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ROOMS OF INVENTION:
THE PRISON POEMS OF SIR THOMAS WYATT
AND HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY

By

REGINA ANN MASIELLO

A dissertation submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Literatures in English

Written under the direction of

Ann Baynes Coiro

And approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

October 2019

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Rooms of Invention: The Prison Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, the

Earl of Surrey

By REGINA ANN MASIELLO

Dissertation Director:

Ann Baynes Coiro

This dissertation argues that Sir Thomas Wyatt's and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey's prison poems can be understood in a myriad of ways: as articulations of deep and abiding political and personal anxieties; as formal (sometimes mimetic) expressions of the suffocating limitations of incarceration; or as self-conscious continuations of prison poems (and of the profound prison tradition) which came before. But most importantly, these poems must be read as political performances, bids at self-representation, performances whose success or failure depended on the courtly audiences that consumed them. Both Wyatt and Surrey mobilized the humanist rhetorical traditions they learned as schoolboys to craft lines designed to garner the attention of influential members at court (maybe even Henry VIII himself). If the poems could not soften the heart of Henry VIII, they might, at the very least, serve to soften the hearts of the courtly members of their social circles. Their words, their lines, their pauses and repetitions, all represented well-crafted attempts to garner attention, to procure an audience, and to perform the prison and their virtuous behavior despite their troubles. *Rooms of Invention* maintains that although Wyatt's and Surrey's prison poems can be understood through multiple lenses, these

poems must first be read as cultural and political performances composed to move the monarchical and courtly audiences that consumed them. While the first two chapters of this study focus on Surrey's and Wyatt's poems as they might have appeared (or as they sometimes appeared) in manuscript to their coterie readers, the third chapter focuses on what happened when Richard Tottel's 1557 print miscellany *Songes and Sonettes* captured those poems in print. When *Tottel's Miscellany* published both Wyatt's and Surrey's prison poems, the landmark publication revealed not only the poems of Wyatt and Surrey to a more general readership, but also the coterie community that had previously been allowed to read, revise, and re-circulate the poems in a privileged privacy. In other words, Tottel took Wyatt's and Surrey's performances public. Richard Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes* guided the way later poets, like Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618), John Donne (1572-1631), Richard Lovelace (1618-1657), and even Queen Elizabeth would imagine the poetic possibilities of incarceration.

Acknowledgements

This project would never have come to fruition without the support of my committee chair, Ann Baynes Coiro. Her patience and generous spirit made the completion of this dissertation possible. Jacqueline Miller and Ronald Levao have also shown great patience over many years, and Alastair Bellany offered kind advice at just the right time.

I am grateful for the support of the English Graduate Program at Rutgers. Courtney Borack's indefatigable smile often made it easier to get on with it, and Cheryl Robinson made me promise I would finish. The promise I made to her that day urged me on when I was ready to give up. She was, and will always be, an inspiration.

My colleagues in the Writing Program – Lynda Dexheimer, Brendon Votipka, Michael Goeller, Alessandra Sperling, and Katie Sillitti – offered constant encouragement as I worked to finish this project. Kurt Spellmeyer gave me the most significant gift of all: time and space to read, think, and write.

My parents have borne the greatest brunt of this project, offering years of emotional support, days of babysitting, and hours of careful copyediting. I certainly would not have completed this project if it were not for them.

Most of all, I want to thank David D'Elia, who showed me what I could accomplish when I had a partner who valued my work. He knew I would finish this one day, even when I didn't think so. His faith in me taught me to have faith in myself.

I dedicate this dissertation to my sons, John and Matthew, because it is important to finish what you started.

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Introduction

In 1546, Henry Howard, the young Earl of Surrey, stood trial for treason. The evidence against Surrey was recorded by Thomas Wrothesley, and can be found in the *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-47*:

18. [Memoranda]

“Sir Henry Knivetes deathe,

“My lord of S. dissembling.

“his holynes.

“Clere.

“Powell.

“Fulmerston.

“Doctor Buttes and the matter of Mr. Denny.

“Mr. Paget.

“Hunston. That Mr. P. shuld be chauncellour of Inglande. 400 mks. Every busshope.

“Hussey. A paket of l’res to the Duke.

“My lord of Surrey’s pryde and his gowne of gold. Departure of the Kinges apparel.

“The Dukes wille.

“Winchestre. St. Mary Overeys.

“Riding wt many men in the streetes.

“They will let me aloom as long as my father lives, and after, I shall do well ynough.

“Things in comen. Paget. Hertf. Admyral. Denny.

“To Sir Nicholas Poinctz ecc. Exclamacion against Lunden.”¹

The evidence against Surrey, listed in the December 15 entry above, consisted largely of testimonies about his nature from people like “Powell,” “Fulmerston,” or “Paget. Hertf. Admyral. Denny.” Surrey’s “pryde and his gown of gold” were also considered evidence, but the bulk of the proceedings memorialized in the *Letters and Papers* were based on tales of Surrey’s impulsive temper, a narrative constructed by Surrey’s powerful

¹ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-47*. Eds. James Gairdner and R.H. Brodie. vol 21.ii.555.18 (London: The Hereford Times, 1910), 288-9.

enemies at court. That narrative was of course bolstered by Surrey's real tendency to act out, and in 1546, when his life hung in the balance, that depiction was given textual credence when one of his now famous prison poems, "London, hast thou accused me," listed as "Exclamacion against Lundo[n]" in the last line of the "Memoranda" above, was presented as evidence against him.

The poem, written three years prior to his trial when Surrey had been imprisoned in the Fleet for damaging London property and for terrorizing prostitutes during Lent, entered the courtroom in manuscript. It had not appeared in print, and yet its readership had been wide enough that the document could be readily produced and could serve as evidence against one of the most established aristocrats in all of England. The courtly coterie that read, altered, and redistributed texts had provided evidence in Surrey's case; the satire, which had only circulated in manuscript, would add to the testimonies that decried Surrey's haughtiness and presumption to power. He would be found guilty and executed, and his poem that had only circulated amongst his courtly coterie of readers, had played a role in the affair.

This dissertation originates in this telling moment during Surrey's trial when the intersection of sixteenth-century prison poems, the courtly readership who understood those poems in context, and the web of power into which those poems had the potential to fall is demonstrated in a dramatic fashion. I argue that Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542), a statesman, courtier, and prison poet, was keenly aware of this dangerous intersection, and that in response he crafted a persona that consisted of a persistent vagueness, a lyric voice that communicated much through its formal attributes. Later English poets who found themselves threatened by the dangers of prison, collaborative readership, and

monarchical power would copy this habit. Wyatt captured his carceral plight and performed the prison with such dexterity that prisoners who followed would imitate his diction and formal play. For Wyatt and other prison poets, the prison was not necessarily significant as a place of composition, but the plight of the prisoner was a recognizable pose they could assume and exploit in their self-representation at court.

The notion that Wyatt was keenly aware of how he appeared to the nobility who often dictated the course of his life's work certainly isn't new; in the game of self-fashioning, Wyatt has been "set off from his contemporaries . . . because in this aspect of a cultural competition he proved himself a superior performer."² But the performative value of the plight of the prisoner has been largely ignored, and perhaps even more importantly, the role of the coterie readership as the audience consuming that prison performance and the value of that consumption for the prisoner has also been largely ignored. That poems were circulated, understood or misunderstood, altered and re-circulated is well known; the degree to which the prison poem weathered those vicissitudes and to what effect, is less known. The presentation of one of Surrey's manuscript prison poems at his trial for treason suggests that performance of the prison, and the audience receiving that performance, could influence decisions about matters of life and death.

Perhaps the notion that Wyatt was a superior performer is accurate, for his poems never earned him execution. Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey (1517-1547) was, I will argue, Wyatt's most adept coterie reader and styled his own prison voice after the persona Wyatt had crafted only a few years before him. His performance was apparently

² Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1980), 120.

less virtuosic though, as his prison persona ultimately helped end his life. This suggestion seems to push against commonly held, almost clichéd wisdom about the two poets; for literally centuries, Wyatt has been styled the less regular, rougher of the two poets, while Surrey has been called the steadier, finer, smoother of the two. Literary history has long determined that Surrey perfected the forms that Wyatt attempted and clumsily executed. But a study of their prison poetry suggests something different – Wyatt’s aesthetic, or his supposed vagueness and clumsiness, created a plausible deniability for the poet, one that put the onus of attributing meaning on the readers who would ultimately circulate and understand his poems. Wyatt’s dramatic vagueness was not clumsiness, and Surrey’s precision, so often lauded, left little for the coterie to imagine. His precision sealed his fate.

My dissertation argues that Wyatt’s and Surrey’s prison poems can be understood in a myriad of ways: as articulations of deep and abiding political and personal anxieties; as formal (sometimes mimetic) expressions of the suffocating limitations of incarceration; or as self-conscious continuations of prison poems (and of the profound prison tradition) which came before. But most importantly, these poems must be read as political performances, bids at self-representation, performances whose outcomes depended on the courtly audiences that consumed them. And both Wyatt and Surrey employed the scholastic and humanist traditions they learned as boys to craft lines that would become canonical models for others to follow. The performance of the prison shaped not only their lines, but also the lines of poets for years to come.

I. Early Modern Prisons, Readers, and Writers

When Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* begins, it is Christmas Eve, and the reader is told that London's fog comes "pouring in at every chink and keyhole" and that the "cloud" adorning the city is "drooping down, obscuring everything." The houses are "phantoms," and even the candlelight in the windows, which ought to be an image of comfort and warmth amidst gloom and gray, appears "like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air."³ It is in this context that those seeking donations for the poor approach Ebenezer Scrooge. Despite the fact that it is Christmas, Scrooge, when confronted with the realities of London's poor and hungry, famously asks: "Are there no prisons?"⁴ Scrooge has yet to undergo his transformation from a selfish misanthrope to an enthusiastic participant in life, and his disgust towards those who populate the prisons is as palpable as the thick London air. The prison, as an institution, lives in the minds of twentieth- and twenty-first century readers coated in the dense fog of Dickensian description; it is in the voice of an unchanged Ebenezer Scrooge that we imagine its stories. Dickens, and many other nineteenth-century novelists, shaped the image of the prison in readers' imaginations, and that image has prevailed for almost two centuries.⁵ But this Dickensian image does not serve as a useful lens for sixteenth-century literature.

From the nineteenth century on, the prison, as it is described in most historical and social scholarship written after 1970, was understood as a site of systematized

³ Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings* (London: Penguin, 2003), 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵ For more on the effects of literary representations of prisons on the public imagination, see: John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in 18th Century England* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1987).

observation and humiliation.⁶ This version of the prison is influenced by Michel Foucault's analysis of the "new age of penal justice," where "punishment . . . gradually ceased to be a spectacle" because beheadings, stocks, and hangings were no longer used as a means of punishment.⁷ In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault charts the "hidden" process whereby punishment is enacted in an "enclosed, segmented space" where "the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded."⁸ While his vision of the prison as a routinized and organized system of observation offers some insight into the prison as an institution in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is not the prison with which this dissertation is concerned. Foucault was not describing Dickensian prisons veiled in the dense fog of the novels, and he was not thinking of the Early Modern prison. Neither the Dickensian descriptions nor the Foucaultian models are helpful in understanding the confinements of Sir Thomas Wyatt or Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey.

Imprisonment, as it existed in sixteenth-century England, was more loosely understood as "simply secured places where those accused of crimes could be held indefinitely while awaiting trial or release."⁹ The kind of security and the conditions in which the prisoners lived varied a great deal: "prisoners could be kept in conditions ranging from bare cells to richly appointed apartments."¹⁰ Prison records from the period

⁶ For a discussion of the historiography of prisons, see: Peter Spierenberg, *The Prison Experience: Disciplinary Institutions and Their Inmates in Early Modern Europe* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991) 1-11.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), 8-9. I quote the 1995 translation, but Foucault's famous study originally appeared in 1975.

⁸ *Ibid*, 197.

⁹ Molly Murray, "Measured Sentences: Forming Literature in the Early Modern Prison," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72.2 (2009): 147-67.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 151.

are scarce.¹¹ The sixteenth-century prison was not systematized, was not standardized, and was not institutionalized. Critical material on the early modern English prison does not compare to the copious research dedicated to the study of penal institutions of the nineteenth century and beyond.¹² A governmental body did not always oversee the early modern prison; in many instances there are no public records. Records, if they were kept, were subject to the vicissitudes of all written documents of the period: easily altered, often lost, and frequently destroyed.

The historical and critical material that does exist demonstrates just how variable and inconsistent penal practices were during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

How one experienced imprisonment depended in large part on one's social station:

The newcomer chose his 'Side' according to what he could afford, for prisoners were expected to pay for their accommodation. The gaoler's profession . . . was often likened to that of an innkeeper . . . he had to recover his running costs and make what profit he could from fees charged for board and lodging, lights, services and privileges – such as the right to take the air on the roof of the prison, or to walk in the garden . . . At the appropriate price the gaoler provided a lodging as well-appointed as a good London inn, or as wretched as a slum. A social distinction was made between the so-called 'Common Gaol' and that part of the building reserved for the apartments of the well-to-do.¹³

¹¹ Established by James I, The Stuart Royal Commission on Fees collected quite a bit of information on English prisons, but these records really expanded under Charles I. These records offer little insight into early sixteenth-century prisons. For more on the Commission, see: G.E. Alymer, "Charles I's Commission on Fees, 1627-1640," *Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research* 31(1957): 58-67.

¹² For more on the lack of critical material on the Early Modern English prison, see Sean McConville, *A History of English Prison Administration: Vol I 1750-1877* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), xii, where he claims that "the English penal histories so far written have been poorly stocked with material." McConville claims this lack is due not only to a dearth of critical material on which to base such studies, but on other factors such as religious beliefs or political attitudes (some looking to urge prison reform). Clifford Dobb in "London's Prisons," in "Shakespeare in His Own Age." *Shakespeare Survey* 17 (1964), held the same position: "it soon appears difficult to learn much about the history of English prisons at any period before the eighteenth-century" (88). For a brief history of the early modern English prison, see pages 87 to 102.

¹³ E.D Pendry, *Elizabethan Prisons and Prison Scenes, Volume I* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1974), 7-8.

This portrait of the early modern prison is compelling for many reasons, not least of which is the fact that it throws the miserable realities of poverty in a class-based culture into high relief. The poorest members of society inhabited prisons best understood as “slums;” the prisons mirrored the economic and social structures of the time. Indeed the “slums” the poor were made to endure were wretched places: “conditions varied widely between prisons, within prisons, and even from prisoner to prisoner. As in other spheres of official administration, uniformity, efficiency and impartiality between persons or social classes were notably lacking.”¹⁴ In one of the several Elizabethan prisons called The Counters, “The Hole,” the lowest ward reserved for the poorest inmates and often their families, was just this kind of slum. Conditions were not only uncomfortable, but also unhealthy. According to contemporary accounts, “The Hole” smelled from feces, and frequently prisoners died while living there (presumably from having contracted some disease during their stay).¹⁵ Family members imprisoned along with them would mourn the bodies of dead prisoners, and so the stink of human waste and decay was accompanied by the sound of human suffering.¹⁶ For the poorest criminals in Early Modern England, incarceration was a dirty, disease-ridden affair.

¹⁴ Dobb, 93.

¹⁵ In his *A History of English Prison Administration: Vol I 1750-1877*, McConville recounts a grim story about the Counters: “William Fennor, who had been imprisoned in the Counters, left a bitter account of his squeezing and grasping gaolers. They went so far, he said, as to take fees from the dead and scarce let the coffin go out of the gates before his friends had paid his fees” (10, footnote 45).

¹⁶ A portrait such as this begs for some critical treatment; surely, one might conjecture, these conditions produced compelling accounts of hardship and scholars have attended to those accounts with due consideration. But that critical project does not yet exist, for the poverty that led to the discomfort and ill health of the poorest prisoners was usually accompanied (if not produced) by a lack of education, and, often enough, total illiteracy. Had these prisoners been taught to read and write, their claustrophobic conditions might have translated into poetic lines wrought with pain. What has survived comes in the form of anonymous scratchings on walls and windows, or appears in commonplace books. But many prisoners probably couldn’t have composed a line, and the pain of their conditions (so seemingly apt for poetry) died along with them, never to be studied or celebrated. And indeed, the current study does not venture into this unknown, undocumented, almost certainly unpleasant territory.

For aristocratic prisoners incarceration could look more like our modern sense of house arrest. Their carceral experiences were markedly different from those of poor vagrants of the period, and from twentieth- and twenty-first-century prisoners as well. Rather than thinking of Wyatt's and Surrey's incarcerations as gruesome affairs filled with hardship and torture, it is more appropriate to consider their isolation along a spectrum of court-imposed separations. Certainly some aristocratic prisoners suffered, but that suffering was often mitigated by wealth, title, and influence at court. While the court could execute certain prisoners at will, as Henry did to Anne Boleyn in 1536 and to Surrey in 1547, the court could also imprison or exile. And imprisonment could consist of either horrendous conditions or rather comfortable ones (as in the case of Sir Walter Raleigh's luxurious appointments in the Tower – where he had a laboratory, a library, and plenty of room for his family).¹⁷ Surrey's early imprisonments were of a more comfortable kind, and Wyatt was never kept in a slum.

Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey were both incarcerated, but both were confined in edifices appropriate to their rank. Wyatt was confined to the Tower of London on more than one occasion, and because he was a man of the court he was housed comfortably. Surrey was confined in Windsor Castle where he was allowed to wander the grounds and had a large retinue waiting on his needs. Neither one experienced anything like “the Hole” at the Counters; their social rank dictated a different kind of treatment. While in many of their poems Wyatt's and Surrey's speakers used the word “prison” to describe the state of their incarceration, their prisons were not the stuff of twenty-first-century readers' imaginations. Their incarcerations were nothing like the

¹⁷ Murray, 152.

experiences of the poor prisoner who could not afford to pay for a day's food.¹⁸ And their imprisonments were not the punishment they might represent now: "In very few cases are there any signs that a term of imprisonment was regarded as a punishment as in later times. Prisons were thought of as places where persons were kept in safe custody . . . the difficulty of attending to one's affairs from prison . . . constituted the punishment."¹⁹ For both of these men, the power of the prison was its ability to isolate active men of the court from their social and political milieu. It is important that their punishments be understood on a spectrum of possible court-imposed miseries.

For Wyatt and Surrey, their punishment was not in the degradation of their living conditions. Their punishment was the enforced leisure and seclusion that incarceration imposed. While the word "leisure" might seem to imply a period of rest, for early modern courtiers an enforced "leisure," or otium, implied a social death. Imprisonment possibly provoked a deep and abiding anxiety in both of these courtiers because it required a retirement from public life – time away from the Henrician court and away from the center of power. So while neither Wyatt nor Surrey spent their days amidst the smell of feces and urine, both suffered a frightening and potentially dangerous isolation from the active life of the court. The kind of anxiety both poets experienced might be akin to the struggle Edmund Spenser faced when he was sent to Ireland in 1580. When discussing Spenser's experience in Ireland, John Breen pays special attention to the "ambivalent attitudes and allegiances that arise from [Spenser's] position as a displaced courtier

¹⁸ See Dobb, 98, for a discussion of the various sources of charity that provided food for poor prisoners.

¹⁹ Dobb, 92. Spierenberg also claims that the prison (as an architectural edifice) was not meant as a punishment in itself: "these places were not primarily meant for punishment" (8).

poet.”²⁰ Spenser’s exile implied that he wielded enough power to anger a monarch; such tacit acknowledgment made him both a threat and an outcast. His “ambivalence” was a product of recognizing both his political position and power, and the very real danger that political power engendered. The displacement of the courtier, his removal from the center of political affairs, and his inability to access the monarch, are helpful ways of thinking about the kind of separation both Surrey and Wyatt faced when Henry put them in prison. Social isolation or courtly “displacement” was an imposed correction – a correction that at once indicated a political status worthy of the King’s attention and a status that could also lead to sudden execution. In many respects, the gentleman’s prison in the sixteenth century operated as a source of punishment by enacting a sentence quite opposed to the repressive observation that Foucault argues the nineteenth-century prison perfected. While the panopticon afforded almost constant observation, for Wyatt and Surrey the agony of being locked up was that absolutely no one was watching.

Since Surrey and Wyatt didn’t experience the prisons imagined in Dickens, or the slums of *The Counters*, it is vital to know how they did experience their court-imposed isolations. Aristocratic incarceration meant separation from court and a kind of relative seclusion; this relative seclusion is what Wyatt and Surrey dramatically allude to and exploit in their canonical lyrics. Prior to their incarcerations, both Wyatt’s and Surrey’s lives were led largely in public and in the company of others. Their highly social lives changed as soon as their King imprisoned them. The impact of the sudden (relative) privacy they experienced might best be understood through the work of Lena Cowen Orlin. Orlin’s study of England’s construction boom from 1570 to 1640 is useful for

²⁰ John Breen, “Edmund Spenser’s Exile and the Politics and Poetics of Pastoral,” *Cahiers Elisabethains* 53(1998): 29.

understanding what preceded the “Great Rebuilding.” The construction boom that started in 1570 (a rebuilding inspired, in part, by the sheer quantity of materials acquired from the stripping of the monasteries) saw architectural shifts such as the addition “of more household spaces, each with specialized functions,” which meant that “dramatic changes in domestic architecture reshaped private life.”²¹ But before this revolution in household design (that is, before 1570) “privacy was not an object of the architecture of the period” and “early moderns had . . . little domestic experience” of privacy. Orlin is pointing to men like Wyatt and Surrey, whose homes consisted of shared and public spaces.²² Even bed chambers were, by our modern (and perhaps more modest) standards, shared: “the highest degree of somnolent and sexual seclusion in the early modern household expressed itself solely and by our lights inefficiently through the drawing of bed curtains.”²³ During seemingly private sexual encounters, one might be sharing a room with servants or other members of the family. In terms of the ways in which household spaces were conceived, distributed, and occupied, daily life for both Wyatt and Surrey was like life for all early moderns: lived largely in the company of others. Incarceration, and the experience of living in the company of significantly fewer people, while distinctly modern and familiar to twenty-first century readers, would have been unfamiliar for both poets.

Perhaps more importantly, the sheer oddity of seclusion and enforced privacy would have had significant dramatic capital for lyric poets looking to garner the sympathy, the admiration, or the attention of a courtly audience. Not only would the

²¹ Lena Cowen Orlin, *Elizabethan Households: An Anthology* (Seattle: Washington UP, 1995), 3 and 5.

²² Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), 185.

²³ Orlin, *Private Matters*, 185.

courtier poets have seen the seclusions as odd and unfamiliar, but their coterie readers would have seen that kind of isolation as strange and potentially troubling too. The courtly coterie, familiar with what was happening to the famous courtiers as the events unfolded, would have read the poems through a well-informed lens, and would have seen the dramatic rendering of the poets' isolations as all the more infused with meaning. If we are to see poetry of the period as "socially contingent," and almost always composed in response to "circumstances,"²⁴ and if "imprisonment" was just one such occasion that inspired the lyric voice, then Wyatt and Surrey traded in the currency of "aloneness," an aloneness their informed and sensitive readers would have apprehended with gravity. Despite the fact that neither men were truly "alone" when imprisoned, the relative seclusion of their experiences was dramatized for the sake of the coterie digesting their poems. The anxiety or torment the isolation of the prison seems to engender in Wyatt's and Surrey's speakers is no doubt exaggerated to play on the minds of the coterie readers familiar with their dramatic settings and with the actual events happening at court.

And of course, the relative isolation of imprisonment (and its attendant unfamiliarity and potential anxiety) should not necessarily be understood as detrimental to either courtier. Anxiety can be productive, and isolation can lead to fruitful reflection. Drawing on Alice Friedman's sense that "spaces and boundaries exert their own influences on the patterns of behavior enacted within them,"²⁵ Orlin studies the eventual development of private domestic spaces in early modern households (the transition from long houses, where livestock and whole families shared a large space, segregated only by some insignificant attempt at separation, to homes with second floors and private bed

²⁴ Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric*. (Ithaca, Cornell UP, 1995), 3.

²⁵ Alice Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and Willoughby Family* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1989), 7.

chambers), and she identifies the study (or personal library) as a particularly important room in the development of a sense of “privacy”: “the study not only inaugurated the experience of private behavior but also nourished the apprehension of individual selfhood.”²⁶ The study was designed to hold and potentially hide important documents, and was often locked. Access to the study was limited, and sometimes only the householder could enter. This kind of seclusion, this kind of privacy, in Orlin’s mind, had everything to do with the development of subjectivity, of self-hood, and was particularly conducive to mental activity. The physical space, in Orlin’s formulation, fostered mental activity, and even fostered the development of the concept of the mental: “the very idea of the mental was delivered by the midwifery of the material, by the accidental sensory experience of isolation afforded by four walls, a door, a lock and a key.”²⁷ Though Orlin is discussing the study, she might well have been describing the Early Modern aristocratic prison.

While Wyatt and Surrey may have had several chambers in which to spend their time, they inhabited limited space, sometimes sealed by a locked door (with some allowed leisure to walk, on certain occasions). And while Wyatt and Surrey would have had servants attending to their needs (and would therefore not have been alone in any real sense), they would have been living a more sequestered kind of life, a more relative seclusion, without access to court functions, to social events, or to immediate political developments. Orlin’s argument about how material conditions produce particular cognitive or intellectual activities that for Wyatt and Surrey the material conditions of

²⁶ Orlin, *Private Matters*, 188.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 188.

relative seclusion produced a kind of cognitive reality that allowed space and time for artistic creation and expression.

The notion that these periods of relative isolation led to creative production is not unusual or new. Renaissance conceptions of authorship were certainly shifting during this period, and courtiers certainly did not yet call themselves poets. Both Wyatt and Surrey were statesmen travelling into Europe on behalf of the king. Their vocation was that of the humanist man of the court. But being imprisoned gave such men the time and leisure to write, and rather than having to own their poems as the product of one who crafts poetry as a primary occupation, they could instead claim their poetic exploits were also a product of their statesmanship: they wrote because their importance to the crown dictated they have enforced leisure, and rather than do nothing with their time, they wrote stoically about their punishments and demonstrated their allegiance even in the face of being censured.

And just as early modern notions of authorship were shifting, early modern readership was shifting and developing. The poems of imprisoned courtiers probably moved through groups of readers at court, readers with various perspectives and political loyalties. To some extent this circulation was extremely private, and in other ways it was dangerously public. The coterie circulation of texts in the English Renaissance is well known.²⁸ The private nature of the poems (or at least the very limited circulation they would enjoy) was a material reality of poetic production during the period. For poets like Wyatt and Surrey, verses were recorded in diaries and in family or courtly commonplace books not prepared for publication. Long before men and women of the courts would

²⁸ This is largely due to Marotti's landmark work on the subject: *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric*, but he first addressed coterie culture in his earlier book *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: Wisconsin UP, 1986).

claim Poet as a vocation, writing for men like Wyatt and Surrey was (or had to appear to be) a private pass-time or hobby. The limited coterie circulation of the period makes the poems and what I will call their “bids for attention” doubly ironic: their prison poems were written during periods of relative seclusion and enforced separation during a time when members of the court only wrote as a hobby anyway (for private consumption, not for public view), and did so with the required appearance of artlessness that courtiers would become famous for exemplifying.²⁹ Yet their prison writings represent a profound attempt at connection with others – as performances designed to engender pity or understanding or mercy. In “The flaming sighs,” Wyatt’s speaker “sits alone,” but also invites an audience: “come he to me.” In the same poem Wyatt’s speaker thinks it “good” that his imprisoned state “should now appear” to his dramatic audience. Yet the circulation of these poems was unpredictable and potentially volatile – “appearing” before a readership was not a straightforward affair. Their writing was shared only with the physical passing of manuscripts from one hand to another. And while that passing was the very thing for which the poems themselves beg, that passing also had to be guarded (or even feared), for the courtly members who might pass the manuscripts might be friend or foe. A good deal of the complexity of these poems lies in their deeply troubled status: intensely private texts that were only powerful if consumed by a particular audience that they could not openly seek. The publication of *Tottel’s Miscellany* in 1557 would change this landscape forever by reifying their poems, by establishing an oeuvre for both poets, and by suggesting that to be a Poet was not only an

²⁹ The “appearance of artlessness” would become widely known as “sprezzatura” when Hoby translated into English and published Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* in 1561.

occupation, but an occupation and title worth owning. But while Wyatt and Surrey wrote from their rooms in Windsor or the Tower, their texts occupied a tenuous status.

Once one of their poems gained an actual readership, once the passing of their prison poems enabled the performance both Wyatt and Surrey sought, there was simply no guarantee that Wyatt's and Surrey's words would be read in precisely the way they were first recorded. Coterie transmission meant that friends, enemies, or mere bystanders might borrow a poem from another's commonplace book or hear a poem read aloud, copy that poem, and then allow an acquaintance to recopy the transcription soon (or long) after. At each moment of delivery, reception, and transcription, the poem was subject to change. Punctuation might shift depending on who had read the poem aloud, or on how the listener had perceived the sense of a line in a given moment (which might have been different from how the line was intended to sound or what it was intended to mean). Punctuation might have been omitted altogether for the sake of efficiency in recording. Poems were always transforming as they moved from one diary or commonplace book to another. Poems could change subtly (intentionally or unintentionally), or poems could change dramatically (again, intentionally or unintentionally). Authorship may or may not have been assigned, and the assignment of an author to any given poem may or may not have been accurate. Coterie circulation, by definition, afforded an author very little control over his or her own work.³⁰ For the prison poets, this circulation was particularly problematic.

³⁰ I use the term "author" with reservations, knowing full well that "authorship" in sixteenth-century England was a vexed and exclusionary title. For more on the ways in which the category of "authorship" excluded on the basis of class and gender, see: Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier, eds. *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989); Jacqueline Miller, *Poetic License: Authority and Authorship in Medieval and Renaissance Contexts* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986); *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* ed., Margaret Hannay (Ohio: Kent State UP, 1985); Michel Foucault, "What is an

While the membership of the coterie was limited to a certain social sphere (which allowed the coterie poet to limit his or her readership to a privileged few) texts were always shifting within that reading (and writing) group. In his article “Reading Wyatt for the Style,” Jeff Dolven likens this textual exchange to a kind of garment swap and warns against assigning too much weight to the concept of authorship: “Too strong a conception of authorship . . . would have spoiled this traffic, and here the analogy of clothing – the poem as a new coat – is especially handy.”³¹ Members of a coterie could borrow and “try on” a new poem as it was passed from person to person, measuring the newest modulation on an old convention as he or she “wore” the poem around a bit.

The coterie’s ability to play with poems as they circulated was not only because of the nature of readerly interpretation or error, but also because of shared understandings of literary convention. As a reading and writing community, the coterie possessed a shared knowledge of the courtly and literary conventions of their day. Indeed, both Wyatt and Surrey were products of the “new learning,” the humanist and heavily Erasmian approach to education that placed a premium on studying canonical authors and learning to imitate their forms and styles.³² They were both steeped in the circulation of convention. Wyatt was often busy translating Petrarch into English and often reworked old forms and old conventions to suit his needs. Surrey was practically obsessed with classical models and how they might move into the vernacular – he praised Wyatt for his ability to achieve this kind of project.

Author?” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977). For more on the shifting and collaborative nature of authorship in manuscript, coterie culture, see: Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995).

³¹ Jeff Dolven, “Reading Wyatt for the Style,” *Modern Philology* 105.1(2008), 77.

³² For a discussion of the importance of imitation in early modern English education, see: T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakspeare’s Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1944).

At Cambridge, the reading of Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* was required during the latter fifteenth century, and so many of the aristocratic tutors drawn from Cambridge and other peer institutions would have required their noble students to read that classic example of prison writing.³³ Coterie readers would have known of Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius (AD c.480-524), the Roman statesman who bemoaned his imprisonment by Emperor Theodoric in his famous *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, and whom Theodoric eventually had executed. *The Consolation* was translated from its original Latin by King Alfred in the ninth century, by Chaucer in the late fourteenth-century (*Boece* c1380), by John Walton in the fifteenth-century (c1410), and by Queen Elizabeth in the sixteenth. It was vastly popular, so much so that Derek Pearsall commented that "Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*" was "as much part of Chaucer's experience as experience itself"; the coterie readership would no doubt have recognized its postures.³⁴ In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, the Boethian narrator blames fortune for his incarceration, but Lady Philosophy comforts him in stages and is slowly able to console him.³⁵ The influence of this model of prison writing can be seen in other medieval texts, such as the *Lament of a Prisoner Against Fortune* (c. 1450).³⁶ Both consolation and complaint are at work in the anonymous *Lament*, where the prisoner actually debates with Fortune, whom he blames for all of his bad luck. In the end, he

³³ For a discussion of Boethius' texts in humanist education, and more particularly for a discussion of Queen Elizabeth's exposure to Boethius, see: John Morris Jackson and Harold Kaylor, "The Early Education of Queen Elizabeth I and Her Later Translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*," *Medieval and Early Modern English Studies* 10.2 (2002): 183-198.

³⁴ Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1977), 203.

³⁵ For more on the stages of the Boethian narrator's consolation see: Matthew D. Walz, "Stoicism as Anesthesia: Philosophy's 'Gentler Remedies' in Boethius's *Consolation*," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 51.4 (2011): 501-519; Elaine Scarry, "The Well-Rounded Sphere: The Metaphysical Structure of *The Consolation of Philosophy*," *Resisting Representation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984), 143-80.; Donald F. Duclow, "Perspective and Therapy in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 4 (1979): 334-43.

³⁶ For a discussion of the dating and possible authorship of this medieval poem, see: Richard Firth Green, "The Authorship of the *Lament of a Prisoner Against Fortune*," *Mediaevalia* 2 (1976): 101-109.

rejects fortune altogether and instead finds consolation by praying to Mary. Inspired by Chaucer's *Boece*, or by Chaucer's poem *Fortune*, and plainly based on Boethius's *Consolation*, the anonymous prisoner of the *Lament* begins with complaint and ultimately finds consolation. Both Wyatt and Surrey imitated these poles of consolation and complaint,³⁷ and then moved beyond them to embed the lived realities of their complicated social and political lives. The coterie, whose shared cultural knowledge could be counted on, would have recognized the medieval iterations renewed in Wyatt's and Surrey's prison poems, and would have had a nuanced appreciation for the newness of the work being done with familiar models.

Both Wyatt and Surrey moved in groups "where the fashion for poems in the same forms, with the same diction, and on the same topics ensured a throng of fellow travelers."³⁸ Wyatt and Surrey were major contributors to the kind of circulation their own poems would experience – a kind of circulation that was simultaneously predictable and unpredictable. Wyatt's and Surrey's contemporary coterie was predictable inasmuch as it was limited to a particular set of readers with shared cultural and contextual knowledge. Yet the coterie was thoroughly unpredictable in that it was impossible to know exactly what kinds of transformations might take place within a given poem.

Yet both Wyatt and Surrey were also innovators even as they replicated old conventions and gave the coterie the recognizable "fashion" they sought. They both imitated Cicero, Horace, Plutarch, and Boethius, but both were also adept at introducing

³⁷ In her article "Chaucerian Prisoners," Julia Boffey refers to the "genre of the prison complaint or consolation" (99). Boffey uses the conjunction "or," possibly indicating a belief that the two forms of prison poetry are mutually exclusive, which in medieval literature may well be the case. In Wyatt's case however, I identify both complaint and consolation simultaneously at work in his prison poems. See: Julia Boffey, "Chaucerian Prisoners," *Chaucer and Fifteenth-Century Poetry* (Exeter: Short Run Press, 1991), 84-99.

³⁸ Dolven, 66.

new postures and new elements to familiar forms. The forms they used were familiar; the newness of their poems always happened as imitations and adaptations of the old.³⁹ Much of their newness was their performance of the prison persona, a voice that combined old conventions with a new formal play that would change English lyric poetry forever. In the case of Surrey's and Wyatt's prison poems, the unpredictability of the coterie was to be expected, but it was also potentially life changing; if their prison poems (and their bids for attention or clemency) were received by the right (or wrong) readers, their lives might hang in the balance.

In her essay "Measured Sentences: Forming Literature in the Early Modern Prison," Molly Murray urges readers to see that "the early modern prison was a site of culture, one that ought to be considered alongside the court and the university as a place of significant textual, and literary, production."⁴⁰ I extend this argument by suggesting that the prison was not just one more site of cultural production ("alongside the court"), but that for courtier poets like Wyatt and Surrey, it was a site of literary production precisely because of its relationship to the court (and to the center of Henrician power). Poems were produced as performance pieces for consumption by a courtly readership to which the poets had little access besides the verses that might move from their relative seclusion to court (or which might shape courtly attitudes even after their eventual release). In other words, for men like Wyatt and Surrey the prison was a "significant

³⁹ See Donald L. Guss, where "for Wyatt, as for Spenser and Milton, imitation is a Renaissance mode of composition – a means of expressing authorized moral views through authorized rhetorical forms in an original poetic creation" (3). I don't agree with Guss on his notion that "authorized moral views" were the things being shared – quite the contrary. Poetry often communicates unique or even unpopular moral views, whether it is the author's intention or not. But Guss's sense that using recognizable rhetorical forms to express original thinking was a mode of composition in early modern poems is helpful. See: Donald L. Guss, "Wyatt's Petrarchism: An Instance of Creative Imitation in the Renaissance," *HLQ* 29.1 (1965): 1-15.

⁴⁰ Murray, 150.

place of literary production” not because it existed “alongside” the court, but precisely because it existed apart from the court. Its significance, as a place of literary production, rested in the fact that courtly prisoners were severed from the center of civic and social life, severed and cast away from the court that sustained them.

More importantly, the prison was a dramatic setting that was exploited by both Wyatt and Surrey for its cultural capital. Whether or not the poets wrote the poems while they were incarcerated is almost beside the point. Whether or not the prison (as they experienced it) was the site of actual composition, the prison held a kind of imaginative power the coterie would immediately grasp. *The Rooms of Invention* maintains that although Wyatt’s and Surrey’s prison poems can be understood through multiple lenses, these poems must first be read as cultural and political performances composed to move the monarchical and courtly audiences that consumed them. Both Wyatt and Surrey mobilized the humanist rhetorical traditions they learned as schoolboys to craft lines designed to garner the attention of influential members at court (maybe even Henry VIII himself). If the poems could not soften the heart of Henry VIII, they might, at the very least, serve to soften the hearts of the courtly members of their social circles. Their words, their lines, their pauses and repetitions, all represented well-crafted attempts to garner attention, to procure an audience, and to perform the prison and their virtuous behavior in the face of their torment.

II. Outline of Chapters

This dissertation begins with the Wyatt family mythology of imprisonment, one which started with Henry Wyatt's imprisonment in Scotland and which Sir Thomas Wyatt extended with his own trials and tribulations. Wyatt would have immediately seen his own relative seclusion as a dramatic setting, one that begged for poetic performance, and indeed in a letter he wrote to his newly married son in 1537, he described his times in prison for the purposes of counseling his child. Since his family's fortune had its roots in his father's ability to perform his loyalty to the future King Henry VII while locked in a jail cell, Thomas Wyatt's own performance of and from prison would have been a natural continuation of the tradition on which the entire Wyatt legacy rested.

The Wyatt family mythology offers valuable context for three of Sir Thomas Wyatt's prison poems: his little studied double sonnet "The flaming sighes that boil within my breast"; his often studied epigram "Lucks, my fair falcon"; and "Sighes are my food," an epigram which has received a fair amount of critical attention. The oft-cited metrical irregularity of "Sighes are my food" performs the sounds of the prison, which are recorded in its dactylic rhythms.⁴¹ Wyatt's family history, which is steeped in

⁴¹ For decades, the standard approach to Wyatt's metrical irregularities was to use them as evidence that Surrey was a superior poet because of his adherence to an iambic line. For an example of this kind of criticism, see: Elizabeth Deering Hanscom, "The Sonnet Forms of Wyatt and Surrey" *Modern Language Notes* 16.5(1901):137-140. Another approach to Wyatt's perceived "unmetricity" was to imagine that his poems that did not adhere to a regularized meter were merely "experiments" or "translations." This approach makes metrical deviation in Wyatt's poems into an accident rather than expression. For an example of this approach, see: E.K. Chambers, "Sir Thomas Wyatt" *Sir Thomas Wyatt and Some Collected Studies* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), 98-145. On page 122 Chambers claims that unmetrical pieces must be translation or adaptation, "roughly jotted down in whatever broken rhythms came readiest to hand." To some extent critical debates on the superiority of one poet over the other still rage on (though often times the debate continues despite critical disavowals of the topic). For a reading of *Tottel's Anthology* as the forerunner of these debates, see Jonathan Crewe, *Trials of Authorship: Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstruction from Wyatt to Shakespeare* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1990), where Tottel gave Surrey "prominent billing," and attempted to "assimilate all courtly lyrics and their makers to the

political imprisonments and the very real rewards those imprisonments could earn, gave Wyatt an informed perspective on his time in the tower, but it also demonstrated how deeply his family registered the danger of political separation. Alienation from the court and from the monarch is a theme Wyatt's family often discussed, invoked, and guarded against. Wyatt's speaker in the prison poems is a carefully crafted persona, one whose identity is pulled from literary convention and from a family mythology that depends in large part on the anxiety and political byproducts of imprisonment. Wyatt's use of the poetic line in these poems must be understood as a product not only of literary convention and family mythology, but also of dramatized carceral production. Its irregularities, and in many cases the ambiguity that has frustrated critical readers for centuries, can be understood as the formal dramatization of the prison itself.

Where Wyatt used what some might call "irregular" rhythms to record the real or imagined sounds and experiences of the tower in his lines, Surrey used an expressive regularity to capture his incarceration. Building on Donald Wesling's notion that metrical regularity can itself be expressive (and that seeking deviation is not the only purpose of metrical scansion), Chapter Two examines the expressive regularity of Surrey's "When Windsor walles" and "So Cruel Prison." Regularized metrical effects are paired with

Surrey *imago*" (50). George Puttenham, in his 1589 *The Arte of English Poesie* (Kent State UP, 1970), claims to have been unable to distinguish between Wyatt and Surrey at all: "Henry Earle of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyat, betweene whom I finde very little difference" (76). By the 1970s prevailing attitudes had shifted – Surrey was considered a boring representative of his time, while Wyatt's irregularities were being praised for their passion. See C.W. Jentoft's "Surrey's Five Elegies: Rhetoric, Structure, and the Poetry of Praise" in *PMLA* 91.1 (1976), where "Surrey's poetry has usually been given credit only as a useful contribution to the development of English prosody and then dismissed" (23). For a more recent and helpful summary of the critical debate on Wyatt versus Surrey, see: J. Christopher Warner, *The Making and Marketing of Tottel's Miscellany, 1557: Songs and Sonnets in the Summer of the Martyrs' Fires* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013). 2.

⁴² The collection famously allowed the public (or "the ordinary") to see that which was previously private (or elite). For more on what Wall calls a kind of "voyeurism," see: Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), 96-7. Also see: Seth Lerer, *Courtly Letters in the Age of Henry VIII: Literary Culture and the Arts of Deceit* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 202. David R. Carlson put this change succinctly: "Printing's interposition of itself

repetitive rhetorical structures (such as enumeration and anaphora) to create dependable cadences that simulate the dependable monotony of isolation and imprisonment. English humanists, drawing on Ciceronian concepts of rhetoric, believed that syntactical structures, when deployed by a skilled orator or poet, could evoke particular feelings. Surrey's lines use expressive regularity and repetitive rhetorical structures to create an emotive experience for the reader; the reader is forced by the lines to experience the monotony of Surrey's prisoner. Surrey's oft-celebrated metrical regularity can certainly be understood as the kind of carceral coherence Murray argues for, and Chapter Two aims to illuminate the ways in which the early modern prison inheres itself in the lines of Surrey's poems. These poems get beyond thematic concerns, and are formally expressive of the conditions under which they were supposedly produced. Through metrical coherence, these poems performed their relative seclusion for the monarchical and courtly audiences that would have consumed them. The first two chapters aim to explore how both metrical and formal coherence and incoherence are deeply expressive of the carceral setting, and how both can be mobilized with great dramatic effect.

The third chapter explores the issue of poetic consumption, both at the court and beyond. Who was reading these prison poems? In what forms, and why? Wyatt's and Surrey's poems were first read by members of their sphere (perhaps in the Egerton or Hill manuscripts, or at least copied from those collections), but their poems reached a broader public through Richard Tottel's print collection *Songes and Sonnettes* in 1557. Better known as *Tottel's Miscellany*, this collection is famous (or infamous) for the anonymous and seemingly heavy-handed editorial changes that emended the poems the book sought to collect and distribute. When Richard Tottel published his landmark collection of lyric

poems in 1557, the coterie nature of poetic circulation that had allowed Wyatt's and Surrey's poems to move from reader to reader changed. The poems of gentlemen, of courtiers, which had previously been available only to the courtly elite, were made public and became fixed in time.⁴² For centuries, Wyatt's and Surrey's poems existed as they appeared in Richard Tottel's *Songes And Sonettes*. Scholars did not begin debating what constituted Wyatt's or Surrey's oeuvre until George Nott's 1815 edition appeared.⁴³

While the first two chapters of this study focus on the text of Surrey's and Wyatt's poems as they might have appeared (or as they sometimes appeared) to their coterie readers, the third chapter focuses on what happened when Richard Tottel's collection fixed those poems in print. Tottel's compilers are generally understood to have changed the poems as they appeared in manuscript versions, but given what we know about manuscript circulation, it is safer to say that we do not know from which texts Tottel was working. Tottel's compilers were readers (and potentially writers) of their time, readers and writers who did not hold poems as fixed entities, but likely understood them as texts in motion – always in flux. The compilers probably had the Egerton manuscript or maybe the Hill manuscript, or they had something we do not even know existed. And in the disjunction between the poems as they appear in various manuscripts and as they appeared in *Tottel's Miscellany*, one can find the possibility of more

⁴² The collection famously allowed the public (or “the ordinary”) to see that which was previously private (or elite). For more on what Wall calls a kind of “voyeurism,” see: Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), 96-7. Also see: Seth Lerer, *Courtly Letters in the Age of Henry VIII: Literary Culture and the Arts of Deceit* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 202. David R. Carlson put this change succinctly: “Printing’s interposition of itself within the circuit of the Henrician courtier-writing’s reproduction changed the poetry decisively, irrevocably perhaps” (171). Carlson’s reading of *Tottel's Miscellany* still sees the collection as the product of a lone editor, and it takes a largely negative view of the emendations. I will discuss this understanding of Tottel in my third chapter. For more on the move from manuscript to print, see: David R. Carlson, “The Henrician Courtier Writing in Manuscript and Print: Wyatt, Surrey, Bryan and Others,” *A Companion to Tudor Literature*, ed. Kent Cartwright (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 151-177.

⁴³ *The Works of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and of Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder*, ed. George Frederick Nott (London: Longman, Hurst, Ress, Orme and Brown, 1815).

expression, of more richness. Rather than worry over which version of the poem is authentic in some sense (and how one might define such a vexed term is itself an unanswered question), this study chooses to read the poems as they potentially existed in manuscript and then as they were published in *Tottel's Miscellany* because such a reading yields a more layered understanding of the poems.

My discussion of Tottel's *Songes and Sonnettes* is not meant to suggest that the work of Wyatt and Surrey never appeared in print until 1557. Wyatt's translation of Plutarch's "Quiet of Mind" was published in 1528 by Richard Pynson, and a version of a sonnet that is sometimes believed to be Wyatt's ("Driving to desire, adread also to dare")⁴⁴ was published in *The Court of Venus* sometime between 1537 and 1539.⁴⁵ Some of Wyatt's poems were published in a *Book of Ballets* sometime between 1547 and 1549, and Wyatt's Penitential Psalms first appeared in print in 1549. But Wyatt's translation of Plutarch from Latin to English was at Queen Catherine of Aragon's request, and it was the work of a courtier pleasing his monarch. And the publication of psalms (though posthumous) was likewise a politically savvy and considered move; the posture of the psalmist is devotional, Christian, upstanding, worthy (according to courtly presumptions and customs) of public consumption. The translation of a psalm could not necessarily give the public a look into the world of the court. And more importantly, the publication of a Latin treatise and devotional translations could contribute to the image of Wyatt as a humanist courtier. His lyric poems (of which his prison poems are a part), the poems that the court consumed, paint another picture, or at least reveal another side of the humanist.

⁴⁴ This sonnet appears in the Blage manuscript, and while Muir and Thomson included it as Wyatt's in their 1969 edition of his poems, they doubt that it is his. See: *The Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, eds., Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomason (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1969).

⁴⁵ For a detailed discussion of the publication history of *The Court of Venus*, see: *The Court of Venus*, ed. Russell A. Fraser (Durham: Duke UP, 1955), 3-35.

Tottel's collection revealed Wyatt's poems, and in so doing it revealed the coterie community that had previously been allowed to read, revise, and re-circulate the poems in a privileged privacy. In other words, Tottel took Wyatt's performances public.

This is also the case for Surrey. Although some of his works were printed prior to *Tottel's Miscellany* (his elegies on Sir Thomas Wyatt appeared in print in 1542, shortly after Wyatt's death), his poems remained courtly performances prior to 1557. There is also some evidence that portions of his psalm paraphrases (supposedly written during Surrey's last imprisonment) appeared in a 1550 volume.⁴⁶ But for the most part, the literary productions of these two men were unavailable to a readership beyond the court until Tottel released their work into the world. And when Tottel did make their poems available to a wider readership, the political climate that surrounded them had changed considerably. Poems that had been read by a narrow and privileged audience, and whose transmission had been controlled first by the authors themselves and then by the aristocratic and elite members of the court, were made visible and widely available all at once in 1557.

The third chapter departs from the many critical opinions that negatively characterize the changes Tottel's editions made to the poems. I argue that Tottel's compilers must be seen as readers and writers of their time, and as sensitive readers who appear to have acknowledged the presence of the prison in these now canonical poems. In many instances, they seem to have sought to either emphasize or de-emphasize that presence for the sake of safe and wide distribution of the collection. Far from detracting from the poems, Tottel's network of compilers gave them safe haven in a collection

⁴⁶ For more on Surrey's appearance in print prior to the publication of *Tottel's Miscellany*, see: Peter R. Moore, "Hamlet and Surrey's Psalm 8" *Neophilologus* 82 (1998): 487-98.

which would change English poetry forever, and which would simultaneously establish a prison tradition other prolific prisoners would follow.

Chapter 1. Memory, Myth, and Meaning: Wyatt and the Prison Persona

Nearly every critical treatment of Sir Thomas Wyatt's poetry makes reference to his four incarcerations; his imprisonments were linked to his work as an ambassador and to his status as a courtier under King Henry VIII. As such, his times away from court are significant biographical notes, not only because of their association with the fall of Anne Boleyn and the sexual intrigue associated with her life with the King, but also because they punctuated the life of an active man of the court and account for the leisure time that allowed Wyatt to write much of his canonical poetry.

But the role of the prison in Wyatt's works has scarcely moved beyond the biographical footnote, and when critics focus on imprisonment in Wyatt they almost always turn to his psalms. This turn makes a good deal of sense; Wyatt translated the penitential psalms of David, and so the supplicant penance of the speaker in those translations maps nicely to the story of the imprisoned courtier.¹ In his landmark *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Stephen Greenblatt dedicates a great deal of time to Wyatt's psalms, which he sees as "solitary expressions of anguish, sinfulness, and faith."² The notion that the psalms are Wyatt's ultimate performance as a self-fashioned penitent seems to be universally accepted.

Greenblatt also dedicates a great deal of his third chapter to Wyatt's satires, and when he puts the satires in relation to the psalms, he establishes a critical binary through which we might see Wyatt's work:

¹ Wyatt translated the traditional grouping of psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. For more on Wyatt's translations of the psalms, see: Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1980), 115 -140.

² *Ibid*, 128.

Thus though both the psalms and the satires self-consciously give voice to a “true” self, stripped of falsification and corruption, we encounter two distinct versions, the former produced by submission, the latter by negation. Where the psalmist longs to be utterly bound by God’s will, to accept eternal domination, the satirist discovers himself in the act of saying no. (127)

According to Greenblatt, Wyatt’s carefully crafted identity in his poems is either performing a kind of surrender to courtly power or a kind of virtuous denial of courtly culture and all of its trappings. Yet even in his abnegation, Wyatt managed never to name Henry as the root of his captivity or avoidance; the monarch may have been implied, but was never named. Wyatt’s dexterity, as psalmist or satirist, gave him protection. Wyatt’s self-fashioning was determined in relation to the cultural conventions of power in Henry’s court, and his ability to deftly stage either a “submission” to that power or a stoical “negation” of it distinguished Wyatt from his contemporaries and demonstrated that Wyatt was “a superior performer.”³

Greenblatt turns to a few of Wyatt’s lyric poems at the end of the chapter, and relies heavily on the work of Donald Friedman, who saw Wyatt’s “They Flee from me” as possessing a “fully imagined persona.” This lyric persona was, like both the psalmist and the satirist, shaped by the secular power to which and under which Wyatt was subjected. The psalmist, the satirist, and the lyric speaker all ultimately share the common purpose of “enhancing and augmenting” the personal position and power of their creator.⁴ In all of these cases, “the poem itself is a kind of agent, sent forth to perform the bidding of its master.”⁵ I begin my chapter on Wyatt with a prolonged discussion of Greenblatt because he, like so many of Wyatt’s critics, never turned to the poems in Wyatt’s oeuvre that are explicitly about the prison. But if he had, the

³ Ibid, 120.

⁴ Ibid, 142.

⁵ Ibid, 142.

performance he sees in the psalms and satires would have been all the more emphatically demonstrated.

Wyatt's prison poems are indeed performances; they are intended to move the courtly audiences amongst whom they circulated in manuscript. The coterie readers who comprised Wyatt's readership would have known Wyatt's history of imprisonment, and indeed, they would have known a great deal more than that; coterie readers would have been familiar with the family mythology Thomas Wyatt and his father actively cultivated – a history bound up in service to the king and time served in prison. The Wyatt family success and fortune was tied, in no small part, to the Wyatts being able to endure their time in prison with virtue and fortitude.

While the speakers in Wyatt's prison poems are absolutely shaped by the power to which Wyatt was subjected at every moment, they often voice both submission and negation simultaneously. And while Friedman, upon whose work Greenblatt relies several times, posits a fully actualized lyric persona in "They flee from me," I argue that Wyatt's prison poems do this consistently, and to great effect. Wyatt's prison poems establish a prison persona that enables the speaker to submit and deny, and to perform his righteous acceptance of his sentence while making bids for courtly attention. In this way, the prison poems of Wyatt occupy a space outside of Greenblatt's binary, and by virtue of their persona, demonstrate Wyatt's ability to create a lyric voice that is penitent, stoic, suffering and filled with vitality, all at the same time. And Wyatt's legacy as a potent lyric voice rendered in ambitious and sometimes frustrating verse (a legacy so many have sought to establish) is perhaps best understood by studying the poems that explicitly stage incarceration and that perform the prison.

This chapter will explore the performative power of the prison in some of Wyatt's prison poems. Some of his most canonical works fall into this category, such as the often anthologized "Lucks my fair falcon." Others in this category have been relatively neglected, like his double sonnet "The flaming sighes that burn within my breast." In all cases though, the prison is a topic critics have often avoided because of the issue that plagues all work with Wyatt's poems – that of attribution. The attribution problem, which is connected to and compounded by the realities of coterie circulation, seems to weigh on nearly every piece of critical attention to Wyatt's poems; yet the attribution problem is a black hole that creates an unnecessary degree of anxiety in Wyatt's readers. Simply put: it does not matter if Wyatt composed a given poem about being in prison while he was actually lodged there. It does not matter which of Wyatt's four incarcerations a given poem claims to capture or might capture. Readers need not fret about a poem's year of composition. I maintain, perhaps even more radically, that readers need not worry about how much the coterie might have altered a poem that we read now. It is a given that coterie hands altered the manuscripts from which we derive a great deal of Wyatt's work, and I contend that those readers were as much under the sway of the Wyatt family mythology (established and cultivated by the Wyatt family and many others) as the Wyatts themselves were. What we see in Wyatt's prison poems is a performance of a persona that was cultivated and disseminated over decades and across familial generations. That performance is visible in the dramatic settings of the poems, in the formal attributes of the lines, and even in the overtly theatrical pose the speakers often adopt. In seeing the prison as a performance in Wyatt's poems, we can re-contextualize

his sometimes jarring and confusing meters, and view his naggingly vague language as a careful and deliberate dance for the courtiers who knew his family's stories well.

I. The Wyatt Family Mythology

In September of 1850, *The Gentleman's Magazine* circulated an article on the Wyatt family. The article focused on their history of imprisonment, and the article's author, John Bruce, claimed to have been given access to "a volume of papers relating to various members"⁶ of the Wyatt family. Those papers contained anecdotes about Sir Henry Wyatt and his son, Sir Thomas Wyatt, and those tales revolved entirely around their stints in prison. According to the collection of papers, Henry Wyatt was "imprisoned often; once in a cold and narrow tower, where he had neither bed to lie on, nor clothes sufficient to warm him, nor meat for his mouth. He had starved there had not God . . . sent this his and his country's martyr a cat both to feed and warm him."⁷ These papers, owned by Rev. Bradford D. Hawkins, certainly made a great deal of Henry Wyatt's suffering. He was painted as a "martyr" for both God and country, and his time in prison was the martyrdom that rendered him such noble and moral standing. The cat, which the papers suggest was sent by God, was apparently so charmed by Henry Wyatt's affection (and perhaps by his moral fortitude) that it would hunt pigeons for the starving Henry. Henry, whose marvelous prison charm extended well beyond the cat, convinced the prison guard to prepare the pigeons to cook and eat. Henry Wyatt's prison cat thereby saved his life, and according to the stories that circulated even 350 years after his death, "Henry Wyat in his prosperity for this would ever make much of cats, as other men will

⁶ John Bruce, "Unpublished Anecdotes of Sir Thomas Wyatt the Poet, and of Other Members of that Family," *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review* (London: Bradbury Evans, 1850), 235.

⁷ *Ibid*, 235.

of their spaniels and hounds.”⁸ Several portraits of Henry Wyatt include a cat, and one even shows his cat pulling a pigeon through a barred window.⁹

Bruce’s article goes on to detail the torture Henry Wyatt apparently endured while imprisoned, and much like the mythical quality of the charmed cat, the tools of Wyatt’s torture became symbolic: “It is said that he was subjected to torture, which was inflicted by an instrument called the barnacles, which is placed by farriers on the upper lip of a horse in order to terrify and keep him quiet under the operation of bleeding. The memory of this fact is heraldically preserved in an addition to the arms borne by this branch of the Wyatts, namely a pair of barnacles argent.”¹⁰ Not only did Wyatt apparently add the barnacles to the family herald, but he also had them woven into carpets that would adorn his castle. Both barnacle and cat took on symbolic resonance that biographers would for centuries associate with the Wyatt family.

In yet another story, Richard III is said to have visited Henry Wyatt in prison, and to have asked him: “Why art thou such a fool? Thou servest for moonshine in the water. Thy master is a beggarly fugitive. Forsake him and become mine. I can reward thee, and I swear unto thee, I will.”¹¹ Though the account claims that Richard personally guaranteed his reward, Wyatt refused to renounce the future King Henry VII. Wyatt supposedly answered Richard with a statement of his loyalty: “If I had first chosen you for my master, thus faithful would I have been to you, if you should have needed it; but the Earl, poor and unhappy though he be, is my master, and no discouragement or allurements shall

⁸ Ibid, 235.

⁹ Portrait of Sir Henry Wyatt, circa 1460-1536, www.artwarefineart.com/archive/gallery/portrait-sir-henry-wyatt-circa-1460-1536.

¹⁰ Bruce, 236.

¹¹ Ibid, 235.

ever drive or draw me from him, by God's grace."¹² Like the other tales, this one paints Henry Wyatt as loyal, and as willing to forsake his own health and happiness for his sworn master.

Henry Wyatt's fabled imprisonment earned him wealth and reputation. He supported Henry Tudor while Richard III still held the throne. Punished for his loyalty to the upstart Tudor sometime before 1485, Sir Henry Wyatt was imprisoned in Scotland. Once the new Tudor king took the throne, Henry Wyatt was rewarded for his stalwart loyalty and the hardships he had suffered. He was made a Privy Councillor, an executor of King Henry VII's will, and he was one of the men responsible for managing the young King Henry VIII's affairs once his father died.¹³ In 1492 he acquired Allington Castle, where Sir Thomas Wyatt was born in 1503. The castle was in disrepair, but the elder Wyatt was able to make extensive renovations. His new castle hosted Cardinal Wolsey in 1527 and Henry VIII in July of 1537. The presence of such honored guests testified to the importance of the Wyatt family, an importance that was emphasized in 1524 when Henry Wyatt was given a license to found a chantry in his name only a few miles from Allington.¹⁴ Henry Wyatt's ability to amass this fortune, and to earn public recognition from the king, depended in no small part on his ability to survive his imprisonment in Scotland. Henry Wyatt's incarceration became synonymous with his rise to power in King Henry VII's court.

¹² Ibid, 235.

¹³ Kenneth Muir, *The Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool, Liverpool UP, 1963), 2.

¹⁴ Stephen Merriam Foley explains the significance of the chantry: "Ten chaplains were to be resident in the chantry, saying cycles of masses daily for the repose of the souls of Henry Wyatt and his heirs forever. This was to be a foundation established in perpetuity, for the glory of God and for the spiritual ease of its founder . . . This was a year of moment for the Wyatt family . . . It was an appropriate time then, for the family to cap their achievements with the establishment of a chantry, a traditional status marker among the elite – aristocratic and mercantile alike – signaling their arrival in this world by arranging to have prayers said for their translation to the next" in his biography. For more on the chantry, see: Stephen Marriam Foley, *Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 80.

The Wyatt family knew the power of these stories. To modern readers these stories seem much like Richard III's "moonshine in the water" – and even in my retelling of the tales above, the words "apparent," "supposed," and "seeming" make several appearances. The historical accuracy of the cat (whose name was apparently Accator), or of the barnacles, or of Richard III's personal interrogation of Henry Wyatt is almost immaterial; what is of consequence here is the myth these tales created, and which biographers like George Nott and John Bruce propagated. The prison, and the tales of its attendant miseries, was productive for the Wyatt family, and they knew it.

Given his family's mythology, it is not surprising then that in 1537, on his way to an ambassadorship in Spain, Sir Thomas Wyatt chose to make his father's imprisonment an example for his own newly married son. In a letter to Thomas Wyatt the younger, Wyatt relates the hardships of Henry Wyatt's prison experience as a means of imparting advice¹⁵:

And consider wel your good grandfather what things ther wer in him, and his end; and they that knew him noted him thus: first and chiefly to have a great reverens of god and good opinion of godly things, next that ther was no man more pitiful, no man more trew of his word, no man faster to his friend, no man diligenter nor more circumspect, which thing both the kings his masters noted in him greatly. And if thes things, and specially the grace of god that the feare of god always kept with him, had not ben, the chansis of thes troublesome world that he was in had long ago ourwhelmed him. This preserved him in prison from the handes of the tyrant that could find in his hart to see him rakkid, from two yeres and more prisonment in Scotland, in Irons and Stoks, from the danger of sodeyn changes and commotions divers . . .¹⁶

¹⁵ For more information on Sir Thomas Wyatt's life, see the following biographies: Stephen Merriam Foley, *Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990); Patricia Thomson, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Background* (London: Routledge, 1964); Kenneth Muir, *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1963). Muir's biography is still considered the most thorough, especially because it contains many of Wyatt's letters that are otherwise scattered in manuscript.

¹⁶ Muir, 39-40.

The force of Wyatt's letter depends on his reference to Henry Wyatt's experiences in prison; the grandfather's moral fortitude, which must serve as a model for Sir Thomas Wyatt's son, was demonstrated as a result of his imprisonment. "What things ther wer in him" "preserved" him in prison, and ultimately delivered him from the "tyrant's irons and stoks" (surprisingly there is no reference to "barnacles"). Though Henry Wyatt was "rakid" for two years – his body was stretched over a medieval torture device designed to stretch its victims' joints – the letter continues with a surprising degree of calm. The narration seems unemotional. The instruments of torture and restraint (the "rack," "stoks," and "irons") are listed without embellishment or comment. These items serve merely as a backdrop against which Henry Wyatt's character is displayed. If his good qualities "had not ben" Henry Wyatt might never have survived his incarceration; conversely, had his imprisonment never happened his fine moral attributes "had not been" proven. Though Sir Thomas Wyatt was advising his son to behave in a manner that was honorable and good, he was also reciting a family lore that had already become known through recognizable symbols. And the implication that incarceration was an inherently productive state rings throughout his letter. Henry Wyatt's imprisonment supplied him with an opportunity to prove his goodness, but perhaps more importantly, his incarceration put him in direct relation to the court and cast him as a player in the political landscape of the country. Imprisonment was socially productive for Henry Wyatt; it helped him amass wealth and it provided the backdrop against which he could prove his moral worth and thereby gain political power and influence at court. Henry Wyatt's courtly presence later in his life was, ironically, a product of his imprisonment (a product of his very isolation from the court and from Henry VII).

Henry Wyatt, Sir Thomas Wyatt's father,¹⁷ was, as Wyatt's letter reminded his son, an object lesson to be "considered." His history and experiences were items for contemplation; his stories were like fables, delivering moral platitudes when understood properly. Thomas Wyatt wanted his own son to follow his grandfather's model. He wanted his son to learn a "great reverens of god," and he wanted him to develop the qualities that supposedly made Henry Wyatt a good courtier: diligence, circumspection, and honesty. Henry Wyatt's diligence and "truthfulness" made him a loyal supporter of Henry Tudor, the Lancastrian Earl of Richmond before he was king, and his service to his master was ultimately his deliverance. If these "things . . . had not ben" he would never have escaped the troubles that plagued him in Scotland. What would seem like the grimmer aspects of Henry's imprisonment (like torture) are not emphasized because they are not central to the message. What is central was Henry's ability to survive his isolation and the status that incarceration conferred.

This mythology was home grown, and it is telling that when Sir Thomas Wyatt wanted to advise his son, he resorted to family legend to find proper examples of moral living and good service. The Wyatt family legacy and fortune were based on an unquestioning allegiance to a sworn master, an allegiance that could stand the test of imprisonment and, if necessary, even torture. The family mythology and success centered on Henry's miserable experience in prison and the supposed goodness of his character which ultimately earned him his deliverance. Though he suffered "in a cold and narrow tower, where he had neither bed to lie on, nor clothes sufficient to warm him, nor meat

¹⁷ For more on Wyatt's relationship to his father, see Foley's analysis "Fables: Sons and Fathers" in the first chapter of his biography *Sir Thomas Wyatt* (4-13).

for his mouth,”¹⁸ and though he was “rakkid” and held in stocks and chains, ultimately his honesty, loyalty and faith in God earned him release. The Wyatt family legacy and fortune were based on Henry Wyatt’s suffering and imprisonment, and the tales of his suffering were probably recorded in the Wyatt family commonplace book, possibly as much for instruction as for reverence. Like other early modern families, the Wyatts no doubt used New Testament parables and various fables to instruct their children,¹⁹ but as Wyatt’s letter above demonstrates, the Wyatts also called upon their own family’s fables to educate younger generations and to solidify their family’s reputation at court.

Sir Thomas Wyatt certainly seemed intent on extending his father’s legacy, and he extended the family mythology with his own travails. From a young age, Wyatt became a servant to the king and later he acted as an ambassador for King Henry. He was imprisoned four times in his short life. Wyatt’s imprisonments were both a result and an expression of the most exciting aspects of his career. His supposed affair with Anne Boleyn, his work as an ambassador sending letters back to England in cipher, and his humanist identity as an international man of letters all, in some part, led to his imprisonments. Like his father’s experiences, some of his imprisonments enabled Wyatt to demonstrate his role at court – he was locked up while doing the work of the crown. And though the Wyatt family fortune had been solidified by the time Wyatt was imprisoned, and financial rewards for his suffering were almost beside the point, his imprisonments allowed Wyatt to position himself as an active man of the court and a valuable servant to the king.

¹⁸ Bruce, 235.

¹⁹ According to Ralph A. Houlbrooke in *The English Family: 1450-1700* (London: Longman, 1984), 149, “The ability to read was regarded, especially by the pious, as first and foremost the gateway to religious knowledge, and the Bible was often used as the first reading book.”

Thomas Wyatt was first incarcerated in May of 1527, while traveling on an ambassadorial mission in Italy. Wyatt traveled to the papal court with Sir John Russell, but after Russell broke his leg and was unable to travel, Wyatt went to Venice alone. While traveling back from Venice to Rome, Wyatt was taken prisoner by Spanish Catholics. Wyatt was not held long, but he had already been incarcerated by the age of twenty-four, and he was imprisoned as a result of his working on behalf of the king in Italy. Seven years later (May 1534), Wyatt was again arrested; on this occasion he was committed to the Fleet for ostensibly killing a man during a fight.²⁰ The altercation was understood as the kind of incident a man of the world might experience. Wyatt was quickly released (his family connections apparently made murder no more than a trifle in Henry VIII's eyes). Though he had not yet achieved the fabled suffering of his father, by 1534 he had already added two of his own tales of imprisonment to the Wyatt family mythology.

In May of 1536 Wyatt was arrested again; this arrest was at the order of King Henry VIII, and no one imagined Wyatt would ever emerge from his third incarceration alive. John Husee told Lord Lisle on May 13:²¹

This day, some say, young Weston shall scape, and some that none shall die but the Queen and her brother; others that Wyatt and Mr. Payge are as like to suffer as the others. The saying is now that those who shall suffer shall die when the Queen

²⁰ In June 1530 Wyatt was reappointed Marshal of Calais. One of the men who worked under him there, one John Rokewood, supposedly told Lord Lisle that on May 15, 1534 that Wyatt was in a fight with the sergeants of London. In the course of the fight, one of the sergeants was apparently killed. For more on this incident see Muir 25. For Rokewood's account of the event, see *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, 1509-47. J.S. Brewer, et al, eds. vii.674 (London: The Hereford Times, 1910).

²¹ Wyatt was arrested in May 1527, 1534, and 1536. In one of his sonnets, "XXXIII. You that in love find luck and abundance," his speaker bewails "the haps most unhappy / That me betide in May most commonly" (6-7) and concludes that "In May my wealth and eke my life, I say, / Have stood so oft in such perplexity" (12-13). All quotations of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry are taken from R.A. Rebholz's edition: *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 1997).

and her brother go to execution, but I think they all shall suffer. If any escape, it shall be young Weston, for whom importunate suit is made.²²

Imprisoned in the Tower of London, Wyatt's third prison experience was markedly different from his first two trips to jail. The reasons for Wyatt's arrest were unclear, though it is generally understood that his arrest was part of Anne Boleyn's fall. Wyatt was, at one time, involved with Anne Boleyn, either as a friend or as a lover.²³ When Henry VIII made his interest in Anne apparent, Wyatt either withdrew his interest from her or she rebuffed him. Either way, the two dissolved their relationship as early as 1532. This apparently did Wyatt no good when Henry's interest in Anne started to wane. By 1534 Henry was being unfaithful to Anne, and in February of 1536 Anne miscarried. Henry was already disgusted by Anne's supposed inability to conceive a son (she had given birth only to Elizabeth) and her miscarriage only exacerbated matters. Katherine of Aragon, Henry's first (and divorced) wife, died in January of 1536. Katherine's presence had always been inconvenient for Henry because some people still believed her to be the rightful queen. With her death, that uncomfortable matter was finally resolved, and Henry, enjoying the convenience of a dead wife instead of a divorced wife, felt dispensing with Anne completely was his best course of action. For Henry, the effect of a dead queen was certainly easier to handle than the effect of a divorced queen. In late April of 1536 Anne was charged with four acts of adultery and one count of incest, was arrested, and was imprisoned in The Tower of London. Her supposed paramours, Mark Smeaton, Sir William Brereton, Sir Henry Norris, Sir Francis Weston, and her brother, Lord Rochford, were also arrested and imprisoned. Though Wyatt was not initially

²² *Letters and Papers*, x.356.865. See also, Muir 31.

²³ For more on Anne Boleyn's life see Eric Ives's biography *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn 'The Most Happy'* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).

arrested with these others, all of whom were his friends, and though he was not charged with adultery, he was questioned separately and eventually taken to the Tower as well. His contemporaries and his biographers have assumed that his involvement with Anne was the cause of his incarceration.²⁴

The large edifice known as The Tower of London is actually a sprawling compound comprised of a central keep (the White Tower) surrounded by grounds and a thick outer wall. The outer wall is comprised of many towers connected by long walks or halls, and these towers held prisoners. Wyatt was apparently housed in the bell tower, a tower which overlooked the moat, and which had a clear view of the Tower Green.²⁵ The end of the Tower Green was the site of the executioner's block, and, from his window, he watched all of Anne's paramours lose their heads. Whether or not he saw Anne die is unclear.²⁶

A little more than a month later, he was released from the Tower, largely due to his family's connections, his friendship with Cromwell, and his reputed honesty with

²⁴ Based on Wyatt's own comments in his 1541 "Defence to the Judges after the Indictment and the evidence," it is possible his 1536 arrest was a result of the Duke of Suffolk's "evil will." What this "evil will" actually consisted of is unclear, and it is possible that the Duke of Suffolk had everything to do with Wyatt being implicated in Anne's fall. Still, it is also possible that Wyatt's arrest was unrelated to Anne's fall, and was instead based on some kind of enmity between him and the Duke. For the full text of Wyatt's 1541 "Defence," see Muir, 187-209.

²⁵ It has been difficult to determine exactly where Wyatt was housed in 1536. I have come to the conclusion he was held in the bell tower based on three pieces of evidence. First, an account of Wyatt's arrest from *The Spanish Chronicle*, though inaccurate in some particulars, claims that the captain of the Tower put Wyatt in a chamber over the gate. In order for Wyatt to be in a chamber over the gate he would have to have been housed in the Bell tower that was actually part of the entrance gate itself. Second, it is widely accepted by all of Wyatt's biographers that he saw his friends die (a point which several of Wyatt's poems also attest to). In order to see the executions, he would have to have been housed in a tower on the west side of the fortress. This, paired with the testimony from *The Spanish Chronicle*, again points to the Bell Tower. Third, Wyatt's "Who list his wealth and ease retain," written in the Tower in 1536, refers directly to "the bell tower" as having "shown" him "such a sight." With all of these points in mind, I have concluded that the Bell Tower is where Wyatt stayed in 1536.

²⁶ In *Unpublished Poems by Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Circle* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1961), Kenneth Muir argues Wyatt saw the execution of his friends: "It is known that Wyatt watched the execution of the alleged paramours of the Queen from his cell in the Tower, that he half expected to share their fate, and that some of the victims were his friends" (xiv).

King Henry VIII. According to Muir, “most biographers have assumed that Wyatt had nothing to confess, or that if he did he kept his mouth shut. But there are three accounts dating from the sixteenth century, apparently independent of each other, which agree that Wyatt told the King or the Council that Anne had been his mistress and was therefore not fitted to be a queen.”²⁷ Because Wyatt may have testified about his affair with Anne Boleyn to the King’s Council, or may even have confessed to the King himself (thus providing the King with the evidence he sought in order to credibly accuse and ultimately execute Anne), he was allowed to live, while his friends, and his supposed former lover were executed. Wyatt was fortunate to escape with his life, but this imprisonment was markedly different from his first two experiences in jail.

For Wyatt, his first imprisonment, which involved being jailed during an ambassadorial mission in Italy, marked him as a man of the world, as a man working actively for the king. His imprisonment was not so much isolation from the court, as it was a pit stop during a more important mission, an episode during his courtly adventure on the continent. His being jailed in Italy allowed him to demonstrate his loyalty to the crown and put him in direct relation to the court and the king. His second imprisonment, after a fight and an apparent murder, again positioned Wyatt as a courtier – as a man out in the world encountering adversity and overcoming it (sometimes with a death blow). His third imprisonment in 1536 during the Boleyn affair saw him removed from court and active life for more than thirty days. This imprisonment enacted a markedly different kind of sentence just by virtue of its duration – it deprived Wyatt of his connection to

²⁷ Muir, 19. The three accounts Muir refers to came from the following individuals: Nicholas Harpsfield, Nicholas Sander, and Chapuys. For more on these three men, their credibility, and their reports, see Muir 19-21. See also: William H. Wiatt, “Sir Thomas Wyatt and Anne Boleyn,” *English Language Notes* 6 (1968): 94-102.

affairs of state and temporarily disconnected him from his social milieu. But despite the severity of the sentence, and despite the fact that his very life hung in the balance, it still served as a powerful reminder that Wyatt was a powerful player at court. Imprisonment, once again, served as a dramatic demonstration of just how connected the Wyatts were to the seat of power.

Wyatt was again arrested and jailed in the Tower in 1541 when he got caught up in Thomas Cromwell's fall. Cromwell lost Henry VIII's favor after arranging Henry's marriage to Anne of Clèves. When Henry finally met the young girl in person, he was immediately disgusted; Cromwell was made to suffer for what Henry saw as a poor arrangement. After Cromwell was executed, his state papers were reviewed. A letter from Archbishop Bonner, a long time enemy of Wyatt's, was found, and the accusations it contained earned Wyatt another stay in prison. This imprisonment was the longest of them all. While he was jailed in the Tower for more than three months, Wyatt's estate was liquidated, and his household dismantled. Wyatt's social isolation was enacted not only by the physical removal of his presence from courtly affairs, but also by the systematic stripping away of his social status. His property, his belongings and his retinue were dismantled and scattered. Wyatt's alienation from courtly life during this period was profound because the very markers of his status and power were scattered. All that the prison had made possible for the Wyatts was suddenly stripped away. But though the prison had finally undone the Wyatt fortune, its place in the family lore was all the more firmly mythologized; the Wyatt family history was inextricably linked with imprisonment.

His experiences in the tower, which were rendered more potent when paired with his father's experiences in prison, found expression in many of Wyatt's poems. Take, for instance, the following epigram:

LXII

Sighs are my food, drink are my tears;
 Clinking of fetters such music would crave.
 Stink and close air away my life wears.
 Innocency is all the hope that I have.
 Rain, wind, or weather I judge by mine ears.
 Malice assaulted that righteousness should save.
 Sure I am, Brian, this wound shall heal again
 But yet, alas, the scar shall still remain.²⁸

The prison experience is central to this epigram, just as Henry Wyatt's imprisonment was central to Thomas Wyatt's letter of advice to his son, and just as the letter lists the instruments of Henry Wyatt's incarceration (the "irons and stoks") this epigram lists elements of incarceration too: "stink and close air." The "clinking" of fetters testifies to the speaker's restraint; the poem's dactylic rhythms insist we hear the "clinking" of shackles as musical, and instruments of restraint become instruments of quite another kind:

, ~ ~ , , ~ ~ ,
 Sighs are my food, drink are my tears;
 , ~ ~ , ~ , , ~ ~ ,
 Clinking of fetters such music would crave. 2
 , ~ ~ , ~ , ~ , ,
 Stink and close air away my life wears.

These lines seem to recall classical metrics (quantitative meter) in their complicated compound dactylic rhythms; far from a straightforward pattern of rhythmical feet, these

²⁸ All quotations of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry are taken from R.A. Rebholz's edition: *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 1997).

lines are comprised of dactylic, anapestic and spondaic feet, pasted together.²⁹ Yet the sound these lines create is unmistakable. Each line moves along, iron shackles (which Wyatt may never have actually worn) clanking all the way: clinkety clink, pause, clinkety clink. Wyatt's consonance helps heighten this effect. Line one begins with the "s" of sighs, and ends with the "s" of tears. That sibilance creates an echo, whereby the line's initial sound (or clink) is repeated at the line's conclusion. Four of the epigram's eight lines use this effect to accentuate the dactylic rhythms that mimic the "clinking" sound of Wyatt's prisoner's fetters. While the aristocratic imprisonment of Wyatt may have meant he was never actually shackled, the poem performs the drama of imprisonment, and does so using the symbolism the Wyatts had woven into their herald. The devices of torture, which Thomas Wyatt may never have experienced personally, were used to perform the plight of the prisoner.

Wyatt's experiences in the Tower of London became as much a part of the family legacy as his father's experience in Scotland. In the 1537 letter to his son, Wyatt testifies to his own place in the family mythology when he follows his father's example with his own:

And of myself I may be a nere example unto you of my foly and unthriftness that hath as I wel deservid brought me into a thousand dangers and hazardes, enmities, hatrids, prisonments, despits and indignations: but that god hath of his goodness chastised me and not cast me cleane out of his favour, which thing I can impute to no thing but to the goodness of my good father . . .³⁰

²⁹ Quantitative meter has long been discussed as failed experiments in English. For a helpful discussion of this critical history, see: Kristin Hanson, "Quantitative Meter in English: the Lesson of Sir Philip Sidney," *English Language and Linguistics* 5.1(2001): 41-91. Other helpful discussions of quantitative meter in English include: Derek Attridge, *Well-Weighed Syllables: Elizabethan Verse in Classical Metres* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974); Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (New York: Random House, 1979), 68-9; John Hollander, "'Observations in the Art of English Quantity,'" *Vision and Resonance: The Two Senses of Poetic Form* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985), 65-6.

³⁰ Muir, 40.

Both Thomas Wyatt and his father suffered under the rulers they followed, but Henry Wyatt's "diligence" is read and understood as a model to work towards, while Thomas Wyatt describes his own experience as a model to work against: he is an "example" of "folly and unthriftiness," not of loyalty and honesty. In his letter to his son, Wyatt erases the role his honesty and political acumen may have had in his release, and his interpretation of his own "example" emphasizes different moral, or at least political, strengths. His imprisonment may have been "wel deserved," but his imprisonment was also a result of his political activity; Wyatt was an active man of the court who certainly braved what could be perceived as "a thousand dangers and hazardes." He was, according to his own addition to the Wyatt family legend, a strong and stoic soul who could suffer. But Wyatt couldn't blame the monarch responsible for his incarceration. While Henry Wyatt's judge was a dead king, who was replaced by the Tudor line, Thomas Wyatt's judge was Henry VIII, who was still very much alive and sensitive to the words of his courtiers. While Henry Wyatt remained loyal to a popular Henry Tudor despite the pressures of failing Richard III, Thomas Wyatt needed to remain loyal to the very man responsible for his imprisonment, and with no hope of a new leader to set him free. The virtues he imparted to his son by telling his own tale were political savvy, perhaps a kind of stoicism, and even a secular martyrdom. More importantly though, and the letter to his son was sure to emphasize this, the prison was the locus of courtly attention to the Wyatt family, and regardless of whether the crime was defensible, the punishment just, or the judge objective, imprisonment was defining because of its ability to position the family in relation to the court.

Given Sir Thomas Wyatt's family history, and the mythologizing of that history, and given his own biography, it is hardly surprising to contend that the prison was central to his poetry. Some critics have responded to the presence of the prison in Wyatt's life and writing, though not in much detail.³¹ Literary scholars are willing to entertain a relationship between Wyatt's imprisonment and his poetry only in passing; for the most part, they seem content to point to the Tower as a place of composition. Its effects on the nature of the composition go largely unexplored. Wyatt's biographers are guided by a different impulse; they use Wyatt's poems as evidence of his suffering in prison, and tend to read as autobiographical those poems which mention incarceration.³² These divergent impulses expose a reading practice that has left poems like Wyatt's double sonnet "The flaming sighes that boil within my breast" relatively neglected. To think of the Tower as no more than a place of composition is to ignore the mythology the Wyatt family had cultivated around its history of imprisonment, and thus it ignores the significant impact the carceral experience had on those poems. If Wyatt's prison poems are remarkable only for their biographical value, we lose a fair number of poems to history, and we ignore the expressive beauty of the verse and the performative elements of Wyatt's compositions.

³¹In an influential essay on Sir Thomas Wyatt's metrics, D.W. Harding off-handedly introduces Wyatt's "Sighes ar my foode" as "the poem from prison" (see "The Rhythmical Intention in Wyatt's Poetry," *Scrutiny* 14 (1946): 93). A.K. Foxwell refers to the same poem as being "written in prison" but, like Harding, she does not elaborate on the significance of the detail. See A.K. Foxwell, *A Study of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poems* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), 113. Similarly, in his edition of Wyatt's poems, E.M.W. Tillyard explicates the third line of the carol, "I am as I am," saying it "may well be a literal reference to Wyatt's own second imprisonment or to fear of it." Though Tillyard feels compelled to gloss the line, he leaves the meaning of the prison "reference" to his reader's imagination. See: E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt: A Selection and a Study* (London: Scholartis, 1929), 174.

³² When discussing Wyatt's "Whoso list his wealth and ease retain," Kenneth Muir, one of Wyatt's most influential biographers, places this poem alongside state papers and letters as proof that the Tower altered Wyatt: "when he was finally released he was a changed man." See: *Sir Thomas Wyatt, Life and Letters* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1963), 35. Muir is not alone in this practice; another of Wyatt's biographers, Stephen Merriam Foley, uses the poem for the same purpose: "the bloody days of May were a strain on Wyatt's consciousness. Wyatt's poem from the Tower laments 'The bell tower showed me such a sight / That in my head stickes day and night'" (27).

It is certainly seductive to read Wyatt's prison poems as a place where biography and literary production come together in frighteningly suggestive ways. Indeed, the boundary between Wyatt and his speaker threatens to collapse as his biography and literary persona seemingly intersect. But scholarship on the manuscript, coterie circulation of poems in the early Tudor court warns us against attributing too much value to biography: "Poems in manuscript circulation were not necessarily, or primarily, valued as biographical expressions of a known author, but as reusable texts, belonging to a shared culture."³³ Texts were "shared" and "reusable," they were picked up, borrowed and remade because they had qualities that made them recognizable and valuable to the borrower. Wyatt was perhaps the most "reusable" because he was a highly recognizable writer of his moment – a man of the court and a writer, his poems may have been heard as songs at King Henry's entertainments, and they certainly moved through coterie circles at court.³⁴ When paired with Wyatt's humanist education, which stressed the use of literary convention and the imitation of models, Wyatt was the ideal poet for coterie culture. The lords and ladies in his circle would have recognized and happily adapted his lyrics to any social situation. His reusability had much to do with the persona his biography (and his family's history) led him to create. His prominence and desirability as a model to be circulated derived from his position at court, and the mythologizing of his and his father's biographies made it likely that the prison was an expected context regardless of the poem's actual moment of composition. The precise time and location of

³³ Elizabeth Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey and Early Tudor Poetry* (London: Longman, 1998), 4.

³⁴The Devonshire Manuscript, which has been thought to have been compiled by three coterie women (Mary Shelton, Mary Fitzroy, and Margaret Douglas) and contained many of Wyatt's poems (such as "Me list no more to sing" which I will discuss later in this chapter), "was kept by many hands" and the "poems found their way to Surrey House . . . Some of the poems were performed to music . . . Others were read aloud, on occasions of varying formality." See: Jeff Dolven, "Reading Wyatt for the Style," *Modern Philology* 105.1(2008): 76.

the composition of one of Wyatt's poems is beside the point; any courtly reader would have known the Wyatt family lore and would have assumed the prison was a viable context or subtext in the poems.

II. The Wyatt Mythology in Manuscript Circulation

CXXXV
 Me list no more to sing
 Of love nor of such thing,
 How sore that it me wring;
 For what I sung or spake
 Men did my songs mistake. (1-5)³⁵

In this poem, Wyatt's speaker is keenly aware that "men" could "mistake" the meaning of one's song rather easily. Here, Wyatt's speaker claims to no longer "list" to sing – the speaker's voice has been stifled by the possibility that his audience might misunderstand or misread. By the end of the poem though, the speaker has taken on a notably bolder tone – no longer concerned that men might "mistake" the meaning, he claims to "reck not a bean," or not to care:

If this be under mist
 And not well plainly wist,
 Understand me who list
 For I reckon not a bean;
 I wot what I do mean. (41-45)

Rebholz offers the following explication for lines forty-one to forty-three: "if this text be obscure and not quite plainly understood, let the person who wishes to understand me do so."³⁶ Readers can certainly misunderstand the words of a poet, especially lines that seem veiled in a "mist," but for readers "who list" to understand, who read willfully and with the collective knowledge the coterie carries, a searing comprehension is also possible. Readers who could understand the particular occasion or context in which a poem had been drafted were best positioned to "list" or to understand. In many respects, this song

³⁵ Rebholz, 170. This poem appears in the "Songes" section of Rebholz's edition, and is found in the Devonshire Manuscript.

³⁶ Rebholz, 431.

encapsulates both the danger as well as the very real advantage of coterie circulation and readership in the sixteenth-century.

While the realities of coterie circulation were dangerous and even potentially lethal, the coterie also carried a kind of collective understanding that could prove useful to the courtier looking to gain an audience without inspiring the wrath of the monarch. Marotti is quick to point out that John Donne depended on the common knowledge of his readership to provide the necessary background for many of his poems: “Donne relied on his coterie reader’s ability to understand ‘A Litanie’ in the context of its author’s personal situation.”³⁷ Readers were effected by the author’s “personal situation,” and authors “relied” upon their reader’s “ability to understand” the personal circumstances which informed the poems. According to Marotti, Donne’s Holy Sonnets were “witty performances that exploited a knowledgeable audience’s awareness of their author’s personal situation and history.”³⁸ Wyatt’s poems would have been understood in these terms as well – as “witty performances” of imprisonment, performances Wyatt’s friends would have understood within the larger context of the Wyatt family mythology and Wyatt’s own imprisonments. The performative nature of these poems often meant that Wyatt could speak obscurely, even tangentially, about his imprisonment, knowing that the coterie would divine his meaning without his needing to name the monarch responsible for imprisoning him. The coterie could understand without Wyatt making himself completely vulnerable.

³⁷ Arthur F. Marotti, “Donne as Social Exile and Jacobean Courtier: The Devotional Verse and Prose of the Secular Man,” *Critical Essays on John Donne* (New York: G.K. Hall, 1994), 79.

³⁸ Marotti, 82.

Manuscripts of poems, like the manuscripts that carried Wyatt's verse through the court and beyond, were, according to Marotti, "socially contingent productions."³⁹ These poems were "best viewed first within the social context that shaped them and the system through which they were originally produced, circulated, altered, collected, and preserved."⁴⁰ Marotti's conclusion is that since the Renaissance lyric was occasional, mired in the context of the supposed (not always literal or real) occasion of its composition, all coterie readers would have read the poems as they circulated as wrought with circumstantial meaning. Certain occasions were more popular than others, and Marotti names "imprisonment" as one such occasion popularized during the English Renaissance.⁴¹ Wyatt was prominent in this popularization – he performed the prison for the coterie readers who would have recognized his occasion and understood his lineage. Wyatt's performance of imprisonment shaped the way the prison would become a standard occasional posture.

Many of the manuscripts that carried Wyatt's verse through the court⁴² have no doubt been lost, but several collections of Wyatt's verse remain, and these have served to establish his literary canon. The Egerton Manuscript (BL MS 2711) is perhaps most often discussed in relation to Wyatt's work because many poems are written in what is

³⁹ Ibid, 2.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 2.

⁴¹ Ibid, 2.

⁴² Marotti explains that "manuscript miscellanies and poetical anthologies were kept mainly by individuals or groups of people associated with the following environments: the universities, the Inns of Court, the court, and the household or family" (30). My discussion here covers manuscripts from the household as well as from the court, though my focus is primarily on manuscripts that moved through courtly readership (the Devonshire and the Arundel-Harington manuscripts in particular). Harold Love calls these groups "scribal communities" in "Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England," *Trans. Camb. Bibl. Soc.* 9.2(1987): 143. Though Love is discussing seventeenth-century texts, the phrase is helpful here too.

assumed to be Wyatt's own handwriting.⁴³ Other poems are written in the hand of a scribe, but then signed by Wyatt himself. But the Egerton was a more private collection, one created by his household for family use, and it seems to have circulated less than some of the other manuscripts from which we derive Wyatt's body of verse. However the Devonshire Manuscript (BL MS Add. 17492), from which much of Wyatt's verse is taken, was emblematic of its time. Early discussions of that collection revolved largely around the manuscript's ability to provide accurate source material for Wyatt's poems,⁴⁴ but more recently it has been understood as an example of the courtly circulation of poems and of the very "production, circulation, alteration, collection, and preservation" Arthur Marotti has compellingly documented.⁴⁵ The Devonshire manuscript contained one hundred sixty-seven lyrics that were "copied by at least twenty-three hands,"⁴⁶ and it "circulated in the manner of an autograph album." Its entries "would be appreciated by its closely-knit group of readers and contributors."⁴⁷ Wyatt's inclusion in the manuscript testifies to his circulation at court, and to Wyatt's place in a "scribal community" that

⁴³ Much of Wyatt's canon is based on his own autograph collection, Egerton BL Add. MS 2711. For more on the Egerton manuscript, see: Richard Harrier, *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975) 1-15, 95-97. Harrier argues that the Egerton Manuscript is "the keystone" of Wyatt's canon, and his transcription of the manuscript appears on pages 97 to 254. For more on Wyatt's manuscripts in general, see: R.A. Rebholz's edition: *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 1997) 9-17; and Kenneth Muir's edition *Sir Thomas Wyatt, Life and Letters* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1963) 222-224. Also see Raymond Southall's *The Courtly Maker: An Essay on the Poetry of Wyatt and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964) 1-25.

⁴⁴ For older discussions of the Devonshire manuscript see: Richard C. Harrier, *Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry*, 23-54; *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, ed. Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1969), xiii-xv; Kenneth Muir, "Unpublished Poems in the Devonshire MS," *Proc. of the Leeds Philos. And Lit. Soc.* 6.1.4 (1947): 253-82; Richard C. Harrier, "A Printed Source for the 'Devonshire Manuscript,'" *Review of English Studies: A Quarterly Journal of English Literature and the English Language*, 11.41 (1960): 54; and Raymond Southall, *The Courtly Maker: An Essay on the Poetry of Wyatt and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), 171-3.

⁴⁵ Marotti, 2. For more recent discussions of the Devonshire Manuscript, see: Julia Boffey, *Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics in the Later Middle Ages* (Suffolk: Brewer, 1985), 7-9, 69-72, 81-2, 117.

⁴⁶ Boffey, *Manuscripts*, 8-9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 8-9.

would have understood the carceral context of his lyric poems, regardless of how obscure or vague his references.

Wyatt's double sonnet "The flaming sighs that boil within my breast" appears in one of the manuscripts scholars have often relied on for the purposes of attribution, but which, like the Devonshire, really testifies more to the coterie circulation and readership of which Wyatt's work was a part: the Arundel Harington manuscript. Fittingly, the Arundel Manuscript carries its own prison mythology; for decades the manuscript was believed to have been compiled in the tower, and its history is itself tied to the prison tradition.⁴⁸ According to the manuscript's mythology, John Harington, the son of a gentlewoman of Queen Elizabeth I's privy chamber and a courtier in King James' court, compiled the Arundel Harington collection while he was locked in the Tower of London. Harington was in fact imprisoned twice, and on the first occasion he wrote love poetry and translated Cicero's *De amicitia*. Like many gentlemen prisoners, Harington used his incarceration for literary endeavors. It was believed that in 1554, during his second trip to the tower, he borrowed the now authoritative Egerton manuscript from a fellow prisoner: Sir Thomas Wyatt's son. Harington then was said to have copied the entirety of the Egerton manuscript creating what is now called the Arundel Harington manuscript. John Harington was himself a coterie reader and writer, and so the notion that he had created a manuscript by copying a collection previously produced by several hands is not all that far fetched. Still, it is now believed that the Arundel Manuscript was compiled after the

⁴⁸ Though Wyatt's 1815 editor G.F. Nott had access to what is now called the Arundel Harington manuscript, it was subsequently lost. Ruth Hughey rediscovered the manuscript in 1933 in Arundel Castle; the location of the manuscript's rediscovery explains why it now bears Arundel in its name. Hughey published an edition of the manuscript and a study of her discovery (which detailed the prison mythology I briefly discuss here) in 1960.

publication of *Tottel's Miscellany* in 1557⁴⁹, and that the miscellany may well have served as a source for the manuscript's compilation.

The Arundel Harington manuscript was contingent and collaborative, and serves to remind readers that poems may have traveled from manuscript to manuscript, but the poems may also have traveled from manuscript to print and back to manuscript again. No doubt the Arundel's entries were copied with the Wyatt family mythology as the context most informing the transcription. Wyatt's prison poems were read specifically as prison poems – the people in his social circle (George Blage, Henry Howard, John Harington, etc.) knew Wyatt had been imprisoned and would understand his discussion of wounds, scars, and fetters in terms of his imprisonment. And Wyatt, we must assume, was writing with a coterie audience in mind. Coterie readers were under the sway of Wyatt's biography, and Wyatt must have depended on this fact.

⁴⁹ See Marotti (61-3) for the traditionally held view that John Harington compiled the Arundel Harington Manuscript while imprisoned. For a succinct reading of why this is impossible, see: Jason Powell, "The Network Behind Tottel's Miscellany" *ELR* 46.2 (2016): 196-7.

III. The Cell is in the Stanza

In his landmark work on Wyatt, *The Courtly Maker: An Essay on the Poetry of Wyatt and His Contemporaries*, Raymond Southall asks readers to view all of Wyatt's poems as deeply immersed in a courtly tradition. Southall contends that "Henry's courtiers were encouraged to see life in terms of the romance of chivalry and courtly love."⁵⁰ Indeed, Henry went to great lengths to recreate courtly scenes and jousts, and he staged elaborate entertainments which didn't always seem appropriate in the political climate of his court: "at the court of Henry VIII, a deliberate attempt was made, largely upon the king's initiative, to resurrect the golden age of chivalry and courtly love."⁵¹ Though Wyatt was at court as early as 1516 when he served as Sewer Extraordinary, he was first noticed in one of Henry's pageants. Wyatt's biographer Kenneth Muir describes the event in some detail:

Edward Hall describes a feat of arms performed before the King at Christmastide 1524-5 by Wyatt and a group of courtiers closely associated with him, including Sir George Cobham (his brother-in-law), Sir Francis Bryan (to whom he addressed one of his satires), John Poins (to whom he addressed another) and Henry Norris, on whom he wrote an elegy. The Castle of Loyalty, occupied by four ladies of the Court, was to be defended by a Captain and fifteen gentlemen. Near the castle was to be erected a mount on which stood a unicorn, 'supportyng foure faire' shields. The Captain and his company promised to 'defend the said Castle against al comers.' The Castle was duly set up in the tilt-yard at Greenwich and 'when the strength of this castle was well beholden, many made dangerous to assault it, and some sayd it could not be wonne by sporte, but by earnest' . . . In the tournament that followed, watched by the Scottish ambassadors, the King particularly distinguished himself, breaking seven spears. On the same evening a Masque was performed . . .⁵²

⁵⁰ Southall, 55.

⁵¹ Ibid, 39.

⁵² Muir, 4.

As evidence of Henry's attempts to capture the "golden age," Southall offers a stunningly similar narrative: in 1511, as part of a New Year's celebration, Henry had a detailed mock castle built, and had six ladies imprisoned within its walls. Imprisonment, which was a common element in such courtly entertainments during the period (and a fact on which the Wyatt family mythology capitalized), carried a considerable degree of drama. Henry and five of his courtiers apparently stormed the castle, freed the ladies within, and then danced with them.⁵³ No expense was spared when it came to Henry's courtly entertainments, and his pageants seemed designed to mimic courtly ideals from a time Henry wished to recall.

The poems of the court, as much a part of "courtly entertainment" as Henry's elaborately staged jousts, were, according to Southall's analysis, saturated with the language of courtly love. Henry's chivalric displays coincided with the publication of Chaucer's works in 1532. "Troilus and Criseyde" was included in the volume, and "there are ten stanzas and a couplet in the Devonshire MS which have been copied directly from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*."⁵⁴ Southall regards the entirety of the Devonshire manuscript as a courtly anthology.⁵⁵ The presence of "Troilus and Criseyde" in that manuscript speaks to Chaucer's wide circulation and literary influence at court. Wyatt certainly knew the poem. In his epistolary satire "A spending hand that always poureth out" he makes direct reference to "Troilus and Criseyde," as he advises Brian "in this case thou be not so unwise / As Pandar was in such a like deed" (ll. 74-5). Chaucer's

⁵³ Southall, 39-40.

⁵⁴ Southall, 26.

⁵⁵ For Southall's discussion of the Devonshire Manuscript, see pages 4, 5 and 10 of *The Courtly Maker*. Also see the entirety of Chapter Two, entitled "A Courtly Anthology" (15-25).

famous character, and the language of courtly love, was more than familiar to Wyatt and his contemporaries.

Just as Henry's imitation of courtly practices "elaborate and artificial as they undoubtedly were, were not without a practical purpose," the poetry young courtiers wrote to entertain the court, infused with the language of courtly love, had "practical purposes" too.⁵⁶ In Southall's analysis, Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde" reveals the eight situations of the courtly lover: "freedom; falling in love; undeclared love; suit to the beloved; acceptance (rejection) by the lady; the joys (complaints) of the fortunate (unfortunate) lover and the observance of secrecy; the separation of the lover from his lady; the unfaithfulness of the lady."⁵⁷ Just as courtly practices, such as helping a lady onto her horse were performed in the service of social advancement, poetry infused with the language of love was made to serve political ends. What was described as a lady's unkind spite could be understood as a social slight or the King's displeasure. The separation of a lover from his lady became a separation of a courtier from the court. Many a love affair was still captured in the language of courtly love, but even those affairs were infused with the political reality of living under Henry. Secrecy designed to maintain a lady's honor became secrecy designed to save the lives of young lovers, who would not dare offend their brutal King.

Southall contends that Wyatt was a master at making the language of courtly love serve a practical purpose, for, in many of his poems, Wyatt is "dismissing the convention of courtly love as a myth, a fiction" by nearly erasing the beloved, and is instead "bringing attention to bear upon the psychological state of which the myth is an

⁵⁶ Southall, 55.

⁵⁷ Southall, 30.

expression.”⁵⁸ Wyatt, as his family history attests, was no stranger to myth, and so it is not surprising that he was able to manipulate the myth of courtly love with such dexterity. Wyatt used the conventions of courtly love to talk about the psychological strains of being a courtier, strains which could often sound like the complaint of a lover. Using the language of courtly love, Wyatt described the “insecure existence”⁵⁹ of the courtier, an existence that hung by “a slender thread” and which was dependent “upon the favour and affection of superiors.”⁶⁰ Put more directly, “there is one historical fact which must never be forgotten in reading the poems of courtiers: the absolute power of life and death in Henry’s hands.”⁶¹ Wyatt’s prison experience (and indeed, the experience of his entire family) was testimony to this fact.

The language of love served the most practical of purposes for Wyatt – it allowed him to perform the role of the prisoner steeped in a courtly poetic tradition so recognizable that any indictment of the monarch who had sentenced him might be explained away as tradition and poetic imitation. The Wyatt family’s mythmaking and Wyatt’s own keen sense of poetic tradition from the continent made him adept at using the language of myth and courtly love to capture the plight of the courtier and the plight of the prisoner. As a well-connected member of Henry’s court, Wyatt knew the dangers of a political life; his experiences in prison were testimony to that danger. And, as a well-connected member of the court, Wyatt was acutely aware of how important the circulation and performance of his time in prison would become to his survival and political position.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 72.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 72.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 47.

⁶¹ H.A. Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period* (London: Routledge, 1959), 49.

As the lovesick swain pines for his lady, Wyatt's prisoners pine for an audience. And in Wyatt's prison poems the speaker is performing the prison through the language of courtly love. This is what occurs in the Arundel Harrington/*Tottel's Miscellany* double sonnet, "The flaming sighs that boil within my breast":

The flaming sighs that boil within my breast
 Sometime break forth and they can well declare
 The heart's unrest and how that it doth fare,
 The pain thereof, the grief, and all the rest.
 The watered eyes from whence the tears do fall
 Do feel some force or else they would be dry.
 The wasted flesh of colour dead can try
 And something tell what sweetness is in gall.
 And he that list to see and to discern
 How care can force within a wearied mind,
 Come he to me: I am that place assigned.
 But for all this no force, it doth no harm.
 The wound, alas hap in some other place
 From whence not tool away the scar can rase.

But you that of such like have had your part
 Can best be judge. Wherefore, my friend so dear,
 I thought it good my state should now appear
 To you and that there is no great desert.
 And whereas you, in weighty matters great,
 Of fortune saw the shadow that you know,
 For trifling things I now am stricken so
 That, though I feel my heart doth wound and beat,
 I sit alone, save on the second day
 My fever comes with whom I spend the time
 In burning heat while that she list assign.
 And who hath health and liberty alway,
 Let him thank God and let him not provoke
 To have the like of this my painful stroke.

It is telling that when this poem was first published in Richard Tottel's *Miscellany Songes and Sonettes* in 1557,⁶² it appeared under the following heading: "The lover

⁶² Recent scholarship has established that Richard Tottel worked with a network of collaborators to compile his volume. For the most recent work on this, see: Jason Powell, "The Network Behind 'Tottel's Miscellany,'" *English Literary Renaissance* 46.2 (Boston: U of Chicago P, 2016) and J. Christopher

describeth his restlesse state” (69).⁶³ The first four lines of the poem seemingly support the descriptive heading found in the *Miscellany*. The first line sounds like the complaint of a lover, burning in his desire for a lady.⁶⁴ The third line seems lifted from the conventions of courtly love as well; this poem seems to be about “the heart’s unrest.” Yet most editors and critics agree that the heading, as it appeared in *Tottel’s*, does not represent the poem accurately.⁶⁵ The text of the poem makes it clear that the speaker is suffering from some unnamed “wound” that “hap in some other place,” – and though editors will only go so far as to indicate that Wyatt was imprisoned, the poem demands

Warner, *The Making and Marketing of Tottel’s Miscellany, 1557: Songs and Sonnets in the Summer of the Martyrs’ Fires* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013).

One older theory suggested that Nicholas Grimald (who had thirty poems in the first edition of *Songes and Sonettes* and only ten poems in each subsequent edition) was the editor. Christopher A Knott claimed that Grimald edited the volume in “Richard Tottell” *British Literary Booktrade, 1475-1700* (Detroit, MI: Gale, 1996. 308-13). See also H.J. Byrom’s “The Case for Nicholas Grimald as Editor of ‘Tottel’s Miscellany’” *MLR* 27 (1932). Edmund Arber was the first person to suggest Grimald was Tottel’s editor in his 1870 edition of *Songes and Sonettes*. Rollins calls the suggestion that Grimald edited *Tottel’s* “sheer speculation, and not very probably speculation at that” (II.89). Another theory suggests that John Harington of Stepney edited the volume. Harington, along with his son (Sir John Harington of Kelston) was thought to have compiled the Arundel Harington manuscript. Some suggested that *Tottel’s Miscellany* was based on that manuscript, and was in fact edited by its elder compiler. For this theory, see Richard Harrier’s *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975), 18, where Harrier admitted it is impossible to know the editor’s identity with certainty but nominates Harington as a possible candidate: “John Harington himself remains a logical candidate for Tottel’s editorship, although it is not possible to pinpoint his full contribution to the volume.” For more on the Arundel Harington manuscript, see Ruth Hughey’s edition *The Arundel Harington Manuscript of Tudor Poetry* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State UP, 1960). For Hughey’s discussion of John Harington and his son, see volume one, pages 3-67. Also see Arthur Marotti’s brief discussion of Harington and his manuscript (4, 61-3). These theories were getting a critical look by the end of the twentieth century, and by 2000, Marquis explained that “Though we know who published *Songes and Sonettes*, we do not know who edited the text” (147).

⁶³ *Songes and Sonettes*. Hyder Edward Rollins ed. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1966), 69.

⁶⁴ On page 46, Southall discusses Wyatt’s opening stanzas in other poems as being particularly marked by the language of courtly love. Southall does not address Wyatt’s double sonnet, but in first talking about “Who list his wealth and ease retain” and then “In mornyng wyse syns dayle I increase” he has the following to say: “Both this poem and that, also found in the Blage MS., which laments the deaths of the five councilors open with stanzas which are those of the lover’s complaint.”

⁶⁵ According to Wyatt’s most recent editor, R.A. Rebholz, “[Tottel] entitles this double sonnet: ‘The lover describeth his restless state.’ But Wyatt probably wrote the poem in prison in 1541 and is alluding to his condition as prisoner: illness of body and spirit (ll. 1-12) and that other ‘wound’ of disgrace, which, however ill deserved, will remain with him (ll. 13-23)” (362). Others have held the same opinion. Though Muir and Thomson make no mention of the matter in their 1968 edition, George Nott in his important 1815-1816 collection, *The Works of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and of Sir Thomas Wyatt, The Elder*, agrees with Rebholz: “The title given by the original Editor [Tottel] would refer the cause [of the speaker’s sorrow] to some disappointment in love. But there is nothing that warrants this supposition. He was confined twice in the Tower” (II.543).

that we understand it in terms of Wyatt's crafted prison persona – as the suffering but faithful courtier who cannot accuse his jailer but who seeks forgiveness and release. The persona in “The flaming sighes that boil within my breast” is a prisoner – his apparent isolation is a result of incarceration. This poem was possibly composed in 1541, while Wyatt was in the Tower for the second time. Editors question the title that appears in *Tottel's Miscellany* because the vague, unspecified “wound” of line thirteen leaves the speaker's source of pain somewhat mysterious. Southall's analysis of Wyatt's practical use of the conventions of courtly love paired with Wyatt's prison experience and family mythology certainly dispels some of this mystery; Wyatt was not talking about love, but was instead talking about the insecurities of his life through the useful language of love which he had inherited from Chaucer's “Troilus and Criseyde” and “Romaunt de la Rose.” But perhaps Tottel's compilers were sophisticated readers who knew that to understand “The flaming sighes that boil within my breast,” readers must understand the performance of the prisoner through the language of courtly love. The danger of such a performance was mediated through a language of love that the court would have recognized, and the language of love protected the poet from the temperamental whims of Henry.

In fact, the mysteriousness of the “wound” in line thirteen, or the “care” in line ten, is much like Wyatt's analysis of his troubles in his 1537 letter to his son, quoted above. His interpretation of his own misfortunes had to differ from his interpretation of his father's misfortunes; he could not blame the tyrant responsible for his persecution. Instead, he needed to either take the blame himself, or to speak in vague generalities. It was not the king, but unspecified “hazards” that were to blame for his imprisonment. In

Henry's court, truthful expression of one's misery was in constant conflict with the consequences of such expression. This conflict – serving and remaining loyal to a brutal and unpredictable king—was certainly not exclusively Wyatt's. He was a courtier, and like all courtiers he was subjected to the vicissitude of Henry's fickle nature. This conflict marked many of his poems, perhaps the most famous of which is his satire, "Mine own John Poyntz." Wyatt's epistolary masterpiece was written shortly after his miraculous release from The Tower in 1536. Though Wyatt was freed, he was released on the condition that he would return home to Allington. While living in a state of social exile, he depicted an imposed banishment as a principled choice.⁶⁶ When Wyatt's speaker tells his friend Poyntz "the cause why that homeward" he withdrew, he does not say it was because he was told to do so by royal edict (2). Instead, it is a principled position of withdrawal. He cannot abide those who "set their part" with "Venus and Bacchus," nor can he "speak and look like a saint, / Use wiles for wit and make deceit a pleasure" (22-3, 31-2). Wyatt's speaker catalogues the many evils at court he cannot stand, while deftly avoiding any mention of the king who sent him to prison unfairly and who now kept him away from court as well. The allusions to "Venus and Bacchus" trade on the courtly love tradition that cloaked so many of Wyatt's complaints.

Wyatt's double sonnet, "The flaming sighs that boil within my breast," is marked by the same deft ability to avoid naming the cause of his suffering. While Wyatt's diction

⁶⁶ This is not an unusual stance for Wyatt's speakers. See Michael McCanles, "Love and Power in the Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt" *Modern Language Quarterly* 29 (1968):156, where he claims that Wyatt's amoris persona "insists that his distrust of the lady and his fear of failure flow directly from his own open trustfulness." Even in the game of love, Wyatt's personae seem to gain strength by claiming their position is based on principle – on moral fortitude not found in those around them. See also Donald Guss, "Wyatt's Petrarchism: An Instance of Creative Imitation in the Renaissance" *Übersetzung und Nachahmung im Europäischen Petrarkismus: Studien und Texte*. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974) 224, where Wyatt's adaptations of Petrarch's sonnets serve to depict his "favorite theme – the magnanimity of a virtuous man who has been ill-treated."

is a careful calculation of implication that avoids naming the source of the speaker's misery, the poem's form is marked by carefree expression. Southall claims that Wyatt's "basic interest" in exploring his "insecure existence" is evident in his use of rhythm.⁶⁷ But here, in the double sonnet, Wyatt's interest in exploring his "insecure existence" is expressed primarily in the expansion of the sonnet form – formal play that dramatically expresses the plight of the prisoner persona. Wyatt's courtly life demanded he communicate his pain in the language of courtly love, but it did not prevent the poet from capturing his insecurities and desires in the movement (and the expansion) of his lines. The formal experimentation in Wyatt's double sonnet enacts the explosion of feeling his diction works hard to contain.

The poem's diction is calculatingly vague, a vagueness which, as explored above, would have been understood by a knowing coterie. The creative heading in *Tottel's Miscellany* attests to the poem's ambiguity, and indeed, many an editor has called the poem nearly inscrutable because of its persistent vagueness.⁶⁸ The speaker will not tell the source of his "painful stroke" (28). Instead, the speaker will refer again and again to some unnamed hurt: it is his "heart's unrest," his "care," a "wound," a "state" (3, 10, 13, 17). Line twenty-one of the poem comes closest to qualifying these vague nouns when it offers an adjective: "For trifling things I now am stricken so." "Trifling" is the only

⁶⁷ Southall, 72.

⁶⁸ When discussing Wyatt's use of punctuation, Rebholz says that some readers think that Wyatt "intentionally used little or no punctuation in order to create ambivalent meanings" (14). Wyatt's biographer, Kenneth Muir complained that "Again and again he writes of the pain and smart of love, of the cruelty, disdain, deceit and faithlessness of women, of the absence of pity and steadfastness" (243). Muir ultimately concludes that many of Wyatt's poems are "undistinguished" because of this vague repetition, and ends his biography with a backhanded compliment calling Wyatt "less labored" than other Elizabethan writers (260). Long before Muir or Rebholz, George F. Nott said Wyatt had "an uncertainty and want of precision in his style" (2.cliii). And much more recently, Jeff Dolven has talked about the other accusations that have dogged Wyatt's poetry over the last century: "his often entangled syntax, his ambiguous pronouns, and his spacious use of prepositions" (65). For a helpful discussion of this seemingly ongoing debate, see: Jeff Dolven, "Reading Wyatt for the Style," *Modern Philology* (2008): 65-67.

qualifier the speaker offers. He is subjected to his current state of isolation because of something trivial or inconsequential. Like Wyatt's "Mine own John Poyntz," the double sonnet deftly avoids mentioning the source of its speaker's conflict or pain. Without the context Wyatt's family history and personal experience provide, readers would be altogether unable to identify the "wound." Yet the wound, by logic of Wyatt's family mythology, and by the context provided by the courtly milieu and readership, is his imprisonment.

One thing the poem is clear about is the speaker's state of isolation; the fact that the speaker of Wyatt's double sonnet is alone becomes painfully obvious when in lines twenty-two and twenty-four of the poem he admits that his heart and his intermittent fever are his only companions. That the speaker's solitary existence is not one of choice also becomes clear when he tells those "who hath health and liberty" to "thank God" for their fortune (26-7). In addressing those who have their "liberty" in such a way, Wyatt's speaker implies that he possesses no such freedom himself, and is instead the very example of the agony the lucky men of line twenty-six have managed to avoid by the grace of God. Wyatt's speaker is a prisoner, a persona created by an incarcerated man to reflect the longings of one who desires an audience. His longing is seen in his physical distress; like a Petrarchan lover, the speaker's pain seems to issue from his heart, which he calls the seat of his "unrest" (3). And like a Petrarchan lover, he "boils" and "sighs," signs which, according to the speaker, "can well declare" his misery to anyone who wishes to look upon him. Indeed the prisoner and the Petrarchan lover seemingly have similar goals. The Petrarchan lover seeks to move an apparently cold or idealized woman with his shows of misery and pain; his exaggerated emotional display is, in fact, a

performance, designed to draw the attention of his lady. His pain, in Sir Philip Sidney's famous formulation "might pity win," and pity might, after all, make her more apt to accept his advances (4). The prisoner also seeks to display his pain, for a performance of misery might move an onlooker, end his lonely isolation, draw some attention to his plight, or make the king who sent him to the tower reconsider his decision.

So the speaker depicts his isolation as agony, as physical and psychological torment. The speaker's skin has turned a morbid gray, an appearance usually reserved for the malnourished or particularly ill: "the wasted flesh of colour dead" (7). The speaker's intermittent fever that serves as his companion not only tells of his isolation, but also of his physical deterioration as well. The poem literalizes Petrarchan conceits usually reserved for the melodramatic; while lovers imagine they are simultaneously hot with fever and freezing with cold, Wyatt's speaker experiences both states simultaneously. A prisoner locked in a damp cell above a wretched moat would certainly feel both dampness and illness – the poem dramatizes the assumed state of one incarcerated, much like Henry Wyatt's hunger and cold in Thomas Wyatt's letter to his son. "Care" weakens the speaker's body, and it has burdened his mind too. Indeed, he considers himself the very model of psychological distress: "he that list to see and to discern / How care can force within a wearied mind. / Come he to me" (9-11). But the speaker seems to mention his psychological distress only to link it directly to his physical deterioration; that is, his mental anguish is the source of the more tangible signs of his suffering. His fevers, his wasted flesh, his tears, all outward shows of pain, are the emblems that might earn him an audience. His psychological distress is not described as his foremost concern, but as the cause of the ailments that might win him pity.

It is as a model of misery and isolation that the speaker offers himself up, issuing an invitation to those who “list to see and to discern” misery (9). Entreating the anonymous “he” of line nine, the speaker asks to be seen, to be “acknowledged,” as the seat of a broken body and the home of a burdened mind that causes his deterioration: “I am that place assigned” (11). In line fifteen of the poem, the anonymous “he” of line nine is transformed to a particular “you,” and it is at this moment that the speaker’s focus on drawing the attention of others is made explicit: “I thought it good my state should now appear / To you” (17-18). Despite his stoic claim in the first half of the double sonnet, that although his outward suffering depicts pain, his “real wound” is in “some other place,” the speaker clearly wants others to see his “state” as miserable. Wyatt’s speaker is making a paradoxical complaint to be sure; on the one hand he is a moral spokesman for unmerited punishment (he is, after all, punished for “trifling things”). On the other hand, he is wearing his suffering as a costume. Hardly moral, the speaker’s pageantry of pain belies his stoic “all this no force, it doth no harm” (12). The “harm,” in actuality, is his point, and he returns to it again and again to seek the attention of others.

The speaker’s mind is always bent outward; he describes, in excruciating detail, the condition of his ailing body (a sickly body which recalls the starvation his father cleverly avoided by training the prison cat), and the signs of his misery (his sighs, his tears, his fever) for the strict purpose of performing them so others might see. He seeks to garner the attention of those beyond his cell – he seeks acknowledgement, pity, and perhaps release. The longing of Wyatt’s prisoner to move beyond the small space assigned to him as a punishment, is seen at every moment in the poem, and the formal qualities of the double sonnet serve only to emphasize the speaker’s outward focus.

Indeed, formally, the poem enacts the very outward movement the speaker so desires. Without mentioning incarceration, the speaker makes it clear that his mind is set on the world outside the cell – the poem threatens at every moment to break open.

Wyatt's double sonnet "The flaming sighs that boil within my breast," is best understood as a deviation from the Italian form Wyatt was so eager to imitate and manipulate.⁶⁹ His double sonnet violates the most basic principle of sonnet form: it has twenty-eight lines, not fourteen. This variation is the formal reflection of the speaker's obsession with his body and with people beyond the limits of his cell. Wyatt's speaker invites his audience to witness his wasted condition, for, those who "list to see and to discern" a wasted man, the speaker beckons: "come he to me" (9-11). Wyatt's speaker invites all who will listen: come see the show.

Therefore the poem does not end at line fourteen, as the Italian tradition dictates. Instead, the speaker continues his plea for fellowship, for human company: "I thought it good my state should now appear to you" (17). That is, the speaker thinks it good to continue to tell about his "state," rather than commit to the silence the closed sonnet form would require. The second sonnet spills out of the first, just as the speaker's sighs "sometime break forth" and his tears "do fall" (2, 5). Perhaps "breaking forth," an image wrought with violence, best characterizes the existence of the second sonnet. After all, the first fourteen lines hammer the reader with "force," a word which appears three times in the space of six lines, and which always appears on a stressed syllable. The speaker

⁶⁹ Wyatt's translations of Petrarch are known for their ability to carefully alter the model from which they were derived. Stephen Greenblatt's discussion of Wyatt's translation of "Whoso List to Hunt" illustrates this point (*Renaissance Self-fashioning*, 145-150). Though I am not dealing with a direct translation above, Wyatt's double sonnet is reminiscent of Petrarch's Sonnet 102 "Ite, caldi sospiri, al freddo core" which Wyatt translated as Rondeau III, "Go, burning sighs, unto the frozen heart." The "burning sighs" of Rondeau III seem remarkably like the burning sighs of the double sonnet.

insists that he feels some “force” or “care” – a compulsion compelling him to continue, regardless of the prescribed silence dictated by a closed poetic form.

Traditional Petrarchan sonnets are associated with an octave and sestet division. The octave ordinarily carried an ABBAABBA rhyme scheme, while the sestet was more flexible – CDECDE or CDCDCD can both be found in Petrarch’s sequence. A semantic or logical shift (the volta or turn) usually corresponded with the move from the octave to the sestet. The first fourteen lines of Wyatt’s double sonnet deviate from the traditional Italian rhyme scheme; the octave is ABBACDDC. But, the turn in the sonnet’s logic does come after the conclusion of line eight:

The flaming sighs that boil within my breast
Sometime break forth and they can well declare
The heart’s unrest and how that it doth fare,
The pain thereof, the grief, and all the rest.
The watered eyes from whence the tears do fall
Do feel some force or else they would be dry.
The wasted flesh of colour dead can try
And something tell what sweetness is in gall.
And he that list to see and to discern
How care can force within a wearied mind,
Come he to me: I am that place assigned.
But for all this no force, it doth no harm.
The wound, alas hap in some other place
From whence not tool away the scar can rase.

Despite the fact that the rhyme scheme is not Italian according to our modernly held definitions, the logic of the poem certainly proceeds as an Italian sonnet would; the first eight lines detail the speaker’s wounds, and come to a full stop: “gall.” The next six lines consist of an invitation; the sestet is dedicated to the speaker’s seeking an audience to view his wounds and “wasted flesh” from line seven of the poem. The balance between octave and sestet is carefully maintained. While the first eight lines of the first sonnet seek to describe the speaker’s “wasted” physical appearance (his skin has turned a

morbid gray, “of colour dead”), the last six lines signal the speaker’s interest in inviting onlookers: “he that list to see” (7, 9). The first fourteen lines of Wyatt’s “The flaming sighs” is a fairly traditional Italian sonnet.

Yet the rhyme scheme demands a closer look, largely because in it we see the roots of what readers and critics would come to call the English sonnet. Wyatt was, and often still is, understood as the progenitor of the English sonnet form. And it is telling that despite the octave/sestet division that plays out in the logic of the poem, the skeleton of the English quatrain structure seems to linger underneath. The first four lines of the poem end with a period, signaling the termination of a thought (tellingly finished with the word “rest”) at the same moment the ABBA rhyme pattern ends: “The pain thereof, the grief, and all the rest.” (4). This is also the case at the end of line eight, where the rhyme pattern corresponds to a semantic (logical shift) and syntactic shift (“gall.”). The first half of Wyatt’s double sonnet is doubly bound by tradition and innovations that would become definitional – it adheres to Italian principles and seems to foreshadow the bounds that would soon become the standard English sonnet form. It is controlled and contained.

This containment disappears as the second sonnet spills out of the first, and in the second sonnet lines run on and meaning seems to overflow its prescribed bounds:

But you that of such like have had your part
 Can best be judge. Wherefore, my friend so dear,
 I thought it good my state should now appear
 To you and that there is no great desert.
 And whereas you, in weighty matters great,
 Of fortune saw the shadow that you know,
 For trifling things I now am stricken so
 That, though I feel my heart doth wound and beat,
 I sit alone, save on the second day
 My fever comes with whom I spend the time
 In burning heat while that she list assign.
 And who hath health and liberty alway,

Let him thank God and let him not provoke
To have the like of this my painful stroke.

There is no period at the end of line eight, and though there is a pause (signaled by a comma), there is no break: “I feel my heart doth wound and beat, / I sit alone” (22-3). As the speaker invokes the rhythmic pulsing of his heart, the reader can pause but not stop, and is pushed to the speaker’s most succinct statement of his condition in the whole poem: “I sit alone” (23). The sestet, which in an Italian sonnet is typically distinguished from the octave in both rhyme and sense, is violated by the extension of the octave into its space. The punctured sestet continues the formal play apparent in the octave; words spill over the lines just as the second poem spilled out of the first:

And who hath health and liberty always,
Let him thank God and let him not provoke
To have the like of this my painful stroke. (26-8)

The speaker, who believes he is incarcerated over “trifling things,” is prompted by his consideration of “liberty” to continue rapidly, and perhaps worse, the speaker’s conclusion that God is to be “thanked” for “health and liberty” suggests a chilling question: has God denied the speaker both these things? The suggestion of this question and its awful answer, paired with the speaker’s mention of “liberty,” pushes him through the last two lines of the poem without pause or stop. Throughout the second sonnet, caesura forces the reader to pause when she doesn’t expect to, and enjambment forces her to continue when she expects to pause. One’s reading of the second sonnet is disrupted, and indeed, the very proportions that define the Italian sonnet as a form are disrupted. This flouting of convention and this breaking of the bounds that typically enclose the Italian sonnet, represent the formal expression of the speaker’s obsession with those beyond the limits of his cell.

The etymology of the word “stanza” explains Wyatt’s choice to use the closed sonnet form. Published in 1603, Samuel Daniel’s *A Defense of Rhyme* capitalized on this etymology when explaining the necessity for controlled rhyme in sonnets, the kind of rhyme that would provide “closes” for the passion that might otherwise overrun the poem. In his response to Thomas Campion, Daniel leadingly wonders: “is it not most delightful to see much excellently ordered in a small room.”⁷⁰ In Daniel’s formulation, the “room” to which he refers is a sonnet. Of course in Italian, a “stanza” is literally a stopping place or a room. Used as a literary term, a stanza is a “group of lines of verse (usually not less than four), arranged according to a definite scheme which regulates the number of lines, the metre, and (in rhymed poetry) the sequence of rhymes” (OED 1). The literal meaning of “stanza” informs its poetic use; a “stanza” in a poem is a contained unit, a place to stop, a tiny room. There are, of course, many kinds of stanzas, and as the OED definition explains, a stanza is also “any of the particular types of structure according to which stanzas are framed” (OED 1). A sonnet is a group of lines (more than four), prepared “according to a definite scheme” which dictates its number of lines, the lengths of those lines, and even its rhyme scheme. A sonnet is also a “particular structure,” that is, the term “sonnet,” conjures an immediate outline of a particular form. A sonnet is therefore a stanza, a conclusion John Donne’s “The Canonization” made famous: “We’ll build in sonnets pretty rooms” (32). To write a sonnet is to work in a particular stanza form; and as Donne describes it, to write a sonnet is also to build “a room.”

⁷⁰ Samuel Daniel, *Poems and A Defence of Ryme*, ed. Arthur Colby Sprague (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1930), 138.

By the time Donne composed “The Canonization,” the sonnet was a well-recognized type of poem; indeed a sonnet had become a famous lyric form, and was understood as a poem in itself. The term “sonnet,” however, did not acquire that meaning until 1557, when *Tottel’s Miscellany* identified a sonnet as a particular kind of poem. Wyatt may not ever have used the term sonnet, and if he had, he may have used it to mean any number of “short poem[s] or piece[s] of verse . . . of a lyrical and amatory character” (OED 2). When Wyatt composed what we now call his sonnets, he was likely thinking of Petrarch’s *Rime*, and of a particular stanza form. A “stanza” form guided his composition, and, for an ambassador who had served in Italy and who spoke fluent Italian, stanza’s literal meaning of “room” would have been foremost in his understanding of the term. Though Wyatt was not “building in sonnets,” he was building a room because he was writing a stanza. Rather than reflect on incarceration in a ballad (a more recognizable form Wyatt used for other matters), Wyatt chose to write in a form still unrecognized in England. In so doing, Wyatt captured (and then escaped) his prisoner’s cell in a stanza.

Wyatt’s family mythology and reliance on coterie circulation allows readers to name the mysterious wound – and gives added importance to the prisoner persona found in poems referred to as “written in prison.” This detail deserves attention when the poet was struggling to express an injustice whose expression might lead to more punishment. Indeed, Wyatt’s biography is frightening here – it is tempting to call the speaker in Wyatt’s prison poems Wyatt himself. One need not make so bold a statement to accept that Wyatt was peculiarly positioned to create a prisoner persona. What the speaker in his double sonnet is unable to say explicitly, he demonstrates formally. When Wyatt’s

incarcerated speaker explodes the boundaries associated with Petrarch, we might imagine him enacting a kind of prison break – though he seems more intent on inviting others into his cell than leaving it himself.

The speaker's performance of his misery, and his desire to garner the attention of those beyond his cell must not be confused with a desire for freedom. The speaker does not ask to be released; instead, he invites his audience to join him: "come he to me" (11). He reminds his imagined listener that he is "assigned" this place – this incarceration is a kind of duty or employment. And in line seventeen the speaker declares that it is "good" his state should now appear to his audience. What "good" is there in the Tower? What "good" can be found in "wasted flesh of colour dead?"

For Wyatt, the "assignment" of incarceration was a royal edict, and to receive attention from the monarch, however uncomfortable that attention might have been, confirmed his place in court life. Thomas Hannen maintains that the goal for a true humanist (as opposed to Scholastics and Platonists) "was an eloquence that would combine wisdom with rhetorical skill so as to produce virtuous action in both speaker and audience."⁷¹ While someone like Erasmus had no problem limiting his action to writing, other humanists, like More, had to debate the value of the contemplative life versus the active life. For More, the retirement suggested by Seneca was always an attractive option, but "he thought it necessary to engage in politics in order to maintain the consistency of his ideas."⁷² Wyatt did not face the same struggle; his father raised him to be a courtier, and retiring from courtly life never emerged as an option in his poems. For Wyatt, the "agony" was finding "a way to maintain his integrity while he continue[d] to be fully

⁷¹ Thomas Hannen, "The Humanism of Sir Thomas Wyatt," *The Rhetoric of Renaissance Poetry From Wyatt to Milton* (Berkeley: California UP, 1974), 41.

⁷² Hannen, 42.

involved in the ever changing patterns of court intrigue.”⁷³ His “assignment” to prison was indeed a sign of his courtly involvement – an emblem and a result of his humanist belief in the active life. Wyatt’s wasted condition served to display his role in Henry’s court; his willingness to endure hardship for his king recalls the Wyatt family mythology rooted in Henry Wyatt’s suffering for King Henry VII. Suffering for the sake of (or even because of) one’s monarch was the highest form of “good” the Wyatts could imagine. A trip to the Tower attested to Wyatt’s active life at court, while his stoic acceptance of his deterioration allowed him to “maintain his integrity.” Wyatt’s speakers maintained this performative posture as the signature of Wyatt’s prison poems.

Wyatt’s prisoner persona again enacts the state of incarceration formally in the epigram “Lucks, my fair falcon, and your fellows all” by clipping rather than extending a form.⁷⁴ Patricia Thomson calls “Lucks” a formal triumph, and while praising Wyatt’s imagery she maintains that “the freedom of the falcons contrasts with his own lack of it.”⁷⁵ This is particularly striking because on the preceding page Thomson warns in a footnote that there can “be no absolute certainty in dating” any of the poems.⁷⁶ And indeed, this epigram’s dating is uncertain. It may have been written in 1540 just after Cromwell’s fall, or in 1541 after Wyatt had been released from yet another stay in the Tower. Why then is Thomson so quick to suggest that Wyatt’s speaker is incarcerated? In fact, her comment might imply that the speaker is Wyatt, actually incarcerated. Certainly

⁷³ Ibid, 42.

⁷⁴ For more on Wyatt’s strambotti, see: Stephen Merriam Foley’s *Sir Thomas Wyatt* (48-51); Elizabeth Heale’s *Wyatt, Surrey and Early Tudor Poetry* (83-86); Patricia Thomson’s *Sir Thomas Wyatt and his Background* (232) and “Wyatt and the School of Serafino,” *Comparative Literature* 13(1961):289-315; and E.M.W. Tillyard’s *The Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt: A Selection and a Study* (30).

⁷⁵ Thomson, Patricia, “Wyatt and the School of Serafino,” *Comparative Literature* 13(1961): 313.

⁷⁶ Thomson, *Serafino*, 312.

the poem makes no explicit reference to imprisonment; though the speaker praises the liberty of the falcons, he makes no indication that his own liberty has been curtailed:

Lucks, my fair falcon, and your fellows all,
 How well pleasant it were your liberty!
 Ye not forsake me that fair might ye befall.
 But they that sometime liked my company,
 Like lice away from dead bodies they crawl.
 Lo, what a proof in light adversity!
 But ye, my birds, I swear by all your bells,
 Ye be my friends and so be but few else.

Though the speaker's friends have apparently abandoned him, he calls his situation a "light adversity" (6). This might not, unless one is reading with Wyatt's biography in mind, imply that the speaker's situation is as dire as that of a prisoner of the Tower.

But Thomson's comment about the speaker's (or Wyatt's) "lack of freedom" is telling; it points to the power of the prison mythology that the Wyatts themselves cultivated as an essential context for understanding the poem. The prisoner persona Wyatt cultivated demands we see the speaker in this poem as an inmate whether he actually was or not. Regardless of its dating, this poem is clearly concerned with the alienation a prisoner suffers; the falcon "Lucks" is told how "pleasant his liberty" is, and is praised for staying by his master though his master's friends do not (his friends are actually parasites, who "like lice away from dead bodies crawl"). The poem is based, of course, on a paradox; Wyatt's speaker praises the freedom of a creature that is by no means free. Lucks, a trained falcon (he is even "belled"), returns because he must. But the falcon, a trained possession (perhaps a lot like Wyatt, a humanist courtier who understood his life in terms of his service to the crown – free to travel but not free to

venture far from his monarch)⁷⁷ is still free to roam within a prescribed area. Wyatt's prisoner was not. And once the prisoner persona is recognized, the poem reflects the prisoner's limitation formally by clipping each of the lines. A strambotto is a six or eight line poem of Italian origin, and was typically comprised of hendecasyllabic lines. It is often understood as the origin of ottava rima, also an eight line form with hendecasyllabic lines. Wyatt's poem contains only one hendecasyllabic line: "Ye not forsake me that fair ye might befall" (3). All seven of the remaining lines are cut short, each contains only ten syllables, and each is marked with a stop, either in the form of a comma, a period or an exclamation point. Unlike "The flaming sighs, which boil within my breast" which seeks to extend form, to get beyond its limitations, "Lucks" is clipped (perhaps like some trained birds), and it enacts the frightening limitation of incarceration – the prohibition on movement and the serious alienation from the world inherent in the prison experience.

Wyatt's prisoner persona, created from a family history of confinement and personal experience in the Tower, elucidates the "vague" diction of his double sonnet and goes a long way toward explaining the formal irregularities for which Wyatt's poems have often been criticized. More importantly, the Wyatt family mythology paired with a knowing and knowledgeable coterie audience invites readers to understand Wyatt's prison poems as performances; by displaying his suffering to his courtly audience, Wyatt simultaneously confirmed his place in their ranks.

⁷⁷ Greenblatt puts Wyatt's conception of his service to the realm succinctly: "'Yet will I serve my prince, my lord and thine.' This is the ideal Wyatt himself inherited from his father, the self-conception of his profession and indeed of his whole social class. This is the principle they repeatedly invoke to explain to others and above all to themselves their difficult, anxious careers, to make moral sense out of apparent moral chaos, to ward off the claims of competing conceptions of service, such as those embraced by More or Tyndale. This is, in one line of monosyllabic verse, the justification of an entire existence" (133).

Chapter 2. Expressive Regularity in Surrey's "When Windesor walles" and "So Cruel Prison"

For centuries, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt have been discussed as companion poets. Critical perspectives on whose poetry was inherently better, smoother, more influential, or more neo-classical, have shifted with time, but for literally hundreds of years, readers and critics have discussed their works in tandem.¹ The reasons for these consistently and inherently comparative discussions are many, but the anthologizing of both Wyatt and Surrey in 1557 in Richard Tottel's landmark collection may have much to do with this critical habit. Of the two hundred-eighty poems contained in that miscellany, Wyatt's poems represent ninety of them. Surrey's poems represent another thirty-seven.² Together they comprise more than half of the volume. And although Surrey's name appears in the full title, *Songes and Sonettes, written by the right honorable Lorde Henry Howard late Earle of Surrey, and other*, while Wyatt's does not

¹ To some extent critical debates on the superiority of one poet over the other still rage on (though often times the debate continues despite critical disavowals of the topic). For a reading of *Tottel's Miscellany* as the forerunner of these debates, see: Jonathan Crewe, *Trials of Authorship: Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstruction from Wyatt to Shakespeare* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1990), where Tottel gave Surrey "prominent billing," and attempted to "assimilate all courtly lyrics and their makers to the Surrey *imago*" (50). George Puttenham, in his 1589 *The Arte of English Poesie* (Kent State UP, 1970), claims to have been unable to distinguish between Wyatt and Surrey at all: "Henry Earle of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyat, betweene whom I finde very little difference" (76). By the 1970s prevailing attitudes had shifted – Surrey was considered a boring representative of his time, while Wyatt's irregularities were being praised for their passion. See: C.W. Jentoft, "Surrey's Five Elegies: Rhetoric, Structure, and the Poetry of Praise," *PMLA* 91.1 (1976), where "Surrey's poetry has usually been given credit only as a useful contribution to the development of English prosody and then dismissed" (23). For a more recent and helpful summary of the critical debate on Wyatt versus Surrey, see: J. Christopher Warner, *The Making and Marketing of Tottel's Miscellany, 1557: Songs and Sonnets in the Summer of the Martyrs' Fires* (Burlington: Ashgate) 2013. 2. ² I am referring to the groupings of the poems from the second printing of the miscellany on July 31, 1557 (known as the Elizabethan version) because that grouping would remain in place for the rest of the miscellany's printed history. That July printing is the text on which Paul Marquis based his newest edition. For a discussion of that edition, see: Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, et al, *Richard Tottel's Songes and Sonettes: The Elizabethan Version*, ed. Paul A. Marquis (Tempe, 2007). For a detailed discussion of the publication history of Richard Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes*, see: Warner 10-11, 215-20.

(foregrounding Surrey's aristocratic name³ was no doubt a ploy to boost sales based on the Earl's cultural cache) the miscellany established them both as literary models for would-be authors and as pillars of literary merit for avid readers.⁴ By 1589 George Puttenham was already describing Wyatt and Surrey as "the two chief lanterns of light to all others that have since employed their pens upon English poesy."⁵ Whether or not his valuation of their work is deemed accurate, the pairing of the authors had already become literary habit by the end of the sixteenth century.

But the tendency to discuss the poets as a pair is more likely to have started even before *Tottel's Miscellany* appeared, and probably has its origins in Surrey's own words. His epitaph "Wyatt resteth here, that quick could never rest" is often quoted as evidence of Surrey's deep admiration for Wyatt's work: "But Wiat said true, the skarre doth aye endure" (28.1, 34.6).⁶ Like his poems would do again and again, Surrey quotes the model he sought to imitate and praise. He praised and imitated Wyatt in less quoted and less formally occasional pieces too; Surrey's poems about Wyatt paint him as an eternal

³ In 1557, Wyatt's name might not have been included in the volume's title because his son, Thomas Wyatt the younger, had just been executed for participating in a rebellion against Queen Mary. Associating the miscellany with a rebel's name would not have been politically expeditious. For a more detailed discussion of the political considerations that may have shaped the miscellany's title, see: Hyder Rollins, *Songes and Sonettes* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1966), II.65.

⁴ I use the term "author" with reservations, knowing full well that "authorship" in sixteenth-century England was a vexed and exclusionary title. For more on the ways in which the category of "authorship" excluded on the basis of class and gender, see: Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier, eds. *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989); Jacqueline Miller, *Poetic License: Authority and Authorship in Medieval and Renaissance Contexts* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986); Margaret Hannay, ed., *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Ohio: Kent State UP, 1985); Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977). For more on the shifting and collaborative nature of authorship in manuscript, coterie culture, see: Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995).

⁵ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*. ed. G.D. Wilcock and A. Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970).

⁶ All quotations of Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey's poetry are taken from Emrys Jones's following edition unless otherwise indicated: *Henry Howard Earl of Surrey: Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964). I give the poem number, followed by the lines cited.

source of wisdom and truth, imagining that Wyatt's psalm translations deserved as rich a canister as Alexander the Great procured for the works of Homer: "what wourthy sepulture / To Wyates Psalmes shulde Christians then purchase?" (31.5-6). Surrey's poems established Wyatt as an important literary figure just as much as *Tottel's Miscellany* and George Puttenham would go on to do.

Surrey's famous elegy for his contemporary, "Wyatt resteth here, that quick could never rest," does more than praise Wyatt's skill or quote from his poems. It demonstrates a keen understanding of Wyatt's signature vagueness – the ambiguity that allowed Wyatt to talk about the perceived injustices that landed him in prison without explicitly blaming the king. Lines 29 to 36 of Surrey's epitaph on Wyatt demonstrate this keen understanding:

A valiant corps, where force and beauty met;
Happy, alas, to happy, but for foes . . .

But to the heavens that simple soule is fled,
Which left with such as covet Christ to know
Witnesse of faith that never shall be ded;
Sent for our helth, but not received so. (27)

Surrey, a product of a humanist education that still put significant emphasis on rhetorical training,⁷ was writing an elegy in the standard style; here, after lamenting the loss of

⁷ Surrey's father, the third Duke of Norfolk, did not approve of the "new learning" (*Henry Howard, the Poet Earl of Surrey*, 11). But regardless of who tutored Surrey (John Clerke, the Poet Laureate John Skelton, or Stephen Gardiner are all possibilities), Surrey's curriculum consisted of the following: "Besides Latin, possibly some Greek, and certainly the dominant modern foreign languages, Surrey's curriculum also consisted of philosophical disciplines like logic, still grounded firmly in the old Scholastic methods although newly interpreted into forms like Agricola's place-logic, which were really stratagems of language. By Surrey's twelfth birthday, Norfolk had already begun to boast of his son's unusual linguistic talents and typically planned to make use of them" (Sessions, *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey*, 4). The fact that Surrey had learned to speak so many languages testifies to the kind of rhetorical approach of not only Agricola's *De Invenione*, but also of Erasmus's *De Copia*, where the focus was on amassing "ample resources of eloquence" (Vickers, 82). The amassing of languages was like the amassing of rhetorical figures and tropes, and by 1553 Peter Schade's *Tabulae de schematibus et tropis*, which consisted of a table of 98 figures, was in its eighth edition. Students were encouraged to hang this table in clear view so that

Wyatt, and after capturing his many virtues, Surrey's speaker looks to console. Strangely, his consolation cannot find the reason for Wyatt's death: "covet Christ to know." In what has become a seminal article on Surrey's elegies, C.W. Jentoft understood this line in the following way: "The ambiguous references lead us to infer that God took Wyatt's life to punish Englishmen for their failure to appreciate his 'vertues'" (26).⁸ I would certainly agree with Jentoft's claim that Surrey's "references are ambiguous," but I would also argue that Surrey's ambiguity leads us to infer a great deal more than that – Surrey had studied the prison poems of Wyatt and had understood, with a searing kind of clarity, how to mimic the persistent vagueness that allowed Wyatt to discuss his incarceration without naming the monarch who was responsible.

According to Surrey's epitaph, Wyatt would have been happy in his life had he not been beset by unnamed "foes." The source of Wyatt's unhappiness is never named, and his foes remain anonymous too. But the coterie that had received Wyatt's prison poems, and which would have been reading Surrey's epitaph of Wyatt, knew that Wyatt's most devastating and dangerous imprisonment had been the result of Henry's scheme to procure a divorce from Anne Boleyn. That reality never gets articulated in Surrey's poem, just as Wyatt had never articulated that truth in his own prison poems, and yet that specter lingers over the lines now, just as it would have to sixteenth-century readers. By employing Wyatt's vagueness, Surrey testified to his having understood the prison performance. Surrey consciously cultivated his association with Wyatt, both explicitly and implicitly; Surrey charted an explicit connection by referring to Wyatt by name and

they could be reminded of the rhetorical figures, and so that over time they could memorize all of them for use in their own writing (Vickers, 87).

⁸ C.W. Jentoft, "Surrey's Five Elegies: Rhetoric, Structure, and the Poetry of Praise," *PMLA* 91.1 (1976): 23-32.

by echoing his diction in his poems, and he drew an implicit connection by imitating the subtle ambiguity of Wyatt's prison persona.

Surrey might best be understood as Wyatt's most avid reader, one whose appreciation of Wyatt's prison performance was informed by his humanist education and by his own imprisonments. Surrey learned from Wyatt's "self-fashioning" as a prisoner; Wyatt's lyric performances, which allowed him to stay in contact with the court during his imprisonments through its coterie readership, but which never resulted in his beheading, was flawless. Wyatt's and Surrey's companionship should be understood as having roots in their shared histories of courtly punishment and isolation. Surrey styled their companionship, in part, on their kindred prison experiences, and his prison poems reflect this connection.

Surrey's "So crewell prison" and "When Windsor walles" are the focus of this chapter because they are some of the earliest and most influential prison poems in the sixteenth century. They are often anthologized and singled out as literary precedents of one kind or another. They also demonstrate their debt to Wyatt's prison mythology and his shaping of the prison persona. "So crewell prison" is one of the most frequently anthologized poems in Surrey's oeuvre.⁹ It is often referred to as the first English elegy, and has been called the forerunner to Spenser's "Astrophel" and Milton's "Lycidas."¹⁰

⁹ A quick look at the table of contents in many anthologies of poetry will demonstrate this point. For example, the very generalized *Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume 1* (Norton: New York, 1993, 455) includes Surrey's "So Cruel Prison" under the title Richard Tottel's 1557 *Songes and Sonnettes* assigned it: "Prisoned in Windsor, He Recounteth His Pleasure There Passed." The more specialized sixteenth-century anthology, *The Golden Hind: An Anthology of Elizabethan Prose and Poetry* (Norton: New York, 1956), 70, also includes "So Cruel Prison" as does the newer *Longman Anthology (The Longman Anthology of British Literature: Volume 1B The Early Modern Period*. Pearson: New York, 2006, 709).

¹⁰ For a helpful summary of Surrey's contributions to English prosody, see: W.A. Sessions, "'Enough Survives': The Earl of Surrey and European Court Culture," *History Today* 41.6 (1991): 48-56. There Sessions tells readers that "In his late teens and twenties Surrey's inventiveness with language appeared

“When Windsor walles” is the companion to the longer elegy (it has even been discussed as another draft of the same poem),¹¹ and it is emblematic of the English sonnet form Surrey is often credited with inventing. Given the place these poems occupy in literary history, it is important to draw attention to the meaning in Surrey’s meter and syntax, and to highlight the place of expressive regularity in the sixteenth-century prison poem. This chapter will argue that the regularity that has alternately been understood as Surrey’s great weakness (as an element that makes his writing boring or which indicates that it lacks feeling)¹² or as his great strength (he established English literary models that would shape discussions of prosody forever), is ultimately, for better or worse¹³, an expression of the carceral state and an adaptation of the formal games he observed in Wyatt’s prison poems. While Wyatt used the sonnet form and then blew it wide open, Surrey’s prison poems use formal regularity, and the strict confinement of form, to express the carceral state.

Surrey’s “So Cruel Prison” not only uses expressive metrical regularity to capture the carceral state, but the poem also employs classical rhetorical structures, or repetitive

everywhere, and the permanent forms of English that emerged, blank verse, the English sonnet, the heroic quatrain, the English alexandrine, the special adaptations of Poulter’s Measure and the Italian ‘capitolo,’ to name only a few, were designed by Surrey to act as a new courtly language” (50).

¹¹ According to Stephen Guy-Bray “Surrey structures ‘So Cruel Prison’ by presenting the structure of identity as something dependent on architecture in its literal sense; in other words, the identification of a person and a place becomes more than a metaphoric equivalence” (143). Guy-Bray also sees identity in “When Windsor walles” as connected to (even dependent upon) architecture. He concludes, “they are two versions of the same poem” (143). See his article “‘We two boys together clinging’: The Earl of Surrey and The Duke of Richmond,” *English Studies in Canada* 21(1995).

¹² See J.W.Lever in *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet* (London: Methuen, 1956) where he famously proclaimed “Surrey, however, lacked Wyatt’s power, perhaps his inclination, to voice intimate experience” and so his sonnets tended to “lose shape and dissolve” (45).

¹³ While assessing intrinsic value to literary works is often thought of as an older practice, judging the innate value of poetic form still takes place in Surrey criticism. See Michael Haldane’s recent project dedicated to “demonstrat[ing] the intrinsic poetic worth of Surrey’s oeuvre” in “‘The Soote Season’: Surrey and the Amatory Elegy,” *English Studies* 87(2006): 402-14. Haldane, like so many others, was answering judgments of Surrey’s poetry as dull. Even Surrey’s most influential twentieth-century editor called the value of Surrey’s poetry into question by saying that if “poetic worth” is our “primary concern,” then “Surrey’s place in the history of English poetry will be a minor one” (xxiv). For Jones’s comment, see: *Henry Howard Earl of Surrey: Poems* ed. Emrys Jones (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964).

syntactic units, such as enumeratio and anaphora. These rhetorical structures heighten the repetition already set in motion by virtue of the poem's rhythm.¹⁴ Not only did Surrey borrow Wyatt's tendency to capture the prison in the poem's form, but he also used rhetorical devices to emphasize the formal expression of the prison in his poems. In so doing, Surrey extended and modulated the English prison tradition that Wyatt had established and then circulated amongst sixteenth-century courtly coterie readers and writers.

¹⁴ Brian Vickers offers a helpful summary of rhetoric in early modern England in his essay "Some reflections on the Rhetoric Textbook": "The great success of rhetoric in the Greco-Roman culture ensured its place as an essential element in education . . . the transmission of inherited knowledge through the encyclopedia tradition, preserved rhetoric through the Middle Ages, while the energetic revival and assimilation of the classical heritage in the Renaissance firmly established rhetoric as an indispensable acquisition for all properly educated men (and gradually, women) down to the nineteenth century and beyond" (81). According to Vickers, such lessons in rhetoric became less and less about its oratorical use, and more and more about how to style a text for "a reader, not for a live audience" (84). For more on the way rhetoric was taught in early modern schools, see: Brian Vickers, "Some Reflections on the Rhetoric Textbook," *Renaissance Rhetoric* ed. Peter Mack (Hong Kong: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 81-102.

I. Surrey's Imprisonments

Like Wyatt, Surrey was imprisoned four times in his short life.¹⁵ In 1537, Surrey was sentenced to confinement at Windsor Castle after the court had vacated the premises. The story of Surrey's first imprisonment holds that while at Hampton Court, when the king was in attendance, Surrey struck Edward Seymour for insulting the Howard family's management of the Pilgrimage of Grace. Surrey's father, the third Duke of Norfolk, had handled the 1536 uprising for Henry VIII, ultimately negotiating the surrender of the rebels at Doncaster Abbey. Unfortunately, the surrender had been predicated on the notion that the king would call a free parliament and hear conversation. Henry VIII had no intention of meeting these terms, and once this was apparent, the rebellion broke out again. Thomas Cromwell blamed the second rebellion on the Duke of Norfolk's laziness, and Edward Seymour supposedly characterized the Duke's management of the uprisings as ineffectual and negligent. Surrey supposedly felt obliged to defend his family's honor, and therefore reacted by striking Seymour.¹⁶ Surrey's actions were punishable not only because Seymour was brother to the pregnant Queen Jane Seymour, but also because the king was at court during the attack.

¹⁵ For Surrey's biography, see: Jessie Childs, *Henry VIII's Last Victim: The Life and Times of Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey* (London: Vintage Books, 2008); William A. Sessions, *Henry Howard the Poet Earl of Surrey: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999); and Edwin Casady, *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey* (New York: MLA, 1938). Brief accounts of Surrey's life seem to appear in every article about his work. Most recently, see Bradley J. Irish, "The Rivalrous Emotions in Surrey's 'So crewell prison.'" *SEL 1500-1900*. 54.1 (Winter 2014): 1-24.

¹⁶ By all accounts, Surrey regarded the Seymours as upstarts, as a family whose popularity threatened the more established aristocratic houses, and whose preferment symbolized the changing culture at court. For more on the conflict between the Howards and the Seymours, see John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 196-8. For more on the changing culture at court, see: William A. Session, "'Enough Survives': The Earl of Surrey and European Court Culture," *History Today* 41.6 (June 1991): 48-54 and Mervyn James, "At a Crossroads of the Political Culture: The Essex Revolt." *Society, Politics, and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), 416-65.

Surrey was arrested for his physical outburst at court, and he was initially sentenced to have his right hand cut off in a ritualized, bloody ceremony. Surrey escaped the prescribed corporal punishment for striking a member of court while the king was in attendance, but he was imprisoned in Windsor Castle after the court had left.¹⁷ There has been some debate over the precise timing of Surrey's incarceration, but most scholars agree that Surrey was imprisoned in Windsor Castle in 1537.¹⁸

Windsor Castle had special meaning for Surrey. From his boyhood, his father had positioned him to succeed at court; part of this positioning involved connecting Surrey with Henry VIII's illegitimate son Henry Fitzroy, the Duke of Richmond.¹⁹ According to all accounts, Norfolk was successful, and the two were close friends as boys (Surrey was also a kind of tutor to the Duke). Surrey and Richmond spent a considerable amount of time together at Windsor Castle as young men, which the third line of "So crewell prison," captures: "With a kinges soon my childishe yeres did passe"(3).²⁰ And because the poem itself describes the elements of Windsor as "swete" even as they "retourne a tast full sowre," readers have taken Surrey's words quite literally and have characterized

¹⁷ For more on the details of Surrey's imprisonment at Windsor and the punishment he was to have received, see Sessions 129-130.

¹⁸ I accept 1537 as the year of Surrey's imprisonment. In his 2003 article "The Earl of Surrey's Quarrel with George Blage," Peter R. Moore claims that "the year of Surrey's imprisonment is quite unknown" ("The Earl of Surrey's Quarrel with George Blage," *Notes and Queries* 50.248 (2003): 387. He is the only recent critic who seems to feel this way. Stephen Guy-Bray discusses Surrey's imprisonment at Windsor in his article "'We two boys together clinging': The Earl of Surrey and the Duke of Richmond," and he accepts 1537 as Surrey's year of incarceration. Guy-Bray does not even footnote the date to reflect a recent debate. Candace Lines also discusses Surrey's imprisonment, and though she footnotes the 1537 date of Surrey's incarceration, she ultimately accepts the date along with one of Surrey's most recent biographers, W.A. Sessions ("The Erotic Politics of Grief in Surrey's 'So Cruel Prison,'" *SEL* 46(2006): 3). For more on the circumstances of Surrey's 1537 imprisonment at Windsor, see Sessions 128-130.

¹⁹ For more on Henry Fitzroy, the Duke of Richmond, see page 147 of J.J. Scarisbrick's biography *Henry VIII* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1968).

²⁰ All quotations of Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey's poetry are taken from Emrys Jones's following edition unless otherwise indicated: *Henry Howard Earl of Surrey: Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964).

Surrey's emotional experience of his imprisonment as bitter sweet (5).²¹ The castle where Surrey had once lived with the King's son, in luxury befitting a prince, had become his jail.²² In both Windsor poems, the castle holds good memories, which paradoxically seem to ease Surrey's cares and heighten them at the same time. While it is uncertain that both "So crewell prison" and "When Windesor walles" were written in 1537 while Surrey was physically kept within the castle's walls, the poems clearly use the Windsor isolation as their dramatic setting. The prison persona hovers over the titles of these companion pieces; in reality, of course, Surrey's imprisonment at Windsor did not consist of the degradations poor people faced in London. The "prison" to which the elegy refers was a castle, and though the "walles" of Windsor conjure the image of a jail cell, they shared very little with a London prison's architecture. Surrey's conditions were not "cruel" in that he probably didn't face any physical degradations or deprivations. But Surrey, having learned from Wyatt's ability to draw on the coterie's understanding of poetic occasion, staged, and no doubt exaggerated, his complaints to emphasize the pose of the prisoner.

Surrey's prison experience was clearly aristocratic, and markedly different from the common criminal who lived in a cell too small in which to stand. For Surrey the Windsor incarceration was a time of relative leisure,²³ and like the many aristocratic

²¹ For a reading of "So crewell prison" through the lens of "modern research on emotion," see Bradley J. Irish, "The Rivalrous Emotions in Surrey's 'So crewell prison,'" *SEL* 54.1(2014):1-24. The poem, according to Irish, is a "well of emotional energy too often ignored by scholars" (19).

²² According to Candace Lines in her article "The Erotic Politics of Grief in Surrey's 'So Cruel Prison,'" Windsor is an ambiguous place – good because it is associated with boyhood memories, but also bad because it served as Surrey's prison. She calls the poem a lament not so much for a person as for a place. According to Lines, the poem establishes a "pattern of reversals and transformations of space" (4).

²³ In her article "Chaucerian Prisoners," Julia Boffey imagines that "it may have been only the enforced leisure of imprisonment or detainment which offered the opportunity of literary experiment to those with busy public lives" (99). See: *Chaucer and Fifteenth-Century Poetry* (Exeter: Short Run Press, 1991): 84-99. Diane R. Marks also comments on the "enforced leisure" of privileged prisoners, though she puts more

prisoners that came before him (like James I of Scotland, Charles D'Orleans, and, of course, Wyatt), it is possible Surrey used his time away from public life to write. The specific details of Surrey's imprisonment at Windsor are therefore less important than the fact that imprisonment isolated Surrey from the influential social sphere in which he moved. The cause (and location) of his imprisonment are testament to the society of which Surrey was a part; indeed Surrey was the son of the highly influential Duke, and was a prominent figure in Henry's court. Imprisonment for Surrey meant political inactivity and the frightening possibility of becoming irrelevant before his prime.

Surrey was imprisoned for the second time in 1542 for less than a month for having challenged a courtier, John a Leigh. Unlike his first imprisonment, Surrey was not jailed in a castle. He was held in the Fleet with only two servants and no friends. He wrote a letter defending himself to the Privy Council, and was released in less than a month. The incident is significant because it helped the developing narrative at court that Surrey was impetuous and prone to outbursts. This impression would once again be confirmed when Surrey, along with a few of his friends (one of whom happened to be Sir Thomas Wyatt's son), was arrested and imprisoned for the third time in 1543 for having broken windows in London during Lent. The charges, like those that led to his imprisonment in 1542, contained seeds of the charges that would see him condemned and executed for treason in 1547. During both of these arrests, the charges included the suggestion that Surrey was in communication with one of the King's sworn enemies (Cardinal Pole), that Surrey had pretensions to the throne, and that Surrey's coat of arms

emphasis on the psychological consequences of such isolation: "Life as a prisoner was perhaps not delightful. The princes were exiled and frustrated, cut off from the normal functions and responsibilities of their class." See: "Poems from Prison: James I of Scotland and Charles D'Orleans," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 15(1992): 245-58.

bore a strange resemblance to the King's (these last two accusations were based on something a household maid was said to have heard).²⁴ As a member of the courtly circle who would have read Wyatt's poems, and who would have understood them through the prison context the Wyatt family lore provided, Surrey no doubt started to see the parallel between the political career of statesman/poet he admired and his own.

His last imprisonment is well chronicled. Towards the end of 1546, Surrey was arrested while eating lunch at Whitehall, and he was taken to and held at the home of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley's house. On December 12, 1546, he walked under guard but without his retinue through the streets of London to the Tower. In nearly every account of this walk, Surrey's aloneness – the dramatic solitude of his progress – was recalled. This walk is referred to as the "Sunday March," and William Sessions, who has written two biographies of Surrey, describes it in detail:

The Windsor Herald Charles Wriothesley, the first cousin of the Lord Chancellor, recorded this Sunday march on 12 December. On this vigil day before St. Lucy's, the winter solstice in the old calendar and a popular saint's day celebrated with lights and candles, the young Surrey had been forced, surrounded by guards and himself on foot, through the streets of Holborn – a humiliation for any nobleman but multiplied for Surrey. Before lively Sunday (pre-Puritan) shopping crowds on a holiday eve, he walked completely alone, with no servant or aide (even in the Tower he had always had a servant). Most disgraceful of all, not only did he lack a horse to ride . . . but he wore no proper dress for his rank, especially in public. Gone were trumpets with silken banners showing the Howard arms that preceded him and the large entourage of thirty to fifty horsemen about which the Lord Chancellor had scribbled during Surrey's interrogation.²⁵

The relative seclusion I discuss in my introduction is demonstrated usefully here.

Surrey's march was remarkable to onlookers because he was so much more alone than noblemen ever appeared. People like Surrey (and to a much lesser extent, Wyatt)

²⁴ For a more detailed account of these arrests, see Sessions 9-11.

²⁵ W.A. Sessions, *Henry Howard, The Poet Earl of Surrey: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 359.

travelled with large retinues, and were often imprisoned with them as well. Here, a man who had spent much of his life concerned with his aristocratic self-styling and representation at court, a point to which I will return, was forced to show himself publicly without adornment, without emblem, and without any indication of his rank. Surrey's march was certainly an emphatic demonstration of court imposed separation, and his dramatic stripping of courtly identity was no doubt the point. Henry wanted to show the supposed traitor for what he had become in the eyes of the court – no more than a criminal alone in the street. But considering this as the extreme end of the spectrum of courtly separation shows just how much cultural value the aloneness of the prisoner carried in sixteenth-century London, and indeed, in the minds of the courtly coterie readers.

Surrey's trial saw him accused of treason, and the evidence consisted mostly of narratives that attested to Surrey's being a hothead. This narrative started in 1537 when he struck Seymour at court and wound up imprisoned at Windsor Castle, and it continued to grow as Surrey sought to defend his family's honor. Surrey's arrest for breaking windows in London during Lent added to this story of recklessness. Surrey was painted as power hungry, and the account above points to how his heraldic displays (like his banners, trumpets and thirty man entourages) were "scribbled about" during Surrey's questioning, after his arrest, and during his trial. Tudor England was changing, and the old aristocratic families, like the Howards, were seeing themselves replaced and rendered less valuable as the new noble houses (like the Seymours) held sway. New Tudor men, like the Seymours, were threatened by displays of the lineage of which the Howards were so capable, and were sure to highlight Surrey's bold performances of rank and familial

history, and to portray those moments as threatening signs of pretension to the throne. Surrey was found guilty of treason, and he was beheaded on January 19, 1547. The moment he was executed, the cult that would paint him as a martyr and a saint picked up the mythos he had himself established.²⁶

Like Wyatt, Surrey was a master of representation, but Surrey's claim to power and prestige far outreached Wyatt's. He had much more to represent than Wyatt ever did. William Sessions has described the Howard family holdings as a "little kingdom" in itself, and Surrey, whose powerful father was often busy with the affairs of the crown, sat in the middle of that kingdom.²⁷ Surrey was the son and rightful heir of the powerful Duke of Norfolk, was descended from kings, and held titles assigned to him by the king: Knight of the Garter, and Lieutenant General of the King on Sea and Land. His preferment at court and his influence over the king waxed and waned over the course of his short life (he experienced the height of his power when his cousin Catherine Howard became queen in 1541), but despite the level of preferment he enjoyed at any given moment, his family's power and lineage were well known and regularly on display.

Surrey actively sought to represent his aristocratic past, his learning, and his military prowess in various forms. For instance, in 1541 he apparently started drafting the plans for Surrey house, a massive palace that would later take shape at the site of an old abbey on a hill overlooking Norwich. Surrey house was styled after the continental

²⁶ After Surrey's execution he was immediately elegized and quickly considered a martyr. Sir John Cheke (tutor to the new King Edward), George Cavendish, John Bale, Thomas Churchyard and many others wrote about Surrey's execution and bewailed the cruelty of his circumstances. Famously, John Foxe would capture Surrey as a victim in his 1559 *Acts and Monuments*. Later, in 1563, Foxe's volume would be expanded into the *Book of Martyrs*. Surrey's inclusion in a book of that title testifies to the perception the public held of him after his death. Perhaps most famous is Thomas Nashe's depiction of Surrey as the hero in his 1594 volume, *The Unfortunate Traveller*. For a helpful summary of Surrey's cult, see Sessions, *Henry Howard, the Poet Earl*, 1-7.

²⁷ W.A. Sessions, *Henry Howard, Early of Surrey* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 3.

castles of Europe, and he installed a Dutch humanist there, Hadrian Junius, to tutor his children. His home represented his aristocratic lineage and his claim to a new kind of learning. In 1536 King Henry sought a regent for his son Edward, and Surrey was among those being considered for the job. Possibly as part of his self-positioning, Surrey is said to have started designing a new coat of arms, the “heraldic blazon that asserted the most public identity of self.”²⁸ Around this time, Surrey commissioned what would become his final portrait; besides King Henry VIII, Surrey is said to have “had more portraits and drawings of himself than any other member of the Tudor court.”²⁹ Surrey was obsessed with self-representation, and he went to great pains to capture his place in Tudor England in various forms.

Given Surrey’s history of imprisonment, it is not surprising how well he had absorbed the lessons Wyatt’s prison poems had taught. And given Surrey’s interest in self-representation, it is even more appropriate that Surrey’s poems tried to imitate the successful persona Wyatt had developed only a few years before him.

²⁸ Ibid, 15.

²⁹ Ibid, 155. For more on Surrey’s portraits, see: Roy Strong, *Tudor and Jacobean Portraits, 2 vols.* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1969), 1:370.

II. Surrey's "When Windesor walles" and "So Cruel Prison"

Surrey's "When Windesor walles" is one of the poems that earned him the title "inventor of the English sonnet form."³⁰ It was this sonnet form that Samuel Daniel would emulate in his 1590 sequence *Delia*, and which Shakespeare would later perfect. The rhyme scheme Surrey employed (ababdcdefefgg) is now considered the defining characteristic of the standard English sonnet; three quatrains and a concluding couplet is understood as emblematic of the English sonnet form. Calling Surrey's sonnet structure regular is understating the matter—it is the model by which the regularity of other English sonnets has been judged.³¹ Surrey's meter is no different. Surrey's lines are controlled and regularized iambic pentameter:

26

When Windesor walles sustained my wearied arme,
 My hand my chyn, to ease my restless hedd,
 Ech pleasant plot revested green with warm,
 The blossomed bowes with lusty veare yspred,
 The flowred meads, the weddyd birdes so late (5)
 Mine eyes discovered. Than did to mynd resort
 The joily woes, the hateles shorte debate,
 The rakhell life that longes to loves disporte.
 Wherwith, alas, myne hevy charge of care
 Heapt in my brest brake forth against my will, (10)
 And smoky sighes that over cast the ayer.
 My vapored eyes such drery teares distill,
 The tender spring to quicken where thei fall,
 And I half bent to throwe me down withal.³²

³⁰ In his notes to Surrey's "Set me wheras the sonne dothe perche the grene," Emrys Jones says that Surrey invented the English sonnet form: "This is an example of the so-called Shakespearian sonnet, which Surrey was the first to devise" (104).

³¹ W.A. Sessions, in his 1999 biography *Henry Howard, The Poet Earl of Surrey: A Life*, says the following about the novelty and importance of Surrey's sonnet form: "even if Surrey invented his English sonnet form just for his lament over Richmond, it soon became continuous in a series of texts in actual societies. After Daniel chose Surrey's form for his sonnet sequence in 1590 and Shakespeare followed, the form changed history" (131).

³² All quotations of Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey's poetry are taken from Emrys Jones's following edition unless otherwise indicated: *Henry Howard Earl of Surrey: Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964). Jones explains that "where possible, sixteenth-century manuscripts have been used" as the basis for his

Given the metrical regularity of the sonnet, the poem's spondaic first foot might seem out of place (or it might seem like the best place to focus one's attention). But the spondee of line one is followed by an iambic foot, and Surrey's use of alliteration forces the reader back into the regularized meter the poem will maintain throughout: "When Windesor walles sustained my wearied arme" (1). The "w" of "walles" insists that the reader hear the syllable as stressed, and the repetition of "w" in "wearied" makes the iambic rhythm of the line unmistakable.

Though others have seen Surrey's metrical regularity as either boring or unremarkable, I argue that his sonnet's regularity is remarkable because it is expressive in itself. My attention to Surrey's metrical regularity is informed, in part, by Donald Wesling's approach to prosody in his book, *The Scissors of Meter: Grammetrics and Reading*:

Seeing a disturbance in the beat, the traditional metrist goes back to find a textual reason for it . . . irregularity affords a way to avoid mechanical rhythm, individualizes the text, gives emotional drive, and enacts a special metrical style . . . As soon as the line "bucks" . . . the metrist falls on interpretive guesses as to why the deviation is justified in the poem's emotional logic. Interpretation thus derives from watching the simple binary opposition of more/less of stress, whereas, one objects, expression is actually occurring all along the utterance.³³

While deviation, or "disturbance" as Wesling has it, provides the reader with interpretive possibility, I argue, along with Wesling, that metrical regularity can offer the same kind of possibility. The accentual syllabic system that Wesling critiques often encourages readers to attend to exceptions. Here, I use the accentual syllabic system to read the

edition. Surrey's Windsor sonnet is based on BL MS Add. 36529. For Jones's discussion of manuscript sources see pages xxvii-xxviii.

³³ Donald Wesling, *The Scissors of Meter: Grammetrics and Reading* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1996), 35.

expressive value of Surrey's regularity. I attend to deviation in Surrey's Windsor sonnet, but metrical deviation in "When Windesor walles" plays a smaller part in making meaning than Surrey's regularity does.

The poem begins with a description of Windsor in spring, budding, blooming, and practically teeming with life. As Surrey's speaker surveys the grounds, he sees numerous examples of regeneration and change. The birds are described as "weddyd" in line five, and are presumably mating, the boughs in line four are covered with blossoms, meads are filled with flowers, and regeneration is all around him. For Surrey's speaker, the natural cycle of the seasons and the vitality that spring promises are available to the boughs of the trees, but not to him – he is, while locked away, essentially removed from the vitality he sees cropping up around him. He is "weary" rather than vigorous as he stands, chin in hand, peering down from the ramparts of Windsor.³⁴

Given the realities of coterie readership and authorship, it would be safe to assume that Surrey's first readers would have understood the poem through the contextual lens of the court; they would have known, for instance, that Surrey had himself spent time at Windsor as a boy with the King's illegitimate son, that he had recently been imprisoned there, and that he had a family from whom he was separated. They would have known, perhaps more importantly, that Surrey had been separated from court because of a skirmish with a powerful new faction – the Seymours. All of this context would have been brought to bear on this poem, and so the regeneration and vitality of the landscape around the speaker would have been understood as emblematic

³⁴ Sessions describes Surrey's chin in hand position as an "originating melancholy pose to be imitated not only by Romeo and Hamlet but by the romantics and their modern descendants" (134). Sessions suggests that even the speaker's deportment became a model for later poets. Elizabeth Heale comments on the apparent weariness in the speaker's pose, saying that Surrey's body seems "forced into inactivity" (24).

of all that Surrey had been forced to leave behind, and would have acted as a harsh counterpoint to the reality of his forced isolation. Surrey, during his isolation at Windsor and dramatically in the poem, was separated from his wife, and from his young children – from the symbols of his own regeneration and vitality, and, perhaps just as importantly to an aristocrat, he was cut off from the doings at court. Isolated from his powerful and influential father, Surrey was unable to participate in affairs of state (and in 1537 things were at a fever pitch). Perhaps more concerning was that while isolated, Surrey was unable to defend himself against the machinations of his enemies. The young Earl of Surrey, about whom factions at court were constructing tales concerning his angry outbursts, was forced to watch the changing scenery from an unchanging rampart at Windsor castle, cut off from the court and English political life.

The landscape, which is transforming along with the coming of spring, essentially mocks the isolated, secluded, static Surrey. The poem's metrical regularity – itself unchanging – serves as a counterpoint to the burgeoning season. Though tree branches are blossoming, and spring is evident everywhere, line four of the sonnet continues its regularity: "The blossomed bowes with lusty veare yspred." The alliterative force of the line only emphasizes the downbeat – the repetitive "b" sound echoes from off the page. Line five, also a description of seasonal rebirth and change, has the same unchanging regularity: "The flowred meads, the weddyd birdes so late." Line five repeats the "b" sound from the earlier line, and the asyndeton, which began in line three, ensures that nothing, not even a conjunction, can force the poem to swerve from its regularity. Thematically, lines one through eight of the sonnet are concerned with change, rebirth and flux; metrically, the lines exemplify regularity, an unchanging, unswerving, relentless

adherence to a downbeat. But this strange contrast between content and form captures a universal truth: time marches on with regularity, changing the faces of men and their social standing too. Time inevitably brings rebirth and death.

Nature changes predictably and consistently, a truth dramatically reproduced in the poem's juxtaposition between its central motif – that of seasonal change and regeneration – and its practically unchanging metrical form. But though the landscape is transforming around him, Surrey's speaker cannot transform with it – he is, like the poem's meter, trapped in an unchanging pattern of sameness. Unlike the world he observes, he cannot change with budding boughs, the mating birds, or the blooming flowers. His own growth and regeneration are cut off. The prisoner, dramatically rendered in Surrey's sonnet, is forced to stand apart from the natural progression of time.

The prisoner's plight makes its most dramatic appearance in lines nine and ten of the poem: "wherewith, alas, myne hevvy charge of care / Heapt in my breast brake forth against my will." The prisoner has not described himself as imprisoned, nor will he; the speaker has a "heavy charge of care," the same kind of vague hurt Wyatt made famous in his prison poems. Indeed, in his double sonnet, "The flaming sighes that boil within my breast," Wyatt described his "heart's unrest" without naming it, and in line ten of that most irregular poem, he suggested that those who "list to see and to discern" might understand "how care can force a wearied mind." Surrey's speaker recreates the vagueness of the hurt, and practically nominates himself as the very "he who can discern"; Surrey's speaker is forced against his will to allow his "care" to brake forth." And when they break forth, Surrey's cares echo the language of Wyatt's double sonnet. Wyatt's speaker has "flaming sighs"(1), and Surrey's speaker has "smoky sighes" (11).

Wyatt's speaker has "watered eyes"(5) and Surrey's speaker has "vapored eyes" (12). Indeed, Surrey's "vapored eyes such dreary teares distill," when in fact, it would seem that the entire sonnet is, in some senses, a distillation of Wyatt's double sonnet.

If Wyatt's double sonnet masterfully performs the prison by capturing its stifling isolation without naming its source, Surrey, as Wyatt's ardent admirer, performs the prison in much the same way. Neither prisoner will name the source of their hurt. And while Wyatt used an irregular form and irregular meter to capture his prisoner's state, Surrey used a regularized form and meter to capture his. It is crucial to remember here that Surrey was not working off an English model of regularity. His regularity was new, and it was expressive in its dependability and newness. It was in its failure to create "disturbance," and through its cloying regularity that it placed its speaker outside of the natural order that it made meaning. Surrey's use of form and a persistent vagueness certainly points to his imitation of the poet he admired so much, but in lifting the language of the double sonnet to use in his own sonnet, Surrey perpetuates the persona Wyatt crafted decades before.

The sonnet's only metrical variation (besides the spondaic first foot of the poem) tellingly comes in line ten: "myne heavy charge of care / Heapt in my brest brake forth against my will." The line begins with trochaic inversion, so that the burden of the speaker's cares is emphasized in the stressed word "heapt." The third foot of the line is spondaic – cares in his "breast brake forth." The deviation in line ten expresses an anguish that begins building as early as line six of the sonnet. At line six, the speaker's focus moves from the outward appearance of Windsor in the spring to the memories that come to "mind." No longer concerned with what he sees at Windsor, he begins to

remember what he once had there: the oxymoronic “joily woes” of line seven and the kind of life that belongs to “loves disporte.” These considerations reach a crescendo in line ten as the speaker contemplates the activities he enjoyed when he was free to experience his life, to grow, to change, and to participate in the world around him; at this moment of climax, the speaker’s cares “brake” forth, shattering the regularity of the poem. The metrical variation in line ten enacts a kind of prison break – going so far as to use the very word “brake” in its midst. The line turns the sound of regularity in line four (the repeated “b”) into its means for variation. In one moment, the poem’s metrical regularity is disturbed by the speaker’s despair. And at that break we imagine the bid for an audience – Surrey’s speaker never asks explicitly for someone to view his state (whereas Wyatt simply asked “come he to me”), but the poem’s meter makes the bid for him.

Just as soon as the poem’s regularity is disturbed, it is restored – the lines immediately return to their iambic rhythm for the duration of the sonnet. Surrey’s use of a regularized iambic pentameter line in “When Windsor Walles” represents more than the advent of the English sonnet form – it also represents a moment when metrical regularity becomes beautifully expressive, or, in the case of the prisoner, painfully performative. Where Wyatt used irregular form and meter to perform his pain, Surrey captured his in his sonnet’s disturbing regularity. By the end of the poem, Surrey’s speaker returns to the dependability of the progress of time in which he cannot participate and recognizes that the only change he might be able to make is that of self-annihilation: “My vapored eyes such drery teares distill, / The tender spring to quicken where thei fall, / And I half bent to throwe me down withal” (12-14). The spring may animate his tears, may use them in the

cycle he observes from the wall, but he will receive no such animation. For Surrey's speaker, suicide may be the only means to act. Surrey imitated the prison persona Wyatt had crafted just years before him, and extended that persona to a dark place; for Surrey, the prisoner was poised for self-harm and desolation.

The first quatrain of Surrey's longer elegy, "So Cruel Prison," is fairly regular iambic pentameter too (though trochaic inversions and spondaic substitutions mark the first and second lines). The poem's use of metrically regular lines is, at the outset, reminiscent of the function of meter in "When Windsor wallles." However, the second quatrain establishes a pattern of metrical deviation; unlike "When Windsor wallles," Surrey's longer elegiac poem utilizes a kind of metrical deviation that becomes repetitive and then regular by its sheer frequency. When lines five, six, and seven of the poem are scanned, they appear as follows:

\sim / / / \sim / \sim / \sim /
 Where eche swete place retournes a taste full sowre. (5)

\sim / / / \sim / \sim / \sim /
 The large grene courtes, where we wer wont to hove,

\sim / / / \sim / \sim / \sim /
 With eyes cast upp unto the maydens towre,

The first foot of each line is iambic, but iambs give way to a spondee in the second foot in all three lines. The scansion above represents graphically the repetitive pattern Surrey's metrical deviations take on. These patterns persist beyond the first and second stanzas:

˘ / / / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /

The palme playe, where, dispoyled for the game, (13)

˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /

With dased eyes oft we by gleames of love

Surrey's "So Cruel Prison" utilizes either a regularized iambic pentameter (as in the first quatrain of the poem, or as in line 14 above), or a regularized form of deviation.

Deviation becomes normalized, and what might have seemed like differentiation takes on a sameness quite akin to the iambic rhythms. At every moment, even when it deviates, the poem's meter captures what Surrey and his aristocratic coterie readers must have imagined as the frustrating sameness of incarceration.

The metrical expression of the stifling regularity that Surrey's sensitive readers might have understood as mimicking the dramatized plight of the imagined prisoner is enhanced in "So Cruel Prison's" use of rhetorical devices. In particular, the poem mobilizes enumeratio and anaphora, rhetorical structures whose force is built entirely on intentional repetition. Just as metrical regularity mimics the stifling sameness of incarceration and the horrifying march of time, parallelism creates repetition through word order:

The statelye sales; the ladyes bright of hewe; (9)

The daunces short, long tales of great delight,

With wordes and lookes, that tygers could but rewe,

Where eche of us did plead the others right.

The palme playe, where, dispoyled for the game, (13)

With dased eyes oft we by gleames of love

Have mist the ball, and got sight of our dame,

To baite her eyes, whiche kept the leddes above.

While describing his current surroundings, Surrey's speaker conjures images which seemingly merge into a recollection of better times long past: "The large grene courtes" (6), "The stately sales" (9), "The ladyes bright" (9), "The daunces short" (10), "The palme playe" (13). Each detail appears in similar word order: (article, adjective, and noun, or article, noun, adjective). The first six stanzas of the poem each have lines which begin with the word "with," and several lines in the first six stanzas also begin with the word "where." Anaphora, the use of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses, serves to suggest the repetitive nature of incarceration. Surrey's humanist training allowed him to marshal the force of rhetorical devices to create a cloying consistency in a poem seeking to dramatize the unending sameness of incarceration. Tellingly, the poems that most sought to dramatize Surrey's imprisonments were most adept at leaving the source of the speaker's incarceration unnamed. His rhetorical and metrical precision were paired with a telltale vagueness he had learned from his prison predecessor.

III. The Loss of Ambiguity and a Life on Trial

When describing Surrey's trial, W.A. Sessions mentions the doodled copies of the poet's redesigned herald that were offered as evidence, and the rumors at court of Surrey's hotheadedness. Ultimately he concludes that "such representations became the very basis of Surrey's final indictment for treason, indeed the only factual basis."³⁵ Certainly Sessions is right that the majority of the so-called evidence at Surrey's 1547 trial, some of which is loosely sketched in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-47*, was hearsay – the testimony of Surrey's political enemies capitalizing on the courtier's ability to perform his status with such brilliance. But, as the introduction to my dissertation points out, there was another piece of evidence offered at his trial: "To Sir Nicholas Pointz ecc. Exclamacion against Lunden."³⁶ The sketches and the portraits were not the "only" material evidence; a manuscript of a poem Surrey had circulated among a courtly coterie was offered as material evidence as well.

The skill Surrey demonstrated in representing his status through symbolic architecture and emblem manifested itself in his poetry as well. "When Windsor walles" and "So crewel prison" had used rhythm, form, and rhetorical devices to dramatize the prisoner's plight without mentioning the monarch (or his favorites) who were responsible for his troubles. Like Wyatt, he had proven that his skill in self-representation extended beyond heraldry and into poetry. Unfortunately for Surrey, he was unable to maintain the persistent vagueness that Wyatt had managed to employ dependably over his whole

³⁵ Sessions, 15.

³⁶ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-47*. eds. James Gairdner and R.H. Brodie. vol 21.ii.555.18 (London: The Hereford Times, 1910), 288-9.

career. In the “Exclamacion against London,” more commonly known as “London, hast thou accused me,” Surrey’s prisoner is unable to maintain his ambiguities.

“London, hast thou accused me,” takes Surrey’s 1543 imprisonment as its dramatic setting. The poem had not been published; it had moved through the coterie readers and writers who had also read Wyatt, and it was probably understood in the occasional context the prison persona emphatically demanded its readers understand. It borrowed the language of Wyatt’s prisoners explicitly, and so at first glance it announced its inclusion in the prison poem tradition Wyatt started and Surrey extended.³⁷ For instance, when Surrey’s speaker complains that “my hidden burden to express, / Wherby yt might appere to the” (12-13), he imitates the speaker in Wyatt’s double sonnet:

Wherefore, my friend so dear,
I thought it good my state should now appear
To you and that there is no great desert. (II.1-3)³⁸

Surrey’s imprisoned speaker is interested in finding an audience; he seeks to make his “appearance,” regardless of how private the supposed circumstances of incarceration might be. Similarly, in line seven of Surrey’s poem, the speaker talks about the “breaking forth” of the “boiling” in his brest” in line three. These lines almost directly echo the opening of Wyatt’s double sonnet: “The flaming sighs that boil within my brest / Sometime break forth” (1-2). Much like Wyatt’s imprisoned speakers, Surrey’s speaker takes up the language of courtly love – his breast boils. Yet unlike Wyatt’s speaker, who

³⁷ For a recent treatment of the religious poetics of Surrey’s invective, see: Taylor, Andrew W, “Glass Houses: Surrey, Petrarch, and the Religious Poetics of the ‘London’ Invective,” *Review of English Studies* 57.231(2006):433-455. Elizabeth Heale in *Wyatt, Surrey and Early Tudor Poetry*, regards the poem as “a tirade whose tone and purpose is notoriously difficult to gauge” (London: Longman, 1998) 140-6. She blames this particularly on “the combination of literary traditions and voices with the circumstances of the poem’s composition.” I could not disagree more – the circumstances of the poem’s composition are immaterial, while the poem’s dramatic setting and adopted persona are deeply material to its meaning.

³⁸ All quotations of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s Poetry are taken from R.A. Rebholz’s edition: *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 1997).

deftly avoids the reason for the boiling and who cleverly uses the language of courtly love to create ambiguity about the cause of the prisoner's suffering, Surrey's speaker misses the opportunity to remain vague.

While Surrey's diction certainly conjures the specter of his prison poet predecessor, the poem does not function on the principle of creating ambiguity so as not to blame those responsible for the prisoner's incarceration. Instead, the poem functions on the principle of precision. In Wyatt's double sonnet, there is never a clear indication from whence the "flaming sighes" were inspired, and "the heart's unrest" and the "wound" that haunt that prisoner are never explicitly identified. But Surrey's syntax is clear:

London, hast thou accused me
Of breche of laws, the roote of stryfe?
Within whose brest did boyle to see,
So fervent hotte thy dissolute life,
That even the hate of synnes, that groo
Within thy wicked walles so rife,
For to breake forthe did convert soo
That terror colde it not repress. (4-8)

Surrey's speaker's breast is boiling because of "thy dissolute life," and "thy" makes no bones about who owns the behavior that has aggrieved the virtuous speaker. Indeed, the behavior the speaker observes is "so rife" that even the speaker's own "terror" of lawlessness could not "repress" its breaking forth. There is little ambiguity in Surrey's lines. The people of London, whose sinfulness led to his rage, are to blame for the speaker's anguish (while he was raging in the streets, and now, while he stands accused).

The precision with which Surrey's speaker describes his rage, the ease with which he decries the lewd excesses of London, all added to the case against him in 1547. His

enemies sought to paint him as an impetuous, impulsive, and proud man, and this prison poem, which echoed and then substantially departed from Wyatt's prison pose offered evidence of those accusations. Surrey's speaker was not going to allow those responsible for his position to go unnamed – far from penitent, the speaker is bold about his righteousness: “In loathsome vyce eche drunken wight / To styrr to Godd, this was my mynd” (42-43). According to the speaker, he is not only righteous himself; he is also powerful enough to conjure the fear of God in those who are under the sway of “loathsome vyce.” His pride, undeniable by virtue of his clarity, powerfully rings from off the page.

While Wyatt's ambiguity and persistent vagueness gave his prison speakers and his coterie readers plausible deniability – they couldn't say for certain what had caused the prisoner's plight – in his London invective, Surrey's speaker left no doubt. In my first chapter I claimed that Wyatt's self-fashioning of the prison persona was a dangerous business, that one wrong word copied into the wrong commonplace book, or that one exchange of a poem or misreading of a line could mean the difference between life and death. Surrey's “London, hast thou accuse me” is the best evidence that this was very much the case. His poem moved through the courtly coterie, landed in the wrong hands, and ended up as evidence at his trial. Ironically, the prison poet most known for his precision and form dropped the vital element of ambiguity for just a moment, and that moment helped end his life.

Chapter 3. Formal Play and Playing with Form: *Tottel's Miscellany* and the Prison Poem Tradition

As two clowns dig Ophelia's grave in act five scene one of *Hamlet*, one of them sings an anonymous poem from Richard Tottel's 1557 print miscellany *Songes and Sonettes* and gets it all wrong. It is fitting that the clown's version is inaccurate because the gravediggers have already established their lack of rhetorical skill; as they debate the suitability of Ophelia's Christian burial, they signal their class and their lack of education when they substitute "argal" for "ergo."¹ Just as he misuses Latinisms, the singing clown misquotes Poem 212 from *Tottel's Miscellany*.² But the clown's alteration of the poem's lines is also fitting because the poem is itself about alteration; mangling the lines, he sings:

But age with his stealing steps
Hath clawed me in his clutch,
And hath shipped me into the land,
As if I had never been such. (V.i.71-4)³

Though he misquotes the poem, the sense of the lines is still plain.⁴ In a scene dedicated to mortality (Hamlet contemplates "Poor Yorick" while holding his skull), the clown's

¹ *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

² All citations and references to *Tottel's Miscellany* are taken from the two volume Hyder Rollins edition: *Songes and Sonettes* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1966). The poems were not numbered in the sixteenth-century editions, but Rollins has assigned them numbers for convenience. All references to poem numbers refer to the poems in the first volume of the set.

³ The lines from poem 212 in *Tottel's Miscellany* read: "For age with stelying steppes, / Hath clawed me with his cowche: / And lusty life away she leapes, / As there had bene none such" (9-12).

⁴ It is accepted that Shakespeare read *Tottel's Miscellany*. For more on this matter, see: Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare Sources* (London: Athlone, 2001), 487-91, and Paul Hammond, "Sources for Shakespeare's Sonnets 87 and 129 in *Tottel's Miscellany* and Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*," *Notes and Queries* 50 (2003): 407-10. Hammond boldly suggests Shakespeare wrote Sonnet 129 with a copy of *Tottel's Miscellany* "open on his table." This suggestion is potentially radical when seen in light of J. Christopher Warner's assertion that *Tottel's Miscellany* was part of a "Marian legacy in Elizabethan England" which might have accounted for the book's sudden decline in popularity in

song laments the changes time brings. Time changes people; it puts lines in our faces, and “ships” us off to our graves. Time also alters texts, as the clown’s song so aptly demonstrates. *Tottel’s Miscellany*, one of the first printed anthologies of English poetry and the text Shakespeare’s clown quotes with humorous inaccuracy, is a wonderful example of just how much texts can change with time.⁵ The poems in the collection changed from edition to edition, perhaps imitating the changing texts of its various sources.

Recent studies of *Songes and Sonettes* have convincingly demonstrated the collaborative compilation of the miscellany. For years, critics assumed that either Richard Tottel or someone working for Tottel’s press edited the volume.⁶ But Jason Powell has established that the Wyatt poems collected in the miscellany “originated not with Tottel, but with a network of kin, admirers” and friends who, along with Thomas Wyatt the

1585 and 1587. See: J. Christopher Warner, *The Making and Marketing of Tottel’s Miscellany, 1557: Songs and Sonnets in the Summer of the Martyrs’ Fires* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013).

⁵ *Tottel’s* cannot be called the first printed anthology of English poems because *The Courte of Venus* (c.1530s) certainly preceded it. *The Courte of Venus* survives in only four fragments, and dating has been based on studies of the Blackletter textura type. Only one fragment, which is called the Folger fragment, is dated. It appears to be a later (1561) printing of earlier editions. For more on *The Courte of Venus*, see Russell A. Fraser’s introduction to his edition (Durham: Duke UP, 1955), 1-74.

⁶ One theory suggested that Nicholas Grimald (who had thirty poems in the first edition of *Songes and Sonettes* and only ten poems in each subsequent edition) was the editor. Christopher A Knott claimed that Grimald edited the volume in “Richard Tottel” *British Literary Booktrade, 1475-1700* (Detroit, MI: Gale, 1996. 308-13). See also H.J. Byrom’s “The Case for Nicholas Grimald as Editor of ‘Tottel’s Miscellany’” *MLR* 27 (1932). Edmund Arber was the first person to suggest Grimald was Tottel’s editor in his 1870 edition of *Songes and Sonettes*. Rollins calls the suggestion that Grimald edited *Tottel’s* “sheer speculation, and not very probably speculation at that” (II.89). Another theory suggests that John Harington of Stepney edited the volume. Harington, along with his son (Sir John Harington of Kelston) compiled the Arundel Harington manuscript. Some suggested that *Tottel’s Miscellany* was based on that manuscript, and was in fact edited by its elder compiler. For this theory, see Richard Harrier’s *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975), 18, where Harrier admitted it is impossible to know the editor’s identity with certainty, but nominates Harington as a possible candidate: “John Harington himself remains a logical candidate for Tottel’s editorship, although it is not possible to pinpoint his full contribution to the volume.” For more on the Arundel Harington manuscript, see Ruth Hughey’s edition *The Arundel Harington Manuscript of Tudor Poetry* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State UP, 1960). For Hughey’s discussion of John Harington and his son, see volume one, pages 3-67. Also see Arthur Marotti’s brief discussion of Harington and his manuscript (4, 61-3). These theories were getting a critical look by the end of the twentieth century, and by 2000, Marquis explained that “Though we know who published *Songes and Sonettes*, we do not know who edited the text” (147).

younger's widow, would have had the poems at hand, potentially in the form of the Egerton Manuscript⁷ itself.⁸ J. Christopher Warner agrees with this contention, and then argues that poems by Surrey and many of the unnamed authors in the volume came from a "second circle of 'collaborators'" that helped "fill out" the "Uncertain Authors" section of the miscellany. This second network consisted largely of the young men at the Inns of Court: "Tottel was part of a large, vibrant, and certainly sophisticated social/occupational network in London, comprising law students, lawyers, and others in the trades and in government who maintained ties to the legal profession."⁹ Richard Tottel sold English Common Law books to this network (he held the exclusive patent by order of Queen Mary). Warner believes that these young men furnished manuscripts and even wrote many of the poems themselves.¹⁰ These studies confirm Paul Marquis's supposition in his 2007 edition of the miscellany that Tottel drew on an "expansive network of manuscripts."¹¹ Given the number of hands involved in the work of collecting the almost 300 poems contained in that volume, it is hardly surprising that the verse as it appears in print departs from the manuscript sources of the poems we have readily available. The metrical alterations, the disambiguation of vague phrases, the heavy editorial hand for which Tottel has been blamed for years, are evidence of the collaborative nature of the collection. In the same way that Wyatt's and Surrey's poems changed as they moved

⁷ Much of Wyatt's canon is based on his own autograph collection, Egerton BL Add. MS 2711. For more on the Egerton manuscript, see: Richard Harrier *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975) 1-15, 95-97. Harrier argues that the Egerton Manuscript is "the keystone" of Wyatt's canon, and his transcription of the manuscript appears on pages 97 to 254. For more on Wyatt's manuscripts in general, see: R.A. Rebholz's edition: *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 1997), 9-17; and Kenneth Muir's edition *Sir Thomas Wyatt, Life and Letters* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1963) 222-224. Also see Raymond Southall's *The Courtly Maker: An Essay on the Poetry of Wyatt and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964) 1-25.

⁸ Jason Powell, "The Network Behind 'Tottel's Miscellany.'" *English Literary Renaissance* 46.2 (Boston: U of Chicago P, 2016), 193-224.

⁹ Warner, 14.

¹⁰ Warner, 11-24.

¹¹ Marquis, xxx.

through their courtly coteries, the poems of the miscellany changed with publication. Shakespeare's clown makes a most sophisticated observation – “age” can “claw a man in his clutch,” and it can do the same thing to poems.

The poems in *Tottel's Miscellany* appear changed from the manuscript sources scholars have relied on for years. In the Egerton manuscript, the autographed edition of Wyatt's poems that is accepted as the primary source of Wyatt's poetry for the miscellany, many of Wyatt's poems appear “rough” or metrically irregular. In many cases, those irregularities are removed in the miscellany. And poems changed between editions. Though the second edition of the miscellany appeared about eight weeks after the first, many of the poems had been regrouped, attributions had shifted, and titles had been altered.¹² Hyder Rollins, who edited the authoritative modern edition of *Songes and Sonettes* in 1928, disliked the changes from edition to edition: “The editions later than 1557 injure his [Tottel's] reputation for care and accuracy. Each so far surpasses its predecessors in blunders and corruptions that the later editions are practically unintelligible unless compared with the texts of 1557.”¹³ And of the textual changes to poems he said “the poems in A [the first 1557 edition of the miscellany] were thoroughly, but not critically, edited.”¹⁴ Though Rollins, still functioning as if Tottel was the primary editor and compiler of the book, believed that Tottel or his editor may have made the poems in the volume more appealing to his sixteenth-century readers, on the whole, Rollins discusses the changes with apprehension, calling them “strange acts” which were

¹² For a helpful summary of these editorial shifts see: Paul A. Marquis, “Printing History and Editorial Design in the Elizabethan Version of Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes*,” *Tottel's Songes and Sonettes in Context* ed. Stephen Hamrick (Surrey & Vermont: Ashgate, 2013), 13-17.

¹³ Rollins, II.5

¹⁴ Rollins, II.94

often “most unfair.”¹⁵ Rollins is not alone. In a 1946 article, Hallet Smith called the alterations in *Tottel’s Miscellany* “curious” and referred to altered poems as “debased texts.”¹⁶ More recent critics are suspicious of the changes too. Elizabeth Heale says that the changes contributed to a “manufactured” and “romantic and fictive version of the elitism” the book distributed.¹⁷ In Heale’s more ideological critique, the poems, as they appeared in the miscellany, were in some senses fake.

In charting the significant role Tottel played in developing and disseminating the prison poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-1547), this chapter departs from the notion that the shifting nature of the texts was inherently negative, or that it somehow rendered the poems less valuable (or even made them fake). Textual analysis reveals that Richard Tottel’s *Songes and Sonettes* not only collected and made a prison poem tradition available to later poets, but that the tradition gained another layer of suggestive meaning by virtue of the collaborative hands that compiled it. Far from “debasement” the poems it published, *Songes and Sonettes* made prison poems accessible to a wider readership in rich and influential forms – forms that deserve critical attention in their own right. For instance, by introducing temporal confusion and narrative disruption to Surrey’s Windsor sonnet “When Windsor walles,” the version of the poem in the miscellany reads as a moment suspended, and as a poem whose incarcerated speaker has inscribed his imprisonment in the poem’s form. In

¹⁵ Rollins, II.95

¹⁶ Hallet Smith, “The Art of Sir Thomas Wyatt,” *HLQ* 4(1946): 324-5.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey and Early Tudor Poetry* (London: Longman, 1998), 191. Heale’s position is interesting when set against Wendy Wall’s notion that in many senses *Tottel’s Miscellany* did exactly the opposite. The collection famously allowed the public (or “the ordinary”) to see that which was previously private (or elite). For more on what Wall calls a kind of “voyeurism,” see: Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), 96-7. Also see: Seth Lerer, *Courtly Letters in the Age of Henry VIII: Literary Culture and the Arts of Deceit* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 202.

Tottel's version, the characteristic moves of the sixteenth-century prison poem at work in Surrey's sonnet (which I discussed in the previous chapter) are emphasized. And Tottel's collaborative network of compilers continued and enhanced the prison persona perfected by Wyatt by giving his double sonnet "The flaming sighs that boil within my breast" a new title: "The lover describeth his restlesse state." The poem did not have this title in Wyatt's autograph manuscript, but, drawing on Wyatt's own practice of using the language of courtly love to mask his discussions of courtly punishment, the editorial network obscured the poem's prison context by calling it a love poem. Though many readers might see this as a kind of editorial misconduct, Tottel's compilers' title only emphasized the persistent vagueness of Wyatt's poem, a vagueness which was characteristic of Wyatt's prison poems, had a political purpose, and would be copied by prison poets in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Richard Tottel's compilers, like the coterie audiences who first received Wyatt's and Surrey's poems in manuscript, were astute readers of the manuscripts, and their careful readings made distinctive and rich versions of the poems widely available.

This chapter is primarily concerned with Tottel's place in the development of the sixteenth-century prison poem, but my analysis of those poems as they appear in the miscellany suggests that if Warner's and Powell's notion that *Tottel's Miscellany* actually predated the Arundel Harington manuscript, on which so many scholars have relied as an authoritative text, then more work with the individual poems in the miscellany is necessary. The versions of the poems as they appear in Tottel's need more attention as valuable iterations of canonical poems that may have captured subtleties of the texts that have been ignored as thoughtless editorial emendations. Critics have always

acknowledged the collection's role in the history of the book, or in literary history,¹⁸ but few critics have studied the individual poems of the miscellany in any real depth, and even fewer seem willing to engage the versions of the poems as they appear in Tottel's collection as valuable in themselves.¹⁹ *Tottel's Miscellany* collected and, to a large extent stabilized, a large group of poems that might never have survived.²⁰ Rather than seeing *Tottel's* as a defective collection, this chapter suggests that *Tottel's Miscellany* be treated as any other influential source – a source whose versions of the poems are valuable and suggestive in their own right. My work in this chapter not only traces the development of the prison poem in the sixteenth century through the miscellany, it also documents the bravery of Richard Tottel and his network, who were sensitive readers of Wyatt's and Surrey's prison poems, who boldly published what was meant to be private, and whose influential versions of poems helped inspire the poetic outpouring of the Elizabethan age.

¹⁸ See Arthur F. Marotti's *Manuscript, Print and The English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995), page 212, where "the story of the literary institutionalizing of English lyric poetry in print culture really begins in 1557 with *Songes and Sonettes* . . . This publication . . . led to the publication of other poetry collections in the Elizabethan period."

¹⁹ There are a few noteworthy exceptions. Elizabeth Heale's article "Misogyny and the Complete Gentleman in Early Elizabethan Printed Miscellanies" (in *Yearbook of English Studies* 33(2003): 233) argues that Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes* and the many print miscellanies that followed erased the role of women in the production of courtly verse. Her essay deals with many of the collection's individual poems. In his article "*Tottel's Miscellany* and the English Reformation" (in *Criticism* 44(2002): 329-61) Stephen Hamrick calls *Tottel's Miscellany* the "premier conduit of Petrarchan poetry" and a "key site at which to read the cultural impact of the Reformation" (329). He identifies what he calls a "Catholic poetics" in the Petrarchan poetry of the miscellany. He examines several of the miscellany's poems (Rollins numbers 283, 221, 172). Paul A. Marquis's article "Politics and Print: the Curious Revisions to Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes*" (in *Studies in Philology* 97(2000): 145-64) studies the second edition of the miscellany, whose arrangement of the poems is different from the first edition. Though the second edition would become the Elizabethan standard, scholars still work from Rollins' modern edition, which was based on the very first edition of *Tottel's Miscellany*. Marquis takes a detailed look at the changes from the first edition to the second, and places those changes in the context of the period's broader interest in collecting and anthologies.

²⁰ Although Arthur Marotti reminds us that print preserved texts that were "conceived of or treated as ephemeral," I maintain that the collection of these lyrics still has great value to readers now. *Tottel's Miscellany* may have stabilized a set of texts that were "disposable" in the eyes of their readers and writers, but in doing so it allowed readers from later periods to examine poems once deemed "ephemeral" in the first place.

I. Richard Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes*

On June 5, 1557, Richard Tottel published the first edition of *Songes and Sonettes*. Tottel, a charter member of the Stationer's Company, was largely known for his law books, not for his works of literature. Unlike so many of the anthologies that would follow, and unlike many of the other published volumes of its day, *Tottel's Miscellany* (as it became known after Edward Arber's 1870 edition), was modestly outfitted. It contained no weighty or decorative front matter, and its preface, written by Tottel himself, was brief.²¹ Amidst the often violent religious upheaval of the Marian counter-Reformation, the printer of law books sent what would become a historic volume of poems into the world with relatively little fanfare. The book's seemingly humble trappings might well have been intentional. Warner suggests that as a piece of "general nostalgia for a pre-Reformation past, when uniformity of religion was just another of life's givens," the compilers might have wanted to obscure its nostalgia by giving it the "utilitarian purpose" of being about words and English eloquence.²² Tottel's preface, which I will cover in more detail shortly, certainly foregrounded "the honor of the Englishe tong" and "Englishe eloquence."²³ Despite its modest appearance, the book's first edition was very successful, and, as a result, it was published twice more in 1557.

Because the first edition of *Tottel's Miscellany* (June 5, 1557) apparently sold well, Tottel quickly arranged the printing of the second edition in two settings.²⁴ Despite

²¹ See Warner pages 5 to 8 for an insightful reading of Tottel's six-sentence preface.

²² Warner, 4-5.

²³ Rollins, I.2.

²⁴ It is unclear why two settings were necessary, and though they are usually talked about as "duplicate settings," they don't seem to be duplicates at all. This may have had something to do with the logistics of sixteenth-century printing, or the two may be entirely distinct editions. For more on this subject see Rollins II.12-20.

the success of the first edition, both settings of the second edition (July 31, 1557) differed from the first edition in many respects.²⁵ Not only were the poems reorganized, but some poems were dropped altogether. New poems were added, and the texts of some of the poems themselves were changed. Tottel and his compilers worked with surprising speed, managing to rearrange the volume in less than two months.²⁶ Some critics imagine the emendations stripped the volume of all religious references to ensure the printer's safety under the Marian counter-Reformation.²⁷ Others imagine the changes made the collection more impersonal to protect authors from the stigma of print, or because it provided authors of potentially dangerous poems with the protection of anonymity.²⁸ Though the first edition of *Songes and Sonettes* included an "Uncertain Authors" section, the volume's subsequent moves toward anonymity are best seen in its increasing authorial obscurity. The compilers dropped Nicholas Grimald's name (along with twenty of his poems) from the first edition and replaced it with only his initials. For reasons that may always remain unclear, Tottel's second edition, issued about eight weeks after the first, was a somewhat different collection of poems. *Tottel's Miscellany* continued to circulate,

²⁵ For more on the changes from the first edition to the second, and for an analysis of the possible implications of Tottel's reorganization and sequencing of the poems, see: Paul A. Marquis, "Politics and Print: The Curious Revisions to Tottel's Songes and Sonettes" *Studies in Philology* 97(2000): 145-64. For a detailed description of the changes to each sixteenth-century edition, see Rollins II.7-36. For a detailed account of all editions of Tottel's, from the seventeenth-century to the present, see Rollins II.37-65.

²⁶ Warner suggests that this speed might well be attributed to the fact that the network of compilers were largely law students, and the time between editions coincides nicely with their breaks from school: "This may be mere coincidence, or it may be the consequence of *Tottel's Miscellany* being in part a students' vacation project" (24).

²⁷ In his landmark edition of Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes*, Hyder Rollins begins his introduction (volume II) with a bold reminder about the political and religious climate under Queen Mary, the climate into which the miscellany was released: "In the spring and summer of 1557 martyrs' fires were sending a lurid glare throughout England . . . To the accompaniment of fire and martyrs' shrieks the epoch-making book correctly known as Songs and Sonnets . . . made its appearance on June 5. It was concerned chiefly with love . . . [but was] eagerly read by the very people who watched the burning of the martyrs" (II.3). Though Rollins believed the volume was chiefly about love, others have identified a religious interest in the volume's poems. See Stephen Hamrick, "*Tottel's Miscellany* and the English Reformation," *Criticism* 44(2002): 329-61.

²⁸ For more on the "usefulness and significance" of early modern anonymity see Marcy North, *The Anonymous Renaissance* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003).

and it appeared in seven more editions (all of which were based on the altered second edition) before the end of the sixteenth century.²⁹

The compilers are known not only for their surprisingly swift changes between the first and second editions, but also for their textual alterations to the verses collected in the miscellany. When poems in *Tottel's Miscellany* are compared to surviving manuscript versions, they appear to have been changed. Many of the poems underwent what has been called a “smoothing” as the collectors managed the metrical qualities of the verse.³⁰ The readers who collected the poems for publication preferred regularized lines, and many of the poems in the book have had lines shortened or extended by the omission or addition of words or syllables. In some cases, lines were dropped from poems. These changes were made without the knowledge of the volume's two largest contributors; both Wyatt and Surrey had long been dead before the volume was ever printed. But the alterations probably wouldn't have bothered either author. As Arthur F. Marotti's influential book has explained, early modern readers, writers and compilers had fluid relationships to their texts (both manuscript and print):

In the system of manuscript transmission, it was normal for lyrics to elicit *revisions, corrections*, supplements, and answers, for they were part of an ongoing social discourse. In this environment *texts were inherently malleable*, escaping authorial control to enter a social world where recipients both consciously and unconsciously altered what they received . . . some of the habits

²⁹ Editions of *Tottel's Miscellany* appeared in the following years: 1559 (third edition), 1559 (fourth edition), 1565 (fifth edition), 1567 (sixth edition), 1574 (seventh edition), 1585 (eighth edition, printed by John Windet), 1587 (ninth edition, printed by Robert Robinson). For a detailed description of each of these editions, and for a detailed history of the miscellany's publication after the sixteenth-century, see Rollins I.7-61. For a more thorough discussion of the second, so-called Elizabethan edition, see Paul Marquis's recent edition of the miscellany: *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, et al, Richard Tottel's Songes and Sonettes: The Elizabethan Version*, ed. Paul A. Marquis (Tempe: ACMRS, 2007).

³⁰ H.J. Byrom offers a helpful summary of the emendator's methods: “Sometimes the meaning is improved, sometimes obscured, but almost always the verse runs more smoothly . . . stressed *-ing* of a present participle and non-syllabic *-er* and *-eth* are avoided, *-ed* of some past participles is made non-syllabic, the accent is made to fall upon the syllable of a word that is normally stressed in speech, a further attempt is made to reduce the number of line-fillers, and a word or syllable is frequently added or left out, in order always to obtain a line of eight, ten, twelve or fourteen syllables made up of perfect iambic feet”(142-3).

that produced textual changes in the manuscript system carried over into print culture . . . ³¹

Poems were changeable at every stage, and the alterations evidenced in the poems would not have been unusual to early modern readers and writers.

What was unusual was that *Tottel's Miscellany* was largely comprised of courtly verse. The miscellany made poems that had only been available to a small and elite group of readers in manuscript available to a larger readership in print. Both Wyatt and Surrey were courtly figures (Wyatt served as ambassador for Henry VIII and Surrey was an aristocratic courtier related by blood and marriage to two of Henry's queens and to Henry himself), and as such they did not write poems for publication. Despite (or perhaps because of) their courtly status, the first edition of Tottel's collection included forty poems by Surrey and ninety-seven by Wyatt. The second, and all subsequent editions, included just as many by Surrey and only one fewer by Wyatt. *Songes and Sonettes* was not only one of the first printed miscellanies of English verse, it was also a collection of courtly verse previously unavailable to a wider readership.

Tottel was aware that the publication of courtly poems might need explaining. His brief introduction to the miscellany went right to the heart of the issue: "It resteth nowe (gentle reder) that thou thinke it not evill doon, to publish, to the honor of the Englishe tong, and for profit of the studious Englishe eloquence, those workes which the ungentle horders up of such treasure have heretofore envied thee."³² The early modern stigma attached to printing has been well documented, and Tottel had to address the breach of etiquette his volume seemed to create. Tottel's preface "reverse[d] the received notions of

³¹ Marotti, 135 and 144 (emphasis mine).

³² Rollins, I.2

gentle and ungentle in this formulation,” and in doing so it sought to abate the stigma of print by flattering its readers.³³

Tottel’s preface also advertised the volume by sensationalizing its contents; his collection was comprised of verses obtained from private manuscripts – manuscripts that would never have reached a wide readership without Tottel’s published collection.³⁴ The typography in his volume accentuated this fact. Given that Roman type was beginning to appear in printed volumes, Tottel made a conscious decision to avoid the new typeface and opted to use the older, more traditional Blackletter instead.³⁵ If Tottel’s goal was to publish previously unread poems hoarded in manuscript, the Blackletter type in his edition only served to remind his readers that the poems in his volume were originally from manuscript. Roman type might have emphasized the poems’ printedness too much, whereas Blackletter reminded Tottel’s readers that until 1557, the poems in the miscellany survived only in handwriting.

³³ Marotti, 215. The seminal article on early modern attitudes towards printing is J.W. Saunter’s, “The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry,” *Essays in Criticism* 1(1951):139-64, though Edward Arber’s introduction to his 1870 edition of Tottel’s *Songes and Sonettes* formulated a similar theory: “Poets of that age . . . generally had the greatest aversion to their works appearing in print” (iii). See Nita Krevans, “Print and Tudor Poets,” *Reconsidering the Renaissance* for a reconsideration of Saunter’s argument. See also Wendy Wall *The Imprint of Gender* for a consideration of the particularly gendered issues surrounding publication in the late sixteenth-century. For a discussion of how sixteenth-century authors and printers addressed the “stigma of print” in their prefaces, see Wall 1-4. Stephen May refutes the notion of ‘the stigma of print’ altogether in his article “The Mythical ‘Stigma of Print,’” *Renaissance Papers* (1980):11-18.

³⁴ Later print anthologies would follow Tottel’s lead and claim manuscript sources just to sell copies. For more on the print anthologies that would follow *Tottel’s Miscellany* see Marotti, 216-7.

³⁵ It is still unclear when the first English book was printed in Roman type. In his 1949 lectures on Renaissance printing, E.P. Goldschmidt addressed the subject with reluctance: “With great diffidence and as a starting-point for future discussions I suggest that possibly Robert Record’s *Castle of Knowledge*, printed by Reyner Wolfe in 1556, may claim the distinction of being the first English book in Roman type. But I suspect that 1556 is too late a date, and that some isolated earlier forerunner has escaped my notice.” See: *The Printed Book of the Renaissance*, (Amsterdam: Gerard Th. Ven Heusden, 1974), 25. In 1969, Harry Carter, following from Goldschmidt’s starting-point, identified Leonard Digge’s *Prognostication of right good effect . . . to judge the weather for ever* (1555) as possibly the first English book in Roman type in his *A View of Early Typography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 92.

Scholars in the history of the book and the new bibliography have been sensitive to issues of presentation (styles of type, sizes of type, ornamental types, bindings, paper, punctuation, italicization, capitalization, etc.) for more than thirty years. In his landmark essay on William Congreve's 1710 *Works*, D.F. McKenzie called for a way of reading that was sensitive to the material conditions of printed texts. Moved by Congreve's personal devotion to the integrity of his *Works* (Congreve oversaw the editing of his three-volume edition and wrote a preface establishing its authenticity and textual reliability), McKenzie believed it was "impossible" to "divorce the substance of the text on the one hand from the physical form of its presentation on the other." The content of Congreve's edition could only be understood when paired with its textual presentation. According to McKenzie, textual presentation was itself a mode of expression: "The book itself is an expressive means. To the eye its pages offer an aggregation of meanings both verbal and typographic for translation to the ear; but we must learn to see that its shape in the hand also speaks to us from the past."³⁶

McKenzie's argument springs from Congreve's personal interest in his own publication, but his analysis is applicable to *Tottel's Miscellany* as well. Though the two largest contributors to the volume were dead before its publication, Tottel's compilers showed a great deal of personal interest in the volume. The miscellany went through edition after edition, and editorial and printerly interest in the book's appearance were certainly present. Printerly, material intention or attention in *Tottel's*, I argue, deserves the same kind of attention to presentation that McKenzie gave Congreve's *Works*, especially since those intentions shaped the way early modern readers received the poems in Tottel's influential collection.

³⁶ McKenzie, 82.

Surrey's elegy "So crewell prison" is an example of how presentational choices in the volume, and typographical choices in particular, affected the way poems were received. Surrey's elegy on Henry Fitzroy, the Duke of Richmond (Henry VIII's illegitimate son) circulated in manuscript among Surrey's friends and acquaintances, but the 1557 publication of *Tottel's* was the first time the elegy, like so many of Surrey's and Wyatt's poems, ever appeared in print. The elegy (in any edition or manuscript) not only mourns Surrey's dead boyhood friend, it also mourns the speaker's imprisonment in Windsor Castle. Surrey's prison elegy, which marks the advent of the heroic quatrain, captures the real or imagined conditions of the speaker's incarceration in its metrical regularity. Its regularity and the repetitive nature of its deviations are expressive of the static conditions of the prisoner, who sees and experiences the same things day after day. The Blackletter typeface that emphasized the poem's history of manuscript transmission also emphasized the poem's expressive repetition.

The first quatrain of the prison poem, as it appears in *Tottel's Miscellany*, is fairly regular iambic pentameter (though trochaic inversions and spondaic substitutions mark the first and second lines). The second quatrain however establishes a pattern of metrical deviation that becomes repetitive and then regular by its sheer frequency. Lines five, six, and seven of the poem scan as follows:

\sim / / / \sim / \sim / \sim /
 Where eche swete place retournes a taste full sowre. (5)

\sim / / / \sim / \sim / \sim /
 The large grene courtes, where we wer wont to hove,

\sim / / / \sim / \sim / \sim /
 With eyes cast upp unto the maydens towre,

While the first four lines of the poem exhibit a regularized iambic pentameter, the second quatrain of the poem establishes what will become a standardized form of deviation. The first foot of each line is iambic, but iambs give way to a spondee in the second foot in all three lines. The scansion above represents graphically the repetitive pattern Surrey's metrical deviations take on. When Surrey's poem is not following a highly regularized iambic pentameter, it shifts to a regularized form of deviation, one which establishes its own repetitive cadence, and which captures the repetitive nature of incarceration in a performative and dramatic fashion.

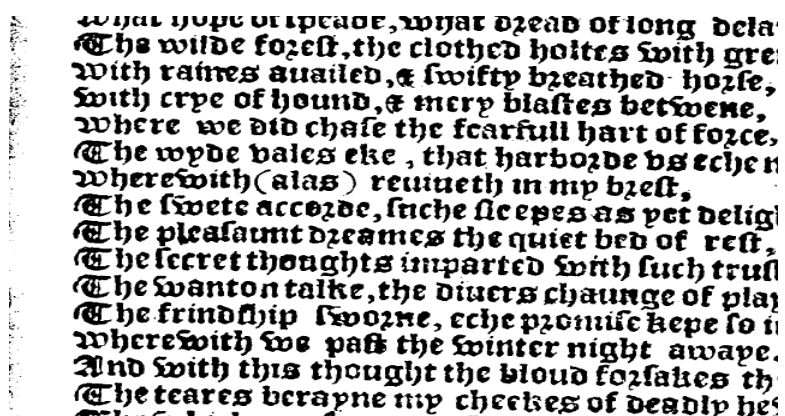
Surrey's elegy also uses rhetorical figures to convey the speaker's confinement. The imprisoned speaker experiences the same landscape day after day, and the syntax captures the sameness:

The stately sales; the ladyes bright of hewe; (9)
 The daunces short, long tales of great delight,
 With wordes and lookes, that tygers could but rewe,
 Where eche of us did plead the others right.
 The palme playe, where, dispoyled for the game, (13)
 With dased eyes oft we by gleames of love
 Have mist the ball, and got sight of our dame,
 To baite her eyes, whiche kept the leddes above.

The speaker lists what he sees around him, images which seemingly merge into recollection of better times long past: "The large grene courtes" (6), "The stately sales" (9), "The ladyes bright of hewe" (9), "The daunces short" (10), "The palme playe" (13). The repeated syntactic structure (article, adjective, and noun, or article, noun, adjective) forces the reader to experience the speaker's surroundings in a repetitive manner. Anaphora enhances the effect of the parallelism. The first six stanzas of the poem each have lines which begin with the word "with," and several lines in the first six stanzas also

begin with the word “where.” Anaphora serves to suggest the repetitive nature of incarceration.

The Blackletter typeface which reminds readers of the collection’s manuscript sources works in conjunction with Surrey’s metrical and syntactic repetition. The appearance of the poem on the page reproduces the repetitive nature of incarceration visually. Because *Tottel’s Miscellany* was set in Blackletter, each line of poetry begins with a capital letter, which is slightly larger and more decorative than the letters that complete the line. The sample of text below comes from the 1574 (seventh) edition of Tottel’s lines twenty-eight to forty-two of Surrey’s “So crewell prison.”



What hope or peace, what dread of long dela
 The wilde forest, the clothed holtes with gre
 With raines auailed, & swifty breathed hozle,
 With crye of hound, & mery blastes betwene,
 Where we did chase the fearfull hart of force,
 The wyde vales eke, that harborde vs eche n
 Wherewith (alas) reuueeth in my brest,
 The swete accord, suche sleepes as yet delig
 The pleasaunt dreames the quiet bed of rest,
 The secret thoughts imparted with such trust
 The wanton talke, the diuers chaunge of play
 The frindship swozne, eche promise kepe so in
 Wherewith we pass the winter night awaye.
 And with this thought the bloud forsakes th
 The teares berayne my cheekes of deadly he

In reproduction the type appears muddied, and the margins seem blurred – but this is not the case in the original copies.³⁷ The type is a dark, bold black, and the pages are off-white. The contrast of type against page is startling, and this contrast is heightened by the repetition of initial consonants. In these fifteen lines of text, six lines begin with the word “what,” “where,” or “wherewith.” The repetition of the Blackletter “W” at the beginning of these six lines visually heightens the repetition the poem creates through rhetorical

³⁷ In May 2007 I visited the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. I looked at the following two editions of *Tottel’s* currently housed there: the seventh edition (STC 13866), published in 1574, and two copies of the eighth edition (STC 13867), published in 1585. My observations of the appearance of the poems on the page come from that trip.

structure and metrical regularity. More striking than the repeated “W,” are the repeated “Ts.” Eight of the fifteen lines above begin with the word “The.” The repetition of initial words (anaphora) I mentioned above is emphasized by the dark column the Blackletter “Ts” create on the page. Because Surrey employed anaphora throughout the elegy’s fifty-four lines, the fifteen lines above illustrate the visual effect of the entire poem. In the case of Surrey’s elegy, the material embodiment of the text enhances the text’s impact – the poem’s concern with repetition and with regularity is visually depicted in the text’s Blackletter typography. Tottel’s preface emphasizes the provenance of the volume’s sources, and a poem like Surrey’s elegy demonstrates the impact of the compilers’ choices to mimic manuscript presentation of the poems in his collection. But even as the miscellany sought to imitate manuscript, Tottel’s volume creates a striking visual effect only print could capture.

It is not surprising that a prison poem should serve as such a fine example of editorial and printerly interest in the volume; prison literature clearly captured Richard Tottel’s attention. Tottel almost certainly knew that associating his book with previously unavailable manuscripts would help sell copies, but it is also certain that Richard Tottel was concerned with writing produced under duress, or with prison writing. Tottel primarily printed law books, but one of the first books of literature he ever published was Sir Thomas More’s prison tract *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulations* (1553) composed in the Tower. And *Tottel’s Miscellany* had many connections to the English prisons of the day. All three of the named contributors to the volume, Wyatt, Surrey and Nicholas Grimald, were imprisoned at one time or another. Several poems by Wyatt and Surrey (like Surrey’s elegy) address the prison experience explicitly. Though Tottel’s

manuscript sources are ultimately unknown, the longest and most romanticized (and now seemingly false) theory about the compilation of the volume held that it was based on a collection started by John Harington of Stepney while he was imprisoned in the Tower.³⁸ That collection, the Arundel Harington Manuscript, is now believed to have been compiled after 1557, and might even have used Tottel as a source in its compilation. But for centuries, the miscellany was whispered to have had roots in the Tower, and was believed to be the product of a prison manuscript.

Tottel's preface does more than abate the stigma of print and advertise the sensational nature of its contents; it announces, however coyly, its interest in the literature of confinement. Tottel's preface justifies his literary project by calling it a kind of liberation. To publish these poems, according to Tottel's preface, is to free them from the "hoarders" who would keep them captive and away from a wider readership. Since the two most prominent poets in Tottel's collection had been prisoners under Henry VIII, in Tottel's formulation some of Wyatt's and Surrey's poems had suffered a kind of double restraint. Not only were they prison poems centrally concerned with incarceration (or even produced in prison), they were locked away by the lucky few who had copies. Along with hundreds of other poems, *Tottel's Miscellany* collected and disseminated the prison poems of Wyatt and Surrey, poems that were produced in confinement and which would have remained in confinement had Richard Tottel and his network of compilers not released them into the world.

³⁸ See Marotti (61-3) for the traditionally held view that John Harington compiled the Arundel Harington Manuscript while imprisoned. For a succinct reading of why this is impossible, see Jason Powell, "The Network Behind Tottel's Miscellany" *ELR* 46.2 (U Chicago P, 2016): 196-7.

II. *Tottel's Miscellany* and Time in Surrey's Windsor Sonnet

When *Tottel's Miscellany* released Surrey's prison sonnet "When Windsor walles" into the world, the collection either preserved a lost manuscript version of the poem, or changed important elements of the sonnet; whatever the case, the sonnet as it appears in *Tottel's Miscellany* captures the contemplative pose of the prisoner and his complex relationship to time in a more nuanced fashion than the version that survives in manuscript. These nuances are best appreciated when the printed version of the poem is compared to an early manuscript version of the poem. The most recent modern edition of Surrey's poems is that of Emrys Jones, which appeared in 1964. In that edition, Jones claims that "where possible, sixteenth-century manuscripts have been used" as the basis for his edition. Surrey's Windsor sonnet in particular is based on BL MS Add.36529 (the Hill Manuscript). That version of the poem consisted of controlled and regularized iambic pentameter lines:

When Windesor walles susteyned my wearied arme,
 My hand my chyn, to ease my restless hedd,
 Ech pleasant plot revested green with warm,
 The blossomed bowes with lusty veare yspred,
 The flowred meads, the weddyd birdes so late (5)
 Mine eyes discovered. Than did to mynd resort
 The joily woes, the hateles shorte debate,
 The rakhell life that longes to loves disporte.
 Wherwith, alas, myne hevvy charge of care
 Heapt in my brest brake forth against my will, (10)
 And smoky sighes that over cast the ayer.
 My vapored eyes such drery teares distill,
 The tender spring to quicken where thei fall,
 And I half bent to throwe me down withal.³⁹

³⁹ All quotations of Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey's poetry are taken from Emrys Jones's following edition unless indicated: *Henry Howard Earl of Surrey: Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964). See pages xxvii-xxviii for his discussion of his sources and manuscripts.

The poem's metrical regularity stands in sharp contrast to the changing spring landscape, and it serves to remind the reader of the inevitability of time. Time's movement is predictable here; symbols of the seasons (green leaves, young birds) paired with the meter assure the reader that time in the poem functions as it does everywhere else. "When" in line one of the poem is clearly in the past; this is confirmed in line six with "discovered," which tells the reader that the speaker's observations were made in the past. Past observations lead logically to an emotional response signaled by "Than" in line six. In this instance, "than" either indicates something like "for that reason,"⁴⁰ or it implies something like "back then." Either way, the speaker's logic is clear: he looked at the changing landscape of Windsor back then. The landscape made him cry either when he looked at it in the past (back then) or it made him cry because of its sheer beauty (for that reason). Regardless of how one reads "than," time is in no way interrupted, and the speaker's response to Windsor makes good chronological sense.

Prior to the twentieth century, readers were not familiar with the manuscript version of the poem (as it appears above); they knew Surrey's sonnet as it first appeared in *Tottel's*. In his 2004 article on Surrey's verse manuscripts, A.S.G. Edwards⁴¹ describes the role of *Tottel's Miscellany* in the formation of Surrey's reputation: "Within a decade of Surrey's death, the appearance of Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes* gave him the titular central role in the creation of the early Renaissance lyric corpus. It was a role that became firmly authorized with the remarkable popularity of Tottel's collection . . . within a few years immediately preceding and following his death, Surrey achieved canonical status in print" (284). Though we may admire the poems as they appeared in twentieth century

⁴⁰ OED: "After a prep.: That; as in *for an*, for that (reason), therefore; *for al an*, for all that (FOR 23b); *not (na) for than*, notwithstanding that."

⁴¹ A.S.G. Edwards, "Manuscripts of the Verse of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey," *HLQ* 67(2004):283-93.

editions, Surrey's reputation for hundreds of years was based on his poems as they appeared in Tottel's collection. For a fuller picture of how "When Windsor walles" served as a literary model, or how it was part of the prison poem tradition before the twentieth century, we must examine the sonnet as it appeared in print in 1557.⁴²

There are other reasons to examine Tottel's version of the poem as well. In the same article, Edwards points to the scattered nature of Surrey's manuscripts as evidence that Surrey was inclined "to circulate separate poems in manuscript sometimes in different forms." Edwards believes that Surrey "reshaped" poems "for different purposes" and "audiences" (288). According to Edwards, Surrey's lyrics changed with his audiences, and the poet knowingly distributed different versions of the same poems. "When Windsor walles" may be just such a case, and with no evidence to the contrary, Tottel's version of the sonnet might in fact be one of Surrey's alternate versions of the poem.⁴³ Tottel's sources (and the extent of the network's emendations) will never be clear, but Edwards's manuscript research suggests that Tottel's version of "When Windsor walles" be given its own attention. The poem as it appears in *Tottel's* (and as it appeared to most of Surrey's contemporaries and followers) establishes a more complicated relationship between the speaker and time.

As in the manuscript version, Tottel's version of the poem seems to begin in the past; the castle walls "susteyned" Surrey's already "wearied" arm. But, unlike the

⁴² This is not to say that Surrey first appeared in print in Tottel's 1557 Miscellany. Surrey's elegies on Sir Thomas Wyatt appeared in print in 1542, shortly after Wyatt's death. There is also some evidence that portions of his psalm paraphrases (supposedly written during Surrey's last imprisonment) appeared in a 1550 volume. For more on this subject, see: Peter R. Moore, "Hamlet and Surrey's Psalm 8," *Neophilologus* 82(1998): 487-98.

⁴³ Edwards is not the first to suggest that *Tottel's Miscellany* may have been based on a manuscript we no longer have access to. For more on this subject, see: E.K. Chambers, "Sir Thomas Wyatt," *Sir Thomas Wyatt and Some Collected Studies* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), 118-9.

manuscript version, the verb tenses begin to shift in Tottel's version (the title is from the miscellany):

How eche thing save the lover
in spring reviveth to
pleasure.

When Windsor walles susteyned my wearied arme,
My hande my chin, to ease my restless hed:
The pleasant plot revedest green with warme,
The blossomd bowes with lusty Ver yspred, (4)
The flowred meades, the wedded birdes so late
Mine eyes discover: and to my mynde resorte
The joly woes, the hatelesse shorte debate,
The rakehell lyfe that longes to loves disporte. (8)
Wherewith (alas) the heavy charge of care
Heapt in my brest breakes forth against my will,
In smoky sighes, that overcast the ayer.
My vapord eyes suche drery teares distill, (12)
The tender spring which quicken where they fall,
And I halfe bent to throwe me downe withall.

The first lines seem to be the speaker's recollection of a happier time. But in lines five and six, Tottel's version takes a strange turn: "the wedded birdes so late / Mine eyes discover." If the speaker's eyes are in the process of "discovering" the birds, the green fields and the flowering boughs, can the first five lines of the poem be recollection? The word "discover" creates narrative disruption, and the poem's temporality is immediately confused. Is the speaker remembering the castle in spring, or seeing it now, as he describes it? Is the speaker remembering his incarceration or describing it even as he is imprisoned?

The miscellany's version of the poem is wrought by temporal confusion, a confusion created by shifting verb tenses bound up in the complicated process of remembering. Windsor castle was fraught with memories for Surrey. In 1537, having struck a member of the court while the king was in attendance, Surrey was sentenced to

confinement at Windsor Castle after the court had vacated the premises.⁴⁴ But before Windsor was his prison, a younger Surrey had lived at Windsor with Henry Fitzroy, Henry VIII's illegitimate son. The young men were close friends, and Fitzroy married Surrey's sister. When his friend unexpectedly died in 1536, Surrey was apparently devastated; Surrey's father, the Duke of Norfolk, claimed his son's mourning had all but consumed him.⁴⁵ Because of his emotional attachments to Windsor, Surrey's imprisonment there was bittersweet. The castle where Surrey had once lived with one of his dearest friends (now dead), in luxury befitting a prince, had become his jail.⁴⁶ Surrey's view from the ramparts of Windsor is a moment suspended; caught between what Windsor once meant to him, and what it means now, Surrey's prisoner experiences a kind of solipsistic trance that nearly leads him to suicide: "And I halfe bent to throwe me downe withal" (14).

The Petrarchan tradition is embedded in the sonnet's use of memory and time, and this tradition comes to the fore in the miscellany's version of the poem (and is rendered

⁴⁴ I accept 1537 as the year of Surrey's imprisonment. In his 2003 article "The Earl of Surrey's Quarrel with George Blage," Peter R. Moore claims that "the year of Surrey's imprisonment is quite unknown" ("The Earl of Surrey's Quarrel with George Blage." *Notes and Queries*. 50.248 (2003): 387). He is the only recent critic who seems to feel this way. Stephen Guy-Bray discusses Surrey's imprisonment at Windsor in his influential article "'We two boys together clinging': The Earl of Surrey and the Duke of Richmond," and he accepts 1537 as Surrey's year of incarceration. Guy-Bray does not even footnote the date to reflect a recent debate. Candace Lines also discusses Surrey's imprisonment, and though she footnotes the date of Surrey's incarceration, she ultimately accepts the 1537 date along with Surrey's most recent biographer, W.A. Sessions ("The Erotic Politics of Grief in Surrey's 'So Cruel Prison,'" *SEL*. 46(2006): 3). For more on the circumstances of Surrey's 1537 imprisonment at Windsor, see Sessions 128-130.

⁴⁵ William Sessions says "Turning 21 in the year after Richmond's death, the new parent stayed in a deeply depressed condition for most of the year. His father explained the illness and its duration in a letter to Cromwell in the summer of 1537 as a result of Richmond's death" (128). In his letter, the Duke of Norfolk explained that his son's depression "came to him for thought of my lord Richmond" (*Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-47*. ed. J.S. Brewer et al. vol. 12.ii, 248). For more on the relationship between Surrey and Fitzroy, see Sessions, 69-107.

⁴⁶ According to Candace Lines in her article "The Erotic Politics of Grief in Surrey's 'So Cruel Prison,'" Windsor is an ambiguous place – good because it is associated with boyhood memories, but also bad because it served as Surrey's prison. She calls the poem a lament not so much for a person as for a place. According to Lines, the poem establishes a "pattern of reversals and transformations of space" (4).

invisible in the manuscript version). Poem 126 of Petrarch's *Rime Sparse*, also invokes the spring:

Da' be' rami scendea
(dolce ne la memoria)
una pioggia di fior sovar 'l suo grembo,
et ella si sedea
umile in tanta Gloria (ll. 40-44)

From the beautiful branches was descending
(sweet in the memory)
a shower of flowers over her lap,
and she was sitting
humble in so much glory⁴⁷

In Robert M. Durling's view, "Petrarch's flowers are . . . expressive of the culminating but transitory moment of the springtime."⁴⁸ And, as in Surrey's sonnet, Petrarch's speaker seems to recount a memory. In fact, Durling claims that poem 126 is representative of the function of memory in the *Rime Sparse* as a whole. Memory is not, for Petrarch, rooted entirely in the past. His poems are laced with the self-awareness that memories are partly "fashioned" as they are reviewed or retold, and that memory is "revocation and resynthesis, it must be constantly renewed."⁴⁹ Ultimately, in Durling's analysis, Petrarch's 126 provides "a model of the Petrarchan-Augustinian dialectic of dispersal and reintegration that governs the entire *Rime Sparse*." This dialectic governs Surrey's sonnet, as it appears in *Tottel's Miscellany* as well.

Though the poem begins in the collected or "integrated" bits of Surrey's memory (the walls that sustained him, the boughs that already blossomed), those memories are

⁴⁷ Quotations from Robert M. Durling's edition of Petrarch's *Rime Sparse*, and from Durling's critical introduction to the poems, are taken from: *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976).

⁴⁸ Durling, 23.

⁴⁹ Durling, 24.

quickly “dispersed” when Surrey confronts the nature of his surroundings. The paradoxical “joly woes” of line seven have apparently fractured the speaker’s recollection. But reintegration is again apparent just a few lines down: “My vapord eyes suche drery teares distill, / The tender spring which quicken where they fall” (12-13). Surrey is back in the past, and he has become part of his landscape. Though he is still imprisoned in Windsor, his tears can water the ground, and participate in the cycle of spring. Though the poem’s temporal shifts (from past to present then back to the past) disrupt its narrative, they also help define the poem as a moment suspended.

In Tottel’s version of the sonnet, the reader experiences a suspended moment as well. In line six the word “discover” inevitably forces the reader to revisit the poem’s first few lines: what tense is the poem working in? As the reader returns to the first line of the poem, the reader is also back in the unfolding spring. The reader can observe the transforming landscape (again), but cannot sort out the poem’s intentions. While Surrey is trapped within the walls of Windsor (and in the inevitability of an unfolding spring), the reader becomes trapped in the first six lines of the poem. These lines are tellingly punctuated with a colon – a startling stop in the midst of a poem that otherwise proceeds smoothly. In the miscellany’s version, the confinement of the sonnet’s speaker is forced on the sonnet’s reader in the form of frustration – the reader simply cannot make sense of time in the sonnet, and so the reader’s reading is hindered.

“When Windsor walles,” as it appears in the print version, implicates the reader in a dramatic way, one which is lost in manuscript. Perhaps this is not surprising as the network of compilers were familiar with the world of the coterie, and imagined themselves as readers as integrally involved in the process of consuming and

regurgitating texts. Active coterie readers would imagine themselves as implicated in the poem. The regularity and unswerving progress of the meter stands in contrast to the reader's inability to get through the poem. The reader attempts to sort through the trouble with time in the sonnet, no doubt wondering: Is the poem about the past or is it about the present? Is the speaker at Windsor now, or is he only remembering what it was like to be at Windsor then? Though the reader is bogged down in the complications of shifting verb tenses, the regular meter marches on. The regularity of the sonnet's meter stands as a reminder that we are all, as Shakespeare's clown astutely observes in *Hamlet*, speaker and reader alike, imprisoned by the inevitability and seeming circularity of time. The "clutches" of age spare no writer, no reader, and no poem.

Tottel's version of Surrey's sonnet introduces a kind of temporal confusion, or narrative disruption that heightens the effect of the sonnet's expressive regularity. In Surrey's sonnet the prison is dramatized and performed in the poem's meter and syntax, and the temporally fractured version of the poem makes that dramatic inscription more visible. *Tottel's Miscellany* can be credited with influencing the prison tradition by ingeniously altering Surrey's poem, by publishing a manuscript that no longer survives, or by doing both.

III. Titles in Tottel's Miscellany

Wyatt's double sonnet from prison, "The flaming sighes," was ingeniously titled by Tottel's compilers. Most sixteenth-century manuscript collections contained few titles; in surviving manuscripts, Wyatt's poems had no titles at all.⁵⁰ In *Tottel's Miscellany*, every poem (by Wyatt and by others) appeared with a title. Wyatt's double sonnet appeared as "The lover describeth his restlesse state," a title which obscured the poem's prison context but which complemented Wyatt's persistent vagueness and political savvy. Though Henry VIII had imprisoned Wyatt, the double sonnet's speaker refuses to name the source of his afflictions. His mysterious "wounds" go unspecified. These deliberate moments of obscurity protected Wyatt from charges of treason, and Tottel's compilers rightly cloaked the poem in an imprecise title.

Wyatt's double sonnet is emblematic of the volume's larger concern with titles and names. Entitling in *Songes and Sonettes* had much to do with Tottel's, and presumably all of the compilers', interests in reminding readers of the collection's manuscript roots, and of presenting the printed material in a familiar format. Commonplace books of the time organized material under stock headings and titles, and readers would have immediately recognized titles in the miscellany as familiar

⁵⁰ According to Rollins, manuscripts from that time rarely paired poems with titles: "Furthermore, titles seldom appear in manuscript anthologies of the sixteenth century" (II.98). According to H. J. Byrom, "Titles were given to poems only rarely in sixteenth-century manuscripts" (135). By the seventeenth-century this practice seems to have changed. Mary Hobbs's study of Henry King's (1592-1669) manuscripts revealed that "The poems are well-spaced, with carefully centered titles." See: *The Stoughton Manuscript: A Manuscript Miscellany by Henry King and his Circle* (Brookfield, VT: Gower Pub., 1990), x. Arthur F. Marotti describes "professionally transcribed" anthologies, where "the title of each poem and the names of the authors of those pieces for which there are ascriptions are enclosed in hand drawn boxes" (29), but again, the examples he cites (BL MS Add. 22118 and BL MS Add. 33998) both date from the seventeenth-century. During the early sixteenth-century, most verse manuscripts did not contain titles, and Wyatt's modern editors have found no basis for Tottel's titles in Wyatt's manuscripts.

bibliographic tools.⁵¹ Had Wyatt's poem been recopied into the commonplace book of a friend or relative, it would most likely have been given a stock title there too. *Songes and Sonettes* merely followed this common manuscript habit. Wyatt's double sonnet received a title like every other entry in the miscellany, and as such it was treated to fairly common sixteenth-century textual procedures. But just as the changes to Surrey's sonnet revealed a more nuanced kind of poem, the title for Wyatt's double sonnet emphasized one of the defining features of Wyatt's prison poem.

The titles in the miscellany functioned like those found in commonplace books of the time; they were stock phrases that associated the poems with favorite sixteenth-century themes. For instance, several poems in the volume were entitled something like "the meane estate is best."⁵² Most of these poems considered the value of a simple life, or meditated on the early modern concept of moderation, or the "golden mean." However, in some cases, this title was misleading, and it simplified the more complicated aims of a given poem. This is the case in Poem 200, in the "Uncertain Authors" section of the miscellany. Poem 200 is entitled "The pore estate to be holden for the best." The poem certainly praises the "pleasures" of the rough life, such as "oten cakes," and extols the virtues of the "thatched house" which is, according to the poem, "best." But alongside standard praises of the "lowly life" (and in some cases embedded within those praises) are warnings against social climbing that seem to point towards the inadequacies of a rough or rustic world:

⁵¹ For more on the use of headings in commonplace books, see pages 136 and 137 of Peter Beal's, "Notions in Garrison," *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 1985-1991* ed. W. Speed Hill, *MRTS*.107 (1993), 131-47. Beal, working from Erasmus's *De Copia Verborum*, notes that "Each notebook was to be divided into sections under certain headings, which were themselves divided into subheadings." See: R.R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1954), 269, 272-5.

⁵² See poems 170, 191, 194, 200.

E xperience now doth shew what Godd us taught before,
 D esired pompe is vaine, and seldome dothe it last;
 W ho climbs to raigne with kinges, may rue his fate full sore.
 A las the wofull ende that comes with care full fast,
 R eject him dothe renoune his pompe full lowe is caste.
 D eceived is the birde by swetenesse of the call
 E xpell that pleasant taste, wherein is bitter gall.
 S uch as with oten cakes in pore estate abides,
 O f care have they no cure, the crab with mirth they rost,
 M ore ease fele they then those, that from their height down slides
 E xcesse doth brede their wo, they saile in scillas cost,
 R emainyng in the stormes till shyp and all be lost.
 S erve God therefore thou pore, for lo, thou lives in rest,
 Eschue the golden hall, thy thatched house is best.⁵³

In line nine, the anonymous poet claims that “Of care have they no cure.” The word “cure” presents a complicated moment of ambiguity. In this context, “cure” might mean “concern,” which would suggest that the poor have no concern with concerns; instead, they are lighthearted and happy.⁵⁴ But “cure” might also mean “remedy,” in which case the poem suggests that the poor may have no remedy for their cares or concerns.⁵⁵ In this vexed formulation, being poor might be preferable, or being poor might be a difficult way of life – a way of life one might understandably look to leave behind. Still, the poem maintains that being poor and remaining that way (that is, being satisfied with one’s “estate”) yields more ease than any attempt at social climbing might provide. According to this anonymous lyric, those who attempt to leave their station (however understandable that might be) and try to “raigne” with kings will “rue” what happens to them later (3). This poem is more than a consideration of rustic life or moderation; it is a warning to social climbers and a statement about the politics of class under the Tudor monarchs. Yet

⁵³ Rollins, I.157.

⁵⁴ OED 1a Care, heed, concern.

⁵⁵ OED 6. a. Successful medical treatment; the action or process of healing a wound, a disease, or a sick person; restoration to health.

the formulaic title assigned this poem all but ignores the political implications of the lyric – it leaves the poem’s message to the reader’s interpretation.

This poem’s title becomes more problematic in light of the acrostic the poem contains. The first letter of each line of the poem, along with the final letter of the final line of the poem, spells the name Edwarde Somerset.⁵⁶ This was a loaded reference in 1557, when Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset had been arrested and executed only five years earlier under charges of treason.⁵⁷ The Duke of Somerset was an exceedingly ambitious man, and in 1547, just after Henry VIII’s death, he managed to secure the Protectorate of England during Edward VI’s minority.⁵⁸ The Duke of Somerset, Edward Seymour, had almost no claims to such a position of authority. In fact, his only qualification for the job was his familial claim to Edward VI; Seymour was Edward’s uncle. The Duke of Somerset had arranged the downfall of the Howard family (to say nothing of his leading role in the arrest and execution of Surrey, whose name appeared in the miscellany’s proper title), manipulated Henry VIII’s will hours after his death, and became the quasi ruler of England for several years. His ambition was evident to all onlookers, and his social climbing was of the most dramatic kind; Seymour did not simply look beyond his own sphere, he looked to rule England. The acrostic’s “Edwarde

⁵⁶ The presentation of this acrostic changed from the first edition to the first setting of the second edition, and then it changed again in the second setting of the second edition (all of which appeared in 1557). In the first edition, the poem appeared with the first letter of each line of the poem capitalized (all poems in the miscellany appeared this way), but with the final letter of the poem, the final “T” of Somerset, left lower case. In the first setting of second edition, the final “T” was capitalized, emphasizing the completion of the acrostic. In the second setting of the second edition however, the final “T” had been changed back to a lower case. Rollins sees these changes as possible evidence that C (the second setting of the second edition) was attempting to increase the anonymity of the poems in the collection: “It is possible that, when he came to this poem, the compositor of C failed to observe the acrostic, for he eliminated both the final capital and the space (which also appears in A) after the initial letter of each line. On the other hand, it may be that the ‘editor’ of C intentionally removed these obvious indications of the connection of No. 200 with Edward Somerset . . . Both B and C made evident efforts to increase the impersonality of A” (19).

⁵⁷ John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 215.

⁵⁸ John Guy calls Somerset “self-willed” (201) and a “man of consuming ambition” (197) who “equated his ambition with the public good” (201).

Somerset” was a social climber with royal aspirations and, depending on its treatment of Somerset, the poem bearing his name was potentially inflammatory.

Perhaps the decision to print the piece was based on the poem’s implicit criticism of Somerset’s climbing. Perhaps the compilers imagined they were safe from charges of sedition if the poem appeared to denounce Somerset’s actions. But the poem’s aims are mysterious; it does not unequivocally denounce Somerset’s actions, it merely points to the possible consequences of forgetting one’s place. Rollins’s notes on poem 200 point to the poem’s ambiguity. On the one hand Rollins suggests that it is “reasonable to believe that it was written by some one else as a compliment” to Somerset.⁵⁹ On the other hand, he claims the poem “seems to discuss his downfall.” Indeed, the poem can be read either as compliment or cautionary tale. An ambiguous poem about such a polarizing figure was a dangerous inclusion in Tottel’s volume. As Lord Protector, Somerset steered England into Reformation, a Reformation Mary would attempt to reverse. Radical Protestants who had been banned under Henry were welcomed back and allowed to publish under Somerset. Though Henry had stripped the English churches of much of their wealth, Somerset ordered the destruction of church ornaments that Henry had tolerated. Under Somerset, England became more Protestant than it had been before. When *Tottel’s* was published in 1557, Mary was in the midst of reversing Somerset’s reformation; it was dangerous to publish a poem about the man most responsible for the Protestantism she hoped to repeal.⁶⁰ Perhaps to avert danger, the compilers sought to obscure the poem’s political possibilities with a misleading title. Seen in this light, the stock title, “The pore

⁵⁹ Rollins II.277.

⁶⁰ According to Paul A Marquis, Somerset had “attempted to force Mary to comply to reforms in the church” (3). See: Paul A. Marquis, “Politics and Print: The Curious Revisions to Tottel’s *Songes and Sonettes*,” *Studies in Philology* 97(2000). See: D.M. Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government, and Religion in England, 1553-58* (London: Longman, 1991), 26-28.

estate to be holden for the best,” contained just enough commonplace to cloak the poem with immunity.

Just as titles were potentially potent in the miscellany, proper names were also potentially volatile (as the acrostic referring to Edward Somerset can attest). In the first edition of the volume, three authors were named in full: Wyatt, Surrey and Nicholas Grimald. In the second edition and beyond, Nicholas Grimald’s name was removed (along with thirty of his poems), and only his initials remained.⁶¹ Though Wyatt’s poems dominate the collection (he has 97 poems in the miscellany, compared to Surrey’s 40 poems), he is not mentioned in the title of the volume. Instead, Tottel’s *Songes and Sonettes* appears as *Songes and Sonettes, written by the right honorable Lorde Henry Haward late Earle of Surrey, and other*. Surrey’s name dominates the volume’s title, lending it an aristocratic cachet and underplaying Wyatt’s contribution to the collection. In addition, the Howards were historically accused of having Catholic sympathies, accusations that were at the heart of the conflict between Surrey and Seymour. To Queen Mary, in the midst of the counter-reformation, the Howard name held some significant theological sway. And the subordination of Wyatt’s name in the volume’s title may have had something to do with Wyatt’s son, who in 1554 (just three years before the miscellany was published) was executed for rebelling against Queen Mary. Rollins believes this explains why Wyatt’s name is not part of the full title of *Tottel’s Miscellany*: “I suggest that he [the editor] omitted Wyatt’s name solely from the fear that it might be confused with that of his son.”⁶² The title of the volume is even more surprising because

⁶¹ Rollins sees this as part of the miscellany’s move towards anonymity: “Both *B* and *C* [the first and second settings of the second edition] made evident efforts to increase the impersonality of *A*, as in the substitution . . . of Grimald’s initials for his name” (II.19).

⁶² Rollins, II.65.

it lumps 94 poems in the first edition and 134 poems in the second edition into the anonymous category of “other.” The compilers label these “other” poets “Uncertain Authors” in the body of the collection, and though it is possible the compilers were genuinely unsure who authored these poems, it is equally possible they simply chose not to name the authors. Even more plausible is Warner’s theory that many of the young men at the Inns of Court who helped compile the volume actually wrote many of the unattributed pieces themselves.⁶³ Their decision to leave their names off the poems might point to the safety and immunity of anonymity for which so many critics have argued. In the first edition Poem 246 appeared under the title “A praise of maistresse Ryce”; in the second edition it was shortened to “A praise of maistresse R.” When the lady’s name appeared again in line 47, it was again shortened to “R.” Given the volume’s tendency toward anonymity, or at least its complicated relationship towards naming and titling, it is no surprise that Wyatt’s double sonnet was protected by a vague title.

Most editors and critics agree that the miscellany’s title for the double sonnet does not represent the poem accurately. When Wyatt’s sonnet appeared in Tottel’s, it was published, as I indicated above, under the following heading: “The lover describeth his restlesse state.”⁶⁴ The heading does not appear in the Arundel Harington manuscript where this poem is also recorded.⁶⁵ According to Wyatt’s most recent editor, R.A. Rebholz, despite Tottel’s title “Wyatt probably wrote the poem in prison in 1541 and is alluding to his condition as prisoner: illness of body and spirit (ll. 1-12), and that other

⁶³ Warner, 23.

⁶⁴ Rollins, I.69

⁶⁵ For a helpful review of the manuscripts in which Wyatt’s poems appear, see Muir (222-224). Also see Raymond Southall’s *The Courtly Maker: An Essay on the Poetry of Wyatt and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), 1-25.

‘wound’ of disgrace, which, however ill deserved, will remain with him (ll. 13-23).⁶⁶ George Nott in his 1815-1816 collection, *The Works of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and of Sir Thomas Wyatt, The Elder*, had the same opinion: “It was written evidently in confinement . . . The title given by the original Editor would refer the cause [of the speaker’s sorrow] to some disappointment in love. But there is nothing that warrants this supposition. He was confined twice in the Tower.”⁶⁷ The speaker in “The flaming sighes that boyle within my breast” is more than a lover; he is a prisoner – a persona Wyatt was particularly adept at creating because his entire family fortune was built on a legacy of imprisonment. The homegrown mythology of the Wyatt family imprisonments had recently grown with the addition of Thomas Wyatt the younger’s rebellion, imprisonment, and execution (a rebellion so recent Mary might still remember it). The title assigned the poem obscures this potentially volatile context.

The title of the poem makes the most of the sonnet’s persistent vagueness. Indeed, the poem’s diction can seem frustratingly vague because the speaker will not tell the source of his “painful stroke” (28). Instead, the speaker will refer again and again to some unnamed hurt:

The flaming sighes that boyle within my brest
 Sometime breake forth and they can well declare
 The hartes unrest and how that it doth fare,
 The pain thereof the grief and all the rest.
 The watred eyen from whence the teares doe fall,
 Do fele some force or els they would be drye.
 The wasted flesh of colour ded can trye,
 and something tell what swetenesse is in gall.
 And he that lust to see and to disarne,
 How care can force within a weried minde:
 Come he to me I am that place assined.

⁶⁶ Rebholz, 362.

⁶⁷ G.F.Nott *The Works of Henry Howard Earl of Surrey and of Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder* (London: Printed by T. Bensley, for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1815), II.543.

But for all this no force it doth no harme.
 The wound alas happe in some other place:
 From whence no toole away the skar can race.
 But you that of such like have had your part
 Can best be judge wherfore my frend so deare:
 I thought it good my state should now appeare,
 To you and that there is no great desart.
 And whereas you in weighty matters great:
 Of fortune saw the shadow that you know,
 For trifling things I now am stricken so
 That though I fele my hart doth wound and beat:
 I sit alone save on the second day:
 My fever comes with whom I spend my time,
 In burning heat while that she list assigne.
 And who hath helth and libertie alway:
 Let him thank god and let him not provoke,
 To have the like of this my painfull stroke.

The speaker describes his distress vaguely as his “heart’s unrest,” his “care,” a “wound,” a “state” (3, 10, 13, 17). Line twenty-one of the poem comes closest to qualifying these vague nouns when it offers an adjective: “For trifling things I now am stricken so.”

“Trifling” is the only qualifier the speaker employs. He is subjected to his current state of isolation because of something he wishes to present as trivial or inconsequential, but the double sonnet deftly avoids mentioning the source of its speaker’s conflict or pain. This careful ability to bewail a pain without naming it, to suffer but to stoically call the signs of that suffering “trifles,” were both hallmarks of the prison persona Wyatt crafted. The performance of the prisoner almost demands that the double sonnet be read as being about both love and imprisonment at the same time.

The title for Wyatt’s sonnet in the miscellany is probably derived from the first four lines of the poem; the first line sounds like the complaint of a lover, burning in his

desire for a lady.⁶⁸ The third line seems lifted from the conventions of courtly love as well; this poem is about “the harte’s unrest.” As I detailed in the first chapter, the poems of the court were saturated with the language of courtly love. The language of courtly love was useful to Wyatt, who could not name the source of his punishment. Wyatt relied on the knowledge of his coterie readership to understand the context – and the compilers, acting as Wyatt’s coterie as they ushered his works into print, understood the context too. The compilers demonstrated their great talent for identifying and emphasizing the intentions of their authors when they entitled Wyatt’s sonnet without referring to its potentially dangerous dramatic setting. The miscellany clouded the sonnet’s meaning by attempting to bury the poem’s prison context under the weight of courtly love. The miscellany, in effect, followed Wyatt’s lead.

The compilers sustained the double sonnet’s politically motivated vagueness; following Wyatt’s subtlety, they masked the poem with their invented title thereby continuing Wyatt’s prison performance. And, the compilers allowed for a multiplicity of meaning; by leaving the sonnet with a vague title, *Tottel’s Miscellany* invites the possibility that the poem is also, simultaneously, a “restless lover’s” complaint. In addition, Tottel’s editor established what would become a defining characteristic of prison poems in the later sixteenth-century. After the publication of *Tottel’s Miscellany*, prison poems deftly avoided naming their contexts in their titles, and often attempted to associate themselves with other traditions.

⁶⁸ On page 46 Southall discusses Wyatt’s opening stanzas in other poems as being particularly marked by the language of courtly love. Southall does not address Wyatt’s double sonnet, but in first talking about “Who list his wealth and ease retain” and then “In mornyng wyse syns dayle I increase” he has the following to say: “Both this poem and that, also found in the Blage MS., which laments the deaths of the five councilors open with stanzas which are those of the lover’s complaint.”

Perhaps the best example of Tottel's influence on later prison poems is Sir Walter Raleigh's pastoral prison poem "*from The 21st and Last Book of the Ocean to Cynthia.*" Raleigh's speaker points to a mysterious wound, much like the wound in Wyatt's double sonnet "The flaming sighs." Like Wyatt, Raleigh deftly avoids naming the wound's cause, bemoaning his "love's wounds" without specifying their origin (11).⁶⁹ Rather than blame Queen Elizabeth for his stay in the tower, Raleigh uses the language of courtly love to carry a carefully worded political message. And like Wyatt's double sonnet in *Tottel's Miscellany*, Raleigh's prison poem has a title that doesn't suit it; rather than clarifying the poem's topic, it mystifies its subject and aligns it with another poetic tradition. The miscellany's title for Wyatt's double sonnet suggests the piece is part of the courtly love tradition, and Raleigh's title suggests his poem is an unfinished piece of a longer epic work. Both poems, regardless of their titles, are part of the prison tradition, and Raleigh's title, taking its lead from the way Wyatt's double sonnet appears in *Songes and Sonettes*, paradoxically signals its place in that tradition by trying to obscure his inclusion in it.

⁶⁹ All references to Raleigh's poetry come from the following edition: *Selected Poems of Thomas Campion, Samuel Daniel and Sir Walter Raleigh*, ed. Ronald Levaio (London: Penguin, 2001).

IV. *Tottel's Miscellany* and the Sound of Wyatt's Shackles

The publication of *Tottel's Miscellany* is an important moment in the transition from manuscript to print. But this transition wasn't always smooth, and despite the very real contributions *Tottel's* made, some losses were inevitable. Wyatt's eight line epigram "Sighs are my food" provides an example of what was lost in the midst of transition, and of what Tottel's collaborators might have missed.

Wyatt's eight line epigram "Sighs are my food" is generally understood as one of his prison poems. Whether he composed the poem while locked in the Tower of London in 1541 or not, the "clinking of fetters" in line two dramatizes the speaker's incarceration:⁷⁰

Sighs are my food, drink are my tears;	
Clinking of fetters such music would crave.	2
Stink and close air away my life wears.	
Innocency is all the hope that I have.	4
Rain, wind, or weather I judge by mine ears.	
Malice assaulted that righteousness should save.	6
Sure I am, Brian, this wound shall heal again	
But yet, alas, the scar shall still remain.	8

⁷⁰All quotations of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry are taken from R.A. Rebholz's edition: *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 1997). In his notes on the epigram, Rebholz explains "The poem was probably written during Wyatt's last imprisonment between January and March 1541" (379). In an influential essay on Sir Thomas Wyatt's metrics, D.W. Harding introduces Wyatt's "Sighes are my foode" as "the poem from prison" ("The Rhythmical Intention in Wyatt's Poetry," *Scrutiny* 14 (1946): 93). A.K. Foxwell refers to the same poem as being "written in prison" (*A Study of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poems* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964) 113).

For more information on Sir Thomas Wyatt's life, see the following biographies: Stephen Merriam Foley, *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990); Patricia Thomson, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Background* (London: Routledge, 1964); Kenneth Muir, *Sir Thomas Wyatt, Life and Letters* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1963). Muir's biography is still considered the most thorough, especially because it contains many of Wyatt's letters that are otherwise scattered in manuscript.

The speaker's isolation is confirmed in line five by his need to judge the weather with his "ears" (while locked away he cannot see the sky). Wyatt's epigram also distinguishes itself as a prison poem because it contains both consolation and complaint.⁷¹

Like the works of his medieval predecessors, and particularly the work of Boethius, Wyatt's prison poem engages in both consolation and complaint. Wyatt complains about the stagnant air in his chambers, and about the "malice" he believes is responsible for his predicament. Wyatt seems most ready to voice his disgust because of his apparent "righteousness" which has been "assaulted"; this seems especially aggravating because his righteousness should be his means for redemption. It should him "save" (6). He also finds consolation, though it isn't a Christian consolation. Wyatt's speaker consoles himself with his "innocency," and with the proverb-like belief that the "wound" will heal (though it will leave a mark).⁷²

Regardless of the poem's dramatic prison setting, and contrary to the speaker's complaints, Wyatt did not experience particularly deplorable conditions while incarcerated. My earlier chapters covered the class-based system that dictated how a

⁷¹ In her article "Chaucerian Prisoners," *Chaucer and Fifteenth-Century Poetry* (Exeter: Short Run Press, 1991), 84-99, Julia Boffey refers to the "genre of the prison complaint or consolation" (99). Boffey uses the conjunction "or," possibly indicating a belief that the two forms of prison poetry are mutually exclusive, which in medieval literature may well be the case. In Wyatt's case however, I identify both complaint and consolation simultaneously at work in his prison poems.

⁷² Though many critics have portrayed Wyatt's use of proverbs as part of his plain style, more recent scholarship has read Wyatt's use of proverbs as shaped by and indicative of his life at court. For traditional views of Wyatt's proverbs as part of his plain style, see Patricia Thomson's *Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Background*, where she says "Wyatt . . . was as fond as any man of what he calls a 'proverb notable.'" (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1964. 40-1, 144). Douglas Peterson believes that the "didactic poet" (not just Wyatt) relies on the "homely proverb" (*The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne: A Study of the Plain and Eloquent Styles*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1967.10). For more recent scholarship on Wyatt's proverbs, see: T.M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982), 258; Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980); Diane M. Ross, "Sir Thomas Wyatt: Proverbs and the Poetics of Scorn," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18 (1987) 201-12; Elizabeth Heale, "'An owl in a sack troubles no man': Proverbs, Plainness and Wyatt," *Renaissance Studies* 11(1997):420-33; and Adrian O. Ward, "Proverbs and Political Anxiety in the Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey," *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature* 81(2000): 456-71.

person experienced incarceration in early modern England – as a man of means Wyatt probably never wore fetters. Wyatt’s stay in the Tower of London was no doubt frightening; during his 1537 imprisonment in the Tower he saw his friends executed and knew that at any moment he might be next. His 1541 stay might well have been colored by those memories.⁷³ But his incarceration was not a time of physical discomfort; in fact, for an active man of the court, Wyatt’s imprisonment and compulsory inactivity was a time of relative leisure.⁷⁴ And like many privileged prisoners who came before him (Sir Thomas More, James I of Scotland, and Charles D’Orleans), Wyatt used his time away from public life to write.

While the fetters in Wyatt’s epigram help situate the speaker in prison, the sound of their “clinking” also demonstrates the possibility of production while incarcerated. In its manuscript version, the poem’s dactylic rhythms insist we hear the “clinking” of shackles:

, ~ ~ , , ~ ~ ,
 Sighs are my food, drink are my tears;
 , ~ ~ , ~ , , ~ ~ ,
 Clinking of fetters such music would crave. 2
 , ~ ~ , ~ , ~ , ,
 Stink and close air away my life wears.

⁷³ Kenneth Muir, one of Wyatt’s most influential biographers, claims that state papers and letters prove that his stay in the Tower altered Wyatt: “when he was finally released he was a changed man” (*Sir Thomas Wyatt, Life and Letters* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1963) 35). Discussing Wyatt’s 1537 imprisonment, Stephen Merriam Foley claims “the bloody days of May were a strain on Wyatt’s consciousness” (27).

⁷⁴ Boffey imagines that “it may have been only the enforced leisure of imprisonment or detention which offered the opportunity of literary experiment to those with busy public lives” (99). Diane R. Marks also comments on the “enforced leisure” of privileged prisoners, though she puts more emphasis on the psychological consequences of such isolation: “Life as a prisoner was perhaps not delightful. The princes were exiled and frustrated, cut off from the normal functions and responsibilities of their class.” See: Diane R. Marks, “Poems from Prison: James I of Scotland and Charles D’Orleans,” *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 15(1992): 245-58.

In my first chapter, I discussed how these lines are comprised of dactylic, anapestic, and spondaic feet, pasted together; I also detailed the way consonance and sibilance work with those rhythms to mimic the “clinking” sound of Wyatt’s prisoner’s fetters.

Tottel’s compilers either did not enjoy the poem’s clinking, or they thought their audience might disapprove of its sound. The emendations suggest that the poem’s irregularity bothered them. The epigram (as it appears above, which is as it appears in manuscript) consists of irregular line lengths: four of its lines are decasyllabic (lines 2, 4, 5 and 8), lines six and seven have eleven syllables, line one has eight syllables, and line three has nine. Alternating line lengths, paired with strangely compounded dactylic feet made for jarring verse. The poem is completely changed in *Tottel’s Miscellany*. The lines are “smoothed,” and the epigram appears in the following (altered) form:

Syghes are my food: my drink are my tears.	
Clinkyng of fetters would such Musick crave,	2
Stink, and close away my life it weares.	
Pore innocence is all the hope I have.	4
Rayn, winde, or wether judge I by mine eares.	
Malice assaultes, that righteousnesse should have.	6
Sure am I, Brian, this wound shall heale again:	
But yet alas, the skarre shall still remayn.	8

Though the first line of the poem begins with trochaic inversion, the rest of the line is iambic. In fact, trochaic inversion begins most lines, but after their initial feet, most lines have been made iambic to satisfy the compilers:

, ~ ~ , ~ , ~ , ~	
Syghes are my food: my drink are my tears.	
, ~ ~ , ~ , ~ , ~ ,	
Clinkyng of fetters would such Musick crave,	2
, ~ , ~ ~ , ~ , ~ ,	

Stink, and close ayer away my life it weares.

Words have been added to lengthen shorter lines. In line one, another “my” has been added to fill out the line. This happens again in line three, where the insertion of “it” makes the line decasyllabic. In manuscript, line six has eleven syllables. In the print version, “assaulted” has been changed to “assaultes” so that a syllable can be dropped. With this omission, the line becomes decasyllabic, and the poem contains more neatly iambic pentameter lines.

The move from manuscript to print certainly involved a bit of loss for this particular poem. In smoothing the lines, the compilers stripped the poem of the very rhythms that dramatized the sounds of incarceration. The manuscript version of the poem allowed the sound of the prisoner’s fetters to dominate the sound of the poem; the sound of incarceration was inscribed in the poem’s form. In the miscellany’s version, that sound has been taken away, and the poem’s meter no longer recreates the imagined sounds of the prison. An epigram comprised of compound dactylic rhythms was transformed into an epigram written in iambic pentameter.

But this loss is balanced by the distinct advantage of circulation and imitation. Wyatt’s irregular lines (as expressive and wonderful as they are), would have been ignored or avoided in the later sixteenth century, when literary theorists like George Gascoigne and Samuel Daniel favored more regularized lines. In his 1575 “A Primer of English Poetry,” Gascoigne advises poets:

hold the same measure wherewith you begin, whether it be in a verse of six syllables, eight, ten, twelve . . . every young scholar can conceive that he ought to continue in the same measure wherewith he beginneth, yet do I see and read many men’s poems nowadays, which beginning with the measure of twelve in the first line, and fourteen in the second (which is the common kind of verse), they will

yet (by that time they have passed over a few verses) fall into fourteen and fourteen, *et sic de similibus*, the which is either forgetfulness or carelessness.⁷⁵

The shifting line lengths in Wyatt's epigram may have been seen as the "forgetfulness" or "carelessness" Gascoigne criticizes. In his "Classical Metres Unsuitable for English Poetry" (c. 1603), Daniel warned against "wrong[ing] the accent," a fault which would have easily been identified in Wyatt's compound rhythms.⁷⁶ Had the sounds of Wyatt's clanking fetters or his irregular line lengths in "Syghes are my food, drink are my tears" been preserved in *Tottel's Miscellany*, theorists like Gascoigne and Daniel might have used his epigram as an example of poor poetic practice. Instead, Wyatt's epigram "Sighs are my food" (along with some others that were "smoothed" prior to publication) became a model for epigrammatists of the later sixteenth-century. Tottel's collaborators turned a poem that might have been ignored into a poem that seemed to herald the iambic pentameter lines that would become so popular in the later sixteenth century.

⁷⁵ George Gascoigne, "A Primer of English Poetry," *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 164.

⁷⁶ Vickers, 450.

Conclusion

Surrey's and Wyatt's prison poems influenced later writers, who would use their lyrics as models for their own poems of incarceration. But the versions of their poems that appeared in *Richard Tottel's Songes and Sonettes* directed the way later poets would take up the prison tradition.⁷⁷ Along with Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, James I of Scotland's *Kingis Quair*, and Charles D'Orleans *Fortunes Stabilnes*, the prison poems in *Tottel's Miscellany* established an English prison poem tradition that would influence later poets like Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618), John Donne (1572-1631), and Richard Lovelace (1618-1657). Even Queen Elizabeth would find inspiration in Tottel's prison poems; Elizabeth's epigram "Written on a Window Frame at Woodstock," believed to have been composed while she was imprisoned at Woodstock Castle by her sister Mary, borrows extensively from Wyatt's "Sighs are my food." Elizabeth points to her "innocents" as does Wyatt, and her lines are more regularized iambic pentameter. She was probably inspired, in part, by Wyatt's epigram as it appeared in Tottel's collection.⁷⁸

Tottel's Miscellany is an important moment in literary history because it marks the beginning of poetry in print. But, it is also important because it influenced so many traditions that would flourish in the later sixteenth century and early seventeenth century.

⁷⁷ "Tottel's *Miscellany* can be seen as more than a mere publishing event in 1557: it marks a central artifact in a revolution that continues through the metaphysical poets . . . the structural achievement of that central meditative voice, as begun in Tottel, never disappeared from their lyrics." See: William A. Sessions, "Tottel's *Miscellany* and the Metaphysical Poets," *Approaches to Teaching the Metaphysical Poets* (NY:MLA,1990), 52.

⁷⁸ The poem was apparently written in 1554 or 1555 when her half sister Mary imprisoned Elizabeth at Woodstock Castle. All references to or quotations from Elizabeth's poems come from the following edition: *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, eds. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000).

The prison poem tradition owes a great deal to *Tottel's Miscellany*. The sheer availability of prison poems in English broadened because of Tottel's collection, but more importantly, the form these poems took owes much to Tottel's compilers. Though Wyatt and Surrey were poetic innovators, what emerged from *Tottel's Miscellany* stands as a stunning example of what happens when readers play with form.

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