The Watermarks on the Northumberland Manuscript and Hand D: Research Findings and Reflections on the Shakespeare Authorship Question

John Casson

The Northumberland Manuscript (NHMS) is a faded, charred, fragile collection of various sixteenth-century papers, held at Alnwick Castle. On the front cover someone has repeatedly written the name ‘William Shakespeare’. The NHMS has been dated to 1596–7. The plays *Rychard II* and *Rychard III* are listed just below the name ‘William Shakespeare’. The fact that they are listed with other works that are still contained in the NHMS suggests that these were manuscripts of the plays. Before 1598 no play had been identified as by Shakespeare on its title page. *Richard II* and *Richard III* were first printed in 1597 without any author being named. The second quartos of both plays were published as written by ‘William Shake-speare’ in 1598. This means that the NHMS was created during the anonymous period, before Shakespeare was identified as the playwright. Henry Neville (1562-1615) was identified as the owner of the NHMS by Burgoyne.1 The name ‘Nevill’ is repeated, with the family motto, ‘Ne vile velis’, at the top left of the front page. Neville (or his scribe) was therefore the first person to record that William Shakespeare had written these plays (or indeed any play).2

The NHMS has not previously been examined for its watermarks. I was able to see these using a light sheet provided by the archivist, Christopher Hunwick, on 14 July 2017. This may be the first time they had been viewed since the paper was made. The watermarks revealed were a pot motif surmounted by a crown-like decoration with trefoil (three-petalled) flowers on the handle and on top.

![Fig. 1. NHMS, f. 68 (Burgoyne f. 45) and f. 72 (Burgoyne f. 53/54): Alnwick Castle.](image_url)

---


2 The play *Locrine* was published in 1595 as ‘Newly set foorth, overseene and corrected, By W.S.’ but it is not certain who this was nor whether the play is wholly or partly by Shakespeare: J. Casson, *Enter Pursued by a Bear, The Unknown Plays of Shakespeare-Neville* (Thatcham, Berkshire, 2010).

3 The folio numberings on the actual manuscript are different from those in Burgoyne’s 1904 facsimile edition.
The Watermarks on the Northumberland Manuscript and Hand D: Research Findings and Reflections on the Shakespeare Authorship Question

While not exactly identical these two images are representative of the watermarks on the NHMS which are all one-handled pots with ‘NB’ across the pot and trefoil flowers above the crown and on the handle. This pot watermark is on folios 48, 49, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 67, 68, 72, 75, 81, 82, 83, 86, 87, 90. The fact that all the pages have a similar one-handed pot watermark suggests the NHMS was one person’s collection made during a limited period and not a random collection of papers from different times and places: the manuscript therefore can be said to have some coherence. We can see that the folder illuminates Neville’s interests in court politics, legal matters, philosophy, religion, dramatic ritual, theatre and poetry. These interests are abundantly represented in the Neville library which is preserved at Audley End House.

The latest entries into the NHMS have been dated to 1596-7. The dramatic speeches on folio 72 are dated: ‘For the Earle of Sussex at ye tilt an: 96’. The NHMS also contains a copy of a letter to Elizabeth I about her possible marriage to the Duke of Anjou, by Sir Philip Sidney, originally written circa 1580. The Nevilles and Sidneys were close: indeed Philip’s father regarded Henry’s father as a very dear friend.

Henry travelled through Europe with Philip’s younger brother, Robert, and they remained friends and political allies throughout their lives. Neville did not return from his European tour until 1582 so the NHMS must be later than that. There is a manuscript copy of Leicester’s Commonwealth (so named on the title page) in the NHMS folder. The printed version was published in 1584 but not called by that title until 1586 so the paper most probably dates from between 1586 and 1596. Other documents in the folder have been dated to 1589, 1590, 1592 and 1595. In the Thomas L. Gravell online catalogue of watermarks, Gravell POT.148.1 has ‘NB’ across the pot and a trefoil on top and on the handle, and is dated 1587.

This watermarked paper is in a collection of documents belonging to the Bagot family of Staffordshire and is in the Folger Shakespeare Library. This includes letters of Richard Bagot (1530-1597) who was sheriff, deputy lieutenant and JP.

Fig. 2. Gravell No. FOL 0618: POT.148.1: Folger Shakespeare Library: L.a.70, 1587.

Like Bagot, Henry Neville held local offices: he was a JP from 1583, he became sheriff after his father’s death in 1593 and deputy lieutenant for Berkshire in 1596. It is evident that this was good quality paper used by privileged people.

4. J. Casson and W. D. Rubinstein, Sir Henry Neville was Shakespeare: The Evidence (Stroud, 2016).
5. In a letter to his son Robert, dated 1578, Sir Henry Sidney wrote, ‘There can be no greater love than of long time hath been and yet is, between Sir Henry Neville and me; and so will continue to our lives end’ (O. L. Duncan, ‘The Political Career of Sir Henry Neville’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ohio State University, 1974), p. 16).
7. Sir William Bagot (died 1407) appears in Shakespeare’s Richard II.
The Watermarks on the Northumberland Manuscript and Hand D: Research Findings and Reflections on the Shakespeare Authorship Question

Discovered in 1867, the NHMS is an important document in the debate about the Shakespeare authorship. Initially it aroused great interest and speculation that it supported the authorship claim of Francis Bacon whose name appears on the cover and some of whose essays are listed and contained in the collection. As the Bacon hypothesis declined so did interest in the NHMS. Recently Henry Neville has been identified as a Shakespeare authorship candidate and there is a growing mass of evidence to support this attribution.\(^8\)

Seeing these watermarks I wondered if there was any significant information to be gleaned from them. Did any Shakespeare authorship candidate use such paper? I decided to test a null hypothesis, namely that watermarks with features similar to the NHMS will not appear on paper attributed to any of the proposed Shakespeare authorship candidates.\(^9\) This null hypothesis is in harmony with the established orthodox, Stratfordian, view that the NHMS is only the result of random jottings of a scribe testing his ‘idle pen’ (i.e. a quill) and has no greater significance than as evidence that Shakespeare was relatively well known in the late 1590s.\(^10\) This comparative research inevitably led to an examination of the watermarks on the only extant manuscript which is regarded by established scholarship as probably being by Shakespeare. This unique manuscript is the Hand D section of *Sir Thomas More* (British Library, Harley MS. 7368). The play is by several different writers and was created over a period of about four years, with the earliest version dated circa 1600, the latest additional revisions being from 1603-4.\(^12\) The earlier paper is of inferior quality and has watermarks of a glove or hand (Jowett, p. 363). The later additions are on better quality paper and a pot watermark is to be found on folios 6, 9, 12 and 16. Folio 6 is an addition by Henry Chettle (Jowett, pp. 289-94). This watermark is a pot surmounted by trefoil and has a trefoil on the handle.

---

\(^8\) See Casson and Rubinstein.

\(^9\) In inferential statistics, the term ‘null hypothesis’ is a general statement or default position that there is no relationship between two measured phenomena, or no association among groups. Rejecting or disproving the null hypothesis—and thus concluding that there are grounds for believing that there is a relationship between two phenomena (e.g. that a potential treatment has a measurable effect)—is a central task in the modern practice of science; the field of statistics gives precise criteria for rejecting a null hypothesis. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Null_hypothesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Null_hypothesis)) [accessed 20/10/17].


\(^12\) Dr Andrea Clarke, Curator of Early Modern Historical Manuscripts at the British Library: private communication, e-mails 5/8/11, 5/10/11 and 9/10/17.
The Watermarks on the Northumberland Manuscript and Hand D: Research Findings and Reflections on the Shakespeare Authorship Question

The lettering on the pot appears to be ‘IH’ or ‘CH’. There is a sole example of this design in the Gravell catalogue: No. FOL 1148: POT. 334.1. This has ‘IH’ or ‘CH’ across the pot, a trefoil on top but no trefoil on the handle and this paper was used in 1604. With a trefoil on the handle and top, the watermark on folio 6 is similar to those on the NHMS but was used approximately sixteen years later.

The pot watermark on folio 12 is very faint and obscured by the ink of the play text but seems to be topped by a quatrefoil (a four-petalled flower). Folio 12 is part of Addition IV, which was written by Chettle and Dekker. It is impossible to read what any lettering might be on this pot but the play text of ‘doggs in paris garden’ near the top of this watermark shows it is under Falconer’s speech (Jowett, p. 222).

The pot watermark on folio 16 has a quatrefoil at the top and the letters ‘PI’ across it. Folio 16 is an addition by Thomas Heywood (Jowett, pp. 262-6). Heywood, Chettle and Dekker are not Shakespeare authorship candidates.

The ‘watermark on fol. 9 is unique for having a crescented orb at the top’ (Jowett, p. 363, n. 5). This has a trefoil below the crescent and a trefoil on the handle of the pot. The lettering on the pot appears to be ‘PO’. Folio 9 is by Hand D and is believed to be by Shakespeare.

There are several examples of this watermark topped by a crescent with ‘PO’ in the Gravell catalogue: No. FOL 0539: POT.130.1 and No. FOL 0944: POT.130.2, both dated 1600:
The Watermarks on the Northumberland Manuscript and Hand D: Research Findings and Reflections on the Shakespeare Authorship Question

In an undated draft letter\(^{13}\) circa 1603-4 Henry Neville used paper with a pot watermark which has a crescent on top, above a trefoil, with a trefoil on the handle, and the letters ‘NB’ across the pot (and possibly ‘H’ below). The letters ‘NB’ are on the NHMS pot watermarks.

Fig. 5. Gravell No. FOL 0539: POT.130.1: Folger Shakespeare Library: X.d.220 (2), Receipts from Exchequer officials to Henry Sheffield (manuscript), 1597-1601.

Fig. 6. Neville’s 1603-4 letter, Berkshire Record Office, D/EN F6/2/3.

Whilst not exactly identical, these three pot watermarks with a crescent on top are similar, being placed in the same positions in relation to the chain lines, with the pot handle just over the left hand line. That Neville used a similar type of paper may simply be coincidence: namely that the paper was available. Hand D has now been dated to 1603-4, the same period as Neville’s

\(^{13}\) The letter must have been written after Neville’s release from the Tower in April 1603. It seems to be addressed to Robert Cecil and records a positive meeting between them. This is then most likely to date from sometime after his release and probably occurred in 1603.
letter. I have been able to show that Neville’s handwriting has many similarities to Hand D, indeed far more than the suggested similarities to be found in the six signatures attributed to William Shakspere \(^{14}\) from Stratford-upon-Avon. \(^{15}\) The Hand D scene includes Thomas More’s advice that the rebels seek a pardon. Neville, imprisoned for his part in the Essex rebellion, had been seeking a pardon.

During this search I discovered that Robert Cecil, Secretary of State, used paper with the pot watermark with a crescent and the letters ‘IB’ or ‘LB’ across the pot, with trefoils on top and on the handle. The letter is dated 1 December 1603. (Cecil’s signature is visible as ‘Ro: Cecil’ at the bottom of this image, reversed because the photograph was taken from the other side of the paper to capture the watermark the right way round.)

![Image](image_url)

*Fig. 7. Letter from Robert Cecil: BL, Cotton MS. Caligula E. X, f. 161.*

Since Neville’s draft letter is presumed to be addressed to Cecil and dated circa 1603, these two documents suggest this paper was available to such privileged people. This is confirmed by the occurrence of a pot watermark with a crescent on a letter of 1604 from Roger Manners, 5th Earl of Rutland (Add. MS. 12506, f. 140) but this is a round-bellied pot of a very different design without any trefoil.

Another document relevant to the Shakespeare authorship question on which I have found a version of this pot with a crescent is Hardwick MS. 44, *The Encomium of Richard III*, held at Chatsworth House. *The Encomium* was written by Sir William Cornwallis (the younger).

---

\(^{14}\) To distinguish between William from Stratford-upon-Avon and the Bard I have used the spelling ‘Shakspere’ (which appears on Stratford documents) as William’s surname and ‘Shakespeare’ as the name of the Bard.

\(^{15}\) Casson and Rubinstein, pp. 152-60.
This manuscript has been dated to 1595-1601. The watermark on the Hardwick MS. 44 paper has the letters ‘NP’ or ‘NB’ across the body of the pot. It is established as the earliest version of this work. The Gravell catalogue has a pot with a crescent and the letters ‘LB’ dated 1598 (FOL 0352 POT.106.1). Another dated 1599 has the letters ‘EB’ (FOL 2102 POT.261.1). Whilst not identical, these watermarks confirm that this crescent image was in use by privileged people at that time.

Hardwick MS. 44, or another copy of the document, was the basis for Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton’s manuscript version (BL, Add. MS. 29307), which he dedicated to Sir Henry Neville while they were fellow prisoners in the Tower. Amongst the additions Southampton made to Cornwallis’s original are the words ‘we must still make him more Cruelle infamous in pamphlets and playes’; he criticized ‘witty Play-makers’ (Bradbeer & Casson, p. 193). Southampton is most likely referring to Shakespeare’s Richard III. The watermark on Wriothesley’s version (Add. MS. 29307) is of pillars and grapes containing the date 1603. Neville would have known Sir William Cornwallis’s father (Sir Charles Cornwallis) as they were both considered for the role of Ambassador to Spain in 1604. His uncle, Sir William Cornwallis (the elder) MP was a friend of Ben Jonson and married Lucy Neville (daughter of John Neville, 4th Baron Latimer). Southampton’s version of the younger Cornwallis’s Encomium of Richard III was published anonymously with other Cornwallis essays in 1616 and there is a copy of this volume in the Neville library at Audley End House. It was Southampton’s version (with its additions and alterations) that provided the text for the printed version, which was published by Thomas Thorpe in 1616 without the dedication to Neville (Bradbeer & Casson, p. 197).

Comparing the Hardwick watermark with that on Neville’s draft letter we can see they both have a circular form just below the rim of the pot and similar lumpy bases but Neville’s watermark has a letter ‘H’ underneath the ‘NB’ and the Hardwick pot may lack a handle. However the colour of the paper and similarity of marks suggests they are from the same paper-making source but are likely to have been made between two and eight years apart. On both there is a trefoil on top of the handle.

To further test the null hypothesis I have researched a random selection of extant manuscript autograph letters and documents of other Shakespeare authorship candidates: Christopher Marlowe, Francis Bacon, Edward Devere (17th Earl of Oxford), Mary Sidney Herbert (Countess of Pembroke), William Stanley (6th Earl of Derby), Roger Manners (5th Earl of Rutland), for a period of 1590-1605, held in the British Library and the Folger Shakespeare Library.

The one-handled pot watermark appears on the only extant Christopher Marlowe manuscript: a fragment of The Massacre at Paris.

---

The Watermarks on the Northumberland Manuscript and Hand D: Research Findings and Reflections on the Shakespeare Authorship Question

Fig. 9. Marlowe, *The Massacre at Paris*. Folger Shakespeare Library, MS. J.b.8: c. 1590.

The top of this watermark has been cut/torn off. There does not appear to be any trefoil on the handle. It has the letters ‘AH’ across the pot. This watermark is listed as Gravell No. FOL 2108: POT.263.1, and was used in 1590. Marlowe’s play was staged in 1593. The descriptor in the Gravell catalogue suggests that this had a quatrefoil, not a trefoil, at the top. Another relevant example is a 1589 watermark which, like the Marlowe watermark, has no trefoil on the handle:

Fig. 10. Gravell No. Fol 0175: POT.025.1: A book of the soldiers at Portsmouth ... under the government of the ... Earl of Sussex 1589-1590. Folger Shakespeare Library, X.d.467 (1).

A letter from Francis Bacon circa 1599 has the pot handle on the right side rather than the left and a different crown design: the crescent is more like a horse shoe and is above a quatrefoil. There is no trefoil at the top of the handle. The letters ‘AB’ are across the pot.
The Watermarks on the Northumberland Manuscript and Hand D: Research Findings and Reflections on the Shakespeare Authorship Question

Another undated Bacon letter to the Earl of Essex has a different pot watermark which has a crescent above a quatrefoil, the handle on the left, without any trefoil, and the letters RO across the pot:

This watermark is also to be found on Bacon’s letter of Advice to ‘My Lord of Essex upon his first treatise with Tyrone 1598 before my Lord was nominate for ye charge of Ireland’. It has a quatrefoil below the crescent. Similarly the quatrefoil is to be found on pot watermarks on a 1603 letter from the Earl of Pembroke (Add. MS. 12506, f. 120) and on a letter from Mary Sidney dated 1596 (Add. MS. 12506, f. 235). On a letter from William Stanley 6th Earl of Derby dated 12 April 1597 (Lansdowne MS. 84, f. 123) there is a pot watermark with a quatrefoil on top and a trefoil on the handle with the letters ‘OO’ (or ‘OQ’ or ‘QQ’: the Gravell catalogue has no record of such, though Gravell No. FOL 0541: POT.132.1 is similar).
The Watermarks on the Northumberland Manuscript and Hand D: Research Findings and Reflections on the Shakespeare Authorship Question

![Image of watermarks](image1.jpg)

Fig. 13. William Stanley’s letter, 1597, BL, Lansdowne MS. 84, f. 123.

This watermark is similar to that on the Marlowe manuscript (or FOL 0175: POT.025.1: see above) and they are dated between four and seven years apart.

A letter from Roger Manners, 5th Earl of Rutland, (Add. MS. 12506, f.193) has a small double-handled pot with a quatrefoil but no letters across it.

The only pot watermark I have found on paper used by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, is on a letter to the Lord Treasurer of England dated 1594. This is a very angular pot with no trefoil or crescent (Lansdowne MS. 76/74, f. 168).

From these watermarks we can conclude that paper with a variety of pot watermarks was in use by privileged people closely connected with the government. However it is clear that the two people who used paper that is most similar to the Hand D pages, thought to be by Shakespeare, were Henry Neville and Robert Cecil. Henry Neville is the only authorship candidate who used paper that has the pot motif watermarks with trefoil and crescent that occur on the NHMS and Hand D of Sir Thomas More. Other authorship candidates used a variety of pot watermarks with a quatrefoil.

One other document which is relevant to the Shakespeare authorship is the last will and testament of William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon, dated 1616. The paper would most likely have been provided by the lawyer who drew up the document. The three pages have pot watermarks. The first has a watermark where the crown is topped by two quatrefoils, one above the other.

![Image of will](image2.jpg)

Fig. 14. William Shakspere’s will, National Archives, PROB1/4, f. 1.
It is difficult to see whether this pot has any handle, whereas the watermark on folio 2 has two handles, possibly with the letters ‘PI’ on the pot. That on folio 3 is difficult to see owing to damage to the paper.

![Image of pot with watermark](image1)

However, despite the poor condition of this last image, we can see the pot is topped by balls. The closest watermark in the Gravell catalogue is dated 1611, a two-handled pot with the letters ‘PT’ across it:

![Image of pot with watermark](image2)

These watermarks are different from all previous watermarks relevant to the authorship. Despite the signatures on the document, the will does not prove any relationship between the man from Stratford and the authorship of the works of Shakespeare.

The following chart summarizes what I have found. I have included Henry Chettle, who is not an authorship candidate, because of the watermark I found on his addition to the script of Sir Thomas More. I have also included Robert Cecil. The authorship candidates are Henry Neville, Francis Bacon, Roger Manners 5th Earl of Rutland, William Stanley 6th Earl of Derby, Christopher Marlowe, Edward de Vere 17th Earl of Oxford, Mary Sidney Countess of Pembroke and William Shakspere from Stratford-upon-Avon.

---


18 Prof. Jonathan Bate claimed in a recent debate (26/9/2017) that the legacy of money to buy memorial rings for ‘John Hemynge Richard Burbage & Henry Cundell’, inserted into the will, was evidence of his authorship. It is in fact only evidence that William Shakspere, who was a sharer in the Globe theatre, remembered fellow shareholders. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqImgJ5L6o>
The Watermarks on the Northumberland Manuscript and Hand D: Research Findings and Reflections on the Shakespeare Authorship Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Watermark Details</th>
<th>NHMS</th>
<th>Neville</th>
<th>Hand D</th>
<th>Cecil</th>
<th>Chettle</th>
<th>Bacon</th>
<th>Derby</th>
<th>Rutland</th>
<th>Marlowe</th>
<th>Oxford</th>
<th>Mary Sydney</th>
<th>Shakespeare Will</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Handle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trefoil on Handle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trefoil on Top</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crescent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB on Pot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table compares the presence (1) or absence (0) of individual components of the NHMS and Hand D watermarks and, although formal statistics are not possible with such a limited number of features, it is apparent that there is good correspondence with the watermarks on Neville’s letter but not for other commonly proposed authorship candidates. Furthermore, there are substantial similarities between the watermarks on the NHMS, Neville’s letter and Hand D, but less so for another identified author of Sir Thomas More, Chettle. A surprising similarity was noted between the watermarks on the NHMS and paper owned by Robert Cecil, although this may mainly reflect shared access to expensive paper. These findings indicate that the NHMS deserves a fresh interpretation, especially since its provenance indicates that it belonged to Neville, and its contents provide many other links to him as a Shakespearean authorship candidate. The NHMS has greater significance than the established (Stratfordian) academics currently wish to recognize: it is the earliest manuscript document to mention plays by Shakespeare, the first manuscript to spell the name correctly, and it predates the publication of that name on any play. This means that not only did Henry Neville possibly possess manuscripts of the plays Richard II and Richard III, he also knew who wrote them before anyone else. If this were the case then he would also be the only known individual to own a Shakespeare manuscript (though manuscripts of some kind must have been available to the theatres and publishers, but none of these were named individuals known to have had a specific manuscript). He was the first person to quote from The Rape of Lucrece. The NHMS also provides the only evidence for a lost work by Shakespeare by twice listing its title as Asmund and Cornelia immediately beneath Richard III.

19 The handwriting on the NHMS may be by several different people so it is possible the list of plays is by Neville or by his secretary or a scribe.

20 This work might be by Francis Bacon, whose name is just above to the left or by Thomas Nashe who is named as the author of The Isle of Dogs below. However it is more likely to be a poem or play by the Bard because of the way it is listed below two Shakespeare plays.
This evidence, including the many similarities between Neville’s secretary and italic handwriting and Hand D, can be added to that for his authorship of the works of Shakespeare.  

This study is not comprehensive: it has not been possible to examine all manuscripts of the authorship candidates, scattered in different archives, for their watermarks. Nevertheless this random selection has offered a snapshot of the occurrence of the specific pot watermarks in manuscripts and a tentative conclusion has been offered that could be further tested. In summary, the null hypothesis – that the watermarks with features similar to the NHMS would not be found on paper attributed to any of the proposed Shakespeare authorship candidates – is rejected by the present findings, most strongly by those appearing on documents belonging to the owner of the NHMS, Sir Henry Neville. The sample size for this study is small, so there is a need for caution in interpreting the findings. However, this result provides a justification for the systematic study of what may turn out to be an important line of evidence to determine the identity of the individual who wrote the works attributed to ‘William Shakespeare’.

Acknowledgements

I am especially grateful to Christopher Hunwick, archivist at Alnwick Castle, for access to the NHMS: indeed it was he who reminded me that I had expressed interest in what watermarks were on the document earlier in my research, but I had not previously been to Alnwick to see the manuscript. I am grateful to Abbie Weinberg, Research and Reference Librarian at the Folger Shakespeare Library, for the image of Marlowe’s manuscript of The Massacre At Paris. It was Dr Ros Barber of Goldsmiths College, University of London, who told me about Marlowe’s manuscript fragment. Dr Andrea Clarke, Lead Curator, Medieval & Early Modern Manuscripts, Western Heritage, The British Library, was extremely helpful in identifying the watermarks on Harley MS. 7368. I am also grateful to Dr Katy Mair, Head of Early Modern Records, National Archives, Kew, for images of the watermark on William Shakspere’s will. I am very grateful for Dr John Leigh’s assistance: his advice, including the composition of the table, has contributed to the development of this paper from its first draft. Thanks is also due to Dr Barry Taylor, editor of the eBLJ, for his editorial advice and help.

Permissions

The watermark on Hardwick MSS 44 is © Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth and is reproduced by permission of the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

The watermarks sourced from gravell.org are used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

The watermark on Neville’s draft letter of 1603/4 (D/EN F6/2/3) is published with the permission of the Berkshire Record Office, Reading.

The watermarks from Harley MS7368 (Sir Thomas More) and assorted letters of Shakespeare Authorship candidates are © The British Library Board.

The watermarks from the Northumberland Manuscript are reproduced with the permission of the Archives of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle (DNP: MS 525) and are © The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland.

The images of the watermarks on Shakspere’s Will are reproduced by permission of The National Archives, Kew and are Crown copyright, The National Archives.

---

21 Casson and Rubinstein, pp. 150-6.