

chewed at that feaste. And here I make an ende of this present traitie *which* I have gadered togeders of this sayde feaste, and at this tyme I write no more; save I beseeche them that were there at the sayde feaste to set in ruche thinges as be digne and worthy to be set in this booke that nowe come not to me remembrance, to the entente that it may be had in sempiternell memorye, *which* was done and fynished in the towne of Bruges, the tyme and yeare aforesaide.

Explicit le mariage de treshault et trespuissant et victorieux prynce, Charles, Duc de Burgoyne, de Brabante, &c. et Margaret, seur de tresnoble, treshault et trespuissant Edward, Roy d'Engleterre et de Fraunce, Signore d'Irlande.

RICHARD FIRTH GREEN

University of Western Ontario

JOHN SKELTON'S LATIN VERSES 'QUI TRAHIS'

IN 1907 Friedrich Brie brought to light a manuscript Latin poem, attributed by its copyist to John Skelton, written on an originally disjunct parchment leaf subsequently inserted into a paper manuscript, Cambridge University Library, Ee.v.18, as its fo. 52^v.¹ Reexamination of the leaf reveals the presence there of a further couplet, not printed by Brie but apparently appertaining to the four lines that he did print:

Qui trahis ex domiti ramum pede leonis,
 Demonis indomiti me serva leonis;
 Candida qui rigid& tua tundis pectora saxo,
 Ipse tuffs famunis, o pater, esto plus.

¹ Brie, 'Skelton-Studien', *Englische Studien*, xxxvii (1907), 28. Brie doubted Skelton's authorship of the verses, and Robert Kinsman and Theodore Yonge, *John Skelton: Canon and Census* (n.p., 1967), 17, acquiesced in Brie's opinion. On the other hand, the poem's inappropriateness to the 'jest-book' Skelton suggests that there might be more to the attribution than wishful thinking on the verses' copyist's part: these are not the sort of verses that would have been freely attributed to the facetious priest Skelton was posthumously reputed to have been, in the way of the Latin verses attributed to Skelton in London, British Library, Egerton 2642, fo. 130v, printed by Ian Gordon, 'New Light on Skelton', *Times Literary Supplement*, 1703 (20 Sept. 1934), 636.

² Brie- mistakenly reads *frigido* for the manuscript's *rigido*. For other corrections to Brie's thorough but apparently occasionally hasty work, see L. J. Lloyd, 'A Note on Skelton', *Review of English Studies*, v (1929), 302-6.

Vanga, ligo, mentem moveant, et fossa sepulchre:

Gens moritura sumus, mortis imago docet.³

The final couplet, omitted by Brie, is set apart from the first four lines by slightly more space than separates the lines of the individual couplets or the first two couplets from one another; and although the two lines making up each of the three couplets are linked with one another by similar brackets at the right margin, and the brackets so linking the lines of the first two couplets are linked in turn by a further bracket, set next to which is the verses' copyist's attribution of the lines, 'Skeltonidis laureati', the final couplet is not bracketed with the first two couplets in the way they are bracketed with each other. Nevertheless, the final couplet was copied in the same ink, in an at least similar hand, distinctively different from the scribbles that cover the rest of the sheet.⁴ The physical evidence suggestive of association of the final couplet with the rest of the poem is corroborated by the way in which the couplet sets an end to the previous four verses: the unfocusedly devotional first two couplets become an effectively concrete *memento mori* in light of the final couplet.

DAVID CARLSON

Southern Methodist University, Dallas

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Ee.v.18, fo. 52^v, quoted by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

⁴ The miniscule 'g' of *rigido* differs from those in *Vanga*, *Om* and *imago*, but the sample of writing is insufficiently long to allow other such differentiations to emerge, nor to determine whether one hand or two copied the six lines; certainly, they are all in the same, uniform brown ink, unlike any of the other material copied on the parchment leaf. Brie's suggestion notwithstanding, at least nine different hands have written on the leaf at various times.

WYATT'S 'I LEAD A LIFE UNPLEASANT': TEXT AND INTERPRETATION

SIR THOMAS WYATT'S 'I lead a life unpleasant, nothing glad'¹ is not one of his most popular poems, but that fact is no reason for not getting the text and its interpretation right. Yet editor after editor has tampered with the text found in the most authoritative Wyatt

¹ See my edition, *Sir Thomas Wyatt: Collected Poems* (Oxford University Press, 1975). I quote the first nine in full (modernized as it is in my text) so as to enable the reader to locate the poem in any edition of Wyatt.

manuscript (Egerton MS 2711 in the British Library) so as to make it significantly different from its original as a result of a misinterpretation of the sense.

The first question we must address is: just how authoritative is the text in the Egerton manuscript? Obviously, if the text is highly authoritative, editors would be less justified in 'emending' it than if it is not.

Allowing for the conventions of modern printing, I copy out the Egerton version as precisely as possible:

I lede a liff / vnpleasant / nothing glad /
 Crye / and complaynt offerre voydes loyfunnesse
 u re
 so chungethe vnrest / that nought shall fade payne
 and dyspyte bathe Altered plesantnes ago /
 nong / synnys / that she hath truly / made /
 dysdayne / for trowght / sett lyght yn stedfastnes I
 haue cause goode to syng this song playne
 or reioyse / who felythe / wene / or wrong

The poem is entered in a scribal hand. There appears to be fairly widespread agreement, however, that the poem was revised by Wyatt himself. Thus, below the transcript of the poem which occurs in his unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Birmingham University, 1961), Raymond Southall writes 'Corrected by Wyatt' (without explaining where). Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson, in their edition of Wyatt,² say about line 3: 'chaungethe vnrest] *between these words is inserted in W's (?) handwriting what looks like re; possibly it is meant for y = the*'. R. C. Harrier comments:

This is the first text in *E* [Egerton MS 2711] copied by the second scribal hand of the volume, hand C. There are two additions to the scribal text, both probably by Wyatt himself. The final 's' on 'voydes' (1. 2) was added later. The letters 're' were placed above the third line before the word 'vnrest'. Wyatt was probably contemplating the revision of 'vnrest' to 'rest'.³

a

In line 3, Harrier reads 'chungethe,' not

'chungethe', as I do. He may be correct,

² *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool University Press, 1969).

³ *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry* (Harvard University Press, 1975), 194.

although I do see a different symbol from him, despite the fact that 'chaungethe' obviously makes better sense. The alteration appears to be scribal and may be mechanical rather than intellectual. At any rate, Harrier and I are in agreement that Wyatt was not responsible for it.

I also agree with him that the 's' in 'voydes' is Wyatt's; indeed, I think it is certainly his, not just 'probably'. I also feel quite positive that 're' was inserted by Wyatt, but I disagree with both the suggestion advanced by Harrier (namely, that 're' was the beginning of 'rest') and Muir and Thomson's (namely, that 're' may represent 'ye' for 'them'). Harrier's notion has the advantage that it does not require us to think of 're' as something imperfect: the two letters would merely be the beginning of a word which Wyatt did not finish. I find it difficult to believe, however, that he did not finish it. If he was thinking of 'rest' as a reading preferable to 'vnrest' it would have been a very simple matter to strike out 'vn'; or, if he wanted to compare the two nouns as alternatives, he would surely have completed a word of four letters rather than just write two. But the Muir-Thomson interpretation is not plausible either, as Wyatt's 'y' is quite distinctly different from his 'r'. It is very likely, however, that he did not complete his first letter satisfactorily while he intended to write 'n' or 'm'. I submit he meant to write 'me'. There is a somewhat similar example in 'So feeble is the thread that doth the burden stay', where, in line 70, Wyatt writes 'the lyvely strenes off plesaut sterres'; 'strenes' does not make sense and is no doubt an error for 'stremes', that is, modern 'streams'.

At all events, it seems quite plain that Wyatt has revised what the scribe had written, and it is very possible that the poem as it stands carries the seal of his approval. Indeed, that such is very likely appears from the fact that Wyatt wrote 'Tho' (for 'Thomas') in the margin, not (as may be thought) to indicate that he was the author of the poem, but, as Harrier suggests, to make clear that he approved of the work of the scribe.⁴

⁴ The possibility that it was Wyatt himself who was responsible for the 'Tho' entries which accompany a number of the poems in the Egerton manuscript has been thought of by a number of scholars at different times. In my 1975 edition I

It would seem, then, that editors should do their utmost to make sense of the text as it stands. It cannot, of course, be proved with absolute certainty that Wyatt left the poem the way he liked it. But even if we do not feel totally confident that he did, there is no reason for us to assume that, if we find the poem hard to comprehend, we should change it, as though we know better than Wyatt what he wanted the poem to become.

But what do we find that Wyatt's latest editor, R. A. Rebholz,⁵ has made of the Egerton text? He offers the following version:

I lead a life unpleasant, nothing glad.
and complaint afar voids joyfulness.
Sore chargeth me unrest that naught shall fade.
Pain and despite hath altered pleasantness.
Ago long, since that she hath truly made
Disdain for truth, set night in steadfastness. I
have cause good to sing this song.
Plain or rejoice who feeleth weal or wrong.

When I included the poem in my 1975 edition of Wyatt, I presented it like this:

I lead a life unpleasant, nothing glad.
Cry and complaint offer, 'voids joyfulness:
So changeth me unrest, that nought shall fade.
Pain and despite hath altered pleasantness Ago,
long since, that she hath truly made Disdain –
for truth, set light in steadfastness. I have
cause good to sing this song:
Plain or rejoice who feeleth weal or wrong.
(lines 1-8)

The punctuation in Rebholz's text shows that he interprets the syntax of the poem differently, and I shall deal with that matter. But my focus must initially be on the actual *words* in Rebholz's version. He and I agree that the Egerton punctuation is of little help in determining Wyatt's sense, so that, if the poem is to be offered to a modern reader in an intelligible form, the editor has to supply his or her own punctuation according to what the editor perceives to be the intended syntactical connections.⁶

⁵ wrote that 'The poet himself may have been responsible for these ascriptions ...' (p. xxii), but I am now firmly convinced that he was. So, I know from private communications, is Professor Southall; Harrier says (p. 11) that 'Tho' is 'Wyatt's own signature, and not a sign of authorship but of approval for work done by the scribe'. I agree with him that this is probably what 'Tho' was meant to indicate, although he produces no evidence for his assertion. I shall attempt to demonstrate in a later article that the evidence does in fact exist.

⁶ *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (Penguin Books, 1978; repr. Yale University Press, 1981).

But we obviously do not concur at all about the editor's right to 'emend' the poem. I do not wish to suggest that an editor must be conservative at all times; scribes do make obvious errors, and it is an editor's duty to try and correct them (with care and caution). The situation is different, however, if the poet's own hand can be detected in the text, and if he has appended some sort of signature to it.

I agree with Rebholz that, for sure, 're' may be interpreted as intended to be 'me'. Otherwise, however, I would keep the words that are found in the Egerton text, and not only because I feel prohibited from altering them, but also because they make sense.

Why, after all, cannot we retain 'Crye / and complain offerre voydes Ioyfulnesse' by modernizing it the way I do? Clearly 'offerre' is not a sixteenth-century form of 'afar'. Moreover, how does Rebholz make sense of the line? In his notes to the poem, he glosses his 'voids' as 'goes away, vanishes'. But this is an impossibility, as the subject of 'voids' in Rebholz's text must obviously be 'joyfulness', which means that 'cry and complaint' is left without a verb. Changing 'offerre' into 'afar' does not help; interpreting it as modern 'offer' (which is what the form logically suggests) does. The structure of the line is obviously chiasmic, being subject ('Cry and complaint') – verb ('offer') – verb ('voids') – subject ('joyfulness'). The meaning is surely: 'Crying and moaning offer themselves to me, while joyfulness avoids me.' I think that 'me' is implied in the case of both 'offer' and 'voids', but this is not my cardinal point; Rebholz may just possibly be right in presenting us with 'voids' instead of 'voids' and in thinking that it means 'goes away, vanishes', but he cannot be right about 'emending' Egerton's 'offerre' into 'afar'.

Nor is his third line an improvement of what I had produced in 1975. I had printed

So changeth me unrest, that nought shall fade.

Rebholz accepts the 'me', but alters 'So changeth' into 'Sore chargeth'. He has no

The significance of the punctuation in the manuscript is the harder to interpret because this scribe uses virgulae only, and because he has not left us enough material to allow any confident generalizations to be made about his practice. (Scribes certainly had individualistic habits in this regard, and some were more 'systematic' than others.)

textual basis for this, and there is no other reason for the alteration either. In the fourth line, the speaker mentions pleasantness altered by pain and despite. We know, therefore, that when he says in the first line, 'I lead a life unpleasant, nothing glad', he is contrasting a pleasant past with an unpleasant present. Amplifying this theme in the second line, he there says in effect that crying and moaning have now replaced the joyfulness which used to be with him but which at present avoids him. Continuing in line 3, the speaker indicates: 'In this fashion unrest has changed me, which shall not grow weak at all'. In other words, 'So changeth' not only is derived from the authority of the manuscript but also gives excellent sense within its context. Rebholz may be justified in interpreting his 'that naught shall fade' as 'that nothing shall diminish' (in keeping with Muir and Thomson's 'that nothing shall alleviate'); he is not justified, however, in introducing 'Sore chargeth'.

Muir and Thomson's edition so far seems to me superior to Rebholz's in its handling of the text: the editors print a comma after 'offerre' in line 2 and interpret 'voydes Joyfullnesse' as 'oyfulness avoids' (presumably 'me', as in my interpretation), while line 3 is glossed as 'So unrest, that nothing shall alleviate, changes my life' (despite the suggestion that 're' might represent 'the'). But in the lines which follow Muir and Thomson do not seem to do any better than Rebholz. In the text, the punctuation of lines 4-7 seems merely confusing:

Payne and dyspyte hathe altered plesantnes
 Ago, long synnys, that she hathe truly made,
 Dysdayne for trowght sett lyght yn stedfastnes,
 I haue cause goode to syng this song: (lines 4-7)

The problem is primarily syntactical, and not, it would appear, helped much (if at all) by the virgulae in the manuscript, which are possibly rhythmical, but at any rate are not conclusive grammatically. However, unless we reproduce the punctuation of the manuscript we must, as editors, try to ensure that our own modern signs do not indicate ambiguities which the author cannot have intended. Muir and Thomson interpret lines 4-5 as 'Pain and scorn have altered the pleasantness that she made long since'. This is certainly a possible reading (despite the omission of 'truly' in the gloss); but

what are we to do with lines 6-7? If Muir and Thomson are right about lines 4-5, we surely need something like a semicolon or full stop at the end of line 5, and then the next two lines become meaningless.

Rebholz also runs into difficulties at this point. Like Muir and Thomson, he fails to see that the lines are a continuum, and, while they see a break after 'made', he creates one after 'pleasantness'. In the manuscript, this leaves him with the following two lines which, in his notes, he suggests form a 'syntactic unit':

ago / nong / synnys / that she hath truly / made /
 dysdayne / for trowght / sett lyght yn stedfastnes

It is difficult to understand what 'syntactic unit' we could see in this. Rebholz points, as a reason for his opinion, at the verbal paradoxes within the lines ('truly disdain truth' and 'set light that which stands fast'), and on this matter I agree with him. They are there; but their presence does not justify the conclusion that the two lines are to be seen as unconnected with the previous line – a 'unit' does not become less of a unit if it is at the same time part of a larger unit. And, most damagingly to his case, Rebholz can only *make* his two-line unit one by introducing yet another 'emendation' which is avoided in my version: he changes 'yn' into 'is', and then interprets the two lines as 'because she, from a long time gone, has shown genuine contempt for loyalty, abiding commitment is widely regarded as unimportant'.

This glosses 'Ago long, since that she hath truly made / Disdain for truth, set light is steadfastness'. But even if we were to accept 'is' for 'yn' (which we should not do), it is hard to understand how Rebholz arrives at his interpretation. Surely 'long since' is an idiomatic expression in English, and surely it is difficult to believe that Wyatt thought of 'Ago long' as a natural combination.

The yet more telling objection to Rebholz's approach must nevertheless be that his interpretation forces him into rejecting Egerton's 'yn'. Not only is the word there (in a poem corrected by Wyatt and bearing his signature), but it is also unlikely that the scribe confused 's' and 'n', and the 'unintelligibility' which

Rebholz in his notes claims exists in lines 5 and 6 is of his own making – it disappears as soon as we adopt my 1975 punctuation and read (without any 'emendation'):

Pain and despite hath altered pleasantness
Ago, long since, that she hath truly made
Disdain – for truth, set light in steadfastness.

(lines 4-6)

I see no reason for altering the paraphrase which I offered at the time: 'Pain and scorn have altered pleasantness, which my mistress has long since turned into disdain – in exchange for my loyalty and honesty, slighted by her for all my constancy'. I added: 'Truly (5):1 verily, 2 ironic', thus alerting the reader to the verbal paradox reworking around 'truly' -'truth' which Rebholz makes an explicit point of.

It is possible, of course, that my interpretation of the text is not ideal. However, I think it must meanwhile stand, because I make sense of the poem without altering any of the substantive readings in it, while Rebholz's interpretation of what he sees as the meaning of the lines not only does not offer us any better understanding but, more seriously, is based on alterations in a text which may well have come down to us in a version approved by the author. Obviously, there are questions of editing and interpreting here which in their importance go well beyond this poem as such.

JOOST DAALDER

The Flinders University of South Australia

'BIRDS' OR 'BEARDS'?

IN the 1558/9 Revels Accounts. John Carowe the property-maker was paid 8s. for 'vij vicars with byrdes vpon them'. In *Notes and Queries* for September 1986, Marion Colthorpe, following Chambers, interprets this as 'bird masks'. Tempting though it looks for her argument, however, they are more likely to have been 'masks with beards' than 'masks with birds'. Compare later in the same accounts, Iohn holte for j dozen of viserdes with shorte berdes yellowe and blacke haulfe a dozen of the one and half A dozen of the other at xxd the pece – xx^s, and in 1571/2 'Thomas Gyles ... for xxj

fyne vyzardes with long Berdes lxx^s, and in

1572/3 'vyzardes with black Berdes .v. – xv^s / Vyzards [4] with Redd Berdes xijs'.

'With birds upon them' would in any case be a curious way of describing bird-masks. It is however natural for bearded masks: 'euery one had on his viser a berde of golde wyer'.² The usual formula for an animal head is either 'an X's face/head' (e.g. 'A vyzarde for an Apes face iij^s iiiij^d': 1527/3), or 'made/moulded like Xs' heads' (e.g. 'hedpeces mowlded like Lyons heddes'), both made by Carowe.³ If we are looking for bird-masks, the generalized entry earlier in the same list 'for the makinge of xxtie heddes at vj^s viij^d the pece' is more likely to cover them.

Byrdes is an eccentric spelling for 'beards', but possible. *Beard* is recorded by Dobson⁴ with [i:] from raising of ME to e though he suggests it is a Northernism. The latest *Records of Early English Drama* volume, for Cumberland, Westmorland, and Gloucestershire, seems to bear this out. It contains the account of a dispute at Windermere in 1537, in which one Isaac Dickson asked a travelling minstrel to sing a song against Thomas Cromwell,

... which he alwayes denyed / & then the said ysaac tuk the said mynstrall by the *Birde* & dasshet the cupe of aill in his fface.⁶

MEG TWYXCROSS

University of Lancaster

¹ Albert Feuillerat, ed., *Documents relating to the Office of the Revels in the Time of Queen Elizabeth* (Louvain, 1908), 95, 141, 180. At slightly more than 1s. 2d. each (is vij a mistake for vj or viij, in which case they would be either 1s. 4d. or 1s. each?), Carowe's visors are cheap of their kind: Holt's were 1s. 8d. each, while by the 1570s they have gone up to 3s. 4d. for the luxury moden, and 3s. for the standard.

² Edward Hanl, *Chronicle* (New York, 1965, facsimile of 1807 London edition), 619. For further information about bearded masks, see Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter, 'Materials and Methods of Mask-making', *Medieval English Theatre*, iv, 1 (1982), 28-47.

Feuillerat, op. cit., 175, and Albert Feuillerat, ed., *Documents relating to the Revels at Court in the Time of King Edward VI und Queen Mary: the Loseley Papers* (Louvain, 1914), 133.

⁴ Feuillerat, *Elizabeth*, 81.

E. J. Dobson, *English Pronunciation 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1957), 472, 726-7.

Records of Early English Drama: Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire, ed. Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (Toronto and London, 1986), 215.