

1-1-2010

Creativity With Purest Energy--How Sir Thomas Wyatt Introduced Modern English Poetics

Jeffery R. Moser
University of Denver

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CREATIVITY WITH PUREST ENERGY—HOW SIR THOMAS WYATT
INTRODUCED MODERN ENGLISH POETICS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Jeffery R. Moser

June 2010

Advisor: Dr. Linda Bense-Meyers

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Author: Jeffery Moser

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Abstract

The court poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42) asserts a special confidence and boldness of the individual and his poetics that stand at the forefront of an ambitious, sure and powerful England which eventually came into place during his life and afterwards. Wyatt marks the start of a new literary period when humanity and art gradually diverged from religious rites and instruction, dramatic impulses for romantic love and mere desires for adventure, allegory and narrative to favor instead modern demands and conscious intellectualism. Wyatt's poetry best represents this distinct literary break from his native medieval predecessors and from writers who had already been challenged on the European Continent by the renaissance which began there about a century ahead of England's.

Transmitting and revising poetry from Italy, France and elsewhere, Wyatt introduced numerous poetic forms to England. Then, by experimenting with these new metrical forms and using native vernacular, he originated his own poetry. Wyatt's poetry also began to reflect a new attitude about human life, an attitude reflecting the flourishing of classical authorities somewhat at odds with old ideas. His early modern poetics would exceed beyond medieval literature's propensity for rhyme and the harsh depiction of nature's realities. Instead, he would offer an alternative to philosophic depth and poetic virtuosity that was mastered by Chaucer and imitated by others in England and on the European Continent. His would be a transformative kind of poetry, more direct and less

narrative, in new and “irregular” prosody. And Wyatt’s “new” poetry uniquely combined native traditions and classical influences in radically different tones and from ordered meters that did not restrict—actually, which served as a catalyst for—lyrical variations, prosodic innovations, and quite different and highly aesthetic expressions about universal truths and humanity’s new-found boldness and intellect that was taking hold in Tudor England.

Wyatt’s court-poet contemporaries and then successive poets like Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Donne to name only a few, would acknowledge the poetics that Wyatt first introduced and that they then improved upon in their own poetry to establish what is well-known as the Early Modern eras’ best lyrics. However, without the clear voice and innovations by Wyatt, that new path in British life and literature undoubtedly would not have been advanced, at least not in the first half of the sixteenth century.

Acknowledgments

I wish to first recognize those at the University of Denver whose expertise and insights were helpful to my labors in preparing this critical thesis and defending its content, context and implications: Dr. Linda Bensel-Meyers who was my advisor and thesis chairperson and Dr. William Zaranka who served as second reader.

Secondly, I am grateful to additional instructors in the University of Denver's English Department from whom I took coursework for the MA in literature: Dr. W. Scott Howard, Laird B. Hunt, Dr. Benjamin Kim, Dr. Jessica Munns, Dr. Maik Nwosu, and Dr. Alexandra H. Olsen. As well, I am appreciative of professors from the Religious Studies Department with whom I completed cognate courses in studies of cultures and texts: Dr. Luis D. Leon and Dr. Liyakat Takim. Finally, thank you to Dr. Gregory A. Robbins who acted as outside chair for the master's exam.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Renaissance Humanism, Courtly Love and Thomas Wyatt

Without entering too clearly into a contemporary debate about what was renaissance humanism and when, indeed, there occurred a literary break between England's medieval past and "modern" texts, I would suggest that the beginning of the sixteenth century certainly accompanied England's progress with a new opportunity for change. Descriptively, Geoffrey Chaucer (1346-1400) was the first to help the literary world recognize the power in surveying the world from a central, a truly human point of view (Mason 12). Then, with Shakespeare (1564-1616), there is the prevailing sense that Chaucer may have lived in a different world than he. Still, Shakespeare's wisdom seems very much like Chaucer's; wit and wisdom is implicit in both authors' dramatic expressions. And whatever was missing, that is, what features were added to writing between these two great masters, demands illumination of Chaucer's successors and Shakespeare's predecessors during this period of about one hundred years called the Early Tudor Age (c. 1450-1557).

The pace of life and literature did not stand still between these two great writers. Social, political and literary changes continued to unfold gradually and in the direction of progress. In fact, monumental reform took place during the sixteenth century and it was then, as C. S. Lewis stated, "a decisive break occurred" (Mason 17). Lewis recognized that, between the death of Chaucer and the rise of Wyatt, English poetry passed through a

very dull phase. Lewis called this time “without a firm line or clear colour anywhere.” Hence, one consequence, of England’s departure from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was that during the renaissance the word “human” came to mean something vital and totally different than it did in Dante’s works, which crystallized the notion that men and women come from stock born to not live like animals but to respond to the call of knowledge and power (Mason 18). Essentially, in the sixteenth century, an intellectual movement that first began on the Continent then came to England in the form of an emerging and then a gradually and debatable world view and moral philosophy that considered humans to be of primary importance. Accompanying this attitude was a renaissance of thinking and printing. The Early Tudors were the first benefactors and actors who received, responded to and accepted this philosophical and textual phenomenon that, for conflation of argument and brevity of definition, might be called “renaissance humanism.”

Early Tudor court poems by Sir Thomas Wyatt (?March 1503-11 October 1542) represent poetry that is distinct, confident and bold. His poetics can best be interpreted as “modern” by the recognition that the two great backdrops to his writings are that he was an author of steadfastness and integrity and who was placed in positions of responsibility for the Tudor Court, surrounded by dangers and temptations, and constantly exposed to calumnies in a time of turbulence and suspicion, but passed through the ordeal without a stain on his reputation (Bell 53). Most of Wyatt’s poems show individuality, ambition and confidence, qualities that would resemble the England which eventually came into place during his life and afterwards, a period when humanity and art gradually diverged

from religious rites and instruction, dramatic impulses for romantic love and mere desires for adventure, allegory and narrative to favor instead modern demands and conscious intellectualism. Wyatt's poetics would develop and evolve in step with England's movement towards national identity and accompanied by ambitious humanism, learning and civic preparation. Wyatt's poetry displays intellect and the personal interest in all that surrounded and challenged him as a lover, Christian and courtier. Still, even for Wyatt, the courtly love tradition as a literary and social concept went all the way back to humankind's earliest poetry. However, in the fourteenth century, English writers made it clear that they were thoroughly familiar with and sympathetic to an aristocratic ideal of love. Thirteenth- and fourteenth-century writers, especially the Italians, and more specifically, Francesco Petrarch (1304-74), perfected the use of allegory in poetry to convey the courtly experience of love. During Chaucer's time and afterwards allegory began to be applied as a primary literary theme that involved education through courtly love. Chaucer especially painted a complex and critical picture of his lovers and the ideals by which they talk and strive to act. Courtly love developed to embrace contrasting elements of the highly principled and the silly, the noble and ineffectual. While a game of pursuit, one that involved the most serious business in life, in the Christian perspective the courtly love tradition mixed education with attainment of Divine love. Yet, the lovers consummate their union in often unforgettable scenes where the aspirations and desires of both mind and body have been fully satisfied. The patience, suffering, self-abnegation and self-control imposed by courtly ideals of love led directly to this transient but intense joy: by no other road could the lovers arrive at their

temporary heaven on earth. From this long and improved social and literary tradition Wyatt crafted poetry between that by Chaucer and Shakespeare, and Wyatt's poems show dogged determination to be a poet in Early Tudor times who, like the aforementioned two, also offered something original. Wyatt's works are especially ground-breaking because they were composed against the early backdrop of accompanying great change in attitude which would wholly influence sixteenth-century thought and texts: renaissance humanism. Wyatt produced poems in the convention of the courtly love style but with simpler personal and lyrical language.

Certainly, the sixteenth century would steadily prove a departure from Britain's medievalist traditions to the acceptance of a new attitude about human life, an attitude reflecting the flourishing of classical authorities, and yet a mindset somewhat at odds with old ideas. Modern poetics would ultimately exceed beyond the propensity for rhyme, the harsh depiction of nature's realities, philosophic depth and poetic virtuosity that was mastered by Chaucer in the second half of the fourteenth century and imitated by others after him in England and on the Continent to, over time, a transformed poetry in meter and form in the sixteenth century. This new poetics uniquely combined native traditions and classical influence in radically different tones and from an ordered meter that did not restrict—actually, which served as a catalyst for—lyrical variation, prosodic innovation and highly aesthetic expressions of humanity's boldness and universal truths. The poetry of knight, courtier and ambassador, Sir Thomas Wyatt, exhibits the first clear voice of this new path in British life and literature.

From about the year 1500, English life and art would be strongly influenced by individualism, interrogation and improvement rather than acceptance of earthly life and mankind's imperfections and isolation. From the Tudor line Henry VII came to the throne in 1485 and a response to a literary and literal sense of an emerging (ultimately, the unfolding English Renaissance) "new order" that would—and did—eventually overwhelm the culture of Wyatt's well-understood polite England. This change in culture, language, and literary order was actually evident just right before Wyatt, in the forceful, ridiculing and quick-witted poetry of John Skelton (?1460-1529). Skelton's poem, "The Bouge (rations) of Court" (1498) dreamily satirized the court of King Henry VII (reigned 1485-1509). In addition, Skelton's authentic English portrayal in a commoner's vernacular of a drunken woman and her ale-house customers in "The Tunning of Elinor Running" (1517) resonated clearly with the resounding poem's perfect rhythm, control of line and Skelton's accurate conveyance of human behavior as a most direct observer. Drawing on "native" vocabulary and egotistical panache, Skelton's poetics offered a model to his contemporaries, and then, Early Modern poets after him including Wyatt, of English letters about pushing words to stay a point.

At the same time in 1517, the great northern humanist scholar, Desiderius Erasmus (?1466-1536), always witty and perfectly clear, labeled Skelton's writing "light and glory". In addition, Erasmus particularly addressed the political and religious reforms underway:

Things are actually so bad that whereas in former times lawyers were the bane of the ordinary man hauled into court, they are now the least of the evils he has to encounter facing trial . . . Everything appears in order here, kind greetings, embraces, merry banquets and all of the amenities. Yet it is all a facade, a mere

shadow of true peace and concord . . . a pretense covering factions and secret dissensions. The courts of princes are not the home of peace but rather the real source of war.

(Erasmus' Letters, as quoted in Dolan 180).

For the Dutch intellectual Erasmus, neither learning nor public service could rest in the sixteenth century upon a narrowly defined culture and limiting intellectualism that made scholastic rules the only rational basis for morality, aesthetics, logic, science and politics. Erasmus stated that it was not that writers had defections in their works but that they read into their work “their own defects” (Hillerbrand 87). However, for Thomas Wyatt, his ballads, lyrics and sonnets were composed to diplomatically balance insufficient and difficult political, theological and personal ideologies against public and private malice and kindness that had to unfold as perfection, the very expectation of almost every courtier, versifier and composer of songs in the close, social Henrician setting that was filled with passion, pretense, trickery and duplicity. It is very important to remember that Wyatt and his fellow court-poets were not members of the clergy like many medieval writers were. Even before the sixteenth century the church often proved to be a reliable refuge for satirical attacks, a literary sanctuary and base for making poetic assaults on church and society. For example, after he was appointed in 1489 a court poet to Henry VII, Skelton was ordained a priest in 1498. Clergymen who were also poets were more vulnerable to reproof and chastisement by authorities within the church than by the court. Obtaining the rectorship of Diss in Norfolk in 1503, Skelton afforded himself wider critical latitude for making satirical attacks. Wyatt and others who were secular court advisers did not have that kind of protective leeway that Skelton and others in the church had; “wise” and wary” are good words to align with Wyatt in understanding his

diplomatic nimbleness and adroit skillfulness at writing plain and pleasing, and yes, sometimes abrupt and erratic, poetics. With Wyatt's meter and verse, one should assume that some of his resulting asymmetrical forms, irregular meter, and uneven lines were precisely written and sung with intention: he was originating poetics from translations and native traditions while balancing" political constraints, classical learning, polished and ornate terms and rhyme, and English vernacular.

Starting with Wyatt, modern poetics would take lyrical grace and artistry to new heights. Not only did Wyatt emerge to stand in the crosshairs of politics, Protestantism and court poetry, but his translations of poetry derived from Continental Renaissance poets and with his own experiments and native predecessors at producing original English poetry ultimately placed Wyatt at a historic crossroads in English literature. The pioneering craft of Sir Thomas Wyatt was the first by Early Modern English poets and his poems displayed a refined interpretation to accompany excellent versification. Essentially Wyatt's poetry resembles the intense emotional opening to one of his odes that begins, "If thou wilt mighty be, flee from the rage / Of cruell wyll; and see thou kepe thee free / From the foule yoke of sensuall bondage" ("No.195" in Muir 1949, 180). Wyatt put in motion an important trend for verse: no longer did it have to be constrained in meaning to simply contain the fidelity found in the antithetical Petrarchan poetic tradition. Nor did this new English verse of Early Modern have to adhere to that of Anglo-Saxon poetry's clannish harshness, erotic desires, religious anxieties and courtly adventures operating through alliteration and stress which had only become less regular in meter and less alliterative in form by the fourteenth century and nearly chaotic, except for rhyme, in the fifteenth

century. Instead, English poetry at the start of the sixteenth century, poems composed by Wyatt, and then, by other early modern writers, became exceptionally construed in meter, form and import to command expression and to demand elucidation, and with this latter feature showing special control of emotions and calling for parallel reflections and self-analyses from these poets' listeners/readers. Some of Wyatt's colleagues were the first to join him in adapting this new versification. They included his fellow courtier-writer, notably his friend, Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey (?1517-47), first cousin to Queen Anne Boleyn, and others: Sir Thomas Cheney (?1485-1558), diplomat to kings Henry VII and VIII; Sir Francis Bryan (?1490-1550), who may have been Wyatt's closest friend more than Surrey and also a cousin to Boleyn; Sir Nicholas Vaux (c. 1460-24 May 1523) and his son, Thomas, 2nd Lord Vaux (1510-56) who submitted two poems for the anthology *Tottel's Miscellany: Songes and Sonettes* (1557) and others— all of whom retained their favor (most of the time) with both Henrys. However, Wyatt was imprisoned in the Tower three times by Henry VIII, but he was always subsequently released and granted more licenses, titles, lands and duties. From Wyatt and the other court-poets' poems, then, became the representation of a new poetics that would match emerging idylls of humanism. As this thesis centrally illustrates, Sir Thomas Wyatt would significantly contribute to Early Modern literature; his bold creativity especially helped to establish what would be sustained and recognized centuries later to this day as modern poetics.

Wyatt's poetry is foremost about truth and individualism, that which was most central human interest and which defined the unfolding renaissance in England. Wyatt expressed these sentiments for human interest in a new and energetic kind of lyrics,

especially his sonnets that make inquiry and intelligence a reflective tri-partite duty of the poet, his audience, and of the poem itself. From Wyatt, and forward, poetics became both intimate and impersonal, a movement that has continued and survived—no, thrived—to this day; modern poetry demonstrates how the greatest demand of the work is that it displays the poet’s loyalty to his art. The poet’s constancy is ultimately realized in the work that he produces, a work virtually removed from the realm of nature and which must make certain that the final art produced is nothing more than precisely that (Parkinson 373).

The resulting prosody that significantly took hold in England at the start of the sixteenth century, as Wyatt’s poetry showcases, was fresh, compact and full of wise ideas about life and thought and with language that promoted caution, wit, self-reflection and the stand-alone worthiness of both poet and his finished literary pieces. In 1858 Reverend George Gilfillan remarked of Wyatt’s poetry, “It is manifestly but a small extract from the nature of the man; but in its smallness forms an exquisitely finished miniature of its author” (xv). Wyatt’s new kind of poetry illustrated a literary improvement, abandoning the anarchy of rhythm and meter into which prosody had fallen by the fifteenth century and unique with innovative forms that carried novel meanings. Of the variation found in Wyatt’s poetry, Gilfillan stated the following:

Some may object to the minuteness with which he anatomizes his love feelings . . . but none can deny the sincerity of the songster . . . [Wyatt’s] affections remind you pleasantly of Arcadia and its poetical lovers; or of Shakespeare’s Arcadia of Arden, where his Rosalinds and Orlandos were wont to “fleet their time, as in the golden world.” Every little song and madrigal of Wyatt’s seems as if it had first been carved on the bark of a forest tree, or perchance inscribed on the sand of the seashore, and thence transferred to his immortal verse.

(Gilfillan xvi)

What Gilfillan first recognized in 1858 of Wyatt's uniqueness at writing improved English verse, at the start of our twenty-first century Harold Bloom seemed to similarly observe in Wyatt exceptional rhythms with their many subtleties and the poet's invaluable contributions of many Italianate forms and improvements to native meter: [Wyatt] "began a new poetry in English, since Petrarch's poetics had inaugurated what, in retrospect, seems the art of the unsaid, vastly developed in the ironies of Chaucer and the extraordinary ellipses of Shakespeare, in his plays as in his sonnets" (53). In 1954, C. S. Lewis also praised Wyatt; Lewis favored Wyatt's satires and, while he found good and bad examples in Wyatt's lyrics, he noted Wyatt's "fame is in the ascendant" (222-30). Striking a critical balance, modern enthusiast H. A. Mason rated Wyatt's *Penitential Psalms* highly and found his "manly" satires admirable, but felt that Wyatt's English love lyrics wanted for "poetic activity" than those by Petrarch (115-160). Nonetheless, Mason, along with Kenneth Muir, agreed that there are a handful of Wyatt's poems which can be ranked as early modern masterpieces (*TLS*). Until 1960, Wyatt's poems were based on two major manuscripts, the Egerton (E. MS), which was Wyatt's personal MS, and the Devonshire (D. MS). In 1960 Muir discovered an unrecorded Wyatt manuscript, called the Dublin or Blage MS (B. MS) because some part of it belonged to Sir George Blage (1512-51), who was known to have been a close friend of Wyatt's and also, to whom Surrey dedicated one of his own psalms. Thirty-four poems of Wyatt's previously accepted poems existing in other manuscripts and publications are in B. MS, and notably, three of them were included in *Tottel's Miscellany*. However, this manuscript also contains 36 additional poems by Wyatt that only exist in this B. MS.

And 51 of the total 69 poems in the Blage MS which are ascribed to Wyatt had never been published until Muir's collection in 1961 (xii-xiii). Muir observed that the Blage text offers some superior versions (handwritten and presumably by Wyatt) to the 34 poems existing in other manuscripts and texts; he found 250 variants (edits to the poems) between the B. MS and others. For a sample of one of Wyatt's superior "Unpublished Poems" see appendix A.

Less exaggerating Wyatt's translations and the influence on his poetry by Italian poets, Wyatt's poetry stood at the forefront during the aforementioned shift that started sixteenth century. He became English literature's enabler for the striking, energetic and sustainable new kind of versification that was born and proliferated in England's renaissance. However, this was not because Wyatt's poetry chiefly facilitated meter and in new forms. In 1589 George Puttenham (?1529-90), author of *The Arte of English Poesie*, stated that Wyatt introduced, as subsequently did other court poets, the apt description that he took upon "to make, namely in sundry of his Songs, wherein he sheweth the counterfeit action lively and pleasantly." Instead, where many of Wyatt's poems sometimes fell short of perfect meter and form (his contemporaries made smoother verse), his poems almost always ascended and surpassed any deficits by their lyric greatness, sincerity and drama. Wyatt died at the age of thirty-nine from a fever that overcame him after riding horse-back through inclement weather and over difficult terrain and then collapsing; he had been sent on a mission that would unexpectedly be the final orders he took from Henry: to dispatch from London to the port at Falmouth in southwestern England and meet the imperial ambassador arriving from Spain. In an

elegy, Wyatt's noted contemporary, Surrey most memorably described Wyatt's poetical skill as "a hand, that taught, what might be said in ryme:/ That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit" (Arber 28). John Leyland (?1506-52), Henry VIII's antiquary, composed an elegy about Wyatt and said that he was England's great refiner of the "vulgar tongue" (Thompson 2). In addition, translating Leyland's Latin, Thompson found Leyland's remarks about Wyatt's sudden death poignant: "the stream, light and lightning of eloquence is annihilated, and now, all fine song is silent" (A 2v). Further, Leyland credited Wyatt with improving the English language through his poetics: "The English language was rough and its verses worthless. Now, learned Wyatt, it has had the benefit of your file" (A 4v).

Puttenham further praised Wyatt's creativity in *The Art of English Poesie*:

In the latter end of the same kings raigne sprong vp a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir *Thomas Wyatt* th' elder & *Henry Earle* of Surrey were the two chieftains, who haunting traualled into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italian Poesie as nouices newly crept out of the schooles of *Dante Arisote* and *Petrarch*, from that it had bene before, and for that cause may isutly be sayd the first reformers of our English meetre and stile.

(34)

At this principal cultural crossroads for England remained Wyatt, an intelligent courtier and writer who became a favorite diplomat of King Henry VIII (reigned 1509-47). Wyatt was a widely read and prepared man, quickly earning respect among other courtiers for his politeness, his wit, his athleticism in the sports expected of current and future knights and his loyalty to many friends. As he found himself in the crosshairs of Tudor court milieu and England's progressing social, intellectual and political changes, those qualities eventually served him and his writing well. Wyatt's voluminous verse, most of good

quality when he was not translating the ancient Greek philosopher-writer Plutarch (46-c. 122 or 125 AD) or copying early Continental Renaissance voices of love, self, loyalty, travel and anxiety from Italy and elsewhere that began in the twelfth century and continued into Wyatt's own time, provides a valid mark of change and confidence.

Wyatt's poetry can be looked at to identify the birth of England's own literary renaissance with its emphasis on new tendencies and attitudes that, yet today, and with all of the sense in many of his poems of impatience, pride and conceit, truly are recognizable as different, that is, "modern". It was Wyatt's poetry that started the corpus of sixteenth-century literature ultimately recording and reflecting England's great movement toward national identity, the nation's change to cultural enrichment and self-improvement and most importantly, by means of ambitious humanism's determined call for learning and civic preparation.

Calls for individual responsibility and human improvement are what I see beckon the loudest in Wyatt's poetry. Above the courtly-love tradition, rather than any self-portrait or redirecting of anger, and not aiming to write poetry that subtly pointed blame at others, several of Wyatt's poems are structured as individualized theses for understanding the non-rational sides of human nature (Mason 12). Wyatt progressed to humanism's side because it favored and validated self-reason; thus, one of the poet's primary objectives reflected in his writing was his desire to escape from the pressures of court-life in order to wrap himself in his own virtue (Mason 12). In Wyatt there is the humanistic apprehension of the elemental freedom of untamed animal nature that enables him to write so subtly about love and lust. Wyatt's poems balance the outdoors activities

that would have been expected of and enjoyed by a sixteenth-century court adviser and aristocrat with those anticipated, pleasure fulfilling, entertaining, contemplative indoor behaviors and diplomacies like writing, wooing and winning and holding onto friends, and in more subtle ways than the intrusion of references to sporting actions like jousting, hunting and hawking.

In the summer of 1536, when he wrote a poem-letter to his friend John Poyntz (?1473-1547) to join him at his family home in Kent (following Boleyn's execution on May 19 and Wyatt being removed after then from the Tower in June, and thus becoming, at least intermittently, away from the close proximity of the court; the once proud and ambitious Wyatt was now even more wary and wise), Wyatt, consciously revealed an early modern recognition. Essentially, his letter to Poyntz was a satire. It was comprised of 35 stanzas in the Italian three-line verse form *terza rima* and ending with a single line for the thirty-sixth stanza, and it made a profound poetic statement that the individual is capable of creating the world as he is perceiving it. Wyatt's would be a different view from the medieval and classical adherences to the belief that goodness could be found in all the earth that surrounded mankind and that a higher good existed elsewhere, either in Heaven or in the neo-platonic support for the divine being, the "One" (Harrington 51-89), Wyatt put forth a bold interpretation in his poetry that it is life's purpose for each individual to effect some kind of adjustment, between traditional allegiances and modern demands. Here are the concluding seven lines to Wyatt's poem-letter, "Myne owne John Poynz, sins ye delight to know":

Nor I ame not where Christe is geven in pray
For mony, poison and traizon at Rome,

A commune practice vsed nyght and daie:
But I am in Kent and Christendome
Among the muses where I rede and ryme;
Where if thou list, my Poynz, for to come,
Thos shalt be judge how I do spend my tyme.
(“No. 196” in Muir 1949, 185-87)

Wyatt’s view was wholly different from Skelton’s who, before he wrote love-lyrics, stirred him to an active assertion of faith that was never after quite recaptured again by Skelton or by the Tudor poets who came after him, including Wyatt. In Skelton’s religious poems, like “Vexilla Regis”, “Upon a Dead Man’s Head”, and above all, “Woefully Arrayed”, Skelton prompted an active impulse which it appears that Wyatt and other later Tudor court-poets took up, but they never confirmed the precise judgment in allegiance to a divine authority that Skelton did. As an alternative, Wyatt would advance ideas of self-fashioning and self protection, away from the church (“Christendome”) and away from the Tudor court, both named one and the same by Henry VIII. Here is the second stanza of one of Skelton’s religious poems which provides an example that is in contrast to Wyatt’s lines above:

Of sharp thorn I have worn a crown on my head,
So pained, so strained, so rueful, so red,
Thus bobbed, thus robbed, thus for thy love dead,
Unfeigned I deigned my blood for to shed:
 My feet and handes sore
 The sturdy nailes bore:
 What might I suffer more
Than I have done, O man, for thee?
Come when thou list, welcome to me,
 Woefully arrayed.
(Green 14)

Skelton prospered on individualism and eccentricity; mocking London life and the Court was just one part of his creative impulse. Skelton was fully aware of the risk in boldly

writing about and attacking authority. It seems abundantly clear that Skelton was scared half out of his wits by the ruthlessness of court intrigue, which simultaneously fascinated and appalled him (Green 15). Unlike Skelton though, what Wyatt seemed to seek most, and what he achieved more than any other courtiers, was striking a public and private balance in his own endeavors, not for survival at the court, but for pleasure and success as a court adviser and poet. His writing portrays, as it provided him, with this arresting humanistic poise. Wyatt's poetics offered originality and steadiness during a time of change; that was worthy of admiration by and guidance to other writers in his time and for generations of writers after him.

Sir Thomas Wyatt was singular to history and for literature. On the first, although accused of treason in the last years of Henry's reign, Wyatt was innocent and eventually cleared of all charges in 1541 after writing a "declaration" of his innocence and making a formal oration in his own defense (Muir xvi). Under the same circumstances few others ever escaped with their lives, even if many could speak and write, not as well as Wyatt but satisfactorily, even when they were innocent (Foley xv). Muir stated that Wyatt was saved largely by his own eloquence and courage, and that "King Henry VIII [d. 28 January 1547, just nine days after he executed Surrey] must have been loth to lose so faithful a servant as Wyatt when the poet unexpectedly died in the autumn of 1542" (Muir xvi).

Chapter Two

Poets and Poetic Traditions Influencing Wyatt

What is of special interest is how Wyatt was able to compose this new kind of variant poetry that made a primary contribution to modern poetics, an indelible, anthologized statement that marked a permanent departure from the medieval history of literature and music with its forced repetition, refrain, remorse and repentance. Because of Wyatt, in part, no longer would alliterative verse ever be the most often used form as it was in Old English poetry. Medieval hymns and friar miscellanies would no longer remain the standards for lyrical books of preachers and poets who sought to make sermons an art form, proverbial orations musical performances and narrative tales moral rhymes (Wenzel 7). Never again could English poetry strictly adhere to the traditions of sweet rhetoric as illuminated by the great Italian poet Petrarch or the comedy of ancient romance and ironic ideals of religion that Chaucer effectively emulated. Wyatt started where Skelton left off. In his most mature poems, *Magnyfycence* (c. 1516), *Speke Parrot* and *A Replycacion* (1528) Skelton had repeatedly explored the idea that meaning is fluid, contextual, and subject to change by the very act of writing that attempts to pin it down (Griffiths 5-6). Skelton's creation of a powerful centrifugal pressure in each of these works ran strongly counter to his earlier poems in which he asserted his own authority over his writing. Wyatt, then, continued in much of the same spirit, attempting in his own poetry to inextricably link what Skelton momentarily achieved in his late

poems and creating works that showed an ultimate centralizing tendency to put a name to what was transformative, improvisatory, and unpredictable in the process of writing. However, Wyatt did not seek to equal Skelton's directness and openness when it came to the political preoccupations of mankind. Where Skelton's *Colin Clout* (1522) included a torrent of Skeltonics attacking the laxity of the Church, Wyatt's poems would avoid outright diatribes and complaints against authorities (Green 30). Where "Skeltonics" could be seen as stressing the process of writing, Wyatt's poetry shows the first evidence from transmitting and revising translations and, then, originating his own unique poems in English vernacular, whether it was sonnets, odes, rondeaux, stanzas in *terza rima*, etc., as a poet determined to emphasize subtle truths over and above resentful rumors and the process of rewriting, a poet different from Skelton and one who believed that his newest version was just momentary.

In Sir Thomas Wyatt's poetry there is a new kind of poet, one indicating that as long as he continued to write and as long as his court listeners/readers accepted his offer of surrender to contextualize and interpret on their own terms what he had composed, then the poet, giving up some of his own vested authority, has expanded and empowered a "new" community of "self-actualizers" like himself. Elizabeth Hanson has stated that writers in Renaissance England were "discovering the subject", trying to ascertain another's innermost being, and that their works show a new attempt in poetry and prose to de-naturalize the relations between the subject and the world (2-3). They were seeking how a "subject's claims", that is, how the self might seem a natural "being" all its own if he/she/it had its own authorial and legal rights. For Wyatt, this meant his poetry would

mature with his own growing perception of an emerging change in thought and attitude about life and the world that surrounded him: that is, via humanism. The more he wrote, the more his poems started to articulate action, change and the importance of subject/self. Especially with his reflective sonnets, he never seemed to lose sight of the knowledge his experiences as courtier and diplomat had informed and affirmed that there were powerful institutional pressures and *ad hoc* strategies available (court-manners, personal alliances, writing) and these came into play around extraordinary social and political relationships.

A systematic understanding of the world meant a clear departure from understood powers of the church and court which resounded from center stage during the reign of Henry VIII. Wyatt's is poetry to be heard and remembered, influenced by external and internal voices simultaneously praising and condemning, assuring and speculating, being announced and whispered in the environment of an emerging "modern" world that often turned upon royalty and court poets, at times suddenly and disastrously.

Different from Skelton and also from William Dunbar (?1465-1530), the best of the Scottish Chaucerian poets, Wyatt instead crafted his poetry somewhat more conservatively than both of them; he came from the position of a writer who wanted his works to at least appear as if they had been derived from a noble world of order and respect, rather than its actual state where Skelton's and Dunbar's poems mocked and satirized authority. Skelton's poetry especially did this. Wyatt was more wary and chose to not contradict and deny the stability that institutions like the church and state provided, and whether these authorities were right or wrong. Skepticism was one attribute from humanism; of course, its only value was if it preserved the self and advanced an

individual's self-improvement. So Wyatt also wrote less liberally than Dunbar whose poetry showed happiness and skill at frivolity, bawdry, Christian morality and the human condition. Still for Wyatt, it was better that his poetry reflected his own skepticism than any over-confidence, for the new times demanded nimbleness as much as they seemed to promote inquiry. Wyatt, then, is the most confident of doubters. No wonder he composed poems revealing his earned wisdom and acquired wariness: "The louer hopeth of better chance", "The louer for shamefastnesse hideth his desire within his faith full hart", "The abused louer seeth his folly and entendeth to trust no more", "The louer vnhappy biddeth happy loues reioice in Maie, while he wailleth than moneth to him most vnlucky", "Against his tong that failed to vtter his sutes", etc. (*Tottel's Miscellany*, Rollins 32-38).

Before Wyatt could write lyrical and varied English poetry he was a student of other languages and poets, both classical writers and those who immediately preceded him from his own native country. If his literary prowess and ability to translate Greek and to read and write Latin were most encouraged while he was a student at St. John's College in Cambridge (Wyatt matriculated there c. 1515-?19), Wyatt's personal speech and fluency in French and Italian rhetoric were likely developed and subsequently refined while serving as a courtier and ambassador to King Henry VIII. Wyatt first traveled abroad in 1526 at the age of twenty-three with Sir Thomas Cheney to the French Court to offer Francis I congratulations on his release after the disastrous battle of Pavia and to negotiate the position of England in relation to the Holy League of Cognac. This trip must have seemed like a baptism for Wyatt into the required agency and necessary skills

at representing the English prince. Courtier advising duties demanded the highest ability to insinuate personal presence into the intimate operations of another foreign court and to come off as likable, and all while not following his own likes and dislikes at confirming the prince's overtures (Foley 21).

Additionally, Wyatt, as a diplomat, would have been required to speak spontaneously and act, or appear to act, naturally, with assertive wit and never departing from the letter of the monarch's written instructions (Foley 21). It was a job demanding not only a well-couched French tongue, but fine oration and, yet, oratory that needed to be friendly, familiar and kind messaging. Above all, most required of ambassadors was diplomatic dexterity, decisively knowing and recording with care just what to say and record for the king, and how, as well, who else should and should not know about the greetings and replies given and taken at court (Foley 26).

Thus, before he would become well-known at court and an entertaining poet of Henry VIII, Wyatt's first critical and creative discourse was in the letters of ambassadors, marked by the many voices of power, intrigue, friendship, hostility, flamboyance, gossip and under-cover activities transcribed and recorded with all of the disguise and charm of the diplomat's effort at gathering invasive information and securing vital intelligence. What diplomatic letters to King Henry lacked in art, they succeeded with humanistic rhetoric. In these letters an early English humanistic approach shines through and which entails a productively ambiguous notion of agency that positions the orator (diplomat/court-poet) both as an individual who leads an audience and as a community member shaped and constrained by the demands of the audience (Leff 135). That tension

becomes intelligible today when we understand how tradition in Wyatt's time would have then functioned as a mediating force between individual and collective identities; viewed from this angle then, tradition emerges as a primary resource for rhetorical invention. For Wyatt, traditions of diplomacy carried expectations about speech-making, and a similar effort at diplomacy appears in the negotiating of identity that is evident in his poems, which accompanied his practice of pioneering poetics while simultaneously maintaining friends and favor at court.

Stephen Foley has stated that letters from abroad by Wyatt, Wriothsley (ambassador to Brussels, c. 1538), Lord Cecil and other successful courtiers to Henry VIII, became "narratives in a mode of neoclassical realism", fleshing out courtly scenes with the "personal" touches of reported dialogue and details of "décor, dress, and demeanor" (26). Accumulating marks of the King's favor towards him as a result of his diplomacy, Wyatt was sent on numerous trips as English Ambassador through the end of his life; he became Henry's favorite diplomat renewing old amities and restoring new ones with France, Flanders, Imperial Spain and the Burgundian territories, and at improving relations, or at least mitigating strained relations, between England and the Holy Roman Empire. Wyatt's major diplomatic achievement took place not long after 1535 when he was knighted at the age of thirty-two on Easter Day (18 March 1535) and was then asked to serve as English Ambassador to Spain to mend relations from Henry VIII's divorce in 1533 from his first wife, Queen Catherine (or Katherine) of Aragon, who just happened to also be Charles V's aunt. Throughout most of 1537 Wyatt had to

specifically prevent too close an understanding between France and Spain, the two Catholic powers.

It was Henry's attempt to have his twenty-four-year marriage to Catherine annulled that set in motion the great chain of events that led to England's break with the Church of Rome. However, Wyatt was beginning to write and publish poetry. Before he left Barbastro, Spain, he composed "Of Carthage he that worthy warrior", an eight-line poem that actually may be Wyatt's first *ottava rima* and thus, the first-ever *ottava rima* composed by an Englishman. His translations are important for the contributions that he makes to adopting native English words and his avoidance of Latinized vocabulary. The epigram, below, is notable for the agitation it evokes and for the yearning of calm that was sought by the court poet-diplomat; its restlessness and longing displayed in the lines parallels the emotional status of a diplomat becoming increasingly tired of Henry's progressively dysfunctional diplomatic directives and rash politics. Foley stated that the great promise of the poem was that its contradictory unsettledness—the distance between its confident voice and its ridiculing contradictions, i.e. a person traversed and tormented by the many circuits of agency he operates in (conquest in war, diplomatic advantage, peace treaty, conquest in love, success in diplomatic career, peace of mind)—seems to deploy a logic of concealment, a promise of subjectivity that guarantees this utterance, that secures its completeness, that answers its enigma (53). From Wyatt England received the gift of a poet whose many brief and "plain-speaking" poems paradoxically play on emptiness and fullness, the personal and the public, and slow time and distant space (54). Where Chaucer's and Skelton's poetic narratives are usually clear, some of

Wyatt's poems, like the one below, are most admirable because they are not fully understandable. Wyatt's poems begin to be embroidered with neoclassical conventions, Petrarchan allusion and momentary condition, circumstance or emotion, and which the latter, for Wyatt, was often bitterness and unhappiness:

Off Cartage he, that worthie warier
Could ouercome but cowld not vse his chaunce;
And I like wise off all my long indeuer,
The sherpe conquest, tho fortune did auaunce,
Cowld not it vse: the hold that is gyvin ouer
I vnpossest. So hangith in balaunce
Off war, my pees, reward of all my payne;
At Mountzon thus I restles rest in Spayne.
(“No. 81” in Muir 1949, 62)

If everything in Wyatt's octet is not fully comprehensible, readers sense delicacy in the matter while relating with the impatient poet and his situation, believing that Wyatt is speaking honestly and intimately to them, and also wisely, urgently, and yet with reason and purposeful caution. On a practical level, Wyatt's many ambassadorial assignments not only brought him face to face with monarchs and their families, but these trips also allowed him to come into contact with those who closely surrounded and supported them: courtiers, secular and religious advisers, entertainers, scholars, aristocrats and notably, other writers and poets and their works. For Wyatt, this prosperous and social career at court had actually begun early in life. First, he was born into a family of distinction whose ancestry included Yorkshire squires and stout Lancastrians and his father, Sir Henry Wyatt (1460-10 November 1536), had been named knight of the Bath at the coronation of Henry VIII in 1509; Wyatt's father eventually became treasurer of the king's chamber in 1519. In February 1516, at only the age of twelve, Thomas Wyatt

served as sewer (page/table servant) at the christening of Princess Mary (later to become, long after Wyatt's death in 1542, England's Catholic Queen; ruled 16 January 1556-17 November 1558). As a courtier and knight though, Wyatt fulfilled the additional and expected role of becoming a court poet, a sixteenth-century gentleman of the leisure arts. And Wyatt excelled above all others; as Puttenham mentioned, if there was any other poet, perhaps only Surrey met him in poetic reform at the start of the sixteenth century. Finally, Wyatt, from prerequisites by way of his diplomatic travels, was the first sixteenth-century English poet to come upon and to transplant into England the popular poetic forms of Spanish, French and Italian writers (Bell 60).

Many critics have insisted upon Wyatt's debt to French and Italian poets and particularly to Petrarch. In addition to stressing diligence at the use of meter and diction, their express influence upon Wyatt made him create new conventions for expressing emotion from translating and transmitting Continental poets. Through foreign travel, Wyatt's meeting with like-minded artists in Europe provided him with encouraging poetic discourse that inspired him to revise and originate in English. Wyatt made allies with poets and their works as easily as he established and kept suitable diplomatic associations for King Henry VIII.

Even if Petrarch influenced Wyatt's (and Surrey's) meter, Wyatt's translating of Petrarch's lyric poems into English vernacular resulted in Wyatt applying a large number of monosyllables and iambic pentameter in his own poetry. This allows for the criticism that some of Wyatt's poetry is overly plain and simple. However, Wyatt, as an experimenter with new forms did not seem to lose sight of the greater importance that,

which poems of Petrarch's that he translated and revised was more critical than Surrey's and his ability to translate. Wyatt sought to translate the finest of Petrarch's work. He had to both transmit as accurately as he could and he had to capture the real understanding of what the poet was saying. Some lyrical grace and beauty of Petrarch's poems would have been sacrificed in his efforts, but then, Wyatt's intention was to originate poems from the significant and humanist ideals that Petrarch had conveyed. Poets who followed Wyatt would later make their own verse more eloquent than his and in many of the forms that Wyatt introduced from Italy and France, but they could hardly have done so without Wyatt's pioneering poetics.

On Wyatt's "feet of three times, and first of the Dactil", Puttenham said the two (Wyatt and Surrey) were "the first reformers & polishers of our vulgar Poesie much affecting the stile of the Italian *Petrarcha*, [but Wyatt especially] vsed the foote *dactil* very often but not many in one verse" (Thompson 36). Even though Puttenham had Wyatt's source wrong (instead of Petrarch's it was actually the poetry of the Italian humanist and poet from Naples, Jacopo Sannazaro (1458-1530), who is best remembered for his humanistic classic poetical prose *Arcadia*) Puttenham said Wyatt's meter was "strained out of their original", as in the opening quatrain of the following sonnet:

Lyke unto these, unmesurable mountaines,
So is my painefull life the burden of yre:
For hye be they, and hye is my desire
And I of teares, and they be full of fountains.
(“The louers life compared to the Alpes” in the *Miscellany*,
Arber 70; “No. XXIV” in Rebholz 83)

Puttenham found Wyatt's second and fourth lines contained a "sillable superfluous, and though in the first ye will seeme to help it, by drawing these three syllables, (im me su)

into a *dactyl*, in the rest it can not be so excused, wherefore we must thinke he did it of purpose by the odde sillable to giue greater grace to his meetre” (Thompson 36). What Puttenham wanted to praise Wyatt for was artful vocabulary but Wyatt broke bi-syllabic and polysyllabic words in order to achieve greater harmony and to release the normal accentuation of English words, which in the second half of the sixteenth century, did become the “new normal” of modern English. Puttenham saw some of Wyatt’s prosody as “art”; the dactyl, as a metrical foot consisting of one accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables was one fitting example of skillful verse with “be full of” and the first three syllables in “unmesurable” (unmeasureable).

Certainly in Wyatt’s meter above, lines two and four are not incomplete, that is, the fifth foot is not truncated or “catalectic”. Nor is it a case of “anacrusis” which commonly appears at the beginning in a line of verse with one, or more, extra and unaccented syllables before regular rhythm in the line unfolds. Instead, it seems that Wyatt’s poem is just one example of his translating and improvising efforts which show more his poetic experimentation and vigor over any inability to best shape metrical feet with natural English accent. Petrarch wrote elegant verse, and so did Sannazaro but less so. Both influenced and inspired court poetry and papal literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries across Europe, and then, in England, starting with Wyatt. Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86), in his own diplomatic missions for Elizabeth I, would later be especially inspired by Petrarch and Wyatt’s translations of him. Sidney imitated the Italian versification that Wyatt first encountered, transcribed and started to perfect. And, again, even Puttenham felt that Wyatt, along with Surrey, should be commended for his

“imitating very naturally and studiously their Maister Francis Petrarcha” and affecting his “stile and measures” (62).

Puttenham especially liked Wyatt’s use of the figure of suspension (Thompson 37); Puttenham labeled it the “long loose” in how Wyatt described the diverse “distempers of his bed”. The first stanza (of three total stanzas) in the following ballad by Wyatt is what greatly intrigued Puttenham:

The restful place, Revyver of my smarte,
The labors salve, incressyng my sorow,
The bodys ese and trobler off my hart,
Quieter of mynd and my vnquyet foo,
Fforgetter of payn, Remembryng my woo,
The place of slepe, wherein I do but wake
Be sprent with teres, my bed I the forsake
(From the Devonshire MS; “No. 115” in Muir 1949, 105)

It is this enriched expression of man’s own feelings, if even in its infancy here, that shows Wyatt as the first of new poets who had to find their own language, to enrich with borrowings from other tongues the stock of words suitable for poetry which the dropping of inflection had left to English (Mair and Ward 22-23).

In 1959 Lily Campbell stated that Wyatt applies in his *Psalms* “the verse forms which he had brought from the continent to England” (35). Lacking the metaphysical conceit and Petrarchan conceit and not in the courtly love style, Wyatt’s *Penitential Psalms* include fourteen poems, each one lengthy, all adapted from the prose paraphrase of Italian author, playwright, poet and satirist, Pietro Aretino (1492-1556). Wyatt composed these lengthy psalms near the abrupt end to his life. Kenneth Muir has advised that Wyatt’s *Psalms* might be regarded as an epic and thus, a “single poem, for the prologues link the seven psalms together and relate them all to the story of David and

Bathsheba” (Muir 1949, xxii). The psalms were Wyatt’s first draft and Muir believes, had Wyatt lived, he would have revised them (xxii). Later, both Sidney and Milton composed their own metrical versions from Aretino’s, but Muir found Wyatt’s version to remain the superior: “Both the *ottava rima* of the prologues and the *terza rima* of the psalms themselves are used with some skill; and Wyatt often deserts Aretino for the Vulgate or for an English translation” (xxii).

Accordingly, in the early twentieth century, Agnes Kate Foxwell suggested that Wyatt’s psalms “touched” the visionary and mythological completeness of William Blake’s (1757-1827) poetry (xxii). However, the issue then surfaces as to why Wyatt’s language in the psalms are more traditional English than Blake’s that came later and were indirect and mystical speech. More than that can be asked, why is Wyatt’s speech, usually, less figurative than that of his Italian predecessors, Petrarch and Aretino? Wyatt was less ornate when he used the two poetic forms he brought to England from Italy. These two again were first, the three-line stanza form, *terza rima*, in which he composed the *Psalms* (a form later made popular by Milton, Shelley and Byron, and widely used by other modern and postmodern, even contemporary poets like Auden and Eliot to name a few); and, second, that of the *ottava rima*, the eight-line stanza form in iambic pentameter and which commonly rhymed *abababcc*. Kenneth Muir came across a particular *ottava rima* located in Wyatt’s personal manuscript (E. MS), and which was written in Wyatt’s own handwriting. Forgetting for a moment that Wyatt composed in early modern times, the following epigram seems contemporary to the twenty-first century in that the conceit uses an analogy to advance the speaker’s feelings:

In dowlfull brest, whilst moderly pitie
 With furious famyn stondith at debate,
 Sayth thebrew moder: ‘O child vnhappye,
 Retorne thi blowd where thou hadst milk of late.
 Yeld me those lymms that I made vnto the,
 And entre there where thou wert generate;
 For of on body against all nature
 To a nothr must I mak sepulture.’

(“No. 80” in Muir 1949, 61)

Tottel titled the above poem “*Of the mother that eat her childe at the siege of Ierusalem*”. Kenneth Muir confirmed that “thebrew moder” in l. 3 meant “the Hebrew mother”. In its original Italian form, *ottava rima* lines were hendecasyllabic, that is, they had eleven syllables. This may be why, in line three of the poem above, Wyatt applied an extra syllable with “vnhappye” for the fifth foot; “sayth” would have been two syllables and “child” spoken/sung as one syllable. There is no elision, that is, there is no omission in l. 3 of any part of a word for ease of pronunciation or to secure a desired rhythmic effect other than the eleventh and extra syllable Wyatt intended and applied. Arguably, rather post-hypothetically, the only word that could have been changed is “child” to “children” but the mother devoured her one and only precious child. And the line is certainly not the case that Wyatt sought twelve syllables since the poem’s metrical departures are launched from the weighted base that Wyatt eventually preferred of the iambic pentameter. Line six is proof and ironically is “generative” for the marvelous varied meter and stress of the other seven lines. This further illustrates the influence from continental poetic traditions that Wyatt encountered on his diplomatic mission; as he experimented with the *ottava rima* in his own English vernacular, Wyatt’s careful translating meant that word choice had to advance his chosen tone and propel drama. “Unhappy” is key because this

epigram is reflecting more than the Biblical story. Wyatt became very unhappy as a diplomat in some extended stays on the Continent for Henry VIII. Nonetheless, perhaps, when Wyatt traveled through Genoa, Bologna, Florence and Rome on trips to confer with the papal court, he was introduced to the writings of Francisco Imperial, a fifteenth-century Genoese who settled in Seville and who, during his lifetime, became the leader among the new Italian-Castilian lyrical and allegorical poets. Imperial drew on Giovanni Boccaccio and on Dante Alighieri, especially, and attempted to transplant the Italian hendecasyllable (eleven-syllable line) to Spanish poetry in the 1400s.

Still, if Petrarch was indeed the “Father of Humanism”, that is, the first poet whose poetry expressed, “a central, truly human point of view”, then Wyatt, as his “first English student of humanism”, was obviously attracted to the Italian patriarch’s thought and poetics. Wyatt’s translations of Petrarch’s poems were inspirational, and Wyatt originated his own versions. He modeled many of his poems with the same power shown by Petrarch, using principal themes of self revelation and protection, loyalty, the grandeur and majesty of places and events, encounters with nature and mankind from traveling, the inner world of the soul and, particularly, the theme of love. Petrarch’s *Il Canzoniere* (1373) was one of the two best-known works by the Italian “man of letters”; the other is the *Trionfi*. *Canzoniere* is made up of a total of 366 poems, 317 of them being sonnets, 29 canzoni, nine sestina, seven ballads and four madrigals. Most of these poems are about love and Petrarch’s desire for Laura, a woman with whom he had little contact. The two first met at Easter mass in the church of Saintye-Claire d’Avignon in 1327. Laura refused him because she was already married to another man, a count. Petrarch

channeled his feelings into the 366 poems thereafter until he finished *Canzoniere* in 1374; his love poems, mostly rhetorically sweet, were exclamatory rather than persuasive and his poetry suggested despair and resulting grief more than bliss. In Petrarch's work lies the subtle hint of genuine contempt, or at least the rub, towards men who pursue women. Still, from his encounter with Laura, Petrarch generated his celebrated sonnets.

It is not so surprising, then, that love is a major theme of Petrarch's sonnets; what is critical though is that Petrarch used it as a vehicle for spiritual transcendence. As real human interest, it plays such a dominant role, ironically fictional yet so seemingly true, as interesting and genuine subject matter in the greatest works of literature and art.

Undoubtedly, Petrarch's implied and imaginative analogies to love were what drew Wyatt to introduce the sonnet into sixteenth-century England that then developed as a viable and vibrant poetic form. Wyatt did not assemble 317 sonnets as Petrarch did; rather, he composed twenty-nine sonnets (one of them is a song of two sonnets for a complete poem of 28 lines). The sonnets include some of Wyatt's best-known poems and which will be further elicited in this thesis, largely in chapters three and four.

However, commentary on one of Wyatt's finer eight sonnets presently follows. The other seven include (titled by their first lines printed in Muir 1949): "Who so list to hount, I knowe where is an hynde" (For the full text of this best-known sonnet by Wyatt see appendix B), "I Fynde no peace and all my warr is done", "My galy charged with forgetfulnes", "Like to these vnmesurable montayns", "If waker care, if sodayne pale Coulor" and "Ffarewell Love and all thy lawes for ever", and "To Rayle or geste ye kno I vse yt not". All but the last sonnet were written in the Egerton MS; "To Rayle or geste

(jest)” is located in the Devonshire MS. Of Wyatt’s pioneering, Thomas Crosland stated “when we turn to Wyatt and Surrey the significance of the form in its relation to the development of English poetics becomes clear and unmistakable (22). He stated further that the “two writers wrought positive marvels for poetry, converting England into a veritable nest of sonnetal singing birds, and making plain the road for Sidney, Spenser, Drayton and Shakespeare (23).

Wyatt preceded Surrey at first translating Petrarch’s sonnet, “Rima 140”. Here is a Modern prose translation (See Surrey’s translation in appendix C):

And reigns in my thoughts and keeps his principal
seat in my heart, sometimes comes forth all in armour into my
forehead, there camps, and there sets up his banner.
She who teaches us to love and to be patient, and wishes my
great desire, my kindled hope, to be reined in by reason, shame,
and reverence, at our boldness is angry within herself.
Wherefore Love flees terrified to my heart, abandoning his every
Enterprise, and weeps and trembles; there he hides and no more
appears outside.
What can I do, when my lord is afraid, except stay with him
until the last hour? For he makes a good end who dies loving
well.

(“No. 140” in Durling 284)

The metaphor that Petrarch extended was that love is like a conquering warrior who then, all too soon, is made ashamed of himself and afraid of his lover. Petrarch’s lover’s alternative resort is then to abandon earthly woes and “stay”; he must wait until he can ascend into a permanent and intimate relationship instead with his Divine Creator. For Wyatt the options left to his lover after being rejected are much the same for Petrarch’s lover: Wyatt’s though seems to find some solace in his inner self and where he reasons that comfort and healing may restore him to some manageable condition of living, and in

spite of the woman for whom he has chosen to love and painfully die. Notwithstanding the knowledge that future desires will carry the risks of future suffering and “payne”, Wyatt is not fully committed to Petrarch’s courtly love ideals of continued suffering and to death over the woman he desires. Wyatt crafts a little different kind of resolution, a more skeptical and practical response to Petrarch’s request, but still a spiritual pursuit exists for Wyatt’s lover who seeks pious resolve as well: for the “goode” life that might hopefully end for him just as “faithfully” as it will for Petrarch’s courtly-lover/warrior. Wyatt makes ll. 12-13 into a question and leaves open the possibility of an alternative choice of behavior to address his rejected love than Petrarch’s ideals of long-term pain and suffering for the one Laura who Petrarch loved but who he could never have because she was married to another. It does not seem by this poem that Wyatt never had a woman like Petrarch’s Laura. Wyatt first translates Petrarch’s “Rima 140” and then he originates with one of his best sonnets below; it, too, was located in his personal manuscript, the Egerton MS, and it was the first poem that Tottel chose in the *Miscellany* to debut Wyatt’s songs and sonnets (“The louer for shamefastnesse hideth his desire within his faith full hart.” – Tottel):

The longe love, that in my thought doeth harbar
And in myn hert doeth kepe his residence,
Into my face preseth with bolde pretense,
And therin campeth, spreding his baner.
She that me lerneth to love and suffer,
And willes that my trust and lustes negligence
Be rayned by reason, shame and reverence,
With his hardiness taketh displeasur.
Wherwithall, vnto the hertes forrest he fleith,
Leving his enterprise with payn and cry;
And ther him hideth, and not appereth.
What may I do when my maister fereth

But in the feld with him to lyve and dye?
For goode is the liff, ending faithfully.
(“No. 4” in Muir 1949, 4-5)

Love, if it actually is love, in Wyatt’s poem is very unlike Petrarch’s love, definitely on the surface. Wyatt’s actor, though, is a little different warrior within the courtly-love tradition. First, Petrarch’s military figure is mock heroic: the speaker has learned to live with the flickering of male desire, and he ends with a flippant dismissal of his own inadequacy both as a manly lover and as a moral agent (Foley 96). Wyatt’s version takes the military metaphor more seriously, that is, pertinent to the “living moment.” His poem tells the story of a single recent event in the erotic experience of the speaker. Wyatt’s warrior suppresses his inner contagion and intense mental, spiritual and physical feelings outwardly as noble while he is no less powerful than Petrarch’s lover: both are terrified at their true feelings. However, and secondly, Wyatt’s warrior is more skeptical and unwilling to suppress these very human urges: his lover seems less afraid but more disappointed and alienated. Wyatt’s military metaphor provides a medium for analyzing the agonizing moral choice of the speaker not to renounce his “lustes negligence” even though he recognizes it as cowardly and wrong and at the cost of being lost in the “hertes forrest” (96). Unlike Petrarch’s lover, Wyatt’s lover, while lonely and kindled like Petrarch’s, is more annoyed and heated; his courtly-manners require him to respect and gracefully retreat from the woman who has refused his masculinity and on another level, to behave as a courtier-poet, because he cannot escape outside of his metaphor or service to the king; and on another level the court was the setting where traditions would have had Wyatt repress his inquiries and views on spiritual and controversial political matters

if it posed danger to himself, the probability more than the possibility that his action might make him “dye”. The occasion of the poem, then, the rhetorical drama of its staging, focuses the poem on the very language which the speaker (Wyatt’s lover/Wyatt himself) comes to understand his situation, the deeply embedded terms of Tudor service and personal loyalty, i.e., one aspect of emerging humanism, civic preparedness and duty. And still, while Wyatt’s lover accepts the lady’s rejection, he does not deny the purposefulness in attaining the ultimate reward that he seeks. He retains his confidence at attempting to act on his true feelings. He may intend to be spiritually devoted. He might seek companionship with a higher being than himself as an eternal and permanent relationship with the divine would not have been “unmannerly” for a courtly lover, like Wyatt, to yearn for. Wyatt’s expressiveness is both similar to, and different from, what Petrarch intended in his metaphor of love as a warrior who is made to contemptuously deny ever desiring a lover on earth and who then, exiles himself from all that surrounds him and what the world has to offer his maleness and his humanness. Petrarch’s lover resigns himself to a life devoted to God and the afterlife; again, Wyatt’s lover asks whether that option may not be the only choice.

Thus, as he introduced the sonnet and the Petrarchan conceit, Wyatt originated sonnets like the one above, with a new native synergy. England’s cultural and literary renaissance would be a little different than it had been on the Continent. Wyatt expressed in true English vernacular the human desires that his life not be one without the fulfillment of an authentic pursuit for a lasting and spiritual relationship that could sustain and eternally provide mutual trust and adoration. The woman in Wyatt’s sonnet is

obviously unlike Petrarch's, and thus, Wyatt's poem offers an innovative and somewhat antithetical version to Petrarch's conceit.

Paralleling his energetic rhetoric, Wyatt made the meter in this sonnet likewise disquieting. The carry-over of medieval rhyme and realism are not all that is at work. While Wyatt uses what becomes one of his familiar rhyme patterns for the Petrarchan octet as *abbaabba* and for the sestet *cdeedc*, he otherwise deviates greatly and metrically innovates. Only lines two, three and twelve are wholly in iambic pentameter. Line nine has an extra syllable. Eight words are of three or more syllables. There are fifteen personal pronouns and possessives. All of these aspects help to establish the resulting tone of fervent intimacy, discourse, feverish intimacy, lively interaction and inviting human interest for the lover (who may be the poet), for the woman whom the lover desires, for the metaphorical warring love that remains in the rejected one's heart, for the reader, and for the work itself.

Baldi certainly agreed with the credit due Wyatt for first bringing Petrarchanism to England, and with it the Italian verse-forms of the sonnet, the *ottava rima* and the *terza rima*, but Baldi felt Wyatt to have been "a poet inspired by his own profound awareness of unhappy love, which he seeks to express in vivid and dramatic images and language" (7). Certainly, Wyatt's translations occurred early in his life and he was experimenting with the courtier life *and* with his poetry. Remarkably and most overlooked in scholarship, his first translations were actually influenced by a writer long before Petrarch. Just after returning from his first trip to Rome with Sir John Russell, on the last day of 1527, Wyatt presented his translation of *Quyete of mynde* by the Greek historian,

Middle Platonist and essayist Plutarch (c. 46-120 AD) to Queen Catherine as a New Year's gift; presumably the gift was a manuscript (Baskervill v-vii). The outstanding English printer Richard Pynson (1448-1529), who first introduced Roman type to England, issued a printed edition of Wyatt's work in early 1528. Wyatt had already started in 1527 to undertake the tedious translations of Petrarch. Plutarch offered an easier substitute and more pleasant diversion and so the philosophic treatise was deliberately translated by Wyatt. Too, Plutarch's work proved most worthy as an efficient distraction from Petrarch because it was in prose and he felt "compelled in haste to finish it by the Christmas season of 1527" (Baskervill ix). Wyatt begins the translation by advising Catherine that it was in "shorte maner of speche" which made the translation "some harde," but which, well advised, "shal be the pleasaunter when thou vnderstandest it." Wyatt's prose translation of Plutarch seems to reveal the emerging humanism that led to an increasing confidence in the power of English vernacular to produce significant literary creation (Malcolmson 1):

Wyatt's diction is a more notable contribution to English prose style. In his prose, as in his verse, there is an evident interest in native English words and an avoidance of Latinized vocabulary. Both the simple diction and to some extent the loose construction which characterize Wyatt's early translation reappear in his letters to his son and his own defenses of himself from the charge of treason. His prose is uneven, but at its best it is sinewy and vigorous.

(Baskervill x)

Without question Wyatt's initial translations helped him to rise along one step in England's ladder with humanism: introducing Latin classical works into the vernacular, and even if Latin would remain for some time after him "the language" of the serious humanist. And with his fulfillment of moral command by presenting Queen Catherine

with his translation of Plutarch, Wyatt displayed a seriousness within himself, exposing a different side to the frivolities of court. His actions were the scholarly and moral bent by a man who would later write deep satires, serious psalms, sterling early English sonnets and expressive, personal lyrical verse.

In the previous chapter Chaucer and Skelton were liberally mentioned in relation to, i.e. their undeniable influence upon, Wyatt. As this is not an exhaustive argument about Wyatt on everything in his time and everyone who may have predisposed and motivated him, it is worth mentioning that aside from these two, along with the poet John Lydgate (c. 1370-1449), English medieval literature that has textually survived and been preserved is scarce in lyric poetry and for the most part, meager in quantity and quality. Chaucer (1346-1400), Skelton (?1460-1529) and Lydgate composed only a few lyrics of an occasional kind and, as Baldi strongly summarized, “the best medieval lyrics (which are by no means remarkable) were confined to popular and comic poetry” (1-2).

However, in spite of Baldi’s indictment, at least the greatest fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English writers were thoroughly familiar with and sympathetic to the aristocratic ideal of love and verse romance had gotten its cue from twelfth- and thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman ones. For amorous greatness preceding Wyatt, look no further than *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late 14th century). For confessional love and the demonstration of refined manners of “fair speech” and how a proper gentleman should be in long service and devoted to his lady, John Gower’s (1330-1408) *Confessio Amantis* (1390) in rhyming octosyllabic couplets is supreme evidence of a native poetic tradition before Wyatt and instructing and entertaining courtly love, even to the ending of

the poem when the lady the poem will have no more to do with the then, very aged, that is, “now” quite old, Lover, who still desires her and continues his enquiries and confessions. The impressive tradition of renaissance poetry, beginning in the thirteenth century and lasting through Petrarch in the fourteenth century, was what Wyatt encountered: these Italian lyrics inspired Wyatt and then spurred a cultivation of lyrical writing in England through the rest of the sixteenth century. And John Skelton’s poetry, with its grandiloquence and dream-allegories served as extraordinary native reference to Wyatt how tender, light and mock heroics could be used, appropriately and unsuitably, as invective when Wyatt began to transmit and revise continental poetics into original verse that asserted English speech. This is easy to see in Skelton’s satirical poems like “Speke Parott” (Autumn 1521) or in “Collyn Clout” (late 1521 and early 1522), the latter as example: “He medleth and he smatters/ He gloseth and he flatters. / Or yf he speke playne, / Than he lacketh brayne: / He is but a foole: Let him go to scole!” Here, the same kind of attack was taken up when Wyatt wrote his own satires in the later 1530s, although Wyatt’s approach was more diplomatic. Here are lines from one of Wyatt’s satires where he shows his literary ancestry to the influence of Skelton’s genius by accordingly invoking disdain and scorn (ll. 34-41):

Ffle therefore trueth; it is boeth welth and ese.
 For tho that trouth if every man hath prayse,
 Full nere that wynd goeth trouth in great misese.
 Vse vertu as it goeth now a dayes:
 In word alone to make they langage swete,
 And of the dede yet do not as thou sayse;
 Elsse be thou sure thou shalt be farr vnmyt
 To get thy bred, eche thing is now so skant.
 (“No. 198” in Muir 1949, 191-93)

Of course, Wyatt, too, was usually more sober and inward looking than Skelton, more indications that the poet had to confidently address and respond to, but more warily than Skelton did, some unexpected event or uncommon change, just like England would have to meet and accept emerging humanism that accompanied the nation's maturation to firmer and more vibrant native language and aid the birth of the country's literary renaissance. Muir stated Wyatt's satires were "experimental, and written in a metre of which he was not master and through which one feels he is struggling towards something—he does not quite know what . . . (for they) contain the air of unaffected self-expression that for all their faults lends them a certain charm" (xlvi).

For all of the resemblances drawn by writers of Wyatt to Petrarch, his poetry did not dwell upon feminine beauty or compare "his lady" to splendor in things heavenly or on earth. Unlike Petrarch's poems, many of Wyatt's lack excessive visual imagery, want for the application of very tight metaphors, and use a great number of plain words and direct speech (Chambers 119-130). In contrast, Wyatt's poetics rely on the effects of rhythmical accomplishment and that kind of economy of speech which usually provided the poet singular resonance. Because he was introducing new poetic meter and form into England and assertively infusing his lines with native English vocabulary, Wyatt's prosody developed with more feverish rhythm and resulted in somewhat detached emotions. That created the space for his subject and work to become anonymous and authoritative, and still, in most of his creations, a whole poem. The challenges made to Wyatt by Petrarch and other continental poets on love and other themes like places and trust cast the poet as a translator, as it did for his friend Surrey, too. Then, Petrarch's

inspirational poetics further tried the court poets to be capable representatives in the changing conditions later ascribed to the period as the English Renaissance, and more specifically, Early Modern (Southall 13-14). Italian influences and prior native traditions granted Wyatt and others equal permission as early-Tudor poets of the occasion for reinterpreting literary conventions. Wyatt seized on this opportunity. In his maturation as a poet, where Wyatt was at first elusive as a courtly-maker of early modern verse, his individuality and constant pursuit of poetic perfection eventually transformed and brought into focus his literary modernism and poetic clout.

Chapter Three

Early Tudor Court-Making: Surrey, Love and Verse

Indeed, Wyatt and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey shared many things. They were court advisers and courtier poets who were contemporaries and friends. They quickly rose in Henry VIII's favor and in 1532, the two accompanied Surrey's first cousin Anne Boleyn, Henry, and the Duke of Richmond to France, staying at Calais for more than a year as a member of the entourage of Francis I and not returning to England until Anne's coronation as Queen on 1 June, 1533. There, Wyatt stood for his father as chief sewer. Both Wyatt and Surrey were aristocratic gentlemen. Surrey was born an aristocrat: the Howard lineage extended back to the Anglo-Saxon King, Aethelred II (d. 1016) (Sessions 1-2). Wyatt descended from a family of less antiquity, but one that gained favor and social distinction by way of his ancestors, primarily via his father, Sir Henry Wyatt, who, like his own son Thomas was likewise an eldest son, and from an ancestry of prosperous landholders and safe residents of Yorkshire. Wyatt's father was a soldier and loyal vassal and emerged as a chief fiscal and administrative agent for Henry VII and later to Henry VIII, in fact as Henry's "banker" (Foley 5-6). But both the younger Wyatt and Surrey rose, too, in monarchical favor, even if largely due in consequence by their two families' ancestral Lancastrian adherence that ultimately became victorious with the earl of Richmond to conclude the reign of Richard the Third (1483-85), right before the Tudors came to the throne, and then during the reign of Henry

VII (1485-1509), the first Tudor king and first monarchy to solidify England's national identity.

Both poets became knights under Henry VII's son and successor to the throne, King Henry VIII (reigned 1509-47) and eventually served the ambitious king on foreign diplomatic missions and numerous noble domestic duties, and each sharing in the full array of affections, desires and suspicions within court society. And, each poet experienced imprisonment more than once (Wyatt three times by Henry VIII). Too, each was the author and subject, alleged or otherwise, of many poetical and amorous imaginations and attachments, either platonic or otherwise, but again, some of these affections may have been real but most of them were likely fictitious. Especially conjectural are the two's relationships begun in youth as friends with Anne Boleyn, England's later influential and infamous queen consort due to her Protestant background and Henry's launching of England's break from Rome; she was ultimately tried on the charges of high treason, adultery and incest (coronation 1 June 1533-executed 19 May 1536). Surrey was not implicated, but Wyatt was arrested on 5 May 1536 after the May Day jousts and imprisoned in the Tower of London among about a dozen men who might be charged with adultery with Queen Anne (ultimately five men were found guilty and executed). Wyatt was still in the Tower when Anne was beheaded and was then released in mid-June to his father's custody at the family home, Allington Castle in Kent, following his father Henry Wyatt's and Cromwell's intervention, King Henry VIII accepting that his most admired friend and diplomat was not involved in the matter. In July King Henry named Wyatt the steward of Connisborough Castle in Yorkshire and

sheriff of Kent. Most of the poet's personal connections, however, and whether actual or alleged, were sedated by the wisdom and wariness from years and experience in what became a very turbulent and dangerous court that escalated exponentially during Henry VIII's reign. All of this is backdrop to why Wyatt had to be more sensitive than other poets before him; what Skelton satirized of the court, Wyatt had to be more subtle; what Chaucer satirized of the church, Wyatt wrote more skeptically; what Dunbar put into medley about chivalry, piety, grossness and satirical and comic visions about court life, Wyatt aimed to make sure that he could not be pigeonholed by the complaints, passions and court mocking that was often at the root of his poetry.

The greatest connection, though, between Wyatt and Surrey is with literature, ultimately their grand association into perpetuity. This lasting historical tie occurred in their afterlife from the preeminent appearance of several of their poems in *Tottel's Miscellany*. The literary connection between Wyatt and Surrey is forever linked by this miscellany, England's first published anthology of poetry.

However, lesser known is that the two courtiers, after their deaths, again "appeared" together; that is, their poetry emerged together publicly in the printing of December 31, 1549, of Wyatt's lengthy translation and revision of the *Penitential Psalms*. The Translation included three verses by Surrey as prologue and epilogues, *Praise of certain psalmes of David, translated by Sir T. W. the elder, Of the death of the same Sir T. W., and Of the same*.

In addition, the two poets shared other admirable and more impressive literary 'firsts': Surrey was the first poet to introduce blank verse into England (at least he has

been given this credit by most scholars) and he initiated the fluent rhythms that later predominate in Elizabethan lyrics. However, these two contributions pale in comparison to those of Wyatt, and not because Surrey's work should be disparaged or that there is no validity in blank verse which is most effective for dramatic, philosophic and narrative verse. In fact, Dryden and Milton would ultimately enhance what Surrey first began to use. Muir, and others, insist that much of Surrey's work is written in the intractable "Poulter's Measure" that Wyatt also introduced (better known today as the "Fourteener" and labeled in the second half of the sixteenth century by George Gascoigne for the poetic line that developed during the Elizabethan period consisting of 14 syllables and usually having seven iambic feet), that the metrical variations in his blank verse were more likely to be involuntary than purposeful. With the exception of Tottel's publication, Surrey was first flattered by critics in the sixteenth century and into the eighteenth century by his poetry being selected for other anthologies while Wyatt's poems were not (xvii). This is why journalist and minor author Robert Bell's introduction to Wyatt, *The Poetical Works* (1854) is significant for Wyattian scholarship. It was the first modern criticism of the poet that adequately recognized Wyatt's contributions to the English poetics, in addition to that already afforded to him in the share in reform with Surrey that Puttenham acknowledged in 1589, both court poets cooperating to "correct the ruggedness" of English poetry. Bell corrected George Nott's claim in 1816: that it was Wyatt, and not Surrey, who likely introduced iambic, because, according to Bell, it was more probable due to a "matter of dates" (53-60). Wyatt was fourteen years older than Surrey and, while no proofs are in existence and there are no precise dates that can be

given when Wyatt and Surrey wrote their poems (except that Wyatt's satires were written in or after 1536, following his imprisonment on May 6 and after the execution of Anne Boleyn, and his *Psalms* were among the last of his pieces, and unfortunately unpolished; all were written at Allington Castle and his *Psalms* were the first of his poetry to appear after his death, published in 1549), it can be presumed that the greater part of Wyatt's translations and poems, including the whole of his love poems, were most likely written in his youth, between 1528 and 1536. There is no question that Wyatt favored the iambic tetrameter, he was the Early Modern era's master of it. And then he went on to apply his eventual, preferred five-foot in iambic pentameter in later life, which predominates in his sonnets and satires. Even though Bell acknowledged, as other critics had before and after him, that Wyatt's originality was indebted to French and Italian writers, and "with reminiscences of many writers, classical and continental, that can be detected flitting in his poems" Bell concluded that it was no "slight merit" that Wyatt enriched English poetry and he "gave greater scope and variety to his compositions than any of his contemporaries ever attained." Wyatt is always to be credited with introducing the sonnet and the modern lyric to England and he became the first English poet to handle the French rondeau (later form of *rondel*), the Italian *ottava rima* and the *terza rima*, the latter notably applied by Wyatt in his poetry for the *Penitential Psalms*. Also, there are three poems from the sixteenth century that have been attributed to Wyatt and they are Horatian satires with a neoclassic bent, a generic novelty in English (Foley 1). By all of this, the two poets co-headed the critical forefront to the flowering of sixteenth century poetry.

Yes, a great deal has been written by scholars about the importance of Francesco Petrarch (c. 1304-1374) and about other Italian poets upon the form of Wyatt's verse. It was during his diplomatic travels for the Tudor Court that these Italian versifiers impressed upon Wyatt the value of chastening and strengthening his thought through vigilant use of diction and meter (Pearson 59-60). What Petrarch described in his "Sonnet 3" as "Love found me altogether disarmed, and the way open through / my eyes to my heart, my eyes which are now the portal and / passageway to tears", Wyatt uniquely crafted his own version: "When first mine eyes did view, and marke, / Thy faire beawtie to beholde: / And when mine eares listned to hark: / The pleasant wordes, that thou me tolde: / I would as then, I had been free" (*Tottel's Miscellany*, Arber 76). What Wyatt most found in poets like Petrarch during his ambassadorship, more than meter or form, was the discovery of "a new convention of voicing emotion" (Pearson 60). Emotion is at the heart of all outstanding literary works, which, when criticized, American poet Ezra Pound (1885-1972) stated are classics due to their "certain eternal and irrepressible freshness" (Gioia, et al., xi).

The ardent voice that appears in a number of Wyatt's best poems has been cited by current scholar Kenneth Muir as "some of the finest, especially on what Wyatt saw as the unpredictability in the female spirit" (Muir 1949, xxv). Muir advocates that the most artistic of Wyatt's poems were written when Wyatt was most successful and happy in his love. Agnes Foxwell's earlier scholarship was in agreement with Muir's about the aesthetic quality in many of Wyatt's poems, but she suggested that many of his poems show the art of court poets who sought to indulge in the "ordinary form of salutation

among the upper classes”, that is, in the expected way that any man of privilege was to appropriately acknowledge women, even in their poetry (xxv).

Wyatt would produce nearly three hundred poems in his lifetime and when England and Europe were making a now-observed, very dramatic transition between Medieval and Early Modern Europe. While most of the poems ascribed to Wyatt are of a successful, durable and personal style, not all of them are about the subject of love and some do not contain the density or consequence to stand alone from the music and performance that would have accompanied their song. Wyatt’s thematic interests in love and life at court are a lot like Dunbar’s but Wyatt rarely wrote about celebrations or moralities. And Wyatt’s late *Psalms* are as close as the poet got to Dunbar’s divine poems like “*Rorate celi desuper*”, “*Hale sterne superne, hale in eterne*” and “*Done is a battell on the dragon blak*”. Wyatt, like other court poets of his time, usually orated or sang poems to the accompaniment of a lute or harp. Yet Wyatt’s “*Mystrustfull mindes be moued / To hau me in suspect*” unforgettably opens one of Wyatt’s stronger and more enduring poems, a song of three quatrains, in tri-meter, and matter-of-factly titled by the editor of *Tottel’s Miscellany* as “*The louer suspected blameth yll tongues.*” Wyattian scholar Joost Daalder has stated that Wyatt’s contemporaries, including Surrey, found the poet to be restless, profound, moral, a generally excellent poet and, particularly, a Christian one, possessed of sharp judgment, and free from deceit himself, though the innocent victim of deceit practiced by others (Daalder xiv). If his poems lack extensive exposition of doctrine they are plentiful with self discernment (Foley 39). Wyatt liked to keep things brief and to the point. Unlike what Chaucer found as a subject’s worth in

being made into a tale, Wyatt's poetic inclinations were to dismiss the saga and make a very short account of the matter. Above all, Wyatt's poems show intellect and resourcefulness at challenges and difficulties in the Tudor Court that prompted Sir Thomas Cheney, another diplomat and courtier to Henry VIII, to write in 1527 to Cardinal Wolsey (c. 1471-1530), that Wyatt "hath as much wit to mark and remember everything he seeth as any young man in England" (Baldi 8). It is not so surprising then that such a distinctive individual like Wyatt would then not only experiment with poetic meter and form but enhance his poems in his own voice about place, reason and passion.

Whenever Wyatt was not wholly adhering to native traditions of the English lyric (the quatrain genre had become a fixed form from Middle English) or dropping into alliterative meters familiar from Middle and Old English, popular alliterative verse that proliferated and survived into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and which tended to make Wyatt's own poetry harsh and rough, he was instead experimenting with good, innovative versification. Wyatt tried to avoid quibbling phrases ("Happe happith", "fforce perforce") and attempted to rework colloquial invectives ("Hoppe byddes me hoppe of payne the right reward", "For Dred to falle, my hand now hold the fast"). He sought to drop medieval alliteration altogether to produce a better poetic effect (changing lines like "To the disdaynful / To the dispyteful;" to "To the disdainful / To the spiteful.>"). Wyatt was a pioneering poet, experimenting and skillfully configuring his meters and the various poetic forms in order to express boldness. He wanted to have his verse, if not charming, at least strong; his poetic practice became a clever push for fresh line and style that, for modern scholars looking back, quintessentially reflected England's

clearly changing attitudes. England's predispositions from its medieval past would give way to a new prominence upon individual consciousness, human progress and enjoyment, and at the very least, the desire or striving for them. For Wyatt, irregularity in meter and form was not always a lyrical fault if the developed tone was impressive and advanced the great topics of humankind's contemplations.

Hence, Sir Thomas Wyatt's poetry is not as much about the portrayal of a single poet who was independently fashioning himself, but of a writer who happened to be a courtier in the Tudor Court and who, cleverly, was reflecting in his poems the passions common in any individual like him in the same courtier-boots. Wyatt's poetry displays "real" courtier passions that were believable and understandable as coming from the author himself (except in Wyatt's poems the subject may, or may not be, the same person as the poet). And yet, Wyatt was a poet who acutely sensed the dependable power and confidence of self which he could emphasize in his poetry about the value in keeping both, himself and his writing, as separate and good "creations", whole and worthy (the author and the poem as both sustainable). The works Wyatt created would bring these two elements together. It was a different sort of unity than the classical and platonic ideals of wholeness in one earth and along with a higher unifier of all things, that of the "One" great divine being. Wyatt's "unities" had to be composed subtly and in juxtaposition with Wyatt's cultural backdrop of trust, distrust, doubt, and conviction held by those around him and with whom the poet interacted within the institutions of aristocratic society, church and the court—and all of those became mixed together into one and the same tumult under Henry VIII.

Lines from one of Wyatt's lesser known poems, "IX", unpublished and located in the Blage MS, most fittingly highlight the weight and importance of this unfolding new renaissance that would forever alter English life and make art more individual, spirited and delightful: "So that the prouf Doth verefye / . . . And bryng hym low that was full hy, / And set hymn hard that set full softe: / Vnloked for all this happes ofte" (Muir 1961, 21-22).

As mentioned earlier, Wyatt's unanticipated early death caused the outpouring of public praise and continual impressive elegies. Surrey further wrote of him approvingly: "Thus for our guilt, this jewel have we lost. / The earth his bones, the heavens possess his ghost" (Keene 59). Other praises flowed forth in almost non-stop fashion. In still another elegy Surrey encouraged his fellow-writers and countrymen to "Honour the place that such a jewell bred, and kisse the grounde, whereas thy couse doth rest" (Muir 1949, xxxiv). Learning of his death, Thomas Sackville, the Earl of Dorset, proclaimed "Not worthy Wiat, worthiest of them all" (Muir 1949, xxxiv). Speaking about Wyatt's capacity for translation, Surrey wrote of his *Penitential Psalms* that they provided a place "Where Rewlres may se in a myrroure clere" and how "Princys hartes Goddes scourge yptinted depe / Myght them awake out of their sinful slepe" (Jones 28). Henry VIII's antiquary, John Leland (?1506-52), dedicated a series of elegies to the poet shortly after his death and named Surrey Wyatt's literary heir (Leland claimed that he first met Wyatt when they were students at Cambridge and was thereafter his constant admirer). In his elegies Leland called Wyatt a phoenix and his death as the destruction of eloquence:

The world contains but one phoenix at a time. One dead, another comes to life.
When Wyatt, that rare bird, was snatched away by death, Howard became his heir

. . . . None can justly claim that Wyatt perished when the monuments of his genius still thrive. Wyatt the stream, the light and lightening of eloquence is annihilated, and now all fine song is lost.

(Thompson 24-27)

Essentially, Wyatt could be called appropriately the “Father of Modern English Poetry”. The first justification for that title is plainly provided by the matter of Wyatt’s introducing of many forms of verse and, especially, by the sonnet as that form evolved through the sixteenth century. Wyatt’s poetry shaped greater poetry than his that was later mastered by Edmund Spenser (?1552-59), steeped in Renaissance Neo-Platonism but earthy and sensible, and the poetry, too, of imaginative, moral and desire-laden complaints and songs by Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86). William Shakespeare (1564-1616) developed many of his plays around the theme of court milieu that were all too familiar to both Wyatt and Surrey. Perhaps Shakespeare partially developed his playwriting from cues that he took from the dramatic and historical vitality that is displayed in many of Wyatt’s personal lyrics. Also, as previously mentioned, Wyatt brought the three-line stanza form of *terza rima* to England, a borrowing from Italian poets. Other Tudor court poets and later, Elizabethan poets, used and perfected the sonnet, the now well-known English sonnet form of fourteen lines that Wyatt first introduced. Shakespeare mastered the form; the iambic pentameter sonnet became for Shakespeare his chief poetic instrument as a writer. And from Wyatt, Shakespeare also found the value in applying and varying the Petrarchan conceit, particularly for concerns of truth and beauty (Blevins 47). But long before Shakespeare, Wyatt, first established and then preferred like Shakespeare, to rhyme the octets, the initial eight lines of the sonnet form, either as *abbaabba* or *abbaacca*, arranged in true Petrarchan fashion, and, then, his sestets, the

final six lines (of his twenty-nine sonnets) commonly as either *cdeedc* or *cdeedf*, rhyme patterns that eventually became the English form with the final two lines of the fourteen a concluding couplet and rhyming *gg*. However, over 40 rhyme variations have been found across Wyatt's sonnets and in his other songs of octets and sestets, again, as he was profoundly influenced by the Italians. Surrey fine-tuned Wyatt's form into three distinct quatrains and a couplet, all in iambic pentameter and usually rhyming *abab cdcd efef gg*. Yet, Wyatt's sonnets survive and are considered today as more interesting, in spite of arguments that can be made that Wyatt's meter and form are "at times less regular" or "usually more irregular"; these are both one and same arguments, except that poise, in arguing for the first view, more supports Wyatt's intentions to experiment and his diligence to always create a new and improved revisions (Child).

Of all poetic forms, the sonnet is very difficult: it is a challenging form for any poet to make obscure, turgid, or irregular. Its structural precision and concision impels a writer to be intense and to compress thought. The narrative summation rests on a brief one or two points: "A feeble sonnet proclaims itself feeble at a glance, but no better corrective could have been found for vague thought, loose expression and irregular meter than the sonnet" (Child).

Wyatt's initial practice with the sonnet corrected some of England's poetic deficiencies of rhyme and expression that had proliferated during the latter half of the fourteenth century and after. Not until Shakespeare would the greatness of the sonnet form be attained; Shakespeare preferred writing his sonnets in iambic pentameter and he modeled his from Surrey's sonnets which were modeled on Wyatt's pieces. Later,

Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, D. G. Rossetti, and Meredith favored Shakespeare's "English form". Yet, Wyatt pioneered the form and thus, the perfection of it should never become a critical expectation of his poetics; his introduction of the sonnet model, though, stands as the head of his poetic sponsorships and fronts the other verse forms which he introduced to England.

Still, while Surrey was seen for two centuries after his death in 1547 as having achieved a revolution in the rhythm and vocabulary of poetry that Wyatt had merely commenced, Dennis Keene has noted that Wyatt's poetry surpassed Surrey's in both quantity and quality. There are nearly three hundred poems that can confidently be ascribed to Wyatt and less than 150 poems for Surrey. The smoothness and lyrical regularities in Surrey's verse juxtaposes with Wyatt's experimental sonnets that often tease the listeners with irregular patterns, dissimilar rhythmical units and puzzling positions of accent. In his critical discussion of all aspects of "poesy" as rhetoric in *The Art of English Poesy* (1589), Puttenham saw Wyatt's poetics, along with Surrey's poetry, as representative of "the first reformers of our English metre and style". Again, ever since the eighteenth century, interest in Wyatt's poetry steadily rose while that of Surrey's waned. This would seem to be for no particular significant reason other than Wyatt's poetry better exhibits a genuine attempt at reforming English meter and form and at expressing a valid voice, unadulterated and stating the new sentiment for the aesthetic intelligence and artistic elegance that would eventually characterize early modern poetry.

The great literary significance of Wyatt's poetry is that it displays a wide range of originality and innovation. This early sixteenth-century English poetry provides

worthwhile intrigue about the poet's unstable, yet highly aesthetic, structure of poetic form; all of this best responds to poetic criticism and is at the heart of this thesis. Wyatt's collection of lyric poems is important not just for the sheer number of his poems but more for how many of them, even the satires and psalm translations, express powerful yearnings for loyalty and show a genuine commitment to king and country. Perhaps even of most significance, across Wyatt's lyrics is displayed a trusting voice, undoubtedly the poet's voice, the Wyatt who accumulated public and private knowledge from years as a courtier and adviser, one who artfully socialized and negotiated with kings. That fine sense of knowing who and when to trust held true for Wyatt. It was a gift that he found that was so seldom expressed by his contemporaries and surrounding authorities. And trust was the root to how Wyatt could assert poetics.

There is a tension revealed in Wyatt's poems between the aforementioned yearnings and Wyatt's own increasing desires to first secure the self and then to fashion and preserve his own individual successes. Wyatt anticipated that others would read and remember his poems long after his life. The eighth stanza of his poem "I am as I am and so wil I be" in the Devonshire MS. "reads" as follows:

Prayeing you all that this doo rede
To truste yt as you doo your crede,
And not to think I change my wede,
For I as I am howe ever I spede.

("No. 167" in Muir 1949, 154-55)

Wyatt's parallel desires to speak for himself and into perpetuity can be compared to the poet's work that actually shows a preference for the five-foot accentual meter, five stresses that are equally measured across a line, and very unlike the feet made up of one

stressed syllable and a varying number of unstressed ones which was used in Anglo-Saxon and much pre-Chaucerian poetry. His nursery-rhyme like jingle in the poem “I am” above is actually a final look back at the past as Wyatt more contemplates the future and what only lay ahead for his country and himself. Most of all, in his sonnets, Wyatt varied the ten-syllable line, frequently changing from decasyllabic and iambic stress. The best way to trust the poet and his poetry is to carefully observe his original and significant departures in rhyme scheme, stress and syllable count; it is difficult to argue that his changes were not intended. Wyatt’s resulting independent and confident prosody best captures the English Renaissance poet’s steadfast passion and resentment, his skepticism and optimism, his longing and fulfillment, his pain and pleasure, his energy and originality. His poetry is a textual copy of England’s cultural and literary marriage to renaissance humanism.

Likewise, Wyatt’s contribution to prosody is better seen as devised by a poet who was coming to grips with creating unity, reflecting in his poetry the tying up of one man’s singular energetic life and literary pursuits—his own. His poetry resembles what he aptly wrote in the first and fourteenth lines of one of his most famous songs, “The louer for shamefastnesse hideth his desire within his faithfull hart”: “The longe loue, that in my thought I harber, / . . . For good is the life, endyng faithfully” (*Tottel’s Miscellany*, Arber 33). Prophetically, Wyatt concluded his “I am” poem with an eternal invitation to future readers that they might and should read him and try to understand his intense but fleeting feelings, and at the least, to appreciate what he was saying: “I do proteste as ye maye see / That I am as I am and so will I bee.”

Dennis Keene noted, conflict, along with cynicism, pervade Wyatt's poetry, and make it interesting (Keene 16). Wyatt's poetic world is essentially one of emotional strife rather than acceptance, the opposite of Surrey's world. In Wyatt's poem "Why loue is blinde," his lines penetrate: "But, for he blinde, and recklesse, would him holde? / And still, by chance, his dedly strokes bestowe: / With such, as see, I serve, and suffer wo." At the same time, many of Wyatt's poems display desires for peace and the wish for a life that might be separated from the deceptions, debasements and fears that prevailed in the Tudor court. Here is Wyatt's pleading song "The courtiers life":

In court to serue decked with freshe aray,
Of sugred meates selyng the swete repast:
The life in bankets, and sundry kindes of play,
Amid the presse of lordly lokes to waste,
Hath with it ioynde oft times such bitter taste.
That with so ioyes such kinde of life to holde,
In prison ioyes fettred with cheines of gold.

(Tottel's Miscellany as edited by Arber 83)

Unquestionably, Wyatt's poetry provides a critic's sanctuary for evaluating his style as a plain-speaking and steadfast author. As the mocking plea above illustrates, Wyatt's poems recount expected and exhausted betrayals by unstable lovers and inconsistent luck. Just a few of them include the following titled poems: "The louer having dreamed enioying of his love, complaineth that the dreame is not either longer or truer", "Of others fained sorrow, and the louers fained mirth", "Of change in minde", "The louer unhappy biddeth happy louers reioce in Mai, while he wailleth that moneth to him most unlucky".

Just as Wyatt's poetry is exceptional for pervading tensions of conflict, emotional dejection and strife, in Wyatt is also the dramatic voice of an active apprehension surrounded by a world that often became insane, on a stage that turned for and against its

players at any given moment. Hence, how Sir Thomas Wyatt's poetics were formulated reveal the mind of an author who was highly adept at grasping how contemporary politics worked, along with an experimental hand that developed to carefully moderate and manage a confident poetic voice.

There is no uncertainty that Surrey and Wyatt were confident men, the former perhaps being over-confident when it was the most dangerous of times and places (at Henry VIII's court) to be so. Wyatt's famous ode "They flee from me" marvelously captures Wyatt's ability to blend in tones that embody passion, anger, cynicism, longing and pain. Here are his four closing lines to that poem, ll.18-20: "And I have leave to go, of her goodness, / And she also to use newfangleness. / But since that I so kindly am served, / I fain would know what she hath deserved." Similarly, Surrey's sonnet, "Love, that doth reign and live within my thought" is also a version of Petrarch's "Rima 140" (See appendix C). Surrey weaves humanistic attitudes of self-preservation and perseverance with knightly inclinations for continuity in the face of adversity and ultimate disaster. Surrey's consistent, regular iambic pentameter pattern makes the poem memorable, especially the final couplet of his translation: "Yet from my lorde shall not my foote remoue, / Swete is his death, that takes his end by loue." But Wyatt's ending couplet is equally excellent, and Wyatt's final couplet diversifies the rhythm, serving to enforce the resolution. Too, Wyatt builds extra interest for his listeners/readers by posing a question: "But in the feld with him to lyve and dye? / For goode is the liff, ending faithfully" ("No. 4" in Muir 1949, 4-5). And Wyatt's best sonnets rise in expressive

quality and their sureness in voice over Surrey's by Wyatt's contrasting uses of varied meter and stress with his stable and authoritative text (See appendices A and B).

Unlike Surrey, when Wyatt translated Petrarch's *rimas*, his translations evoked a kind of chivalry and honor that was not as immovable, excessive or lacking possibility for negotiation as Surrey's were. Instead, where Surrey's verse is finer and the meter smoother than Wyatt's, Wyatt's poetry is more fluid in thought and diplomatically opportunistic. And different from most of Surrey's poetry, Wyatt often creates in his poems a wider narrative space of comfort, room for the chance of reaching a common understanding with the poem's readers/audience to accept both the poet's practicality and his reasoned attempt to deal with fate and dire circumstance. When Wyatt translated the same Petrarchan sonnet that Surrey did, his concluding two lines finish the familiar Italian sestet, the second part of two formal structures that comprise the Italian sonnet. The second and final sestet was preceded by an octet (*ottava*).

Also, Wyatt's translations are more spontaneous than Surrey's and Wyatt's closings are usually of more intelligible resolve. With Petrarch's "Rima 140", Wyatt's transmission emphasized temporal life and eternal "life" over the finality of earthly "death" and absent of, or what was unattainable and of significance for both life and death with "love". Wyatt was better able than Surrey was at negotiating with realism. Wyatt believed in his own inevitable worth as a natural and deserved part of life. He possessed the intelligence and humility to realize that no man was one-hundred percent virtuous nor was his world completely evil and then craft that reasoning into many of his poems. Ironically, Surrey bestowed upon Wyatt the most authentic, perhaps, of honors in

his poetic prologue to Wyatt's translations (published in 1549) from the *Psalms* when Surrey said of Wyatt: "A hed, where wisdom misteries did frame: / Whose hammers but setyll in that lively brain." No doubt a little envious of Wyatt's genius, Surrey continued his commemorative praise to his fellow courtier with a sonnet:

A praise of sir Thomas Wyate th(e) elder for his excellent learning
In the rude age when knowledge was not rife,
If Loue in Create and other were that taught,
Artes to conuert to profite of our life,
Wende after death to haute their temples fought.
If vertue yet no voyde vnthankfull time,
Failed of some to blast her endles fame,
A goodly meane both to deterre from crime:
And to her steppes our sequele to enflame,
In dayes of truth if Wyates frendes then wayle,
The only det that dead of quick may claime:
That rare wit spent employed to our auaile.
Where Christ is taught we led to vertues traine.
His liuely face their brestes how did it freat,
Whose cindres yet with enuye they do eate.

(Tottel's Miscellany, Arber 30)

Where Wyatt's poetry can so easily be criticized for its irregular meter and rough form, his contemporary Surrey assures readers into perpetuity that his poetry came from a poet of high artistry, infused with "knowledge", "truth", "wit" and intended for good, "to profit of our life". Ironically, Surrey modeled his poetry after what his older friend, Wyatt, made available. Wyatt was among all of the writers that Surrey stated are in "det" to his courtier-friend. It is proper to infer that Wyatt's verse should be widely celebrated for his skill at natural speech and in his accurate word choices that conveyed reality, except not as an allegory. For Wyatt understood that the medieval allegory had become such a dominant "classic" form, since Augustine and especially after Chaucer's death, that it was monotonous and no longer enjoyable. He was thus compelled to write less

unnaturally and recognizing instead what his contemporaries did not: what C. S. Lewis called the danger in “the same kind of writing, that kind (which) is in danger” (232). If translating Wyatt’s language to modern spelling can leave many of his pieces flat and meager, he was able to produce others that are admirably ingenious and fresh (“Vnstable dreame according to the place” and “Love to gyue law vnto his subiect hertes”). Thus, many of Wyatt’s poems retain a concision that gained another remark by Lewis: many other poets (none of them contemptible) have “said less in far longer pieces” (Thompson 173). Lewis also stated that Wyatt can not be regarded as the last of the early Tudor lyricists but as someone who modified the tradition by several new borrowings and adding something of his own. Yes, Wyatt was the first of England’s Italianate poets. And, while introducing the sonnet was important, it just may have developed much the same without him had he never lived. Above all, it may be that Wyatt’s greatest contribution came from experimenting with, not perfecting, new poetic meters and forms. His poetry provides evidence that metrical imperfection and innovation were capable of carrying a great degree of aesthetic quality. The weight of his life and poems would influence future poets after him. This is an ironic result from a pioneering poet: Sir Thomas Wyatt seldom achieved poetic perfection because his creative energies were mostly consumed by establishing a new poetic path. However, Wyatt was able to write many graceful lines that made other writers in his time envious. Surrey’s elegiac sonnet reported Wyatt’s poetics made his contemporaries “fret in their heart”.

Additionally Surrey celebrated Wyatt’s poetic capacity in his prologue to Wyatt’s psalms translations: “A hand, that taught, what might be sayed in ryme; / That reft

Chaucer the glory of his wit; / A mark, the which (unparsited, for time) / Some may approche, but never none shall hit.” When Surrey sincerely complimented his contemporary’s non-parsed poetic form and meter, prosody that did not adhere to arbitrary rules of meter and form, Wyatt’s friend and fellow poet was unconsciously indicating the distinct break and founding brand which separated Wyatt’s work, along with the poems by Surrey and other great British poets after him, from Britain’s medieval past. Primarily, Wyatt set about establishing characteristics for poetics that eventually developed as a collective indication of early modern verse in England.

The primary attributes of this new poetry can be seen in Wyatt’s seemingly natural variants in his meter and style, in the words that Wyatt used, in the punctuation he applied and in the ideas he connects in his sonnets, satires, epigrams, odes, short poems and psalms. Agnes Kate Foxwell was the first modern scholar to produce a landmark study (two volumes, the first published in 1911 and the second in 1913) of Wyatt’s poems. Foxwell articulated that Wyatt’s poetry generally displays the poet’s concerted endeavor to:

- 1) bring lines into the compass of ten syllables (decasyllabic verse) and at the least, make a five-stressed line (iambic pentameter and otherwise);
- 2) ensure a ten-syllable line by occasional alterations and avoidance of archaic or Italianate words or the misunderstanding of words;
- 3) make changes for political reasons;
- 4) produce a better poetical effect by strong phrasing; and
- 5) vary line-length by adding or removing syllables and not just for the sake of meter (Thompson 111-19).

Combining lines of various lengths, extra end syllables, a preference for accenting every last syllable in a line and not employing weak endings, and the clearer expression of the idea of the poem while not making changes in language and meaning in order to obtain a

better and final version of the poem are at the heart of Wyatt's practice and development of confident, experimental and enthusiastic poetry. These "natural" poetic variations of Wyatt's were new and they would become models of preference and pride among his fellow poets who would make court verses that attracted early modern printers and from which other great poetry would be fashioned by successive poets, Spenser, Sidney, Drayton, Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton, again, citing only a few. And non-refutable evidence that Wyatt's poetry was meant to be read and enjoyed by others came in the first edition of the *Miscellany*. That first English anthology began with a planned address that was titled "The Printer to the Reader" and which stated that the book's purpose was the following:

. . . . to publish, to the honour of Englishe eloquence, thos workes which the vngentle horders vp of such treasurer haue hereto enuied thee. And for the point (good reader) thine own profit and pleasure, in these presently, and in moe hereafter, shal answere for my defence.

(Rollins 2)

Chapter Four

Wyatt's Poetic Variety, Improvement, Modernism and Power

What makes Wyatt's poetry distinct from other writers before him and during his time is his originality. Surrey translated many of the same poems from Petrarch that Wyatt did except the two court poets' results varied widely. Surrey adopted the sonnet model for smooth regularity and refinement. Wyatt, on the other hand, apparently saw the form as *not* what it did for meter and continental European verse, but how it could be *undone*, i.e. varied and improved, by the infusion of English vernacular and using the form to make more complex and interesting poetry through varied meter and creative passages. What Surrey took and made over of Petrarch and other Italian and French poets, from them Wyatt instead revolutionized.

Too many writers in the past have focused on Wyatt's work as experimental, and he was pioneering, to explain that his poetry was imperfect and not polished. They have disregarded the obvious, that Wyatt would have read and edited Surrey's sonnets as much as Surrey read and commented on those by his friend Wyatt. It was the tradition of court-poets to share and circulate their sonnets, songs, epigrams and satires among their friends. Wyatt's translation from poem 140 from Petrarch and then his origination of "The longe love, that in my thought doeth harbar" is found in Wyatt's personal manuscript (E. MS) MS, his favored manuscript that he worked with and revised throughout his life. When Tottel (or someone else who may have been the editor) published *Songes and Sonettes*, a

large number of changes in Wyatt's poems, at least of the 96 poems ascribed to Wyatt and which were printed in the various eight editions of *Tottel's Miscellany*, were made in order to make the lines smoother and to resemble Surrey's verse. That was the printer's decision and should not be taken to infer that Surrey's verse actually is better than or even comparable to the creativity of Wyatt's poetics. It is worth remembering that at Wyatt's time England's lyric tradition was on a course of change. Song and drama were yet to reach their highest level in the second half of the sixteenth century and into the early 1600s when Sidney, Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare flourished and when a new interest in literary criticism took hold. Both Surrey and Wyatt as "co-authors" of the *Miscellany* were dead when the book was published in 1557. Surrey was conserved for providence; he had been vocally opposed to the Seymours, and his Howard family's strong ties to Protestantism had manifested as the last straw for a very aged and ill King Henry VIII. Surrey was tried for treason and sadly became forever marked in history as the last of Henry's victims. Neither court poet was around then to counter or to affirm Richard Tottel's editorial decisions. Surrey likely would have affirmed the publication that premiered his verse while Wyatt would have hawked and protested on the rewording and over-editing of his poems, and probably with the same confidence that Raleigh later did when he pulled back his manuscripts from late sixteenth-century printers. But until Wyatt, no poet had realized the trend taking hold in the sixteenth century how language and human wills were changing: wholly acceptable and legitimate was holding a central, truly human point of view. Wyatt may have taken pleasure in that his contemporaries, Surrey, Nicholas Grimald, Lord Vaux, John Heywood, Sir Francis Bryan, Sir John

Cheke, John Harrington, Thomas Norton, Sir Anthony St. Leger, Thomas Churchyard, John Hall, and others by the “Uncertain Authors”, had not yet grasped the new attitude and expressive power of humanism that he did. By altering verse to renaissance humanism’s new lyrical demands and thought, Wyatt was the sole court poet at the start of the sixteenth century who most seemed to identify with the forms and styles of the Continental Renaissance. And as far as the great Tudor poetical miscellany published by Tottel, the sonnet (a majority of the sonnets included were written by Wyatt) is liberally represented, along with a richness of other poetical forms (and most of these forms were introduced to England by Wyatt) (Rollins and Baker, 194-5). In spite of its archaic diction, its heavy (and sometimes inept) imitations of Petrarch and others, and its frequent technical insecurity, for all practical purposes the book inaugurated the high period of the English Renaissance, and it was unquestionably, the most influential literary achievement of Elizabeth’s early reign.

Critical to the respect deserved by is the range and diversity of Wyatt’s poetics is that his poetry has survived, either by social functions that allowed him to collect his poems as a group and by chance, but nonetheless, in preserved manuscripts where the poems that were ascribed to him and as they were circulated in and after his lifetime retained the sense and signature that they were “Wyatt’s” (Foley 32). That too was an early modern first—that English poems, as a genre, would clearly be understood in relation to the name of their author, even during his lifetime. The currency and authority of other authors, and then printers and finally, literary critics, would not and could not deny Wyatt’s poetic originations and power.

With 300 poems now ascribed to his authorship, and with undoubtedly many others in manuscripts either un-ascribed and declared as doubtful they are his, or just not yet verified as undoubtedly to have been written by him, Wyatt's volume of poetry, notably a canon yet unfixed (R. A. Rebholz's 1978-81 modern spelling edition of Wyatt's *Complete Poems* is the most recent attempt), provides a spectrum of good poems and varied innovations—yes, some of them are not as good as others or long enough to be considered anything more than fragments or “unfinished ideas”—but there are several great lyrical works that show Wyatt's eminence as the instigator of modern poetics.

In that vein, Wyatt's three satires, written near the end of his life, are in *terza rima* and were especially influenced by Horace. One of the sermons is translated and revised from the Italian statesman and versatile poet, Luigi Alamanni (1495-1556), whom Wyatt may also have met. Again, Wyatt introduced to England the unique form of the *terza rima*. Further, the poet anglicized his satires with a deferential nod to Chaucer. In a *somewhat* native voice, Wyatt satirized Court life, drawing on his own experiences, remembering many unattainable goals and his human reactions to unachievable desires. Also, Wyatt was standing on the shoulders of Skelton as a literary giant of satire. Skelton, of all poets before Wyatt, displayed the shrewdness of a realistic eye and his satirical rhyme and rhetoric, often ludicrous and with mud slinging, tasteless and vulgar, humorous and in slapdash vernacular immediacy, could simultaneously describe emotional honesty, fierce argument, strange compulsions and social and political truths, even if all were sometimes written incomprehensibly (Green 12-16).

A lot like Skelton, Wyatt addressed in his own way bitterness, rationalizing about whether he or someone else was most responsible for the anticipated outcomes that were denied to him. Here is an excerpt from one of Wyatt's lengthy satires, his third translation and Anglicized sermon among his *Penitential Psalms*, ll. 76-85a:

Ffor he, the ffooll, of conscience was so nyse
That he no gayn would have for all his payne.
Be next thy self, for friendship beres no prise.
Laughst thou at me? Why, do I speke in vayne?
No, not at the, but at thy thriftly gest.
Wouldest thou I should for any losse or gayne
Chaunge that for gold that I have tan for best
Next godly thinges, to have an honest name?
Should I leve that, then take me for a best!
Nay then, farewell!

(“No. 198” in Muir 1949, 193)

Disregarding the rhymes and Wyatt's justified humanistic intrusions of inquiry, E. M. Tillyard (1889-1962) observed that Wyatt's satires appear throughout as seemingly stanzaic. Tillyard did not recognize the satires as they were in the new *terza rima* form that Wyatt introduced. Instead, Tillyard viewed them as blank verse, the innovative form which some have credited to Surrey. Tillyard also saw in the satires what he witnessed throughout Wyatt's poetry: that the court poet “was most able to balance antithetical qualities with genius for action and refined scholarship, impetuosity and the restraint of gentle manners, versatility and fidelity—and above all high ambitions and modesty” (Thompson 143). Muir stated of the satires that Wyatt ingeniously must have determined that if he sought “to preserve the form too rigidly old destroy the admirable conversational tone at which he was aiming” (xxiii). In spite of certain stiffness in his satirical lines, Wyatt displayed an excellent poise. The tone is perfect, with just the right

amount of indignation, and with the didacticism tempered with humor (Muir xxviii). Accordingly, Wyatt's satires and his other lengthy poems, like "Of the courtiers life, written to John Poins" allowed the poet to "speak" favorably of what was bad in his verse. As a diplomat in the center of Henry VIII's unstable court, Wyatt knew well the risk of poignant verse. Wyatt skillfully balanced those things that were both sweet and sour about the court, love and life. Many of his better poems are astute and pertinent, but his carefully word choices, neatness and moderating tone serves to keep relevant criticism indirect and thus, supplemental to the striking aesthetics and stimulating action/drama often present in his best poems. And James Yeowell noticed that during Wyatt's life, the court was perpetually moving from one place to another (100-02). Wyatt's dramatic and irregular verse presents an exceptional parallel to the unpredictability and instability of the Tudor Court.

As alluded to above, the epigram is a viable poetic form that has a long history, contextually going back to inscriptions and funerary pieces during the Hellenistic era and before. It became a preferred form among Wyatt and his contemporaries. This is one tradition that Wyatt adhered to rather than broke away from. Many of Wyatt's six- and eight-lined epigrams (he favored using the octet) are like so many of his other poems. They do not deal with the subject of love. Instead they refer to places and events in the court-poet's courtier life, when he was in Spain, in prison or after the execution of many of his friends including Anne Boleyn (d. May 1536) and Thomas Cromwell, first Earl of Essex, Henry's chief minister from 1532-40 and who did not come to Boleyn's defense. However, Cromwell was Wyatt's patron and personal defender of him among his fellow

courtiers. Below is one of these epigrams which illustrates the novelty, humanistic inquisitiveness, self-induced passion, and unrealized (however, developing) Anglican religious bent of Wyatt; it is Wyatt's meditating about Cromwell after he had been executed at the Tower on 28 July 1540, and ironically, because Cromwell had supported Henry VIII in disposing of Anne Boleyn and replacing her with Jane Seymour. But not just because Cromwell had fallen out with Anne over the distribution of the funds from the dissolution of the monasteries, he also then encouraged Henry in haste to marry Anne of Cleves, which proved a disastrous alliance and threw Cromwell's hope for the English Reformation intermittently off track. On the same day Cromwell was executed, as Wyatt watched, the king went on to marry his fifth wife, Catherine Howard:

Ffarewell all my wellfare,
My shue ys trode awry;
Now may I karke and care
To syng *lullaly by by*.
Alas! What shall I do thereto?
There ys no shyffte to helpe me now.

Who made hytt suche offence
To love for love agayn?
God wott that my pretence
Was but to ease hys payn;
FFor I had Ruthe to se hys wo;
Alas, more fole, why dyd I so?

Ffor he frome me ys gone
And makes there at a game,
And hathe leffte me alone
To suffer sorrow and shame.
Alas! He ys vnkynd dowlles
To leve me thus all comfortles.

Hytt ys a grevows smarte
To suffer payne and sorowe;
But most grevyd my hart

He leyde hys feythe to borow:
And falshode hathe hys feythe and trowthe,
And he forsworne by many an othe.

All ye lovers, perde,
Hathe cawse to blame hys dede,
Whyche shall example be
To lett yow off yowre spede;
Let neuer woman again
Trust to suche wordes as men can fayn.

Ffor I vnto my coste
Am warnying to yow all,
That they whom you trust most
Sonest dysceyve yow shall;
But complaynt cannot redresse
Of my gret greff the gret excesse.
(“No. 108” in Muir 1949, 97-98)

Wyatt’s song is a heartfelt lament on the execution of his intimate friend. It also provides a rationalizing for the poet and with a literary gift of advice to others about the price one can pay by allegiances to untrustworthy “allies” and by misplaced loyalties. Either despite or because Wyatt’s chief occupation was not poetry, his poetic interests were quite varied. Court poets for Henry VIII would be expected to write poetry but it would not occur to them to think of their productions as “collected works”. Thus, many of Wyatt’s poems were occasional pieces and they were not simply read; they were usually sung to the accompaniment of a lute or other stringed instrument. That is why many of Wyatt’s lyrics, epigrams and ballads are about fleeting feelings and his corresponding meters and form likewise appeal to music. The clarity and directness of the poet’s feelings expressed in pointed epigrams work well to make his feelings known, bluntly, genuinely. Even in his translations from Petrarch, while there is often little description of the lovely lady, and the state of the poet is often far from abject; there is more of a sense

of “that’s how things are,” suggestive of how love affairs have been at the Tudor court (Bender 5). More than 120 of Wyatt’s poems are lyrics and ballads; Wyatt would have called them “songs”, “ballets” and “lullays”. While many of these songs are commonplace and ineffectual, a lot of them likely composed in his youth as Nott and Bell presumed, and thus, written by a far lesser poet than Wyatt eventually became, his best lyrics surpass the best in English before him and rival most of the best that came after him. Wyatt achieves near perfection in lyrical poetry with poems like “My lute, awake, performe the last” (E. MS), “They fle from me that sometime did me seke” (E. MS), “Ys yt possible” (D. MS), “And wylt thou leve me thus? (D. MS)”, “Fforget not yet the tryde entent” (D. MS), “Blame not my lute for he must sownde” (D. MS) and “Wyth seruing still” (D. MS). According to Muir, Bender, and others, these poems, written in a variety of stanza forms, illustrate an astonishing amount of metrical variation (5). Tottel included “My lute awake” and “They fle from me” in the *Miscellany*. Bender stated that “They fle from me” was a “marvel of technique”, the “poem itself is alive”, and presented a dramatic state of affairs “charged with emotion: alone, in adverse fortune, the poet laments his present life, but remembering an event of the past, his tone changes, and a brilliant little scene flushes to life” (6). Bender added that not until Donne did anything match this in English poetry.

Wyatt’s experiments with rondeaux resulted in poems that are of a happier tone. They evoke a less sober attitude that is more in the tradition of Dunbar’s poetry. It was another form that Wyatt introduced to England. While his rondeaux were not as satisfying as his epigrams, they permitted the form’s eventual popularity among English

poets after him. It is interesting that Wyatt must have liked the light and fancy French form as they are the first poems that he preserved in E. MS (Muir xxiv). They are certainly valuable for the tone they set and the form is superior for lyrical movement and evoking imagination, a good poetic form for Wyatt's primary emphasis to suggest deceit, disdain, guile, "new fangilnes" and his favorite adjectival discord about that real or imaginary "cruell love", "cruell brest", "cruell hart", "cruell rebel", "cruell intent", "cruell deth" and "cruell more and more". Here I believe is Wyatt's best rondeau (from the Egerton MS):

BEHOLD, love, thy power how she dispiseth!
My great payne how litle she regardeth!
The holy oth, wherof she taketh no cure,
Broken she hath; and yet she bideth sure
Right at her ease and litle she dredeth.
Wepened thou art, and she vnarmed sitteth;
To the disdaynfull her liff she ledeth,
To me spiteful withoute cause or mesure,
Behold, love.

(“No. 1” in Muir 1949, 3)

Wyatt applied an *aabba aabc* rhyme scheme and ended with a short ninth line. After him the restrictive form's (only two rhymes permitted) became a favorite by other poets, in nine, ten, twelve and fifteen lines, but always the ninth and fifteenth lines being short. The form also prompted refrains. While Wyatt's preference was to make the first eight lines in all of his rondeaux decasyllabic, English poets after him would prefer eight syllables, and if twelve lines were used, commonly breaking the form into three quatrains. Tennyson early fancied the form in the nineteenth century for its power at expression; however, after becoming Laureate, he closed his *Library Edition* in 1873 with

an epilogue to Queen Victoria noting, among many threats to the “mightiest of all people under heaven,” the danger to art from “honey stol’n from France” (Robinson 733).

Wyatt produced nearly 150 lyrics and ballads and scholars have identified more than fifty of them as the best verses before the great Elizabethans. Some of these, though, are in the halting verse so characteristic of his immediate English predecessors and where is seen the influence of Skelton’s close-knit use of the rhyme royal, as in *Speak, Parrot*: “Peace, parrot, ye prate as ye were *ebrius*: / Hist thee, *lieber Got von Himmelsreich, ich seg*”; or William Dunbar’s daft and underrated medieval craftsmanship, for example, “Hevins distill your balmy schouris, / For now is rissin the bricht day ster” (Kinsley xxv-xxviii). Both poets came before Wyatt and tended to put more in their poems than what they intended. Conversely, when Wyatt was not complaining about the unkindness of his real mistress, or a fictional one, he was expressing that man cannot always adequately express his true feelings in the borrowed conventions of the Anglo-Saxon confessionals or what he came to perceive to essentially be, a very challenging, at times disappointing, yet still ultimately worth pursuing. The Tudor courtly-love convention was for all manner of reasons as Wyatt saw it, a purposeful aim and most valid of soul searching: for Wyatt a spiritual quest was legitimate to the point of “dying” as he so aptly described in metaphor the pursuit for divine love in his songs and sonnets.

What individualizes Wyatt and makes him stand above the poetic conventions that preceded him is his confident human voice. Whether he actually ever was a complex and passionate lover himself, his poetry illustrates that power and the modernism to break

with tradition and partake in vitality, variety and artistic success. Again, Wyatt's superior ode and quasi ballad "They flee from me" most dramatizes passion and the reasoning of an English writer who came to understand that the power of poetry is its chief purpose to serve and stand as art. Here in full is that creativity when the inventive poet had reached the preeminence of his poetics, his Early Modern humanistic self, and vigorously mixing his preferred 'iambic pentameter' with lines of altered stress for emphasis:

THEY fle from me that sometime did me seke
With naked fote stalking in my chamber.
I have sene them gentill tame and meke
That nowe are wyld and do not remembre
That sometime they put theimself in daunger
To take bred at my hand; and now they raunge
Besely seking with a continuell change.

Thancked be fortune, it hath otherwise
Twenty tymes better; but one in speciall,
In thyn arraye after a pleasaunt gyse,
When her lose gowne from her shoulders did fall,
And she me caught in her armes long and small;
Therewithall sweetly did me kysse,
And softely saide, *dere hert, howe like you this?*

It was no dreame: I lay brode waking.
But all is torned thorough my gentilnes
Into a straunge fasshion of forsaking;
And I have leve to goo of her goodenes,
And she also to vse new fangilnes.
But syns that I so kyndely ame serued,
I would fain knowe what she hath deserued.

(From the Egerton MS; "No. 37" in Muir 1949, 28)

It is pointless to ask if Wyatt is recounting an "historical" situation or a "real" mistress; the song itself breathes and sings and that is what ultimately matters. Wyatt's male speaker occupies the place of the truthful and weeping mate and Wyatt's woman/women are wild, deceitful and fickle (Heale 51). The poem, though, has consistency and this is

its power, and over and aside from the muddled situations of power/powerlessness and liberty/home boundness (chamber boundness) that Wyatt gives to his man and to his woman/women.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: Wyatt's Transmitting and Originating Inaugurated a New Poetry

It is the richest of pleasant surprises that from Wyatt's poetry, rhetorical devices definitively mirrored and advanced a beneficial self-display so useful for the writer who found himself at the early Tudor court where proximity to the royal body promised wealth and power as much as it offered him and others, possible danger, betrayal and loss. To inaugurate England's rich literary, social and political perplexities that would amass during the sixteenth century, Wyatt introduced the Petrarchan conceit, the forms of the sonnet, *ottava rima* and *terza rima*. Additionally, he refined lyric expression and the satire, applied the novelty of the Horatian ode, mastered the iambic tetrameter, and set in place a working iambic pentameter to "flee from" and with a preferred, five-foot meter for poets to run back to, along with many other metrical innovations and new forms of expression. Wyatt's subtle directness, plain simplicity and exacting truthfulness reflected skill and strategy in his verse and life, at a critical time when it was understood that an individual needed to acquire—and which Sir Thomas Wyatt mastered as adviser and arduously practiced to achieve the same with his poetry—in order to secure and maintain favor with Henry VIII, and more so, among his court friends.

From Sir Thomas Wyatt has been gained a body of poetic literature that, altogether, shows the critical development of a pioneering writer at the forefront of a new

literary period, times that the humanist Erasmus defined as equally pressing and praising. Accordingly, Wyatt's poetry presses and praises in new forms and metrical innovation. His verse was written in a century when English life and literature would undergo great change throughout the period, when, at the start of the century and with him, there began a gradual and significant break from the medieval past. Sir Thomas Wyatt helped to set in motion this important severance with his that closely identifies the significant early modern cultural and literary split. He introduced a new kind of poetry whose organic rhythm and form contained a preference for five stresses and with connected ideas that were promoted by varying line length of syllables and careful word choices, among the application of other new and variant poetics through his transmissions, revisions and innovations of meter and style.

Even if Wyatt lacked a poetic career as other modern poets who have no other business and occupation and could therefore devote their time exclusively to cultivating their gift and literary talents, Wyatt's poetics bear many signs of having been the products of hours of enforced leisure such as fell to the lot of all sixteenth-century servants from the king's close advisers down to Shakespeare's time (Mason 1). Wyatt left a stamp of personal empowerment and modern improvement marked on his poetry as his friend Surrey, other contemporaries, and descendant writers found and admired. In Wyatt there was the poet who was in the poem and the one who remained outside, the poet making and moderating that new posture in life that he encouraged his friends to seek, that critical adjustment between traditional allegiances and modern demands in the emerging renaissance. Wyatt was a pioneer; his poetry is emblematic of the transition

from the Medieval to the Early Modern. From all his continental translations he took over the general framework and order of ideals from the original. He recast foreign idiom into English idiom. He brought the classical into his relevance. He drew on his textual sources critically and rehandled them in a manner similar to Eliot's creative rehandling of Laforgue and Theophile Gautier (Mason *Humanism* 185-86). And his arduous poetic practice led to originals that were either, or all of them, mask, persona, and sharp confrontation and momentary drama for the means of finding and creating himself and turning moral commonplaces into vital and haunting poetry. His career was interesting, dynamic, directed and purposeful and his best songs, sonnets, epigrams and lyrics reflected the same.

Above everything, Wyatt's poetics celebrate that significant break between Chaucer and Shakespeare by forms he introduced and his metrical innovations that helped England to begin its own renaissance in art and life reflecting "truly human" thought.

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Appendix A

One of Wyatt's unpublished poems from the Blage MS; the sonnet is pioneered in mostly iambic tetrameter but exemplifies his varied meter and stress:

Be besltred wordes I am borne in hand,
As whoo saith, byddyn I shuld obbey.
Ye may thret twys, er ons ye maye
Prevayle by poure to vnderband,
That I shuld yeld and nat withstand.
Youre wordes doo well, your wittes bewraye
Wenyng to bere so great a Swaye,
To wene my will when you commaunde.
The ffre ye fforce by fferre,
To seke obedyens of the thrall.
Youre thretenyng wordes of poer but small
Ys wasted wynd to vse them here;
For lyke aquytaunce of lyke scathe
Ys my noo force of your no faith.

(“No.VII” in Muir 1961, 9)

Appendix B

Wyatt's best-known sonnet; it appears as the seventh poem in the poet's personal manuscript, the Egerton. The poem was never published by Tottel or anyone else during the sixteenth century. It is an adaptation of Petrarch's "Rima 190". However the poem is a clear reference to Anne Boleyn, in whom Henry VIII became interested in 1526; except for Berdan (472) and Crewe (36), Henrician scholars and Wyattian critics agree the poem refers to personal circumstances that culminated in Henry marrying Boleyn in 1533, who allegedly, had been Wyatt's lover earlier (Chambers 132; Baldi 22; Thompson *Sir Thomas Wyatt* 23; Fox 260; Greenblatt 149; Foley 99; Szalay 70, and others). In 1532 Wyatt was among the courtiers who accompanied the king and Anne Boleyn to Calais for a meeting with Francis I.

WHO SO list to hount, I knowe where is an hynde,
But as for me, helas, I may no more:
The vayne travail hath weried me so sore.
I ame of them that farthest commeth behinde;
Yet may I by no meanes my weried mynde
Drawe from the Diere: but as she fleeth afore,
Faynting I folowe. I leve of therefore,
Sins in a nett I seke to hold the wynde.
Who list her hount, I put him owte of dowbte,
As well as I may spend his tyme in vain:
And, graven with Diamonds, in letters plain
There is written her faier neck rounde abowte:
Noli me tangere, for Cesars I ame;
And wylde for to hold, though I seme tame.
(“No. VII” in Muir 1949, 7)

Appendix C

Surreys' translation of poem 140 from Petrarch's *Rime sparse* (scattered rhymes) with comparison to Wyatt's translation of the same original, p. 34:

LOue that liueth, and reigneth in my thought,
That bilt his feat within my captiue brest,
Clad in the armes, wherein with me he fought,
Of in my face he doth his banner rest.
She, that me taught to loue, and suffer payne,
My doutfull hope, and eke my hote desire,
With shamefast cloke to shadowe and refraine,
Her smilyng grace conuerteth straight to yre.
And cowarde Loue then to the hart apace
Taketh his flight, whereas he lurkes, and plaines
His purpose lost, and dare not shewe his face.
For my lordes gilt thus faultlesse byde I paynes.
Yet from my lorde shall not my foote remoue,
Swete is his death, that takes his end by loue.

(“Complaint of a louer rebuked” in *Tottel's Miscellany*, Arber 8)