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Spellings in Sir Thomas More (Hand M) and Edward III

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Nowadays, there is general if not universal agreement¹ that the three-page insurrection scene from *Sir Thomas More* (hereafter M) is an undoubtable (if undatable) Shakespeare autograph, and also that the anonymous edition of *Edward III* in 1596 is, at least in part, his work. So if the two texts share certain unusual spellings, these may well be authorial.

Of course the two orthographies are not always exactly similar. Shakespeare's remarkable variability is clearly evidenced in M. Differences of dating may also have had their effect; further, any printed spellings may have derived from a compositor, or even a copyist, not the author.

But some of M's spellings seem so unfamiliar that their duplication in *E3* is worth investigating. Their oddity is emphasised in Honan, 1998, 45-6, with the comment that Shakespeare's supposed daily memorization of Latin, from the age of 7 until about 15, did not help his English spelling, because that language was not regularised, and anyhow his teachers 'would have cared a great deal more for a child's Latin'. However, it seems from this same child's later M spellings, in such words as Credyt, inhumanyty, infeccion, lustyce, obay, perceau and scilens, that he was heedless or unaware of creditum, inhumanitas, infectus, justitia, obedio, percipio, silens and so forth.

On any hypothesis it seems sensible, in the absence (*pace* Honan *op. cit.*) of clear counter-evidence, to accept the massive testimony that Shakespeare had 'small Latin' and indeed lacked orthodox education in general. Why, otherwise, would such illiterate, spellings be found throughout the 1596 first quarto of *Edward III*? These are now not easy to verify; there is as yet no old-spelling concordance to that fine play. But its 1596 lineation is used in a statistical analysis (Slater 1988, 197-248) and my own modern-spelling edition (Sams 1996), whence the serious analyst can identify the original words.²

Meanwhile the following parallels between M and *E3* may prove of especial interest, in view of the fact that the latter is now accepted as Shakespearean by many modern editors,³ at least in those scenes that contain the Countess (I.ii., II.i-ii, lines 177-1038, called C from now on). Given that the same hand penned both, some correspondence between M and C is only to be expected. Thus in the former we can see Shakespeare writing advauntage, Comaund, ffraunc [=France], graunt, seriaunt [=sergeant], as well as -an variants (such as Seriant); so it comes as no surprise to find braunches, comaund, exchaunge, Fraunce, inchaunted, substaunce, vauntage, as well as -an variants, in C. But then what of the -aun spellings⁴ and their -an variants in the *non*-Countess scenes? These are I.i., III. i-v, IV. i-ix, V.i; lines 1039 to 2600, the end of the play. Let us call them N from now on, which may also stand for the view that these portions are Not by Shakespeare.

Many other quirks, such as Shakespeare's frequent substitution of a capital C for a small initial c, or his preference for y over i, are also found in M, where they were treated as idiosyncratic (by Pollard, 1923, *loc. cit.*). Capital Cs appear throughout N.⁵ Examples of y for i abound there too.⁶ As Pollard also said, the list seems to be getting rather long.

But this is just a beginning. The truncated preterites in -t, identified in *The Shakespeare First Folio* (Greg, Oxford 1955, 363) as phonetic and doubtless authorial, also occur⁷ throughout N. Readers are entitled to ask why some writers (such as Gabriel Harvey⁸) should choose to spell phonetically; perhaps they too were once educationally disadvantaged?

Equally evidential are the silences and omissions. Thus to judge by M, apostrophes seem to have been anathema to Shakespeare; at least none appear throughout its 500 lines. They are also entirely absent from *E3*'s 2,600 lines, whether C or N, although they often occur in other printed sources, including the early quartos of plays known to be by Shakespeare.

The rational and economical inference so far is surely that he wrote all of *E3*, not just C. Such criteria as the supposed differences of style between C and N are too subjective and unevicenced to sustain the total rejection of N as 'non-Shakespearean'; any detectable differences of style within the same work are more rationally and economically explained by different dates of composition, which is verifiably the actual reason for other examples of possible discontinuity, in music no less than in literature.

Such an explanation also covers the many other correspondences between M and N. Thus the former tells us, in *banck*, *thanck* and *thinck*, that Shakespeare often, perhaps usually, spelt nk as nck; so no eyebrows will be raised at *rancke* (234), *incke* (398), *thincke* (525) and *thancke* (527) in C, especially since those last two words also occur in M. But so does *bancke*; and this appears in N (1421), together with *drancke* (1103) and *Francks* (1714). So the copy for N too, like that for C, was written in every sense by Shakespeare and supplied to the compositor in his own hand - unless of course he had cunningly chosen a collaborator whose spelling praxis strongly resembled his own.

Again, M thrice writes modern -ss- as a single -s- (*mas*, *stilnes*, *trespas*); and so does the hand set up by the compositors in C, which has *boldnes* (543), *busines* (347), *foolishnes* (390), *glas* (467, 468, 480), *greatnes* (719), *helples* (675), *mightines* (456, 957), *mistres* (476, 700), *pasport* (789), *sweetnes* (532), and *vnwillingnes* (955). But N says the same, often in the same words, with *busines* (2135), *pasport* (1718, 1844, 1880) and *willingnes* (2325, 2366) as well as *darkenes* (1226, 2326), *darknes* (2081), *fatherles* (1538), *numberles* (1301), *quietnes* (2398), *readines* (1046), *remorseles* (1222), *saples* (1541), *senceles* (1850), *sharpnes* (113), *sollitarines* (1343), *stubbornes* (1774), *wantonnes* (1478) *wildernes* (90), *wilfulnes* (1613) and *worthles* (1398). Such a practice conforms with Shakespeare's own spelling, according to John Mover Wilson, who says (1923, 135) that 'writers and printers of the period had the choice between -s and -sse, and it seems certain that Shakespeare generally preferred the former'. If so, it again appears that both C and N 1596 were set up from copy in his own hand.

Similarly, Shakespeare in M writes the word *coasts* as *costs*, *loaf* as *loff* and *throats* as *throts* or *throtes*, while *groat* becomes *grote*. The first of those words recurs, in the singular but again, unsurprisingly, with the Shakespearean spelling *cost*, in C, together with several analogues. But the same word, in the same spelling, also appears in N (supposedly Not Shakespeare), at lines 1109 and 1164; cf. also *approch* (2391), *approching* (1461), *approcht* (1128), *bemoning* (2309), *croke* (2111), *groning* (2525), *othe* (a key word in this play, 133, 1700, 1853, 1856, 1867), and *reproch* (109)? *Not Shakespeare?*

In M he uses the vowel ai instead of a, in *plague*, *straing*, *straingers*; and C follows suit with *prophaine* (709). But N spells *range* and *ranged* as *rainge* (1235) and *rainged* (1543). Similarly, Shakespeare in M uses the vowel ea instead of a short e, as in *geat* [=get] (300), *himsealf*, *sealf*, *sealves*, *together*. The same applies to C, which has *least* [=lest] (300), *tearmes* (343), *tearme* (891); but the same curious quirk also occurs in N, which also has *least* (103, 1142, 1265) as well as *shepherd* (44, 1441). Similarly, Shakespeare's M practice of omitting a final e after t, as in *appropriat* and *desperat*, often recurs in C, which has *contemplat* (443), *emulats* (509), *excommunicat* (689), *passionat* (444), *infinet* (481), *requisit* (452), *tribut* (607). But the same spelling is found in N, which has *priuat* (36), *respit* (2365) and *not* (= note, 20). Again, M is notable for its silent c, especially in its famously Shakespearean spelling *scilens* (as also found nineteen times in *2 Henry IV*, 1600); so too in C (*fructles*, 334), but also in N (*fructfull* 45, *Poyctiers* 1679).

In M, Shakespeare often uses doubled medial or final consonants, such as dd, ll, nn, pp, rr and tt. All six doublings are predictably found throughout C (e.g. at *shaddow* 587, *Aprill* 324, *Angell* 595, *cancell* 694, *compell* 960, *eternall* 920, *evill* 800, *annointed* 621, *gonne* 853, *vincupple* 273, *lippes* 604, *Corrall* 361, *farre* 978, *pittie* 212, *mettell* [=metal] 614); but so they are in N, often in the same words (*meddow* 1116, *Admirall* 1120, 1196, 1197, *allarum* 2211, 2229, 2361, *Anuell* [=anvil] 1652, *arriuell* 1338, *artifitiall* 1403, *Callis* [= Calais] 1720, 1750, 1799, 1803, 2345, *Callice* [= Calais] 2192, 2193 (twice), 2205, *civill* 2559, *collours* 118, 1942, 1987, *Coullours* 1635, *coulloured* 1115, *counsell* 105, 1598, 2295, *continuell* 1655, *cruell* 1656, *deniall* 2155, *dismall* 1630, *eternall* 1430, *extemporall* 2032, *fatall* 1947, *fellonious* 2373, *finall* 119, *funerall* 2474, 2519, *heerewithall* 2553, *imperiall* 1120, 2071, 2385, *Issabell* 50, *lawrell* 1514, *loyall* 1060, *maiesticall* 1118, *marshiall* [=martial] 1048, *mortall* 2272, 2274, 2514, *naturall* 1465, *Pellican* 1686, *perill* 1852, 2006, 2550, *perillous* 2050, *pollicy* 1709, *prodigall* 1445, *quarell* 1427, *quarrell* 1274, *rebell* 2238, *regall* 10, *roiall* 2184, *royall* 2323, 2346, 2423, *sallutation* 1395, *schollers* 1450, *seuerall* 1142, 1967, *sollemnly* 1061, *sollitariness* 1363, *speciall* 28, *therewithall* 2009, *tragicall* 2458, *trauell* 1784, *vallor* 1221, *vallour* 1593, *vniversell*

991, vnnaturall 769, 2116, vntill 118, 1219, 2522, donne [=done] 1639, ennemie 1694, ennemie [=enemy] 1566, linnen 1816, runne 1635, perhapps 1617, topps, 1290, afarre 1163, Courage 1474, farre 115, 1235, 1252, 1755, 1901, 1971, forrener 1466, forrage 1909, Marriner 1184, scarre 2272, 2278, spurre 1409, 2205, tyrannie 1470, warre 124, 152, 1054, 1138, 1289, 1864, 1893, 2279, 2549 etc., Bryttish 1990, pittying 2006, and sett (cf. the same word in M) 82.

Sadly, very little attention has been paid to Shakespearean spellings, whether *per se* or via misprints, since the two studies¹ of M already mentioned, despite the present widespread availability of word-processors and computers. No doubt, despite such earlier expert assurances as 'if we find any considerable number of eccentric or archaic spellings in a print, the likelihood is great that it was set up from the author's own manuscript' (Greg. *op. cit.*, 148), the current academic mind-set will find such studies unconvincing. 'Clearly, any argument for Shakespeare...on the basis of orthography must be accounted weak, for lack of reliable data' (so says Forker, 1989, 164). Nevertheless he proceeds to itemise thirty-eight unusual spellings in M (which he accepts as holographic) for which 'parallels or near parallels' have been noticed in Shakespeare's printed texts, 'the regularising tendencies of compositors notwithstanding' or else 'can be plausibly inferred from the spellings of analogous words or from compositorial misreadings'. First come examples which are unsurprisingly also found in C, where M's 'adicion' is paralleled by 'condicion' 461, and its 'oo' for 'o' as in 'afoord' by fourth 190, misdoo 752, loose [=lose] 757, 760, moouing 424, prooue 371, too [=to] 853. But double o also appears throughout N, as in beloued 2512, or again loose [=lose] 2266, 2426, 2443, remoude 1708, smothered 2206.

Next comes a leven for eleven. Personally, I expect Shakespeare knew that such English integers were spelt as one word; if so, the unusual element consisted in his writing the initial letter a so that it seemed separate. But this is a feature of *E3*, where N has a bused (1311), a farre (1163), a foot (2535) and a side (1298). Then Shakespeare in M often omits the final e after c, as in ffraunc, insolenc, obedienc, obedyenc, offyc. Forker finds the selfsame idiosyncrasy in certain accredited Quarto misprints, such as ingredience, intelligence, instance, where the sense demands ingredient, intelligent and instant respectively.

But if misprints are admitted as evidence, then such endings can readily be confirmed in C; and even without such support the spelling recompenc can be seen plainly printed in N (1327). Again, N has persaging, which may have been caused by Shakespeare's own misuse of his D abbreviation per, meaning per- or par-. Other M abbreviations are tane for taken, which reappears in N at 1191, 1617 and 1959, and ore for over, found in N at 2014 and 2111. Forker also identifies obay as a curious D formation; this uses ay for modern ey, just like pray [=prey] in N 1772. He also mentions theise = these, a word which appears as theis in N 1476, and cites ymagin from D, with the parallel ymaginary from a Shakespeare quarto; this spelling qualifies as unusual because it begins with y instead of i, like yron in N (2046, 2204). Neither he nor any of his predecessors mentions D's use of terminal -ie for -y, no doubt because both forms were used together for many years; but a complete survey of parallels should include the -ie spelling, because it is Shakespearean. And it abounds in N, which (like D) has Countrie (with capital C) and maiestie. Again, D has aie for ay in saies [=says]; so has N, in araiie [=array] 1363, arraie 1938, daies 66, 1814, 2289, delaies 2356, dismaie 2232, dismaied 2117, laie 2489, praie 1480, 2031, 2037, 2297, 2440, staie 1311, to daie 1428, 2013, 2286, waie 2143, waies 1302. The first of those N spellings recalls the many words with single consonants so spelt in Shakespeare quartos, as also in D - and in N, with carie 1282, comence 151, comixt 1838, crost 57, deferd 1528, 1874, dragd 2386, dwels 2171, dwelst 2187, imbost 2488, incompast 1591, 2143, litle 2137, lopt 2308, Loraine 1555, ods 1978, possest 1695, prest 1565, profered 1738, 1991, puld 81, shipt 2597, tost 1214, tyrannous 1390, tyranie 1470, as well as araiie 1363.

The only recent exception to the general absence of modern investigation into Shakespeare's spelling⁹ has been but tepidly received, save for one positive review.¹⁰ As before, these will not necessarily conform in every detail with the orthography of *Edward III* 1596, which was published some seven years before *Othello* was written. Besides, as *STM* shows, Shakespeare's spelling could be widely variable; and in any event the two plays have very different vocabularies. Nevertheless, the *Othello* spellings said by Honigmann to be Shakespearean (because they occur elsewhere in the canon) will be of especial interest to the serious researcher. They do not in the least depend on Shakespeare's authorship of D; but they too serve to validate the whole of *E3*, both C and N, because they occur so regularly and so copiously throughout that play. Take for example the two *Othello* spellings 'battaile' and 'battell'.

Both of them occur, six and four times respectively, in *Edward III*. But all six of those 'battailes' (1258, 1390, 1456, 1941, 1984, 2523) and three of those four 'battells' (1182, 1522, 1934) occur in N. So do comming (1800, 2380), desteny (1607), groning (2569) and intirely (198). This last example is found in the phrase 'entirely love', which is, for no very clear reason, a Shakespearean collocation (the two words appear in association eight times out of the nine usages of 'entirely' listed in the Spevack concordance, 1973, 358-9). The spelling 'intirely' is not only singled out as individually authentic by Honigmann but also included in his equally accredited Shakespearean category (4) of words spelt with initial 'in' for 'en'.

Again, lyer (=liar) is said to be a Shakespearean spelling. That word does not occur anywhere in *E3*; but lies (= untruths) is there printed as lyes (and in section N, too: 1426), and a writer who wrote lyes could hardly fail to spell liar as lyer. This would also fall under the first of Honigmann's five categories of characteristic spellings, namely (1) the very frequent substitution of y for modern i, a spelling already analysed above, and found in profusion throughout the N sections of *E3*. The Shakespearean spelling Lyon also occurs thrice in *E3* N, (102, 103, 1506); those first two references rehearse the same curious scenario as *King John* II. i. 138 and *Henry V* IV. iii. 94, where the wearer of a lion's skin is denounced - although neither of those two plays had then been published. In *E3* N, furthermore, the bogus lion would be torn 'peecemeal', although 'peece' also figures in Honigmann's list of Shakespearean spellings and recurs in *E3* N (1107). So does pity, as the first two syllables in the word pitying (2006); so does prophane (1534); so does sence, in the word senceles (1850); so do shew (1178, 2044, 2159, 2575), shewes (1932), Souldier (149) as well as the frequent souldier (1103, 1237, 1301, 1335, 1367, 1597, 1674, 1677, 1737, 1883, 2111, 2118, 2135, 2145, 2355, 2387, 2426); so do stroake (2387), suddaine (1924) and vertue (2158).

Incidentally, the spellings identified by Honigmann also serve to illustrate that lack of Latinity about which Shakespeare's contemporaries so often complained. A well-schooled classicist would hardly have rejected destino, profanus, sensus, virtus, and so forth, quite so cavalierly; nor, surely, would such a scholar have written 'emured', as contained in *E3*, when 'immured' was meant.

The first three of Honigmann's five additional groups or categories, namely (1) y for i, (2) -oo- for -o- and (3) the doubling of consonants, (4) in- for en- and (5) -full for -ful. Honigmann adds that 'the same characteristic spellings are found in the good quartos'; and many readers may think that the time has now come to examine the so-called 'bad' quartos as well. These categories also appear in *E3* N; for example with belooued (2512), foorth (190, 1759), loose [=lose] (2266, 2426, 2443), prooued (1279), remooude (1708), smoothered (2206), woone [=won] (1232).

The doubling of consonants (3) has also already been dealt with above, in some detail. But one example calls for separate consideration, namely Shakespeare's preference for the ending -full as distinct from -ful, as in Honigmann's category (5). This spelling is found throughout *E3*, whether in C (bewtifull 435, faithfull 1053, ioyfull 563, lawfull 691, peacefull 208, pytifull 423, scornfull 184, shamefull 300, vnlawfull 938) or N (disdainfull 1351, dolefull 2459, dreadfull 1899, dredfull 1302, fearefull 1089, 1272, 1678, 2101, 2582, fructfull 44, fruitfull 1378, 1783, handfull 1273, 2264, ioyfull 169, 1636, mirthfull 1256, mornefull 2310, painefull 1784, painfull 2086, 2593, paynefull 1642, peacefull 2398, rightfull 173, watchfull 1110, wilfull 1774, 2423, wonderfull 1925, youthfull 166).

That leaves category (4). *Pace* Honigmann, in- for en- as well as en- for in- are both found in *STM* (Inglond, enstalls); so the group is rightly defined as 'in- and en- interchangeable'. Such transpositions are found throughout 3, in both C (enchantment 285, enchanted 417) and N (inioynd 74, enioynd 1656). The latter, further, abounds in examples of in- for en-, such as incampe 1045, inclose 1204, incompast 1591, 2143, incroach 1369, indeuor 1022, 2142 indurde 1346, ingagde 2182, ingirt 2006, ingraud 1449, inkindled 1435, inlarge 1326, insnard 1849, 1912, intangled 1602, intertainment 2667 inthroned 1470, intombed 1493, intrapt 1921, intreated 1790, intreats 2060 intrench 1740, and intrencht 1650. There too the author is printed as if he had also written im- for em-, in imbattled 2113 imployd 1414, 1560, imboast 2488 imbrace 40, 1667, imbracement 1348 imbracing 2196.

It remains to suggest a reason why Shakespeare in D always writes 'coold', 'shoold' and 'woold'. As we have seen, he spelled phonetically; so the necessary component 'ould' would have said 'old', as indeed it does at N 1534. According to Professor Honigmann, this is a Shakespearean spelling, as in fould or unfould. These words do not occur in *E3* which however has bould, Gould, scoulding and souldered in C together with hould (1382) and souldier (2185 etc) in N.

NOTES

1 as attested by several specialists in compendia from *Shakespeare's Hand in the Play of Sir Thomas More* ed. Pollard, Cambridge 1923, to *Shakespeare and Sir Thomas More* ed. Howard-Hill, Cambridge 1989.

2 especially with the considerable help offered by the modern-spelling *Concordance to the Shakespeare Apocrypha*, ed. Ule, Hildesheim, Zürich, New York 1987, 95-196.

3 notably in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. Evans and Tobin, Boston and New York, 2/1997, 1732-1773, and *King Edward III*, ed. Melchiori, Cambridge 1998.

4 at 19 (Fraunce, as in M), 52, 82, 92, 104, 157, 980, 1032, 1050, 1142, 1552, 1634, 1807, 1815, 1828, 2438, 2454, 2466, 2488. At least the copy before the compositors was presumably also written by someone who, like Shakespeare, pronounced -an as -aun.

5 e.g. in lines 4, 84, 136, 168, 190, 1095, 1134, 1156, 1159, 1166, 1170, 1238, 1239, 1259, 1267, 1296, 1309, 1339, 1416, 1434, 1437, 1438, 1473, 1474, 1625, 1635, 1691, 1699, 1721, 1771, 1805, 1909, 1918, 1947, 2324, 2328, 2348, 2370, 2450, 2453, 2491, 2500 and 2524.

6 e.g. in lines 5, 11, 20, 23, 24, 33, 39, 40, 43, 56, 59, 63, 74, 76, 84, 92, 97, 102, 103, 106, 110, 121, 123, 124, 134, 139, 159, 161, 167, 196, 207, 208, 211, 216, 219, 221, 243, 269, 1048, 1054, 1056, 1066, 1071, 1105, 1121, 1125, 1147, 1154, 1155, 1157, 1190, 1196, 1202, 1210, 1211, 1227, 1228, 1230, 1234, 1263, 1276, 1278, 1280, 1281, 1286, 1290, 1348, 1364, 1375, 1376, 1389, 1400, 1402, 1415, 1420, 1422, 1425, 1426, 1429, 1443, 1461, 1468, 1492, 1540, 1542, 1544, 1547, 1549, 1562, 1595, 1599, 1603, 1607, 1610, 1612, 1615, 1617, 1631, 1633, 1641, 1642, 1656, 1661, 1679, 1682, 1715, 1722, 1734, 1751, 1752, 1759, 1770, 1802, 1811, 1844, 1864, 1895, 1911, 1981, 1990, 2007, 2023, 2046, 2069, 2074, 2077, 2204, 2224, 2301, 2306, 2314, 2322, 2345, 2357, 2360, 2395, 2402, 2447, 2471, 2480, 2488, 2492, 2495, 2500, 2501, 2503, 2518, 2525, 2530, 2544, 2578.

7 e.g. in lines 49, 80, 107, 129, 1021, 1054, 1087, 1094, 1097, 1107, 1133, 1141, 1169, 1237, 1239, 1258, 1288, 1300, 1360, 1430, 1512, 1565, 1591, 1623, 1635, 1648, 1650, 1678, 1695, 1743, 1756, 1786, 1797, 1838, 1848, 1851, 1923, 1934, 2070, 2081, 2083, 2095, 2125, 2143, 2204, 2213, 2253, 2308, 2312, 2465, 2478, 2488, 2511, 2545, 2556, 2559, 2580 and 2597.

8 such as Gabriel Harvey, whose own atypical spellings are discussed by J.D.Wilson in the first source named at 1 above, pp. 122-6

9 E. Honigmann, *The Texts of Othello and Shakespearian Revision*, London and New York, Routledge, 1996, especially its Appendix C, 158-161.

10 W. Speed Hill, 'Editing *Othello*: The Indefatigable in Pursuit of the Intractable', *The Shakespeare Newsletter* 50/3 No. 246, 67-8, 70, 72, 84, 88.