SIR THOMAS WYATT

Date

There is no difficulty over the dating of the original two-part play behind *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyat*, published in 1607, since on 15 October 1602 Philip Henslowe records in his *Diary* payment of one shilling 'vnto harey chettel Thomas deckers thomas hewode & m^r^ smythe and m^r^ webster in earneste of A playe called Ladey Jane'. This shilling was a tiny amount, but symbolically and legally significant as 'earnest money', proof of the contract. Six days later, on the 21st, Henslowe makes the five playwrights 'fulle payment' of five pounds ten shillings. This payment in full seems almost certain to be for what we now call *1 Lady Jane*, the first part of this lost two-part play. Henslowe was a canny and ruthless businessman, so it seems likely that Part one was complete and delivered before he made payment on 21 October. It is also possible that the entire play was written in less than a week, subsequent to the payment of the earnest money.

Henslowe's next payment for a play was on 27 October, five shillings to Dekker alone, 'in earneste of the 2 pte of Lady Jane'. This is the first mention of a second part. Part two may have been equally speedily written, but Henslowe records only this earnest money; there is no entry for a payment in full. Nevertheless, on 2 November Henslowe lends 'Thomas hewode & John webster three pounds 'in earneste of A play called cryssmas comes but once ayeare', with later payments to a team which also included Chettle and Dekker. It therefore seems likely that a completed script of 'the 2 pte of Lady Jane' had already been delivered. (A payment for a costume on 6 November may have been for *2 Lady Jane*; see pp. 26.)

But if determining the date of composition of the two-part 'Ladey Jane' is simple, that of determining the date of composition (if that word might loosely be used here) of *Sir Thomas Wyatt* is not. A clear *terminus ad quem* is its publication in 1607, but the only clue to when, in the intervening six years or so, the abridgement might have been made is, Phillip Shaw contends, the absence in *Sir Thomas Wyatt* of marked anti-Catholic sentiment.[1] For while Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester, is vindictive and vengeful, Shaw sees Queen Mary as por-

trayed sympathetically, and particularly so in scene iii, where, as he puts it, 'the unhistorical depiction of Queen Mary dressed like a nun, reading the Roman Catholic prayer book and praising it without any hint of self-righteousness, is . . . more sympathetic than was required by the minimum standards of patriotism and censorship'.[2] Noting a similar absence of hostility towards Catholicism in the sympathetic treatment of Mary's husband [Philip of Spain] in *1 If You Know Not Me*, (registered in July 1605) and bitterness towards Mary in the Prologue of *The Whore of Babylon* (1607), Shaw suggests that the play as we have it must antedate the Gunpowder Plot of 5 November 1605, which led to an upsurge of anti-Catholic feeling in England.

1. Shaw, p. 228.
2. Shaw, p. 228. But see p. 17 for evidence that as early as the end of scene iii Mary's behaviour casts significant doubt on her genuineness.

Critical introduction

David Gunby

It is hardly surprising that the play that has come down to us as *Sir Thomas Wyatt* should have received scant attention, and virtually no praise, since in critical terms everything is against it. For not only has it been until now available only in a corrupt text, a probable memorial reconstruction and abridgement of a two-part *Lady Jane* (see pp. 34–7), but the latter appears to have been composed in haste by the team comprising, in *1 Lady Jane* at least, Dekker, Heywood, Webster, Chettle, and Wentworth Smith. The play is significant, of course, as the second of Webster's playwriting career, and the earliest to survive; but against that is the fact that the state of the text makes it difficult to determine with certainty which parts are Websterian. Editors and critics have speculated as to his presence, particularly in scenes i, ii, and xvii, but little more.

Yet *Sir Thomas Wyatt* is of interest, not least for the challenges it poses. The greatest is apparent in the gap between what the title-page of the 1607 quarto promises and what the play-text provides. *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyat. With the Coronation of Queen Mary, and the coming in of King Philip*: so runs the full title. Yet we see nothing of Mary's coronation or of Philip of Spain's arrival in England to take possession. The general assumption is that these events were dramatized in the much longer two-part *Lady Jane* and retained on the title page of *Sir Thomas Wyat* as a sales pitch reflecting its earlier theatrical life. Hence one of the most interesting challenges, that of determining, so far as possible, the structure and content of the two *Lady Jane* plays, or a subsequent ur-*Sir Thomas Wyatt* (see p. 37), from which *Sir Thomas Wyatt* was derived.

Another challenge is to determine whether, as several critics have claimed, *Sir Thomas Wyatt* is a covert comment on events or individuals contemporary or near- contemporary. Thus Muriel Bradbrook suggests Lady Jane Grey may be a portrait of the young Elizabeth,[1] while Judith Spikes argues that she is meant to represent King James's cousin, the tragic Lady Arbella Stuart.[2] Rejecting these claims, Julia Gasper claims rather that Wyatt's attempted putsch closely parallels that by the Earl of Essex in 1601, and reads *Sir Thomas Wyatt* as a sympathetic comment on

Essex's ill-fated attempt to force the aged Queen Elizabeth to submit to his will.[3] Finally, Irving Ribner sees the play not in terms of individual equivalences, but rather as a comment on the burning question of the day, namely who should succeed the childless Elizabeth, asserting the principle of direct lineal descent, and thereby the priority of the claims of the descendants of Jane's sister, Lady Katherine Grey, over those of James VI of Scotland.[4]

Sir Thomas Wyatt belongs to a genre popular during the 1590s and early 1600s, the biographical history.[5] Akin to plays like Samuel Rowley's *Thomas of Woodstock* and *When You See Me, You Know Me* (on the fall of Cardinal Wolsey), Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (on the early hardships of Elizabeth I), Munday and Drayton's *Sir John Oldcastle* and the anonymous *Thomas, Lord Cromwell,* it celebrates a heroic Englishman attempting to maintain true succession (by opposing the accession of Lady Jane Grey) and protect the English monarchy and kingdom (by opposing Queen Mary's marriage to Philip of Spain).

But this is the play as we have it, radically abridged, and not *1* and *2 Lady Jane*, as written by Dekker, Webster et al. For one thing is clear; that in abridging *Lady Jane* those involved significantly altered the balance within the play, replacing what was presumably a trio of central figures—Wyatt, Lady Jane Grey and Queen Mary—with that of Wyatt alone. Whether this was because the actor who played Wyatt was central to the memorial reconstructions, or because it was wished to shift the original emphasis, cannot be determined. What is clear, however, is that a reorientation of *Lady Jane* has taken place. Any discussion of what the authors of *Sir Thomas Wyatt* had in mind thematically must, therefore, take into account what we can determine about the structure and content of the original two-part *Lady Jane*.

The title-page of *Sir Thomas Wyatt* gives us some indication of the scope of *Lady Jane*, which must have included Queen Mary's coronation and the threat posed by Philip's arrival in England to marry Mary and so exert influence over English affairs. And the fact that Henslowe refers to the two-part original as *Lady Jane* suggests that the unfortunate nine-day Queen was also central to the play. How much more than this, however, can be determined, or even speculated upon? Only one scholar, Philip Shaw, has attempted the task of reconstructing the original from which *Sir Thomas Wyatt* derives; his putative *Lady Jane*, arrived at from a close analysis of what remains of the original, considered in relationship to

the sources from which the remains are derived, carries considerable conviction.[6]

The principal plot of *Sir Thomas Wyatt* depicts two rebellions involving Wyatt. The first, opposing Jane's assumption of the throne, is dealt with in scenes i–x, and the second, opposing Mary's Spanish marriage, in the remainder of the play.[7] Within each half, Shaw finds clearly coherent blocks of narrative, linked by material less coherent and integrated, and at times in flat contradiction of what surrounds it. His argument, thus, is that in the coherent narrative blocks we have something close to *Lady Jane* originals, while in the problematic linking scenes we have severely abridged (and at times garbled) versions of the originals, employed to bridge gaps in the abridged story.

As Shaw notes, the first two scenes in *Sir Thomas Wyatt* clearly go together. The plot to put Jane on the throne is set in motion, and Wyatt is the only member of the Council opposed to this. The second narrative block comprises scenes iv to viii, and covers the attempts by Northumberland to secure the throne for Jane militarily, and the defection of the council, under Wyatt's influence, to the cause of Mary. Within these two blocks, Shaw comments, 'the historical narrative runs clearly and coherently, and there is no indication that each scene does not retell, with certain rhetorical abbreviations, the plot of a corresponding scene in the full length version'.[8] Thus, he concludes, these scenes may 'be taken to constitute a scene-by-scene abridgement of Scenes 1 and 2 and five other scenes of *Jane*'.[9]

With scene iii, however, there are major problems, including what Shaw labels 'striking inconsistencies of plot' and a 'peculiar garbling of historical circumstances'.[10] There is, first, the a-historical particularizing of the initial messenger to Mary, Sir Henry Bedingfield. That he is told that he will hereafter be held 'in honour and due regard' (iii.23) prepares us, as Shaw observes, 'for a reappearance that does not materialize in the play'.[11] Second, and even more marked, there is Wyatt's assertion, 'Ile to the Dukes at Cambridge, and discharge them all' (iii.43), which is in flat contradiction of what actually happens. For in scene iv both Northumberland and Suffolk are still in London, the former about to leave to apprehend Mary, while in scene vi Wyatt appears before the council, in London, arguing for Mary's rights to the throne, and in scene viii, set in Cambridge, he greets Northumberland (who has reached Cambridge only in scene vii) on behalf of the Council, not Mary. Shaw also notes a third oddity about scene iii, which is that it ends with Mary's 'streight'

departure to Framlingham without there occurring the meeting with the men of Suffolk, who pledged their support conditional on her swearing to maintain the religious status quo. Without this occurring, however, the following exchange between Arundel and Queen Mary in scene xi makes no sense:

> *Arundell.* Your sacred Highnesse will no doubt be mindefull
> Of the late Oath you tooke at Framingham.
> *Mary.* O my Lord of Arundell, wee remember that,
> But shall a Subject force his Prince to sweare
> Contrarie to her conscience and the Law? (xi.22–6)

Shaw's conclusion, which carries conviction, is that these omissions and contradictions, related as they are to the historical accounts of the short reign of Lady Jane Grey, 'can be explained as vestiges of scenes which appeared in the full-length version but which otherwise were dropped in the process of abridgement'.[12] And as Shaw points out, these vestiges bring 'Mary and Jane into prominence, as antagonist and protagonist respectively, as would be expected in a play entitled *1 Lady Jane*'.[13]

What might those scenes in *Lady Jane* have comprised? Considering the source material in Stow and Holinshed available to Dekker and his team, Shaw speculates that, as in *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, the original scene iii depicted Mary being informed by Bedingfield that her brother is dead, and by Wyatt that Jane has been proclaimed queen, but additionally that she is advised by Wyatt to lay her claim before the Council, and to move to safety in Norfolk. The next scene would then take place in London, focussing on Jane's convincing the Council to let her father stay with her, leaving Northumberland in sole command of the force setting out to capture Mary; while the next scene again, switching back to Mary, would have her at Framlingham, with Bedingfield and Wyatt, and including her meeting with the men of Suffolk.

From here to scene viii what we have in the extant play is perhaps, with some abbreviation, essentially what was in the original *Lady Jane*, covering the departure of Northumberland (scene iv), the attempted flight of the Lord Treasurer (scene v), the Council scene, ending in Wyatt's persuading them to support Mary (scene vi); and Northumberland in Cambridge, ending in the proclamation of Queen Mary and the departure of the Duke for London under arrest (scenes vii and viii). It should be noted, however, that in scene iv there is a substantial degree of

ambiguity and confusion, which may derive from clumsy abridgement or perhaps from a muddled memorial reconstruction. It concerns the roles of Suffolk and Arundel. At the outset Suffolk is clearly associated with Northumberland in ensuring that the army is ready to depart, and his 'we will set forward streight' (iv.4) suggests that he is leaving with Northumberland as does the latter's committal of Queen Jane into Arundel's care. Yet curiously, Suffolk says nothing more after line 4, and the terms in which Northumberland speaks subsequently (22–7) and particularly 'you have sworne your selves' (24) suggest that he is not just addressing Arundel but also Suffolk, who historically remained in London. Further confusion arises from the fact that Arundel's 'Commend us to the Queene and to your Sonne' (43) flatly contradicts what has just preceded it, which is his apology for not being able to accompany Northumberland.

This confusion aside, however, scenes iv to viii present a coherent narrative in broad agreement with the historical sources. With scenes ix and x, however, covering the arrest of the fugitive Suffolk, there are problems. Historically, he was arrested twice, the first time for his part in the plot to put his daughter on the throne. There is an oblique reference to this first arrest in scene v, when Arundel observes, apropos growing support for Mary, that 'the Duke is but newly arrested' (28). As Shaw points out, this cannot be a reference to Northumberland, who is shown at the head of his army in scenes vii and viii, but must refer to Suffolk's first arrest. Pardoned by Queen Mary, he then joined with Wyatt in armed opposition to the Queen's marriage, and it was as a fugitive after an abortive attempt to raise support in the Midlands that he was hidden by a retainer in a hollow tree, as depicted in scene ix. Even conflated with the second arrest, however, placed here in *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, it is clearly out of sequence. For it is only in scene xi, following his failure to prevent Queen Mary's marriage to Philip, that Wyatt decides on the armed insurrection of which Suffolk was a part. Shaw finds a further confusion, in that in the same scene the Queen notes that 'The Duke of Suffolke | Is not yet apprehended' (38–9) and bids 'Some of you most deare to us in love, | Be carefull of that charge' (40–1), though in the previous scene the Sheriff arrests him as the 'late Duke of Suffolke, in her highnesse name' (ix. 37). There is, thus, weight to Shaw's contention that scenes ix and x properly belong between scenes xi and xii. That they may have been moved forward can be put down, speculatively, to

abridgement conflating Suffolk's two arrests, and to a wish to complete the Suffolk action at the same point in the play as Northumberland's.

Scene xi is of particular interest structurally. For one thing, it marks the return of Mary, who has not been seen since scene iii, but has, as Shaw puts it, 'out of sight in the tiring room . . . risen from recluse to sovereign', and is now 'safely set | In [her] inheritance' (2–3).[14] It also presents us with a new set of characters, including Norfolk, Pembroke and Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and a fresh dramatic action in Mary's Spanish marriage and Wyatt's opposition to it. Shaw also notes that 'the old plot, the failure of efforts to crown Jane, is treated as "antecedent action"' and that scene xi 'has the static character of an opening scene',[15] even employing a standard expository device, the question:

> *Arundell.* What is your Highnesse pleasure about the Rebels?
> *Mary.* The Queene-like Rebel meane you not, Queene Jane?
> *Arundell.* Guilford and Jane, with great Northumberland,
> And hauty Suffolkes Duke.
> . . . . . .
> *Wyatt.* The Lady Jane, most mightie Soveraigne,
> Alyde to you in blood
> (For shes the daughter of your Fathers sister,
> Mary the Queene of France, Charles Brandon's wife:
> Your Neece, your next of blood, except your sister)
> Deserves some pittie, so doth youthfull Guilford.
> *Winchester.* Such pittie as the law alowes to Traitors.
> *Norfolke.* They were misled by their ambitious Fathers. (35–8, 43–50).[16]

The second major action initiated, *Sir Thomas Wyatt* runs relatively smoothly to its conclusion, the narrative action coherent and faithful to the sources. Clearly, though, much must have been omitted from *2 Lady Jane*, and Shaw, bearing in mind the title page of *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, speculates that the excised material

> depicted Mary's dramatic appearance in the Guildhall to win support against Wyatt (who was already marching at the head of a band toward London to force her to repudiate her promise to marry Philip); Philip's landing at Southampton and his affectionate reception by the Queen; the official proclamation of the betrothal; and the gorgeous nuptial ceremony.[17]

As Shaw notes, such material would enable the dramatists to set up Mary as a foil for Wyatt, just as, in part one, Jane had been. It is a plausible scenario.