

'Wyatt resteth here.' Surrey's republican elegy

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I

Dealing with Henry Howard's contradictions requires a cautious approach to the politically fluctuating court of Henry VIII. During his reign, both king and state were redefining their positions within the changing European network of power as well as their institutional status, and were thus developing a self-conscious image of what they considered to be their place and function in both the domestic and international debates on religious policy and political reforms. Henry Howard, earl of Surrey (1516–47), son of the duke of Norfolk and one of the highest-ranking aristocrats in England, was pursuing similar strategies. His family had a tradition of military, political and diplomatic service for the crown, and the emergence of a new political environment with its new men during the changes involved in Henry VIII's divorce, the Reformation, and the events that accompanied them were transforming the Howards' original situation at a swift pace. For Surrey, being active in politics during Henry VIII's reign required supple abilities and the capacity to reinvent himself continually. Such tension implied a constant process of re-writing the past, creating and adopting new habits of reading, and setting up texts and symbolic forms for self-definition. My purpose is to demonstrate how Surrey's humanist education, especially his contact with political doctrines associated with this tradition, permeates some of his poetry. An analysis of some of the contradictions in his elegy on Wyatt ('Wyatt resteth here, that quick could never rest')¹ will also reveal how its political and anthropological subtexts emerge in his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Both texts reveal the roots of Surrey's poetic discourse, and demonstrate how his paradoxes as well as his stylistic choices are determined by his contradictory modernity and his dramatic personal position at the crossroads not just of English politics and history, but also of European poetics and literary tradition. Surrey played a major role in the changes that took place in the English poetic tradition during the early sixteenth century, and several central poetic modes converge in his work. These trends include the Petrarchan rhetoric of the body as an emblem made up of a constellation of

¹ The text of the elegy on Wyatt is taken from Emrys Jones (ed.), *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. Poems* (Oxford, 1964). It is poem no. 28, on pages 27–8.

scattered signifiers, the stylistic ideal of Stoicism articulated along the lines of the transparency of the text, and the construction of an individual and a social ethos. These central tendencies are combined in Surrey with a certain Augustinian teleology of epic discourse that emerges in his choice of blank decasyllables for his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Among the new intellectual and literary trends emanating from Italy were contemporary political doctrines that defended a classically inspired republicanism. It is precisely this republicanism that subtly pervades part of Surrey's poetry.

Surrey's work thus constitutes a catalogue of the incipient early sixteenth-century English canon. He approached a miscellany of genres and poetic forms, and experimented with different styles, some of which would further develop into established patterns in this canon. This diversity, together with his failure to produce a systematic or sustained career in any of the different poetic genres he tried his hand at – except, perhaps, for his blank verse *Aeneid* – make it difficult to establish his real identity, or to define him with a clear-cut profile. Surrey's puzzling dispersion into the scattered remains of his poems constitutes a mosaic emblematic of the richness and complexity of his period.

The first critic who attempted to systematize Surrey was Tottel, with his well-known 1557 edition of the *Songes and Sonettes Writen by the ryght honorable Lorde Henry Haward late Earle of Surrey, and other. Tottel's Miscellany* turned Surrey's disperse love poetry into a sort of sonnet sequence, a narrative with a Petrarchan love story – the Geraldine legend – that gave it a cohesive background. This post-mortem Surrey is the author who was also set up as an example by Sir Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poetry*, or the one who appeared as a martyr – the very last one – of Henry's turbulent reign. At the end of the sixteenth century, Catholics looked upon the new men in and around the Henrician court as the introducers of the Protestant heresy, and they associated the Catholic cause with the 'ancient nobility'. Surrey had also previously been appropriated by Marian Catholics, who portrayed him as victim and martyr of Protestant conspiracy, a worthy representative of traditional Catholic aristocracy as opposed to the upstart Reformers.² This dispersion and its inherent contradictions become more evident if we look at the pre-Tottel Surrey – significantly, also the pre-print Surrey. Except for a remarkable exception we will deal with later, during his lifetime Surrey had his manuscript texts circulated in restricted elitist groups at court, where the work of others of its members also passed from hand to hand. Hence Surrey's profile as an author is determined and sometimes fused with the communal aristocratic atmosphere within which these poems appeared. The discursive strategies that these groups used in order to establish a textual network of power parallel to that of actual power in politics at court originate in a rich

² See Simon Adams, 'Favourites and factions at the Elizabethan court', in John Guy (ed.), *The Tudor Monarchy* (London, 1997), 253–74.

and multifaceted intellectual background. I shall focus on a specific part of this process of re-writing, and shed some light on the discursive incursions that Surrey had to make into specific texts dealing with coetaneous religious and political doctrines as he was trying to articulate and justify his position at court.

Surrey was a thoroughly educated aristocrat, fluent in several languages, and he had been exposed to the new intellectual and artistic atmosphere in Europe not just through his education at home in England, but also during his stay at the French court of Francis I in 1532–3.³ Francis's court, a paradigm of Renaissance patronage of the arts, attracted poets and intellectuals from all over Europe, including some Italian republican exiles like Luigi Alamanni – one of the first Italian poets to use *versi sciolti*, from which Surrey took the idea of writing blank decasyllables in English to imitate Latin hexameters. This period abroad not only provided Surrey with a literary and artistic education in one of the most sophisticated centres of his time, but also extended his familiarity with contemporary political doctrine, and with some of the texts and authors that were being used to defend different political positions and forms of government. At a specific moment of his political career Surrey became sympathetic to humanist criticisms of the absolutist imperialism that was threatening the status of his father and family. In doing so, he moved close to contemporary doctrines of counsel, where he could find an assortment of different views. This approach to new political theories ran parallel with Surrey's opposition to the new men at court, and with the religious debate between evangelism⁴ and traditional Catholicism.

Initially, Surrey may thus be approached from a double political perspective, which is nevertheless far from constituting a clear-cut dichotomy. On the one hand, his Howard blood connected him with the conservative policies of his father. One of the main leaders of the baronial faction, Thomas Howard, Third Duke of Norfolk (1473–1554), was a conservative Catholic with a pronounced political instinct that helped him negotiate the turbulent final years of Henry's reign and facilitated his survival even after his son's fall. He participated actively in the fall of Wolsey – precisely because the

³ For an account of Surrey's stay in the French court with Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond and Henry VIII's bastard son, see William Sessions, *Henry Howard, the Poet Earl of Surrey. A Life* (Oxford, 1999), 91–107.

⁴ It is not easy to outline a precise definition of what evangelism was in the first half of the sixteenth century. The variety of religious experience during these highly controversial years calls for a cautiously flexible use of this term to refer to those doctrines that, in Diarmaid McCulloch's words, make 'the primary point of Christian reference the Good News of *Evangelism*, or the text of scripture generally'; McCulloch also adds that: 'it is a conveniently vague catch-term which can be applied across the board, except to the very small minority of English religious rebels who proceeded further towards Continental radicalism'. Diarmaid McCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer. A Life* (New Haven and London, 1996) 2. On this issue, see also Diarmaid McCulloch, 'Henry VIII and the early Reformation', in D. McCulloch (ed.), *The Reign of Henry VIII. Politics, Policy and Piety* (London, 1995), 168–89, and E. W. Ives, 'Anne Boleyn and the early Reformation in England: the contemporary evidence', *Historical Journal*, 37 (1994), 389–400. For our purposes, suffice it to say that the complexity of early sixteenth-century evangelism, interwoven as it is with political positions and strategies within Henry's court, accounts for the equally varied and controversial nature of Surrey's personal acquaintances and stances in court politics. It also helps explain the intricacy of his poetry and the different types of discourse which constitute it.

cardinal's enormous power was detrimental to the traditional nobility – as well as in the destruction of Thomas Cromwell, by denouncing before Henry Cromwell's connections with religious radicals on the continent. Thus, in spite of his wily political nature, and his acute sense of political survival, Norfolk was after all involved in the defence of the values of the more traditional, late-medieval aristocracy.

The other side of Surrey's political coin lies with the rather less conservative proposals of humanists such as Richard Moryson (d. 1556) or Thomas Starkey (1499?–1538), who at certain moments of their careers became hired pens at the service of Cromwell and of Henry's policy.⁵ Thus Moryson's *A Remedy for Sedition* (c. 1539) and Starkey's *An Exhortation to Christian Unity* (1536) were written for the ideological justification of Henry's policy and against conservative resistance to it. In particular, Moryson's treatise was devised to justify Henry's repression – implemented *manu militari* by none other than Norfolk himself – of the Pilgrimage of Grace.⁶ These authors were educated both in England and at continental universities, mainly Paris and Padua. In England, Starkey would be influenced by Colet's humanism, and through his stay in Paris as secretary to Reginald Pole he was exposed to contemporary humanist political theories as well as to religious controversy. The Italian city of Padua would give Moryson and Starkey the opportunity to absorb the republicanism emerging from the civic-rhetorical tradition of humanists such as Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), Leonardo Bruni (1369–1444), or Matteo Palmieri (1406–1475). This tradition constituted the ideological basis for contemporary debates on forms of government, theories of civic anti-absolutist and anti-imperialist resistance and conciliarism, both in the context of the papacy and the internal administration of the Church, as well as in international and domestic policy.⁷

Evidence of Surrey's contact with the more radical faction within the evangelicals emerges from the controversy over Anne Askew (d. 1546) and her use of his own biblical paraphrases as inspiration for some of her poems critical of Henry's religious policy. The connection between Surrey and Askew was provided by the evangelical circle around Catherine Parr, whose religious leanings had to be checked by Henry VIII himself. As Susan Brigden has demonstrated, there were abundant contacts between Askew and the evangelicals at court, some of them very close to Surrey's family and friends.⁸ In

⁵ See Arthur B. Ferguson, *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance* (Durham, NC, 1965), 136–7.

⁶ Ferguson, *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance*, 222–5.

⁷ On the relation between Thomas Starkey and Reginald Pole, and their journeys through Paris and Italy (some of them gathering texts to support Henry's divorce), as well as their conciliarist or republican positions during the late 1520s and early 1530s, see chapter 3 of Thomas Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonwealth. Humanist Politics and Religion in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1989). Mayer discusses Starkey's humanist education in chapter 2. See also Thomas Mayer, 'Thomas Starkey, an unknown conciliarist at the court of Henry VIII', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49 (1988), 207–27.

⁸ Susan Brigden, 'Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, and the "Conjured League"', *Historical Journal*, 37/3 (1994), 507–37, in particular 513.

a typically conspiratorial fashion, the prosecution of Anne Askew became the perfect way to bring about the downfall of those reformers at court who were felt to be closer to radical positions – a conspiracy which was promoted by the baronial faction in Henry's privy council. This episode is symptomatic of the tense political and religious atmosphere in Henry's court, and shows how carefully active participants in politics at the time had to define their positions, and how skilfully these positions needed to shift in order to maintain one's import within the network of power and influence. The constant tension and instability at the level of day-to-day politics were superimposed over the more theoretical debates between the established modes of political and religious behaviour and some of the new, more radical proposals. The resulting fluctuation is also proof of the inherent ambiguity in English humanism, and of the uneasy connection between political and religious doctrines and practical politics and power brokering in court. Humanist discursive practices required incursions into radical territory. Such incursions may not have always been central to their authors' ideological intentions, but proved to be a necessary strategy for the construction of a relevant ethos within the emerging cultural and political paradigms.⁹

The different interpretations that Renaissance republicanism has undergone aptly illustrate the indeterminacy of humanist political doctrine. These interpretations oscillated between the more radical claims of Italian republicans or those of Protestants of utopian persuasion, on the one hand, and the 'monarchical republic' of Queen Elizabeth I on the other, when – as Patrick Collinson has argued – the corporate network of power established by Cecil and his men as a response to the unusual situation of a female monarch who would not marry amounted to a *de facto* republican system.¹⁰ Of course, we must bear in mind that the term *republic* did not have at this time the same meaning it acquired later, in eighteenth-century revolutionary France. In this more restricted meaning, the subtext for Surrey's elegy on Wyatt is republican in the way that Markku Peltonen has defined humanist republicanism in England, that is, not as 'a constitutional goal' but as 'a theory of

⁹ On the relation between Anne Askew's poems and Surrey's biblical paraphrases, see Brigden, 'Henry Howard, earl of Surrey', 522–5, and Sessions, *Henry Howard, the Poet Earl of Surrey*, 353–7. On the issue of the ambiguity in humanism, David Baker, *Divulging Utopia. Radical Humanism in Sixteenth-century England* (Amherst, 1999), 11 stresses what he calls 'English humanism's sense of its own political ambiguity'. He remarks that 'this humanism mediated the radical/official binary as well as reinforced it'. By way of example, Baker refers to 'More's frequently quoted remark that he would rather see some of his works burned than translated into English and become exposed to "misconstruction"'. The controversial but fascinating issue of More's radicalism – and hence of humanist radicalism – has been dealt with in numerous works. For a recent survey, see John Guy, *Thomas More* (London, 2000), especially chapter 5. On the wide-ranging interests of Renaissance humanism and its thousand different – and contradictory – faces, see Lauro Martines, 'The protean face of Renaissance humanism', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 51 (1990), 105–21.

¹⁰ Patrick Collinson, 'The monarchical republic of Queen Elizabeth I', in John Guy (ed.), *The Tudor Monarchy* (London, 1997), 110–34.

citizenship, public virtue and true nobility based essentially on the classical humanist and republican traditions'.¹¹

The elegy needs to be carefully scrutinized before it can reveal the republican strain that lies deep in its texture. It is more productive to approach the workings of the poem from the perspective of its more immediate political relevance, couched in terms of the ideal civic ethos it projects and the Petrarchan strategies that articulate it, in order to proceed later into a discussion of the consequences of these textual and discursive moves that connect it with the universe of republican humanism and its world-view. This analysis will go back and forth between the context out of which the elegy emerged and the ideological premises that upheld the different political and religious doctrines that were being used to justify actual political actions and positions. The political scenario for the poem is the court of Henry VIII around 1542, with different factions fighting for influence at court, and with Henry himself striving to find a convenient middle way between traditional Catholicism and Reformist radicals as he sought to consolidate his position as absolute monarch and Head of the English Church. Cromwell's fall had left a political and administrative void that the baronial faction had failed to fill appropriately. The Howards, in particular, were at a disadvantage after the scandal of Catherine Howard's infidelities and her subsequent execution; this gave the Seymours – new men in the eyes of the conservatives – the upper hand with Henry, since they were the family faction that was now closer to Henry and his only male heir. A certain group of humanists and intellectuals who had for some time been working within Henry's administration, most of them educated in Italy, will provide the connection between actual political events and the ideological universe of contemporary doctrine.

II

Wyatt resteth here, that quick could never rest;
Whose heavenly giftes increased by disdain
And vertue sank the deper in his brest:
Such profit he by envy could obtain.

A hed, where wisdom misteries did frame;
Whose hammers bet styll in that lively brayn
As on a stithe, where that some work of fame
Was dayly wrought to turne to Britaines gayn.

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¹¹ See Stephen Alford, 'Reassessing William Cecil in the 1560s', in John Guy (ed.), *The Tudor Monarchy*, 233–53, especially 247. For an account of the rhetorical tradition and its role as basis for republican doctrines in the sixteenth century, see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1978), in particular 1, chapters 2 and 6. For a more detailed discussion of the relation between Renaissance humanism and republicanism, see specifically 1, 152–80.

- A visage stern and myld; where bothe did grow
 Vice to contemne, in vertue to reioice; 10
 Amid great stormes whom grace assured so
 To lyve upright and smile at fortunes choyce.
- A hand that taught what might be sayd in ryme;
 That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit;
 A mark the which, unparfited for time, 15
 Some may approche, but never none shall hit.
- A tounge that served in forein realmes his king;
 Whose courteous talke to vertue did enflame
 Eche noble hart; a worthy guide to bring
 Our English youth by travail unto fame. 20
- An eye, whose judgement none affect could blinde,
 Frenedes to allure, and foes to reconcile;
 Whose persing loke did represent a mynde
 With vertue fraught, reposed, voyd of gyle.
- A hart, where drede was never so imprest 25
 To hyde the thought that might the trouth avance;
 In neyther fortune loft nor yet represt,
 To swell in wealth, or yeld unto mischance.
- A valiant corps, where force and beawty met;
 Happy, alas, to happy, but for foes; 30
 Lived and ran the race that nature set;
 Of manhodes shape, where she the molde did lose.
- But to the heavens that simple soule is fled,
 Which left such as covet Christ to know
 Witnessse of faith that never shall be ded; 35
 Sent for our helth, but not received so.
- Thus, for our gilte, this jewel have we lost.
 The earth his bones, the heavens possesse his gost.

The image of Wyatt that emerges from the poem is that of an honest friend and a faithful subject. Wyatt is depicted in the poem as the ideal courtier and counsellor, whose truthfulness and open heart render perfect service to his king, without being deterred by fear or personal interests, and with no concern for the consequences of the truthful and honest advice that he offers. Wyatt's self is a balanced unity, unmoved by fortune or political convenience. While describing Wyatt's 'visage', Surrey stresses the balance of Wyatt's ethos in terms reminiscent of classic Stoicism, terms which echo Surrey's version of Horace's equally Stoic *Rectius vives Licini, neque altum* – 'Of thy lyfe, Thomas, this compasse well mark' (no. 39 in Jones). In this Horatian ode the stable

self is portrayed as maintaining the 'golden meane' amid storms ('Not aye with full sayles the hie seas to beat, / Ne by coward dred, in shonning stormes dark, / On shallow shores thy keel in peril freat'), just as Wyatt's 'visage' remained unchanged and impervious to the changes of fortune:

A visage stern and myld; where bothe did grow
 Vice to contemne, in vertue to rejoyce;
 Amid great stormes whom grace assured so
 To lye upright and smile at fortunes choice. (lines 9–12)

The elegy also shows a metaphorical and tropological articulation that befits this subtext of civic Stoicism through the display of Wyatt's body as a mechanism that is dismembered and analyzed. His head, his look, his hand, his tongue, his eye, and his heart appear in a solemn parade before the reader, all of them proofs of Wyatt's public and private virtues. The function of each of these different parts is discussed and praised in terms of the service rendered to the state. Thus, his head is depicted as a workshop, where hammers toil incessantly at work for Britain's benefit:

A hed, where wisdom misteries did frame;
 Whose hammers bet styll in that lively brayn
 As on a stithe, where that some work of fame
 Was dayly wrought to turne to Britaines gayn. (lines 5–8)

In a direct reference to Wyatt's prominent diplomatic career, the reader is confronted with this consummate example of the Renaissance courtier and diplomat, who uses his intelligence and linguistic abilities at the service of the commonwealth. Wyatt appears as a flawless, highly qualified citizen, whose balanced combination of wisdom, prudence, temperance, and virtue turned him into a model in all respects.

An eye, whose judgement none affect could blinde,
 Frenedes to allure, and foes to reconcile;
 Whose persing loke did represent a mynde
 With vertue fraught, reposed, voyd of gyle. (lines 21–24)

This self-possessed personality, which embodies the ideal of the perfect correspondence between thought and action together with the selfless sincerity of the virtuous courtier, so common in Renaissance constructions of that model, is intended to reflect by indirection the image that Surrey would give of himself. The insistence on the selfless character of Wyatt's role as a counsellor and his corresponding disregard for the personal consequences of the straightforward opinion offered to a superior authority respond to the fact that, within the doctrines of counsel, one of the main roles of the good counsellor was to limit and correct the deviations from justice and the interests of the commonwealth that would arise from tyranny or absolutist individual

rule. This aspect of the elegy should be contemplated against the background of Surrey's thinly disguised criticism of Henry VIII in other poems. See, for instance, 'The Great Macedon', in which Wyatt's psalms are also mentioned as mirrors, in whose image of David

. . . Rewlers may se in a myrroure clere
 The bitter frewte of false concupiscense,
 How Jewry bought Uryas deathe full dere.
 In Prynces hartes Goddes scourge yprinted depe
 Myght them awake out of their synfull slepe.

(lines 10–14 in Jones, no. 31)

A similar note is struck in the following poem in Jones's edition (no. 32), with references to the Assyrian king living in 'foul desire' and 'filthy luste', and indulging in gluttony and 'womanishe delight'. When they are observed within the milieu of the aristocratic circles in which they circulated in manuscript, these references could barely conceal Surrey's condemnation of a monarch who enjoyed appearing in other public iconographic contexts as a new David mediating between his subjects and the Word of God.¹² Surrey's openness is not surprising, since he was well known for his outspoken and impetuous personality, which frequently burst into statements and behaviour that were a source of trouble both for him and for his father, the more prudent, politically experienced and shrewd duke of Norfolk. Surrey contemplated his displacement at court in favour of the new men as the unfair discrimination of someone who, like him, combined the fundamental values of blood, learning, and virtue – to which we should add a family tradition of military prowess. In other words, Surrey saw himself as an epitome of traditional and modern, aristocratic and civic, values. As a result, Surrey conceived the elegy on Wyatt as a textual mirror for his own political use and benefit. Through the discursive construction of the ideal courtier he was indirectly promoting himself as the honest, disinterested kind of counsellor that Henry needed in order to steer his policy in the right direction.¹³ From this perspective, the poem was of a piece with the overall

¹² See Brigden, 'Henry Howard, earl of Surrey', 508–9. On the issue of Henry VIII as King David in official propaganda, see John N. King, 'Henry VIII as David: the king's image and Reformation politics,' in Peter C. Herman (ed.), *Rethinking the Henrician Era: Essays on Early Tudor Texts and Contexts* (Urbana, 1994), 78–92.

¹³ This is not the only area in which Surrey coincides with Reginald Pole's criticism of Henry's policy, and with the republican stance from which they do so. Thomas Mayer, *Reginald Pole. Prince and Prophet* (Cambridge, 2000), 66 has pointed out how Pole blamed 'Henry's depravity on his counsellors'. Both Pole and Surrey (at different points along Henry's reign) resisted Henry's absolutist and centralist policy, so damaging to the more traditional nobility by turning to the aristocratic strain that could be found in Italian republicanism and to political doctrines of elective monarchy. When discussing Pole's reaction to Henry's alleged burning of Beckett's bones, Mayer holds that: 'Becket was invoked to defend not just Pole himself, but the whole of the English nobility. More explicitly than in his appeal to "the people" in *De unitate*, in the "Apology" Pole accused Henry of trying to do in the nobles, and set out to guard his class. This was in marked contrast to the beginning of Henry's reign, which had ended noble faction "and joined all and the wills of all in the same man" to a degree never seen in English history. This almost sounds as if Pole meant to refer to Henry's accession as an election' (Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 98).

strategy that Surrey was continually implementing in order to maintain and augment his influence – and that of his family – in the circle of Henry's courtiers. Viewed from this political background, the poem reveals itself not just as a textual mirror in which Surrey would contemplate himself, but also as a verbal release for the increasing resentment that Surrey felt at the advance of those he considered not as worthy as his kin and himself. He couched – and partly concealed – his personal political interests and frustration in terms of the anti-absolutist doctrine of counsel.

Despite scholars like G. R. Elton¹⁴ having stressed that the ancient nobility lacked a specific or well-defined political agenda other than staying in power and maintaining their inveterate position and influence at court, they coincided with contemporary doctrines of counsel in their anti-absolutist bent. The baronial faction contemplated with disgust how the king was surrounded by these new men who flattered Henry, catered to his lower instincts, and veered his policies towards the concentration of power involved in absolutist monarchy.¹⁵ These manoeuvres towards absolutism and the centralization of the administration went hand in hand with the Reformation and its consequent empowerment of the monarch through his new position as Head of the English Church, all of it at the expense of traditional baronial power. Surrey was thus interested in criticizing by indirect example, by promoting the image of a benevolent and virtuous counsellor, the kind of counsellor who would not falsely flatter the king and use the monarch to promote the wrong political agenda, but rather honestly and candidly denounce his errors, and promote justice as well as the progress of the commonwealth by awaking the monarch from his 'synful slepe' and thus 'advance the truth':

A hart, where drede was never so imprest
To hyde the thought that might the trouth avance;
In neyther fortune loft nor yet represt,
To swell in wealth, or yeld unto mischance. (lines 25–28)

The poem concludes on a subtle evangelical note, couched through an indirect reference to Wyatt's psalms as 'witness of faith' left behind for those who 'covet Christ to know'.¹⁶

¹⁴ Geoffrey R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation* (London, 1977), 137–8.

¹⁵ One of the petitions of the rebels participating in the Pilgrimage of Grace was that Henry VIII should only use noblemen as councillors. See David S. Berkowitz (ed.), *Humanist Scholarship and Public Order. Two Tracts against the Pilgrimage of Grace by Sir Richard Morison* (Washington, 1994), 31: 'In the Lincolnshire articles of October 8, the rebels had made two not unrelated demands. The first was that Cranmer, Latimer, and Longland be deprived and punished. The second, and more reactionary, was that the King take only noblemen for councillors and accordingly that he surrender Cromwell, Rich, Legh, and Layton to the "vengeance of the commons, or else banish them".'

¹⁶ On Surrey's evangelism, and his apparent religious fluctuation, see Brigden, 'Henry Howard, earl of Surrey', 513–19 and 522.

But to the heavens that simple soule is fled,
 Which left such as covet Christ to know
 Witnesse of faith that never shall be ded;
 Sent for our helth, but not received so. (lines 33–36)

The reference to the psalms is part of Surrey's strategic move away from the more conservative positions within the traditional aristocracy in the direction of the evangelism that was politically prevalent at this time in Henry's court. This stanza, just before the concluding couplet, and in combination with the political subtext, turns the elegy on Wyatt into a paradigmatic object of early sixteenth-century humanism. Surrey's elegy becomes an English condensation of some of the ideological discourses that were circulating in early sixteenth-century Europe, deftly geared to serve and defend his position in court, as well as to inscribe his literary persona within the circle of the virtuous and the elect. The concentration of such diverse subtexts, involving not just political and religious doctrines at a theoretical level, but also very specific personal and political interests, accounts for the intricate nature of the poem. In that respect, the elegy is also an emblem of the contradictions that Surrey had to face in order to find his way around the Henrician court. If Surrey's poem on Sardanapalus defines by default the qualities of the good ruler, the features that Wyatt positively displays through his dismembered body define the kind of virtues and values that an ideal courtier should display in the *vita activa*.

Its Petrarchan frame confirms the strategy of self-projection that Surrey was pursuing within the elegy. Nancy Vickers has shown how the corporeal dispersion of Petrarch's Laura, scattered all over his *Rime sparse*, mirrors the poetic voice that articulates them. The poetic self that Petrarch weaves through the sonnets provides not just Laura's scattered remains, but the whole sequence, with their only source of unity and cohesion as a narrative. Just as Petrarch's Laura, Wyatt's ethos is described through a poetics of fragmentation.¹⁷ This creates a tension between an actual rhetoric of

¹⁷ Among the abundant scholarship that has commented on Petrarch's strategies of dispersion in his ekphrastic sonnets on Laura, John Freccero, 'The fig tree and the laurel: Petrarch's poetics', *Diacritics* 5 (1975), 34–40 and Nancy Vickers, 'The body re-membered. Petrarchan lyric and the strategies of description', in John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols (eds), *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes* (Hanover, 1982), 100–9 provide sufficient evidence to confirm the view that Surrey's elegy is based on the same strategy. The parallels between the strategies are obvious: 'The comparison of Laura's face to gold and topaz on the snow, sparkling in the sun, is not only reified and coldly beautiful, it is radically fragmentary in a way that scarcely seems accidental. One of the consequences of treating a signifier as an absolute is that its integrity cannot be maintained. Without a principle of intelligibility, an interpretant, a collection of signs threatens to break down into its component parts. To put the matter in medieval terms, we may say that the Spirit is the "form" of the letter in the same way that the soul is the form of the body. In the absence of such a principle of anteriority, signs lose their connection to each other. So it is with Laura. Her virtues and her beauties are scattered like the objects of fetish worship: her eyes and hair are like gold and topaz on the snow, while the outline of her face is lost; her fingers are like ivory and roses or oriental pearls, her eyes are the pole stars, her arms are branches of diamond. Like the poetry that celebrates her, she gains immortality at the price of vitality and historicity.' John Freccero, 'The fig tree and the laurel', 38.

disintegration and a virtual unity that is only hinted at by omission at the end of the poem, as well as by its balanced formal structure and the distant voice of the narrator in it. The voice in the poem appears poised and solemn, distant and self-assured as it carefully and meaningfully rearranges and displays Wyatt's body before the eyes of the reader – a reading audience that was meant to go beyond the elitist court circles, since the poem was actually printed as a pamphlet in 1542. The result is Surrey's vicarious poetic construction of what amounts, in the context of its production and through its circulation in print, to a statement of what he believed to be his political worth and relevance. It is very revealing, on the other hand, to see Surrey doing this in the subdued melancholy and quasi-prophetic mood emerging from the last lines of the elegy. Somehow he seemed to be anticipating that, just like Wyatt's, his real value would only become appreciated *in absentia*, after the silence that emerged at the end of the poem, coinciding with the annihilation of the diverse selves which are fashioned in the poem: Wyatt's spent ideal courtier and the persona articulated in the voice that described such process. The concluding couplet provides a sombre tone that combines guilt and loss with an Augustinian corroboration of the teleological direction that Wyatt's earthly dispersion takes into the realm of the absolute.

Thus, for our gilte, this jewel have we lost.
The earth his bones, the heavens possesse his gost (lines 37–8)

That the positive qualities Surrey attributes to Wyatt are features he considers his own is also supported by more direct evidence from the poem. In lines 17–20, Surrey combines a reference to the service rendered to the king with the example that Wyatt set for 'noble hearts' and 'our English youth'. Here Wyatt becomes a mirror for young aristocrats to improve through 'travail' and contribute to the wealth of the country.

A tounge that served in forein realmes his king;
Whose courteous talke to vertue did enflame
Eche noble hart; a worthy guide to bring
Our English youth by travail unto fame.

This reference to education, linguistic abilities, hard work in the context of diplomacy, and the pursuit of fame as good examples for the benefit of 'noble hearts' acquires its full relevance within the context of those contemporary political treatises that fostered the creation of a group of virtuous and educated citizens that would furnish the ranks of high officials at the service of the commonwealth. Thomas Starkey, one of the most Italianate English authors on political doctrine, insisted on the need to reform the aristocracy and put them at the service of the *res publica*. In the course of a discussion on how to avert tyranny and absolutism in his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* (written towards the end of the 1520s), Starkey criticized the English aristocracy for its lack of civic education, and thus for its inability to rule and properly serve

as counsellors for the head of the commonwealth. The presence of Pole in this dialogue is highly significant. At the time Starkey's *Dialogue* was written, Pole was still working for Henry VIII: both he and Lupset had been successfully working with theologians in Paris to obtain a favourable report on the controversial issue of Henry's divorce. Starkey meant Pole to lead the reformed nobility at the head of the new commonwealth, a plan that his mentor eventually rejected. It would not be too unreasonable to imagine Surrey secretly contemplating himself as a new candidate for the leadership of this reformed aristocracy, in particular now that Pole had completely disengaged himself from Henry's policies and was abroad in permanent exile.¹⁸

III

To say that all pre-Tottel Surrey amounts to pre-print Surrey is not fully accurate. As mentioned above, the Wyatt elegy was printed during Surrey's lifetime, shortly after Wyatt's death in 1542. This was the eight-page booklet entitled *An excellent Epitaffe of syr Thomas Wyat, With two other compendious ditties, wherin are touchyd, and set forth the state of mannes lyfe*. It was highly unusual for an aristocrat in this period to allow one of his poems to appear in print. This type of poetry was generally restricted to court circles, where it circulated in manuscript, and it never sought the wider – and socially inferior – audiences that printed texts could reach. In that respect, what Surrey did with the elegy on Wyatt is highly significant, and it implied a shift from one paradigm to another, taking a step down within one scale – that of the values of traditional aristocracy, blood, and lineage – only to climb up in the new scale of virtuous, active citizens and learned counsellors. The debasement of his social position from the perspective of a traditional aristocrat, by praising a social inferior in the new medium of print, actually amounts to a textual praise of his own political attitude from the standpoint of those civic-minded, republican doctrines. In the elegy on Wyatt, Surrey would

¹⁸ Thomas Mayer, in the introduction to his edition of Starkey's *Dialogue*, aptly summarizes his doctrine on this issue, and the context out of which it emerged: 'In order to make his system work, the English nobility needed reform. Starkey unsparingly blamed what he called the "frencecy" in the head of the body politic – the prince and high nobility – for a long list of evils, all of which could be cured by a civic education for the nobles. Thus equipped, the high nobility would deserve the places reserved for it in two councils, which Starkey designed to restrain the prince's power. and Pole would lead them, once he had allowed the fictional Lupset to persuade him to abandon the *vita contemplativa* and take up the active life instead. In a curious foreshadowing of part of Pole's career, Starkey also argued that papal tyranny posed as great a threat as royal tyranny and insisted on an equally conciliar solution: the pope could do nothing without the cardinals, whose authority depended on the general council.' Thomas Mayer, 'Introduction', in Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue Between Pole and Lupset*, ed. by T. F. Mayer (London, 1989), i–xxvii, at xiii. Elsewhere, Thomas Mayer discusses the different interpretations and appraisals to which Starkey's political radicalism has been subjected. Although it is not realistic to contemplate him as a modern republican in the way that term is understood now, it is true that frequently in his texts he does not come forward as wanting to see England ruled by an hereditary elite, and that he placed an orthodox humanist emphasis on the value of education, merit and virtue to achieve high-ranking positions within the commonwealth. See Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonwealth*, 107, 127.

inscribe himself by default within the circle of the politically relevant as well as within that of the elect, that is 'such as covet Christ to know'. These circles are articulated on the virtues they share, and most significantly, they are circles that – despite being decidedly elitist – can at least theoretically expand beyond the more restricted traditional aristocratic groups.

The political implications of Surrey's decision to print his elegy on Wyatt gain even more significance when they are contemplated through the link that its Petrarchist rhetoric provides with contemporary republican discourse. Wyatt appears as a balanced but fragmented collection of scattered parts, a constellation of functional signifiers that individually fulfil a practical task at the service of the state. But these *disjecta membra* only gain a comprehensive significance through absence. Wyatt only reaches immortality, or transcendental significance, after his scattered members have all been spent in the service of the commonwealth, after his virtue has been relegated to neglect and public obliteration, after he has left historicity for a higher, totally authentic realm where silence and absence eliminate the historical misunderstandings of Wyatt's virtuous impulse and thus bridge the gaps of imperfection that had plagued his earthly self. As mentioned above, Petrarchan ekphrasis implies the identification of the poetic voice with the poetic text. This mirroring process involved in the textual construction of Wyatt's elusive ethos turns the elegy into a sophisticated artefact whose function goes beyond a mere mask for Surrey. The rhetorical strategies that turn Wyatt's body into a discursive machine at the service of the state, a multifunctional artefact that eventually vanishes, fully correlate with Surrey's symbolic and public projection of his political and social self. Wyatt's is both a positive and a negative model, in parallel with the positive and negative manner of his description. His positive, active attitudes and values are those that turn him into a useful and virtuous citizen, either directly (at the actual service of the king as a diplomat) or indirectly, as the provider of cultural and linguistic authority and prestige for the nation through his literary practice:

A hand that taught what might be sayd in ryme;
That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit;
A mark the which, unparfited for time,
Some may approche, but never none shall hit. (lines 13–16)

The kind of Ciceronian republicanism Surrey was approaching entailed a socio-political doctrine that defended the integrity of the individual, the ideal of liberty, and the contribution to the organization of a lay republic through civic service as the result of the corporate action of worthy individuals that responded to the model Surrey portrayed in his elegy on Wyatt. This was as far from the emerging imperial absolutism as it was from the Catholic universal monarchy, or a divinely sanctioned feudal order supported by the more traditional aristocracy. This doctrine also included the ideal of the

public official,¹⁹ as a member – but also as an analogy – of the new body politic, elevated to that category for his functional civic abilities, based on education and proper ethical attitude. In other words, a prominent place in the new administration of the state was based on individual merit (a concept that subsumed both action and morality), as opposed to just blood and family as the sanction for a place of responsibility and influence at court. All these concepts had for some time been common currency in humanist political and ethical doctrine.

The *topoi* in Surrey's elegy on Wyatt give away these diverse humanist sources, some of which must be placed within the wider perspective of the dignification of the body that started to emerge in Quattrocento Italy²⁰ as a symbol of man's constructive capacity as well as of his functional perfection as the summit of creation. They can also be contemplated within the much older rhetorical tradition that conceived of a well-constructed speech as a living thing with different members and parts.²¹ More significantly, the metaphorical apparatus of the elegy echoes certain political treatises much closer to Surrey's milieu that constructed the notion of the good citizen as a living republic. Matteo Palmieri (1406–75),²² one of Leonardo Bruni's most prominent disciples, states in his *Della vita civile*²³ (composed around 1434–7) that a citizen in public office is no longer a 'privata persona' but now represents the whole city and becomes a living republic: 'rapresentare l'universale persona di tutta la cita, et essere facta animata republica' (131). The elegy articulates the political inscription of Wyatt's body as the universal model of active citizen, or in other words, as the *homo faber* that was part of the humanist constructivist vision of man. Within this republican vision, every worthy official becomes the universal symbol of the entire commonwealth in the different functions he is called upon to fulfil. Within the framework of this corporate – and socially expanded – administration made up of highly qualified bureaucrats, each scattered official is at the same time a piece in the mechanism and also stands for the whole *res publica*, in a parallel fashion to the way in which Wyatt's scattered *membra* both contributed individually and stood for

¹⁹ See Retha M. Warnicke, 'Family and kinship relations at the Henrician court: the Boleyns and Howards', in Dale Hoak (ed.), *Tudor Political Culture* (Cambridge, 1995), 31–53, at 38–40.

²⁰ See William J. Bouwsma, 'The two faces of humanism. Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance thought', in Heiko A. Oberman and Thomas A. Brady (eds), *Itinerarium Italicum. The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations* (Leiden, 1975), 3–60, at 39–41.

²¹ See Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. and intro. James H. Nichols, Jr (Ithaca and London, 1998), 264c; see also Aristotle, *Poetics. A Translation and Commentary for Students of Literature*, trans. Leon Golden, commentary O. B. Hardison, Jr (Tallahassee, 1981), 1450b; or Cicero, *De oratore*, with an English translation by E. W. Sutton, completed, with an introduction, by H. Rackham (London and Cambridge, MA, 1942), II.325.

²² On Palmieri in the context of Florentine humanism and its attached republican doctrines, see Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, I, 69–74. Two more recent studies dealing with Matteo Palmieri in the context of a reassessment of Renaissance civic humanism are those by John M. Najemy, 'Civic humanism and Florentine politics', in James Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism. Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2000), 75–104, especially 93–104, and Mikael Hörnqvist, 'The two myths of civic humanism', in Hankins, *Renaissance Civic Humanism*, 105–42, especially 131–41.

²³ Mateo Palmieri, *Della vita civile*, ed. by Gino Belloni (Florence, 1982).

the whole of his integrated, stable self. The parallelism between the individual body and the body of the republic is complete in terms of its organization and functions.

This antithesis between specialized parts and the whole is equally revealing for the understanding of Wyatt as a negative example, since his mechanical parts are the ones that function within the orb of historicity, whereas the whole eventually displaces these scattered functional members and provides the transcendental permanence, but only *in absentia* of the former. Some of the metaphors in the poem reveal this new mechanical-constructivist perspective, the vision of both Wyatt and the republic as a body-machine made up of highly specialized parts whose functioning depends on this division of labour. What fuels this civic machine made up of scattered parts is virtue. Virtue articulates the unity of the different parts and also provides the link with its transcendental launching after its loss, after the annihilation of its historicity into absence. Virtue so pervades Wyatt's body, so much underlies it, that it breathes life into his limbs and senses, in perfect accord with Lorenzo Valla's notion of the senses as instruments or extensions of the soul.²⁴ Its main lexical leitmotiv, virtue appears at four key moments in the development of the poem as the impulse and the element that constitutes the central axis of Wyatt's ethos. Virtue is at the centre of his self, deep in his breast (line 3). Wyatt's 'visage' rejoices in virtue and condemns vice (line 10). His speech and example encourage 'noble harts' to virtue (line 18). And finally, his mind is also fraught with virtue (line 24). The centres of the self – mind and heart as the respective seats of reason and affect – are ruled by virtue in Wyatt, and through his actions, his look, and his speech, and through the functional activity of his scattered *membra*, Wyatt projects such virtue onto other individuals and the commonwealth. If Wyatt's ethos, with his body as its emblem, needs to be functionally divided in order to prove socially significant, the cohesive device articulating his civic and moral relevance is virtue.

Historians of political ideas like J. G. A. Pocock have significantly stated that the ideal of the citizen and republicanism helped to break the medieval timeless hierarchy into individual moments.²⁵ From this perspective Wyatt's

²⁴ One work which epitomizes the revaluation of the body in Renaissance humanism is Giannozzo Manetti's classic *De dignitate et excellentia hominis*, whose book I is significantly titled: 'De egregiis humani corporis dotibus', whereas book II deals with the soul in close relation to the body. Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness. Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* (Notre Dame, IN, 1995), 234 offers an apt account of the abundance and complexities of the sources for the central place of the body in a large number of humanist writings. The perspective that these sources provide serves to demonstrate – if further proof were needed – the humanist pedigree of Surrey's poem, and how it came to embody this central strain of humanist thought as it had never been done before in English poetry.

²⁵ See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975), 49: 'It can be argued that the ideal of the citizen implied a totally different conceptualization of the modes of political knowledge and action from that implicit in the scholastic-customary framework'. and later (54): 'To affirm the republic, then, was to break up the timeless hierarchic universe into particular moments'.

body is no longer the organic emblem of a static cosmos, but a dismembered and functionally divided machine at the service of the state, which only achieves perfection at the end of the succession of these scattered episodes, when his virtuous soul leaves his earthly carcass and flees into a different realm. Wyatt's trajectory, both as an individual and as a member and emblem of the commonwealth, no longer consists of the motionless circularity of the medieval ideal of perfection, or a hieratic position within its strict hierarchies. It appears couched as a teleological project, which responds to Augustinian patterns of direction and intentionality, in a linear movement within the realm of historicity, and subsequently beyond it towards the annihilation of the material and social self. Wyatt's body is moving through fallen history towards the transcendental sphere of salvation through grace, where the virtue that articulated his scattered members will lead him to relevance in the celestial city.

In the same way as Augustine modelled the collection of the scattered members of his vital experience (*colligere . . . sparsa mea*, *Confessions* 10.11, 10.40) on Virgil's teleological narrative patterns, Surrey's brief account of Wyatt's civic self and ethos is couched along the lines of a vital pilgrimage that only achieves unity and full meaning at the end, when the whole itinerary is narrated from the perspective provided by the recollection of the scattered past episodes into a coherent unity, which is simultaneously thrown into transcendence. In the case of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the aim of this historical transcendence consisted in the foundation of the Roman Empire by design of pagan *Fatum*. In the case of Augustine, the recollection of these scattered episodes fulfils several purposes: the self-contemplation of the individual in the recognition of past faults and falls, and the achievement of redemption through the assimilation and textual rearrangement of such dispersed episodes into a coherent narrative which eventually will make sense of earthly life in terms of the divine realm, towards which its direction had always been oriented. In all these cases, self-recognition and self-fulfilment are only achieved once the scattered members – be they dispersed episodes, or the Petrarchan dispersion of Wyatt's civic *membra* – are put together through the action of memory – a narrator providing a coherent narrative structure – only to be launched towards the next step in self-comprehension in coincidence with the understanding of divine purposes. Since the type of knowledge in this final stage is impenetrable in terms of human language or reason, it eventually dissolves into nothingness. From this perspective, the elegy on Wyatt can be contemplated as an epyllion in which Wyatt's historical trajectory consists of the fulfilment of his social and civic duties, carried out in a fragmentary way and couched along the lines of his broken-up members and their different functions, but with a holistic purpose whose sense can only be achieved and perceived at the end of such trajectory. The voice in the poem, through the contemplation of Wyatt's tomb and the construction of his epitaph, becomes the artificer of that unity and the mediator between the end

of the material road and the step towards transcendence: Surrey as narrator/craftsman is here to Wyatt what Virgil was to Dante at the doors of Heaven. In this case it is not a first-person account, as in other autobiographical narratives with an Augustinian teleological bent, but a textual mirror of a transcendental self whose crafting was inspired by the same purposes that drove Surrey's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. In the latter he pursued in a more systematic way the construction through *translatio* of a personal narrative in sixteenth-century English by means of a new symbolic structure. He did so through a fruitful return to Virgilian roots and through his proleptic choice of what was probably the most adequate verse form at his disposal: blank decasyllables in imitation of the Italian *versi sciolti*, one of the most successful contemporary European experiments in emulation of Virgil's Latin hexameters.

In his translation of books II and IV of the *Aeneid* Surrey turned to the Virgilian and Augustinian teleological vision of history within yet another textual correlate for his political self, as well as for the position and mission of his own lineage in history. He did so by taking up the linearity of a *renovatio* of his bloodline through Aeneas as his *alter ego*²⁶ and consequently by relinquishing the circularity of a static medieval holistic vision. Surrey sought to move his bloodline forward by making it relevant within the new political and historical context. In other words, he aimed at relevance within historical progress by shifting paradigms – by shifting from the circular medieval paradigm of the old baronial tradition and its world-view into the teleological, progress-oriented ideal of the commonwealth and its virtuous civic artificers. This connects Surrey's *Aeneid* with his republican poem on Wyatt, since one of the underlying ideas that accompany that of the active citizen is the notion of the commonwealth's progress fostered by the virtues of individuals leading a fruitful *vita activa*.

The dichotomy between Stoicism and Augustinianism and their respective concepts of the nature of man, cosmos, and history can shed some interesting light on the parallelism between Surrey's *Aeneid* and the elegy on Wyatt. It can also help understand the complex, and frequently indistinguishable, combination of both doctrines not just in Surrey's world-view but also in the generality of humanist doctrines. Charles Trinkaus has demonstrated how the Augustinian separation of human history from the order of the cosmos and the emphasis on free will and providence contributed to the laicization of society, as well as to the idea of progress within history. Stoicism, on the other hand, defended the essential unity of all beings with the cosmos within a system of natural religion, and hence advocated the existence of a divine spark in man as part of the whole universe. In the Stoic view, man was directly connected with the divine order, reason was the common feature to all

²⁶ This is the thesis defended by William Sessions in his biography of Henry Howard, *Henry Howard, the Poet Earl of Surrey. A Life*, see especially chapter 10, 'The origins of blank verse'.

humanity, and the application of reason to social action resulted in virtuous individuals and a well-organized *civitas*. For the Stoics, the correct application of virtue and reason resulted in the lucid submission of man's balanced individuality to the overall cosmic structure, and thus they advocated the ideal of *aurea mediocritas* that gave them a reasonable yet limited amount of personal freedom and contributed to withstanding the inevitable ups and downs of fortune. Augustinianism – in spite of the complex and contradictory dichotomy between divine providence and free will – viewed history from a less deterministic angle. In Augustine's perspective, man in his historical avatars had become dramatically separated from God and his designs as a consequence of the Fall, and reason, despite being commendable and useful for insights into the earthly realm, was not sufficient for understanding or reaching the higher purposes of divine designs and eventual salvation. Neither was will, which provided freedom, but which could also move in directions totally different from God's designs. History was thus the result of God's designs, but separate from the perfection of the divine realm, and man could choose to move along fallen history in the direction of salvation – he could even tend to regain the lost prelapsarian perfection through progress. But ultimately man was moving freely within the imperfection of fallen history – the City of Man, with its own internal organization – and at the same time trying to go beyond history into the perfection and immutability of the City of God.²⁷ History was God's design and it had a purpose beyond itself dictated by the overall divine scheme. Paradoxically, the separation of the two realms in the Augustinian vision gave man ample freedom to organize his existence in society, disconnected from the divine realm, towards whose ineffability his existence was, however, directed. Hence the culmination of Wyatt's social development in the annihilation simultaneous to his entry into the divine realm. Life, social and individual experiences, thus become itineraries in the direction of the absolute knowledge and integration embodied in the transcendental order, expressed in the ineffability of its nothingness: the silence at the end of the poem, and at the end of the vital trajectory of Wyatt's ethical and civic action, leaving Surrey and the rest of us within the infirm confines of history.²⁸

²⁷ Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 1, 88–94 sheds additional light on the complex and contradictory relation of Augustinianism with Renaissance civic humanism in his account of the concept of *virtus* associated with the Petrarchan and Florentine optimistic view of *uomo universale* as opposed to the Augustinian view of fallen man, which ascribed all virtuous behaviour to the grace of God: 'By far the most important consequence of adopting the ideal of the *uomo universale* was that it prompted the humanists to reject the entire Augustinian picture of human nature. St Augustine had explicitly postulated in *The City of God* that the idea of pursuing *virtus*, or total human excellence, was based on a presumptuous and mistaken view of what a man can hope to achieve by his own efforts' (91).

²⁸ On the secularization of the cosmos, see Bouwsma, 'The two faces of humanism', 45–6; on the Augustinian concept of history, see 11–12 and 49–50. On Augustinianism, will, and narrative, as well as different modes of reading, see Victoria Kahn, 'The figure of the reader in Petrarch's *secretum*', *Papers of the Modern Language Association*, 100 (1985), 154–66, at 155–7.

IV

Within the complex maze of international diplomacy around the political events in England, and the interwoven network of interests and plots in favour of and against the developments that were taking place there, it is expedient to pursue the possibility of a connection between Surrey's circles in England and those of Reginald Pole. The humanists and bureaucrats working around Pole in Padua and Paris, and those within Surrey's purview, later worked under Cromwell. Thomas Mayer (2000) discusses and documents in detail Pole's initial hesitant attitude towards Henry's divorce and his political and religious reforms during the late 1520s and early 1530s, before he made the decision to combat openly Henry's heresies around 1532. Mayer also mentions Pole's sympathies for the so-called *spirituali* and the doctrines of Juan de Valdés.²⁹ Mayer states that: 'Pole's emphasis on faith and his formulation and perhaps potentially unstable resolution of the apparent dilemma which confronted those who shared his view at the same time as they were determined to stay within the Roman church immediately identifies him as already a member of the "Italian (or latterly English) evangelicals" or *spirituali*'.³⁰ In this, Pole shows yet another parallelism with Surrey, since both seem to have oscillated between conservative positions and more reformist views which, given the turbulent political and religious circumstances of the period, were not always easy to maintain or defend without serious harm to one's political position or ideological and religious coherence. In any case, both Pole and Surrey, prominent members of the traditional aristocracy, had to adopt at specific moments of their careers strategies of textual resistance against Henry's aggressive policies. This in turn led them to deftly geared manoeuvres that do not always respond to what some would today like to contemplate or historicize as more orthodox or unhesitant positions.³¹

Susan Brigden has shed some interesting light on the complex and intricate issue of Surrey's religious and political allegiance within the context of the political events in the late 1530s and early 1540s. Although we do not have a complete or totally clear-cut account of what actually happened, the hints at the different turns that events might have taken, the political alliances that might have been established (some of them very short-lived), and the flow of political and religious doctrine between the different circles provide sufficient evidence to support the likelihood of a connection between Surrey and some of the people who were or had been working with Pole. Brigden³² traces in detail the hints and scattered pieces of evidence that exist on the relation between Surrey's circle and those members of his entourage

²⁹ Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 32–3; see also 8–11.

³⁰ Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 30.

³¹ On Reginald Pole, and his relation to Thomas Starkey, Richard Moryson, and other Italian and Paduan scholars, see Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, chapters 1 and 2.

³² See Susan Brigden, 'Henry Howard, earl of Surrey', and '“The shadow that you know.” Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Francis Bryan at court and in embassy', *Historical Journal*, 39/1 (1996), 1–31.

who may have been in touch with Pole and his circle. Thus, she mentions the fact that in some quarters, Surrey was believed to be the emperor's man, and how the accusation of treason that was used against him rested on his alleged relations with individuals who had served as couriers or contacts between Surrey and the conspirators on the side of the emperor and Pole. She also speculates about the possibility that a certain Doctor John Fryer, a student at Padua in 1535 and a member of Pole's circle there, might have betrayed Surrey during the latter's trial for treason. In any event, and irrespective of whether the details of such relations are proven or not, it is sufficiently clear that in the murky waters of international conspiracy at this time there was an intense traffic of contacts between Pole and certain individuals in England; moreover, the flow of ideological influence was intense and fluctuating, with frequent changes of allegiance and shifts in nuances that could be put at the service of one cause or another, depending on the convenience and political position of the author or political pawn in question.

Sir Thomas Wyatt himself was imprisoned in 1541, accused of having conspired with Cardinal Pole during Wyatt's stay in the imperial court of Charles V. Colin Burrow³³ mentions Wyatt's troubles at his return from his diplomatic mission as just one more case among many which accounts for the absolute need of poets working under Henry VIII and his father to build up texts as resistance against conspiracy and political pressure so that they could gain or keep patronage and maintain their own relevant spaces at court, or even their own head on their shoulders.³⁴ At this time of tension and crisis (Cromwell himself was executed in 1540), the confusion and insecurity about which turn events might take in the immediate future accounts for the shifting positions, and the – apparent or real – political and religious confusion in many of the players, both within Henry's court and in the embassies he sent abroad in an attempt to deal with the crisis and the pressure to bring England back to the Church of Rome. Irrespective of where the real allegiances may have been – an issue that will continue to be a source of controversy among scholars for a very long time – the agitated state of the political situation in Europe at the time and the subsequent need to make rapid political moves helps to explain the urge to maintain strategically ambiguous and sometimes contradictory positions in order to survive. It should not be surprising, then, to find such contradiction and ambiguity in the texts that

³³ Colin Burrow, 'The experience of exclusion: literature and politics under Henry VII and Henry VIII', in David Wallace (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 1999) 793–820, at 808.

³⁴ On the complex events and the circumstances surrounding Wyatt's embassy in France and the imperial court during the crucial period (c. 1537–9) in which France, Charles V, and the papacy were negotiating to seal an alliance against Henry VIII, in which Cardinal Pole played an important role, see also Patricia Thomson, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Background* (Stanford, 1966), 63–6. Brigden, 'The shadow that you know', 8–10 speculates about the possibility that both Wyatt and Sir Francis Bryan (Surrey's cousin) may at this time have been sent to the Continent to kidnap or murder Cardinal Pole, and about the hypothesis that Bryan might have been actually working in Pole's camp, a hypothesis that Thomson also mentions.

poets and intellectuals at court used as tools for political, religious, and poetic self-fashioning.

Against this historical background, what is of relevance is the fact that some of the intellectuals who at a specific period were working for Pole in Italy, and later for Henry VIII in England, at the service of their respective political interests, were in turn under the influence of Italian political doctrine, in particular anti-absolutist doctrines of counsel, and republicanism of the kind defended by, among others, Matteo Palmieri. These doctrines were conveniently re-elaborated to suit the specific purposes of the political moment and to furnish the ideological substratum of the texts that were being produced in Henry's court for political and poetic self-fashioning.

Palmieri was one of the humanists who helped transmit the notions of liberty and active citizenship to Renaissance Italy from the Ciceronian tradition. Cicero's presence is ubiquitous in Palmieri's *Della vita civile* and constitutes his main source for the Stoic notion of the absolute necessity of fidelity, stability, and truthfulness (*constantia et veritas*) as some of the basic virtues of the social self. These virtues are articulated through both language and action, but especially *constantia* and the stable self must make themselves present through language (see lines 13–16, 17–20 in the elegy). Cicero's *De officiis* bases the fundamentals of peaceful and prosperous civic life on virtue and industry at both the personal and social levels, which are then sanctioned by the inescapable concurrence of justice, understood as the balanced and stable correspondence between words and deeds, language and meaning. The reference to the Stoics, and the need to follow their example in the study of language as an ancillary discipline for active social life in order to establish the true meaning and intent of words, is very significant, and directly links the tradition of civic life with rhetorical practice on a solid moral basis. Irrespective of the doubtful etymology – as he himself acknowledges – Cicero puts the emphasis on the fact that the notion of good faith, or fidelity, derives from the straightforward combination of action (*quia fiat*) and words (*quod dictum est*):

Fundamentum autem est iustitiae fides, id est dictorum conventorumque constantia et veritas. Ex quo, quamquam hoc videbitur fortasse cuiquam durius, tamen audeamus imitari Stoicos, qui studiose exquirunt, unde verba sint ducta, credamusque, quia fiat, quod dictum est, appellatam fidem.

The foundation of justice, moreover, is good faith – that is, truth and fidelity to promises and agreements. And therefore we may follow the Stoics, who diligently investigate the etymology of words; and we may accept their statement that 'good faith' is so called because what is promised is 'made good', although some may find this derivation rather farfetched.³⁵

³⁵ Cicero, *De officiis*, with an English translation by Walter Miller (London and Cambridge, MA, 1942), I.vii.23.

In other words, peaceful and prosperous civic coexistence depends on a proper and stable agreement about the meaning of social utterances and their purport. This notion of common language runs parallel in the Renaissance with the emergence of early civil society, the new bureaucratic classes, and the need to establish effective channels of communication, as well as legal standards between states and individuals. The need for a common language was both the result of the natural development of more complex bureaucratic and legal demands for effective social interaction,³⁶ and the result of those theoretical treatises that called for a common set of linguistic and moral values to grant effective and truthful circulation of verbal articulations and exchanges in all spheres of the expanding social life. The practical purposes of this doctrine of social/linguistic transparency were extended in Renaissance republican thought to preclude the arbitrary decisions of absolutist rulers. These decisions were literally uncivil, because by their own nature they emanated not from the basis of common linguistic/legal agreement oriented towards the prosperous progress of the commonwealth, but from the external, extra-civil source of individual royal or imperial will; in other words, from an arbitrary source outside these new circles of social agreement. Limited as the new standards still were at this time, their abrogation naturally resulted in the alienation of the commonwealth.

As seen above, the metaphor of the body upon which Surrey's elegy is framed corresponds to a long tradition of comparing a well-wrought text – or, in terms of the rhetorical tradition, an oration – to a perfect and proportioned body whose different sections fulfil their own specific purposes conducive to the overall goal. Surrey's Wyatt thus turns out to be an example of *constantia* and *veritas*, perfectly matched by the simple but poised and solemn style of the elegy, with its balanced distribution of rhythmic phrases and stanzas. Wyatt's body is the transparent vehicle that serves as the expression of his inner self, an epitome of the perfect correspondence between moral intention and action. Such is the case in lines 21–4 and 25–6, and in particular lines 23–4, where Wyatt's '... persing loke did represent a mynde/With vertue fraught, reposed, voyd of gyle'.

As mentioned above, through the Wyatt elegy Surrey also inscribes himself within the circle of the elect. Surrey's reinscription within that circle implied a double move on his part. He elevated Wyatt to the category of the elect, but from the perspective of the ideological universe of the baronial tradition, Surrey also diminished his status by praising a social inferior. We have seen how this moved Surrey out of the old hierarchical order and situated him within a new social and moral paradigm. This textual re-inscription had its

³⁶ The first examples of a homogeneous *koiné* of the variety commonly known as early modern English emerged from the clerk-bureaucrats of the late-medieval court.

correlate in the fact that Surrey decided to permit the circulation of the poem in print. To put it in plain words, Surrey decided to go public with his elegy on Wyatt. The importance of this move cannot be overstressed, since it constituted a fundamental breach of the unstated codes of coterie poetry and stained Surrey with the stigma of print. This move gives away the fissures, as well as the metastasis between court circles and the new audiences. It also evinces Surrey's uneasy position – both political and ideological – between a monarch who was accumulating absolutist power and the emerging bureaucratic elites.³⁷ Although Surrey was not responsible for the new expanding audiences that Tottel sought with the *Songes and Sonnettes* in 1557, he did start courting a wider audience beyond the more restricted circles of the nobility when he went into print with such a politically significant poem as the elegy on Wyatt, a poem that combined both the political and the civic, in the praise of *virtú*, with religion, in the form of grace. Virtue is the touchstone that legitimizes Wyatt's value as a machine at the service of the new state. Grace affords an everlasting reward to the sublime side of his self.

The reader finds in the elegy the poetic articulation of the correspondence between thought and action, language, and self also in terms of style. The plain but dignified tenor that Surrey uses in this and in other poems echoes that of Valla and those humanists who defended the use of simple language in order to move away from the convoluted and obscure manners of scholasticism. But beyond Valla, it leads back to Petrarch again, and what he took to be his discovery of the *real* Cicero in his letters, with their simple, colloquial style as the authentic *speculum animi*, without the trappings of scholasticism and excessive rhetorical ornamentation. Simultaneously, the Wyatt-machine is also an emblem of the ideal of *homo faber* and the active life.³⁸ A significant aspect of Palmieri's Ciceronian civic republicanism and its attached concept of the social self when he deals with the topics of action and its relevance in the commonwealth is that he does so in combination with an Augustinian teleological pattern. At the end of Palmieri's treatise, the souls of those who have served the community justly and profitably are found in heaven, in a sort of lay and civic version of Dante's *Commedia* (see Baron). Likewise, in Surrey's elegy the individual moments of the civic epitome of virtue commemorated in Wyatt's body only regain their lost unity when they are discarded and just the basic core, his virtuous, simple soul, remains to flee towards the elect in heaven. In this, Surrey shows an eclectic mixture of the Augustinian

³⁷ In this respect, Surrey's position accords with the picture that David Quint, *Epic and Empire. Poetics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, 1993), 10 offers of the general situation of the European nobility in the sixteenth century: 'The nobility of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries found their traditional role and their identity undermined both from below, in competition with a newly powerful mercantile bourgeoisie, and from above, as their role and identity were absorbed as instruments into the war machinery of modern absolute monarchy'.

³⁸ Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 282–3.

and Stoic strains in humanism. Stoic because of Wyatt's application of reason to action through his social self, resulting in honest advice and virtue; Augustinian because Wyatt's earthly existence finds its culmination and reward as he abandons the material part of his fallen self and moves on to the divine sphere where his purified soul joins the elect. Stoicism implies the application of fidelity, *constantia*, and rationality to social action, as the Ciceronian echoes in Palmieri sustain. Augustinianism accounts for the eschatological movement towards transcendence, towards salvation beyond the sphere of human history, time, and the fallen world and word. Surrey's paradigmatic eclecticism also appears in the fact that these Ciceronian and humanist modes of reading run parallel to the Virgilian and biblical ones in his poetry.

These contradictions between Surrey's aristocratic interests and republican humanist discourse mirror the contradictions and shifts of his turbulent period. They also affected the intellectual and political positions of the humanists working within the circles of Pole in Padua, or with Cromwell in London during the 1520s, the 1530s, and later. Alistair Fox³⁹ has remarked significantly that the real humanist contribution to actual politics in England did not come from the quarter of Erasmus, More, or Elyot, but rather from the more practice-oriented, think-tank style of the circle of scholars around Thomas Cromwell, some of whom also proceeded from Pole's circle in Padua.

Thomas Starkey is again a case in point, and his evolution illustrates, by parallelism and comparison, Surrey's shifts and contradictions. Starkey was a practical humanist, in favour of the *vita activa*, and deeply imbued in Italianate ideals of the value of man's enormous capacity for progress through action and achievement. Starkey's status as a liberal, radical political essayist is upheld by his insistence on the relativity of all forms of government, which he deemed as instrumental, with the main focus not on the legitimacy of blood, nobility, or royalty, but on its agreement with the nature of the governed and its decision to work towards the common good. Proof of Starkey's radicalism was his assertion that a mixed form of government with an elected monarch and a network of delegated councils was the most desirable model. However, his practical bent also led him to concede that, given the actual situation of politics in England, it was better to stick to the hereditary monarchy, whose power should be limited by statute in order to avoid tyranny. In his *A Dialogue Between Pole and Lupset*, Starkey puts the following words in Pole's mouth:

. . . fer as much as I remembyr we have resonnnyd apon thys mater before
& plainly concludyd the best way, yf men wold lyfe in cyvyle lyfe togyddur,

³⁹ Alistair G. Fox, 'English humanism and the body politic', in Alistair Fox and John Guy (eds), *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, Politics, and Reform, 1500–1550* (Oxford, 1986), 35–52, at 47.

to have a prynce by fre electyon & chosyng hym among other of the best, but for bycause we are barbarouse & rulyd by affectys, for the avoydyng of gretur yl wych wold come among barbarouse myndys, therfor in the second place, & not as the best, we thought hyt convenient as you say now to take hym by succession, but tempuryng hys powar as hyt ys before sayd.⁴⁰

Starkey's belief in the possibility of progress shares a common set of basic underlying assumptions with Surrey's translation of the *Aeneid*, specifically in terms of its Augustinianism,⁴¹ that is, the concept of fallen history as separate and distinct from divine order, although set in motion by it and moving towards it, as opposed to the more pessimistic views of Stoic determinism. Starkey's may have been a teleology of indefinite progress, whereas Surrey's teleology may have been that of the renovation of his bloodline (and its position in power) through a *renovatio* that could make it relevant in the new political context. In practical, political terms, he failed. He succeeded, however, in terms of poetic form and the establishment of an enduring textual *alter ego* in his rendering of Aeneas into English. Nevertheless, this success ran parallel with the concessions he had to make to the opposition that also undermined Surrey's own political positions. This now looks inevitable to us. If Surrey was determined to move forward, to regain relevance in the new context, he had no choice but to make these moves, no matter how risky they may have been. In the high-stakes political gambling involved in the final days of Henry's reign, Surrey's bet failed, but his textual strategies remain as testimony of a truncated attempt by the old blood nobility to become relevant. His political position was crushed, devastated under the weight of Henry's paranoid and conspiratorial last days.⁴²

Surrey's effort to retain relevance for his family and himself also brings us back to the political debate between Sir Thomas Elyot's nobility and Richard Moryson's more radical meritocracy during the 1530s. Both Elyot and Moryson shared with Starkey a belief in a strong nobility to counterbalance royal power. There is no doubt that it was in Surrey's interest to promote the idea of a strong group of counsellors around the king, counsellors whose ideal model should of course display true virtue and nobility at the service of the state. This is precisely what Surrey praised in the elegy on Wyatt. There was thus a community of interests between the English baronial tradition and radical humanists educated at Padua under the influence of Italian republican

⁴⁰ Starkey, *A Dialogue Between Pole and Lupset*, 123.

⁴¹ According to Fox, 'English humanism and the body politic', 48: 'There is a much greater sense of the possibility of historical progress in the *Dialogue* than in any of the other works discussed so far. In spite of recent attempts to disprove the prevailing view of Starkey as a liberal, the optimistic tone and homocentric bias of the *Dialogue* seem the very opposite of medieval conservatism.'

⁴² See Fox, 'English humanism and the body politic', 48.

treatises, all of them against the idea of imperial kingship.⁴³ This common enemy propitiated the alliance and opened the way for Surrey's use of texts and discursive strategies that could be read in a more radical way than might have been in Surrey's own interest.

Starkey's political evolution is again illustrative. After finding himself caught up between Pole, who found him increasingly irrelevant, and Cromwell, who did not trust him in religious matters, the political events drove Starkey into an ideological tie with the conservative nobility. The fact that this was an *ideological* alliance is what really interests us, since at least some of Starkey's radicalism seems to have seeped subtly into Surrey's poetry. Thus, although the result may have been contradictions in the underlying political and religious discourse within Surrey's texts, once we contemplate in detail the rapid political changes in Henry's court, it is not surprising to find how the movements in the network of power pushed the different pawns against each other, simultaneously grouping some of them against other opponents. The sheer political necessity to make a move into a different position displaced ideological differences to the background, and what is more, led some of the movers (in this case Surrey) to adopt some of the rhetorical strategies of the ideological positions of the purely practical political ally he was embracing.⁴⁴

Contradictions very similar to those of Surrey were already present in Starkey's sophisticated combination of new Italian categories of political thought with the political agenda of the conservatives at court. This combination offered a way out of the traditional alliance with the old Church for well-informed aristocratic conservatives, concerned with sustaining their political survival with relevant new texts and political theory. If there was a member of the traditional nobility politically active in court in an intellectual position to embark on such a project of renovation it was Surrey, given the fact that he had been widely exposed to the New Learning. Incidentally, by the time Surrey became active in politics within the Henrician court, the other candidate with similar features, Reginald Pole, was already openly combating Henry's policy in exile.

⁴³ Paduan meritocracy finds one of its foundational texts again in Palmieri. John Najemy comments on the fact that, although rejecting traditional nobility, this new idea of meritocracy served very specific interests, and was, after all, a very elitist view of the type of individuals that should constitute the ruling class. This is a pattern that fits the kind of background and attitude displayed by the Henrician authors discussed here. Thus, according to Najemy, Palmieri 'takes a dim view of citizens from aristocratic families who claim a right to public honors on the basis of their ancestors' accomplishments. . . . The special pleading offered on behalf of the lowborn who attained great heights makes it clear that, in the moral economy of political virtue, those who rose from humble origins to achieve political power and glory, even if there were many of them, were and always would be the noteworthy exceptions. Given the contexts of class antagonism with which Palmieri introduces this subject, the force of the claim that virtue ought to be the defining element of eligibility to office, and that many lowborn men achieved prominence in Rome in this way, is that virtue is the *only* legitimate avenue to political participation for citizens of the popular classes' (Najemy, 'Civic humanism and Florentine politics', 94). See also John Guy, 'Tudor monarchy and its critiques', in John Guy (ed.), *The Tudor Monarchy* (London, 1997), 78–109, at 85–6.

⁴⁴ See Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*, 282.

While the scholar may concede that the well-known duplicity and complexity of humanism and its proverbial eclecticism make it practically impossible to pinpoint well-delineated positions,⁴⁵ for Surrey and others, new research may discern interesting emerging patterns. Contemplating Surrey's poetic production – and in particular his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* – from the angle of the Augustinian and Stoic visions of history and time yields insights into the relation between his poetic forms and contemporary political events and theories. With his blank verse *Aeneid*, Surrey succeeded in locating, appropriating, and adapting into English a new mode of articulation for the poetic voice of the self, in particular for Aeneas's account of the fall of Troy in book II of Virgil's epic poem. Blank decasyllable was the new medium, and *enargeia* one of his strategies. *Enargeia* and *ekphrasis* contemplated rhetoric as a *speculum animi* or *effigies animi*. Scholarship has confirmed the relation between Augustine's strategy of reading by identification, exemplified in his approach to the Psalms (see Camille Bennet), and the need during the Renaissance to devise new stylistic strategies that facilitated the projection of these rhetorical processes and their products as mirrors of the mind, in the same way as Wyatt's eye was the perfect representation of his own mind. This technique provided a text with universal appeal, by articulating in a perceptively effective way the inner processes and affects of the self and their recollection in a first-person coherent account couched in an underlying teleological movement. This teleological movement found its metrical counterpart, its symbolic structure, in the incipient verse paragraphs of Surrey's blank decasyllable *Aeneid*. This joint use of rhetorical and poetic devices provided the kind of realism which, by means of its proximity to what is construed as phenomenological experience – that is, what modernity has termed the phenomenology of individual conscience – facilitated the identification of the reader and the poetic voice through the mediation of the text and its self-effacing author.

Contemplated from this perspective, Surrey lies at the roots of modern teleological projections of history and self. This constitutes a tradition and an outlook that have fallen into crisis in our own days: the teleology of empire as national, communal history, or the process of reconstitution out of the preceding fragments with the aim of establishing a round, stable self.⁴⁶ The examples of this breakdown are well known and innumerable. This is a teleology that questions its linearity in poems such as Tennyson's 'Ulysses', in which the traveller – that central trope in teleological discourse – starts to suspect that this movement really has no end, and that maybe it really consists

⁴⁵ See the accounts by Lauro Martines, 'The protean face of Renaissance humanism' and Ronald G. Witt, 'Civic humanism and the rebirth of the Ciceronian oration', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 51 (1990), 167–84.

⁴⁶ Colin Burrow, 'The experience of exclusion' casts Surrey as a foundational poet against the background of the expanding new state and absolute monarchy. There is much detail to be dealt with and discussed in this respect, but Burrow nevertheless points the way to new modes of reading Surrey's poetry, not only against the background of the fundamental changes that were taking place in Europe and in England during his own time, but also under the light of the direction that English literature and the Western canon would take in subsequent periods.

of a circle, a cycle of an ironic and paradoxical continuous movement forward. Hence the return of late twentieth-century versions of epic, such as Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, to the Dantesque teleological circularity of *terza rima*, the identity of origin and end, the alpha and the omega, as a self-conscious rebellion against the overwhelming tradition of blank verse. Almost 500 years after Surrey's first blank verse epic in English, poets trying to renovate epic discourse in the English canon are consciously eager to abandon the tradition that Surrey and others initiated. The fact that they are still trying to get rid of it gives a right measure of the success of Surrey's project.

There will be some who may consider the former an overstatement. Of course, Surrey's elaboration of the poetic voice of the modern autonomous self turns out to be a representation at a very incipient stage. The technical difficulties he frequently came across in terms, for example, of a certain lack of metrical and syntactic flexibility reveal the tentative nature of his endeavour, and have obscured his reputation for the major part of the twentieth century, with most critics paying due homage to the visionary nature of his choice of verse form but blaming him for a less than perfect execution. What can hardly be contested is the fact that this new poetic articulation, the eventually successful mediation between the poetic modes of late middle English poetry and the upcoming trends of modern versions of selfhood, was in Surrey based on an effective and solid assimilation of very central concepts in Renaissance humanism. This mediation had clear and revealing implications in terms of political doctrine – in particular, in terms of the rhetorical and anthropological conceptions of civic republicanism and their underlying epistemology – as well as practical consequences when they are viewed from the actual political context emerging from the last years of Henry VIII's reign.

One specific aspect of this general statement can be illustrated by means of another comparison between Starkey and Surrey. Thomas Mayer⁴⁷ traces Starkey's reluctant evolution from a sort of Stoic position that implied a belief in natural theology towards a weaker emphasis on the role of reason, as well as an increasing awareness of human weakness, and the need of divine guidance for salvation and the achievement of virtue. This was in opposition to the Stoic tenet that the application of the universal human faculty of reason led to virtuous action, whose implementation resulted in the improvement and progress of the commonwealth. Thus, as Starkey was moving from Stoicism towards a more providential Augustinianism, we find Surrey, the aristocrat from a traditional conservative background, gravitating towards Italian Stoic belief in civic virtue and reason in his poem on Wyatt, with his insistence on virtue and the role of the body as a living republic overriding the traditional values of blood and lineage. Both Starkey and Surrey seem to have been moving away from positions implied in their

⁴⁷ Thomas Starkey and the *Commonweal*, 285–6.

original ideological backgrounds, following opposed but intersecting courses that at a certain point of political necessity seem to have met in a sort of ideological middle ground.

If Starkey thus constitutes one of the many possible links between Surrey and Italian political doctrine, the influence of Palmieri's type of republican political discourse on Starkey – through his stay in Padua – constitutes a fundamental source to analyse the further-reaching contradictions in Starkey, and by indirection, in Surrey as well. We have seen that, late in his life, Starkey tempered some of his philosophical tenets. His Stoicism and his defence of the absolute necessity for the application of reason to action in order to achieve public and private virtue moved into a more providential Augustinianism, which had a more pessimistic vision of human weakness, and into a belief in the need for divine guidance in order to achieve the same virtue. In other words, virtue here is moving towards the realm of grace. However, before this ideological evolution, Palmieri's Ciceronianism constituted the main source for his political doctrine. Starkey's rejection of the values of blood in its ultimate consequences, that is, the rejection of hereditary monarchy, finds its origin in a radical reading of Palmieri's equally radical elaboration of Cicero's *De officiis*. This genealogy of Starkey's texts shows how ominously Surrey was approaching a constellation of political doctrines that, in its more radical fringes, might undermine his own position. If Surrey dared make such political moves in order to assert his position and status within the Henrician court, his audacity was no less significant in the field of ideology. David W. Baker has stressed the fact that humanist discourse occasionally verged on radicalism, which he terms *communism* – a communism that could be read in the scriptures as well.⁴⁸ In that respect, some of Surrey's political and religious rhetorical manoeuvres may have occasionally verged on radicalism too, since, for example, the community of believers that the evangelical circles defended was theoretically extended to all the elect by grace, irrespective of social class – as opposed to the hierarchical social structure of medieval Christianity. This is what led to Trinkaus's statement that Augustinianism did not necessarily impose a cosmic order on society, as Stoicism did through the common faculty of *reason*. For Augustinianism, what all human beings shared was the faculty of *will* and the possibility of salvation through *grace*. Surrey's appropriation of evangelical discourse when praising Wyatt as one of the chosen thus runs parallel to his appropriation of epic discourse, of the Virgilian teleology in order to construct an emblem of his political self. The fact that Augustine dynamically imbibed and transformed – and also transmitted to the humanists – some of the different philosophical trends in Hellenism (Stoicism, Neoplatonism, the classical rhetorical tradition, etc.), turning them into a sort of eclectic compendium of classical antiquity – which also included the Virgilian teleology of empire

⁴⁸ See Guy, *Thomas More*, 101.

– must be taken into account when putting Surrey forth as an emblem of reading and writing strategies in the Renaissance, as well as of their inherent contradictions. It is as if, after Augustine's compendium and combination, the new historical consciousness of Renaissance humanism contributed to Surrey's partial decomposing of these two strains, the Christian and the pagan, but still showing part of the common substratum. In this respect, one can appreciate how Surrey's Wyatt can only become stable after he has left the teleological linear course of history and language at the end of Surrey's poem, and how this is achieved only after his body has been dismantled and turned into a machine: a signifying machine, a combination resulting from both a public and private articulate mechanism, a living republic. This permanence could only be achieved through a Stoic concept of stasis and stable self embedded in and combined with a teleological movement towards annihilation and absence – at the end of which Wyatt's soul is fled with the elect, and the rest of us are left, with Surrey, inside fallen history to deal with its imperfections, its contradictions, and its shortcomings. Surrey could only approach such an emblem of stability by projecting it onto a text, onto *an-other*, that is, through a process of textual alienation, as an object that he articulated linguistically and poetically – Wyatt in the elegies, Aeneas in the translation. Surrey's personal tragedy was that he could never articulate a poetical/political self for himself from the inside out: the network of power at court never allowed him to do so, and kept him moving continually. Ironically, the importance of his lineage and his highly aristocratic background turned him into a very dangerous threat for the royal succession in the paranoid eyes of the dying Henry VIII and those who surrounded him. Whether textual or iconographical, signs played a prominent role in Surrey's life, as well as in his death. Surrey's use of the arms of Edward the Confessor in his own coat of arms was one of the main charges against him in the process that eventually led to his beheading for treason just a few days before Henry's death.⁴⁹ The semiotic and political moves that Surrey made while attempting to reach stability and relevance at the peak of power were used by his enemies to cause his downfall.

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⁴⁹ On Surrey's trial for treason and his last days, see Sessions, *Henry Howard, the Poet Earl of Surrey*, chapters 14 and 15. See also Brigden, 'Henry Howard, earl of Surrey', 526–37.