

(Economic History, Sydney) has drawn my attention to two recent comments. Lady Antonia Fraser notes, in her *Biography of Mary, Queen of Scots*, that

There was a rooted prejudice in Scotland against May marriages—or, as a Scottish saying had it: "Marry in May and regret it for ay"; and the records show a remarkable decline in the number of marriages practised during that month. Ovid's line (from the fifth book of the *Fasti*) described the similar prejudice of the ancient Romans, said to have been due to the fact that the *Lemuralia*, or three-day feasts to appease the spirits of the dead, began on 9 May.<sup>2</sup>

A similar tradition, again referring to May generally, and to the misfortunes which attended men marrying in May, is cited by N.Z. Davis: "an old tradition warned man not even [*sic*] to marry in May, for then the bride would have him in harness for the rest of his life".<sup>3</sup>

It is just possible, as Mrs Jack suggested to me, that Dunbar feared the establishment of a Tudor domination through the marriage—though the poem as a whole offers statesmanlike approbation of the union. It seems more likely, given the analogy of Douglas's use, that the allusion has a different significance altogether and was a way of signalling the auspiciousness of the occasion. I would be grateful for any suggestions.

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1. See F.N. Robinson, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn, Oxford 1957, p.674.
2. Antonia Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots* (Panther 1970), p.385.
3. N.Z. Davis, "Youth Groups and Charivaris", *Past and Present*, No. 50 (February 1971), p.45.

#### The Sense of Some Passages in Wyatt

The sense of Wyatt's verse, particularly in its syntax, sometimes offers difficulties which editors have not—or not sufficiently—elucidated. Of course one could argue that all editors need do is provide the best possible text and leave its interpretation to the reader, the best possible text being the most accurate reproduction of the most authoritative sources. Any attempt to go beyond this toward a version of what the author might have intended is bound to involve an editor in interpretation and speculation. The editor's version may nevertheless seem convincing, but it will not be entirely factual.

Professor Muir's two editions of Wyatt's poems go a long way towards being entirely factual. Quite rightly, no attempts are made to conflate various readings, and the words in MS sources are reproduced faithfully. But the MSS of Wyatt are so thin in punctuation that editions can hardly hope to be entirely factual in this respect. Muir, however, has freely supplied his own, without indicating whether the punctuation he prints is to be found in the original sources, or whether it is of his own invention (See *MT Introd*, p.xxvi).

Professor Muir's representation of the poems, therefore, is to some degree interpretative, the punctuation being used to elucidate the text for a modern reader. This is true alike of the recent *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool University Press, 1969), edited by Professor Muir and Patricia Thomson, and of Muir's earlier edition of the poems (1949). Not that it would be fair to single out Professor Muir's work: there is simply no edition that prints Wyatt's poems as they stand in the MSS. Nonetheless the Muir-Thomson edition offers a ready basis for discussion, as being the most recent edition of its kind and in some respects an exhaustive scholarly piece of work. It is a pity that it leaves so much to be desired, when we consider its representation of the MS punctuation.

Such punctuation as there is in the MSS is probably meant to indicate rhetorical (probably rhythmical) rather than syntactical patterning, though naturally one cannot always keep the two functions distinct. Both the origin and the precise function of individual marks is still a matter of doubt, as is admitted by the scholar who probably knows most about these problems, Dr Raymond Southall, whose important book *The Courtly Maker* (Oxford, 1964) should have influenced MT far more than it did. If the marks are rhythmical, they affect the delivery of the poems rather than their sense, and not to print them is bad enough from this point of view. But Southall may well be right when he argues that the punctuation of the manuscript also affects the sense in cases like the following (MT CCXXXIX), which is printed thus:

Patiens, for I have wrong  
And dare not shew whereyn;  
Patiens shalbe, my song,  
Sins truthe can no thing wyne;  
Patiens then for this fytt,  
Hereafter comis not yett.

Southall (p.133) indicates that the MS punctuation mark (.) between "comis" and "not" suggests a syntactical reading quite different from Muir's ("...for the last two lines editors have given the reading 'patiens then for this fytt, hereafter comis not yett'. This gives to the lines the trite meaning, 'Have patience with this fit, for the hereafter doesn't come yet'. In the original the sense of the lines is quite different, it is, 'Have patience then, for this fit hereafter comes, not yet'.") Muir does not discuss this problem, and disregard of MS punctuation, or of what others have said about it, is alas all too typical of MT. It is least responsible in the case of the Egerton MS (which contains poems in the poet's own hand as well as a number supervised by him); but it is not attentive to two other MSS, which, on Professor Muir's own admission, are highly authoritative (Blage and Devonshire). The punctuation of even the worst sixteenth-century manuscript may well tell us more about Wyatt than any modern conjecture could hope to.

In several places, the punctuation Muir has inserted is almost certainly contrary to Wyatt's intention. Consider the following stanza, from poem LXIX in MT ("I have sought long with stedfastnes"):

Therefore I plaid the foole in vain,  
With pitie, when I first began  
Your cruell hert for to constrain, Syns  
love regardeth no doulfull man.

The comma after "pitie" also appears in Muir's 1949 edition, *The Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, London, 1949; 4th impression, 1963, henceforth M. Neither M nor MT explains why the comma was introduced, and it is not in the main MS tradition. The sense seems quite satisfactory without it. We can perhaps paraphrase the lines: "When I first began, with an appeal to pity, to try and compel your cruel heart to love me...". The word "doulfull" seems to support this interpretation.

Another passage, I believe, has never been punctuated adequately. No editorial punctuation I know of brings out the sense satisfactorily, and indeed editorial punctuation here appears to impose syntactical nonsense on the manuscript. I am thinking of MT XLV ("What no, perdy, ye may be sure!"). The second part of the poem is represented thus:

Though that with pain I do procure  
 For to forgett that ons was pure Within  
 my hert shall still that thing,  
 Vnstable, vnsure and wavering, Be  
 in my mynde withoute recure?  
 What no, perdye!

In M there was a comma after "pure". The undesirable effect of this was to make "within my hert" a part, as an adverbial modifier, of the clause that follows, where, however, we already have "in my mynde". MT seems a step in the right direction; but the phrase still hovers in the air. I would read:

Though that with pain I do procure  
 For to forgett that ons was pure  
 Within my hert, shall still that thing  
 Vnstable, vnsure and wavering Be  
 in my mynde without recure?

Of course, it might be better not to tamper with what appears in the MS at all; but if we do want to provide punctuation, we should either come down on the side of what makes straightforward sense, or else explain fully (as M and MT do not) why doing so would lead one astray. In the present case, while it is not perhaps entirely clear just what was "pure" within Wyatt's heart, it seems easier to suppose something was, than to produce the confusing duplication "within my hert"—"in my mynde". Wyatt, it may be thought, here compares a "pure" emotional state (presumably one in which he sheltered in the safety of the woman's love), with the uncertainty wrecking his mind in the poem's present. He tries to forget his past happiness in the knowledge that it will not return, but he also wants to free his mind from the anxiety it would experience if he doted "without ending".

Another interesting example occurs in lines 80-84 of MT CVI ("My mothers maydes when they did sowe and spyne"):

Eche kynd of lyff hath with him his disease.  
 Lyve in delight evyn as thy lust would,  
 And thou shalt fynde when lust doeth moost the please  
 It irketh strait and by itself doth fade.

A small thing it is, that may thy mynde apese.

The whole argument of this poem suggests, I think, that Wyatt, as much in search for peace of mind here as we just saw him in MT MLV (and this search is central in him) holds that the mind should simply seek contentment within itself, and not allow itself to get frantically absorbed in the enticing entanglements of the world outside. I believe, therefore, that the sense of the last line is something like: "You should not look far for your peace of mind, for the thing which will set it at rest is only small". On this understanding MT's editorial comma (not in M) in the last line above is misleading rather than helpful.

The other instance I want to discuss is perhaps more problematic and debatable. Consider lines 1-4 of poem XXXI:

Love and fortune and my mynde, remembre  
Of that that is nowe with that that hath  
ben, Do torment me so that I very often  
Envy them beyonde all mesure.

The comma before "remembre" in MT is an editorial insertion. It occurs in a number of previous editions (M: Foxwell), and may ultimately go back to Tottel, where "remembre" became a verb in a subordinate clause introduced by "which do". But it is perfectly possible to read "remembre" as a verb in a *main* clause, with a plural subject. I propose to read: "Love and fortune and my mynde remembre / Of that that is nowe with that that hath ben; / [and thus] do torment me so ...".

Editions of Wyatt, including MT, have insufficiently regarded the punctuation of the MSS, and generally supplied modern marks without restraint and without comment. The procedure seems to me rather unscholarly anyway, but it has the embarrassing effect of showing us that several passages in Wyatt have not been properly explained. Unintentionally, therefore, the procedure appears to have its use. But this is not to defend it, and it seems that a new edition should seek to give both the complete textual facts, and an interpretation of those facts which is not allowed to interfere with the status of the evidence but merely tries to explain it. Wherever an editor chooses to disregard manuscript punctuation and instead provides his own, this ought to be made very clear, out of the respect to which the poems are entitled. Interpretations could be seen as distinct from the editorial process in its purest sense, yet it is clear we shall need them.

(I have also discussed editorial principles in general, and a fair number of specific textual examples, in my review of the Muir-Thomson edition in *AUMLA*, No.35, 1971, pp.83-85, and in "Some Problems of Punctuation and Syntax in Egerton MS. 2711 of Wyatt's Verse", *NO*, June 1971, pp.214-16. Dr Southall informs me that H.A. Mason will shortly publish a book on editing Wyatt. This should make very interesting reading.)

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