

Shakespeare, More or Less: A.W. Pollard and Twentieth-Century Shakespeare Editing

Paul Werstine

Those who have disputed Shakespeare's authorship of the plays and poems usually attributed to him have been inclined to name the eminent Shakespeare scholars who have vilified the anti-Stratfordian cause. In the Preface to his 1908 book *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, the urbane Sir Granville George Greenwood quoted Sidney Lee, then chair of Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, mocking the Baconian theory as "foolish craze,' morbid psychology,' 'madhouse chatter'" (vii) and John Churton Collins, chair of English Literature at the University of Birmingham, denouncing it as "ignorance and vanity" (viii). More recently, Charlton Ogburn has listed among the detractors of the Oxfordian theory Louis B. Wright, former director of the Folger Shakespeare Library (154, 161, 168); S. Schoenbaum, author of *Shakespeare's Lives*, which devotes one hundred pages "to denigration of...anti-Stratfordian articles and books" (152); and Harvard Shakespeare professors G. Blakemore Evans and Harry Levin (256-57). In view of the energy and labour expended by numerous prominent scholars defending Shakespearean authorship, it is not surprising to discover that this defence has influenced reception of Shakespeare's works and their editorial reproductions. This essay deals with the very successful resistance movement against the anti-Stratfordians that was led by A.W. Pollard from 1916 to 1923, and with the peculiar influence that Pollard's efforts have continued to exert, even upon today's Shakespeare editors.

Like those Shakespeareans mentioned by Greenwood and Ogburn, Pollard, as an editor of the important bibliographical and editorial quarterly *The Library* and as Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum, was well placed to fend off anti-Stratfordians. Yet, unlike many of Shakespeare's defenders, Pollard wisely chose neither to vilify nor even directly to attack the anti-Stratfordian position; rather, Pollard set out to shape an argument in favour of Shakespearean authorship that mirrored the argument against it. (Of this shape more will come below.) And Pollard also chose not to stand alone in championing Shakespeare. Instead, he attracted to his "cause" a "little company"—some of whom were not even Shakespeareans until they were taken up by Pollard—whose research into the Shakespeare authorship question he nurtured, celebrated, and sometimes defended (*Shakespeare's Hand* 32). The focus of this research was three pages of a manuscript in the British Museum entitled on its wrapper *The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore*; these three pages were the only ones inscribed by the writer whom W.W. Greg called "Hand D" in his 1911 edition of the manuscript. While Greg did not hazard any speculation about the identity of Hand D, there had been occasional speculation beginning with Richard Simpson's in 1871 that the writer was Shakespeare. It was the "cause" of Pollard and his "little company" to promote Simpson's conjecture. If they could win acceptance of the view that Shakespeare not only inscribed, but also composed the text on these three pages, then they could deal a blow to the anti-Stratfordian claim that Shakespeare's limited educational and cultural opportunities could not have equipped him to be a playwright, and that therefore Shakespeare could only have copied out the work of other men. Together they set out (as Pollard put it in his Introduction to the 1923 book *Shakespeare's Hand in the Play of Sir Thomas More* in which their research was collected) to win adherents to their belief "that part of a scene, represented by three pages in the extant manuscript [of *Sir Thomas More*] was composed and written with his own hand by Shakespeare" (1). As Pollard emphasised in his Preface to the 1923 book, "if Shakespeare wrote these three pages the discrepant theories which unite in regarding the 'Stratford man' as a mere mask concealing the activity of some noble lord (a 17th Earl of Oxford, a 6th Earl of Derby, or a Viscount St Albans [Francis Bacon]) come crashing to the ground" (v). In spite of the prominence accorded this reference to the anti-Stratfordians in the Preface, they were not explicitly mentioned again in the book, which was instead devoted (after Pollard's Introduction) to papers by Pollard's collaborators offering arguments for Shakespeare's

hand in (three pages of) the play in three areas: “[hand]writing;” “misprints” and “spelling;” “phrasing,” and “attitude” (vi).

Work on the book had begun seven years before its publication when Pollard recruited to his “cause” the paleographer Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, former Keeper of Manuscripts and, later, Pollard’s superior as Director of the British Museum, then retired and aged seventy-six. Thompson’s field was classical and medieval manuscripts; only under Pollard’s direction had he turned to the early modern period. John Dover Wilson, another member of Pollard’s “little company,” later wrote of Pollard’s influence on Thompson’s work at this time: “Pollard was teaching us to look for...the hand that Shakespeare wrote...behind the quarto and folio texts. Thompson *accordingly* rounded off his chapter [in the 1916 collection *Shakespeare’s England*, which was ‘the earliest account of the handwriting of Elizabethan England’] by subjecting the poet’s six signatures...to a minute critical examination” (“The New Way” 70, emphasis mine). Already in 1916 Thompson had also committed himself in spectacular fashion (and in Pollard’s company, according to Wilson’s recollection) to the belief that Shakespeare’s hand was to be found in the play of *Sir Thomas More*: “some time early in 1916 Maunde Thompson returned to his old Department of Manuscripts and taking down *The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore* from its shelf opened it...What his hopes were I do not know, but the effect, I have been told, I think by Pollard, was instantaneous: he threw up his hands and cried ‘Shakespeare!’” (Wilson, “The New Way” 73). In *Shakespeare’s Handwriting*, published in the same year, Thompson attempted a detailed justification of his instantaneous identification. In his Preface to the book, he acknowledged the help of only one person, A.W. Pollard (ix). Reviewers, including those writing in the pages of Pollard’s own journal *The Library*, were not persuaded. J.A. Herbert’s review there urged that “great caution must be used in deducing the identity of two handwritings from the occasional occurrence of the same unusual forms in both” (100), and Percy Simpson’s *Library* article on “The Play of ‘Sir Thomas More’ and Shakespeare’s Hand in it” was equally restrained in assessing Thompson’s achievement: “the utmost that it is safe to assert is that the scene is not unworthy of Shakespeare” (93). The anti-Stratfordian George Greenwood responded in *TLS* with a predictable dismissal of Thompson’s work (“Sir E. Maunde Thompson on ‘Shakespeare’s Handwriting’”).

Thompson's inability to prove on paleographical grounds that the three so-called "Hand-D" pages in the *More* manuscript were written by Shakespeare led Pollard to enlist the second member of his "little company," John Dover Wilson. Now famous for a life's work editing Shakespeare for Cambridge, as well as for his many books on Shakespeare, Wilson was then, as he himself later recalled, only an amateur Shakespearean when Pollard took him up:

[N]o palaeographer and a very amateur bibliographer...I had begun to collect misprints and odd spellings in the original Shakespearian texts....[T]he reason I took to it was that as a disciple of Pollard's and sharing his belief that many of the good quarto and folio texts were printed direct from Shakespeare's manuscripts, I hoped to discover something about the way he wrote and the way he spelt by studying the aberrations of the compositors who had to set up those manuscripts in type....[F]eeling confident that my collection of spellings and misprints provided information more or less definite about Shakespearian "copy," no sooner did I hold Maunde Thompson's book in my hands than I turned to his transcript of the Three Pages to see how far their spellings tallied with those I had culled from the quartos. To my delight they fitted in like pieces of a jig-saw puzzle ("The New Way" 74-75).

At the December 1918 meeting of the Bibliographical Society, Wilson read a paper co-authored with Pollard in which they offered a number of coincidences both between slips of the pen in the Three Pages of *More* and misprints in the Shakespeare quartos, and between "peculiar" spellings in the *More* pages and those in the quartos ("What Follows if Some of the good Quarto Editions of Shakespeare's Plays were printed from his autograph manuscripts").

Pollard, writing anonymously in the *TLS* of 24 April 1919 in order both to defend Thompson's book against the sceptical reception that had greeted it and to announce his own and Wilson's new findings, already was shaping the argument that would later inform the 1923 book *Shakespeare's Hand in the Play of Sir Thomas More*, whose title Pollard first used for this article.¹ According to Pollard, his was an argument from an array of evidence, none of which was conclusive in itself, but all of which was persuasive in its accumulation. Pollard began by acknowledging the expert judgment that had found Thompson's case wanting:

Among those best competent to judge his work there seems to be a consensus of opinion that, while the materials available are not sufficient for a complete palaeographical proof, on purely palaeographical grounds a distinct probability has been established, creating an expectation that if any new evidence should come to light it will tend to strengthen his contention.

Then he alluded to the “peculiar” spellings, misprints and slips of the pen of which he and Wilson had just written, citing these as “new evidence...come to light...to strengthen [Thompson’s] contention.” His conclusion figured a growing accumulation of parallels between Shakespeare and Hand D in *More*:

However many coincidences [between the Hand-D *More* pages and Shakespeare quartos] may be adduced, it will remain open to doubters to maintain that they are coincidences and no more....Yet when they accumulate...they are undeniably impressive.

It is a tribute to Pollard’s skill in controversy that he was able to figure Thompson’s work as supported by and supporting Wilson’s and his own, especially because Thompson had already disagreed in print with Pollard and Wilson’s cherished belief that, to quote Wilson again, “many of the good quarto and folio texts were printed direct from Shakespeare’s manuscripts.” This belief was the basis for Pollard and Wilson’s assumption that slips of the pen in the three allegedly Shakespearean pages of the *More* manuscript might be used to explain the origin of misprints in the early printings of Shakespeare’s plays, but Thompson’s model of manuscript culture gave no countenance to such a belief. As Thompson had written,

[C]uriosity naturally arises regarding the extent to which the obscurities and errors in the texts of [Shakespeare’s] plays that have been transmitted to us from the earliest printed collection may be due to misreading of his autograph MSS. Although the editors of the First Folio of 1623 announced in their preface, with perhaps intentional vagueness, that they had “scarce received from him a blot in his papers,” and thereby may have intended to lead their readers to believe that they had had access to Shakespeare’s originals (would that they had!), we may be extremely doubtful whether they had a single shred of the poet’s own MSS. before them. The autographs of the plays would have ceased to have any practical value after they had been transcribed for the acting copies, and were probably thrown aside. (*Shakespeare’s England* 298)

Thompson's position was incommensurable with Pollard and Wilson's belief that Shakespeare's holographs had been preserved by his acting company, which had given them to stationers to use as copy for the early printed texts of the plays; however, in the interest of holding up the Shakespearean side against the anti-Stratfordians, Pollard swallowed any disagreement with Thompson.

Pollard's skill in controversy was exhibited to even greater effect in his use of the rhetoric of accumulation, for in doing so he knowingly fashioned an argument for Shakespearean authorship (not only of the three *More* pages but also of all Shakespeare's works) that mirrored the argument of his opponents, the anti-Stratfordians. As an editor of *The Library*, he had already ushered into print serious and detailed refutations of anti-Stratfordian publications such as a lengthy anonymous review of Mark Twain's *Is Shakespeare Dead?* ("Shakespeare, and the School of Assumption"). At article length, Pollard's younger friend Greg had provided withering examinations of, first, W.H. Mallock's argument for "the occurrence of 'emblems' of alleged Baconian significance on the title-pages of certain books of the early seventeenth century" in 1903 ("Facts and Fancies") and then, in 1909, of William Stone Booth's *Some Acrostic Signatures of Francis Bacon* ("Another Baconian Cipher"). In reviewing Mallock, Greg cast a harsh light on the form of argument employed by the Baconians:

Mr. Mallock takes up the position...that his arguments are cumulative. Individually they may not be convincing, but taken together—! We have heard this before. You might as well attack a jelly-fish. He will complacently watch the demolition of support after support of his fairy fabric, the explosion of figment after figment of his scheme, and smilingly murmur "cumulative evidence!" Not until every single item of his evidence has been proved utterly fictitious will he cease to believe in the alchemy of the words "cumulative evidence"—*et encore!* (49)

As Pollard was to reveal in his first book on Shakespeare, published in 1909, he and Greg collaborated with each other so closely on some matters Shakespearean, "communicating our results to each other at every stage, so that our respective responsibilities for them have become hopelessly entangled" (*Shakespeare's folios* vj). It is to be expected, then, that Pollard found in Greg's review the principle of "cumulative evidence" according to which he organised his campaign against the

anti-Stratfordians. However much Shakespeareans might ridicule Baconians for arguing from “cumulative evidence,” Pollard seems brilliantly to have recognised the usefulness of deploying against his opponents an argument that mirrored their own. While such an argument might have no intrinsic worth, it would be as good as the arguments against which it was pitted in the controversy over Shakespeare’s authorship of the Shakespeare canon and thus could bring the controversy to stalemate.

Greg also supplied Pollard with the other members of the “little company” that together published *Shakespeare’s Hand in the Play of Sir Thomas More* in 1923. Greg himself was one member, and his contributions to the volume were considerable, comprising a chapter on “The Handwritings of the Manuscript,” an edition of “Scenes from the Play” and a “Special Transcript of the Three Pages” (41-56, 189-[242]). Unlike the other contributors to the book, Greg refused to commit himself to the identification of Shakespeare as the writer of the Three Pages. In doing so, he maintained the position that, as Wilson was later to recall, he had taken since the publication of Thompson’s 1916 book: “[A]t that date Greg was probably one of the two or three scholars in the country competent to judge, and he was at first inclined to reserve his verdict” (“The New Way” 74). But such was Greg’s bond to Pollard that Greg did not at this time alienate himself from his fellow contributors by expressing disagreement. To the contrary, it was Greg who was to attract to Pollard’s “little company” the last of the contributors to the 1923 book, R.W. Chambers, whose chapter on “phrasing” and “attitude,” according to Pollard, was the result of a chance conversation that Chambers had with Greg (*Shakespeare’s Hand* 31). Until he talked to Greg, Chambers had published scholarship chiefly on Old and Middle English Literature and on Sir Thomas More as an historical figure. Like Thompson and Wilson before him, Chambers was to become a Shakespeare scholar by joining Pollard’s “little company.”

Only once was Pollard apparently unsuccessful in inspiring friends and acquaintances at the British Museum to join his “cause.” The exception was Pollard’s friend M.A. Bayfield, who attacked both Wilson’s and Thompson’s views on *More* in the *TLS* in 1919.² All in all, however, Pollard managed wonderfully to produce an apparent consensus among the contributors to his 1923 book—he and Wilson kept silent about their disagreement with Thompson about the nature of the manuscripts from which Shakespeare’s plays were set, and Thompson kept silent as well;

meanwhile Greg continued to reserve his judgment without explicitly calling attention to his doing so. Pollard managed to fashion this apparent consensus according to the rhetoric of “cumulative evidence” that his anti-Stratfordian opponents had already used to advance their case. During the formative stages of the 1923 book, it was only John Dover Wilson who attempted to invest this rhetoric with the value of truth: “When coincidences accumulate, every additional one increasing the probability of the case, it only remains to decide the point at which probability passes into certainty. For all impartial students, I contend, this point has now been reached. At all events, at this time of day the burden of proof rests upon those who deny the attribution” (“Shakespeare’s Hand”). But to bring to stalemate their controversy with the anti-Stratfordians, Pollard and his “little company” did not, and did not have to, establish the certainty of their belief in Shakespeare’s hand in *More*; all they had to do was present a case that was no worse than the one that they opposed.

Greg wrote, “[the Baconian] will complacently watch the demolition of support after support of his fairy fabric, the explosion of figment after figment of his scheme, and smilingly murmur ‘cumulative evidence.’” In the history of reception of Pollard’s *Shakespeare’s Hand*, Shakespeareans have paradoxically played the role that Greg here imagines for the Baconian. Like Greg’s Baconian, Shakespeareans have watched “the demolition [by Shakespeareans!] of support after support” for Shakespeare’s hand in *More* while, at the same time “murmur[ing] ‘cumulative evidence.’” The first support for Shakespeare as Hand D is paleographical—the province of Thompson. His identification of the handwriting of Hand D as identical to that in Shakespeare’s authenticated signatures is too specialised for analysis here. I can note only that by 1927, Thompson’s paleographical evidence had been exposed as grossly overextended, and so Greg, who had, in 1923, kept silent about Thompson’s work and, for that matter, kept silent about the identification of Hand D as Shakespeare, had to break his silence, detail his differences with Thompson, and acknowledge that the paleographical case was inconclusive (“Shakespeare’s Hand Once More”). Yet, rather than abandon the effort to make Hand D Shakespeare, Greg instead deployed a rhetoric of “cumulative evidence” that is dangerously close to what he himself had ridiculed so sharply in 1903. (Perhaps he took the risk because he was now locked in controversy with S.A. Tannenbaum regarding identification of the hands in the *More* manuscript.³)

I do not pretend that, thus restated, the [paleographical] case, though of considerable weight, approaches complete proof; and I doubt whether the available data [six “authenticated” Shakespeare signatures] are extensive enough to make complete proof possible. If we are to believe that Shakespeare wrote the three-page addition to *More*, it must, I think, be on the ground of the convergence of a number of independent lines of argument—palaeographic, orthographic, linguistic, stylistic, psychological—and not on any one alone (908).

Greg’s list of the other “independent lines of argument” is rather longer than Pollard’s in his Preface to the 1923 book; there Pollard included, in addition to “hand-writing,” only two other lines of argument, the first from “misprints” and “spelling,” and the second from “phrasing” and “attitude” (vi).

Nonetheless, let’s follow Greg’s direction towards what he calls the “orthographic” support for Shakespeare as Hand D, which was offered by J. Dover Wilson and his co-author A.W. Pollard, and first published in summary form over Wilson’s name in *TLS* on 8 May 1919 (“Shakespeare’s Hand”). There the two argued that unusual spellings from the Hand D portion of *More* were occasionally to be found in early printed copies of Shakespeare’s canonical plays. For example, Hand D spelled the word *silence* in the form “scilens,” and in the 1600 first quarto of *2 Henry IV*, we sometimes find in the stage directions, speech prefixes, and dialogue the proper name of the character Justice Silence in the Hand-D spelling.⁴ Sometimes, as well, according to Wilson and Pollard, it must have been the “unusual” spellings found in Hand D of *More* that led the type-setters of the quartos into what were, for Wilson and Pollard, otherwise inexplicable errors. Thus, according to Pollard and Wilson, the type-setter of the second quarto of *Hamlet* mistakenly spelled *self-slaughter* as “seale slaughter” because Shakespeare-Hand-D spelled *self* as “sealfe.” (This argument presumes, of course, that whatever spelling seemed “unusual” to Wilson and Pollard would also have seemed unusual to an early modern type-setter.) From such data Wilson and Pollard drew two conclusions: the early quartos were likely to have been printed from Shakespeare’s own papers (because they had spellings common to Hand D); Hand D was probably Shakespeare because spellings in Hand D were also to be found in the early quartos.

As one might anticipate, readers of *TLS* made short work of that kind of circular argument. Here is a sample from the reply by M.A. Bayfield published in the next week's *TLS*:

Let us, for the sake of argument, grant that the faults and spellings [printed in the quartos] were found in the manuscripts [from which they were printed]; even so, the premisses do not warrant the conclusion drawn, unless it is first shown that all the manuscripts from which the Quartos were set up were in Shakespeare's handwriting. If some were and some were not, the argument cuts its own throat.⁵

Pollard, of course, could not refute Bayfield's reply. And so, instead, the following week in *TLS* Pollard conceded that "this single point of agreement" (between Hand D's spelling and spellings in the Shakespeare quartos) could not constitute "proof" that Shakespeare was Hand D. But Pollard was no more willing than Greg later was to give up the identification, for proof of which he directed Bayfield back to Thompson's paleographical argument: "It was this particular point of agreement which led me to welcome Sir E. Maunde Thompson's attribution of the More Addition to Shakespeare" ("Shakespeare's Hand"), an attribution that Greg was later to find inconclusive.

The third (and last) support for Shakespeare as author of the Three Pages is variously termed "stylistic," "literary," or "psychological." R.W. Chambers produced it in his chapter for Pollard's 1923 book and then revised and expanded that chapter for his own 1939 book entitled *Man's Unconquerable Mind*, from which I will quote here. Because Chambers' argument has been found by many readers to be so much more accessible and appealing than the paleographical and orthographical arguments, I attend to it in much more detail, approaching it from the viewpoint of recent reassessment that has raised doubts about its method. For Chambers, Shakespeare is constructed as a number of sequences of associated themes and figures, the presence of which in both the canonical plays and the Three Pages of *More* identifies Shakespeare as author of the Three Pages. Although Chambers occludes his own interpretive role in the identification of these sequences, his method nevertheless requires him, as Shakespeareans have recently begun to appreciate, to exert so strong a hand in abstracting themes and figures from their contexts that pressing questions arise about whether evidence produced by such a method is located in the texts under examination or in the method and interests of the examiner.

His chief example is the relation between the following passages, the first from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, the second from the Three Pages. In quoting these passages below, I will follow Chambers' own method of presentation to the extent that I will divide up the passages into the segments that, for Chambers, are parallel to each other. Chambers argued that segment A in Ulysses' speech from *Troilus* is self-evidently parallel to segment A from *More* in that both represent "Degree [hierarchy] neglected" (226). But the parallel is scarcely self-evident. The terms in which Chambers generalises it are explicit in *Troilus*—"Take but degree away." But in *More* Chambers had to discern in the mob's shouting down the Earl of Surrey a dramatic representation of the general neglect of hierarchy; to fit this interpretation to the *More* text, Chambers needed to ignore the mob's subsequent expression of their willingness to hear another member of the social hierarchy, Sir Thomas More, because that dramatic representation of respect for a social superior threatened the parallel he was trying to draw with the *Troilus* passage. Segment B from *Troilus* is also, for Chambers, an obvious parallel to segment B from *More* in that both "picture...a flood surging over its banks." While this parallel is a great deal more persuasive than the first one, it may still not be quite convincing because Chambers cannot find language for a generalisation that covers both texts. This time he captures the sense of the *More* text, which figures a "bank," but his generalisation stops far short of *Troilus*' grandiloquent image about the "shores" of the "globe." Whatever the problems with this parallel, they shrink in significance when one turns to Chambers' interpretation of the rest of the passages. The likeness between the C segments concerns, for Chambers, "the doing to death of the *aged* or the *babes*" (226, italics mine); to make this connection Chambers had to interpret the infanticide projected in *More* as the same as the parricide imagined in *Troilus*. In the D segments, the wolf from *Troilus*, which is paradoxically its own prey, and *More*'s fish who feed on each other both suggest "cannibal monsters" to Chambers. To arrive at this parallel, Chambers had to equate a creature's eating itself, which is hardly cannibalism in any sense of the word, to its eating another member of its own species.

(A) Take but degree away, untune that string,
 And hark, what discord follows! Each thing meets
 In mere oppugnancy: (B) the bounded waters
 Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
 And make a sop of all this solid globe.

(C) Strength should be lord of imbecility,
 And the rude son should strike his father dead....
 (D) And appetite, an universal wolf,
 So doubly seconded with will and power,
 Must make perforce an universal prey
 And last eat up himself. (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.109-24)

(A) GEO. BETTS We'll hear the Earl of Surrey.
 LINCOLN The Earl of Shrewsbury.
 BETTS We'll hear both.
 ALL Both! Both! Both! Both!
 LINCOLN Peace, I say, Peace! Are you men of wisdom, or what are you?
 SURREY What you will have them, but not men of wisdom.
 ALL We'll not hear my Lord of Surrey!
 No, No, No, No, No! Shrewsbury! Shr[ewsbury]!

(B) MORE Whiles they are o'er the bank of their obedience
 Thus will they bear down all things.....
 (C) Had there such fellows lived when you were babes
 That could have topped the peace . . . and the bloody times
 Could not have brought you to the state of men....

By this pattern

Not one of you should live an aged man.

(D) ...and men, like ravenous fishes,
 Would feed on one another. (Hand D, *More*, ll. 31-86)⁶

However problematic Chambers' construction of this sequence, he argued for the presence of the same sequence not only in *More* and *Troilus*, but also, at least in part, in *Coriolanus*, *Hamlet*, *Richard II*, and *Lear*, and this was not, for him, the only sequence that linked canonical works to Hand D. His method has proven to be enormously productive of further discoveries about putatively individual patterns in Shakespeare's thought. In 1963 E.A. Armstrong developed Chambers' method at book length in *Shakespeare's Imagination*. In 1973 Karl P. Wentersdorf argued that Chambers had overlooked in *Coriolanus* and *Richard II* parts of the now-famous pattern of *degree/flood/babes* or the *aged/cannibalism*, and added that other plays, such as *King John*, *2 Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Macbeth*, unbeknownst to Chambers, also showed parts of the pattern. Chambers'

image clusters and their even wider dispersion across the canon were the topic of William H. Matchett's "Shylock, Iago, and *Sir Thomas More*: With Some Further Discussion of Shakespeare's Imagination." And as recently as 1989, John W. Velz pushed patterns that Chambers had first "located" in Hand D all the way to the limit of the Shakespeare canon in *Henry VIII*. In presuming that such patterns were self-evident in all these texts, none of these investigators offered a rationale for how their predecessors, who had also searched for the same patterns, had failed to find them.

It was in the meantime discovered, however, that image clusters in Hand D could also be detected in the canonical works of other dramatists. Peter Blayney used similarities in the imagery of Hand D and Henry Chettle in the latter's *Kind-Harts Dream* of 1592 to argue for an early date for the Hand-D pages (182-89). While Gary Taylor has recently rejected these similarities in arguing a later date, Taylor has put in their place other alleged similarities between Hand D and Chettle's later work, *The Tragedy of Hoffman*. It was not until Eric Sams explicitly adopted Chambers' method in 1985 to argue that the manuscript play entitled *Edmond Ironside* was, like Hand D of *More*, of Shakespearean inscription that supporters of Shakespeare as Hand D raised an alarum about the technique's shortcomings. Then MacDonald P. Jackson wrote, "The total absence of constraints on our search for resemblances renders the calculations meaningless." But, using a rhetorical gesture that will now be familiar to readers of this paper, Jackson did not therefore abandon his belief that Shakespeare was Hand D; after all, even if the "literary" and "stylistic" arguments for Shakespeare's authorship had to be abandoned, there remained the others: "Chambers's claims," unlike Sams', wrote Jackson, "were buttressed by other scholars' evidence from handwriting and from bibliographical and orthographical links between Hand D and the Shakespearian good quartos"(225 n3).

So now the rhetoric of "cumulative evidence" has closed its circle: conclusive demonstration of Shakespeare's hand in *The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore* has been deferred from a study of handwriting to a study of spelling and from there to an examination of style and now back to handwriting and spelling. It would seem then that the argument for Shakespeare as Hand D is truly interdisciplinary. Paleographical, bibliographical-orthographical, and psycho-literary arguments are each admitted by advocates of Pollard's case to be inconclusive. Yet as each kind of argument is

abandoned, the advocates gesture toward the other disciplines for the conclusiveness that the now-abandoned field cannot provide. So the demonstration comes to rest nowhere, and can be maintained only in so far as it can play among the disciplines.

Shakespeareans do not seem to have noticed how they have knocked out all the supports for Hand D's identification as Shakespeare. Persistence of belief in the identification may perhaps be traced in part to idealisation of Pollard's "cause" by Shakespeareans who, like the present writer, are gratified by the effect of Pollard's initiative (and others) in freeing us to write about Shakespeare instead of combatting anti-Stratfordians, whom nowadays, thanks to our predecessors' efforts, we can afford to ignore. The flavour of idealisation is apparent in several characterisations of Pollard's 1923 book. S. Schoenbaum singled the book out for praise in his attack on the use of internal evidence for the attribution of authorship of Tudor and Stuart plays—even though Chambers' and Wilson's chapters in the 1923 book employ internal evidence for attribution of the Three Pages to Shakespeare: "The varieties of evidence presented in the Pollard collection—paleographic, bibliographical, and critical—converge upon a single destination; all roads lead to Shakespeare....The work on *Sir Thomas More* accomplished by a small band of distinguished scholars serves as a stunning vindication of the role of internal evidence in attribution study" (*Internal Evidence* 106-07). While Schoenbaum was writing before Jackson acknowledged the insufficiency of the last kind of evidence adduced by Pollard's "little company," evaluations like Schoenbaum's continued to appear after Jackson's announcement. In 1989 one scholar idealised the 1923 book as comprising "separate but convergent lines of enquiry conducted by scholars of pre-eminent skill and authority" (Howard-Hill 2). Another then developed this idealisation in other figurative ways:

The significance in this collection of studies lies in its synergism. The confluence of the disparate findings of literary, palaeographic, bibliographic, imagistic and, what has sometimes been called "psychological," disciplines, all of which individually tend to support the Shakespearian authorship of [the Three Pages] and which collectively present a reinforcing argument, established *Shakespeare's Hand* as a peak in the history of the scholarship of the play (Metz 22).

While such panegyrics are to be applauded for the generous motives from which they spring, much is nonetheless disturbing about their representation of the genesis

of *Shakespeare's Hand*. They appropriate terms from geometry (convergent lines), medicine or theology (synergism), and geography (confluence) to represent what they regard as exemplary, objective, and logical scholarly demonstration. By figuring the production of Pollard's book as a natural, and therefore inevitable, phenomenon, such idealisations understate the importance of Pollard's hard work in the book's formation; by identifying the contributors to his book as already all "distinguished" "scholars of pre-eminent skill and authority," these accounts of Pollard's achievement ignore how he carefully selected, recruited, nurtured, collaborated with, defended, and kept united a highly disparate group of men, some of whom had come to his project from other fields and some of whom were neophytes in the study of Shakespeare, whose later reputations for expertise are owed, in considerable measure, to Pollard's tutelage. But what is most puzzling about the idealisation of Pollard's book is the way it glorifies the form of the book's argument from "cumulative evidence" when Greg, one of the contributors to the book, had mocked such a form as no more than "alchemy."

The effects of an idealising reception of Pollard's 1923 book continue to be felt most keenly in Shakespeare textual criticism and editing. Many scholars in these fields make both minor and significant editorial decisions based upon the assumption that Hand D in *More* is Shakespeare. Take, for example, the comparatively minor issue of editorial treatment of punctuation from the early printed texts. In a recent study of the *Othello* texts, E.A.J. Honigmann counsels editors who make the 1623 Folio (F) version the basis of their editions (as he does in his recent Arden edition) to "feel free to disregard F's question marks unless the sense of the passage positively supports them" because "not a single question mark appears in the three Shakespearian [i.e., Hand-D] pages of *Sir Thomas More*" (54). It is particularly puzzling that Honigmann should promote such an editorial policy, for he believes that the quantity of scribal or compositorial misreading in the *Othello* texts "points back to the author's illegible handwriting" and does not "square with the three pages in Hand D in *Sir Thomas More*....The three pages, being really quite easy to read, do not bear out the hypothesis of an illegible hand" (87). However, so strong is the hold on Shakespeareans of the association that Pollard advanced between Hand D and Shakespeare that Honigmann refuses to abandon it in the face of the evidence he has just presented against it.

Instead, he preserves the association by conjecturing, in opposition to much recent opinion, that the Hand-D pages of *More* date from early in the 1590's and that the somewhat careless habits of penmanship evident in the Three Pages worsened as Hand-D-Shakespeare grew older so that by the time he wrote *Othello* early in the seventeenth century his handwriting had become often illegible: "Either the pressures of more and more writing, or perhaps writer's cramp or a nervous disability, could account for the differences between the three pages and the illegibility of the *Othello* manuscripts" (87). (It should perhaps be observed that there is no evidence that Shakespeare's handwriting ever became illegible—all his surviving handwriting amounts only to six signatures, one of them prefixed by the words "By me"—or that he suffered from the ailments that Honigmann suggests.) Among the careless habits of Hand D was a "disposition...to finish off the final letters of his words in a flourish" (Thompson, *Shakespeare's Hand* 70), and Honigmann, piling conjecture upon conjecture, supposes that an alleged worsening of this feature in Hand-D-Shakespeare's writing can be invoked to resolve the most famous crux in *Othello*. As Othello is about to commit suicide, he compares himself, in the 1623 Folio version, to "the base Iudean [who] threw a Pearle away / Richer then all his Tribe." In the 1622 Quarto version, the comparison is, instead, to "the base *Indian*." According to Honigmann only the Folio reading is Shakespeare's, but when Hand-D-Shakespeare inscribed the word, he failed to form the *e* of *Iudean* in a way that clearly distinguished it from an *i*; the scribe or compositor's misreading the *e* for an *i* "had a knock-on effect": the scribe or compositor was thereby led also to misread the *u* of *Iudean* for the *n* of *Indian*, the word that came to be transmitted into the Quarto (88-89). It matters little to my larger argument that in the seventeenth century one acceptable spelling of *Indian* was "Indean," and so a seventeenth-century reader could have misread "Iudean" as "Indian" whether or not the word's antepenultimate letter were an *e* or an *i*, and so Honigmann's conjectures about the development of Hand-D-Shakespeare's penmanship are irrelevant to a solution of the crux in favour of *Iudean*.⁷ It matters much more to my larger argument to observe how, in Honigmann's textual criticism, *what Shakespeare wrote* is being determined in light of *how Hand D may have shaped the letters comprising what Shakespeare wrote*—even after Shakespeareans have lost confidence in each kind of evidence that Pollard's "little company" presented for the identification of Hand D as Shakespeare.

But there is no cause to single out Honigmann or his volume in the Arden edition for erecting editorial policy upon Pollard's identification. The editors of the Oxford *Complete Works*, for example, assert that "the first edition of *Much Ado About Nothing* [as well as the first editions of *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard II*, and *Titus Andronicus*'] seems to have been set from a very lightly punctuated manuscript in a handwriting remarkably similar to that of Hand D" (Wells 14). And Andrew Gurr, in his Cambridge edition of *Henry V*, figures misprints in the 1623 Folio version of that play as having arisen from slips of the pen of the very kind identified by Wilson in Hand D's pages of *More* (214). Such editorial analogies between the Three Pages and the early printed Shakespeare plays dictate, in part, the choice of which early printed text will constitute the basis for a modern edition, and therefore help in the editorial selection of what is to be read as "Shakespeare." There may by now have come to be some irony in Pollard's efforts to keep Shakespeare's works from being attributed to someone like Oxford or Bacon, for whose alleged authorship the only kind of argument that could be advanced is one from "cumulative evidence"; for, in much Shakespeare editing today, authorship of the works is credited to Hand D, to whom Shakespeare's works can be assigned only through an argument from "cumulative evidence"—all of which evidence has been dismissed as inconclusive by Shakespeareans themselves.

King's College, University of Western Ontario

Notes

1 Wilson attributes this article to Pollard in "The New Way," p. 79 n5.

2 For Pollard's friendship with Bayfield, see Wilson's "Introduction" to Fred W. Roper's compilation *Alfred William Pollard: A Selection of his Essays*, p. 43.

3 See Tannenbaum's "Shakespeare's unquestioned autographs and the addition to Sir Thomas Moore" and his *The booke of Sir Thomas Moore, a bibliotic study*, and Greg's review of the book.

4 While, before scholars became very familiar with early modern spelling, the form "scilens" was thought to be most unusual, even unique to Hand D and to 2 *Henry IV*, and therefore strong evidence for Shakespeare as Hand D, nowadays it is recognised that the spelling is hardly so uncommon. Most of the spellings of *silence*

recorded in *OED* for this period either begin “sci-” or end “lens.” The spelling has also been found in two non-Shakespearean plays (Metz 21). In *2 Henry IV*, the slightly more common spelling of Justice Silence’s name is “Silens,” which is not a Hand-D spelling.

5 Efforts have since been made to establish on grounds independent of the *More* MS that some early printed versions of Shakespeare’s plays were printed directly from his MSS. The *locus classicus* of such efforts is Greg’s *Shakespeare First Folio*. However, as Long was first to observe, Greg’s method is at odds with evidence in surviving dramatic manuscripts from the early modern period.

6 As quoted by Chambers, pp. 222-26, with ellipses to indicate the omission of lines not directly related to his case.

7 In the MS of the anonymous play *The Wasp*, the spelling “Indean” occurs three times (276, 2010, 2223).

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