1613: Frederick, the Elector Palatine and his new wife, Princess Elizabeth, left England in April, arriving in Heidelberg in June. On 6th July Turnbull wrote that Neville was in Brussels (Winwood, 1725, Vol 3, 467). Southampton was also in the Netherlands that summer, returning in August (Stopes, 1922, 362; Casson, 2009, 219). They may both have accompanied the royal party.

Thus a pattern of interweaving themes appears, of Southampton, Neville Shakespeare and Richard III. There is no evidence whatsoever linking William from Stratford with the Earl of Southampton.

Why did Southampton chose to dedicate this document to Henry Neville? They were both in the Tower of London which was the scene of Richard III’s crimes, so vividly portrayed in Shakespeare’s play. Perhaps they discussed the historical events in which members of their families had taken part. It is possible that Southampton was attempting, albeit playfully, to justify himself in Neville’s eyes: if a bad king was not so bad then maybe Southampton himself was not so bad. He himself had betrayed Neville. Is Neville referring to Southampton’s betrayal in sonnet 34?

For no man well of such a salve can speak
That heals the wound and cures not the disgrace:
Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss:
The offender’s sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offence’s cross.
Ah! but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,
And they are rich and ransom all ill deeds.

The very next sonnet follows on with:

No more be grieved at that which thou hast done:
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.

The choice of the rose imagery points to Wriothesley, which was spelt ‘Wrosely’ in the baptismal register for his son in 1607 (Stopes, 1922, 313). Green (1993) provided compelling evidence to support the view that the rose imagery in the sonnets refers to Wriothesley. The very first sonnet, encouraging the young Southampton to breed refers to him as “beauty’s rose”. The above sonnets of betrayal make sense when we are able to identify Shakespeare with Neville in the Tower, with Southampton. The poems show Neville working through his friend’s betrayal and triumphing over the circumstances: however wounded, the friendship survived and we can see Southampton’s work on Richard III as a peace offering.

Neville’s identity as Shakespeare also throws light on the political position of the play Richard III. Neville evidently was a strong supporter of the Tudor dynasty and so blackening the last Plantagenet King, despite his Neville connections, would have strengthened his own position, but the picture is complex and merits further study.
Appendix 1: The dedication to Henry Neville in MS Additional 29307

To the honourable Sir Henry Neuill knighte.  
I am bold to adventure to your honours viewe this small porcion of my privat labours, as an earnest penye of my loue, beinge a mere Paradoxe in prayse of a mostt blame worthie, and Condemned prince kinge Richard ye third; who albeit I shold guilde with farr better termes of eloquence then I have don, and sweate myself to death in pursuit of his Commendacions, yet his disgrace beinge soe publicke, and the worlde soe opinionate of his misdoings as I shold not be able soe farr to justifie him, as they to condemne him yett that they may see what may be saide and shewe how farr they haue mispraysed his virtues, this followinge Treatise shall make manyfest. Your Honoř may pervse and censure yt at your best leisure, and though yt be not trickt vp with elegance of phrase yet may it satisfie a right curious judgemente, yf the reasons be Considered as they oughte: But howsoever yf you please to accepte it I shall think my Labours well bestowed; who bothe in this and what elles I may devote myself to Your Honoř, and rest

Your Honoř most affectionat Servante,  
Hen: W:
Appendix 2: The Dedication Code Grids and Henry Nevil

James found that the name “Henry Nevil” could be found in the original 12 x 12 grid of the Sonnets Dedication by transforming it through two anagrams of the second line:

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Rearrange the second line as TEST THE FORGE and the name Henry Nevil appears. Neville had an Iron Forge at Mayfield.

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The second anagram: rearrange the second line of the grid to read GET THE FOREST and the name Henry Nevil appears again. Neville was the Royal Forester of Windsor.

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In 2008 James published the first of these anagrams in her book *Henry Neville and The Shakespeare Code* and revealed the second at the Shakespeare-Neville Symposium in London the same year. Whereas other anagrams used by authorship investigators are unconvincing, these two not only refer to aspects of Neville’s career as a forge master and forester, but transform the grid to reveal his name.

**Appendix 3: Hamlet, Neville and the Earl of Essex.**

*Hamlet* has been dated 1599 - 1601 and seems to refer to the Earl of Essex. Just as Claudius murders Hamlet’s father and marries his mother, the Earl of Leicester was believed to have murdered Robert Devereux’s father, who, it was believed, died due to poisoned wine. Leicester married Devereux’s mother, Lettice, after his father’s death. *Leicester’s Commonwealth* (1584) accused the Earl of Leicester of being a murderer who used poison. “Essex sometimes blamed his own irrational outbursts on his accidental sipping of the wrong goblet” (James, 2008, 345). Neville had his own hand written copy of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* (Casson, 2010). Like Hamlet, both Essex and Neville had been sent abroad but returned to face the monarch’s wrath. Like Hamlet, Neville had prevaricated during the build up to the Essex rebellion, not wanting to be involved but being inexorably drawn into the debacle.

In a letter dated 24/4/1600 Neville used the word ‘inhibition’ which Shakespeare only used once, in *Hamlet*. Just three days later on 27/4/1600 Neville wrote another letter in which he used the word ‘innovation’. Speaking of the players, Rosencrantz says, “I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.” (2.2.330)

“The word innovation must of course be understood in its then common sense of insurrection… and an allusion to ‘the late’ one in 1601 would inevitably bring to mind the Essex rebellion in February of that year” (Jenkins, 1995, 3, 255).

The day before the Essex rebellion of February 8th 1601, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men were paid to perform *Richard II* in what was clearly a political act aimed at rousing the London public to support the rebels. William Shakspere from Stratford was not arrested or questioned for this treasonous act. Neville however had met Southampton just five days earlier and at this meeting he had been told that Essex had hinted Neville would be made Secretary of State if they were successful. Instead he was soon to be in prison. Hamlet refers to Denmark as a prison.

In the same letter that Neville used the word ‘inhibition’ he also reported the recruitment of ‘Suissers’ as mercenaries. The only time Shakespeare uses this word is when Claudius calls for his Switzers (4.5.96). In this letter Neville also used the word ‘postscript’ which Shakespeare only used twice: in *Hamlet* and *Titus Andronicus*. Furthermore, Neville used the words ‘ministers’, ‘study’, ‘conversation’, ‘conference’, ‘employment’, ‘speedier’, ‘devise’, ‘choler’, ‘conscience’, ‘dangerous’, ‘globe’ and ‘petty’ which occur in *Hamlet*. Just three days later on 27/4/1600 Neville wrote another letter in which he used the following words that occur in the play: ‘pastime’, ‘audience’, ‘innovation’, ‘distinguish’, ‘satisfaction’, ‘commission’, ‘marble’, ‘chamber’, ‘prize’, ‘troubles’, ‘remedy’, ‘pangs’, ‘passionate’, ‘partial’. Two weeks later, on 9/5/1600, Neville again referred to ‘Suissers’: the French King had paid one and a half million to the ‘Suissers’ whilst failing to pay any of his debt to Elizabeth I: he wrote, “she might as well look to be regarded in her so just demaunds as the Suissers.” (Winwood, 1725, Vol 1, 181). Neville was writing from Paris and in this

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5 For more evidence concerning the use of the word ‘innovation’ see appendix 5.

“The Ambassador of Wirttenberg told me lately, that he had received Advertisement from a Friend of his in Hambourg, that the King of Denmark makes very great Preparation by Sea” (Winwood, 1725, Vol 1, 183).

It is possible that Neville was referring here to Württemburg, which could be spelt Wirtemberg or Wirtenberg. Wittenberg is the University that Hamlet attended. The word ‘preparation’ is also used by an Ambassador in Hamlet, about war (Fortinbras’s intended invasion of Poland, 2.2.63). In the first scene Horatio and Marcellus discuss Denmark’s ‘preparations’ for a war, including ships and cannons, against Norway (1.1.108). In 1574 and 1578 Sir Thomas Gresham received licences to export cannons to Denmark. One of his ships, containing cannons, sank in the Thames and was rediscovered in 2003 (James, 2008, 213). Neville inherited Gresham’s iron foundry and exported cannons during the 1590s.

Five days after this last letter, on 14/5/1600, Neville used another word that occurs uniquely in Hamlet, ‘questionable’. Neville also used ‘indifferently’, ‘jealousy’, ‘controversy’, ‘consequence’ and ‘infinite’, which occur in the play. In this letter Neville stated that the French King’s “friendship is very hollow”. In Hamlet the Player King says:

For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
And who in want a hollow friend doth try,
Directly seasons him his enemy. (3.2.203)

Hamlet himself also uses the word ‘friendship’ (2.2.270). According to LION not other writer uses the word ‘hollow’ to refer to ‘friend’ or ‘friendship’ during the period 1599 - 1601.

Taking ten of these words used by Neville in his April-May 1600 letters and by Shakespeare in Hamlet, I now explore their use by other writers published between 1599 - 1601, according to LION:

‘Inhibition’ was used by no other writer at this time.
‘Denmark’ was used by no other writer at this time.
‘Ordnance’ was used by no other writer at this time.
‘Jealousy’ was used by no other writer at this time.
‘Wittenberg/Wirttenberg’ was used by no other writer at this time.
‘Innovation’ was used by Andrew Willet in A Christian Letter, 1599.
‘Switzers/Suissers’ was used by Edward Fairfax in Godfrey of Bulloigne, 1600.
‘Questionable’ was used by Andrew Willet in A Christian Letter, 1599 and by Antony Munday in poems from England’s Helicon, 1600.
‘Controversy’ was used by John Hoskins in Directions for Speech and Style, 1599.
‘Afternoon’ was only used by Shakespeare in Romeo and Juliet, 1599.
In other words only Shakespeare and Neville used this combination of words at this time (Casson 2010b). These letters and his personal circumstances suggest that Neville was writing and re-writing *Hamlet* between 1600-1601, just as scholars have argued from the available evidence.

**Appendix 4:**

*Damon and Pythias and The Comedy of Errors, Southampton and Neville*

Scholars have already noted a link between *Damon and Pythias* and some of Shakespeare’s plays. The older play is about Friendship and several of the bard’s plays explore male friendship, from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* at the start of his career to *The Two Noble Kinsmen* at the end. *The Comedy of Errors* has further specific links with *Damon and Pythias*: in both plays a man is under treat of execution but is finally reprieved; men arrive by sea and explore an unknown city; two men are inextricably linked and exchange places; Syracuse is a location; a servant is torn between two masters; both plays are tragi-comedies. *The Comedy of Errors* ends with the words:

We came into the world like brother and brother  
And now let’s go hand in hand, not one before another.

In *Damon and Pythias*, written 30 years before, we find:

So we two linckt in frindshippe brother and brother,  
Full well in the Courte may helpe one another.  (1.1.71)

and

Fear not that Jacke, for like brother and brother  
They are knit in true Friendship the one with the other.  (1.1.192)

Whilst rhyming ‘brother’ and ‘other’ might be regarded as commonplace the repetition of “brother and brother” and the use of the word ‘one’ suggests Shakespeare was recalling these lines. Edwards’ play *Damon and Pythias* was performed at Merton College, Oxford, in 1568 (White, 1980, 7). Neville went to Merton in 1574. It is therefore possible Neville came across the text of the play there. As the play was being quoted in Oxford eighty years later this is not fanciful (Dorsch, 2004, 9).

*The Comedy of Errors* was first performed at Gray’s Inn during the Christmas celebrations of 1594. “It is likely that the Inn was entertaining some important people that year, for it had just made a number of special admissions on the order of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, a senior member of the Inn and also Secretary of State. These included Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton” (Dorsch, 2004, 31). Southampton had already been a student at Gray’s Inn. The very same year Shakespeare had dedicated *The Rape of Lucrece* to Southampton. There is a specific record that Southampton was present at another event in this season of entertainment at Gray’s Inn: “a debate … held on 3 January in front of some of the leading members of the Queen’s court, including the Earls of Southampton and Essex and William Cecil” (Dorsch, 2004, 33). A month later, on February 3rd 1594, six councillors made
speeches which are thought to have been written by Francis Bacon. These are referred to on the cover of the Northumberland Manuscript which lists works, including “Orations at Graies Inne revells” and indeed the manuscript contains a number of speeches written by Bacon. The Northumberland Manuscript was owned by Neville, whose name is at the top. Lower down on this same cover someone is practising William Shakespeare’s signature. This document has been dated to 1596, 16 years before the first authenticated signature of William from Stratford which was found on the 1612 legal case of Belott vs Mountjoy deposition.

Furthermore the word ‘Honorificable did undine’ is scribbled on the Northumberland manuscript. ‘Honorificabilidinitatibus’ is found in Love’s Labour’s Lost which is believed to have been written 1595 – 6 and was first performed during Christmas 1597. It appeared in print in 1598 as by “W. Shakespere”. The writer of the Northumberland manuscript must therefore have had access to a manuscript of Love’s Labour’s Lost before it was ever performed. In this play there is an echo of the 1594 season at Gray’s Inn. During these ludic celebrations 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 the 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). There are further links between Southampton and Love’s Labour’s Lost outlined by Woudhuysen who detected evidence of the rivalry between the Essex/Southampton grouping at court and Sir Walter Raleigh’s School of Night. He also noted that Gervase Markham published a pamphlet in 1598 referring to a joke in Love’s Labour’s Lost. “Markham was closely involved with the Earl of Southampton and the tract was published by William White, who was also responsible for the first quarto of the play” (Woudhuysen, 2001, 70, 78). Both The Comedy of Errors and Love’s Labour’s Lost contain references to Henry of Navarre’s war in France. Southampton had fought in that war. Neville was later to meet Henry as King when he was ambassador in 1599 but they may well have met when he was Henri of Navarre during his continental travels of 1578-82. As we have seen, Southampton arranged a performance of Love’s Labour’s Lost in 1605. One main character in Love’s Labour’s Lost is Berowne whom scholars believe is based on the Duc de Biron at the French Court of Henry IV. Both Neville and Southampton met Biron more than once: Southampton borrowed money from him in 1598 (Stopes, 1922, 128). 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 had 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).

Here again we can see links between Southampton, Neville and the bard: no such links exist between Southampton and William from Stratford.
Appendix 5: ‘Innovation’, Sir Thomas More, Shakespeare and Neville

Shakespeare uses the word ‘innovation’, meaning civil disorder, three times: in Henry IV part 1, Hamlet and Othello. In the earliest of these, dated about 1597, Henry IV part 1 the King says:

the garment of rebellion
With some fine colour that may please the eye
Of fickle changelings and poor discontents,
Which gape and rub the elbow at the news
Of hurlyburly innovation: (5.1.HIV)

However, in Sir Thomas More, we find in the Hand D section, believed to be by Shakespeare and dated 1603-4 (Jowett, 2011):

you shall p(er)ceau howe horrible a shape
your innovation beres, first tis a sinn
which oft thappostle did forwarne vs of vrging obed ienc to aucthory[ty]
and twere no error yf I told you all you wer in arm es gainst g[od]

and a few lines later:

whose discipline is ryot; why eu en yor hurly in in to yor obedienec.

This section of the play is highly significant because it is the only extant manuscript believed to be by Shakespeare himself. The handwriting therefore can be compared with that of Henry Neville and I have previously done this in relation to the latter’s manuscript of Leicester’s Commonwealth which I dated to 1584-6 (see Casson, 2010, 171 - 174). I have subsequently compared Hand D to two of Neville’s letters dated 1602 and c1604. Again there are many similarities of vocabulary and handwriting. I am continuing this research and will announce the results when my work is completed.

Appendix 6: Julio Romano, Southampton and the Nevilles

In The Winter’s Tale a sculptor is named as Giulio Romano (5.2.95). Southampton was born at Cowdray House and spent much of his youth there. It was the manor of the Anthony Browne, 1st Viscount Montagu whose wife gave birth to twins: Mary and Anthony Browne. Mary was Southampton’s mother. A 1717 catalogue of works of art at the house listed two copies of paintings by Julio Romano, both entitled “Marriage of Cupid and Psyche” (Green, 1993, 179). Also listed were paintings of Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury (who appears on stage in Henry VI part 1) and numerous other Nevilles. Sadly these paintings were destroyed in a fire in 1793. Here again we find evidence linking Southampton, Shakespeare and members of the Neville family.

Appendix 7: Henry Neville’s Authorship, a summary

Brenda James first identified Henry Neville as the author of the works of Shakespeare in 2005. For the sake of anyone who has not read her books I will summarise her discovery but I would encourage any reader to refer to her work for the fuller picture.
The Authorship Question
Doubts about whether William Shakespeare from Stratford wrote the works attributed to him have been around since his own lifetime. These doubts can be summarised as follows:

1) The works of Shakespeare contain evidence of wide reading, travel, ability in foreign languages. Shakespeare never travelled outside England and left no books in his will.
2) Despite being our greatest writer his daughters were illiterate at a time when women were educated. His parents were illiterate. None of his ancestors or descendants were writers or involved in the theatre.
3) No letters written by this great writer have ever been found. Only one letter written to him has been discovered, it was never sent but found in the posthumous papers of the person who wrote it. The letter was a request for a loan (Michell, 2000, 48).
4) Shakespeare shows intimate knowledge of the English and French royal courts, yet no courtier ever wrote about meeting him.
5) When he died nothing whatsoever happened. When Francis Beaumont died he was buried in Westminster Abbey and Ben Jonson had a state funeral. Shakespeare’s first monument in Stratford (recorded in engravings of 1653 and 1709) shows a very different man with his hands on a sack of grain (see Michell, 2000, 89, 91).

Diana Price (2000), who has written the most scholarly book on the available evidence, concluded the man from Stratford could not have been the writer. She was unable to suggest who was. The Authorship Question fell into disrepute because the candidates suggested (Bacon, Oxford and others), whilst intriguing, were just not credible.

Henry Neville
When Brenda James discovered Henry Neville she was not looking for him: indeed, unlike all the other candidates, Neville was not discovered because a researcher had identified a plausible candidate and then sought evidence to fit. James was examining the dedication to the 1609 edition of the Sonnets. Having hypothesised that it was in code she set out, through a logical process, to decode it and thus discovered the unexpected name Henry Neville. James had never heard of him but as she researched his life she found more and more evidence pointing to him having been the hidden poet behind the front man/pseudonym ‘William Shakespeare’. Why did he want to keep his identity secret? James discovered an interlocking series of reasons that made this secrecy essential.

1) It was not socially acceptable for a man of his position to be identified as a playwright.
2) The plays he was writing were political and at the time such writing could be punished by imprisonment and torture.
3) Neville’s father and father-in-law were involved in secret diplomatic government business. Indeed Neville himself became ambassador to France in 1599.
4) Crucially Neville was illegitimate and had this been discovered he could have lost one of the largest fortunes of the day: the Gresham inheritance. This last
point explains the references to bastards in the plays, one of whom (in King John) is called Faulconbridge: a Neville family name.

Neville’s Life and Shakespeare’s works
As James researched Neville’s life she found it fitted what we might expect to find in the biography of the bard, like a glove. I will illustrate this with ten points:

1) Italy: Neville visited Italy in 1581, including Padua and Venice, gaining special knowledge of that country which we find in Shakespeare’s plays.
2) France: Neville was Ambassador to France 1599-1600, at a time when Shakespeare wrote Henry V, which includes scenes in France.
3) Holinshed: Neville’s father-in-law, Henry Killigrew, was one of the editors of the 1587 edition of Holinshed, used as a major source by Shakespeare.
4) Nevilles in the history plays: members of the family are disguised by being identified only by their titles (the Earls of Salisbury, Warwick, Westmoreland etc.), though the name ‘Nevil’ is mentioned 7 times in Henry VI part 2.
5) Imprisonment: Neville was caught up in the Essex Rebellion and imprisoned in the Tower of London 1601-3. From this time a tragic darkness enters Shakespeare’s plays.
6) Henry Wriothesley: Neville had known Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, since he was a boy and they were imprisoned together in the Tower. They were close friends. Southampton dedicated a document about Richard III to Neville (British Library, Additional MS 29307). Shakespeare dedicated poems to him. In 1613 John Chamberlain wrote that Wriothesley was Neville’s “great patron” (McClure, 1939, Vol 1, 401).
7) James I was in Oxford when Neville was awarded his MA in 1605. On that occasion Matthew Gwynne presented his Tres Sibyllae, a Latin poem which referred to the prophecy that Banquo’s descendants would inherit an endless empire (a possible source for Macbeth, 1606). Neville had visited Glamis castle in 1583. James I consulted Neville about his own writing.
8) The Strachey Letter was a source for The Tempest. A private manuscript, it was circulated within the Virginia Company, of which Neville was a member.
9) John Fletcher dedicated a play (A King and No King) to Neville before he co-wrote the last plays with Shakespeare.
10) Ben Jonson wrote a poem addressed to Neville and The Staple of News, a play about the First Folio, which hints that Neville was the author (James, 2008, 268). At the time the First Folio was printed Jonson was living at Gresham College, which was founded by Neville’s great uncle (James, 2005, 210).

THE AUTHORSHIP TEST

Many candidates have been suggested for the authorship of Shakespeare’s plays. I suggest that these be tested against the following criteria:

1) The person’s life span must be contemporary with that of William Shakespeare and the works written under that name. The facts of this person’s life and career must fit the generally accepted order and chronology of the plays and have considerable explanatory power to illuminate the motivation and meaning of the plays.
2) There must be evidence of a friendship between this person and Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton.
3) There must be evidence in a manuscript of a similarity between the person’s handwriting and the Hand D section of SIR THOMAS MORE.

4) There must be some writing, such as letters or other documents, that show evidence of shared vocabulary between the writer and Shakespeare.

5) There must be evidence the person could read/write French, Spanish, Italian, Latin and Greek (to enable him to read known Shakespeare sources that were not translated into English).

6) The real surname of this candidate and members of their ancestral family should appear in the plays.

The only candidate who passes all these tests is Henry Neville.

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Without Brenda James’s ground breaking discoveries this paper would not have been written: she pointed to the Encomium in a footnote in her first book (James & Rubinstein, 2005, 320).

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