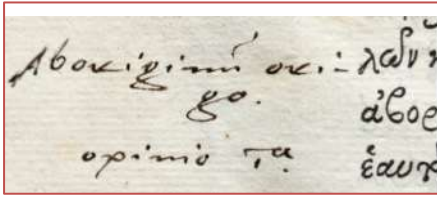
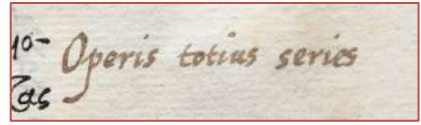


**BREAKING NEWS:**  
**DE VERE ANNOTATED BOOKS FROM AUDLEY END**

**By Roger Stritmatter** – with thanks to Charles Beauclerk for his consultation on the Latin translations

In research made possible by a recent grant from The de Vere Society, three newly discovered books annotated by Edward de Vere are now yielding fresh insights into the creative dynamics of Shakespeare's literary imagination for two of the Roman plays, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. They also contain names, plot elements, themes, and motifs prominent in other plays, especially *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Coriolanus*. The books are Folio-sized first editions of Appian's *An Ancient History and Exquisite Chronicle* (1551, Paris)<sup>1</sup> and Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities* (1546, Paris),<sup>2</sup> and a 1587 French edition of François de La Noue's *Discourses Politique et Militaires*.<sup>3</sup> Both folio editions are designed for annotation and include extra-wide margins for that purpose.

Now at the great estate of Audley End in Saffron Walden, Essex (managed by English Heritage),<sup>4</sup> the books were first discussed in a chaotic and undisciplined presentation by John Casson and William Rubinstein in their 2016 *Sir Henry Neville mas Shakespeare*,<sup>5</sup> and later, somewhat more systematically, by Ken Feinstein on his blog, <http://kenfeinstein.blogspot.com/><sup>6</sup> Both these sources misidentified the annotations in question as being in Neville's handwriting, under the incorrect assumption that any 17th century books at Audley End must have been annotated by Neville (1564-1616), since most such books arrived at Audley End from Neville's Billingbear estate in Berkshire sometime in the early 20th century. A historian, diplomat and Essex sympathizer, Neville was jailed in the Tower of London along with Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton following the abortive 1601 uprising. How they came into Neville's possession in the first place remains an unresolved enigma, but the volumes do preserve traces that can help to fill in a plausible answer. In addition to the copious annotation (amounting to perhaps a thousand total distinct annotations, some of many words' length) in the hand misidentified as Neville's, the Dionysius and Appian volumes also contain many annotations in the handwriting of the Essex faction scholar and controversial Tacitus translator Sir Henry Savile (1549-1622). The two hands are shown below:

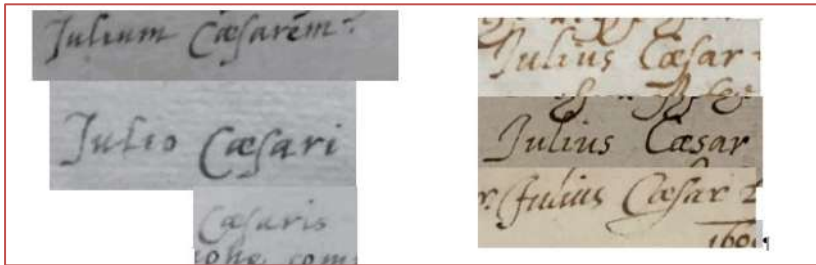
**Figure 1 A and B:**A: Sir Henry Savile: *Aboriginum origo*B. Questioned Document Sample:  
*Operis totius series*

Sir Henry Savile's note in his spare, schematic, and somewhat obscure script (Latin above Greek) as contrasted to the mystery annotator's precise calligraphic hand, including artful variations in the angle of nib to produce thicker or thinner elements in a line. Sayville (Savile) notes something about the aboriginal population of what became of Rome and the Roman empire. The second note summarizes Dionysius's proposed design for his narrative: 'The sequence of the entire work (*operis totius*)' from Dionysius pp.7–8.<sup>2</sup> The differences between the two annotations, one focused on content and the other on structure, are somewhat characteristic. Sayville thinks like an ethnographer or a historian; the annotator like a rhetorician and a dramatist. All photos of Audley End annotations courtesy the Estate of Audley End, English Heritage,<sup>4</sup> and Louise Newman.

Starting (in the Dionysius volume),<sup>2</sup> the annotations trace a long arc of Roman history, from Aeneas' founding of Lavinium and pact with the Latins (*Latinos*) and the abandonment of Romulus and Remus and their raising by shepherds (*pastoribus*) and moving on through Appian<sup>1</sup> into Caesar's conquest of Gaul and Brittany and his assassination in Pompey's theatre, Cicero's prosecution of Cataline, the rise to power of Caesar's adopted heir Octavius, rivalries of the power-sharing second triumvirate of Octavius, Lepidus, and Antony, the Triumvirate's conflict with Pompey and Menas, Antony's relationship with Cleopatra, and the battles of Philippi and Actium, and concluding with notes on the reigns of Claudius (51–54 C.E.), Nero (54–68), and Vespasian (69–79). In many cases and for many intricately interconnected reasons the notes exemplify the reading of a dramatist preparing to write such masterworks as *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, plays for which Appian is a well-acknowledged and influential source, second only to Plutarch's *Lives*.

The Casson–Rubinstein book<sup>5</sup> was first brought to my attention at the 2019 Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Conference at the Twain House in Hartford, Ct., by SOF and DVS member and Oxfordian researcher Jan Scheffer. Scheffer suggested that the annotations claimed by Rubinstein and Casson as by Neville might instead be in Oxford’s hand. Comparative study first presented for the Shakespeare Authorship Trust at the Globe theatre on April 23, 2022, confirmed the first part of Scheffer’s hypothesis, that the annotations in question are not in Neville’s handwriting. Systematic differences between the questioned document sample and samples of Neville’s handwriting are illustrated in Figure 2 below:

**Figure 2 A and B:**



A. From Appian (1551).<sup>1</sup>

B. From letters of Henry Neville.

(A and B: Both after the arrangement created by Ken Feinstein.<sup>6</sup>)

Systematic differences – the kind that denote the existence of two or more writers – between the annotations (left, 2A) and Neville’s hand (right, 2B) cast serious doubt on his writership of the questioned document annotations at Audley end. A dramatic contrast between the types of construction used for the double-s formation is shown in Figure 3 below:

**Figure 3:**



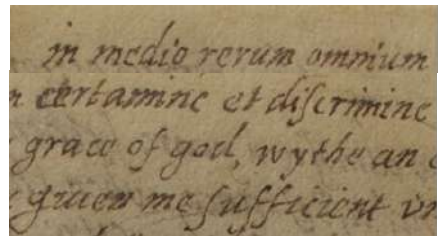
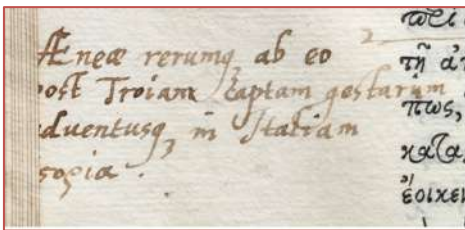
The annotator (left two images in Figure 3) uses a traditional long & short construction, with or without a ligature. Sir Henry Neville, (right two images in Figure 3) uses a more ‘modern’ cursive double-s.

These exemplars are formed using entirely different hand movements. By themselves they rule out the likelihood of common writership for the two samples.

For further discussion of why the annotations do not match Neville’s documented handwriting, please see the author’s presentation to the Shakespearean Authorship Trust on 23 April, 2022, which is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOTj9n27vIg>.<sup>7</sup>

On Friday, October 21, 2022, with the assistance of Dorna Bewley and English Heritage curator Dr Peter Moore, Shelly Maycock and I shot over a thousand new high-resolution photos of many hundreds of annotations, mostly from the Dionysius and Appian. These are mostly in Latin but also contain many words and phrases in Greek and, sometimes, mixed Latin–Greek constructions, which summarize the Greek original in a few words as exemplified below. This article is not intended to offer a systematic evaluation of around a thousand annotations, still less a forensic demonstration proving that the annotations are definitively by Oxford. Readers even somewhat familiar with his handwriting will readily recognize many points of similarity in the samples which follow. In place of a forthcoming full forensic study of the handwriting, an abbreviated demonstration that the annotator is Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford is supplied in Figure 4 below:

#### Figure 4 A and B:

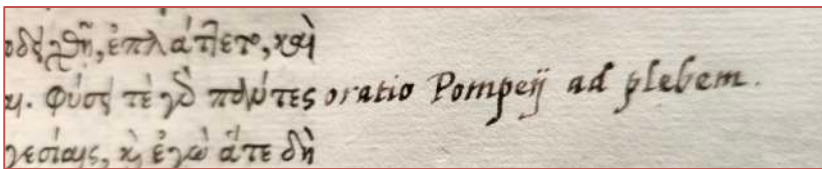


Audley End annotation (left, 4A) compared to a Latin phrase in Edward de Vere's 1602 Danvers Escheat Letter (right, 4B).

- A. Of Aeneas and of the deeds [*rerum*] done by him after the capture of Troy, and of his coming into Italy [left, 4A. cropped]. [I fear now to be left] in the midst of contest and crisis in all things [*rerum*]. . . Pen: thin nib. Source: Audley End 1546 Dionysius, p18.<sup>2</sup>
- B. Source: de Vere Danvers Escheat Letter [right, 4B]. Courtesy of the Marquess of Salisbury and 1604 Productions. Pen: wide nib.

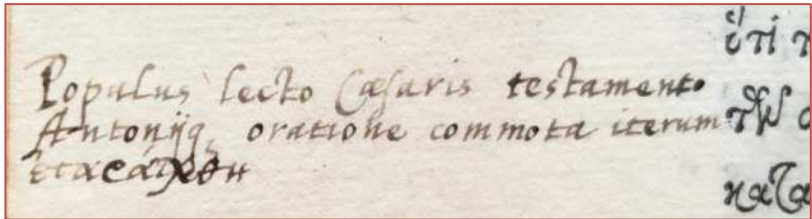
Unlike the annotations of the de Vere Geneva Bible,<sup>8</sup> which preserve records of private devotional readings, those found in the volumes by Dionysius and Appian trace *dramatis personae*, motifs and plot elements from historical sources known to have influenced the Shakespearean plays. The pulse of the dramatist is palpable in these notes, which pay close attention to moments of crisis, conflict, psychology and rhetoric, including many that are directly applicable to the design and emphases of the two already named Roman plays. For example, the annotator tracks Appian's account of speeches by several historical figures with the notation '*oratio*' in Figure 5 below:

**Figure 5:**



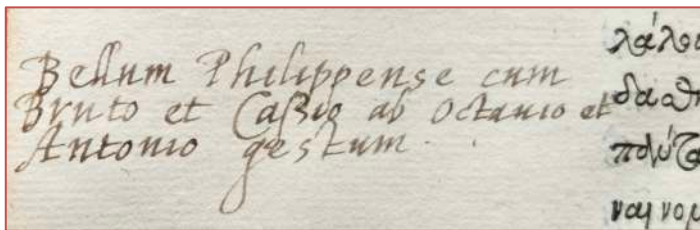
The Speech [*oratio*] of Pompey to the people. Appian, p.3.<sup>1</sup>

The annotator has devoted his closest attention to the construction of Mark Antony's funeral oration, a speech long known to have been influenced by Appian's theatrical account. According to Stuart Gillespie in his *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sources* (2001),<sup>9</sup> 'in both [plays] Appian supplements Plutarch with details not readily available elsewhere; *Julius Caesar* uses him for the portrayal of Antony, especially for Antony's funeral oration on Caesar, which has similarly theatrical, almost operatic qualities in both writers' (18). The annotator has carefully recorded two separate notes about Antony's funeral oration, including one in which Antony's reading of Caesar's will has 'again aroused' the anger of the people as shown in Figure 6 below:

**Figure 6:**

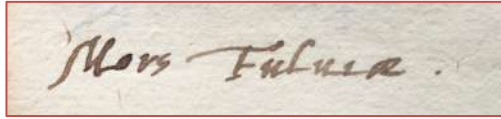
The will of Caesar having been read, and the power of Antony's eloquence having been stirred, the people were again agitated (ἐταραχθῆν).<sup>1</sup> Appian, 170.<sup>1</sup> (Thanks to Charles Beauclerk for help with this translation.)

Clearly the annotator has paid precise attention to narrative and rhetorical elements for which Gillespie says Shakespeare owes a special debt to Appian. Several notes, for example, detail the two great battles – Philippi and Actium – which take place in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. The entire fifth act of *Julius Caesar* concerns the battle of Philippi (43 B.C.E.) and the circumstances by which Brutus and Cassius were defeated. One of the relevant notes about this battle is illustrated in Figure 7 below:

**Figure 7:**

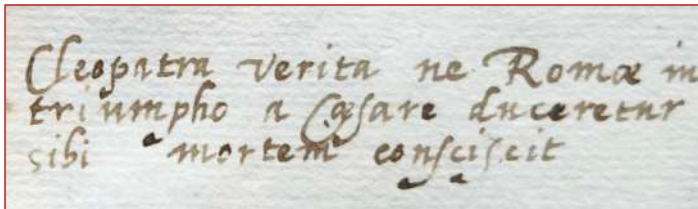
The battle at Philippi with Brutus and Cassius waged by Octavius and Antony. Appian 234.<sup>1</sup>

Gillespie states that the influence of Appian on *Antony and Cleopatra* 'is more minor' than that seen in *Julius Caesar*,<sup>8</sup> but one wonders if this alleged discrepancy may be the result of insufficient scholarly attention to Appian's original Greek text. After all, the mantra of orthodox Shakespeare studies is 'small Latin and less Greek.' For example, there is a note on the death of Mark Antony's Roman wife Fulvia as shown in Figure 8 below:

**Figure 8:**The death of Fulvia. Appian, 250.<sup>1</sup>

In the third scene of the play, Cleopatra and Antony discuss this death: ‘Can Fulvia die?’ asks Cleopatra. ‘She’s dead, my queen . . . see when and where she died’ (1.3.57-62). While Plutarch also depicts the news of Fulvia’s death being delivered to Antony, the concentrated focus of this note (Figure 8) invites us to read Appian more closely alongside Plutarch to discover if the influence of the former on this or other scenes may not have been underestimated.

There are many deaths in these two plays, but by far the most consequential is the suicide of Cleopatra herself. In both the play’s sources and the play her motive for suicide is to avoid being paraded in triumph as a war captive in Rome. The narrator has once again anticipated Shakespeare’s emphasis as shown in Figure 9:

**Figure 9:**Fearing lest she be led in triumph by Caesar in Rome,  
Cleopatra kills herself. Appian, 306.<sup>1</sup>

Many annotations of like significance can be cited from the Audley End de Vere annotations. In my opinion, it is safe to say that they reveal aspects of the creative process by which Shakespeare transformed his sources into the fully assimilated designs of his plays. Both leading motives and many highly particular names yield their significance from the larger context and the strength of their accumulation. In addition to the eponymous title characters, the following names from *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar*, or other plays, occur at least once in the

Appian or Dionysius annotations: Ptolemy, Augustus (*Cymbeline*), Pompey, Portia, Lepidus, Octavius Caesar, Octavia, Marcus Brutus, Decimus Junius Brutus, Cassius, Lucius, Trebonius, Dollabella, Menas, Marcus Crassus, Ventidius, Cato, Cicero, Herod, Comagene, Cimber, Nero, Maecenas, Messala, Bochas, Tauros, Caesarion, Proculius, Scaurus, Mithridates, Pacorus, and Orodes. The place names Armenia, Alexandria, Syria, Cilicia, Actium, Philippi, Brundisium, Ionia, Cappadocia, Pannonia (*Cymbeline*), Rhodes (*Othello*), and Parthia, also appear in the annotations.

In addition to those already noted, the Appian includes many notes anticipating motifs and themes from the Roman plays, including the murderous confusion of the two Cinnas in *Julius Caesar*, Portia's proving her fortitude by self-harm, torture and killing of messengers, corruption of imperial offices, triumphs, intercepted messages, positive attitudes towards exile, proscriptions, plots, secret pacts, dissimulation, the distribution of honors, the risks of writing poetry and history, Pompey's command by sea, conflict between members of the triumvirate, the suicides of Antony and Brutus at Philippi, Antony's 'delights' (*deliciae*) in Egypt, political desertion, Antony's envy of Ventidius's conquests in Parthia, the Battle of Actium, Antony's burning of his ships, Antony and Cleopatra's flight from the battle, and Cleopatra's feigning suicide as the cause of Mark Antony's suicide. Categories of annotation include law (*lex, leges*), prodigies and omens (*prodigia, portenta*), deaths, political intrigue, battles, suicide, and speeches (*orationes*). Indeed, throughout the annotator tracks 'speeches,' just like Shakespeare did while composing his version of Mark Antony's funeral oration with the help of Appian. Unfortunately, it's in the handwriting of the wrong man! . . . a comedy of errors?

Thanks are due to the Audley End Estate and English Heritage, Dr. Peter Moore, and the de Vere Society for supporting this ongoing research. To conclude on a personal note, having taught these two Roman plays many times back-to-back in my Coppin State University Shakespeare class – where the luminous films of Gregory Doran's masterful 2012 RSC production of *Julius Caesar*, and Barry Avrich's 2015 Stratford Ontario production of *Antony and Cleopatra* are favorites – I have been awestruck by the intimate relevance these annotations hold for the study of these plays. The Audley End annotations provide historical,



dramaturgical, and thematic connections to many of Shakespeare's plays, but especially *Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, and to a lesser extent *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, and *Coriolanus*. They not only constitute a prolegomenon to *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* but reveal glistening sparks of the creative process by which these and many other plays were generated.

Reading them is like having a small glimpse at least into the workshop of Shakespeare's mind.

### Addendum

Readers are encouraged to stay tuned for further exciting revelations of the annotated books of Audley End.

### End Notes

1. Appian's *An Ancient History and Exquisite Chronicle* (1551, Paris) – Folio-sized first edition
2. Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities* (1546, Paris) – Folio-sized first edition
3. François De La Noue's *Discourses Politique et Militaires* – 1587 French edition
4. Audley End, English Heritage: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/audley-end-house-and-gardens/>
5. Casson, John and William Rubinstein *Sir Henry Neville was Shakespeare: The Evidence*. Gloucestershire: Amberley (2016).
6. Feinstein, Ken. 'Ken Feinstein's Neville Research Blog' <http://kenfeinstein.blogspot.com/>.
7. Shakespeare Authorship Trust 2022 Members' Event: Roger Stritmatter on Neville's Handwriting, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOTj9n27vIg> recorded April 23, 2022.
8. Stritmatter, Roger. *The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible: Providential Discovery, Literary Reasoning, and Historical Consequence*. University of Massachusetts PhD Dissertation (2002).
9. Gillespie, Stuart. *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sources*. London: Continuum (2001).

