

Book Reviews

EDITING WYATT

Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt. Edited by KENNETH MUIR and PATRICIA THOMSON. Liverpool University Press, 1969. £5.00.

Editing Wyatt: An Examination of 'Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt' together with suggestions for an improved edition. By H. A. MASON. The Cambridge Quarterly (Publications), 1972. £2.50.

The Muir-Thomson edition (MT) was published in 1969. Miss Thomson's work seems to have been confined chiefly to the notes on poems imitated from the Italian. The dust-jacket of MT describes the volume as a 'definitive presentation', and most reviewers have accepted it as such. Mr. Mason exaggerates, however, when he claims (p. 194) that 'nobody else apparently has found anything serious to complain about in this edition of Wyatt's poems'. The preface to MT states that the editors have reluctantly disagreed with Dr. Raymond Southall on editorial policy. Professor Richard Harrier's review in *Renaissance Quarterly*, XXIII (1970), pp. 471-4, can hardly be considered to be very favourable, nor can mine in *AUMLA* 35 (1971), pp. 83-5. If these reviews appeared too late for Mr. Mason to read before the publication of *Editing Wyatt* in 1972 he should have been more patient with that, or he should have withheld judgement on other reviewers. In any case, in *The Courtly Maker* (Oxford, 1964), Dr. Southall's critical comments on Professor Muir's *Sir Thomas Wyatt: Collected Poems* (London, 1949; reprinted and revised in subsequent years) and *Sir Thomas Wyatt and his Circle: Unpublished Poems* (Liverpool, 1961) are there for all to see, and insofar as MT continues along the same lines as the previous editions, have not become outdated.

Even so, we may admire the energy, and the devotion to Wyatt, which Mr. Mason shows in his attempt to correct MT from cover to cover. MT, as neither Professor Harrier

nor I sufficiently realized in our reviews, is a very inaccurate and unreliable edition. Unfortunately Mr. Mason is on the whole more adept at seeing its faults than at offering us a corrective.

As Harrier says, it is unfortunately true that most of the bibliographical work on the Wyatt MSS. has still to be presented'. I do not think that our ignorance need meanwhile prevent us from editing the MSS., but we should pay attention to the facts. The first problem is to decide how authoritative the texts are, and what relations there are between them. This is not the place to go into the problem in great detail, but a few remarks should be made.

Mr. Mason pays little or no attention to the problem, and this is his greatest failing. Much of his book is given over to 'reconstructing' the text, and this is done on the basis of taste rather than anything else. Not only are the results as a rule entirely arbitrary and eclectic, but they also fly in the face of the facts. As Professor Muir and several others are aware, there are sound reasons for regarding the Egerton MS. as our most authoritative source. Several of the poems are in Wyatt's handwriting. This is not, theoretically, a sure sign of his authorship, but the Penitential Psalms, for instance, are so extensively revised that there can be little doubt that they are Wyatt's compositions. Several of the poems not in Wyatt's hand have been revised by him. Again, this does not prove his authorship, but the important point is that these poems *may* be by Wyatt, and *may* be in a form which he approved of. It is clear, anyhow, that we should not tamper with them unless we have very compelling reasons for doing so, and Mr. Mason is far too ready to alter poems anywhere in the Egerton MS., including poems in Wyatt's hand. Further, in the absence of evidence, we cannot tell whether anonymous poems in the MS. are Wyatt's, and authoritative, or not. They may be by someone else; but they may have been supervised by Wyatt as copies of his poems, and we are not at liberty to act as though they are distorted versions of his poems which we need to set right. Moreover, a number of poems have been ascribed 'Tho' or Wyat'. We need not share Muir's rather uncritical faith

in these ascriptions. We are uncertain who were responsible for them. As Dr. Southall has pointed out, we should distinguish between the two categories. Someone close to the poet (or, perhaps, the poet himself) was apparently responsible for the 'Tho' ascriptions. The evidence is not conclusive, but it points fairly firmly in the direction of Wyatt's authorship. We should feel less confident about the 'Wyat' ascriptions. If the 'Tho' ascriptions are to be relied upon, it is not a little odd that whoever was responsible for them did not mark the poems which are ascribed 'Wye.

Professor Muir is inclined to regard most or all of the poems as Wyatt's and authoritative. Like Mr. Mason, he should have paid more attention to Dr. Southall's description of the Egerton MS. (see particularly Appendix A of *The Courtly Maker*). However, Muir has the facts rather more on his side than does Mason in deciding to trust or reject the evidence according to his fancy.

It is true that we know less of the authority of the other primary sources. Even so, using the Egerton MS. (E) as our starting-point, as we must, we can set up some sort of a hierarchy. After an extensive comparison between Tottel's Miscellany (T) and the MSS. one can only agree with Professor Muir and others that generally speaking T must be considered very unreliable—though the T versions of short-line, rhythmically regular 'lyrics' are apparently more authoritative than the versions of poems which in E don't scan. I think that on the whole we must agree with Professor Ruth Hughey (*The Arundel Harington Manuscript of Tudor Poetry*, 2 vols., Columbus, Ohio, 1960) about the status of the Arundel MS. (A) and the Hill MS. (P). These texts bear frequent and unmistakable signs of later revision away from E in the direction of T, to which they are often conspicuously similar. Muir recognizes the fact. I find it surprising that Harrier has more faith in A than in the Devonshire MS. (D); but evidently we disagree about the position of D.

Prior to the re-discovery of the Blage MS. (B), Muir regarded D as the second most important Wyatt MS., and I think that this view was—and still is—entirely defensible.

Harrier argues that some studies have 'moved the volume out of Wyatt's social circle' (p. 473). This seems an exaggerated view, but in any case a MS. may be based on an authoritative source no matter by whom, where, or when the poems in it were copied. For all her faults, Miss A. K. Foxwell, in *A Study of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poems* (1911; repr. New York, 1964) and her edition *The Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (2 vols., 1913; repr. New York, 1964), showed the importance of the fact that several of the poems in D preserve earlier versions of the poems in E. Of course, as Muir points out, the D text of MT's XCVIII, 'for example, incorporates Wyatt's own alterations, but does not incorporate any of the deleted readings' (MT, p. xx). Even so, there is a firm textual link between D and E, and many of the departures can be explained on the assumption—or by the fact—that the D readings are authoritative, but precede those which Wyatt finally preferred (and E shows that he was in the habit of revising his poems). Moreover, D generally makes excellent sense, and the poems are stylistically closer to those in E than are those in A, of which we know that they often resemble those in T, a text based on stylistic principles very different from Wyatt's own.

It is more difficult, at this stage, to settle the general claims of B as opposed to those of D. In MT, Professor Muir treats B as the second most important Wyatt MS., but Professor Harrier, Dr. Southall, Mr. Mason, and I are apparently all agreed that this claim cannot be maintained or is at the least dubious. For a start, there are very few poems in B which by any criterion can safely be attributed to Wyatt. For those peculiar to B, the only criterion we can generally invoke is style, and this criterion is almost wholly without value from a scholarly point of view. As for the poems which B shares with D or E, there is simply no good ground for believing, as Professor Muir does, that the readings in B are more authoritative than those in D. And one can as easily argue that some of the D readings are superior to those in B as *vice versa*. The fact that Blage knew Wyatt counts for very little, and as Professor Harrier argues, it is possible that Blage did not first own the

MS. but got possession of it sometime in the 1540's and was well aware that it was not a collection of Wyatt poems'. Muir states in *Unpublished Poems* (p. ix) that it seems reasonable to assume that loose sheets of different dates were brought together for the compilation of B, but in the section with which we are concerned the watermark is the same throughout. The idea that Blage was compiling a Wyatt MS. is probably no more than a romantic fancy. Most importantly, there are many occasions when B departs significantly from E; the fact that it shares some readings with D or T tells us little, and we know nothing about the authority of readings unique to B. The problem is further complicated by the fact that B sometimes contains two readings by different hands where Muir records only one, and that we know very little about the hands involved. We should keep an open mind, but meanwhile we appear to be on safer ground with D than with B.

It is not necessary to discuss all the primary sources here. The chief point I am making, and one that I base on a comparison of the sources, is that Professor Muir is quite right in trying to set up a hierarchy, and Mr. Mason wrong in largely ignoring it. However, Muir is almost certainly wrong in regarding B as the second most important-MS. Nor does he seem to be aware (as Padelford was) that the Harleian MS., which he lumps together with e.g. A and P (p. xxv) is in fact on the whole a good deal more reliable than those MSS., as comparison with E shows. And I think that Mason is right in casting doubt on the authority of A as a source for lines 100-53 missing from the E version of the Penitential Psalms, which is not to say that we need accept the cocktail that Mason produces on pp. 153-4.

Though there is a hierarchy of texts, it is in some respects an uncertain one. The problem is well illustrated by Muir's decision to prefer B to D. Crudely, the evidence probably suggests that D is the more reliable MS. But the editor who uses D as his copy-text is in almost as awkward a position as Muir. Each decision implies a generalization about the MSS. At the moment we can hardly do better, but we need to work harder on the primary sources before

we can be confident that such generalizations are justified. It is a dangerous over-simplification to act as though the poems were copied into a MS. by one hand using one more or less reliable source. It is perfectly possible that one poem is more authoritative in D than in B while another is not. We should therefore endeavour to determine more specifically how authoritative the versions of individual poems are, and this can only be done by a thorough study of the make-up of each MS., and by a comparison of the various versions of a poem. The make-up of a MS. can only be properly studied by considering a MS. in its entirety, and Professor Muir's inaccurate inventories of the MSS. in the Introduction of MT do not take us very far. We need such descriptions as Dr. Southall gives us in his Appendices. If such descriptions are to be of any interest and use to other readers, we need separate editions of the MSS. Such a job as Professor Hughey has done on A, though it is not without faults, needs to be undertaken for every other MS. It is a scandal that A, a relatively unimportant MS., is from a scholarly point of view so far the only one that has been edited at all decently.

Even if one grants Muir his inadequate descriptions of the MSS. (we are told next to nothing about the various hands involved, for example) and his dubious choice of copy-texts, much of what has been done in MT has been done deplorably and should have been done much better.

For instance, when it comes to giving evidence for Wyatt's authorship Professor Muir is often at fault. Poem LVI, to mention only one example, is corrected by Wyatt in E, and ascribed 'TW' in D. Muir would have given much better information of this kind if he had used Southall's transcripts of E and D more carefully, which were at his disposal. Apart from the inaccuracy of the inventories of the MSS. in the Introduction, MT occasionally shows confusion about the position of the poems in the MSS.; thus CCXXXIV is not followed in A by a Wyatt poem, but preceded by one ascribed to Wyatt in T, and it is not recorded that the first four lines of LXVII appear in B. Mr. Mason notes correctly that variant readings are very incompletely listed—so much so that this information is almost worthless.

The principal textual question that remains is whether the poems have been correctly transcribed. Someone who knows the difficulty of the task would be optimistic to expect perfection, but Muir's readings are unfortunately very inexact. Most often the many mistakes which Mason lists are indeed errors. However, there are several errors which Mason fails to note, particularly in the B poems, which contain an abnormally high proportion of misreadings even for MT. Some of these make complete nonsense of the text. Mr. Mason should surely have noted CLXXIII, 15, *than*, which occurs neither in B nor D, and which should of course read *that*. To mention merely one more example: CXLVI, 32, *there*, which is nonsensical but accepted by Mr. Mason, reads *then* in B. As often, the *e* represents our *i*; *then* is a form of modern *thine*. Professor Muir is more than once puzzled by this simple fact, for instance when he discusses XI, 4, *nede*, which, as Nott observed, is a form of *needy*. The reading *then* can only be determined from the MS. itself, since some of the ink which a microfilm shows as writing on the recto is in fact part of the writing on the verso.

Mr. Mason's corrections are in several places incorrect. This applies particularly to his 'corrections' of Southall's readings. Generally, Dr. Southall's transcripts are the best I have seen. They are not faultless, and some of Mr. Mason's corrections are right, but it is very much easier to correct Southall's labour than Muir's or Mason's. Southall's errors, moreover, are generally mechanical rather than intellectual. A good example which Mason notes (pp. 8-9) is *giue* in the 'Aunswer' to XXXIV. I can only agree with Mason that this mistake (E has *griue*) must be a slip on Southall's part rather than a sign of inability; Southall has as a rule little trouble with such simple, clearly-written words, and he shows himself uniquely perceptive when he tackles almost undecipherable words in XXXV. With some revisions, Southall's transcripts could readily serve as the basis for a new, scholarly edition of the MSS. It is distressing to have to observe that Mason's attempts inspire one with less confidence in his ability to read sixteenth-century MSS. For instance, XCII, 9 has *Sephances*,

as Professor Hughey records (and Professor Muir with her), not, as Mr. Mason thinks it might be, *Sephame*. Given the nature of the symbols used in A, *Sephame* would be an anachronism. However, several of Mason's corrections of Hughey's transcript of A (which for the most part is extremely easy to read) are right.

One of the most disturbing features of MT, as Mason observes, is that in several places its text bears signs of having been derived from transcripts, notably Southall's and Hughey's, rather than the primary sources themselves. Mason rightly adduces the example of *glue* (above), and there are several others. I agree with Mason that some of the mistakes in the transcripts have been incorporated into MT's text, while several correct readings have been ignored, or at least are not presented. It is patently obvious that the only way in which an editor can construct a reliable text is by going to the MSS. themselves. One wonders, incidentally, why Professor Muir is in the habit of following Professor Hughey rather than Dr. Southall when he has the choice, yet is contented to lean on Dr. Southall when he has not.

Quite rightly, Professor Muir's text does not include many emendations, but there might have been fewer (*pace* Mr. Mason); for instance, *me* for *my* in CXXIII, 7, is wholly unnecessary, for the address 'my thought' is clearly paralleled in line 12.

Mr. Mason pays next to no attention to the way Professor Muir has handled the difficult question of punctuation. *Yet* if Muir's text too often fails, it fails at least as much because of his treatment of this problem as any other. The general reader must find himself often entirely bewildered by the punctuation in MT. Most often it is Muir's own or Miss Foxwell's, but in some instances it is that of the MSS., and since the significance of the signs there is not explained and they are not presented separately from Muir's modern punctuation, they are not less confusing. I have written about some instances before, e.g. in *Notes and Queries* (June, 1971), 214-16, but of late I have discovered so many other examples of faulty punctuation that a further article will be required to deal with them.

Here I shall first note an example of Muir's unfortunate neglect of MS punctuation. Lines 97-99 of CVIII occur thus in E, where they are written in Wyatt's own hand :

I lord ame strayd / I sek w^t owt recure
 fele al my lymys y^t have rebelld / for fere
 shake in dispayre onles y^u me assure

Professor Muir produces this :

I lord ame strayd : I, sek without recure, Fele
 al my lymys, that have rebelld for fere, Shakes in
 dispayre, onles thou me assure.

One may quarrel with Muir's punctuation from a stylistic point of view; this is one good reason why Southall maintained in *The Courtly Maker* that one should not tamper with MS. punctuation. However, the main point here is that Muir has distorted Wyatt's sense, which emerges quite plainly from what Wyatt wrote. David means that he shakes in despair because he is afraid, not that his fear has led him to rebel.

Poem CCXLVI is one of many that has been strikingly mispunctuated. If we are to have comprehensible modern punctuation, the whole poem will have to be punctuated anew. I only quote here Muir's version of the last stanza :

But deathe were deliuerance and lief lengthe off payne :
 Off two ylles, let see nowe chuse the lest: This
 birde to deliuer youe that here her playne, Your
 aduise, yowe louers, wyche shalbe best In cage
 thraldome, or by the hauke to be opprest And which
 for to chuse? Make playne conclusyon By losse off lief
 libertye or lief by prison

I doubt that any reader can understand this. To bring out what I think to be the sense, I would repunctuate the stanza as follows, and undo the emendation in line 2:

But deathe were deliuerance, and lief lengthe off payne.
 Off two ylles, let see nowe, chuse the best
 This birde to deliuer, youe that here her playne.
 Your aduise, yowe louers, wyche shalbe best :

style, and it was not Wyatt's 'task' to render as literally as possible the concentrated short love allegory of the ship in XXVIII, but within their limitations Miss Thomson's remarks are generally sound. An important exception which of course Mason is quick to pounce on is the commentary on the Psalms. It would seem that Mason's rejoinder is on the whole right and is in many respects supported by Robert G. Twombly's 'Thomas Wyatt's Paraphrase of the Penitential Psalms of David' in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, XII (1970), pp. 345-80. At the least, Mason is justified in claiming that the editor has a case to answer.

Something should also be said about the standard of proofreading and general care for presentation in MT. It is obvious from Mason's book that this standard is low, but the fact deserves explicit attention. The norm is set on the first page of the Preface, and in the first paragraph, where we are referred to a non-existent poem 'Once in *her* grace'. This level is maintained until the very end; p. 475 of the Index, for instance, contains no less than seven errors. Several of these are of minor importance, but they are symptomatic, and mistakes like 'I *have* loved and so doth she' make MT hard to use. The same goes for such a thing as the reference under *Prese, in* (Glossary), which should be LXXI. 9, not LXX. 19. The Commentary says about XCIV. 10, *time*: 'See Glossary'. But there one looks for the word in vain.

It will be clear that Mr. Mason and I largely agree about MT in a negative sense. But we do not agree about the way a better text should be constructed. There is certainly a need for a reliable, scholarly edition of the texts. Anyone who bothers to inspect MT carefully against the primary sources will come to the conclusion that its text should not be regarded as definitive. It is perhaps useful to consider whether there are other, better editions to turn to. The situation is not comforting. However, the text of T has been splendidly edited by Rollins. And there is a Scholar Press facsimile reprint of T's first edition. In this respect we are well served, as we need to be, for MT does not even print the T poems or variants from them accurately. The text of A appears in a reasonably trustworthy

form in Hughey's volumes. As Mason points out, Hughey's transcripts are not impeccable, but it must be admitted that her version of CCXXXIX, for instance, is very much more reliable than Muir's. And a great advantage of Hughey's text is that it avoids emendations and editorial punctuation, and hence confusion. Moreover, she assembles much information about A and other primary sources. Nevertheless, A should ideally be re-edited. *The Court of Venus* has been edited by Russell A. Fraser (Durham, N.C., 1955). The edition is not faultless, but it is a great help. The relation between the texts needs to be considered anew in view of the re-emergence of B. I agree with Muir, however, that the importance of the fragments as Wyatt texts is marginal.

The other primary sources, of which E, at least, is much more important than those just mentioned, have not been edited very well. Ewald Flügel's transcript of E in *Anglia*, vols. 18 and 19, remains of some value. Thus, as Muir and Mason fail to note, Flügel and Southall are exceptional in claiming—correctly—that we should read *in hert* in XII. 1. Southall's transcript of E is very much better than Flügel's; but it is not in print. I believe we are all agreed about the unreliability of Miss Foxwell's edition. The only other significant, full-scale edition of Wyatt which we need consider is Nott's, to whose outstanding virtues Mason rightly draws our attention. The great strength of Nott's edition is the wealth and perceptiveness of its explanatory material. The reader who consults Nott and Rollins for this will generally find himself aided more by their editions than by MT. In this respect, at least, Nott's edition is easily the best edition of Wyatt so far. His intelligence was considerable, and his learning stupendous (most of the Italian sources, and nearly all of the Chaucerian parallels, that we now know of were discovered by Nott; but to say so is to do poor justice to the scope of Nott's erudition and his use of it). Few of us can hope even to approach Nott's level, but he sets a standard for which we should try to aim. Nott's text is less satisfactory. It is modernized, which I think quite defensible in an edition for the general reader, but which has serious limitations from a

scholarly point of view. Nott provides his own punctuation. Theoretically, this has some drawbacks, and Nott certainly over-punctuates, while he does not always show that he grasps Wyatt's syntax, but very often he does where later editors reveal that they don't. However, like Mr. Mason, Nott is too eager to conflate and emend his texts. From his point of view, Nott produces a text more precise and intelligible than Foxwell's or MT's, but it will not satisfy the scholar who—as he should—wishes to see the evidence unadulterated.

Dissatisfied with previous editions, I have tried to produce one that will serve students and general readers. However, I remain aware that a scholarly edition will need to be undertaken. I shall now briefly sketch what kind of edition I think is required. Dr. Southall and I are, I believe, in general agreement about what needs to be done, and we have begun to consider the MSS. afresh, but I would not be thought to be speaking for both of us.

Baldly speaking, we desperately need a precise and complete presentation of the facts. There are simply no printed transcripts which are sufficiently close to the MSS. To mention only the most obvious desiderata, the actual words need to be correctly transcribed, including all deleted readings and accretions (unless we can be absolutely sure that they are spurious); the punctuation that appears in the MSS. needs to be presented, with comments on who may be thought responsible for it and what it may signify, and editorial punctuation should be kept out.

It will be necessary to edit the MSS. separately. A MS. needs to be considered bibliographically, and in its entirety. Only in this way can we get a proper view of the question which hands are responsible for entering the poems or revising them, just how much attention we should pay to ascriptions, and how the various parts of the MS. were brought together. These issues are obviously important in an attempt to settle the canon (at present an editor of Wyatt just does not know which poems to include or exclude), the question of authority, and that of dates. Only then can textual comparisons of differing versions of a poem make real sense.

I crudely state only some of the basic problems and procedures, but I hope to have indicated in which direction we should move. Once the textual facts have been satisfactorily presented it becomes possible to provide other material. A gloss, for instance, will carry more conviction if the various versions of a poem have been looked at. Thus the Commentary of MT suggests that XX. 6, *Take with* means 'take with you'. Obviously, the editors take *the* to be a definite article in 'Take with the payne whereof I have my part'. It reads more easily as a form of *thee* anyway, but the likelihood becomes a near certainty if we examine MT's textual notes and there find that *the* appears as *thee* in T, and as *you* in D.

But of course *any* statement about the text can only be sound if that has been satisfactorily presented. Otherwise, no Wyatt scholarship or criticism can successfully proceed.

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DAMAGED

Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel. By NORMAN FRUMAN.

George Allen & Unwin, 1972. £5.50.

Now that this book is published and familiar, nothing will be the same again in Coleridge studies. Let me say at once that Fruman's charges against Coleridge can never be countered; they can only be upheld or supplemented, as more and more evidence of plagiarism and duplicity comes to light. Joseph Cottle, indulging in his own form of literary biography, said that Coleridge was the kind of man who 'ceases to be private property, but is transferred, with all his appendages, to the treasury of the public', and the *Quarterly* hated him for it, calling his *Recollections* 'the sweepings of a shop, the shreds of a ledger, the rank residuum of a life of gossip, . . . Bristol garbage', which vilified a great man from motives of so-called conscience, duty, and religion. What would they have made of Fruman?—in his funnily-arranged book he first strips away