WYATT MANUSCRIPTS AND THE COURT OF VENUS

DESPITE A GREAT DEAL OF RECENT WORK, many of the problems posed by the sixteenth-century sources in which the poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt survives remain as elusive as ever.¹ I believe that scholars like Raymond Southall in The Courtly Maker (Oxford, 1964) and R.C. Harrier in The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1975) allow themselves to get preoccupied unduly with the question of authorship at the expense of a more urgent concern with the relationships between the various texts. Of course, the question of authorship is important not only in its own right, but also in that an answer to that question may help us to understand what the relationships between the texts may be. But the matter has been pursued with much attention to questions of hands, likely dates of entry of poems into the manuscripts, and so on, rather than study of more internal (or at least less physical) textual facts which are by no means irrelevant to the bibliographer. For example, we should try to determine as nearly as we can just how the texts relate to each other, chronologically and in terms of kinship. Much of this work can be done without any reference to questions of authorship; indeed, it is conceivable that we shall get a clearer notion of Wyatt as an author of distinct identity if, amongst the large body of ‘doubtful’ material, we can isolate certain categories. Thus, obviously, insofar as we can safely assume that poems in the poet’s own hand, with substantial and intelligent revisions, are his own work, we can, using these poems as a basis for comparison, identify, in theory, such versions of poems (or classes of variants) as the following: (a) ‘early’ Wyatt (pre-revision), (b) Wyatt, (c) post-Wyatt. In practice the distinctions are by no means always easy to make. Nevertheless, it is a reasonable assumption that, if a text for which no clear authority can be established persistently uses ‘seing’ (i.e. modern ‘seeing’) instead of Wyatt’s ‘sins’ (modern ‘since’), the form ‘seing’ must be regarded as post-Wyatt.² A text which, although not in the poet’s hand and in another manuscript, has ‘sins’ must be in that respect closer to the poet than the text which has ‘seing’. But the position would be quite different if the poet in his own work had first written ‘seing’ and then substituted ‘sins’ for it. In this case, if much the same poem turned up in another manuscript with ‘seing’, that version of the poem would, as regards this form, be what I called before ‘‘early’ Wyatt’.

It is the purpose of this article to show the importance of such textual comparisons with specific reference to the differences (and similarities) between some of the manuscripts containing poems by Wyatt and The Court of Venus — a collection of three, probably related, fragments of printed books of verse, edited by Russell A. Fraser (Durham, N.C., 1955), who refers to them and dates them as follows:

'Douce’ (1537–1539)
'Stark’ (1547–1549)
'Folger’ (1561–1564).

To get our bearings, it is first necessary to say something about Wyatt texts in general.
Modern editions of Wyatt are in the main based on manuscripts, in the belief that these offer what the poet wrote or what is likely to be closer to that than what printed versions may be assumed to represent. This assumption about the inferiority of the printed texts is on the one hand justified, but on the other hand extreme. It is justified in that we can in general demonstrate that the printed texts are at some remove from the poet’s work; but it is extreme in that the assumption is too general: not all of the manuscripts are superior all of the time. Moreover, and very importantly, the almost complete neglect of the printed sources in our time prevents us from seeing how the various texts have been transmitted, how they relate to each other, and so on.

Nevertheless, any consideration of Wyatt’s texts has to start with the Egerton Manuscript (E). E (British Library, Egerton MS 2711) was at one time in Wyatt’s hands. He appears to have used it as in a sense ‘his’ manuscript, in that he not only wrote a number of his poems into it directly (composing them or copying them from another source), but also corrected poems copied by others. Most scholars are agreed that these poems are all Wyatt’s, and his habit of correcting poems, no matter whether they are in his own hand or not, makes it extremely likely that those which bear the stamp of his hand are indeed his. Some of the material in E is quite patently not Wyatt’s, and again there is general agreement about this. Other material, which most would claim for Wyatt, is less unambiguously his than poems in his hand and/or corrected by him. In particular, the objection has been raised that the ascription ‘Tho’ (for Thomas) which is found to accompany several of the poems may well be an indication that these poems are Wyatt’s, but that, if they are, we must surely assume that the other poems are not — or else, why would not these have been similarly ‘certified’? This argument would appear to have even more force if we believe — as I do — that ‘Tho’ is in the poet’s own hand. However, there is in fact no reason for supposing that ‘Tho’ is intended to certify any of the poems. Most likely, it rather is something like a sign ‘of approval for work done by the scribe’, as Harrier suggests. In other words, while we may see ‘Tho’ as a sign of authorship from our point of view, it was probably not intended to be such by Wyatt, and we would hardly seem justified in believing that poems which do not carry the sign ‘Tho’ are not Wyatt’s. For example, the poem ‘Of purpose Love chose first for to be blind’, which is in Wyatt’s hand and fairly extensively corrected by him, is not marked ‘Tho’; it would be hard to argue that a poem of this nature is less likely to be Wyatt’s than one not in his hand but accompanied by ‘Tho’. Thus this particular difficulty is more apparent than real, and the signs of authorship are so numerous and weighty in their totality that we may safely assume that the E poems which most scholars at present assign to Wyatt are his work. It does not follow, however, that the fact that he corrected poems at various places throughout the manuscript is a guarantee that he went through it with exemplary care and left the poems in perfect condition. The manuscript has a high degree of authority, but it cannot be considered faultless.

The traditional view has it that the Devonshire Manuscript (D; British
Library, Devonshire MS. Add. 17492) is the second most important manuscript, and it is a view with which I concur and which I think has wrongly become unfashionable. There is some reason for this. Southall is the chief scholar to have argued that the Egerton and Devonshire manuscripts are essentially similar in character: heterogeneous collections of verse by different authors, entered by different hands at different times. Though he has not succeeded markedly in persuading others to adopt his views with regard to E, he has dislodged some confident beliefs about this manuscript, and more so about D, which is actually far less clearly a ‘Wyatt’ manuscript than E. While the influence of Wyatt throughout E is pervasive, there is not even a single letter in his hand in D. This is not to say that D does not contain many Wyatt poems. Several of the poems in E, including such E poems as we have very firm evidence for considering Wyatt’s, also occur, in somewhat different versions, in D. The poems are entered by more than one person, but on the whole this fact does not turn out to be textually very significant. The authorship of the poems appears to be vouched for not only by E, but also by such factors as ascription within D itself, or ascription to Wyatt in yet another contemporary source. More importantly still, the connection between D’s poems as versions of Wyatt’s text and the versions in E is of a very special kind. The D versions are, characteristically, ‘early’ Wyatt versions, in that there is a marked resemblance, in several places, between readings found in D and those which Wyatt rejected when revising his poems in E. This phenomenon was first observed by Miss A.K. Foxwell, and it is one of the better features of the (otherwise very inaccurate) edition by Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson that some attention is paid there to this relationship between D and E. It is at the same time a real pity that Southall’s approach has been so influential: Harrier, whose view of E is substantially like my own, largely joins Southall in seeing less unity in D than in fact there is. Indeed, he goes so far as to prefer the Arundel Harington Manuscript (on which I shall comment later) to D, for the remarkable reason that, although it is later and less reliable than E, it must be regarded as superior to D because that manuscript precedes E, while the later text is at least based on Wyatt’s ‘own’ manuscript. It does not occur to him that, if we know variants to be late and spurious, they are less valuable, as testimony to the author’s own work, than those which may reflect what the poet once wrote even if they do not tell us what he came to prefer.

Amongst the major manuscripts, the most puzzling one so far is the Blage Manuscript (B; MS. D. 2. 7 in Trinity College Dublin), which was at some stage in the hands of Sir George Blage, a friend of Wyatt’s who was with him in Spain. There has been much less work done on this manuscript than on E, and even than D. Despite a number of oddities, it would seem to be a manuscript of relatively high authority, with firm points of connection between it and D, which, however, I believe to be ‘earlier’ (in the sense, anyway, that no matter when poems were entered into B or D, the D versions often seem to preserve earlier readings). Sometimes B and E correspond, but not at all consistently, and it may be that the B variants cannot all be written off as wrong or unauthoritative. The connections which B has with D on the one hand and E on the other point in the direction of a source, now missing, which was independent of D and E. In all likelihood such a
source would have contained D poems not found in E, and versions of other poems which were either intermediate between D and E or represented a separate stage of development. E cannot possibly have contained all of the poems which can be safely associated with Wyatt's name if ascriptions in D and other sources distinct from D can be relied upon; there simply was no space in E at any time even though scholars agree that not all of the leaves which originally were in E have reached us. Furthermore, the "early" Wyatt' material in D cannot have been copied from E, and there must have been at least one manuscript of Wyatt's poems which contained poems, or versions of poems, which were quite authentic but which are not found in E. I believe that the principal importance of The Court of Venus is that it suggests the one-time existence of a highly authoritative source which was a D-B hybrid, so to speak, and quite separate from E, the crucial importance of E notwithstanding.

The Arundel Harington Manuscript (A; in Arundel Castle) has been capably (though not faultlessly) edited by Ruth Hughey, and we are indebted to her for properly examining the relationship between this manuscript and the other sources; it is no exaggeration to say that her labour in this respect is, amongst that of modern scholars, virtually unique. It is not good enough simply to transcribe a manuscript with or without a list of variants: we need to consider what the variants may tell us, and this Hughey has done. She established beyond any doubt that A derives, insofar as it is a Wyatt manuscript, from E — a fact hardly surprising in view of the circumstance that E after Wyatt's death ended up in the hands of John Harington, who was also the compiler of the A section containing poems by Wyatt. The A poems are therefore no more authoritative than the E versions from which they derive. A, in fact, is part of an editorial chain which culminated in the first important printed collection of Wyatt's work, Tottel's Songs and Sonettes 1557 (T), more popularly known as 'Tottel's Miscellany'.

These are the main manuscripts, and in this context no others need concern us. However, it is desirable that something be said about T as a highly significant printed text.

Certainly, if one compares T with E, one gains the impression that T is corrupt. However, the T variants are less the result of slovenliness than of deliberation. I have already discussed their literary importance elsewhere, but the textual relationships are properly summed up by Hughey in saying that comparison of the Wyatt texts in A with those in E, D, and T leads to the conclusion that A is later than E and D, though deriving directly from E, but that it seems to be textually earlier than T. T continued the editorial process which had already been taken very far in A. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that everything in T can be accounted for by this line of reasoning. There are places where T differs from both E and A but is close to D. For example, the poem 'There was never file half so well filed' in E occurs in a different version in T (No 39), starting with the first line as 'Was never file yet half so well yfiled'. There is a version in A (poem 98) which looks much the same; however, as Hughey points out, the A version is
likely to have been copied from the printed version, not the other way round, likely to have been copied from the printed version, not the other way around, since A includes a misprint which occurs in the second and succeeding editions of T, but not in the first." In fact T's version is not only directly based on E (without reliance on A) but also on D (or a source very close to D), as D's first line is 'Was neuer yet fyle half so well fyllyd'; and D also contains other readings which T takes over but which do not occur in E. Nevertheless, in general T's reliance on E and A is heavy, and it belongs essentially to quite a different 'family' from what I shall regard as a 'D-B-The Court of Venus' group.

*The Court of Venus* has not been studied from this angle before. Fraser, when editing the printed fragments, was more concerned with the inter-relations between them than with the manuscripts, and, crucially, did not have access to B, which was as yet to be re-discovered. A later discussion, by Charles A. Huttar, does call on B to a very slight extent, but addresses such questions as are raised by Fraser, i.e. 'Just what is the relation between the fragments?' and 'Just how sure can we be which poems are by Wyatt?' What I am concerned with, rather, is the question 'What light do the printed fragments throw on the relations between the manuscripts?'

This is not to say, of course, that the questions raised by Fraser and Huttar are irrelevant or unnecessary. For our purpose, though, it may first of all be observed that Huttar is no doubt right in expressing scepticism about the claims which Fraser makes for the earliest fragment, Douce (1537–1539), as the surviving part of what was once supposedly a Wyatt anthology. The fragment contains only three poems. One, 'The pylgrymse tale', no-one, including Fraser himself, has wished to claim for Wyatt. The other two are highly doubtful propositions. One is itself a fragment starting with 'which had me in the snare': there is nothing to relate this specifically to any known Wyatt poem except some vague, but by no means individualistic, stylistic features. The other poem, 'Dryuen by dissyr to set affection', is more interesting. Fraser suggests it is a re-working by Wyatt of a poem 'Driven by desire I did this deed', which occurs in D, T, and (as he could not know) B. That poem is virtually identical in those sources, but its resemblance to the Douce poem is so slight that there is — on this comparative basis — little reason for supposing that the poems are by one and the same author. In fact, the D, T, B poem shares only the following phrases with the one in Douce: 'Driven by desire', and 'not like to speed'. The poem may nevertheless well be Wyatt's. It may or may not be significant that 'Driven by desire' is the phrase which commences each poem, with 'not like to speed' occurring a little later on. But, if the Douce poem is Wyatt's, I would rather point to its general stylistic features than these two particular phrases, and also suggest, in favour of his authorship, that the situation referred to in Douce may well be, as so often in Wyatt, that of the lover of Anne Boleyn who bewails the fact that he covets 'that thing that will not be', as the refrain says, viz. a relationship made impossible by the king's marriage to her. There is no very strong reason for thinking of Wyatt as re-working
anything, but, if he did, probably ‘Driven by desire I did this deed’ is a reduced version of the Douce poem rather than that the Douce version should be seen as an expansion. In other words, I agree with Mrs C.C. Stopes that Wyatt may have shortened the longer version so as to make any political allusion less pointed. This procedure was certainly not untypical of Wyatt. In the poem ‘If waker care, if sudden pale colour’, he refers to Anne Boleyn as ‘Brunet that set my welth in such a rore’, whereas his scribe had previously written ‘her that did set our country in a rore’.

But, in any case, the Douce fragment does not enable us to deduce much about the relationships between the various texts. The Stark fragment (1547–1549) offers us more interesting material. To begin with, it has a fragment of ‘If fancy would favour’. This poem occurs in E, as well as in D and A, and is very probably Wyatt’s. It also occurs more fully in the Folger fragment, in a version obviously derived from Stark’s, although the Folger text dates later (1561–1564) and has some spellings peculiarly different from Stark’s (e.g. in the second but last stanza ‘gryefe’ for Stark’s ‘grefe’). The differences which both texts share with the manuscripts are far more telling, however. For example, both Stark and Folger use ‘fantasy’ for ‘fancy’ — a form which for one thing creates a different rhythm. Since the manuscripts agree in not having the form ‘fantasy’ except where it fits metrically (in line 26, ‘Set once your fantasy’), it may be confidently assumed that elsewhere ‘fantasy’ is peculiar to the Stark and Folger texts, and that its presence in Folger is one of several features showing that Folger was derived from Stark.

All in all, this poem, if we wish to compare it with the manuscript versions, is best studied in the later Folger version, which is both complete and hardly different from Stark’s. How about the other poems? How many might be Wyatt’s, and do we need to distinguish, in comparing printed versions with manuscript ones, between Stark and Folger?

The next poem in Stark is ‘L[ou]e w[home ye] lyst and spare not’. This poem bears a considerable resemblance, in every other line, to poem CXXXVI in the Muir-Thomson edition, ‘Hate whome ye lyste, I care not’. It may or may not be a poem which Wyatt expanded: certainly, however, the poem is an interesting one to compare with the much shorter versions in D and B — which need not be by Wyatt either. I find the question of authorship less important than that of text, and will come back to this poem later. Meanwhile, it may be noted that in this case there are some differences between Stark and Folger beyond those of spelling. Even so, the Folger variants can hardly be the result of any independent consultation, by the Folger editor/publisher, of a manuscript not known to the compiler of Stark. Indeed, one of Folger’s variants, ‘doubt’ in ‘For in your loue I doubt not’, is clearly an error for Stark’s ‘doudt’, which — however odd (and thence possibly accounting in part for Folger’s ‘doubt’) — is clearly intended to represent the ‘dote’ of the manuscripts.
It would be tedious, and supererogatory, to present all the evidence for believing that Folger derives from Stark, and that any variants are editorial or due to the process of re-printing rather than that Folger must be regarded as being based on previously unknown source material. To be sure, there are cases when the Folger reading is superior (as distinct from Folger’s usual inferiority): thus in Folger’s ‘My lute awake performe the last’, we find in stanza 5 ‘Trow not alone vnder the sonne’, where ‘Trow’ is supported by the manuscripts, and corrects Stark’s ‘true’. But in the context it is not difficult to guess that Stark’s form is incorrect and should be ‘Trow’; it would be unsafe to imagine that whoever corrected the form in Folger was working from anything other than intelligence or a manuscript wrongly copied in Stark. My own detailed comparisons between the Stark and Folger versions and all the relevant manuscripts leads me to assume that Folger is based on Stark, and that inferior forms in Folger are due to slovenliness, while superior ones are the result of reasonably intelligent editorial revision, or possibly a re-examination of the source used for Stark.

Therefore, before giving an analytical account of other differences between the printed versions on the one hand and the manuscripts on the other, it will be best to state further which poems need to be considered. The third Stark poem, ‘Shall she neuer out of my mynde’, is paralleled, in fragmentary form, in Folger, and also, in a very garbled version, in the eccentric manuscript Add. MS. 18752 in the British Library. It is difficult to draw any sensible conclusion from comparisons involving this manuscript, which is not only a very bad text as far as Wyatt (or his contemporary, in this case?) is concerned, but which gives us very little. There is no ground for believing that this poem is Wyatt’s, anyway. Poem 4, ‘My penne take payne a [lytle space]’, occurs in Folger, and also in D. It is often claimed to be Wyatt’s, and may or may not be, judging on stylistic grounds (no other grounds exist). Poem 5, ‘[My lute a]wake perfourme the last’ is undoubtedly Wyatt’s on a number of scores, and, existing in several manuscript as well as printed versions, is the most important and interesting poem to compare.

Some of the poems are peculiar to Folger, amongst the Court of Venus fragments. Poem 3 in the Folger section, ‘To whom should I sue to ease my payne’, not only has no counterpart in any other source, but is so feeble and halting that it is difficult to believe that the poem could be Wyatt’s. Poem 4 is ‘Dysdaine me not without desert’, which is also found in T, where it is classified as Wyatt’s, and, again, in Add. MS. 18752. The chief point of interest here (given the bizarre status of the manuscript) is the relationship between Folger and T. As usual, T drops its refrain, but the T version is otherwise both independent and superior. For example, T has an internal rhyme (‘not ... not ... wot’, etc.) which is distorted in Folger, where line 4 contains ‘nothing’ instead of ‘not’. The manuscript, insofar as anything can be inferred from it, seems to be derived from an independent source (at whatever remove), for it gives us ‘wote’ in line 19, where Folger has ‘knew’ and T ‘know’ (which is better but does not rhyme). The independence of T and Folger is obviously of crucial importance. The two books represent two quite different editions, and are not, either of them, to be regarded
as a reprint of the other. The independence stands out quite starkly: if Folger followed T, Folger could not have contained the refrain of each stanza (‘Dysdayne me not ... Refuse me not’, etc.), and its line 4, ‘I meane nothing but honesty’ is hardly likely to have been derived from T’s ‘I meane ye not but honestly’. On the other hand, the T line could not have been derived from that in Folger, and T contains several other superior readings which must have come from another source, e.g. ‘Refuse me not that am so true’ where Folger has ‘Refuse me not that I am so true’ (line 22). The facts fit the theory which I advanced before, viz. that Tottel’s text is a member of one ‘family’ and Folger of another.

Amongst the other pieces in Folger, two are also found in B: No 5, ‘Fortune what ayleth the’, which may well be by another poet than Wyatt, but which is useful, to a limited extent, for comparative purposes; and No 8, ‘During ofayne and greuous smart’, which is in a similar category. Poem 6, ‘I may by no meanes surmyse’, is found in no other source. The only poem which remains is ‘Meruaile no more al tho’, which is found also in D, E, and T. For a variety of reasons, this poem is definitely Wyatt’s.

We now need to compare versions of poems where it is relevant to do so, although it will be obvious from what has been said so far that one’s sense of relevance is likely to depend somewhat on whether one believes a poem to be Wyatt’s or not; and it will also be apparent that comparisons will be more useful in some instances than others, given the fact that for some poems many more sources exist than for others. But let us make a start.

Where manuscript versions exist, the least useful comparisons are those which involve a printed version and only one manuscript. Even in these cases, however, something of value may be deduced. Folger’s ‘Fortune what ayleth the’, for example, which readers who do not have access to B or to a microfilm of it can check in Muir and Thomson’s edition (poem CLXI), at first looks rather boringly like B. However, the variants in Muir and Thomson are not correctly listed. Thus in line 11, Folger does not contain ‘Nor’, but ‘Nother’, as in B; but a variant which should have been noted is the following, where I first quote B, then Folger:

Folger:
Long haue I loued her,
Oft haue I pryded her, [Muir and Thomson’s punctuation]

Muir and Thomson:
Long haue I loued her
Oft haue I proued her

The difference between ‘pryded’ and ‘proued’ may seem trivial, but I think that it turns out to be significant once we realise that Folger has a rhyme as a result, and therefore is here surely the better version. What this suggests is that Folger does not derive from B, but from a better text. That fact is also confirmed by the fact that B omits the last ten lines. Folger must therefore derive from another source than B. This is not to say something about Folger’s quality, only
about its provenance. For example, in lines 16-17, B has ‘Nothyng regardes me/ Nor yet rewardes me’, while Folger here destroys the rhyme by printing ‘Nothyng regardyng me/ Nor yet rewardeth me’. But this fact can only encourage us in the belief that if Folger had been printed from B or another source containing ‘prayd’, then that reading would no doubt have been copied, since exactitude of rhyme was obviously no consideration in the production of Folger. B’s ‘prayd’ is probably no more than a mechanical error, but its presence throws significant light on Folger’s ‘proud’.

The other Folger poem which is only found in B is ‘During of paynes and grevus Smarte’, which is printed from B in Muir and Thomson (poem CXXIV). On this occasion, there are a great many differences. The conclusion which we had already drawn with respect to ‘Fortune what ayleth the’, viz. that Folger is not based on B, seems to apply in this instance also. To be sure, many of Folger’s variants could be the result of carelessness or editorial revision. But not all of them can be explained this way: notably, in line 6, B has ‘The teres voide that from thyn eyes doo Leke’, while Folger omits ‘voide’, and in line 10, where B has ‘Thow stryves where strength ys all to weke’, Folger prints ‘Thou pullest the stringes that be to weake’. And, even if we were to impute these differences to a rich imagination on the part of the editor/publisher of Folger, such an assumption does not seem to be warranted in line 19, where B offers ‘Better were dethe then this alyve’ but Folger has the — surely superior, but moderate — ‘Better to dy then thus to lyue’.

One might think, then, that it is only an accident of history that these two poems survive in B and Folger, and that if, for example, those poems had occurred in D, that text would no doubt have offered versions closer to Folger. Unfortunately, this thought is not supported in the one case which enables us to make a comparison between D and Folger (or Stark), viz. the poem which starts as follows in Folger:

My penne take payne a lytle space
to folow the thing that doth me chase
and hath in hold, my hart so sore
And when thou hast this brought to passe:
My pen I praye the wryte no more.

In Muir and Thomson, the first stanza is correctly copied out from D as follows, although all the punctuation is editorial:

My pen, take payn a ltyll space
To folow that whyche dothe me chace,
And hathe in hold my hart so sore;
But when thow hast thys brought to passe,
My pen, I prithe, wryght no more!

I said earlier that I do not believe that Folger is in any sense based on source material different from Stark’s. That is not to suggest, of course, that Folger
may not have been printed after re-checking of the same source. Thus in line 3 Stark had ‘And hold’, and someone either guessed that the line needed ‘hathe in’ or re-examined the original source. In that case, it is the less likely that that source was much like D, or else the difference in line 2, between ‘the thing that’ and ‘that whyche’ would also have been observed. It is inconceivable, surely, that someone would have wished to change ‘that whyche’ — an entirely clear and metrical reading — into the more gauche (but not patently unauthentic) ‘the thing that’.

It becomes tempting, after comparing poems from B and D with their printed counterparts, to see what the status of E might be with regard to Stark or Folger. The most intriguing thing about E, in this context, is that it counts for so little. The most frequent manuscripts to occur in our comparisons are D and B, which by itself suggests once again the existence of a ‘family’ to which these two belong. Still, we can compare ‘Meruaile no more al tho’ (Folger) with versions in both D and E, and the results of such a comparison are interesting.

At first, it seems as though Folger is derived from D. Muir and Thomson print the poem from E, and it will be easiest, I think, if I give complete lines from the manuscripts in this case, using the conventions of modern printing as is done in Muir and Thomson, but leaving the lines unpunctuated, as in the manuscripts. I focus on instances where Folger might either follow D or E (not those when it is different from both):

**Line 13**

D: play who can that part  
E: Play who that can that part  
Folger: Play who can that depart

Folger is based on D, adding a syllable to ‘part’ for metrical reasons; if there had been access to E, E’s simple and effective line would have been copied.

**Line 21**

D: how shuld I do than  
E: Alas how should I then  
Folger: How should I than

D is clearly the source for Folger. Again, if E’s reading had been available, it would have been copied, and could not possibly by mere accident have been changed so as to correspond to D’s, even though ‘do’ is omitted in Folger.

**Line 22**

D: that neuer tast but sowre  
E: that never tasted but sowre  
Folger: That never tasted but sour
Here, surprisingly, E seems to be followed. However, it is not at all necessary to believe that ‘tasted’ might not just as readily have been thought of as fitting (metrically and otherwise) by the editor/publisher of Folger. And, if the source was neither D nor E, as I have consistently suggested was the case, it may well have contained the odd reading which corresponded to E. In my next example, anyway, it is again D which is followed in Folger:

Line 29

D:    and yf suche chance do chawnce
E:    And if I have souche chaunce
Folger: And if such chaunce do chaunce

This example is, I feel, the clearest yet. Unmistakably, the Folger text of this poem is derived from D or a source very close to it, and we need not at all suppose that E played any part in the textual process leading up to Folger.

Folger’s ‘If fantasy would fauour’ (of which a fragment also appears in Stark) is found in both D and E (and in part also in an A version based, as usual, on E). Comparisons shows that Folger cannot be derived from D. For one thing, Folger produces a stanza commencing with ‘But fantasy is frayle’ which is not in D. It does occur in E. Some other readings, too, cannot come from D. In line 12, Folger has ‘Wyth fayth to take part’, as in E, while D has ‘with fayth for to take parte’; it is of course possible that for was intentionally (or casually) omitted by Folger, but in any case Folger must have been based on another text for it to include the stanza missing in D. Similarly, it would seem that another text than D was used in line 34, where Folger prints ‘As I deserue and shal’ although D omits ‘I’ (which E, again, has). Yet it is not necessary to assume that it was E from which Folger derived. Apart, of course, from the fact that there are many poems in Folger which do not occur in E (a fact which we constantly need to remember), line 28 in Folger, ‘Of helpe and remedy’, appears to follow neither E (‘off stedfastnes remedy’) nor D (‘off stedefast remedy’). It is of course possible, in a case like this, that E’s or D’s reading was revised. It is equally possible, however, that Folger was based on a different source altogether. Its text departs very drastically from both D and E in many places, and it is hard to imagine that all of the departures are due to carelessness or editorial revision. Very probably there was a different source which Folger and Stark were based on.

We are now left with two more poems which may throw light on the provenance of Folger and Stark. One of these is very curious indeed, and I shall present it in full, indicating which of its lines show resemblance to the one manuscript with a version about half as long (though the line-length varies), i.e. B, and which to the other manuscript, D, which presents a similar short version:

Loue whom you lyst and spare not      D,B
Therwyth I am content
Hate whom you lyst and spare not  
For I am indyfferent  

D, B (with ‘care not’ for ‘spare not’)  

Do what you lyst and dread not  
After your owne fantaseye  
Thynke what you lyst and feare not  
For all is one with me.  

D (B has fere for dread)  
D (B Sey for Thynke, dred for feare)  

For as for me I am not  
Wauering as the wind  
But euen as one that reketh not  
Whych way you turne your mind  

D,B  
B has rekyth, D reckes  

For in your loue I doubt not  
But as one that reketh not  
Whether you hate or hate not  
Is least charge of my thought  

D,B, (dote for doubt, doudi in Stark)  
D,B  

Wherfore I pray you forget not  
But that I am well content  
To loue whom you list and spare not  
For I am indyfferent  

D (yon for you), B  
B (But for To)  

The second but last line in D is ‘but love whom ye liste/ for I care not’ — much more powerful and intelligent than what is presented by B or Folger, but obviously not adopted if D was available, which makes it probable that D was not the source for this expanded poem, although two lines are significantly close to D as against B.  

Of course, this poem is somewhat of an enigma as it appears in Folger. It may, just possibly, be an expanded version, by Wyatt, of what he first wrote. In that case, the poem as it stands still shows a combination of D and B features, which I assume was a marked characteristic of the important source which has gone missing. Alternatively, the poem was ‘improved’, by addition, without Wyatt’s authorization (assuming that he wrote a version like the one in D and B). It is also conceivable that Wyatt first wrote something like what we encounter in Folger, and afterwards drastically shortened the poem to strengthen it. Even then, this longer version contains traits of both D and B, and the textual fact would remain that Folger incorporates those combined characteristics. In any case we are still led to the view that Folger was not based on D or B, but a quite independent text which was some form of hybrid, containing, of course, also things not found in D or B — e.g. variants like those which Folger shares with E, or of course whole poems. But the connection with D and B is far closer than with any other known major manuscript.  

To see just how close to D and B Folger’s source was, let us now consider ‘My lute awake!’, or at least some of the more significant variants in that poem.
It will also become plain that E and T do indeed belong to a different group, as I contend.

In each instance I shall first quote the line from Folger, followed by one or more other versions for comparison:

1 My lute awake performe the last
   My lute awake performe the last labor D; error not in Folger

9 Should we then syng, wepe or mone
   should we then syng or syghe or mone
   synge or walle
   sigh or syng
   sigh? or singe
   D
   B
   E
   T

Clearly B is closest here: ‘wail’ is not the same as ‘weep’, but formally ‘sigh’ is even more remote. Yet D is at least closer (see the word order) than E and T, which stand apart.

11 The rocke doth not so cruelly
   The Rokk dothe not so cruelly
   Rokkes do
   D, B
   E, T

D and B are equally close to Folger; E and T depart.

18 Vnkind although thou hast them won
   by whom vnkynd
   vnkynd althoughte
   D, E, T
   B

Folger here must derive from a source close to B; and we may note that ‘Unkind although’ is a very acceptable reading, for which Wyatt may at some stage of composition have been responsible.

21 Vengeance may fall on such dysdayne
   Vengawnce may fell on thy dysdayn
   shall
   D, B
   E, T

The most common pattern: D and B are closer to Folger than are E and T.

22 That maketh but game of earnest paine
   makes of truest
   makes of yernest
   makest on ernest
   D
   B
   E, T

Of all versions, B is the closest, despite the eccentric ‘yernest’.

23 Trow not alone vnder the sonne
   trow not alone vnder the sone
   think not alone vnder the sonne
   (Stark has true for Trow)
   D, B
   E, T

As usual, Folger seems to derive from a D/B source rather than an E/T one.
A major oddity is that lines 26 – 30, forming the sixth stanza of the poem, are absent from Stark and Folger. Possibly this is due to mere oversight, but it is also conceivable that the source used did not contain this stanza.

36 My lute be stil this is the last
   Now cesse my lute thys ys the last            D
   My lute be styll                                B
   Now cesse my lute this is the last            E, T

Demonstrably B is closer to Folger than any of the other sources are, and the Folger/B version is perfectly satisfactory, perhaps representing what Wyatt once wrote.

38 And end that I haue begonne
    and endyd ys that I begone                     D (‘haue now’ later inserted after ‘I’)
    end                                B
    that I have now                                  E, T
    ended is that we

The addition ‘haue now’ in D suggests that this, also found in B, was once an authoritative reading, although not found in E, which Wyatt in one place corrected (line 31 in the E version, where he altered ‘they lay’ to ‘the lye’). Line 38 as found in B is very adequate. Comparison of the various versions of lines 26 – 30, too, suggests that there was an earlier version, which may in some respects have been superior to the one found in E, Wyatt’s revision notwithstanding. For example, line 27 speaks of ‘the wynter nyght that are so cold’ in E, but D, B, and T all have the ordinary plural, which is, indeed, the form usually found in Wyatt.

39 Or when this song is song and past
    now ys thys song Bothe songe and past        D, E, T
    ffor when                                  B
    ys songyne

Again Folger appears to derive from B, despite B’s odd ‘ys songyne’ (also found in line 4, where Folger has ‘is gon’, but Stark ‘is sung’).

In general, when studying this poem, we might well come to think that Folger could be directly derived from B, and the most startling resemblances are to be found in stanza 7, from which I need merely single out the instances when Folger and B agree against all others. Thus in line 33 only B and Folger have ‘louer’, and the peculiar ‘sowne’, instead of a form more recognisably like modern ‘swoon’. This line, ‘To cause thy louer to sighe and sowne’ in Folger, therefore has two variants shared by Folger and B which are not found elsewhere.

Nevertheless, however close B is to Folger in this poem, we have also found interesting differences. For instance, if B or a transcript of B (or a source from which B was copied) is the basis for the Folger text of this poem, why does Folger not have a form like ‘wail’ in line 9, instead of ‘wepe’? Furthermore, we have also found strong resemblances, in other poems, between Folger and D. And B does not contain all of the poems occurring in Folger.
I suggest that something like the following is the case. The Stark-Folger fragments were derived from one and the same source. It is possible that when Folger was printed this source was once again consulted, though we do not have to assume that this happened; and in any case there is no reason for supposing that the Folger text was based on an independent source. Stark may well have contained poems now absent from it which we can still find in Folger — itself also an incomplete text. Very probably, therefore, there was an anthology — and in some degree, at least, a Wyatt anthology — in existence in 1549, the latest date for Stark. The text from which the anthology was set up differed significantly from that on which ‘Tottel’s Miscellany’ was based in 1557. While Tottel’s text is in the main based on E and A — or rather on E through A, an edited manuscript — the Stark-Folger collection derives from an unknown source, almost certainly of very high authority, and very probably a manuscript (the enigmatic Douce fragment notwithstanding), which contained poems now chiefly found in D and B, and which textually too had strong points of contact with those manuscripts. I think that there was once a manuscript which contained earlier versions of Wyatt’s poems than are now found in the revised versions in E, and that D and B preserve features of this earlier text.

In view of what I have just argued, I believe that we need to adopt a different attitude to the texts from the present one, according to which E is seen as having a unique authority and the other manuscripts (and particularly the printed texts) are regarded as hardly significant by comparison. There is, for one thing, a major difference between D on the one hand and A on the other. With A we know that we are on unreliable ground because so much of it is the result of quite unauthorised revision. D in some cases quite definitely contains readings which Wyatt subsequently came to reject, and it may well preserve many others. If we are to understand the relationship between the various texts, and the changing nature of Wyatt’s poetic practice, we need to look at D very intensively. Likewise B, which at present is rather in danger of being ignored, needs to come in for thorough attention. The emphasis in Muir and Thomson’s edition, where B was presented as though it is more authoritative than D, seems still exaggerated, but I cannot deny that my work for this article has persuaded me that B is a good deal more important than I once thought. Not only may B, like D, contain ‘early’ readings (though perhaps it often represents a later stage of composition than does D), but we must also — and most significantly — realise that E, despite Wyatt’s corrections, is by no means faultless (as all recent editors have agreed). There may well be instances where D and/or B must be given close attention not just because these manuscripts probably contain readings which Wyatt once approved of, but also because they can provide us with readings which, being superior to their counterparts in E, Wyatt might finally have included if he had been able to correct E properly; in which case he might also have added poems to his collection which now survive, not in E, but in D or B. There is no strong in-
dication that such poems have inevitably survived in versions far removed from what the author wanted them to be.

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NOTES

1 In addition to the books by Southall and Harrier which I go on to mention, see for example Ruth Hughey, The Arundel Harlington Manuscript of Tudor Poetry, 2v. (Columbus, Ohio, 1960); Kenneth Muir, ed., Sir Thomas Wyatt: Unpublished Poems (Liverpool, 1961); Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson, eds., Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt; H.A. Mason, Editing Wyatt (Cambridge, 1972); Joost Daalder, ed., Sir Thomas Wyatt: Collected Poems (London, 1975); R.A. Rebholz, ed., Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems (Harmondsworth, 1978). These works also contain references to earlier books and articles. There are also many other articles of interest, some recent and others not so recent, which it would take too much space to list here. In general, the books which I mention will give an adequate notion of what is at present seen as problems, and what attitudes are being adopted, some of which are so confident as to suggest that problems merely exist in the minds of other scholars.

2 This tendency to use ‘seing’ instead of ‘sins’ is persistent in the Folger fragment of The Court of Venus, which I shall later discuss extensively.

3 There are important comments on this manuscript in the books by Hughey, Southall, and Harrier. Harrier’s book is amongst other things an edition of E, or at least contains a (reasonably accurate) transcript of it, together with a good listing of variants from other sources. His views of the texts, of which E is especially important to him, are assertive; and although he is (I believe) right in regarding E as a collection of Wyatt’s poems rather than anonymous ones, many of his comments on individual hands, the relationships between the texts, etc., are unreliable, as I shall show on a later occasion. Southall exaggerates when arguing that many of the E poems are ‘doubtful’, but his accuracy as a transcriber (especially in his Ph.D. thesis, Birmingham University, 1961) and as an analyst of hands is far superior to Harrier’s.

4 I adopted this reasoning myself in my edition (p.xxii), even though I was not as yet completely persuaded that the ‘Tho’ entries are in Wyatt’s hand.

5 Harrier, p.11.

6 I refer to first lines of poems in the modernised versions which are found in my edition, and which are easiest to use if the reader wishes to locate poems in other editions, such as that of Muir and Thomson (where the first lines in the Index are also modernised). I do not, of course, adopt this practice if a textual point needs to be made, or if I quote from a poem which is not found in my edition. Unfortunately one cannot refer the reader to a reliable ‘standard’ edition of Wyatt. The Muir-Thomson edition is, as Mason and I have more than once shown, extremely erratic, and Rebholz’s (as I have not yet been able to demonstrate in print) is far from accurate. I still believe my own edition to be textually accurate except for two readings which I would now wish to change; but it is a modernised text, and should therefore, if an edition of Wyatt (not just of a manuscript) is to be used, be consulted along with Muir and Thomson’s text.

7 Cf. Southall, especially Chapter II and Appendices A and B.


10 Edited, in part, by Muir in his 1961 volume (cf. note 1 above), and used also in the edition by Muir and Thomson.

11 See note 1 above.

12 I use the 1967 facsimile (Menston, Yorks.) of this text, but there is also a splendid edition of H.E. Rollins, Tottel’s Miscellany, 1556–1587, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1928–9).


14 Cf. Hughey, i, 60.

15 Hughey, ii, 127.
