

# “Unto the world’s ear”: Wyatt’s *Psalms* Beyond the Court

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*Scholars have come to understand Thomas Wyatt’s poetry strictly within the social context of the English court. Yet the fluid relationship between the coterie manuscript practices and wider print readerships that came into contact with Wyatt’s paraphrase of the penitential psalms helps to situate his work within a broader interpretive milieu. The Penitential Psalms themselves bear out this context by dramatizing a desire to reach readers and listeners beyond the monarch. Wyatt’s poem fashions an interlocutory, adaptable mode of address that displaces David’s own voice and opens it to communal reception.*

**I**N Thomas Wyatt’s metrical paraphrase of the *Penitential Psalms*, written while Henry VIII’s court was becoming increasingly oppressive, David falls into sin in a courtly setting complete with a forthright counselor who admonishes his monarch for adultery and treachery.<sup>1</sup> By the end of the opening prologue, David has withdrawn from the court and begun the penitential process in an isolated and subterranean cave. Narrative interludes between individual psalms illustrate the dramatic setting and describe David’s struggle to articulate his prayer, and in the climactic buildup to Psalm 51 the narrator posits an audience other than God for David’s song, beginning with a single, hypothetical listener:

<sup>1</sup> Wyatt could have composed the *Penitential Psalms* at any point between 1534 and his death in 1542, as R. A. Rebholz notes in *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* ([London: Penguin, 1978], 455), though scholars continue to debate the date of composition. Jason Powell argues that 1536 is a likely date based on the fact that John Brereton, a scribe who probably accompanied Wyatt in diplomatic service, entered a psalm on fol. 65v of Wyatt’s personal manuscript, British Library, Egerton 2711. The psalm in question, however, is Psalm 37 (Psalm 36 in the Vulgate Bible), which is not one of the penitential psalms and thus was not necessarily composed at the same time as the paraphrase (“Thomas Wyatt’s Poetry in Embassy: Egerton 2711 and the Production of Literary Manuscripts Abroad,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 67 [2004]: 261–82).

But who had been without the cave's mouth  
 And heard the tears and sighs that he did strain,  
 He would have sworn there had out of the south  
 A lukewarm wind brought forth a smoky rain.  
 But that so close the cave was and uncouth  
 That none but God was record of his pain,  
 Else had the wind blown in all Israel's ears  
 The woeful plaint and of their king the tears.

(411–18)<sup>2</sup>

In order to speak to this listener, the cave develops an uncanny “mouth,” an image that Wyatt adds to his sources.<sup>3</sup> A “smoky rain” potentially mixes with or carries forth David’s song, probably alluding to the climactic moment in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* when Pandare foresees a “smoky reyn” of biblical proportions that will confine Criseyde to his house.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the stanza, the narrator suggests that the entire nation of Israel would experience the “record” of David’s pain if only the song could extend beyond the cave walls.

Scholars including Stephen Greenblatt and Alexandra Halasz have viewed the focus upon stifled expression that is characteristic of the *Psalms* in light of Wyatt’s anxious relationship with Henry VIII. Greenblatt argues that the *Psalms* “express a single, unified process which we may describe in religious terms as penitence or in psychological terms as loving submission to domination,” where the force of domination is a composite of Henry VIII and God, “two irascible autocrats [who seem] to bear a striking resemblance to each other” from the standpoint of a

<sup>2</sup> Quotations of Wyatt’s *Penitential Psalms* are taken from *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (ed. Rebholz, 195–216), and are cited parenthetically in the text by line number.

<sup>3</sup> Wyatt’s principal source here is Pietro Aretino’s *Sette Salmi*, though the pious rain also calls up the manna distributed to the Israelites in Numbers 11:7. For a seventeenth-century English translation of Aretino, see *Paraphrase vpon the seaven pen[itenti]all psalms of [t]he kingly prophet tra[n]slated out of Italian*, trans. John Hawkins (Paris, 1635), *Early English Books Online* (<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>) (May 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 522, line 628. Because of the “smoky reyn” Pandare is able to convince Criseyde to come to dinner, which creates the opportunity for Troilus and Criseyde to consummate their love. Editions including that of Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson (*Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1969]) annotate the line as a possible allusion to *Troilus and Criseyde*. The allusion seems likely because of the scarcity of the phrase, the prominence of *Troilus and Criseyde* in early Tudor literary culture, and Wyatt’s close familiarity with Chaucer. On Chaucer’s influence over Wyatt generally, see John Watkins, “‘Wrestling for this world’: Wyatt and the Tudor Canonization of Chaucer,” in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, ed. Theresa M. Krier (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998), 21–39.

courtier and diplomat such as Wyatt.<sup>5</sup> Halasz describes a more defiant relationship to Henry, but like Greenblatt she views Wyatt's mode of address as that of a courtier to a monarch, in which "the narrator's case against David is, in fact, Wyatt's case against Henry VIII."<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Heale, meanwhile, sees the *Psalms* as a "distinctly, but cautiously, Reform[ist]" enterprise without insisting upon their direct relationship to Henry—though Heale believes that the *Psalms*, like all of the poetry of Wyatt and his peers, "need to be understood within the context of their [authors'] primary occupations as servants of the king and the commonwealth."<sup>7</sup>

As the *Psalms* help to reveal, however, Wyatt was more than a career courtier, and his poetry does far more than address a monarch. Indeed, the *Psalms* articulate a desire to open up the claustrophobic boundaries of a monarchal cave or court to a host of alternative voices, interpreters, and interlocutors. And though this desire remains experimental and hypothetical, the circumstances of production and circulation that surrounded the *Psalms* suggest that there is more than wish fulfillment at stake in their gesture toward an audience of "all Israel's ears." As I argue below, the *Psalms* came into surprisingly close contact with the spheres of distribution and reception associated with devotional literature in print. This context adds to what we already know of Wyatt's cosmopolitan, international sensibilities, and it helps to explain why Wyatt's contemporaries linked him to the broadest of audiences both before and shortly after his death. Acknowledging a wider interpretive milieu of the *Psalms*, furthermore, leads to a new reading of the strategies by which Wyatt carves out an open, responsive mode of address—and a new appreciation of the sense of *invitation* that the *Psalms* extend to an inclusive body of readers.

Scholars have long viewed Wyatt as a courtier poet, a member of an interpretive community that depended upon the monarch's personal recognition and acceptance.<sup>8</sup> H. A. Mason indicates the consensus be-

<sup>5</sup> Greenblatt, "Power, Sexuality, and Inwardness in Wyatt's Poetry," in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 126 and 116.

<sup>6</sup> Halasz, "Wyatt's David," in *Rethinking the Henrician Era: Essays on Early Tudor Texts and Contexts*, ed. Peter C. Herman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 193–218, 208.

<sup>7</sup> Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey, and Early Tudor Poetry* (New York: Longman, 1998), 160 and 32.

<sup>8</sup> For a helpful distinction between the terms "courtier" (literal service to the court) and "courtly" (a stylistic idiom associated with the court), see Steven W. May's "The Social Organization of the Court" (*Elizabethan Courtier Poets: The Poems and Their Contexts* [1991; repr., Asheville, NC: Pegasus, 1999], 9–40).

fore and after he was writing in 1959: "Even if the court poet writing in the vernacular were not averse to printing his works, the poems were not thought of as destined for a 'public'. For what public could there be outside the court?"<sup>9</sup> Since then scholars have continued to describe a struggle in Wyatt's poems between an interior identity on the one hand and a royal institution of authority on the other. When Daniel Juan Gil argues that "Wyatt's is a poetry of social corrosion. . . . it tears the speaker out of the social world within which he (or sometimes she) is normally embedded," for example, he posits a unified social world centered on the court, from which the "limit experience" of sexuality is an asocial departure.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, James Simpson's analysis of Wyatt's relationship to his fifteenth-century predecessors remains focused on the ways in which the monarchal court constricts the "discursive freedom" of individual poets.<sup>11</sup> And Greg Walker has argued that the *Psalms* remain "trapped within the paradigm of literature as counsel" after the disappearance of a climate where forthright courtiers were free to counsel their monarch in bold terms.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the fixation on the monarch in Wyatt scholarship, we do not expect Henry's court to be the exclusive audience for many of Wyatt's immediate predecessors and contemporaries. John Skelton, who claimed his laurels on the basis of his university career as opposed to his position within the Henrician court, produced a mass of printed writing in a great variety of genres.<sup>13</sup> Chaucer and Thomas More pro-

<sup>9</sup> Mason, "The People and the Court: Wyatt's 'Devonshire' Poems," in *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 144. See also Raymond Southall, who develops this line of thinking in his *The Courtly Maker: An Essay on the Poetry of Wyatt and his Contemporaries* ([Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., 1964], 54–66).

<sup>10</sup> Gil, *Before Intimacy: Asocial Sexuality in Early Modern England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 26 and 25.

<sup>11</sup> Simpson, "Breaking the Vacuum: Ricardian and Henrican Ovidianism," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29 (1999): 329; and see Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 322–29.

<sup>12</sup> Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 376. Jason Powell and Adrian Ward have also delimited their inquiries into Wyatt's public persona within the context of courtiership and diplomacy. See Powell, "'For Caesar's I Am': Henrican Diplomacy and Representations of King and Country in Thomas Wyatt's Poetry," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 36 (2005): 415–31; and Ward, "Proverbs and Political Anxiety in the Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey," *English Studies* 81 (2000): 456–71. See also Robert Meyer-Lee, who identifies Wyatt as a member of the gentry operating in a model of literature as counsel (as opposed to a "laureate" poet) ("Epilogue: Sir Thomas Wyatt: Anti-laureate," in *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 220–32).

<sup>13</sup> Arthur F. Kinney has demonstrated that John Skelton was much less concerned with

vided additional precedents for conceiving of *auctoritas* in a manner that was not tied exclusively to the court; Chaucer's vernacular literary authority rose to new heights with the publication of his work from the 1470s through the Henrician period, and More directed *Utopia* and other printed books at readerships throughout Europe.<sup>14</sup> W. A. Sessions has argued that the notion of a "new communal poet" whose honor and nobility do not derive from a monarch emerged contemporaneously with Wyatt—though Sessions portrays this development as the Earl of Surrey's rather sudden innovation, one that is not present in Wyatt's poetry.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, Wyatt himself was a "communal poet" in the sense that his writing draws heavily from a cosmopolitan literary climate outside of England. As Joel B. Davis has recently argued, Wyatt is a poet of "linguistic borderlands" whose Petrarchism must be contextualized in relation to the Spanish court of Charles V.<sup>16</sup> In addition to Petrarch, Wyatt was influenced by contemporary continental poets including Clément Marot, whose satirical epigram "Frere Thibault" appears in Wyatt's personal manuscript.<sup>17</sup> Marot's influential reformist psalter is one of the many models for Wyatt's *Psalms*, which are allusive to a web of continental sources to an extent that is uncommon even among psalm paraphrases. Wyatt's principal source is *Sette Salmi*, a prose narrative version of the seven penitential psalms by Pietro Aretino, a poet whose talent for satire earned him a reputation as a "scourge of princes."<sup>18</sup> In Wyatt's

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the royal patronage system than we might expect, in *John Skelton, Priest as Poet: Seasons of Discovery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); and Jane Griffiths has argued that, for Skelton, "the poet cannot be defined wholly in relation to the court, but is compelled to speak as an outsider [and therefore] must ultimately locate the source of his authority in himself alone" (*John Skelton and Poetic Authority: Defining the Liberty to Speak* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 14).

<sup>14</sup> On the publication history of *Utopia* and a study of its reception across Europe, see *Thomas More's "Utopia" in Early Modern Europe: Paratexts and Contexts*, ed. Terence Cave (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Sessions, "Surrey's Wyatt: Autumn 1542 and the New Poet," in *Rethinking the Henrician Era*, ed. Herman, 186.

<sup>16</sup> Davis, "'Thus I restless rest in Spayne': Engaging Empire in the Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt and Garcilaso de la Vega," *Studies in Philology* 107 (2010): 518. On Wyatt's diplomatic career as it emerges in his poetry, see also Susan Brigden, *Thomas Wyatt: The Heart's Forest* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> On Marot and his influence over English poetry, see Anne Lake Prescott, *French Poets and the English Renaissance: Studies in Fame and Transformation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 1–36.

<sup>18</sup> Though he undoubtedly earned the sobriquet *flagello dei principe*, Aretino actually gave the nickname to himself in the process of negotiating his celebrity status. See Raymond B. Waddington, "A Satirist's *Impresa*: The Medals of Pietro Aretino," *Renaissance*

*Psalms* there are also clear links to a Latin paraphrase of the psalms by Joannis Campensis, who was a scholar of Hebrew at the University of Louvain; a Latin translation of the psalms by Ulrich Zwingli; and the Latin Vulgate Bible. Wyatt was also influenced by English Bibles including the Miles Coverdale Bible, English translations of the Campensis and Zwingli paraphrases, and treatises and commentaries by John Fisher and William Tyndale.<sup>19</sup>

Wyatt's *Psalms* are potentially linked, furthermore, to the extensive readership of one of the most ubiquitous genres in early modern England. Psalm translation and interpretation were fundamental at all levels of early modern English culture; Thomas Becon reproduces a commonplace about the relevance of the psalms to all aspects of contemporary life when he suggests in 1542: "Certes the Psalmody of Dauid maye well be called the Treasure house of the holye Scripture. For it conytayneth the what so euer is necessary for a christen man to know."<sup>20</sup> Metrical paraphrase of the psalms doubled as an everyday mode of devotional expression and a noble, belletristic enterprise, and often these functions overlapped. The Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter was one of the most frequently printed books in the history of English verse, read and sung by courtiers, aristocrats, and commoners alike for over one hundred and fifty years.<sup>21</sup> Though his common meter later came to be derided as base and dull, Thomas Sternhold, a courtier in the retinue of Henry VIII and then Edward VI, was attempting a project similar to that of Marot by providing a fashionable alternative to "fayned rimes of vanitie," as Sternhold calls secular verse.<sup>22</sup> Sternhold alludes to a cour-

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*Quarterly* 42 (1989): 655–81; and Waddington, "Pietro Aretino, Religious Writer," *Renaissance Studies* 20 (2006): 277–92.

<sup>19</sup> See Rebholz's notes on Wyatt's use of sources, in *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, 452–56; H. A. Mason, "Wyatt and the Psalms," *Times Literary Supplement* (February 27, 1953): 144, and (March 6, 1953): 160; and Brigden, *Thomas Wyatt*, 465–73.

<sup>20</sup> Becon, *Dauids harpe ful of moost delectable armony, newely strynged and set in tune* (London, 1542), A7v, *Early English Books Online* (May 2011); and see Rivkah Zim, *English Metrical Psalms: Poetry as Praise and Prayer, 1535–1601* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> On the relationship between the Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter and literary culture, see Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 19–50; on its longstanding influence and its relationship to the Reformation, see Beth Quitslund, *The Reformation in Rhyme: Sternhold, Hopkins, and the English Metrical Psalter, 1547–1603* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Sternhold, *Certayne psalmes chose[n] out of the Psalter of Dauid, and drawe[n] into Englishe metre* (London, 1549), A3r, *Early English Books Online* (May 2011). Zim argues that Sternhold was directly influenced by Marot (*English Metrical Psalms*, 122–24), while Hamlin points out that there is clear evidence only of a common inspiration among reformist psalters and hymns (*Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature*, 26–27).

tier setting when he claims in the preface to his *Certayne psalmes* that Edward VI “taketh pleasure to hear [metrical psalms] song sometimes of me,” but he also suggests that they will serve the comfort of “all youre maiesties subjects” (as, indeed, turned out to be the case).<sup>23</sup> Sternhold’s paraphrases have little in common with Wyatt’s elegant style and versification, but it does not follow from this that their reading communities were entirely separate. In fact, the musician and tutor Thomas Whythorne claims—in comments that have gone unnoticed by scholars—that he grouped Sternhold’s and Wyatt’s psalms together in a 1545 miscellany (which is no longer extant) compiled for John Heywood:

Also, while I was with [Mr. Heywood], I did write out for him divers songs and sonnets that were made by the Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder, and Mr. Moor, the excellent harper, beside certain psalms that were made by the said Mr. Wyatt, and also Mr. Sternhold, the which be also in my said book.<sup>24</sup>

Though he differentiates psalmic writing from “songs and sonnets,” Whythorne notes no distinction in kind between Sternhold’s and Wyatt’s metrical psalms.

Sternhold’s and Wyatt’s psalms were both printed early in Edward VI’s reign, some years after both had appeared in manuscript.<sup>25</sup> Unlike Wyatt, who died seven years before his *Psalms* were printed, Sternhold was directly involved in the printing of *Certayne psalmes*—but the similar circulation history of these paraphrases nevertheless raises the question of Wyatt’s own relationship to the print market. Was Wyatt linked in any way to the broad devotional readership that Sternhold acknowledges in his preface? We might not expect so, given Wyatt’s reputation as a coterie poet or his sophisticated style, but we should

<sup>23</sup> Sternhold, *Certayne psalmes*, A3r.

<sup>24</sup> Whythorne, *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne: Modern Spelling Edition*, ed. James M. Osborn (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 6. See also Osborn’s edition that retains Whythorne’s phonetic orthography, published as *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961). Whythorne’s title is *A book of songs and sonets, with longe discourses sett with them, of the chylds lyfe, togyther with A yoong mans lyfe, and entring into the old mans lyfe. devoyed and written with A new Orthografye by Thomas Whythorne, gent.*

<sup>25</sup> Wyatt’s psalms were printed in 1549, Sternhold’s sometime between 1547 and 1549. When exactly Sternhold composed his psalms is unknown, but the evidence that Whythorne copied them for John Heywood in 1545 reveals that they were circulating in manuscript during Henry VIII’s reign. Richard Baird Weir argues on the basis of internal evidence that Sternhold’s psalms were written under Henry (*Thomas Sternhold and the Beginnings of English Metrical Psalmody* [PhD diss., New York University, 1974], 19–22), while Quitslund argues that they were probably composed in 1547 or 1548, under Edward VI (*The Reformation in Rhyme*, 27–28). None of the discussions that I have seen is aware that Whythorne had access to at least some of Sternhold’s psalms by 1545.

not forget that during the same period other career courtiers were producing masses of religious writing for print. By the early 1530s Thomas More had printed over one million words of polemic in the vernacular, sponsored by Cardinal Wolsey and the Bishop of London, in defense of Catholic orthodoxy.<sup>26</sup> With Henry VIII's escalating crisis with Rome and Thomas Cromwell's rise to power during the 1530s, the government grew even more invested in the commission and patronage of religious texts in print.<sup>27</sup> Wyatt's closest ally at court and Henry VIII's most powerful agent of religious reform, Cromwell attracted a retinue of protégés who, together with the reform-minded courtiers that had risen in Anne Boleyn's shadow, established an influential circle of evangelicals in royal service and in proximity to it.<sup>28</sup> It became court policy to foster ties with pamphleteers, balladists, playwrights, satirists, translators, and poets.<sup>29</sup> Describing what he dubs "The Emergence of the Protestant Literary Tradition," John King argues that "By commissioning a series of works intended for the reading public rather than a coterie audience, Cromwell turned away from established patronage practices" and "skillfully manipulated a broad, popular audience as a vehicle of government policy."<sup>30</sup> Eamon Duffy has qualified this view, demonstrating that devotional literature was less one-sided and reform less widely palatable than has been assumed, but there is little question that Cromwell was a major force in an expanding print market.<sup>31</sup>

Historians including Alec Ryrie have portrayed Wyatt as a reformist directly involved in the evangelical cause, highlighting Wyatt's friendship with Cromwell and his status as the "most important of [Anne Boleyn's] evangelical clients" (whether romantic, political, or both).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (2002; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 192. See also H. S. Bennett (*English Books and Readers, 1475–1557*, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979], 65–76) who discusses the early Tudor period's "steady" and "constant demand" for religious writings.

<sup>27</sup> John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982) 44–56.

<sup>28</sup> Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 194–222.

<sup>29</sup> William Underwood, "Thomas Cromwell and William Marshall's Protestant Books," *Historical Journal* 47 (2004): 517–39.

<sup>30</sup> King, *English Reformation Literature*, 35 and 48.

<sup>31</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–1580* (1992; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 424–47. See also Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, 47.

<sup>32</sup> Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII*, 199. See also Alistair Fox, who identifies an "unmistakable Lutheran bias" in the *Psalms* (*Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII*

The idea that Wyatt was a reformist is difficult to defend conclusively, though the *Psalms* do treat provocatively reformist ideas including the inefficacy of deeds in prayer and devotion:

For if thou hadst esteemed pleasant good  
The outward deeds that outward men disclose  
I would have offerd unto thee sacrifice.  
But thou delights not in no such gloze  
Of outward deed as men dream and devise.

(495–99)

Although the term “sacrifice” may allude to the vanity of Catholic ceremony, this passage does not betray an explicitly Lutheran position so much as an expressive engagement with theological controversy. Similarly, the narrator’s later claim that David “takes all outward deed in vain / To bear the name of rightful penitence, / Which is alone the heart returned again / And sore contrite that doth his fault bemoan, / And outward deed the sign or fruit alone” (651–55) may (as scholars including Heale and Mason have suggested) echo William Tyndale on justification by faith, but it does not stake out a definitively unorthodox theology.<sup>33</sup> Literary scholars remain divided about Wyatt’s doctrinal leanings, and there is plenty of reason to be wary of assigning the *Psalms* to any particular theological camp.<sup>34</sup> The categories “Catholic” and “Protestant,” after all, are misleading labels for the fluid spectrum

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and *Henry VIII* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989], 282). And see Clare Costley King’s discussion of the reformist tendencies that Wyatt’s 1549 editors located in the *Psalms*: “Rightful Penitence and the Publication of Wyatt’s *Certayne Psalmes*,” in *Psalms in the Early Modern World*, ed. Linda Phyllis Austern, Kari Boyd McBride, and David L. Orvis (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 155–74.

<sup>33</sup> Heale suggests that this passage “is clearly a Reformed statement” (*Wyatt, Surrey, and Early Tudor Poetry*, 164). In *Editing Wyatt: An Examination of Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt, Together with Suggestions for an Improved Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge Quarterly, 1972), H. A. Mason draws out echoes from Tyndale’s *A Prologue Upon the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*: “even so are all other good works outward signs and outward fruits of faith and of the Spirit; which justify not a man, but shew that a man is justified already before God, inwardly in the heart, through faith, and through the Spirit purchased by Christ’s blood” (189), quoted from G. E. Duffield, ed., *The Work of William Tyndale* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 133. See also *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court*, where Mason suggests that Wyatt is “very much in the spirit of Luther” in the moments that I quote (218–19).

<sup>34</sup> In addition to the scholars mentioned above, see Greg Walker (*Writing Under Tyranny*, 360–76) where he emphasizes the contiguities between Wyatt’s theology and that of the Henrician government in the late 1530s; and see Brigden, who sees “no imputation of Lutheranism” in Wyatt’s *Psalms* but detects “a different strain of reformed belief” that is “closer to an Augustinian concept of the importation of righteousness” (*Thomas Wyatt*, 451–90, 489, and 485).

of affiliations available—or unavailable, given the treacherous obscurities of government policy—in Henrician England. Nevertheless, the deliberation about “outward deeds” in the *Psalms* is good evidence that Wyatt was in conversation (if not necessarily in complete agreement) with his reformist allies at court and with 1530s reformist publications.

There is evidence, furthermore, that Wyatt was directly linked during his lifetime to a publication that included a radically unorthodox text, namely *The Court of Venus*, which was published circa 1537–39 and likely printed some of Wyatt’s lyrics alongside the “Pilgrim’s Tale,” an anti-fraternal satire that identifies the pope as antichrist and preaches the doctrine of justification by faith.<sup>35</sup> The amorous poems at the beginning of the volume are not thematically related to the “Pilgrim’s Tale”; on the contrary, they likely served to disguise the volume’s more incendiary content. Regarding Wyatt’s possible involvement in the publication, Richard Harrier has argued that Wyatt “could not have been led into so crude and audacious a venture” as to have authorized the printing, and what we know of Wyatt’s discretion in declaring his theological sympathies makes this a fair assumption.<sup>36</sup> I would, however, dispute Harrier’s further suggestion that “the work of Wyatt was alien to the guiding minds of [*The Court of Venus*].”<sup>37</sup> Even if the publishers of the volume included lyric poems simply as a distraction, they were obviously familiar enough with Wyatt’s poems to have gained access to them. And even if Wyatt was not personally involved in the publication of this volume, the fact that his writings were included in this milieu may itself have influenced how he was read.

Our reluctance to connect Wyatt to devotional literature in print stems from his association with lyric poetry produced in coterie circles

<sup>35</sup> The fragmentary nature of the extant editions of the volume creates a puzzle over attribution, since only two lyrics survive in the first edition, and textual scholars disagree over the likelihood that they are Wyatt’s. Wyatt’s verifiable presence in the later editions is good reason to believe that his poetry was printed in the first extant edition, however: five of the surviving poems in the later editions are certainly by Wyatt, and some of the remaining nine may be as well. See Richard Harrier, *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 80–85; and Russell A. Fraser, ed., *The Court of Venus* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1955), 33–35 and 56–77.

<sup>36</sup> Harrier, *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s Poetry*, 82. On Wyatt’s characteristic discretion about his theological leanings, see his 1541 defense against charges of treason including his association with Reginald Pole. Writing that “I thynke I shulde have more adoe with a great sorte in Inghlande to purge my selfe of suspecte of a Lutherane then of a Papyst,” Wyatt dexterously refuses to identify himself as a Lutheran even as he defends himself from association with the Catholic Church (*Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, ed. Kenneth Muir [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1963], 195–96).

<sup>37</sup> Harrier, *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s Poetry*, 85.

of manuscript transmission. Arthur Marotti has demonstrated that early Tudor lyric poets tended to write within a circumscribed coterie setting and that it was not until 1557 that "Tottel's collection diverted poetry from the relatively closed system of manuscript transmission to present it to a larger public through print: the verse of Wyatt, Surrey, Grimald, and other early Tudor poets, which had been confined previously to manuscript circulation, made its debut in the print medium in this volume."<sup>38</sup> Yet categorical divisions between scribal and print cultures in a period when script was often "published" for a widespread audience are now acknowledged to be misleading.<sup>39</sup> Aristocrats often wrote for print as a form of self-presentation and self-promotion, and the term "coterie" itself is problematic given that networks of manuscript distribution could potentially be very large.<sup>40</sup> In the early sixteenth century, when associations between vernacular literary genres and their media were less clearly established, boundaries between manuscript and print cultures were particularly blurry and permeable.

Wyatt's personal volume, the Egerton manuscript, which includes a holograph version of the *Psalms*, is a telling example of how a poet's participation in coterie circles of manuscript transmission did not preclude association with print.<sup>41</sup> The foundation of the canon of Wyatt's poetry and a palimpsest of readings and interpretations of his writings, the Egerton manuscript provides a wealth of evidence about the communities that came into contact with Wyatt's poetry. After Wyatt's death the manuscript came into the possession of the Harington family, and the writings it contains from this period—including another paraphrase of the penitential psalms by Sir John Harington—are consistent with the habits of exchange and collaboration that characterized Wyatt's milieu.<sup>42</sup> Like other volumes of Wyatt's poetry, the Egerton manuscript reveals how Wyatt's poems were edited and even rewritten

<sup>38</sup> Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 212.

<sup>39</sup> See Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). See also Alexandra Walsham and Julia Crick, who describe the period as one of a "lingering co-existence, interaction and symbiosis" of script and print ("Introduction: Script, Print, and History," in *The Uses of Script and Print: 1300–1700* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 4).

<sup>40</sup> See Steven W. May, "Tudor Aristocrats and the 'Stigma of Print,'" *Renaissance Papers* (1980): 11–18.

<sup>41</sup> British Library, MS Egerton 2711. My thanks to the curators at the British Library for facilitating access to the manuscript.

<sup>42</sup> See Harrier, *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry*, 1–15. For a study of the political and diplomatic context of the Egerton manuscript, see Powell, "Thomas Wyatt's Poetry in Embassy."

in the process of circulation. What is more, it includes traces of association with the world of print: a number of poems early in the manuscript are marked up extensively by Nicholas Grimald, who edited the first printed version of the *Psalms* in 1549 and wrote extensively for print.<sup>43</sup> Grimald's exact role in the production of Tottel's 1557 Miscellany is unclear, and he did not come into contact with the Egerton manuscript until several years after Wyatt's death.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, Grimald's efforts to regularize Wyatt's metrical line and to introduce firm punctuation show how a coterie manuscript could double as a copy text for an editor with an eye for print.

The culture of re-appropriation, emendation, and free copying that is evident in manuscripts of Wyatt's verse has done much, as Jeff Dolven puts it, to "make the question of authorship elusive, if not beside the point."<sup>45</sup> While this evidence rightly complicates our notion of a static mode of authorial address to an abstract public, however, it also forces us to recognize that authorial self-fashioning is not mutually exclusive with localized, socially conditioned practices of manuscript transmission. Part of the enigma of the Egerton manuscript is that it includes evidence of Wyatt's careful attention to self-presentation, complicating the idea that Wyatt was a participant in aristocratic coteries without an "author-centered focus."<sup>46</sup> Written in several highly legible secretary hands including Wyatt's own, Egerton is an elegant compendium in which each poem is allotted a generous amount of vellum and the *Psalms*, given a separate section. Wyatt appears to have checked over the poems thoroughly, adding his monogram signature and other signals to indicate approval or authorship throughout the volume.<sup>47</sup> It is unusual to find a collection of the works of a single poet in the early Tudor period, particularly one that appears to be designed as a presentation anthology. The overall impression of the manuscript is one of significant, even unexpected concern for authorial posturing.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> MS Egerton 2711, in particular 4r–7v. Harrier argues that Grimald was involved in editing the 1549 *Certainne Psalmes* but that he was unlikely to have edited Tottel's Miscellany (*The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry*, 6–7 and 18).

<sup>44</sup> On Grimald's markings in the Egerton manuscript, see Harrier, *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry*, 6–7.

<sup>45</sup> Dolven, "Reading Wyatt for the Style," *Modern Philology* 105 (2007): 75–76. See also Chris Stamatakis's *Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Rhetoric of Rewriting: 'Turning the word'* ([Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 65–95), which argues that Wyatt's rewriting and interlineal emendation of the *Psalms* in the Egerton manuscript becomes a mode of penitence and redemption.

<sup>46</sup> Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric*, 40.

<sup>47</sup> See Harrier, *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry*, 3 and 11.

<sup>48</sup> A. K. Foxwell, whose 1911 study demonstrated the Egerton manuscript's unique im-

Wyatt's 1527 translation of Plutarch's *The Quyetie of Mynde*—an instance of his personal involvement in print that often goes unmentioned—shows that he engages in related forms of authorial self-presentation when directly addressing a print audience. Refusing Katherine of Aragon's request that he translate Petrarch's *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, Wyatt published instead a moral treatise by Plutarch that includes a preface "To the reder." With its aloof and even sarcastic tone, Wyatt's preface might appear to scoff at those who fail to meet stringent criteria for gentle readership:

It shall seme harde vnto the parauenture gentyll reder / this translation / what for shorte maner of speche / and what for dyuers straunge names in the storyes. As for the shortnesse aduyse it wele and it shalbe the plesanter / whan thou vnderstandest it. As for the straunge names stycke nat in them / for who that can take no frute in it / without he knowe clerely euery tale that is here touched / I wolde he shulde nat rede this boke.

Farewell.<sup>49</sup>

The sense of these lines, however, is that a reader who considers him or herself to be gentle may "parauenture" not be, and that a truly gentle reader need not stumble over unsophisticated appearances or unfamiliar allusions. Anyone who picks up the book has the potential to be in on the joke and to develop the kind of conspiratorial rapport with the author that is characteristic of poems like "Whoso list to hunt," in which the speaker effects a self-effacing appeal for company, inviting the reader to identify with his failure to keep up with the hind: "Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt, / As well as I may spend his time in vain."<sup>50</sup> At the same time that Wyatt invites a company of discerning readers to imagine their participation in learned discourse, he effectively broadens the possibilities for joining this community by replacing the densely glossed and rhetorically elaborate Petrarch with the pithy and straightforward prose of Plutarch, in the vernacular.

Not long after Wyatt's death, his contemporaries framed him as a poet with a far-reaching audience, whose authority did not derive from the English monarch. The *Psalms* appeared in print amidst the expansion of evangelical literature under Edward Seymour's protectorate, a con-

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portance, went so far as to suggest that Wyatt designed it as a collection of his works for a print audience (*A Study of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poems* [1911; repr., New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1964], 27–28). For a recent discussion of the ways in which "Even an ostensibly author-centric manuscript like *Egerton* yields up evidence of . . . 'participatory poetics,'" see Stamatakis, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Rhetoric of Rewriting*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, ed. Muir and Thomson, 440.

<sup>50</sup> *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems*, ed. Rebholz, 77.

text that supplied them with a polemical edge antithetical to the shifting forms of orthodoxy that defined Henry's final years.<sup>51</sup> Seven years earlier, in an elegiac tribute printed within weeks of Wyatt's death, John Leland singled out the "great art" of Wyatt's *Psalms* ("This succinct, admirable and pious work will not perish. Wyatt will be more famous for this work") and called upon the entire English nation to praise him: "Lo, the famous Wyatt lies dead, that man, I say, who was the unique glory of the English nation. . . . In life Wyatt was an ornament to all honest men and to his nation, in death he is a national glory."<sup>52</sup> According to Leland, the English nobility is "indebted" to Wyatt, since from him they "learned that poetry can be written in varied meters," but in none of the thirty-four dirges that comprise the elegy does Leland mention Henry VIII. A loyal courtier and antiquary who had been producing royal propaganda since the early 1530s, Leland had no apparent reason to obscure links between Wyatt and the monarch. The elegy is not in itself a reliable indicator of Wyatt's reputation during his lifetime, but Leland's portrayal of Wyatt as the glory of a national audience not "inferior in his native tongue" to Dante and Petrarch challenges the notion that Wyatt was understood exclusively as a courtier poet at the time of his death.<sup>53</sup>

Leland dedicated his elegy to Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, whose own tributes to Wyatt in the autumn of 1542 aggressively defy the idea that poetry needs to be legitimized by a prince. Surrey personally ventured into print for the only time (anonymously) in order to eulogize Wyatt, invoking "Chaucer the glory of his wit" in order to establish Wyatt's authorial legitimacy.<sup>54</sup> Suggesting that Wyatt's poetry will survive regardless of his contemporary reputation, Surrey's praise of Wyatt opens the door for others—not least poets of noble lineage like himself—to assume authority independently of their relationship with the prince and court.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> See King, *English Reformation Literature*, 76–121.

<sup>52</sup> Leland, *Naeniae in mortem Thomae Viati equitis incomparabilis* (1542), trans. Dana F. Sutton, hypertext edition (<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/naeniae/>) (May 2011). The Latin verse reads: "Non morietur opus tersum, spectabile, sacrum. / Clarior hac fama parte Viatus erit"; "Extinctus iacet en Viatus ille, / Ille inquam decus unicum Britannae / Gentis . . . Ingenuis decori cunctis patriaeque Viatus / Vivus erat, patriae mortuus ille decus." For a verse translation, see Kenneth Muir, *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, 261–69.

<sup>53</sup> Leland, *Naeniae in mortem Thomae Viati*, trans. Sutton.

<sup>54</sup> Howard, *The Poems of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey*, ed. Frederick Morgan Padelford, rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1928), 98.

<sup>55</sup> On Surrey's bid for independence from the role of the courtier poet, see Sessions, "Surrey's Wyatt."

But to the heuens that simple soule is fled;  
 Which left with such, as couet Christe to know,  
 Witnessse of faith that neuer shall be ded;  
 Sent for our helth, but not receiued so.<sup>56</sup>

Around this time Surrey also wrote a manuscript proem to the *Psalms* that registers Wyatt's participation in the paradigm of courtier literature, highlighting David's adulterous sins and suggesting that the *Psalms*, "In princes hartes Godes scourge yprinted deepe / Mowght them awake out of their synfull sleepe."<sup>57</sup> By placing Wyatt in the role of David's counselor Nathan—who in Wyatt's narrative prologue lambasts his king for falling in love with Bathsheba, fathering her child, and sending her rightful spouse to his death—Surrey engages in the type of risky behavior that would lead to his execution. Alleging so plainly that David's sins parallel Henry's with Anne Boleyn would probably have met the conditions of punishable treason in the later Henrician years.<sup>58</sup> For Surrey, however, Wyatt's achievement is not limited to satire—Wyatt will be remembered for importing the sonnet form into England and for the "lively fayth" and piety that the *Psalms* transmit, in the vernacular, to a devotional readership.<sup>59</sup> If Alexander created such a "riche" monument to Homer's fame, Surrey asks, "What holie grave, what worthye sepulture, / To Wyates Psalmes should Christians than purchase?"<sup>60</sup> This longing for a collective cultural "purchase" is inflected through Surrey's own anguish at the time, but, as we shall see, it also resonates with ways in which Wyatt's *Psalms* themselves imagine their audience.

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It is in the narrative prologue to his *Psalms* that Wyatt comes closest to Surrey's implication of a scathing critique of Henry VIII. If anything, Wyatt plays up the accusations of monarchical profligacy and lasciviousness levied by his source, Pietro Aretino. David's "pompous pride of state and dignity" (49) is specifically monarchical, and twice the narrator

<sup>56</sup> *The Poems of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey*, ed. Padelford, 99.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 93. Surrey's proem is entered in the Egerton manuscript immediately before the holograph *Psalms*, and Harrier identifies the hand that entered it as that of John Harington the elder, who likely took possession of the Egerton manuscript directly from Wyatt's son (*The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry*, 5–8).

<sup>58</sup> See Colin Burrow's discussion of the period's broad definition of libel in "Wyatt and Sixteenth-Century Horatianism," in *Horace Made New*, ed. Charles Martindale and David Hopkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 27–49.

<sup>59</sup> *The Poems of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey*, ed. Padelford, 93.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

interjects to remind us of the damage that such behavior will wreak in later Christian kingdoms:

So that forgot the wisdom and forecast  
 (Which woe to realms when that these kings doth lack)  
 . . . . .  
 And of that lust possessed himself he findeth  
 That hath and doth reverse and clean turn out  
 Kings from kingdoms and cities undermineth[.]  
(17–18 and 28–30)

David emerges not only as a sinful and adulterous monarch but as a remarkably tyrannical one, hoping to censor any mention of the fact that he sent Bathsheba's husband to his death:

He, blinded, thinks this train so blind and close  
 To blind all thing, that naught may it disclose.  
(31–32)

This depiction of a monarch who is at once extremely oppressive and exceedingly secretive about his own policies, to the point that he is blind even to himself, has no precedent in Aretino, and it is suggestive of the indiscernible theological position of Henry VIII's autocracy at the time that Wyatt wrote the *Psalms*.

If David's kingly sins at the outset of his penitential journey point to Henry VIII, however, this figuration begins to break down almost immediately, as does the text's restriction within the boundaries of courtier literature. The *Psalms* begin by identifying with Nathan, providing a forthright critique of tyranny, censorship, and sin at court, but by the sixth stanza this mode of authorial presentation has shifted dramatically. Consumed in fear and regret, David withdraws "into a dark cave" (60) and remains there, emphatically remote from the court, for the rest of the poem. Wyatt even removes David's crown, marking a transition from David's identity as a prophet-monarch to his other principal role, vatic poet: "straight his crown of gold, / His purple pall, his sceptre he lets fall / And to the ground he throw'th himself withal" (46–48). Immediately after shedding the accoutrements of kingship, David "taketh in hand" his harp (57) and enters a discursive space that is not defined by the acceptance or even recognition of monarchy. This movement away from the court, which seems necessary for Wyatt's David to achieve his powers of poetry and prophecy, is considerably less pronounced in Wyatt's sources. Clément Marot, for example, subtly and consistently provides the exemplar of a reform-minded Christian prince, whereas Wyatt appears less interested in reforming the court than in rejecting it.

It has been tempting to understand David's withdrawal to the cave as a step inward, toward the illusion of an intimate space that continues to be associated with Wyatt's lyric poetry. The *Psalms* do after all create a vivid sense of David's tortured mental state, detailing his "inward contemplation" and "inward restraints" in "a dark cave / Within the ground" (358, 361, and 60–61). As becomes clear in the following passage, however, there is more to inwardness than confinement or isolation, particularly for the prophet David:

The sacrifice that the Lord liketh most  
Is sprite contrite; low heart in humble wise  
Thou dost accept, O God, for pleasant host.  
Make Zion, Lord, according to thy will,  
Inward Zion, the Zion of the ghost.

(500–504)

Zion literally refers to the hill on which the city of David was built, but throughout the *Psalms* it refers metonymically to the nation of Israelites to whom David proselytizes God's word, as David clarifies when he asks God to "Rue on Zion, Zion that, as I find, / Is the people that live under thy law" (583–84). When David speaks of an "Inward Zion," he yearns for that "people" to become something deeply private, a community of believers incorporated into his spirit and imagination. At the same time that he resists the vanity of externalization and disclosure, that is, David expresses a desire for communal action and expression. Inwardness is not a resolution but a starting point, and the narrative interlude immediately following David's desire for "Inward Zion" details his struggle to "importune, cry, and call" on God for the ability to express the "deep secrets that David here did sing . . . Of God's goodness" (539, 509, and 511). David yearns to participate in the process by which God "gratis his graces to men doth depart," to the just and to "prodigal sinners" alike (524 and 527).

The illusion of David's inwardness, then, cannot be reduced to the overheard contemplations of an inward psychology. In fact, this particular way of thinking about poetic address—a product of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary criticism—is misleading in Wyatt's amorous poems as well.<sup>61</sup> One need only recall the overlapping series of sugges-

<sup>61</sup> On the problems that arise in using the formal tools of the New Criticism to address Wyatt's style, see Dolven, "Reading Wyatt for the Style." See also Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey, and Early Tudor Poetry*, 173: "No more than the passionate 'I' of the courtly lyrics, or the sinuous 'I' of the satires, should the suffering and penitential 'I' of the psalms be taken at face value."

tive asides, calls for response, dialogic turns, and subtle innuendos in poems including “Whoso list to hunt” and “My lute, awake!” to see that the production of inward deliberation is only one strand among many in Wyatt’s constructions of speaking and listening:

May chance thee lie withered and old  
The winter nights that are so cold,  
Plaining in vain unto the moon.  
Thy wishes then dare not be told.  
Care then who list for I have done.<sup>62</sup>

With its mixture of humor and bitterness, this stanza of “My lute, awake!” scorns the notion of complaining unobserved by oneself and goes on to imply a sense of camaraderie at the mistress’s expense. The refrain “My lute, be still, for I have done” hints that this very poem will be subject to further repetition and performance by other unrequited lovers who would provide better company than the absent mistress. The curious dialogue between singer and lute that runs throughout the poem—“Now cease, my lute. This is the last / Labour that thou and I shall waste”—seems to parody a solipsistic style of speech and invite a communal, musical response.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the fact that Wyatt has been canonized at the root of the vernacular lyrical tradition that Northrop Frye defines (following John Stuart Mill) as “preeminently the utterance that is overheard” becomes quite ironic given the interlocutory style of address that tends to surround Wyatt’s constructions of inwardness.<sup>64</sup>

Such play surrounding speakers and listeners is particularly pronounced in the *Psalms*, where David’s most intimate contemplations are simultaneously understood as vehicles of collective devotion. Wyatt achieves this effect not least by exploiting the psalm tradition itself, where the inward truth of David’s expression is precisely what makes it addressable to all of “Zion.” The psalms had long been understood both as a vehicle for personal penitence and as an occasion for communal integration, which helped them earn their reputation as a uniquely powerful means of instruction and social improvement.<sup>65</sup> As Rivkah

<sup>62</sup> *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems*, ed. Rebholz, 145.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 249.

<sup>65</sup> As Michael Kuczynski suggests of the late medieval English tradition: “Like David’s own penitential behavior and poetry, acts of Davidic imitation always have a social as well as individual character. Converting sinners to God’s ways might not fit a modern definition of political activism, but . . . it is a powerful and necessary form of social action” (*Prophetic Song: The Psalms as Moral Discourse in Late Medieval England* [Philadelphia: Uni-

Zim notes, "The simultaneous dual application of psalms [as private devotion and communal worship] to participants in the liturgy had been described by Basil in the fourth century, and this was repeated by Bishop John Jewel in the mid sixteenth century."<sup>66</sup> What Wyatt achieves in the *Psalms* is to adopt the psalmic ideal of simultaneous inward and outward devotion and then dramatize it as a conflict. David continually retreats to inward spaces "wherein he might him hide" his shame (61) and then attempts to renew his confidence that he is a vatic author with "Sure hope of health" and that his song is inspired by God (322). Much of the suspense of Wyatt's paraphrase derives from the tension surrounding David's struggle to emerge from the cave as God's *vates* or prophet-poet; and triumphant declarations of David's power to express God's word are hedged by doubt and insecurity. David seems able to contemplate the grand notion "how shall thy great mercy / Sound in my mouth unto the world's ear?" (135–36) only as a question, and his concern to incorporate Zion "Inward" follows immediately upon an ambitious declaration of the authorial influence that will follow his redemption:

Sinners I shall into thy ways address,  
 They shall return to thee and thy grace sue;  
 My tongue shall praise thy justification;  
 My mouth shall spread thy glorious praises true.  
(486–89)

David's journey from a penitent sinner to the great king who spreads God's praises to all of Israel is thus framed as a process of *opening* inward secrets: "I, for because I hid it still within, / Thinking by state in fault to be preferred, / Do find by hiding of my fault my harm" (237–39).

The overall trajectory of David's journey is toward the "sured confidence" of the final narrative interlude, where David looks forward to Christ's "Word that should confound / The sword of death . . . when full ripe time should come" (725, 699–700, and 703). This typological assertion provides a triumph for the vatic poet relating God's word in a Christian context where "Man redeemed, death hath her destruction, /

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versity of Pennsylvania Press, 1995], xviii). Zim shows how this tradition continued through the Reformation (*English Metrical Psalms*, 27–31).

<sup>66</sup> *English Metrical Psalms*, 28. Jewel's translation reads: "As it were from one mouth and from one heart, they offer up unto the Lord the psalm of confession, and the words of repentance every of them applieth particularly unto himself" ("A Replie vnto M. Hardings Answer," in *The Works of John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury*, vol. 1, ed. John Ayre [Cambridge: Parker Society, 1845], 333).

That mortal veil [Christ's body] hath immortality, / David assurance of his iniquity" (708–10). Readers familiar with Wyatt's characteristically ambiguous style will not be surprised to find undecidability lingering even here—the line in which the narrator declares David's final salvation rests on the troubling word "iniquity," and David continues to struggle with "foes" (774), including his own son through the final penitential psalm. The last line of the final narrative prologue, "And thus begins the suit of his *pretence*" (726, my emphasis), suggests that any confidence of God's favor before Judgment remains to some extent pretended or performed.<sup>67</sup> Such ambiguity seems to me insufficient to support Alexandra Halasz's claim that "Wyatt's narrative frame finally presents an unregenerate David"—any Christian reader would have a hard time believing that David himself is not saved.<sup>68</sup> But the unresolved tension surrounding David's righteousness as a prophet does suggest that his speaking position remains a tentative, incomplete vehicle for authorial address.

I have been suggesting that David's departure from a courtly setting and his ongoing struggle to achieve confidence as *vates* provide a means for Wyatt to meditate on his own departure from the role of the courtier poet and his adoption of a broader mode of address that invites and inspires response. The *Psalms* develop an illusion of psychological inwardness only to exceed it, placing David's struggle for "sured confidence" as a vatic poet amidst a diverse profusion of alternative voices, glances, and whispers. The traditional mode of address in psalm paraphrases is that of David to God, but Wyatt highlights the dramatic "engines" (171) of a variety of additional speakers and auditors, including Bathsheba, various "en'mies" (24), Nathan, and onlookers including a "servant" (301) and a "pilgrim" (395). Chief among these voices is the figure of the narrator, who occasionally asserts control over the perspective of the interludes with an "I say" or "it seemeth unto me." The *Psalms* move rapidly and self-consciously, that is, between courtly and political insinuation, illusions of David's interior contemplation, expansive evangelism, alternative voices surrounding David, and the wry and wily intrusions of the narrator.

Although Greenblatt and others have conflated this narrator with David, positing a unified psalmic voice, in fact the narrator differenti-

<sup>67</sup> See the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for "pretense," which emphasizes the alleged, performative quality of such an assertion. *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (<http://dictionary.oed.com>) (May 2011).

<sup>68</sup> Halasz, "Wyatt's David," 196.

ates himself sharply from the other speaking positions in the text, often with a first-person *I*.<sup>69</sup> The narrator's first "I say" appears in the prologue as he is chastising David for sending "Urie I say, that was his idol's make" to his death (22), and he retains traces of irony throughout the poem. The ottava rima that Wyatt uses for the narrative interludes, with its final rhyming couplet that tends to comment upon or sum up the rest of the stanza, allows the narrator to participate alongside David in a divine poetic project. Immediately before Psalm 51, for example, the rhyming couplet allows the narrator to intervene in what would otherwise be David's monologue: "His voice he strains and from his heart outbrings / This song that I not whether he cries or sings" (425–26). The most straightforward way of dealing with this couplet would be to see "not" as an elision of "know not," with the narrator suggesting that he does not *know* whether David cries or sings. The awkward syntax and the first-person pronoun, however, may imply a pun on *note*, reminding us of the translator's influence as the writer and recorder of David's prayer. Boccaccio and Ariosto provide models for this type of irony in the rhyming couplet of ottava rima, and the device of a subtle, sarcastic narrator is something that Wyatt may well have picked up from Chaucer.<sup>70</sup>

At such moments, the narrator draws attention to the gradual displacement of David as the poem's central figure of address. This process is particularly noticeable in the musical imagery that the narrator uses to describe David's increasing lack of control over the sounding of God's word. In the opening prologue David actively takes up his harp and employs his singing voice, "seeking to counterpoise / His song with sighs, and touching of the strings" (70–71), a form of artistry that remains actively under David's "judgment" in the second prologue: "His harp again into his hand he rought. / Tuning accord by judgement of his ear" (212–13). The third prologue, however, which begins with a curiously dialogic "silence" which "seemed to argue and reply / Upon this peace" (296–97), supplies an image of a harp that is no longer fully David's:

<sup>69</sup> Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 122. Heale notices the tendency among commentators to "read in Wyatt's paraphrases the immediacy of the poet's own voice and personal anguish" (*Wyatt, Surrey, and Early Tudor Poetry*, 161); and both she and Halasz note the distinction that the poem makes between David and the narrator.

<sup>70</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio innovated the ottava rima form in the *Filostrato* (c. 1335), and Ludovico Ariosto exploits its ironic effects in *Orlando Furioso* (pub. 1532).

This while a beam that bright sun forth sends  
 . . . . .  
 Pierceth the cave and on the harp descends,  
 Whose glancing light the chords did overglide  
 And such lustre upon the harp extends  
 As light of lamp upon the gold clean tried[.]  
 (309 and 311-14)

It is ostensibly God that appropriates his servant's instrument here, but the highly wrought imagery implies the continued presence of the artful narrator as well, particularly since the simile about lamplight on gold interjects an alternative, human-made source of light into the mix. By the end of the stanza the "harp again tak'th [David], / His hand his tune" (322-23), but David's alienation from his own instrument continues in the fourth prologue, where his failure to control or even to hear his song reaches a climax. Articulating a form of communal address that extends beyond the confines of the cave, the narrator posits a series of onlookers and assembles a graphic method of reaching them.

On sonour chords his fingers he extends  
 Without hearing or judgement of the sound.  
 Down from his eyes a storm of tears descends,  
 Without feeling, that trickle on the ground,  
 As he that bleeds in bain right so intends  
 Th' altered senses to that that they are bound.  
 But sigh and weep he can none other thing  
 And look up still unto the heaven's king.  
 (403-10)

Here, prayer begins with David's fingers, which extend to the "sound" of his harp, itself resonating with the sonic "storm" of his teardrops. Through the simile of bleeding into bathwater, David's tears appear almost to flow into his blood, and the water takes on the sensual properties of the blood that flows into it. The description is that of ideas and emotions extending fluidly into the physical form of "mercy[']s matter" (126), except that David seems to have lost direct control over that matter. Removing David's "hearing and judgement" from the "sound" of his harp, Wyatt demonstrates that David's authorial mantle is open to appropriation, an entry point for any number of speaking positions and responses.

David never regains personal control over his prayer, and although this tendency is entirely appropriate to the project of proclaiming God's

word, it creates something of a vacuum in the *Psalms's* mode of address. The fifth prologue leaves David astonished with the song that has come out of his mouth: "As who might say: 'Who hath expressed this thing? / I, sinner, I! What have I said, alas?'" (513–15). And in the sixth prologue the narrator forgoes the harp altogether, forming a new simile to describe the way in which David is instrumentalized by God's word:

[David] knew he hath alone expressed  
 These great thing that greater spite compiled,  
 As shawm or pipe lets out the sound impressed,  
 By music's art forged tofore and filed[.]

(634–37)

Elizabeth Heale locates in these lines a sense in which "the forging and filing of human art has been superseded," and she observes of the *Psalms's* use of musical imagery more generally: "Wyatt seems, through his use of the gradually displaced image of the harp, to be exploring the possibility of an unmediated language of truth, in which human artistry is discarded and man's voice or mind become passive channels for God's word."<sup>71</sup> Given Wyatt's inveterate fascination with varying registers of poetic artistry, however, it seems more likely that the harp is simply another *level* of artfulness—a new expressive channel by which humans might reach God. Just as David's inward anguish is a starting point for communal expression, David's transformation into a wind instrument suggests that others have the opportunity to play upon him, including the narrator and his musical art "forged tofore and filed."

With this context in mind, we may return to the lines quoted at the beginning of this essay with a fuller sense of the "ears" that they imagine. Expanding upon the liquid imagery of David's blood, sweat, and tears in the bath simile immediately preceding it, the narrator outlines the swelling or vaporization of this lukewarm spillage into a storm cloud:

But who had been without the cave's mouth  
 And heard the tears and sighs that he did strain,  
 He would have sworn there had out of the south  
 A lukewarm wind brought forth a smoky rain.

(411–14)

The cave—now become a mouth that is not David's—has not managed to contain all associations or extensions of the fluid poetry of

<sup>71</sup> Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey, and Early Tudor Poetry*, 168 and 171.

the previous stanzas, and the “tears and sighs” form a chiasmus with the “lukewarm wind” and “smoky rain” to reveal yet another step in the associative chain of the previous stanza’s “storm of tears” and bloody bathwater, down to its temperature and its mixture of liquid and gaseous states. This “smoky rain” provides an appropriately inclusive, capacious image of poetic address and response—a vatic medium of God’s word that is also (given the poetic artfulness with which the narrator has arrived at the image and the fact that it likely alludes to Chaucer) infused with skillful vernacular authorship. Yet the audience of “all Israel’s ears” remains hypothetical; the cave is too “close” and “uncouth” for the wind to blow the tearful song into the receptive ears of a national audience (417 and 415), and the stormy rain never reaches them. Wyatt’s poem remains apprehensive, that is, at the moment when it seems most eager to open David’s speaking position to whomever would hear or respond to it.

Such apprehensiveness is perhaps to be expected given the *Psalms*’s experimental approach to authorial address. After moving away from a courtier model of expression, the *Psalms* invoke the range of poetic modes at their disposal—from David’s vatic powers to the narrator’s dialogic interjections—in order to explore the possibilities of readership available to them. In this way they experiment more radically with exceeding and displacing courtier styles of address than Wyatt’s other work. The epistolary satire “Mine own John Poyntz,” for example, mounts an elaborate critique of life at court and looks hopefully to a retreat in “Kent and Christendom,” but it provides no robust alternative to the court. The very critique of courtly vice that Wyatt adapts from Luigi Alamanni is a device of courtier poetry, and neither Wyatt nor his interlocutor Poyntz had the means for the life of country leisure that the poem idealizes. Wyatt’s *Psalms*, on the other hand, provide a sense of “Christendom” that does not retain this sense of inescapability—they are “courtly” only in a versatile sense of the word that might be attached, in different ways, to More’s *Utopia*, Mary and Philip Sidney’s *Psalms*, or Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*. The editor of Tottel’s *Miscellany*, one of Wyatt’s most influential literary executors, would claim him as a courtly maker whose “weightinesse” had the power to “profit” and shape all of society in the image of nobility.<sup>72</sup> Although the *Psalms* do not work to “profit” their readers in exactly this way, Tottel’s editor does intuit the poten-

<sup>72</sup> *Tottel’s Miscellany (1557–1587)*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, rev. ed., vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 2.

tial breadth of Wyatt's audience even during Henry's reign. Wyatt may have been a courtier by trade, but his *Psalms* speak through and beyond the monarch in order to develop a complexly layered, open-ended mode of address.<sup>73</sup>

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