

George Etheridge, *Wyatt's Conspiracy* (1557)

Homeric Pastiche in Marian England

Abstract

This paper (40,000 words) presents a critical edition of a hitherto unknown, unedited manuscript poem composed by George Etheridge (Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford) and presented to Queen Mary I in 1557. The occasion of the text's composition was Mary's victory, three years earlier, over Wyatt's Rebellion, so the poem fits familiar categories of panegyric address and royal gift-giving within a patronage network. But in other respects this poem is highly unusual: it is composed in Greek hexameters, in imitation of Homeric epic, and is significant as perhaps the first Greek cento or 'cento-pastiche' (a verbal mosaic made from lines and half-lines of ancient Greek poetry) to be produced in England. It sheds light on humanist practices of language-learning and commonplacing, on the topical occasions motivating Homeric pastiche, on the treatment of Tudor chronicle history, on classical reception in early modern England, and on the processes of literary creativity itself. The paper comprises two halves: first, a lengthy discursive introduction outlining the historical background of Wyatt's Rebellion, the intellectual and educational contexts that inform neo-Greek culture in England, the poem's likely reception by Mary, its literary design, and its textual issues; and second an annotated transcription and translation of Etheridge's Latin preface and his Greek poem itself.

Keywords

George Etheridge

Homeric pastiche

neo-Greek culture

Tudor poetics

cento

Wyatt's Rebellion

philhellenic humanism

classical reception

Original orthography of early modern English texts has been lightly modernised: *u/v* and *i/j* distinctions are silently normalised, and English scribal contractions are expanded and reproduced as italics. All translations of Latin and Greek are mine, unless otherwise indicated.