COURT POLITICS AND CULTURE: THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH COURT LITERATURE, 1500 – 1540

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the ways in which Scottish and English court literature of the early sixteenth century existed within a complex system of entertainment, education, self-fashioning, dissimulation, propaganda and patronage that circumscribed the production and initial performance of court poetry and drama. Court literature was never autotelic and within the critical idiom of performative pragmatics selected works are placed under close critical scrutiny to explore the symbiotic relationship that existed between court literature and important socio-political, economic and national contexts of 1500-1540.

The first two chapters discuss the pervasive influence of patronage upon court literature through an analysis of the panegyric verse that surrounded the coronation of Henry VIII. The rhetorical strategies adopted by courtiers within their literary works, however, differed, depending on whether the writer was, at the time of writing the verse or drama, excluded or included from the environs of the court. The different, often elaborate rhetorical strategies are, through close readings of selected verse, delineated and discussed in chapter three on David Lyndsay and chapter four on Thomas Wyatt and Thomas Elyot.

Wyatt's integrity, his honest persona is, however, in chapter five, shown to have been a façade deliberately and adroitly crafted by the poet that allowed him to survive and flourish within a world of political intrigue at the Henrician court. Literature at times could be appropriated by the sovereign and specifically crafted on his behalf to further national and personal political objectives. The possibilities of this appropriation are explored in the final chapter through a scholarly informed imaginative analysis of the works of Buchanan, Dunbar and Wyatt.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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It is with deep-felt sincerity that I thank Dermot Cavanagh for his initial guidance as the supervisor of my research. He allowed me the freedom to explore my ideas and proved to be an excellent source of information and advice. He would, no doubt, have continued to have exerted a beneficial influence upon my research had he not been offered a position at Edinburgh University. I would also like to thank Jane Shaw, along with numerous other individuals I have never actually met and who work behind the scenes at the Library of Northumbria University, for the excellent service that they have continually provided. Throughout the last three years they have been invaluable in securing me the numerous texts and articles necessary for my research. My deepest thanks, however, go to David Walker, not only for his having stepped into the breach and taking over the role as my research supervisor a year and a half ago, but for the continued support, encouragement and genuine friendship he has offered me since our first meeting when he taught me Renaissance literature in the second year of my undergraduate degree at Northumbria University. He has been a great influence on both my deciding to undertake a PhD and my choice of subject matter. I can still remember the enthusiasm he instilled within me when he stood at the front of the lecture hall, the students completely captivated, as he spoke of how Thomas Wyatt was a 'player', and a serious one at that, within the murky world of Tudor politics. I was hooked, and from that moment on have been driven to explore just how literature, particularly poetry, interacted with culture and politics during such a volatile and exciting period as that of the early sixteenth century.

ABBREVIATIONS

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EC	*Essays in Criticism*
ELH	*English Literary History*
ELR	*English Literary Renaissance*
HJ	*The Historical Journal*
HLQ	*The Huntington Library Quarterly*
JHI	*Journal of the History of Ideas*
JMRS	*The Journal of Medieval & Renaissance Studies*
MA	*Medium Aevum*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
RES	*Review of English Studies*
RS	*Renaissance Studies*
SCJ	*Sixteenth Century Journal*
SHR	*The Scottish Historical Review*
SL	*Scottish Language*
SLJ	*Scottish Literary Journal*
SSL	*Studies in Scottish Literature*
SSR	*Scottish Studies Review*
TSL	*Tennessee Studies in Literature*
TSLL	*Texas Studies in Literature and Language*

CONVENTIONS

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Spelling during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century was not standardised and the same word in English can have a very different meaning in Scots. Any attempt to analyse early Tudor and Stuart texts must confront the problem of early spelling and pronunciation. Changes in pronunciation, orthography and the meaning of specific words mean that for modern readers straightforward texts can seem obscure and difficult to follow.

On the whole I follow the modernised spelling of the texts that are available in the editions of Wyatt, Dunbar, Skelton and Lyndsay's verse by Rebholz, Bawcutt, Scattergood and Hadley Williams. There are times, however, due to the potential flexibility of meaning that comes from spelling in the period when, for clarity and the development of meaning that is lost in modernisation, I quote from either an early-spelling text or a manuscript source. When this occurs it is indicated with a footnote that explains the reasons why the early spelling of the verse is used. When quoting from a manuscript, from an early edition or an early-spelling edition, I have followed the recent example of critics such as Bawcutt and Heale and have modernised some aspects of Tudor orthography and convention, altering 'u's and 'v's, 'i's and 'j's and usually, 'y's, to conform to modern usage.

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INTRODUCTION

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Gregory Kratzman, in *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations 1430-1550*, the only relatively recent book-length study to look at the relationships between Scottish and English literature during the early sixteenth century, has detailed how the existence of a geographical and political border, or even, at times, bitter and devastating conflict, did not prevent English poetry from becoming known in Scotland, and vice versa.[1] Yet, whilst Kratzman, and other critics, such as Henry Harvey Wood, in *Two Scots Chaucerians*, has been satisfied to outline the similarities between Scots and English verse within the context of literary influences, this is not my aim in this thesis.[2] An investigation into similarities and connections between court poets must look to other matters than mere genre, style and sources. A.A Macdonald acknowledges this fact in a recent article on Anglo-Scottish literary relations when he remarks that 'literary relationships need not only imply cultural contact and transfer, but may also embrace parallelism of topic and genre' and we should 'attempt to take into account the whole phenomenology and sociology of culture'.[3] Nor is it my aim to offer an in-depth analysis of the way particular poets have stylistically created their verse, such as Priscilla Bawcutt's excellent book on 'Dunbar the Makar' in which she discusses the poet's craftsmanship and technical virtuosity.[4] Similarly, it is not my intention

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[1] Kratzman clearly states in his preface to *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations* that his aim within his thesis is the study of literary influences. Kratzman, G (1980) *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations 1430 – 1550.*

[2] Wood, H. (1967) *Two Scots Chaucerians.*

[3] Macdonald, A.A. (1991) 'Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations: Problems and Possibilities' in *SSL* 26, p. 174.

[4] Bawcutt, P. (1992) *Dunbar the Makar.* Though Bawcutt's book includes biographical information concerning Dunbar her main analysis is based on exploring the literary form and genres used by the poet.

to offer detailed biographies of the selected poets, nor to offer a comprehensive literary study of their oeuvre, such as those studies offered by Muir, Mason or Heale, concerning Thomas Wyatt, or the recent biographical study by Edington regarding the life of Sir David Lyndsay.[5] What particularly interests me are the ways Dunbar and his contemporaries often brutally, at other times sensitively, handle language and poetic modes and genres, and illuminate the complex symbiotic relationship between literature and the important socio-political, economic and national contexts of the era in which it was produced. In the sixteenth century the literatures of Scotland and England do not always deal with precisely the same topic, but when they do they provide opportunities for another kind of literary relationship.[6] Common subject-matter, political influences, patronage and the poets' engagement with contemporary issues offer insights not explored in any depth by modern cross-border critics.

At this point it will be enlightening to define and narrow the parameters of the study and of the chosen critical approach I will use in this thesis. In writing about such an extensive period, it is necessary to be somewhat selective. The literature primarily under scrutiny in this study will be that written by active courtiers, literary figures whose work obtained a degree of popularity in the courts which their authors inhabited, authors who are now at the centre of the early sixteenth-century literary canon: Thomas Wyatt, Thomas Elyot, Thomas More, John Skelton, William Dunbar, David Lyndsay and George Buchanan. These authors' works offer some of the clearest insights into the socio-political flux and ideology of the makers and shakers of their respective kingdoms. Other

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[5] Muir, K. (1963) *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt*; Mason, H. (1959) *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period*; Heale, E. (1998) *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*; Edington, Carol. (1994) *Court and Culture in Renaissance Scotland: Sir David Lindsay of the Mount.* These are merely a few of the many biographical orientated works on the poets to be discussed.

[6] Skinner, Q. (1987) 'Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* and the language of Renaissance Humanism' in Pagden, A. (ed.) *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, p. 183.

considerations have also been necessary and although this thesis does not altogether neglect much discussed works such as Dunbar's 'The Golden Targe', Skelton's 'The Garland of Laurel', Wyatt's 'Penitential Psalms', or Lyndsay's works after the death of James V, it will pay particular attention to the satirical poems, the petitions, and other works that seem, by comparison, to have been deliberately crafted as socio-political court entertainment, propaganda, or specifically to benefit the individual poet. Such verse does not necessarily analyse government or aspects of the socio-political world of the court in the explicit manner of legal and theological discourse, which has traditionally been the basis for investigating social history or the history of political thought. Yet, when adroitly analysed, such literature can reveal a host of assumptions concerning political behaviour and causation. Through it we can penetrate and unearth not only normative ideas concerning how the symbiotic relationship between literature, culture and power actually functioned but also how the authors of these works and their contemporaries believed it should actually work.[7] Moreover, the analysis will primarily be underpinned by the critical idiom of performative pragmatics that encompasses these strands of patronage, propaganda, dissimulation and dialogue, and these strands will be placed within the context of the political and ecclesiastical affairs in which they evolved. Yet, the state of the Church in Scotland and England, European politics, the Reformation, humanism and other cultural and political influences, will be discussed only in sufficient detail to show its influence and relationship with the poet's pragmatic actions and intentions, otherwise the study would pass beyond the scope and size possible for a thesis. The significance, for example, of the state of early sixteenth-century religion and Reformation politics and beliefs is recognised as being immensely

[7] Baker, D. (1999) *Divulging Utopia*, p. 4.

important within the era that this study explores, but this area of research has been covered sufficiently by recent critics in great depth and detail.[8] The driving principle of this study is not simply to locate the poets in their contemporary contexts, politically or socially – merely to provide 'historical background' material - or simply to delineate similarities and differences. Instead, a more substantial and meaningful integration of history and court literature has been undertaken to suggest what may have been behind the poets' critical stances and also to examine the pragmatic function of their verse, and their creative art, when performed within the environs of the courtly milieu.

At times my approach will be one of theoretical eclecticism, but insights generated by theoretic formations such as psychoanalysis, structuralism, deconstruction, feminism and 'new' and 'old' historicism will be located within and subordinated to a socio-political analysis underpinned by the performative pragmatics that surround the initial production of the verse.[9] I do not here speak of the actual production of verse into either manuscript or book format, as collections of poets' works, such as the Devonshire Manuscript, the Egerton Manuscript, Tottel's *Miscellany*, the Bannatyne Manuscript, the Reidpeth Manuscript or the Maitland Folio, though these remain the primary sources for the verse I will discuss.[10] Such primary sources are certainly living documents of the social life at the court of Henry VIII and the Scottish kings, James IV and James V. The circulation of verse within manuscripts is certainly important, as Marrotti so succinctly argues concerning the manuscript circulation of John Donne's verse

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[8] Critics who offer in-depth analysis of Reformation, Church and early sixteenth-century religion are, for example, Wormald, *Court, Kirk, and Community: Scotland 1470-1625*; MacCulloch, D. (ed.) (1995) *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics, Policy & Piety*; Cowan, I. & Shaw, D. (1983) *The Renaissance & Reformation in Scotland.*

[9] Patterson, L. (1990) *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380-1530*, p. 4. Patterson similarly, though less defined in his argument, argues for the value of such an eclectic approach to literary material.

[10] Concerning these manuscripts see their references in the bibliography.

in *John Donne, Coterie Poet*, and as Thomas Healy observes manuscript transmission promoted a sense of participating in a literary culture conducted by intellectual and social elites. But manuscripts and their importance to specific topical socio-political contexts should also be handled with critical tact.[11] For example, Tottel's *Miscellany*, printed in 1556, brought the poems of Wyatt to a new audience, a much more public readership than the one for which they were written. The *Miscellany's* range was also limited due to political considerations and the prevalent censorship of the reign of Mary Tudor.[12] Tottel did not print all of Wyatt's verse, he selected particular poems from Wyatt's oeuvre and made deliberate formal alterations to many of the poems': modifying the poet's irregular rhythms to produce regular iambic metres. He also added his own colophons to introduce the poems, such as, 'How the lover perisheth in his delight, as the fly in the fire' for the poem whose first line reads 'Some fowls there be that have so perfect sight'. Such changes and considerations tell us a great deal about socio-political imperatives when the verse was published during the 1550's. They also create, as Heale so pertinently remarks, an embryonic persona of a somewhat forlorn, dejected and bitter lover which almost strips the poem of any suggestion of a political dimension[13] This detracts from an understanding of the pragmatic reasons behind the poet's production of the verse.

Similarly, the Bannatyne Manuscript must be handled with critical circumspection. The poems were copied into the manuscript by George

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[11] Marotti, A. (1986) *John Donne, Coterie Poet*; Healy, T. (2001) 'Reading Contexts for Renaissance Lyrics' in Rylance, R. & Simons, J. (eds.) (2001) *Literature in Context*, p. 50. Concerning manuscript culture and its social nature see also, Marotti, Arthur (1995) *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric.*

[12] Mason, *Humanism and Poetry*, p. 253: Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 191, 'Epilogue: Tottel and after' where she offers a short discussion on the influence of Tottel's selection of verse within the context of the latter half of the sixteenth century. There are many books on the reign of 'Bloody Mary' but one that is an especially balanced and impartial appraisal of her rule is Turton, G. (1969) *The Dragon's Breed*, Chapter 15.

[13] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 191.

Bannatyne, a member of a prominent family of Edinburgh merchants, from three or four independently transcribed manuscripts probably dating from 1564-7, and produced in its final form during the last three months of 1568.[14] The manuscript, though one of the eminent sources concerning the verse of William Dunbar and David Lyndsay, was not circulated within either the era these poets wrote their verse or the courts in which they existed and served. It was created during the latter years of Mary Stuart's controversial reign when she was embroiled in a desperate struggle for her personal survival within a bitterly divided kingdom, and finalised the year following her abdication.[15] Certainly, as Newlyn and Dunnigan have suggested, the selection of verse by Bannatyne and his arrangement of the verse within the manuscript, when analysed within the framework of feminist theory, suggest how his selection and arrangement illustrates, and also simultaneously advances, the culture's dominant male ideology.[16] This gives us insights into the gender politics of the Reformation era in Scotland during, and after, the reign of Mary Stuart, but the manuscript and its circulation tells us little or nothing about the pragmatic reasons behind the production of either poet's verse. Nor does a study of the formation and circulation of such manuscripts as the Devonshire cast much light upon the pragmatic motives of poets whose verse they include. Though the Devonshire Manuscript was certainly circulated within the court in which Thomas Wyatt lived, it records the preferences of the group of

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[14] Concerning the dating of The Bannatyne Manuscript and its composition see Goldstein, R. James (1999) 'Writing in Scotland, 1058-1560' in Wallace, D. (ed.) *The Cambridge History of English Medieval Literature*, p. 252.

[15] Cherry, A. (1987) *Princes, Poets & Patrons: The Stuarts and Scotland*, p. 39.

[16] Newlyn, E. (1999) 'Images of Women in Sixteenth-Century Scottish Manuscripts' in Ewan, E. & Meikle, M. (eds.) *Women in Scotland c.1100-c.1750*; Newlyn, Evelyn (1992) 'The Political Dimensions of desire and Sexuality in Poems of the Bannatyne Manuscript' in Mckenna, S. (ed.) *Selected Essays on Scottish Language and Literature*; Dunnigan, S. (2002) *Eros and Poetry at the Courts of Mary Queen of Scots and James VI.* The first section of Dunnigan's book, which deals with the Bannatyne Manuscript, is in many ways simply a reiteration of Newlyn's ideas.

lady copyists who created the manuscript.[17] These copyists believed to have belonged to the Howard circle made additions and corrections to the verse contained in the manuscript.[18]

In order to ascertain insights into the true motives of the poet's production of the verse, and a more enlightened understanding of particular poems, we need to look at the possible pragmatic reasons behind the production of court poetry and ask questions concerning the possible initial performance of the verse. Why was the poem produced? For whom was it produced? What are the implications of reading the poems with distinct ideological, social, political, national, or gender themes, embedded within them, to a court audience? How would the courtly audience have reacted to such a poem? How would the monarch have reacted? What would the poet gain from its production? Is the verse intended to exclude or include sections of the court or nation, or certain specific behavioural characteristics, or for that matter certain gender traits? In essence, we need to ask what was the complex cultural construct contingent upon the circumstances of both composition and reception of the verse.[19] To answer this question we need to place the verse within the context of its creation and initial performance when analysed within the political, social, religious and personal relations of the court and the era. We need to understand what will from now onwards be termed the 'performative pragmatics' that surround the poetic text. Edington correctly points out in her study on Lyndsay that 'if poetic texts are to serve as a useful guide to contemporary attitudes, it is necessary to engage in more than an analysis of the

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[17] Concerning the debate over the women copyists of the Devonshire Manuscript see Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, pp. 42-46; Baron, H. (1994) 'Mary (Howard) Fitzroy's hand in the Devonshire Manuscript' in *RES 45*; Remley, P. (1994) 'Mary Shelton and her Tudor literary milieu' in Herman, P. (ed.) *Rethinking the Henrician Era: Essays on Early Tudor Texts and Contexts*.

[18] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry* pp. 42-46, offers a good discussion on this subject.

[19] Edington, *Court and Culture*, p. 89.

words on the page (important though these words are).'[20] Unfortunately, because of the lack of any extant evidence specifically detailing the poets' reasons for the production of their verse and the paucity of information concerning their audiences and readers' reactions to the literature, these questions are not easily answered.[21] As Greg Walker points out, a great deal of the evidence concerning early Tudor literature is often 'ambiguous and internal', based upon speculation, inference and plausibility 'rather than hard facts'. This, as he further rightly remarks, 'should not necessarily deter investigation.'[22] There is in fact very little that is essentially provable concerning either early Tudor or Scottish literature or history that is not open to renegotiation, and speculation forms the core of even the most empirical arguments. We have only to look at the continuing debate concerning Tudor court faction and the changing opinions of historians concerning the kingships and personalities of Henry VIII, James IV or James V to understand this point.[23] It is, somewhat paradoxically, readings that attempt to ground a text within its historical contexts that are the least speculative, even if it seems contradictory to speculate on the relationship between context and text.

A botanist does not attempt to understand and study the marvel and wonder of *Quercus robur*, the English oak, by merely studying the leaves produced by it, or even its branches or bark. Such a study, though to some degree informative, only obtains a superficial surface understanding of the tree. It tells

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[20] Ibid, p. 89.

[21] A problem recognised by Ferster concerning research into the reader's reactions to medieval verse, in Ferster, J. (1996) *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England*, p. 178.

[22] Walker, G. (1996) *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII*, p. 178.

[23] Zagorin, P. (1993) 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII: The courtiers ambivalence' in *JMRS 23*, p.120; Ives, E. (1979) *Faction in Tudor England*, p. 30; Starkey, D. (1982) 'From feud to faction: English politics c.1450-1550' in *History Today*, Nov. 1982, pp.16-22; Bernard, G. (2000) *Power and Politics in Tudor England*, pp. 1-18. These are the mere tip of the iceberg concerning this issue but their arguments are those that form the centre of the debate.

botanists about the tree's appearance, its form and visible structure, its outward beauty. It allows them to see how the oak appears to those who look upon the tree. It does not, however, allow them to understand the way in which the tree functions, was created, or the way in which it interacts and was nurtured by its natural habitat. It is only by studying beneath the surface of the bark, which through time has grown thicker and thicker to obfuscate a clear understanding of how the cambium layer, sapwood and heartwood function; and through an understanding of the importance of the root system that stretches beneath the visible surface, roots that have nurtured the tree with life endowing nutrients drawn from its direct environment, that a botanist can hope to gain an understanding of the marvellous creation they study. Historical, social, political and religious contexts are the very life-endowing nutrients that nurtured the Scots and English verse written during the early sixteenth century. The performative pragmatics are the roots and "phloem", the pipeline, through which the creation of the heartwood, the poem, occurs. Criticism without topical context looks in a sense only at the knotted gnarled outer surface of the bark. It obfuscates all but a surface understanding and appreciation of the beauty of the poem. We need to be willing to look beneath a poem's beauty and form, past a mere appreciation of how the verse moves us as we read, to explore its function and reasons for being created within the contexts of its initial springing forth into life.

In no way do I attempt to suggest that this way of approaching selected Scots and English verse is the only one that is valid. Underlying the critical idiom of performative pragmatics, however, is the assumption that to consider literary texts and writers apart from the complex system of entertainment, education, self-fashioning, dissimulation, propaganda and patronage that circumscribed the production and initial performance of the poem, is to arbitrarily and myopically

abstract literature from its living cultural context. It leads to a misconception of the text's full meaning for its original audience and denies the modern reader a clearer and more enlightening understanding of the verse.[24] As Greenblatt, in his typically succinct manner remarks:

> ... if literature is seen only as a detached reflection upon the prevailing behavioural codes, a view from a safe distance, we drastically diminish our grasp of art's concrete functions in relation to individuals and to institutions, both of which shrink into obligatory 'historical background' that adds little to our understanding. We drift back towards a conception of art as a timeless, cultureless, autonomous, closed system – in either case, art as opposed to social life.[25]

Poems in the early sixteenth century were not simply hidebound repositories of traditional and universal truisms, they were complex creations laden with meanings ascertainable from outside the text, from the culture and society in which they were produced.[26] The notion of poetry as 'a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,' based on 'emotion recollected in tranquillity', such as we associate with William Wordsworth or John Keats, would have been totally alien to men such as Dunbar, Wyatt and their contemporaries who served at court.[27] Though not public poets in the sense of a modern poet such as Seamus Heaney or Tony Harrison, the court poet was still primarily a public poet, his audience being his monarch and social peers. Dunbar was not a 'free spirit'; he was inextricably bound to the court, as were Wyatt, Lyndsay and their contemporaries whom we regard as court poets. The courts they served and spent their lives in were basically extensions of the monarch's household, a member of this household guaranteed nothing more than *bowge of court*; whatever security or status he

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[24] Griffin, D. (1996) *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800*, p. 1.
[25] Greenblatt, S. (1984) *Renaissance Self-fashioning*, p. 4.
[26] Goldberg, J. (1982) 'The Politics of the Renaissance: A Review Essay' in *ELH* 49, p. 514.
[27] Reiss, E. (1979) *William Dunbar*, p. 19.

enjoyed was directly dependant on the favour of his specific king or patron.[28] A courtier was to be useful in whatever role was assigned to him and the successful servant was one who could promote the interests of his master, particularly his king. The importance of entertainment, as a form of both disseminating and discussing ideas, as a form of official dissimulation, as a means of making political statements, either through amusement or tragedy, has been clearly recognised by those interested in Tudor and Elizabethan drama such as Greg Walker, yet this remains an underdeveloped area of research by those who study the poetics of the era under analysis in this study.[29] The literary creations of courtier poets who served at court were necessarily tied to pragmatic imperatives that were often socio-political in nature and at other times imbued with national politics.

It is my contention that a poet such as Wyatt was not hermetically separated from the other poets of his era and that he was not alone in using his verse in a pragmatic and deceivingly cynical manner. The rhetorical strategies and pragmatic imperatives that underpin the verse of a poet like Wyatt did not emerge in a vacuum. A deeper and more enlightened understanding of the possible intentions of both the poet and his contemporaries use of poetics, and the possible literary relations between Scots and English court poetics, can be discerned in greater detail through a comparative analysis of the performative pragmatics and rhetorical strategies of selected Scottish and English court verse. Though many Scottish historians and literary critics influenced by nationalistic tendencies tend to stress historical and national differences, those Scots poets whose work will be primarily discussed within this study, William Dunbar, George Buchanan and

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[28] Norman, J. (1992) 'William Dunbar: Scottish Goliard' in Mckenna, S. (ed.) *Selected Essays on Scottish Language and Literature*, p. 44.
[29] Walker, G. (1998) *Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama.*

David Lyndsay, existed in a social and political milieu at times strikingly similar to that experienced within the Tudor court by English writers such as John Skelton, Thomas Wyatt, Thomas More and Thomas Elyot.[30] We should not allow the similarities and the continuities between the two courts to be masked by the fervour of Scottish nationalism that is currently in the process of recreating its historical narrative fiction as a symbol of Scottish independence from England. As Jack polemically remarks:

> What may have been a valuable formulation for the establishing of Scottish Literature as a discipline may not be the best model for sustaining it in health and reputation. In particular, current trends seem to support a tradition defined through contrasts with English literature and language.'[31]

R.D.S. Jack rightly suggests that 'a more harmonious, historical and specifically literary model may have more utility'.[32] Moreover, the idea of a national 'Scots' language separated and distinct from that of England during the early sixteenth century represents a complex myth perpetuated as part of the narrative of Scottish nationalism. 'Middle Scots' is a language boundary imposed by latter day critics. Dunbar and Lyndsay both refer to the language in which they wrote as 'Inglisch': as Bawcutt points out, Dunbar 'recognised a single language community.'[33] This is not to imply that they wrote or spoke the 'King's English' with its 'received pronunciation', which only became the 'standard' form of the language during the sixteenth century and was only spoken habitually by a small minority.[34] The English language composed innumerable heterogeneous dialects and 'speech

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[30] The most radical of these critics is without doubt the Marxist and Nationalist Tom Scott in Scott, T. (1966) *Dunbar: A Critical Exposition of the Poems*. It is however, a typical tone and strand adopted by such Scots historians as Norman MacDougall, in MacDougall, N (1997) *James IV*.

[31] Jack, R. (1993) 'Of Lion and of Unicorn: Literary Traditions at War' in Jack, R. & McGinley, K. (eds.) *Of Lion and Of Unicorn: Essays on Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations in Honour of Professor John MacQueen*, pp. 72-73.

[32] Jack, 'Of Lion and of Unicorn: Literary Traditions at War', p. 73.

[33] Bawcutt, P. (ed.) (1996) *William Dunbar: Selected Poems*, p. 5.

[34] Collinson, P. (ed.) (2002) *The Oxford History of the British Isles: The Sixteenth Century*, p. 222-223.

communities': geographical, occupational and social, which were not always mutually comprehensible in their entirety, yet the language still remained, as Dunbar and Lyndsay recognised, 'Inglisch'.

This thesis attempts to explore the possibilities of such a 'model' of cross-fertilisation suggested by Jack, by moving closer together both the fields of literary and historical research and the increasingly divided study of Scottish and English literature. The intention is to raise the possibility of an interdisciplinary space for mutual enrichment in these areas. Despite the fact that the writers of both countries works shared significantly similar themes and preoccupations, and the two nations underwent similar political and social upheavals, Scots and English scholars have proven to be more than a little unreceptive to a cohesive exploration of each other's ideas.

It may well be that many of the questions I ask concerning the performative pragmatics that surround the verse can never be answered satisfactorily, but by attempting to approach an answer to these questions as closely as the available evidence will allow, it will be possible to rewrite some of the assumptions that underpin the current biographies and critical analysis of the Scots and English poets chosen for this study and explore avenues of cross border literary relations not merely dependant on the somewhat limited approach of searching for direct literary sources that influenced the poets of either nation.[35] Critical orthodoxies such as those that assert Wyatt as 'honest'; suggest Dunbar was a perpetual whiner and whinger whose only real desire was for a benefice; or that much of the verse of this era is subversive, the poets attacking the court and crown through ambiguity and protecting themselves through 'deniability' by

[35] This approach is one influenced to a certain degree by that adopted by Walker concerning John Skelton's 1520s verse, particularly the satires concerning Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. See Walker, G. (1988) *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s*.

having their words placed in the mouths of poetic personas, will be subjected to sceptical scrutiny.[36] The interdisciplinary methodology of the study, however, is neither a scythe able to slice a clear pathway through all maze and thicket, nor a panacea able to cure all ills.[37] Nor is it a bludgeon with which to beat to a bloodless pulp previous critical interpretation. My approach is intended not to supplant; rather, it is intended to compliment both current and previous historical and critical cross-border research. In the following chapters the interrelated topics of service and counsel, honesty, personal and national diplomacy, will be discussed within the idiom of performative pragmatics, which is itself underpinned by religious, political and social contexts of the era and milieu of the court.

[36] For critics who see Wyatt as fundamentally 'honest' within a corrupt court see Fox, A. (1989) *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII & Henry VIII*; Muir, *Life and Letters*. . Concerning the portrayal of Dunbar as a perpetual whiner whose only real desire was a benefice, see Scott, *A Critical Exposition of the Poems*, p. 7. Jack, *The Poetry of William Dunbar*, p. 5. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 121. Many critics have been influenced by Greenblatt's ideas concerning 'deniability'.

[37] Melczer, W. (1980) 'The War of the Carrots and the Onions' in Smith, N. & Snow, J. (eds.) *The Expansion and Transformation of Courtly Literature*, p. 225.

CHAPTER ONE

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POET, COURT AND CULTURE

> For the world and princes are no longer made as they should be, but as they are.
>
> Francesco Guicciardini[1]

In 1537, the Tudor ambassador, courtier and poet, Sir Thomas Wyatt, wrote a solemn letter of advice to his fifteen year old son in which he spoke of the 'thousand dangers and hazardes, enmyities, hatrids, prisonments, despits and indignations' he had experienced.[2] This was a reflection on the time he had spent in the Tudor court, a perilously unstable world in which power, honour and life were always at risk.[3] A world in which he recognised, like Guicciardini, that the reality was far removed from the ideal. The assumption, as Greg Walker points out, that literature exists as an apolitical sphere of activity, divorced from the immediate political and moral concerns of the elite is inordinately inaccurate, whichever period we consider, but perhaps none more so than when we consider the early sixteenth century and the literature produced for the English court of Henry VIII and the Scots courts of James IV and V.[4] Tudor literature was predominantly written for the court, by the court and the literary discourse of writers outside of the court was heavily influenced by the political and moral reality of an England not only under the control of the tyrannical Henry VIII, but an England also experiencing the turmoil of the Reformation. The court was a

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[1] Guicciardini, F. (1965) *Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman*, trans. Domandi, M., p. 86.

[2] Letter (1) Wyatt to his son, printed in Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 40.

[3] Zagorin, P. (1993) 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII: The courtiers ambivalence' in *The Journal of Medieval & Renaissance Studies,* 23, p. 120. The idea of the court of Henry VIII being one that was unstable, mainly due to the king's volatile nature, is promulgated by the majority of Tudor historians past and present.

[4] Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, p. 8. Walker makes this point concerning the Tudor court but it equally applies to the Scottish Stuart court.

place in which the decorum and display of the royal entourage, the outward courtesy, splendour and idle pastimes, concealed a vigorous, vicious world of intrigue inspired by personal jealousies, guilty secrets and salacious scandal-mongering.[5] The Tudor court in particular was a place which was ruled by a king about whom Thomas More, the king's Lord Chancellor until his resignation in 1532, would remark to his son-in-law William Roper after he had expressed his pleasure at the king's friendship towards his father-in-law:

> I find his grace my very good lord indeed; and I believe he doth as singularly favour me as any subject within his realm. Howbeit, son Roper ... if my head could win him a castle in France (for then there was war between us) it should not fail to go.[6]

Never was this more true than in the last two decades of Henry VIII's reign, when the whole atmosphere at court underwent a radical transformation as the ageing king finally despaired of having a son by Katherine of Aragon and, obsessed with providing for the succession, decided to look elsewhere.[7] The king's quarrel with Pope Clement VII over his divorce, his marriage to Anne Boleyn and repudiation of papal authority, created enormous tensions both at home and abroad.[8] The court, like that of many of its European neighbours, always an arena of ceaseless competition for the rewards of favour and power, increasingly became a place of bitter factional politics that were driven by the king's fear of treason from within

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[5] Wilson, D. (2002) *In the Lion's Court*, pp. 389 & 467; Weir, A. (2002) *Henry VIII: King and Court*, p. 27.

[6] Sylvester, R. & Harding, D. (eds.) (1962) Two Early Tudor Lives: The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey, by G. Cavendish: The Life of Sir Thomas More, by William Roper, p. 208.

[7] Fox, pp. 258-9; Elton, G. (1989) *England Under the Tudors*, p. 71. Elton suggests that Henry's 'bloodthirsty' actions began at the beginning of his reign, when in 1509 he used the fictitious charge of treason to execute his 'fiscal judges', Empsom and Dudley. This is a valid point, but as Elton also acknowledges this was not typical of Henry's early actions as king and the violence of his reign increased and intensified in the later decades of his kingship. See also Ives, E. (1995) 'Henry VIII: the political perspective' in MacCulloch, pp. 31-34.

[8] Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII', p. 120.

and invasion from without by a Catholic coalition on the continent.[9] Historians such as David Starkey, Eric Ives, and more recently George Bernard, may disagree with each other over the exact degree to which factions were an influence upon the king's political decision making concerning the realm, but as R. Malcolm Smuts astutely reminds his colleagues, the royal court, and in particular the king, was the epicentre of English politics and the ultimate source of power from which all patronage flowed and towards which all politically and personally ambitious men were drawn.[10] The court was not only the natural habitat of those whose ancient right it was to attend upon the king, the nobility, it was the place towards which both men of newly acquired wealth or men of mere ability were inevitably attracted.[11] Those who visited the court did so in a search for influence, patronage, privilege and wealth, and the most influential individual in the realm was the king. As a result, the prestige and ultimate success of courtiers depended largely upon their nearness to the king or someone who could possibly influence a king who was prone to constantly changing shifts of policy and enthusiasm.[12]

The insecurity of courtiers was further heightened during Henry VIII's reign by extensions made to the Treason Act in 1534.[13] It became an act of treason to convey, even if only in spoken words, a desire to harm either the king, his

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[9] There is amongst current historians of the Tudor era, a debate concerning whether it is correct to view Henry VIII's court as factional. Historians, such as, Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII', p.120; Ives, *Faction in Tudor England*, p. 30; Starkey, 'From feud to faction: English politics c.1450-1550'; regard the court as a place of faction where groups of nobles fought to influence the king's policies. This view is challenged by other historians, who suggest that there was no important faction in Henry's court, that he was a ruler who dominated the court. The most recent historian to follow this line of argument is George Bernard, who gives an insight into this debate in the introduction to *Power and Politics in Tudor England*, (2000), pp. 1-18. Whilst, I would agree that it is a reasonable argument that Henry VIII dominated his court, this does not mean faction did not exist within the court and it is perhaps better to view the king as not merely a dominant figure, but a Machiavellian prince who divides and conquers the members of his court through both his dominant power and by allowing competing religious and family groups to undermine and destroy each other.

[10] Smuts, R. (1999) *Culture and Power in England 1585-1685*, p. 80.

[11] Richardson, G. (2002) *Renaissance Monarchy*, p. 3; Weir, p. 25.

[12] Weir, p. 27.

[13] 26 *Henry VIII, c.2.*

queen or his heir. Of the 883 of the king's subjects who were convicted of treason between 1532 and 1540, there were 394 who were charged with treason by words, 63 of whom would pay the ultimate price of a traitor's execution.[14] Baldwin Smith has succinctly remarked that 'trial for treason was the instrument by which the king struck down both high and low'.[15] The statutes regulating the nature of treason were in fact so vague that they could be construed to include almost any word, expression or deed. As Sir Thomas More discovered to his cost, even silence could not protect a man from being charged with treason. At More's trial in 1535, it was argued by Christopher Hales, the Attorney General, that 'though we should have no word or deed to charge upon you, yet we have your silence, and that is a sign of your evil intention and sure proof of malice.'[16] The fear of being charged with high treason was a constant threat from which no man was free and this was a period studded with the fall of such great ministers as Cardinal Wolsey, Sir Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, and the destruction of such noble families as the Boleyns, Poles and Howards.[17] The closer the proximity to the crown, the greater the danger, for the Treason Act was not only used to remove those who committed overt acts of rebellion, it was used as an instrument to remove those who had become too powerful or dangerous in an era in which the king would tolerate no rival for his throne.[18] No individual or relationship could be allowed to flourish that might threaten the king's dynastic interests.[19] Lady

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[14] Palmer, M. (1971) *Henry VIII*, p. 79.
[15] Baldwin Smith, L. (1954) 'English Treason Trials and Confessions in the Sixteenth Century' in *JHI 15*, p. 472. For a short, but succinct history of treason legislation, see Smith, A. (1997) *The Emergence of the Nation State: The Commonwealth of England 1529-1660*, pp. 434-435.
[16] Christopher Hales, Attorney General in 1535, quoted in Baldwin Smith, 'English Treason Trials and Confessions in the Sixteenth Century' p. 474.
[17] Concerning the court of Henry VIII, see, Lacey, R. (1972) *The Life & Times of Henry VIII*; Warnicke, R. (1989) *The Rise & Fall of Anne Boleyn*; Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII', p. 120. Christmas, M. (1998) 'The Tudor Nobility' in *History Review*, 31, pp. 46-52. These are just a few of the historians who outline the tyrannical rule of Henry VIII.
[18] Baldwin Smith, 'English Treason Trials and Confessions in the Sixteenth Century', p. 472.
[19] Fox, p. 259.

Margaret Douglas, the king's niece, discovered this to her cost when she contracted a secret marriage to Lord Thomas Howard in July 1536. The two lovers were imprisoned and Howard died a year later from the rigours of his incarceration.[20] In the same year Sir Henry Norris, one of the king's closest friends and Chief Gentleman of the Privy Chamber was, with several others of the royal household, including Anne Boleyn's brother, beheaded for adultery with the queen.[21] At times members of the Tudor court must have lived in an atmosphere of terror as the ageing king became increasingly paranoid and his actions progressively more bloodthirsty.[22]

Any written or verbal critique of the court or the king's policies during Henry VIII's reign was extremely perilous. William Tyndale earned the lasting enmity of the king and was branded both a traitor and heretic. This was not simply due to his Lutheran views but in part because he had dared to criticise, in *The Practice of Prelates*, both the political and immoral reality of the Henrician court and the king's attempt to divorce Katherine of Aragon.[23] John Fisher, bishop of Rochester and newly created Cardinal, a prince of the Church and a man of fiery and dangerous eloquence was executed in 1534 for his written and spoken opposition to Henry's divorce and religious policies.[24] Cardinal Reginald Pole also earned the king's enmity and was denounced as a traitor for his opposition to Henry's repudiation of papal authority in his *De Unitate Ecclesiae*.[25] Pole, Henry VIII's cousin and a Yorkist claimant to the throne through his grandfather George, Duke of Clarence, had been granted a licence to live and study abroad in 1532. His stance against Henry gave the king the

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[20] Ibid, p. 259.
[21] Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII', p. 120.
[22] Ibid, p. 121.
[23] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 90.
[24] Loades, D. (1974) *Politics and the Nation 1450-1660*, p. 179; Baker, D. (1999) *Divulging Utopia: Radical Humanism in Sixteenth-Century England*, p. 90.
[25] Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII' p. 132. Concerning the life of Cardinal Pole see also Einstein, L. (1970) *The Italian Renaissance in England*, p. 336-337 and Raab, F. (1964) *The English Face of Machiavelli*, pp. 18 & 32.

opportunity virtually to annihilate the Pole family in 1539, a family who may have threatened the king's dynastic ambitions.[26]

Elizabeth Barton, the so called 'Holy maid of Kent', was perhaps the best known of Henry's 'popular' critics. She was a woman with a long, locally distinguished history of prophetic utterance and induced by a group of clergy led by Dr. Bocking, Cellarer of Christ's Church Canterbury, to declare that she had seen in a vision:

> ... that the king should not continue king a month after that he were married; and within six months after God would strike the realm with such a plague as never was seen, and then the king should be destroyed.[27]

These were dangerous words, designed to transform animosity against Anne Boleyn into a political weapon for the reversal of royal policy. Manuscripts and printed copies of the young nun's stories and prophecies circulated among prominent individuals during the late 1520s and early 1530s, and in 1534 the nun was denounced by the council as a fraud and harlot and hanged, along with Dr. Bocking and four others at Tyburn.[28] Even confidential conversation could be construed as treasonous: the vicar of St. Clemens was denounced to Cromwell for calling the king a 'despoiler' of the church when he was talking to a companion in a tavern.[29] As Loades has pointed out, the records of the King's Bench during Henry's reign are

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[26] O'Day, R. (1995) *The Tudor Age*, pp. 211-212.

[27] Cox, J. (ed.) (1844-46) *The Works of Cranmer*, 2 vols, vol ii, p. 272-274.

[28] Walker, *Persuasive Fictions*, p. 10; Loades, p. 178; Scarisbrick, J. (1981) *Henry VIII*, pp. 321-322; O'Day, p. 54. Walker mentions that amongst those known to have actually visited the Nun, or heard her story, were Queen Katherine, princess Mary, John Fisher and Sir Thomas More, but he stipulates that this bare list of names conceals the range of responses with which these individuals showed to the Nun herself and he delineates how many of those contacted by the Nun's supporters were sceptical or were reluctant to see her. (p. 10-11) Walker's point is perhaps weakened by the simple fact that those who did support her, even those who did visit her, were extremely unlikely to leave evidence of this after her evident demise and due to the attack on the king her prophecies implied.

[29] Duffy, E. (1992) *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-1580*, pp. 385-386.

liberally sprinkled with indictments and trials of those who were charged with treasonous verbal attacks upon the king.[30]

The politics of court faction, the jostling between courtiers for eminence and privilege, the split with Rome over the king's divorce and the introduction of the Treason Act created an era of invasive censorship and intrusive surveillance.[31] The French prelate and ambassador to England during 1538-43, Charles De Marillac, wrote in 1540 of how Henry was tainted with three vices, which:

> … in a king may be called plagues. The first is that he is so covetous that all the riches in the world would not satisfy him …
>
> Thence proceeds the second plague, distrust and fear. The King, knowing how many changes he has made, and what tragedies and scandals he has created, would fain keep in favour with everybody, but does not trust a single man … he makes alliances which last as long as it takes for him to make them.
>
> The third plague, lightness and inconstancy, proceeds partly from the nature of the nation, and has perverted the rights of religion, marriage, faith and promise, as softened wax can be altered to any form.
>
> The subjects take example from the Prince, and the ministers seek only to undo each other to gain credit, and under colour of their master's good each attends to his own. For all the fine words of which they are full they will act only as necessity and interest compel them.[32]

There is no doubt a degree of nationalistic bias in Marillac's appraisal of the English king, court and nation, but a clear sense of the pervasive and threatening atmosphere that surrounded the king is also evident in the letter. Marillac would further comment a year later in a report he sent to Francis I in 1541, that many English noblemen felt themselves 'always under suspicion,' believing that 'for the most trifling matter they can be most grievously punished.'[33] It was a period of increasing constraints on verbal expression in which a change in government policy, a sudden shift in the

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[30] Loades, p. 186.
[31] Lerer, S. (1997) *Courtly Letters in the Age of Henry VIII: Literary Culture & the Arts of Deceit*, p. 165.
[32] *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, xv, 954.
[33] Lerer, p. 165.

king's affections or plans, whether personal or national in perspective, or even mere verbal disagreement with the king's policies, could end in high treason and a quick visit to the executioner's block.[34] Dangerous though it may have been to criticise the court and king during this period, this is, however, precisely what many modern critics of Wyatt's poetry contend the poet does in his verse.

Yet, Wyatt's poetry has not always been perceived in this vein.[35] In the first half of the twentieth century the poet's verse experienced a much needed revaluation by critics like E.M.W. Tillyard, Edmund Chambers and C.S. Lewis. They pointed out Wyatt's idiosyncratic individuality and poetic skill in order to challenge previous perceptions of Wyatt's verse as being of little relevance other than it having first introduced the sonnet into England.[36] Their interpretations of Wyatt's verse yielded an image of the poet as a flawed, but intense individual. To be sure, Lewis recognised that Wyatt's poems 'reached an intensity, and sometimes a dramatic quality which the English lyric had hardly attempted before', but ultimately his judgement was restrictive, the verse was nothing more than love lyrics, 'a little music after supper'.[37] As such, Wyatt's poems were seen as being devoid of 'confessional or autobiographical tone' concerning the politics and culture of the Tudor court.[38] Since Lewis published his criticism of Wyatt, however, diametrically opposed views have emerged from critics concerning Wyatt's verse. Like Lewis, some critics continue to see little or no political significance in Wyatt's poetry. A.C. Spearing believes Wyatt's most interesting poems are his translations and that Wyatt shows little sign of being a powerful or original thinker, that the poems' full meaning can only known by

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[34] Baldwin Smith, 'English Treason Trials and Confessions in the Sixteenth Century', p. 475.

[35] For a concise detailed evaluation of Wyatt's initial reaction during his own and the following centuries, see the introduction of Thomson, P. (ed.) (1974) *Wyatt: The Critical Heritage*.

[36] Tillyard, E. (1929) *The Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt: A selection and a Study*; Lewis, C. S. (1954) *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*; Chambers, K. (1933) *Sir Thomas Wyatt and Some Collected Studies*. For Chambers, writing in the 1930s, Wyatt was a lover/poet 'watching his own emotions in detachment, with a finger on the burning pulse', p. 130. Puttenham, G. (1589) *The Arte of English Poesie*, (1968) p. 50. Puttenham refers to Wyatt as a mere 'nouice newly crept out of the schools of Dante, Arioste and Petrarch'.

[37] Lewis, p. 230.

[38] Ibid, p. 230.

the 'woman to whom it is addressed and is completed not by its words but by the blush they provoke`.[39] Similarly, N.S. Leonard argues that Wyatt's verse are love poems which allowed Wyatt to express an aesthetic sensibility, devoid of historical or political context.[40]

Such views, however, are persuasively challenged by other critics, who show, in their attempt to place both Wyatt and his verse in their historical and cultural context, a growing sensitivity to the political nuances and significance of his poetry. Southall views Wyatt's poetry as an expression of the insecurity and instability the poet experienced at the Tudor court.[41] Both Muir and Fox conclude that Wyatt was a 'changed man' after his imprisonment and the execution of Anne Boleyn, and that it is this experience, as well as the later fall and execution of Thomas Cromwell, that shapes and influences his poetic verse[42] Fox finds Wyatt to be in a 'perpetual search for some kind of emotional stability' within the exploitative power structures of the Tudor court.[43] Roland Greene, looking at the verse from a somewhat unusual and tenuous perspective, suggests the sonnets represent a concern with the European experience of governing the recently conquered societies of the New World.[44] He argues that Wyatt's poetics are a dialogue with the dialectic of colonial rule and exploitation of South American natives.[45] Lauro Martines is convinced Wyatt cast a cold detached eye over the Tudor court.[46] Such detachment is impossible, insists

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[39] Spearing, A. (1985) *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, p. 286.
[40] Leonard, N.S. (1978) 'The Speaker in Wyatt's Lyric Poetry' in *HLQ 41*, pp. 1-3.
[41] This is Southall's general theme in Southall, *The Courtly Maker*. See also Southall's article (1972) 'Love poetry in the Sixteenth Century' in *EC 22*, in which the general contention is that Wyatt's plain forceful style expresses a need for personal stability due to the collapse of the feudal system.
[42] Fox, pp. 266-8; Muir, K. (1963) *Life and Letters*, p. 35.
[43] Fox, p. 284.
[44] Greene, R. 'The Colonial Wyatt: Contexts & Openings' in Pearsall, D. (ed.) (1999) *Chaucer to Spenser: A Critical Reader*, p. 165.
[45] Greene's ideas concerning Wyatt's poetics and their dialogue with the dialectic of colonial rule and exploitation is one which holds little validity in the period of Wyatt's life as there was minimal English contact with South America during Henry's reign and it appears never to have been of major importance to the king or the court. It is though, a valid argument concerning the verse of poets in the later Elizabethan era when there was a relevant burgeoning of contact and exploitation of the Americas.
[46] Martines, L. (1985) *Society and History in English Renaissance Verse.*

Greenblatt, who suggests that though Wyatt constructs a self, a literary and social identity in order to deal with the corrupt Tudor court, the power of the court shapes Wyatt's poetic discourse.[47] Greenblatt's highly influential interpretations of Wyatt's poems, however, though impressive in their range of knowledge and allusion, at times produce a fearful narrowing of the range of Wyatt's poetic energies and pragmatic rhetorical strategies.[48] Moreover, Greenblatt's readings of Wyatt's poems have themselves been criticised by feminist critics for their politically incorrect heterosexual critical perspective; for their critical slippage into identification with the poems' male persona and intense misogynistic attitudes.[49] Yet, even feminist critics agree with the general consensus of historically orientated criticism that Wyatt's verse is a critique of the Tudor court and it is often deemed as subversive.[50] The mainstream of this criticism, though at times recognising Wyatt's voices are crafted personas, accept without much question the honesty and good faith of the poet. They accept Wyatt's advice to his son as he entered the world of the Tudor court that, 'I haue nothing to crye and cal apon you for but honestye, honestye.'[51]

For Wyatt, as he tells his son in a letter, 'honestye' was:

> Not honestye that men comenly call honestye, as reputation for riches, for authoritie, or some like thing, but that honestye that I dare well say your Grandfather (whos soule god pardon) had rather left to me then all the lands he did leaue me – that was wisdome,

[47] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning,* chapter 3.

[48] For a short, but excellent sympathetic appraisal of Greenblatt's theories in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, see Goldberg, J. (1982) 'The Politics of Renaissance Literature: A Review Essay' in *ELH 49*, pp. 532-534.

[49] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 3; Waller, M. (1987) 'Academic Tootsie: The Denial of Difference and the Difference it makes' in *Diacritics 17*, pp. 3-9; Waller, M. (1989) 'The empire's new clothes: refashioning the Renaissance', in Fisher, S. & Halley, J. (eds.) *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings: Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism*, especially p. 179, where Waller suggests the hind of the sonnet, *Whoso list to hunt*, may indeed refer to Anne Boleyn, yet, she views the hind as symbolic of all courtly women who dwelt within a male dominated system that regarded women as little more than competition and reward.

[50] For survey of recent studies in Wyatt's poetry, see Caldwell, E. (1989) 'Recent Studies in Sir Thomas Wyatt' in *ELR 19*.

[51] Letter (2), Wyatt to his son, printed in Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 41.

> gentleness, sobrenes, desire to do good, frendliness to
> get the love of manye, and trougth above all the rest.[52]

It is my contention that Wyatt, however, was anything but 'honest', rather he was a master of dissimulation who crafted an 'honest' persona through his poetry, a persona whose moral touchstone was truth and who appears to be maimed and frustrated by the corruption of courtly existence.[53] This persona, Wyatt's honest façade, the poet creates through recurrent performances of weakness, martyred innocence, passivity, marginality, frustration and abjection.[54] Paradoxically, though dissimulating, in order to appear honest and create the façade of an indignant individual, Wyatt cynically and pragmatically appraised not only the political and moral reality of the court in his verse, he also engaged with contentious issues of his era: issues concerning courtier behaviour, stoicism, humanism and language. The honest persona, however, is not the historic Wyatt and many of the poems, I contend, were calculated courtly performances: performances that were not only integrally concerned with personal self-promotion and public image-making but which were equally imbued with the pragmatic promotion of court, king and country. They were a form of self-fashioning and subtle propaganda that allowed him to survive in a world in which politics and personal relationships were inextricably entangled and craft, sycophancy, and hypocrisy were indispensable to success and even survival.[55]

The Scottish court during the reign of James IV, the minority that followed his death at Flodden in 1513, and the reign of James V, was often similar to the court within which the English poets existed. It was a peripatetic court,

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[52] Letter (1), Wyatt to his son, printed in Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 38. Wyatt further defines 'honestye' in the second letter printed on pp. 41-43.

[53] Crewe, J. (1990) *Trials of Authorship: Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstruction From Wyatt to Shakespeare*, p. 27; Lerer, p. 161.

[54] Crewe, p. 27.

[55] Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Court of Henry VIII', p. 121; Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 4-5. Heale offers an erudite analogy of the modern pop song and courtly poetry as forms of self-display.

undergoing the initial stages of centralising its administration, that often experienced anarchy and faction, a court in which sycophancy and hypocrisy were the inevitable prerequisites of success and survival.[56] This too was a court where courtiers' often experienced sudden reversals of fortune, reversals that at times cost them their lives. Though James IV has often been regarded by historians through the retrospection of his disastrous defeat and death at Flodden, recent historians have shown that this picture is hardly credible. Previous criticism has too often viewed James's reign in the light of the battle in which not only the king died but in which the Scottish nobility and clergy were decimated. James has been seen as a quixotic 'moonstruck romantic' enamoured by the desire to liberate the Holy Land, a medieval king left stranded amid the Machiavellian princes of Renaissance Europe, who wore a metal belt as a form of repentance over the guilt he felt concerning his father's death.[57] James IV has, however, been more circumspectly described by Nicholson in an excellent study of the king and his reign, as 'never blind to his own interests, he had longer experience of statecraft than most rulers and could rival them in their deviousness'.[58] He increased his royal income through recognition, non-entry, extensive feu-farm grants, remissions and by enforcing a renewal of charters through the 1498 revocation.[59] Moreover, James IV shows himself capable of astute political manoeuvres: by marrying the daughter of Henry VII he dramatically changed Scottish foreign

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[56] Shire, H. (1996) 'Music for 'Goddis Glore and the Kingis' in Williams, J. (ed.) *Stewart Style 1513-1542: Essays on the Court of James V*, p. 119; Fradenburg, L. (1991) *City, Marriage, Tournament*, p. 22.

[57] For those historians who have argued that James IV was a medieval king and pitiful monarch, see Mackie, L. (1958) *King James IV of Scotland: A Brief Survey of His Life and Times*; Macquarrie, A. (1985) *Scotland and the Crusades, 1095-1560*. For those historians and critics who challenge such a viewpoint see Fradenburg, *City, Marriage, Tournament*; MacDougall, *James IV*; Nicholson, R. (1973) 'Feudal Developments in Late Medieval Scotland' in *Juridical Review 1973 (1)*; Nicholson, R. (1974) *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages,* vol 2; Donaldson, G. (1977) *Scottish Kings,* 2nd edition.

[58] Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages,* vol 2, p. 594.

[59] MacDougall, *James IV*, p. 163. For an account by MacDougall concerning James IV's financial policies in connection with feu-farm grants (1497 onwards) see p. 156-161.

policy by turning his most inveterate enemy into his father-in-law, whilst at the same time he continued to maintain the 'Auld Alliance' with France.[60] In retrospect it is too often argued that the alliance with France was a mistake and that James was duped by French promises that would lead to his death at Flodden. But whereas James's flawed martial leadership is unquestionable, at the time his foreign policy offered his kingdom and border maximum security. He not only made the English his new ally but maintained the alliance with France that had been for so long a balk to English expansion of its northern border. Like his father-in-law Henry VII, James IV was ostentatiously pious and their ecclesiastical policies were very similar, both used their power to cripple and exploit the clergy.[61] Unlike the court of his father-in-law, but very much like that of his brother-in-law Henry VIII, James IV's court, as his son's would be, was one in which there was a permissive climate of sexuality, in which the king's amours were regarded by many as a symbol of royal virility. Payments to James IV's many mistresses, Marion Boyd, Margaret Drummond, Janet Kennedy, Isabel Stewart, and others identifiable only by their initials, are recorded in the royal accounts.[62] It is only when looking through the opaque viewfinder of James IV's death at Flodden that incredible claims concerning James IV's kingship, such as that made by Wormald, that James though 'an energetic king ... was an unrealistic and ultimately pathetic figure', can be made and the similarities to the Tudor rule be denied.[63]

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[60] Jack, R. (1997) *The Poetry of William Dunbar*, p. 6.

[61] MacDougall, *James IV*, p. 215. Concerning the similarities in their religious policies see MacDougall, p. 218. For a concise and informative discussion of the changing view of Henry VII by historians see Williams, C. (ed.) (1971) *English Historical Documents 1485-1558*, p.11. Williams comments how Henry VII now appeals to historians who admire the king for his strategy and tactics concerning finance and administration.

[62] Linklater, E. (1972) The Royal House of Scotland, p.58.

[63] Wormald, J. (1981) *Court, Kirk, and Community: Scotland 1470-1625*, pp. 6 & 7.

One of the principal features of the minority of James V was the faction fighting that surrounded the young prince. In essence, whoever had possession of the young James possessed royal authority. For much of the minority John, Duke of Albany, governed Scotland, but when he returned to France in May 1524, after a third spell as governor, two months after his departure the twelve year old James V was declared capable of ruling, though in fact it was his mother, Margaret Tudor who ruled, supported by Arran, when she took control of the government.[64] This would not last long, as the twelve year old monarch was soon in the care of Archibald Douglas, sixth earl of Angus.[65] Angus would remain the dominant figure in Scottish government until June 1528 when James is thought to have enacted his daring escape in a dramatic moonlit ride from Falkland to Stirling.[66] For a long time the influential view that dominated assessments of James V was the one made by Gordon Donaldson that:

> James is not to be judged by Scottish standards. He was, after all, half a Tudor by birth and perhaps a Tudor rather than a Stewart in character. He combined in his person the acquisitiveness of his grandfather, Henry VII, the lust and ruthlessness of his uncle, Henry VIII, and the unrelenting cruelty of his cousin, Bloody Mary.[67]

Recent research by Jamie Cameron, however, has challenged the idea that James V was a paranoid vindictive monster to argue that he was in fact an assertive, aggressive and self-confident monarch, touchy of his rights, particularly where finances were concerned, and determined to extend these rights whenever and

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[64] Cameron, J. (1998) *James V*, p. 11; Cowan & Shaw, p. 45.
[65] Cameron, p. 10.
[66] For an erudite discussion of the 'king's great escape' and the political situation surrounding James V's accession to power, see Cameron, Chapter 2.
[67] Donaldson, G. (1965) *Scotland: James V to James VII*, p. 62.

wherever possible.[68] Yet, whilst Cameron has made an essential reassessment of James's character and reign, his study is also one which has a tendency to prove the distinctiveness of the Scot's monarch at the expense of admitting any similarities between James V and Henry VIII. These similarities certainly existed; both monarchs were at times typical of Machiavelli's ideal prince, capable of dominating their respective courts and dealing ruthlessly, when necessary, with traitors in a manner that ensured that nobility were vividly reminded of their own unstable position and the king's ultimate power. Janet Douglass, the highest ranking noble to be executed in the reign of James V, was burnt to death for plotting to kill the king.[69] Both kings at times displayed varying degrees of paranoia concerning the nobles who made up their court. Though James V would not follow his uncle's lead in breaking with Rome, they also both exhibited similarly cynical attitudes towards the Church and at times exerted enormous pressure upon the clergy within their respective kingdoms to increase their personal wealth.[70] Similarly, when pursuing their policies, those that affected either the rights of their nobility or the wealth of the English Church and the Scottish Kirk, they were both punctilious with regard to shrouding their actions within a framework of legality and used the expertise of formidable legal and ecclesiastical advisors to exploit any loophole available.[71] The two monarchs were also similarly deeply concerned with diplomatic marriages of alliance and the provision of a legal heir for their kingdoms.

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[68] Cameron's whole research is a reassessment of James V's personal rule. Unfortunately, for Scottish studies, Jamie Cameron's untimely death resulted in the loss of a fine historian and his thesis had to be converted into book form by his thesis supervisor Norman MacDougall. For an excellent summary of the historical debate over the character of James V, see Mason, R. (2000) 'Laicisation and the Law: The Reception of Humanism in Early Renaissance Scotland' in Houwen, L., MacDonald, A. & Mapstone, S. (eds.) *A Place in the Wild: Essays in Vernacular Culture and Humanism in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, pp. 18-19.

[69] Cameron, p. 172. Janet Douglass was the sister of the forfeited earl of Angus.

[70] Ibid, p. 260.

[71] Mason, 'Laicisation and the Law', pp. 18 & 19.

Moreover, in Scotland, as with its English neighbour and also much of Western Europe, the first half of the sixteenth century was a period of both intellectual and ideological innovation and conflict. Long-held beliefs that had shaped the secular and spiritual life of the fifteenth century were challenged on numerous fronts.[72] The contentious ideas embodied in the emergent humanist culture, Protestant doctrine, and the resultant religious schism, created an era in which men questioned not only their faith, but how they should serve their king, the role of the king and many of the basic assumptions by which they lived. In a similar vein to the English poets, many of the works by the selected Scots poets deal with their relationship with the court and were specifically created for a court audience which would have included their respective monarchs. The literature of the milieu, however, does not merely inform the critic or historian about what was important in the thoughts of individual courtiers. When we look at the verse, paying particular attention to the pragmatic imperatives that underpinned both the topic and manner of the poetic dialectical dialogue with contemporary ideas and issues, and specifically within the context of the initial performance, we obtain a clearer, more explicit understanding of the socio-political world of the court and the manner in which poetic creativity both related to, and was directly and intentionally shaped by, and for, the court. To dismiss the importance and relevance of verse when studying the socio-political world of the court in one fatal swoop, as MacDougall does in his introduction to his biography of James IV, in which he claims to be making a 'strong emphasis on political and diplomatic

[72] Edington, *Court and Culture*, p. 45.

affairs', is a catastrophic blunder.[73] Poetry not only directly contributed to this milieu, it offers the twenty-first century critic or historian, informative insights into the early sixteenth-century political and social world of the court, the epicentre of national and European diplomacy.

Lyndsay's earliest poems are addressed directly to his 'Rycht potent prince', James V, whom he served as the 'Kingis maister uschar' from 1514 to 1523, after the dramatic defeat and death at the battle of Flodden of James IV in 1513. Serving in such a post, he was closely involved with the social-political milieu of the Stuart court, and though he would lose his position in the upheaval that occurred after Governor Albany's departure for France in 1524, he would soon once again become one of the king's companions and servants when James V took personal control of Scotland in 1528. By 1530, Lyndsay was acting as Snowdon Herald and involved directly in the king's political manoeuvres abroad. He was sent to Flanders in the summer of 1531 to confirm a long-standing trade agreement, but also, Edington suggests, seems to have become 'embroiled in negotiations' concerning Charles V's proposal of a matrimonial match between James V and Dorethea of Denmark.[74] In 1532, Lyndsay would be part of the embassy which travelled through England to France, consisting of the duke of Albany and the bishop of Ross, which was commissioned by James V to implement the Treaty of Rouen.[75] He would return to France on behalf of his king in 1534 as part of the Scottish party negotiating the marriage of James V and Madelaine, daughter of Francis I, a marriage he would attend when it took place

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[73] MacDougall, *James IV*, 'Introduction', p. viii. See also pp. 288-289 in which MacDougall incredulously claims Pedro de Ayala's diplomatic letter , read carefully, 'tells us infinitely more about James IV and his times than Dunbar; there can be little doubt that, from the king's point of view, the Spanish ambassador was better company than the disenchanted Scots makar.' To give so much importance to one letter written by a foreigner in retrospect who had a personal agenda in portraying both James and Scotland as he did, is incredibly reductive.

[74] Edington, *Court and Culture*, p. 32.

[75] *Letters of James V*, 215-216.

in Paris on New Year's Day of 1537. Lyndsay would be promoted to 'Lyoun King of Armes' in 1542, the same year of James V's death, which shortly followed the king's defeat by the English at Solway Moss.[76] His position as a herald was one that would continue until his own death in March 1555.[77]

As Kratzman astutely remarks, 'we do not need the Treasurer's Accounts to tell us how closely Dunbar's life was connected to the court' of James IV.[78] The allegorical poem 'The Thrissill and the Rois' is a poem celebrating the political and symbolic marriage of Margaret Tudor and James IV in August 1503.[79] 'The Petition of the Gray Horse, Auld Dunbar', 'Schir, I complane off iniuris' and 'Schir, ye have mony servitouris' are clearly intentionally directed towards James IV.[80] Like the criticism that concerns Wyatt, critics have not always recognised, or been able to appreciate precisely how deeply Dunbar's craft

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[76] Livingstone, M., et al, (1908-1982) *Registrum Secreti Sigilli regum Scotorum: Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland 1488-1580, vol 2,* no 4910. For an informative description of Lyndsay's heraldic career see Edington, *Court and Culture*, Chapter 2, 'A Heraldic Career'.

[77] The factual information contained in this section on David Lyndsay owes a particular debt to Janet Hadley Williams's historically detailed introduction to her selection of Lyndsay's poems. Hadley Williams, J. (ed.) (2000) *Sir David Lyndsay: Selected Poems*, 'Introduction', particularly pp. viii-ix. In general, it will be from this collection of poems that I will quote Lyndsay's verse and I will provide only the poet's name, the name of the poem and the line number, but in the instances where I quote poems not provided within this collection I will be using the complete edition of poems by Hamer, D. (ed.) (1931-36) *The Works of Sir David Lindsay of the Mount 1490-1555*, 4 vols. When this occurs it will be noted in the reference. The decision to use Hadley Williams's selection of Lyndsay's poems is based on her book's availability for subsequent critics and the fact that it includes all the earlier works of Lyndsay, which are the poems I am primarily concerned with.

[78] Kratzman, p. 29.

[79] Gifford, D., Dunnigan, S., & MacGillivray, A. (eds.) (2002) *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*, p. 26.

[80] 'The Petition of the Gray Horse, Auld Dunbar' is a poem not included in its entirety in the latest copy of Dunbar's verse, Bawcutt, P. (ed.) (1998) *The Poems of William Dunbar*, 2 vols, as it is in Mackenzie, M. (ed.) (1990) *The Poems of William Dunbar*. In total Bawcutt dismisses nine poems attributed to Dunbar by Mackenzie. Her reasons for doing so are not satisfactorily explained; similarly some of her editorial decisions seem somewhat whimsical. Certainly there is no direct uncontroversial evidence for attributing some of the poems to Dunbar, but there is even less genuine evidence for denying the possibility these poems belong to Dunbar. Regardless of this debate concerning the authorship of the verse, the poems remain important court poems and some of them will be discussed within this thesis. It is for this reason that I will be primarily referring to Mackenzie's edition of Dunbar's poems. I will, however, at times use Bawcutt's edition of the poems when appropriate and will certainly be making the utmost use of her detailed and scholarly 'Notes and Commentary'. Whenever, either of these editions are used, or for that matter the informative edition of Kinsley, J. (ed.) (1958) *William Dunbar: Poems*, a reference and explanatory note will be provided.

was connected and imbued with the pragmatic imperatives of the poet and monarch whom he served. For the Marxist critic Scott, Dunbar exemplifies the class conflict, though his tirades were not motivated by class consciousness but rather through envy. 'He was angry with the parasites only because he was not one of them, and this motive behind so much of his work limits its ultimate value.'[81] Priscilla Bawcutt, perhaps Dunbar's most influential recent critic, has summarised criticism concerning the poet as following two popular strains.[82] She points out that such critics as Edmund Reiss see an 'underlying continuity at the heart of all the poems' and deny that 'any difference exists between Dunbar 'the court entertainer' and Dunbar the 'moralist'.[83] The view she regards as being most prevalent, however, is epitomised by the work of Denton Fox, in which Dunbar is neither regarded as an autobiographical poet, nor as a profound political thinker, rather he is seen as excelling in a vitality of language and 'unparalleled technical virtuosity' which gave him an ability to match perfectly theme and metre.[84] Bawcutt correctly points out that each strain is somewhat reductive, and in language almost as poetic as Dunbar's, that this leads to perverse readings and a 'flattening [of] the peaks and valleys of his poetic landscape into a monotonous, featureless plain, ... a poetry of surfaces.'[85] Yet, much of Bawcutt's own analysis is analysis of the surface of the verse. To treat the 'historical' contexts as mere background material, as Bawcutt too often does, is to miss the topicality that gives many of the poems their implicit irony and very different and far more potent readings than she assumes possible.

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[81] Scott, *A Critical Exposition of the Poems*, p. 7.
[82] Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar*, concerning the past critical reception of Dunbar's poetry see pp. 1-5.
[83] Ibid, p. 3. Bawcutt is referring here to Reiss, E. (1979) *William Dunbar*, but her argument, though mainly correct, is over simplified and Reiss's argument far more complex than she suggests.
[84] Ibid, pp. 4-5.
[85] Ibid, p. 3-4.

This is not to suggest that Bawcutt's, or similar approaches to Dunbar are not valid or informative, but as Scott is correct to point out, whilst onlsome of Dunbar's verse is of a semi-official courtly nature, almost all of it in some way is related to or aimed at a courtly audience.[86] The majority of Dunbar's poems deal either specifically or abstractly with court life and socio-political aspects of James IV's reign and a large proportion of the poet's oeuvre has been variously labelled as panegyric, begging-poems, or petitions; many addressed to the king, the queen, or other important court officials.[87] Whether adopting an eloquent and highly ornamental aureate style, or the wild, exuberant and often base language of the gutter, Dunbar was a conscious craftsman aware both of the effects he was creating within his poetry and also the function to which his verse would be used within the court environment.[88] As Lewis remarks, Dunbar was 'professional through and through' and we can be sure that 'the last line of each poem was in view before he wrote the first'.[89] It will be my contention, that by looking at the possible contexts that surround the pragmatic performance of Dunbar's verse, we will not see the whinging, whining sycophant too often suggested by critics but will gain an insight into how the poet deliberately used his verse to uphold the politics of the court, praise the virtues of James IV and attack the enemies of his king.[90] Like Wyatt, the grumpy, indignant, at times, self-pitying personal and individual voice of Dunbar the poet is a mask of dissimulation, a persona assumed for a public role: a public role which, when explored, offers not only insights in

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[86] Scott, *A Critical Exposition of the Poems* p. 1.
[87] Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar*, p. 103-7; Reiss, p. 33. This point Bawcutt acknowledges but she does not develop more than a surface analysis of the political contexts of the verse.
[88] Reiss, p. 20.
[89] Lewis, p. 97.
[90] Norman, J. (1992) 'William Dunbar: Scottish Goliard' in Mckenna, S. (ed.) *Selected Essays on Scottish Language and Literature*, p. 46.

the relationship between poetry and the socio-political milieu within which it was created and existed, but also a deeper understanding of the verse.

CHAPTER TWO

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Patronage and panegyric verse

And therefore, at the kynges court, my brother,
Ech man for himself, ther is noon oother.[1]

Geoffrey Chaucer

As Chaucer's Arcite cynically observes in *The Knight's Tale*, the milieu of the court was one in which the courtier's quest for wealth, power and privilege, fostered a dark, aggressive and competitive individuality.[2] This milieu, in which it was apt to regard courtiers as being 'Ech man for himself', was one which flourished in the early sixteenth-century courts of both England and Scotland. In 1485, after a decisive victory at Bosworth Field on 22 August, God and allies having apparently simultaneously deserted Richard III as he charged to his death into the midst of the usurper's army, Henry VII took the throne of England. Through what historical scholars often accept as an innate distrust of the English nobility, many of whom had fought against him, Henry began the process of diminishing the power of his realms most powerful magnates and nobles in order to centralise sovereign power in the figure of the king and his court.[3] This was a process that was continued with even more vigour during his son's reign by Henry VIII's ministers Thomas Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell. This centralisation brought with it, on the one hand, a diminution in the influence of the great nobles

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[1] Chaucer, G 'The Knight's Tale' in *The Canterbury Tales*, lines 1181-1182. All references to *The Canterbury Tales* are from Chaucer, G. (1987) *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by Benson, L.

[2] Burrow, J. (1982) *Medieval Writers and Their Work: Middle English Literature and its Background 1100-1500*, p. 43.

[3] Brigden, S. (2001) *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors 1485-1603*, p. 14. Brigden's remark that 'it was not in Henry VII's nature to trust, his tendency was to treat them as enemies rather than as allies' is typical of historical scholars' views of Henry VII's relationship with his nobility.

and their independent courts, whilst on the other hand, it fostered the growth of the king's court.[4] Above all, however important the development of Parliament and Westminster, and however significant the contribution and power of individual ministers, England was governed from the court.[5] Court life during the early sixteenth century assumed far greater importance than ever before as more and more the activities of the nation centred around and emanated from it, with the sovereign at its centre, the ultimate source of privilege, prestige and wealth, the king personally keeping a firm grasp upon the treasury purse-strings.[6] The royal court increasingly became the nucleus of the nation; the country's most important focal point of politics and culture, the privileged political and social arena where ambitious individuals sought to fulfil their desire for profit, power and political influence. To a considerable degree the court became almost the only means of entering the service of the state and found favour in the eyes of Henry VIII would often be rewarded with lands and titles, or entrusted with the command of an army, the charge of an embassy, or the government of a province.[7]

Though James III did much to centralise the Scottish court and the country's administration in Edinburgh during his reign, Scotland did not experience, during the reigns of James IV and V, the same degree of centralisation of government that took place across its southern border.[8] Due to James IV's restless nature, the comparative destabilisation of the minority rule after his sudden death at Flodden in 1513 and James V's need to dispense justice among the rebellious feudal Isles and Western Highlands, Scotland remained a primarily

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[4] Einstein, p. 59.
[5] Ives, 'Henry VIII: the political perspective', p. 16.
[6] Einstein, p. 59.
[7] Ibid.
[8] MacDougall, N. (1982) *James III: A Political Study*, p. 303.

peripatetic court during much of the early sixteenth century. This did not, however, diminish the influence of the monarch upon Scottish society, or the importance of a courtier obtaining the king's patronage as the ultimate means of personal advancement. At a time when the increasing influence of humanist thought and education saw the role of the courtier being re-imagined throughout most of Europe, Scotland was not a backwoods barbarian society, it was a society whose intellectual and social elites were cosmopolitan in education and outlook, a society in which Scottish courtiers shared their foreign neighbours' dreams of advancement, prestige, wealth and power. However limited their capacity to pursue those dreams, when either James IV or James V sat upon the Scottish throne, the main means of fulfilling these dreams was through service at the court and the king's patronage.[9]

In an enlightening discussion of Renaissance patronage, Werner Gundersheimer has broadly and usefully defined patronage as the action of an individual in a position of power supporting, encouraging, protecting, or countenancing another person, institution or work.[10] Patronage was clearly one of the dominant social processes of pre-industrial Europe and it exerted a pervasive influence in such diverse areas as appointments of both secular and clerical offices. As Gundersheimer further remarks, to the extent that Renaissance literature embodies social thought and character, even the most genuinely idealistic Italian texts of Ariosto and Castiglione, as well as the less idealistic works of Alberti and Machiavelli, portray centralised aristocracies in which it is implicit that it is from his prince that a courtier will receive all sustenance and rewards, that courtiers 'are expected to defer to, or accept protection, from their

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[9] Buchanan, G. (1995) *The Political Poetry*, edited and translated by McGinnis, P. & Williamson, p. 2.

[10] Gundersheimer, W. (1981) 'Patronage in the Renaissance: An Exploratory Approach' in Fitch Lytle, G. & Orgel, S. (eds.) *Patronage in the Renaissance*, p. 3-4.

superiors'.[11] The involvement of the king in this system was no technicality. In the personal monarchies of early sixteenth-century Tudor and Stuart kings, it was the direct decision of the ruler which was of utmost importance, a decision exemplified in his personal signature as a form of royal approval before any bureaucratic process of issuing payments, pensions or grants could take place.[12] It was the king, whether at the Scottish or English court, who was the ultimate patron of the court and nation. The king's favour could transform a man overnight from an obscure minion or servant into a person of station and dignity, with livery, wealth and lands to rival peers of the most ancient lineage.[13] The king was the well from which nearly all succour and status flowed. This was not, however, a well over-brimming and overflowing in copious abundance; as Norman MacDougall comments, James V 'was hardly generous in his distribution of royal patronage.'[14] The rewards which courtiers sought were limited and at times it was a mere trickle of accolades, honours and awards that seeped from the fickle flowing well of royal patronage. With limited rewards available it was necessary for courtiers to do their utmost to both obtain and keep either the patronage of the monarch or an influential lord. Government ministers such as Cromwell or Wolsey could, through their own proximity to the king, influence the flow of sought after rewards in the direction of the courtier. Court offices, from the Lord Chancellor to the Groom of the Stool, were highly stratified, but cutting across these strata were fluid lines of influence, faction and enmity, which changed with bewildering rapidity in reaction to contemporary events.[15] Nor, as Southall so

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[11] Ibid, p. 4.
[12] Ives, *Faction in Tudor England*, pp. 5-6.
[13] Baldwin Smith, 'English treason Trials and Confessions in the Sixteenth Century', p. 496.
[14] Cameron, *James V, Foreword* by Norman Macdougall, p. ix.
[15] Burrow, C. (1999) 'The Experience of Exclusion: Literature and Politics in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII' in Wallace, D. (ed.) *The Cambridge History of English Medieval Literature*, p. 794.

succinctly remarks, did 'the winds of favour at court, unlike the winds of heaven ... blow as they list', they were dependant upon 'the loyalty of friends and the influence of enemies.'[16] These friends and other courtiers were at times only too ready to desert a friendship at the slightest sign in a shift in the direction of the winds of favour. Courtiers on occasions, through deliberate actions, frequently brought about change that was detrimental to one another. Contemporary awareness of this situation is vividly clear in the first stanza of Thomas Wyatt's poem *They flee from me*. The poet wrote, in a tone that seems to express his profound bitterness at this situation:

> They flee from me that sometime did me seek
> With naked foot, stalking in my chamber.
> I have seen them gentle, tame, and meek,
> That now are wild and do not remember
> That sometime they put themself in danger
> To take bread at my hand; and now they range,
> Busily seeking with a continual change.[17]

The poem, when seen as a comment upon the poet's relationship with the social milieu in which he existed, as much of Wyatt's verse is now seen by recent critics, implies the court was a place of fickle alliances and loyalties where, in order to obtain the best advantage for themselves, its inhabitants 'busily' sought 'continual change' and were always ready to quickly 'flee' from those they once called friends if their own position was in danger.

Those literary figures writing during the early sixteenth century in England and Scotland, whom we regard as central to the literary canon of the early sixteenth century, men like William Dunbar, John Skelton, Thomas Wyatt, Thomas Elyot, Thomas More and David Lyndsay, were neither exempt nor immune from the lusty pull of lucre, reward and the necessity to obtain patronage.

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[16] Southall, *The Courtly Maker*, p. 65.
[17] Wyatt, *They flee from me*, lines 1-7 in Rebholz, R. (ed.) (1978) *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems*. All references to Wyatt's poems, unless otherwise stated, will be from this edition.

Patronage affected all aspects of both countries' social and political life and its influence on literature was inevitable. Literary patronage was inseparable from the systems of social and political patronage and its influence was not limited to complimentary works or dedications.[18] Patronage meant much more than mere financial support for courtier poets, though, as Lawrence Stone has remarked, it furnished them with 'the necessary leverage to thrust them into comfortable jobs in the Church, the universities, and royal administration.'[19] As Thomas More's life exemplifies, for anyone who wished to play a role in the nation's government or politics, there was no choice, it was the court or nothing. The real question was how first to obtain, and then keep, a position at court.

Understanding that a symbiotic relationship existed between literature and patronage provides a meaningful framework within which to discuss the activities of a group of writers that was far from homogeneous.[20] Though literary patronage has long been a familiar topic in relation to the courtier, too often literary scholars have simply accepted that patronage existed without any further exploration of its effect on literary production. Rarely has it been acknowledged just how important an influence it may have been upon the creation of a poet's verse, or a systematic examination been made of the nuances of individual poets' symbiotic relationships with patronage.[21] Certainly, as Priscilla Bawcutt remarks, poetry was subordinate to courtiers' other duties, 'as chaplains, clerks, letter-writers, envoys,

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[18] Marotti, A. (1981) 'John Donne and the Rewards of Patronage' in Fitch Lytle, G. & Orgel, S. (eds.) *Patronage in the Renaissance*, p. 207. Marotti makes this claim in connection to John Donne but the argument is equally applicable to Wyatt and his contemporaries.

[19] Stone, L. (1965) *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, p. 703.

[20] Edington, *Court and Culture*, p. 2-3. Edington regards the 'royal will' as the decisive factor when determining change and policy, and concludes that the relationship between poet and prince is what binds poets of this period together.

[21] Greg Walker's work concerning Skelton is a distinct exception, particularly Walker, G. (1988) *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s*. In this book Walker explores in depth the possible motives behind Skelton's later verse. Of particular interest is his discussion concerning *Magnyfycence* in which he argues that the play was produced to please the London merchant class who were in conflict with Henry VIII and Wolsey over taxes. Walker rightly points out, through his discussion of Skelton's work, how it is extremely important to understand why particular poets wrote particular poems or plays.

or notaries', but to reiterate as she does R. F. Green's claim that poetry was 'very much a spare-time occupation, and its material rewards largely incidental', is inadvertently to regard the rewards of literary patronage as being of little value to the poet.[22] This is to view court poetry's relationship to patronage as unimportant, and to place the verse outside one of the most historically potent contexts of the early sixteenth century. True, the benefits of patronage are hard to measure, the evidence to substantiate them limited, for there is little extant evidence to show that a poet such as Dunbar received financial benefits from James IV specifically for writing verse, with no explanation given in the treasury accounts to stipulate why the poet's pension was increased dramatically on several occasions during his tenure at the Scottish court. In November 1507 Dunbar's annual pension was officially increased from £10 to £20, and in August 1510 quadrupled to a very impressive £80 a year.[23] The reason for the increase may remain a topic of conjecture, but lack of specific knowledge of financial rewards having been given for the production of verse or prose should not allow us simply to dismiss the importance of the relationship between literature and patronage, or the influence patronage had upon a writer's topic and tone. Moreover, direct financial reward was not the only way in which the patronage system worked, nor perhaps the most important to many who were at court, perhaps more important to a courtier poet than money, was patronal hospitality, protection and familiarity.

Hospitality of one form or another, whether it was the formal '*bowge of court*', or being given a position at court that allowed the poet to mingle with noble men and women, an invitation to sit at the king's table, a weekend hunting, a safe haven outside of London or Edinburgh during times of pestilence in either

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[22] Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar*, p. 80.

[23] Concerning Dunbar's financial rewards for serving at the court of James IV see *Treasurer's Accounts: Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland [T.A.]*, i-iv, (1473-1513) eds. T. Dickson & J. B. Paul (Edinburgh, 1877-1902), iii, 154, 181, 331, 361; iv, 69, 106, 127, 249-50.

city, was important to a courtier. During an era in which violent retribution could be extracted against one's enemies, the king's protection might mean the difference between life and death. Henry VIII would, when it suited him, protect evangelicals who either spoke or wrote works, against the Catholic Church or supported his divorce from Katharine of Aragon. James V would also protect George Buchanan against the wrath of Cardinal Beaton after the poet, at the king's instigation, criticised the order of the Franciscans in the poems *Somnium*, *Palinodia* and *Franciscanus*. The king's protection could also mean protection from verbal attacks, or at least the opportunity for the poet to defend himself in public, whether it be in the form of Skelton's and Dunbar's flytings against their respective adversaries, Christopher Garnesche and Walter Kennedy, or Wyatt's more general indignant expressions of innocence in many of his ballads and epigrams. Equally important, though even less tangible, was what Samuel Johnson and others in the eighteenth century called 'familiarity', whereby persons of talent are permitted to cross those lines that normally separate the ranks of a hierarchal system.[24] To be admitted into the king's presence implies a rise in status, which at a time when income and access to economic resources were closely correlated with both class and proximity to the king, carried an important, if intangible, economic value in itself. The material rewards of producing literature for the king and his court may not have been explicit, but they were never, as Bawcutt implies, 'largely incidental.'

Furthermore, the system of patronage that existed in the early sixteenth century was always political and never a form of disinterested generosity. It was an arrangement that provided benefits for both parties, with the poet having to provide a service of some kind for the king or nobleman who was his patron. This

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[24] Griffin, p. 19.

service could range from overt propaganda, as in the case of John Bale, who wrote damning polemics against the Catholic Church during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, to ballads by Thomas Wyatt that C. S. Lewis has regarded as merely entertainment, a 'little music after supper'.[25] To emphasise the fact that the poet or literary figure provided such services to a king or patron may paint a dark, somewhat sinister picture of the writer as a kind of panderer, a pimp in his patron's service, it may seem oppressive and demeaning, but to think like this is to impose modern values upon the relationship between poet and patron. Dunbar gives an enlightening insight into the preponderance of the patronage system in the lightly satirical petition, *Be divers wyis and operatiounes*, in which he catalogues the way in which men dwell in court. The poet tells us that:

> Be divers wyis and operatiounes
> Men makis in court thair solistationes:
> Sum be service and diligence,
> Sum be continuall residence.
> Sum on his substance dois abyd,
> Quhill fortoune do for him provyd.
> Sum singis, sum dances, sum tellis storyis.
> ...
> Refferis me to the kyngis grace.
> Methink his graciows countenance
> In ryches is my sufficiance.[26]

Through service to the king the courtier, including the poet, will receive his 'sufficiance', his share of wealth. Dunbar makes a further poignant statement on the patronage system that we should take note of when he says in the poem, *Off every asking follows nocht*, that:

> To ask but service hurtis gud fame;
> To ask for service is not to blame.

This is interpreted by Bawcutt as meaning:

> To ask *without* service hurts good fame;
> To ask *in return* for service is not to blame.[27]

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[25] Lewis, p. 230.
[26] Dunbar, *Be divers wyis and operatiounes*, lines 1-7 & 24-26.

Service and reward, the essential elements of patronage were not thought of as demeaning or derogatory by Dunbar or his contemporaries. Quite the reverse in fact; it was those who sought rewards without having first offered and provided adequate service that Dunbar viewed with such distaste, disapproval and hostility. To obtain rewards for services rendered was an accepted element of the poet's relationship with his king. As Gundersheimer has pointed out, such attitudes should be kept in mind when considering the complex relationship between poets and patrons in the early sixteenth century.[28] Dunbar acknowledges a reality that has too often not been acceptable to modern literary scholars who prefer to view poetic works of art as autonomous objects, simultaneously independent of its author and audience. Such critics, often influenced heavily by the Romantic Movement's ideas of poetic independence and individuality, regard literature conversely as a spontaneous, highly emotive, uniquely direct and candid personal expression that was independent of utilitarian imperatives.[29] Such views are reductive, limiting poetic creativity and production to values that are predicated on modern ideas of authorship. Patronage should not be seen as a constraint upon the poet's art, but rather a source of political significance that generates poetry of great interest, strength, and often intense subtlety.

In the Renaissance, perhaps more so than any subsequent period in history, works of art, whether in oil upon a canvas, in open display upon the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, or written in ink upon a manuscript page, were never seen as autotelic, self-ending, as having no intention of changing the audience's

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[27] Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar*, p. 106.
[28] Gundersheimer, p. 12.
[29] For discussions on current critics views on poetic art and how divergent views, often reductive, are held by various critics see Shawcross, J. (1974) 'The Poet as Orator: One Phase of His Judicial Prose' in O.Sloan, T. & Waddington, R. (eds.) *The Rhetoric of Renaissance Poetry*, p. 5; Vickers, B. (2000) *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, p. 10.

perceptions and opinions.[30] The idea that art, in all its varied forms was a means of propaganda was a commonplace in the sixteenth century and taken for granted by the politically active sovereign or noblemen.[31] Literature could serve a number of functions in the early sixteenth century. It could, in forms ranging from courtly love lyrics to the village storyteller, at times simply entertain its audience. It could, in the form of Interludes and Moralities, educate and pass on cultural attitudes and moral values to persuade people to adhere to particular modes of behaviour. It could, depending on presentation and topic, be either subversive or conservative propaganda, soothing or heightening social and political tension. What literature could not do is remain free from the period's turmoil within the Church, society or state, nor could it remain free from courtiers' preoccupations with courtly patronage. Even the amorous verse readily dismissed by C. S. Lewis, and regarded as merely social and occasional by Stevens and Mason, could smooth the path of a career at court.[32] It was not without justification that George Puttenham, in the *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), described poets as 'cunning Prince-pleasers'.[33] The poet performed, whether to an elite audience in the king's chamber, or the entire court in the Great Hall, or upon the manuscript page, for a specific audience or readership, exploiting existing relationships with others of the court in order to build up good will, his verse crafted as a mode of persuasion and proof that implicitly and explicitly addressed the intellect and emotions of the audience.[34] The Marxist Scots scholar and poet Tom Scott recognised this influence on the poet's poetic production when he colourfully commented that Dunbar:

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[30] Vickers, p.10.
[31] Bevington, D. (1968) *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Topical Approach to Topical Meaning*, p. 3.
[32] Stevens, p. 207; Mason, *Humanism and Poetry*, p. 171.
[33] Puttenham, quoted in Southall, *The Courtly Maker*, p. 50.
[34] Zim, R. (1997) 'Dialogue and Discretion: Thomas Sackville, Catherine De Medici and the Anjou Marriage proposal 1571' in *HJ* 40, p. 293; Vickers, p. 10.

> ... uses the traditional forms and material not as an ends in themselves, art for art's sake, but as weapons provided by God for him to carve his way within the world. It is this shameless utilitarianism of Dunbar's use of the traditional forms that gives his poems their extraordinary freshness, vitality, and personality. He is not just doing exercises: he is fighting a campaign, and the conventional weapons are hot with the fire of battle.[35]

Courtier poets made use of persuasive rhetoric and adopted particular rhetorical stances as a means of influencing the thoughts of king and court, a particular audience whose intellectual capacity, beliefs and personality had been thoroughly considered.[36]

Whilst literary and historical scholarship have to some extent recognised the importance of rhetoric's relationship to literature during the Renaissance, it has not sufficiently understood the significance of the poet's deliberate adoption and employment of rhetorical stances. The rhetor assumes a stance, a political position or point of view that is not necessarily his own: he adopts a strategy, a set of techniques, specific language, manipulates the theme and tone, genre and form, in order to gain rewards within the patronage system. More than often the tone, politics and viewpoint the poet adopts are those of the court's ultimate patron, the king. Such a statement predicates that sixteenth-century court literature is contrived; but, and to use Brian Vickers' words, Renaissance 'literature is cerebral, despite its emotionalism'.[37] The Italian historian and diplomat Francesco Guicciardini makes a telling comment, in his *Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman*, concerning Renaissance patronage that should be noted when we consider the poet's relationship with his patron. Guicciardini, writing after he had retired from court service, wrote:

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[35] Scott, *A Critical Exposition of the Poems*, p. 146.
[36] Jack, 'Of Lion and of Unicorn: Literary Traditions at War', p. 73.
[37] Vickers, p. 5.

> I know of no one who loathes the ambition, the avarice, and the sensuality of the clergy more than I – both because each of these vices is hateful in itself and because each and all are hardly suited to those who profess to live a life dependant upon God … In spite of all this, the positions I have held under several popes have forced me, for my own good, to further their interests. Were it not for that, I should have loved Martin Luther as much as myself.[38]

Guicciardini's aphoristic lines distil his personal experience into a few lines that adroitly highlight a perplexing tension of court service: it was not merely beneficial to the courtier's career at court that he adopt a rhetorical stance that would please his prince, but essential to the courtier's physical wellbeing. As Carlson has pointed out, Pietro Carmeliano, received multiple Church benefices and other benefits from the crown.[39] Carmeliano wrote a poem castigating the French Ambassador for having conducted negotiations in bad faith during 1489; a panegyric verse for the betrothal of Mary Tudor and Prince Charles; and in 1513, a poem rejoicing the English victory over James IV at Flodden. Carmeliano was not the only humanist to enjoy such success and rewards, numerous others also flourished at the Tudor court, among them Cornelio Vitellie, Bernard Andre and Desiderius Erasmus.[40]

Though he would adopt an increasingly independent and stoic persona as he became more famous and less dependent upon princes and courts, Erasmus initially wrote works of gross flattery in order to obtain the favour and support of patrons. After meeting the children of Henry VII on a visit to the English court during 1499, Erasmus composed the flattering poem entitled *Prosopopoeia Britanniae*, in which a personified Britannia praises the royal children

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[38] Guicciardini, F. (1965) *Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman*, trans. Domandi, M., p. 48. For an informative biography and study of Guiccardini's literary and historical craft see Philips, M. (1977) *Francesco Guicciardini: The Historian's Craft.*

[39] Carlson, D. (1993) *English Humanist Books: Writers and Patrons, manuscript and Print, 1475-1525*, p. 57 – 58.

[40] Ibid, p. 60 – 61.

allegorically as five roses on a single rose-bush, each child described as having reached different stages in their growth.[41] The newborn Edmund is a rosebud almost entirely sheathed in its calyx, to whom the muses sing lullabies. The three-year-old Mary is a bud who has just burst its covering, named after *stella maris*, the star of the sea which never sets. The eight year old Henry is a bud completely exposed but not yet open, who bears a close resemblance to his father after whom he was named. The ten-year-old Margaret has similarly not opened her petals, but her bud is suffused with a faint rosy flush and she is as spotless as a pearl, symbolically devoted to the heavens. Arthur, the eldest and heir apparent, has spread twelve petals and shows the promise of a seed-bearing centre, his name symbolically linked with the valour of his knightly namesake.[42] Erasmus even adopts and adapts the popular political motif of the red and white rose when he portrays the two princesses as white roses, the three princes as red, all growing on one single bush to signify the unification of the houses of Lancaster and York. The poem, which would undoubtedly have pleased Henry VII, was clearly crafted by Erasmus to impress and ingratiate himself with the king. Erasmus also, after a five year period at the English court, obtained a position as a royal counsellor to Archduke Charles, later Emperor Charles V, and though he did not actually serve at Charles's court, he would pay for his sinecure and pension by writing for his patron *Institutio principis christiani*. An ideal picture of the good prince, the treatise in no way relates to the contemporary conditions in which Charles V had to rule and the emperor is portrayed throughout the work as a prince of honour and sincerity, as the selfless servant of the people.[43] A further insight into how the revered father of Northern European humanism initially, at least, had to adapt his

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[41] Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 14.
[42] My interpretation of Erasmus's poem is indebted to that of Miller, C., Bradner, L., Lynch, C. & Oliver, R. (eds.) (1963-) *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, volume 3, part II, p. 43-44.
[43] Mason, *Humanism and Poetry*, p. 111.

works to the pragmatic needs of patronage is demonstrated in a letter he wrote in 1500 seeking promises from his patron. He tells his patron that he would obtain more glory through his writings than through other literary figures as 'they merely deliver the humdrum sermons,' whereas 'I am writing books that may last forever…[and] my books will be read all over the world; in the Latin west and in the Greek east and by every nation.'[44]

The imagery of the red and white rose as a symbol of unity is also used by the Scottish poet William Dunbar in a poem written to celebrate the arrival of Margaret Tudor to Scotland. Princess Margaret, the daughter of Henry VII, had journeyed to Scotland to marry the poet's patron James IV in 1503. Far from deterring cultural interchange, as some literary historians have assumed, political tensions and circumstances such as this at times influenced Scots and English poets to deal with a topic in a similar thematic and figurative mode of poetic discourse.[45] In a poem which is clearly conjointly dedicatory and panegyric; specifically crafted to inaugurate a political event, Dunbar tells Princess Margaret:

Now Fayre, fairest off every fayre,
Princes most plesant and preclare,
The lustiest one alyve that byne,
Welcum of Scotland to be Quene!

Younge tender plant of pulcritud,
Descendyd of Imperyalle blude;
Freshe fragrant floure of fayrehede shene,
Welcum of Scotland to be Quene!

Swet lusty lusum lady clere,
Most myghty kyngis dochter dere,
Borne of a princes most seren,
Welcum of Scotland to be Quene!

Welcum the Rose bothe rede and white,
Welcum the floure of oure delyte!
Our secrete rejoysyng frome sone beme,

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[44] Cited in Richard L. De Molen, (1978) *Essays on the Works of Erasmus*, Yale University Press, New Haven, p. 1.
[45] Kratzman, p. 3.

Welcum of Scotland to be Quene;
Welcum of Scotlande to be Quene![46]

The queen to be, Margaret, is the epitome of health and beauty, the fairest of the fair, her 'Imperyalle blude' making her a fitting bride for James IV. This poem, however, is not merely a compliment, or a tender welcome to the young princess, the warmth of which is clearly conveyed through the boldness and repetition of the refrain, but a verse that carries within it political signifiers. At a time when Henry VII's legitimacy as king was still questioned by certain English nobles, when the 'War of the Roses' was still a recent bitter memory, the Scottish poet aligns his sovereign with Henry VII and offers a subtle declaration of the English king's children's legitimacy to the English throne. Margaret, and by implication, her siblings, are symbolically 'the Rose bothe rede and white'. Knowledge of this, either through hearing the poem firsthand, or from the hearsay of one of his ambassadors, would certainly have pleased Henry VII and inclined him to look upon his alliance with Scotland in a further favourable light. It would make it appear that James IV was a stalwart supporter of Henry's usurpation. Moreover, the poem's refrain, the repetition of the welcome given by Dunbar on behalf of the poet, and that of Scotland in the last verse, make a powerful and clear political proclamation to those who would have been the poet's audience, of how they should regard Margaret and accept her as queen. Dunbar, who would not have any real personal knowledge of Margaret at this point, or of her apparent appropriateness to be the queen of Scotland, clearly and deliberately crafts a poem that fulfils his role as James IV's court poet and shows he shapes his poetics to fulfil the demands that would have been placed upon him by the king within the patronage system.

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[46] Mackenzie, M. (ed.) (1990) *The Poems of William Dunbar*, Poem 89. Mackenzie entitles this poem 'To the Princess Margaret'.

Political expediency undoubtedly prompted such public exhibitions of loyalty. In the early sixteenth century, supplications, petitions and dedications to popes, kings and lesser magnates were an accepted means of self-advancement. Whilst it was typical of sovereigns to receive such panegyric verse throughout their life, it is, however, when they take over the rule of their respective kingdoms, become married, or at the birth of a prince or princess, that we see a preponderance of written panegyric verse being produced. The death of a king in particular was a fertile period for panegyric literature. A king's death not only inaugurated a change in sovereignty, it typically brought with it a change in personnel at court. The new king would often dismiss or imprison those who had served his predecessor, or worse, as in the case of Henry VII's most powerful ministers, Edmund Dudley and Richard Empson, who, when Henry VIII came to power in 1509, were arrested, charged with extortion and treason, and then executed. With the advent of a new king opportunities emerged for those nobles and courtiers who had long waited in the sidelines and chances arose for those out of favour with the deceased sovereign to regain their position at court. The new king would often bring with him to the court an entourage of favourites and lackeys, with many of whom he had spent his youth. Those who could impress the new king when these sweeping changes in government and court personnel took place could often find themselves catapulted into positions of power, prestige and wealth. For poets, or courtiers who wrote verse, the advent of a new sovereign offered an opportunity to remind the new king of past services rendered and the chance for them to use their skill with language, their poetic ability and wit, deliberately to craft verse that would obtain recognition and impress the new king. The calculating, cold and cautious government of Henry VII had offered little in the way of opportunities for those at court and the reign of Henry VIII not only

opened in a blaze of glory, it was one fuelled by contemporary expectations. By looking at some of the verse dedicated to Henry VIII when he ascended the throne we begin to gain an insight into one of the more obvious aspects of poetic verse's symbiotic pragmatic relationship to patronage. Moreover, when placed within the context of tensions raised by a change within the court's patronage system, exaggerated courtly compliment becomes much more literally meaningful and serious in tenor.

When Henry VIII succeeded to the throne in 1509, Thomas More was, alongside Erasmus, Bernard Andre, Alexander Barclay, Stephen Hawes, John Skelton and others, amongst those who composed panegyric verse in the hope of obtaining the young monarch's favour.[47] Until recently few historical scholars could see further than the end of Thomas More's life, his execution by Henry VIII for standing by his religious principles. He remained an almost sacrosanct historical figure, a humanist saint and revered martyr. This perception of More, initially formulated by the catholic hagiographer William Roper, but perpetuated by so many of those scholars that followed, has, however, recently undergone a much needed reappraisal. Several recent historians now refute the image of More as a utopian idealist and dreamer who was able to exist within the murky environs of the court, free from even the slightest taint of corruption and immorality. Scholars now argue that the fury of the polemical works reveal to us the true personality of More. They further point to the irremediable contradictions that exist between More the humanist idealist and More the public servant of Henry VIII.[48] Taking this a step further John Guy, has raised the possibility that More was little more than a sycophantic courtier who dissembled his intentions even to

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[47] Pollet, M. (1971) *John Skelton: Poet of Tudor England*, p. 58.

[48] See Marius, R. (1984) *Thomas More* and Guy, J. (1980) *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More* for critics who now paint a much bleaker picture of Thomas More's character and morality.

his closest friend Erasmus. For Guy, More's activities were the product of savvy political and literary stagecrafting that were deliberately intended to attract the attention of both Thomas Wolsey and Henry VIII.[49] This deliberate stagecrafting would eventually culminate in More's promotion to Lord Chancellor. Louis Martz, however, has, in the attempt to create a more complete picture, challenged this view to suggest More was 'a writer, statesman, scholar, family man, and polemicist typical of his era.'[50] On the point of More being a typical man of his era I would agree with Martz, but to a degree Guy is also correct when he brings to our attention just how deliberately More, like others at the Tudor court, dissembled his intentions and calculatedly crafted a public persona to bring himself to the attention of powerful and influential patrons. This I would suggest was an everyday reality of the court and the patronage system. A reality from which canonical courtier poets and those long regarded as sacrosanct figures of humanist literature were not immune and in which they at times used their literary skill to enhance their political careers and social positions. Thomas More's coronation poem that he dedicated to Henry VIII merits detailed scrutiny as it establishes precisely how the writer deliberately adopts a particular rhetorical strategy, tone and themes to obtain the king's favour and enhance his position at court.

More's poem to Henry VIII was one of the many gratulatory poems that sprang up overnight like weeds and wildflowers upon the fertile soil of a new king's coronation. These poems were written to celebrate the young prince's virtues and physical attributes. Written in Latin, however, rather than the vernacular, More's poem, *On the Coronation Day of Henry VIII*, was never

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[49] Guy, J. (1980) *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More*, p. 7.
[50] Martz, L. (1988) *Thomas More: The Search for the Inner Man*, cited in Freeman, J. (1992) 'More's Place in 'No Place': The Self-Fashioning Transactions in Utopia' in *TSLL 34*, p.197.

intended for a popular audience, the everyday man of London. It was clearly intended for the social elite, an elite who would dwell within the court and to whom Latin was a sign of social and intellectual superiority. More's flattering address to Henry in the initial dedication as, 'MOST GLORIOUS AND BLESSED KING', is a fairly typical introduction to a panegyric, but it is not long before we begin to see that the poet has adopted a particular rhetorical strategy, tone and political position in the encomium. More begins the poem:

> If ever there was a day, England, if ever there was a time for you to give thanks to those above, this is that happy day, one to be marked with a pure white stone and put in your calendar. This day is the limit of our slavery, the beginning of our freedom, the end of sadness, the source of joy, for this day consecrates a young man who is the everlasting glory of our time and makes him your king – a king who is worthy not merely to govern a single people but singly to rule the whole world – such a king as will wipe the tears from every eye and put joy in the place of our long distress. Every heart smiles to see its cares dispelled, as the day shines bright when clouds are scattered. Now the people, freed, run before their king with bright faces. Their joy is almost beyond their own comprehension. They rejoice, they exult, they leap for joy and celebrate their having such a king. "The King" is all that any mouth can say.[51]

At the outset of the poem More, paying particular attention to the king's character and ambitions, skilfully begins to enter into the verse a strain of almost ubiquitous flattery of Henry VIII that would no doubt have pleased the young and somewhat egotistic king. It would, no doubt, have been a great delight to Henry to have been described as 'a king who is worthy not merely to govern a single people but singly to rule the whole world.'

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[51] Miller, C., Bradner, L., Lynch, C. & Oliver, R. (eds.) *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, volume 3, part II, Poem 19, p. 101. This is the volume of poems I will be using with regard to the verse of Thomas More in this chapter and henceforth will refer to any quotations from this volume throughout the thesis as More, volume 3, part II, followed by the poem number and either the lines quoted or page number if the companion translation is used.

At the same time, however, More introduces into the poem another thematic strain, one more politically significant and more meaningful in demonstrating the writer's rhetorical plan. He begins in the first section of the poem to attack the previous reign of Henry VII in order to instigate and justify a change in court and government personal. Through this strategy he also demonstrates his allegiance to those nobles and courtiers who became influential at court when the new king took his throne. Henry VII's reign is deemed within the poem to have been one of 'long distress', 'slavery' and 'sadness', with the coronation of Henry VIII a source of 'freedom' and 'joy'. The new king metaphorically is cast as the sun that shines so brightly he scatters the clouds. In portraying the previous reign as one of tyranny and fear the poet adopts the popular sentiment of many of those who had either been excluded from the court of Henry VII or who had experienced the brunt of his fiscal and legal bureaucracy. More's rejection of the previous government and its ministers, along with his allegiance to the nobility, becomes even clearer in the next section of the poem when we are told that:

> The nobility, long since at the mercy of the dregs of the population, the nobility, whose title has long been without meaning, now lifts its head, now rejoices in such a king, and has proper reason for rejoicing. The Merchant, heretofore deterred by numerous taxes, now once again plows seas grown unfamiliar. Laws, heretofore powerless – yes, even laws put to unjust ends – now happily have regained their proper authority. All are equally happy.[52]

In the new reign of Henry VIII the nobility, once at the mercy of men such as Dudley and Empson, can lift their heads once again and become a force of influence within the nation. Merchants will now be able to feel the benefits of their work; no longer will they be deterred by 'numerous taxes'. We are further

[52] More, volume 3, part II, Poem 19, p. 101-103.

told 'it is a delight to ignore informers. Only ex-informers fear informers now.'[53] Those who served the previous king are now those who should fear retribution, which certainly came quickly for Henry VII's most powerful ministers, Dudley and Empson. More, through his verse, attempts to justify the actions of whoever was responsible for the removal of the two ministers, whether this was Henry VIII directly or those assuming government and influential positions at his new court. The old bureaucracy is portrayed as being corrupt, the suppressor of both the nobility and of merchants, able to suppress even the laws of the kingdom. More's rhetorical strategy is to create a dichotomy between the past and present reigns in order to reject the old and rejoice in the new order. In doing this he makes it vividly clear that his allegiance belongs to the new men of the court and government. More reiterates and reinforces this strand of his rhetorical strategy and position as the verse develops when he comments upon how Henry 'instantly arrested and imprisoned anyone who by plots had harmed the realm'. This would have been seen by contemporaries as a clear reference to the swiftly arrested, imprisoned and executed Dudley and Empson. The poet further comments upon how it is Henry who has allowed the 'long-scorned nobility' to recover their 'ancient rights' and the king who has opened up the 'sea for trade' and removed the 'overharsh duties' from the merchants. Henry we are told, 'without delay has restored to the laws their ancient force and dignity (for they had been perverted so as to subvert the realm).[54] Whilst More aligns the treatment of Dudley and Empson with the king's seeking to instil justice within the nation, Polydore Virgil offers a more insightful and telling comment concerning Henry's motives when he notes that, 'By this act all the wrath of the people was appeased, and everyone

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[53] Ibid, p. 103.
[54] Ibid, p. 107.

was grateful to the monarch for the punishment of evil-doers.'[55] Henry VIII, Virgil makes clear, began his reign with an overtly political act beneficial to his own popularity with his subjects.

This does, of course, raise the question of how the new king, Henry VIII, would have accepted a polemic that criticised the reign and personality of his father. Certainly, More is subtle enough in his criticism of Henry VII not to refer to the king directly; he alludes more specifically to the ministers Dudley and Empson in the poem. The blame for the previous state of the nation is thus placed upon 'evil counsellors' in a manner that is fairly common in Renaissance literature. At the same time, however, Henry VII is not absolved of culpability in the previous reign's policies and corruption by the poet. More could easily have distinguished between the behaviour of the king and his counsellors in the poem, but, in what is a telling fact, he allows the implication to remain that Henry VII was a part of the problem. The influential Tudor historian, J.J. Scarisbrick, throws some light upon this issue when he comments that 'Henry's childhood had been one of oppressive subjection to a stern father and grandmother'. When Henry VIII ascended the throne, he further remarks, the young king was released into 'the bright, cloudless warmth of gaiety, freedom and power.'[56] That the poet felt able to criticise the previous reign and, even if only by implication Henry VII, reinforces Scarisbrick's suggestion. More, it seems reasonable to assume, would not have presented the poem to Henry VIII without having first adroitly appraised the king's views of his father's rule. Furthermore, More deliberately suggests that all the faults of the previous reign, be they the faults of counsellors or king, are

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[55] Polydore Vergil *Anglia Historia*, pp. 150-152, quoted in Williams, C. (1971) *English Historical Documents*, vol. v, p. 400.
[56] Scarisbrick, p. 11.

recognised and that Henry VIII will be a completely different monarch, his coming to power the instigation of a new virtuous era.

At times throughout the verse, however, More's rhetorical strategy is to continue his flattery of the personal attributes and abilities of the new king that he began at the outset of the poem, at times through sleek subtlety, but on occasion through overt and abject praise of Henry's virtues. Initially he gives a long exordium based upon the joy of the crowds watching the king's progress at the time of his coronation. 'The people gather together, every age, both sexes, and all ranks' and 'wherever he goes, the dense crowd in their desire to look upon him leaves hardly a narrow lane for his passage.' 'On all sides there arises a shout of new good will', and there are even those who dash ahead to view him more than once, for this is a king 'whom Nature has created nothing more deserving of love.'[57] The poet reminds Henry of the joyful crowds he had experienced during his progression in order to flatter the king by highlighting just how well the new monarch is loved by his subjects. Simultaneously, this would have been a subtle but stark political reminder to the poet's audience, those at court, that this king was both the people's choice and that he was the chosen one of Nature. As More begins to describe the physical appearance and abilities of Henry VIII the flattery becomes far more vivid and overt. Physically, Henry 'stands out taller than any' when placed 'among a thousand noble companions'. He is described as having 'strength worthy of his regal person. His hand ... skilled as his heart is brave, whether there is an issue to be settled by the naked sword, or an eager charge with levelled lances, or an arrow aimed to strike a target.'[58] In a potent and powerful image the king's beauty and physical stature is compared to that of the fabled warrior Achilles, who in his full glory, dragged the defeated Hector behind his

[57] More, volume 3, part II, Poem 19, p. 103.
[58] Ibid.

Thessalian steeds in the sight of all Troy and the soldiers of Greece. The king's inner virtues are then introduced by More; the poet subtly describing them as shining 'forth from his very face; his countenance bear[ing] the open message of a good heart, revealing how ripe the wisdom that dwells in his judicious mind'.[59] Through positive poetic images and language, Henry is further referred to as a man of 'modest chastity', 'clemency', 'justice' and 'responsibility'; a man from whom all signs of 'counterfeit' are removed. The overt flattery continues even as the poem ends, when More both extols the virtue and beauty of Katherine of Aragon and praises the king's choice of her as his queen. We are told 'there has been no other woman, surely, worthy to have you as husband, nor any other man worthy to have her as wife'. Henry is the paragon of a perfect Renaissance prince who is expected to reign well, live long and provide England with legitimate royal offspring who will be the future sovereigns of the nation.

None of the king's excellent virtues or his beneficial actions, we are told, however, surprise Thomas More, for what, he tells us:

> ...could lie beyond the powers of a prince whose natural gifts have been enhanced by a liberal education, a prince bathed by the nine sisters in the Castalian fount and steeped in philosophy's own precepts.[60]

More succinctly indicates that it is Henry VIII's humanist education that has allowed him to develop into the king that 'is loved' by all; into a king capable of the just and honest rule of his people and kingdom. This, of course, is precisely the education received by More and many of his closest friends, and by implication he is suggesting how such an education is superior to that received by others, that those educated as humanists are endowed with superior knowledge and virtue. As such, he is suggesting that he, and fellow humanists, are better

[59] Ibid, p. 105.
[60] Ibid, p. 107.

suited to fill positions of power and influence at the court and in Henry's government. The poet then emphasises how, through the happy recent reversal of political and social circumstances, this fact has been accepted and learned men are now beginning to occupy positions of influence and obtain the prerogatives which ignorant men held in the past.[61] In other poems of praise written by More concerning Henry VIII the poet continues to highlight both his own and the king's similar education. He associates the king's reign with that of the age of Plato in one poem, and in what is a clear debt to Ovid's descriptions of the creation of the world and the evolving stages of man in the first book of *Metamorphoses*, he tells Henry how 'the golden age came first, then the silver; after that the bronze, and recently the iron age...[but] in your reign, sire, the golden age has returned.'[62] The analogy that is made by More implies that Henry VII's reign was an 'iron age', an age that was deplete of all culture and virtue, whilst the new reign of Henry VIII is the re-emergence of the 'golden age'. The 'iron age' of man was described by Ovid as an age where:

> … Men lived by spoil and plunder;
> Friend was not safe from friend, nor father safe
> From son-in-law, and kindness was rare between
> Brother and brother; husbands plotted death
> For wives and wives for husbands; stepmothers
> With murderous hearts brewed devilish aconite,
> And sons, importunate to glut their greed,
> Studied stars to time their fathers' death.
> Honour and love lay vanquished, and from earth,
> With slaughter soaked, Justice, virgin divine,
> The last of the immortals, fled away.[63]

This despicable, immoral and sinful behaviour of man and the vile life mankind lived was a stark contrast to the 'golden age' that Ovid described as an age where

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[61] Carlson, *English Humanist Books*, p. 65.
[62] More, volume 3, part II, Poem 21, p. 115.
[63] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Melville, A., Book One, lines 148 – 158.

man: 'unconstrained, / With heart and soul, obedient to no law, / Gave honour to good faith and righteousness'.[64] An age in which:

> The gentle zephyrs with their breathing balm
> Caressed the flowers that sprang without a seed;
> Anon the earth untilled brought forth her fruits,
> The unfallowed fields lay gold with heavy grain,
> And streams of milk and springs of nectar flowed
> And yellow honey dripped from boughs of green.[65]

Through the analogy More reiterates and reinforces his rhetorical strategy of both overt flattery of Henry as a king and subtle rejection of those who held power prior to Henry VIII's accession to the throne.

The infamous history of Henry VIII's marital affairs and the equally infamous portraits painted by Hans Holbein and many of his unknown contemporary artists of the ageing and grossly overweight fifty year old king tend to obscure the fact that when Henry came to the throne he was enthusiastically and unanimously regarded by his contemporaries as a uniquely handsome man who was educated, cultured, and athletic. The Venetian diplomat Piero Pasqualigo's comments upon Henry's abilities, attributes and virtue, in 1515, are typical of contemporary English and European views of the young king. According to Pasqualigo:

> His majesty is the handsomest potentate I have ever set eyes on: above the usual height, with an extremely fine calf to his leg, his complexion very fair and bright, with auburn hair ... and a round face so very beautiful, that it would become a pretty woman ... He speaks French, English, and Latin, and a little Italian, plays well on the lute and harpsichord, sings from book at sight, draws the bow with greater strength than any man in England, and jousts marvellously. Believe me, he is in every respect a most accomplished Prince; and I, who have now seen all the sovereigns in Christendom ... might

[64] Ibid, lines 88 – 90.
[65] Ibid, lines 109 – 114.

> well rest content, and with sufficient reason have it said to me, 'abi viator, sat tuis oculis debes'.[66]

Lord Mountjoy expresses the quintessential English courtier's view of Henry VIII when he informs his former teacher Erasmus in a letter that:

> Henry the Eighth, whom we all may well call our Octavius ... could you but see how nobly he is bearing himself, how wise he is, his love for all that is good and right, especially his love of men of learning ... Heaven smiles, earth triumphs, and flows with milk and honey and nectar. This king of ours is no seeker after gold, or gems, or mines of silver. He desires only the fame of virtue and eternal life.[67]

Henry VIII was, as Scarisbrick has pointed out in his excellent study of the English king, essentially the archetype of a resplendent Renaissance monarch, whose reign began amidst an atmosphere of jubilant expectation and euphoria.[68] More could quite easily simply have heaped straightforward panegyric praise upon Henry VIII as other contemporaries undoubtedly had done. Poets such as More, Skelton, Ammonio and Hawes, it seems certain, had, as Lloyd points out, 'good material to work on'.[69] Yet, whilst More certainly did use flattery as a major part of his epideictic rhetorical strategy in the verse to demonstrate to the king his literary skills and profound learning, to prove himself worthy of fulfilling a position of influence at court, he also chose explicitly to denounce the previous reign and those involved in its government. He chose deliberately to align himself with both the nobility and humanist educated courtiers in a rejection of the immediate past as part of the rhetorical strategy of his verse. More's poems, and others he wrote concerning Henry VIII, were always more than mere flattery, they

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[66] Quoted in Palmer, p. 91 (document 4), from Brown, R. (1854) *Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII*, p. 85. 'abi viator, sat tuis oculis debes' translates as 'go home traveller, your eyes have seen enough'.

[67] Allen, P. (ed.) (1906) *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmus Rotterodami*, vol. I, Letter 215.

[68] Concerning the character of Henry VIII and contemporary views and expectations see, Scarisbrick, chapter 1; Weir, chapter 1.

[69] Lloyd, L. (1938) *John Skelton: A Sketch of his Life and Works*, p. 11.

were often political statements underpinned by the pragmatic imperatives of self-advancement.

The pragmatic political expediency to which More subjects his literary skill can clearly be seen in another poem he wrote concerning Henry VIII, the short Latin verse, *On Two Roses Which Became One*. Translated the poem reads as follows:

> A white rose grew near a red one, and in their struggle to demonstrate superiority each crowded the other. But both roses are combined to become one flower, and the contest ends the only way it can. Now only one rosebush grows and buds, but this one has all the qualities of both. In other words, this one rose has the beauty, grace, loveliness, colour, and strength which used to belong to both. Therefore, if any loved either one of these roses, let him love this one in which is found whatever he loved. But if anyone is so fierce that he will not love this rose, then he will fear it, for this flower has its own thorns, too.[70]

Like Erasmus, and many other poets of early sixteenth-century England, More adapts the flower metaphor and imagery of the white and red rose to make a political statement upon the war between the houses of Lancaster and York, Henry VII's usurpation of Richard III, and of Henry VIII's legitimacy as the rightful king of England. Whereas the rose was typically presented as the premier flower in the floral hierarchy and would be a fitting metaphor concerning the young prince, in the poem Henry VIII is a hybrid, a single rosebush that is the natural outcome of the cross fertilization of both strains of rose. The floral metaphor symbolises that Henry is the rightful heir of both the houses of Lancaster and York, endowed, through the Tudor dynasty that was founded through the unification of the two houses when Henry VII and Elizabeth of York were wed, with the 'qualities of both'. The poet also emphasises that, as the

[70] More, volume 3, part II, Poem 23, p. 117.

natural heir of both Lancaster and York, Henry VIII is owed the allegiance of those who served on either side of the war. Those that rebel against him will find they will need fear this king for he has his 'own thorns'; he is more than capable of dealing with those who would harm him. In what is a very short poem More blends ubiquitous flattery of the young king with a powerful political statement that could only have pleased Henry and demonstrated to him both More's rhetorical ability and political allegiance.

. The elaborate and expensively illuminated extant presentation manuscript of More's 1509 verses dedicated to Henry VIII on his coronation suggests the importance of possible patronage as an element for the writing and production of such a work. Interestingly, as if to emphasise in a work of art what is metaphorically alluded to in the poem, *On Two Roses Which Became One*, one of the illuminations is of a rose bush. The rose bush bears six buds, all of which are at various stages of development, but one is fully opened and this shows as the Tudor Rose, the petals of a red rose enfolding those of a white rose, above which there sits a crown.[71] Men of letters, such as Thomas More, could choose from a variety of strategies in their bid to gain royal favour and positions at court. Their use of literature to make political statements and bring themselves to the attention of the king was one of the available methods they often put to very good use. It would appear that More's bid for preferment was successful: ten days after Henry's coronation, on 5 July 1509, the poet became a member of the royal judicial commission to enquire into the lands and titles of William Viscount Beaumont.[72] This was to be followed by a succession of important offices in local government, Parliament, and at the Tudor court. Amongst other positions Thomas

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[71] A copy of the illumination is shown in Lusse, B. (1992) 'Panegyric Poetry on the Coronation of King Henry VIII: The King's praise and the Poet's Self-Presentation' in Baumann, U. (ed.) *Henry VIII: In History, Historiography and Literature*, p. 76.

[72] Lusse, p. 65.

More was the Under Sheriff of London in 1515, an envoy to Flanders on a trade mission in 1516, Under Treasurer of England in 1521 and in the same year he was present at the Field of Cloth of Gold and knighted by Henry VIII. His court career culminating in his fulfilling the position as Lord Chancellor from 1529 to 1532.[73] More was not, however, alone in adopting such a rhetorical strategy in order to ingratiate himself with the new king in order to secure patronage and promotion, yet the production and presentation of panegyric verse, even at the time of ostentatious display and pageantry that surrounded a new accession to the throne, was not always successful. This initially seems to have been the case with regard to John Skelton's attempt to regain a position at the Tudor court.

When, in 1509, Henry VIII succeeded to the English throne, Skelton made a concerted effort to be reinstated to a position at the Tudor court. Skelton, once the tutor of the young Prince Henry, lost this position when the heir to the throne Prince Arthur died in 1502. Whether or not he was dismissed because he was regarded as the wrong teacher for the heir apparent, or perhaps his work was unsatisfactory, is uncertain but what is certain is that he left the court and was granted a prebend at Diss, Norfolk, a considerable distance from the court and capital[74] He would spend most of his time at Diss fulfilling the duties of a country clergyman between 1504 and 1512. Skelton, like Thomas More, attempted to obtain a position at Henry VIII's court through the use of his literary ability, producing the panegyric poem, *A Lawde and Prayse made for Our Sovereigne Lord the King*, concerning Henry's coronation. In a distinctly similar vein to More, Skelton adopts the metaphorical theme of the union of the red and white rose to emphasise Henry VIII's legitimacy as sovereign and the dual rhetorical

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[73] O'Day, p. 207.

[74] Holtei, R. (1992) 'Measure is Treasure: John Skelton's 'Magnfycence' and Henry VIII' in Baumann, U. (ed.) *Henry VIII: In History, Historiography and Literature*, p. 85.

strategy of flattering praise of the new king and denouncement of the previous reign.[75]

In what is one of Skelton's shorter poems, the poet rejoices to see the union of the two houses of York and Lancaster finally accomplished in the person of the new monarch. The poem begins with the frequent theme of propaganda associated with Henry VIII's parentage:

> The rose both white and rede
> In one rose now dothe grow;
> Thus thorow every stede
> Thereof the fame dothe blow,
> Grace the sede did sow.
> England, now gaddir flowris,
> Exclude now all dolowrs.[76]

The 'one rose', Henry VIII, produced from the 'sede' of the red and white rose, Henry VII and Elizabeth, symbolises unity at a time when the early Tudors were still nervous about their claims to the English throne. Henry VII's claim to the throne by lineage had been a meagre one, his father being the half-brother of Henry VI.[77] Moreover, England will now, through Henry VIII, the poet's claims, be free from all painful grief; it will 'Exclude now all dolowrs'. The implication here is immediate, that the previous reign was one to be censured and rebuked as a time of woe and hardship for Englishmen. Initially, however, the poet does not dwell upon this point and in the second stanza he begins to introduce the rhetorical strand of praise and flattery that is threaded throughout the poem. He extols the personal virtues of Henry VIII and overtly flatters the young king. Through classical allusions Henry is compared to 'Alexis yonge of age' and 'Adratus wise and sage'. To have been compared to Alexander the Great would no doubt have pleased Henry VIII. Though there is indecision amongst critics as

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[75] All references to the English poems of John Skelton will be from Skelton, J. (1983) *John Skelton: The Complete English Poems*, ed. Scattergood, J.
[76] Skelton, *A Lawde and Praise*, lines 1-7.
[77] Scattergood, p. 419.

to whom the reference to Adratus refers, with it having been suggested it is Adrastus, the king of Argos, who survived the war of seven against Thebes, or Adrastus, the peripatetic philosopher, the poet is clearly underlining both Henry's courage and wisdom.[78] The hyperbolic superlatives with which Skelton flatters Henry continues as the poem develops with the young king compared to Adonis, Priamus of Troy and, as the poem ends, to 'Martis lusty knight'.[79] Adonis, the beloved of Aphrodite, was renowned for his beauty whilst Priamus of Troy had only been defeated by the treacherous tactics of the Greeks. Priamus had also been the father of fifty sons at the time of Troy's destruction by Agamemnon. The suggestion that Henry was the god of war's 'lusty knight' would no doubt have more than pleased a monarch enamoured by ideas of war and military conquest. This was flattery deliberately designed and underpinned by the pragmatic intentions of capturing the king's benevolence.

This is also a rhetorical strategy which makes clear, as did Thomas More in his panegyric for Henry, Skelton's political allegiance to the new court and government officials, whilst at the same time he offers an apologetic that explains topical actions that took place during the first weeks of Henry's reign, such as the execution of Dudley and Empson. This element of Skelton's poetic strategy can be clearly seen in the central stanzas of the poem. In these stanzas we are told:

> Astrea, justice hight,
> That from the starry sky
> Shall now com and do right,
> This hundred yere scantly
> A man kowd not aspy
> That right dwelt us among,
> And that was the more wrong.
>
> Right shall the foxis chare,
> The wolves, the beris also,
> That wrowght Englond in wo;

[78] Ibid, p. 419: Lusse, p. 52, Note 11.
[79] Skelton, *A Lawde and Praise*, line 55.

They shall wirry no mo,
Nor wrote the rosary
By extort trechery.

Of this our noble king
The law they shall not breke;
They shall com to rekening,
No man for them wil speke.
The pepil durst not creke
Theire grevis to complaine;
They browght them in soche paine.

Therfor no more they shall
The commouns overbrace,
That wont wer over all
Both lorde and knight to face;
For now the yeris of grace
And welthe ar com agayne,
That maketh England faine.[80]

The previous reign is presented as the culmination of a bloody century and an era of injustice, a period of pain for the English people. The return of Astrea, the goddess of justice during the golden age, who withdrew to the heavens as man's wickedness increased, symbolises that with the accession of Henry VIII justice once again returns to England. The new king is literally presented as the people's saviour, his reign, unlike the previous reign will be one of 'grace', 'welthe' and 'fane'. The 'foxis' and 'wolves' are allusions to Dudley and Empson that would have no doubt been immediately recognisable to the poet's contemporaries. By highlighting their many alleged crimes, including the extortion through taxes of the Church, Skelton offers an apologia and explanation of the king's actions. Throughout the poem, the rhetorical strategy of praise and flattery is reinforced by that of creating a dichotomy between past and present in a rejection of the past that serves as a negative folio, as Lusse points out, against which Henry's good character and virtue 'stands as a paragon of a perfect

[80] Skelton, *A Lawde and Praise*, lines 15-42.

prince'.[81] The past corruption of Henry VII's reign is starkly juxtaposed against the present and future virtue of Henry VIII.

Just how important it was to Skelton that he caught the new king's attention is shown by the fact that apart from his coronation poem for Henry, *A Lawde and Prayse*, he also sent a small leather booklet to the king which contained a revised copy of his *Speculum Principis*, written in 1502, the epigram *Ad tanti principis maiestatem*, composed between 1494 and 1502, and the poem praising Henry, *Palinodium* of 1509.[82] These poems which were presented to Henry VIII, are eloquent testimonies to Skelton's attempts and desire to be reinstated within a position at the Tudor court. The production of such a leather booklet, though no match in monetary terms compared to the illuminated manuscript of Thomas More, would have been a costly expense to a country clergyman. Its production signifies the importance that the poet placed upon obtaining the king's attention, whilst the inclusion of the didactic treatise entitled *Speculum Principis*, gives us an insight into part of the poet's strategy used to obtain the king's patronage. The re-representation of this somewhat archaic treatise, written for the young prince Henry in 1502, in which, with the support of quotations from ancient literature and scripture, Skelton extols the excellence of knowledge, the advantages of self-control and the superiority of virtue, would have acted as a clear reminder to the newly crowned Henry VIII of services rendered in the past. As Lisa Jardine has discussed concerning Erasmus and other humanists' re-representation and recirculation of their works, this is a strategy adopted by humanists and literary figures as reminders to princes and rulers of

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[81] Lusse, p. 65.
[82] Ibid, p. 50.

both past services and the writer's ability.[83] David Carlson has similarly argued that where once works may have been specifically topical as individual pieces of verse, when they are re-presented in collections at a later date, they act simultaneously as a reminder of past service and as symbols of literary skill.[84] By reminding the prince or patron of previous services or work produced on his behalf the writer draws upon a past relationship and friendship in order to influence the king's present thoughts. The strategy of reminding a prince of past literary services could be taken a step further by using the verse to remind the prince of specific services, not necessarily literary, that were provided by the poet in the past.

Not all poets, however, adopted a strategy of creating a dichotomy between past and present reigns. Though Stephen Hawes used his verse to flatter Henry VIII and remind him of past service he had provided to the crown, and similarly emphasise the legitimacy of the new king's reign, by stressing the king's lineage through the topical metaphor of the white and red rose used by More, Erasmus and Skelton, he did not denounce or criticise the reign of Henry VII. Hawes instead chose to praise the continuity between the two reigns to stress the possibility of an intensification of happiness in 1509, and he blisteringly berates those who accuse Henry VII of avarice.[85] In the panegyric poem written by Hawes for the coronation of Henry VIII, *A Joyfull meditacyon to all England of the coronaycon of our moost naturall souerayne lorde kynge Henry the eyght*, the poet deals directly with the accusations of avarice made against Henry VII by many of his contemporaries. He tells the reader:

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[83] Jardine, *passim*. Concerning the value of a work's republication and re-representation within the patronage system, see also, Carlson, *English Humanist Books*, p. 67-68.
[84] Carlson, *English Humanist Books*, p. 68.
[85] Rundle, D. (1995) 'A New Golden Age? More, Skelton and the accession verses of 1509' in *Renaissance Studies* 9, p. 65.

Our late souerayne his fader excellent
I knowe right well some holde oppynyon
That to auaryce he had entendment
Gadrynge grete rychesse of this his reygon
But they lytell knowe by theyr small reason
For what hye entente he gadered doutles
Vnto his grace suche innumerable ryches

For I thynke well and god had sente hymn lyfe
As they haue meruaylled moche of this gadryne
So it to them sholde haue ben affyrmatyfe
To haue had grete wonder of his spendynge
It may fortune he thougt to haue mouynge
Of mortall warreour fayth to stablysshe
Agaynst the turkes theys power to mynysshe.[86]

These two stanzas make it clear that Hawes is not accusing Henry VII, as Lusse mistakenly asserts, of avarice and exploitation.[87] For Hawes, Henry VII is beyond reproach, he is 'our late souerayne his fader excellent', and the poet accuses those who attack the deceased king of being men of 'small reason', men of low intelligence. The poet further explains that the king's wealth was not gathered for his own personal benefit, but as necessary preparation for a crusade against the Turks. This was, of course, the reason given by Henry VII himself for the taxes he issued and by which he raised a great deal of the crown's treasury funds.

In refusing to create a dichotomy between the two reigns and instead stressing continuity and offering valid reasons for Henry VII's taxes and the crown's current wealth, Hawes adopts a rhetorical strategy distinctly different from that of Skelton and More. It is not hard to find, as Rundle has pointed out, pragmatic reasons behind Hawe's strategy. He had been, since at least 1503, a Groom of the Chamber who had access to the king and received patronage from the crown. Though Hawes could have made accusations against Henry VII and

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[86] Stephen Hawes, *A Joyfull meditacyon to all England of the coronaycon of our moost naturall souerayne lorde kynge Henry the eyght*, in Gluck F. & Morgan, A. (eds.) (1974) *Stephen Hawes: The Minor Poems*, pp. 84-91, lines 71-84. From now on this poem will be referred to as *A Joyfull meditacyon.*

[87] Lusse, p.59.

disowned his previous master, in order to ingratiate himself amongst the new men at court, many of whom were nobles who felt they had been subjugated during the previous reign, as did so many others, to do so would have been to undermine his own status.[88] The poet, through his praise of continuity between the two reigns is making a bid for his own continued receipt of patronage and this adds an edge and impetus to this poem that is both similar and, at the same time, very different to that of Skelton or More's verse. Like his contemporaries the verse is underpinned with the pragmatic imperatives of patronage, but unlike the majority of other poets he is concerned with continuity rather than creating a clean sweep. Skelton and More did not have a position at court to protect, they were trying to emphasise the need for change, change that would open up opportunities for themselves. The different poets, depending on whether they were presently included or excluded from the patronage system and positions at court adopted somewhat similar rhetorical strategies when it came to flattering the new king, and stressing his legitimacy, but their strategies are very different in how they approach the previous reign of Henry VII.

[88] Rundle, p. 66. See also Fox, p. 13, in which Fox recognises the differences between Hawes and his poetic contemporaries' treatment of Henry VII.

CHAPTER THREE

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The 'inclusive and exclusive' rhetorical strategy of David Lyndsay's *The Dreme* and *The Complaynt*

He is not dead that hath a fall,
The sun returneth that is under a cloud.
And when Fortune hath spit out all her gall
I trust good luck to me shall be allowed.
For I have seen a ship into haven fall
After the storm hath broke both mast and shroud.
And eke the willow that stoopeth with wind
Doth rise again and greater wood doth bind.[1]

Thomas Wyatt

Through the use of proverbial metaphors in this poem Thomas Wyatt alludes to a reality of the early sixteenth-century court: that those who fall from favour can return to their previous prosperity on another day. This belief also manifests itself in the structural and substantive rhetorical strategies adopted by excluded poets in their attempt to regain lost patronage. This is apparent in the works of Scots and English literary figures such as John Skelton, Thomas Elyot, William Dunbar and David Lyndsay. If we take a look at Lyndsay's 'Epistil' to the poem he dedicated to James V around the time of the prince's coronation, *The Dreme of Schir David Lyndesay of the Mont*, this point is vividly illustrated.[2] A close reading of this poem, the first extant piece of verse written by Lyndsay, and the next poem he produced, *The Complaynt*, also allows us further to explore the different rhetorical strategies adopted by an individual poet when 'excluded' or 'included' within the inner circle of courtly influence. The rhetorical strategies adopted by the poet

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[1] Wyatt, *He is not dead that hath a fall*, in Rebholz, p. 92, poem XLII.
[2] Lyndsay, *The Dreme* in Hadley Williams, J. (ed.) (2000) *Sir David Lyndsay: Selected Poems*, lines 1-7. All quotes from this poem will be to this copy of the poem. Henceforth this poem will be referred to as *The Dreme*.

when 'the sun returneth that is under a cloud' have distinct differences from those of the excluded courtier.

Whilst David Lyndsay's reputation and fame have for a long time principally been grounded upon the poems he composed that concentrate on public and national themes, such as the governance of the kingdom and the controversies of religion, recent research has began to recognise the immensely important fact that for most of his life Lyndsay was first and foremost an active courtier.[3] His service to the crown was an intensely important influence upon both his poetic creation and his life. As Carol Edington has observed in her recent excellent biography of the poet, standard accounts and evaluations of Lyndsay's life and works, based 'largely and erroneously upon *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estatis* ... [have] obscured the fact that the majority of his works were court poems.'[4] For over thirty years Lyndsay's principal milieu was the Scottish court, where he served both James IV and James V, and his early poems written prior to the death of James V are informed, conditioned and stimulated by his relationship with both the court and the king. Like many of his contemporaries, among them William Dunbar, John Bellenden and William Stewart, Lyndsay's activities at court included the writing of verse and prose. Eight of Lyndsay's poetic compositions dating from the late minority years and into James V's personal reign have survived and these are clearly the work of a poetically-knowledgeable court 'insider'.[5] Changes in the political status quo after the death of James V and Lyndsay's subsequent withdrawal from court life may have heralded a critical

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[3] MacDonald, A. (1996) 'William Stewart and the Court Poetry of the Reign of James V' in Hadley Williams, J. (ed.) (1996) *Stewart Style 1513-1542: Essays on the Court of James V*, p. 180. MacDonald is a recent critic who continues to concentrate on themes of government and politics without adequately acknowledging the extent of the influence of the poet being an active courtier to his sovereign.

[4] Edington, *Court and Culture*, p. 205.

[5] Hadley Williams, J 'David Lyndsay and the Making of James V' in Hadley Williams, J. (ed.) *Stewart Style 1513-1542*, p. 202.

shift in his later works but the initial verse he wrote, around the time that James V began his personal rule in 1528, belonged to the narrow, intimate socio-political environment of the court and when placed within the contexts of patronage and pragmatic imperatives it offers a more complex understanding and interpretation of the verse.[6] The court may have been, as Edington has suggested, an environment in which a poet occupied an ill-defined niche, with little extant evidence of direct financial rewards being received by poets for their efforts, yet this should not detract from the fact that it was also an environment in which poetic verse could be used to make a special bid for the monarch's attention in the hope of obtaining his patronage.[7] Clearly Lyndsay's personal situation within the complex social and political world of the court, and the need to procure the king's favour, was an important influence upon his verse.

When James V began his personal rule, Lyndsay, though he had been a close personal servant to the king throughout much of the king's early childhood, held no position at court. If he was to obtain a position of influence at court he needed somehow to obtain the young James's attention and renew their previous familiarity in order to obtain his patronage. To do this, in what is his earliest extant poem, *The Dreme*, Lyndsay adopts in the opening 'Epistil' to the poem a specific rhetorical strategy that is designed to remind James of the past services the poet has provided for the young king. This becomes apparent in the opening stanzas when Lyndsay directly addresses James V:

> Rycht potent prince, of hie imperial blude,
> Onto thy grace I traist it be weill knawin
> My service done onto thy celsitude,
> Quhilk nedis nocht at lenth for to be schawin.
> And thocht my youthed now be neir over blowin,
> Excerst in sevyce of thyne excellence,

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[6] Edington, *Court and Culture*, p. 115.
[7] Ibid, p. 205-206.

Hope hes me hecht ane gudlie recompence.[8]

The petitionary style of the poem is initially similar to that of some of Lyndsay's contemporaries' prose and verse written for James V, but even at the outset the tone is different and the poet's rhetorical strategy becomes more apparent as the stanza develops.

The dream genre typically purports to be a recording of the poet's own experience; the rhetorical strategy that underpins the genre, the presentation of a confidence offered by the poet to his audience, when handled carefully, heightens the verisimilitude of what is being told to add to the verse a dimension of human interest.[9] Lyndsay, however, develops this strategy further when he draws upon a past personal relationship to remind James how he has provided the king in the past with long and diligent service. The poet implies that his own youth has been spent serving James and his expectations for having served the king in his youth are clearly stated: he expects 'gudlie recompence.' The emphasis upon their past relationship is further stressed when Lyndsay tells James:

Quhen thow wes young, I bure the in myne arme
Full tenderlie, tyll thow begouth to gang
And in thy bed oft happit the full warme,
With lute in hand syne sweitlie to the sang.
Sumtyme in dansing, feiralie I flang,
And sumtyme playand fairsis on the flure,
And sumtyme on myne office takkand cure.[10]

Through what Janet Hadley Williams has termed the 'device of selective retrospection', Lyndsay ostensibly defines the past relationship he has held with the king by selecting positive events that are intended to stimulate James's childhood memories.[11]

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[8] *The Dreme*, lines 1-7.
[9] Kratzman, p. 28.
[10] *The Dreme*, lines 8-14.
[11] Hadley Williams 'David Lyndsay and the Making of James V', p. 213.

The biographical details that Lyndsay has selected to provide in the poem depict a previous informal relationship in which Lyndsay nurtured, protected and cared for James when the prince was a helpless infant.[12] He tells James, 'I bure the in myne arme/ Full tenderlie', until he had learnt to walk. Lyndsay continues to emphasise this point as the poem develops, reminding James how he had continually been occupied looking after him as a child, how he played with him to keep him amused and how he had fulfilled his duties in every way possible. Lyndsay reminds James he had been at times:

> ... sumtyme seware, coppare, and carvoure,
>
> Thy purs maister and secreit thesaurare,
> Thy ischare, aye sen thy natyvitie,
> And of thy chalmer cheiffe cubicular,
> Quhilk, to this houre, hes kept my lawtie.[13]

He had attended James as he dined, carved his food and held his cup, had looked after the young prince financially and stood guard at his door. These powerful emotive images that Lyndsay injects into the verse imply that the poet has been both a provider of sustenance and the prince's physical protector throughout James V's early childhood: emotive images that were based upon truth – for whether Lyndsay is described in official record as 'hostiario domini regis' or as, on other occasions, 'kepar of the Kingis grace' or 'Kingis uschar' – he was directly and closely linked to the king as a servant and intimate throughout James's childhood. The treasury records show that Lyndsay was in receipt of a royal pension of £40 from 1512.[14] The poet has chosen deliberately to bring to the forefront of James's thoughts memories of his childhood, memories with which Lyndsay is associated in a favourable light.

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[12] Ibid.
[13] *The Dreme*, lines 21-25.
[14] Dickson, T. & Balfour Paul, J. (eds.) (1877 – 1916) *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, vol. iv, p. 269 & 441.

Lyndsay continues this strategy as the verse moves onto James V's early education. The king is reminded of the stories read to him as a youth by the poet:

> ...at lenth, the storeis done discryve
> Of Hectour, Arthour, and gentyll Julyus,
> Of Alexander, and worthy Pompeyus,
>
> Of Jasone and Media, all at lenth;
> Of Hercules, the actis honorabyll,
> And of Sampsone, the supernaturall srenth,
> And of leill luffaris, storeis amiabyll.
> And oft tymes have I fenyeit mony fabyll
> Of Troylus, the sorroe and the joye,
> And seigis all – of Tyir, Thebes, and Troye;
>
> The Prophiseis of Rymour, Beid, and Marlyng
> And mony uther plesand storye
> Of Reid Etin, and the Gyir Carlyng,
> Confortand the quhen that I sawe the sorye.[15]

Stories from the bible, classical antiquity and tales of prophecy are all quite deliberately selected by Lyndsay to stimulate James V into remembering and re-envisioning a close personal relationship he once held with the poet during his early childhood. Lyndsay claims to have been the king's minion responsible not only for the early personal welfare of James V but also the courtier who was responsible for imparting to James the virtues of classical literature, fable, prophecy and the wisdom of the bible. It is reasonable to assume there is a degree of truth in the poet's catalogue of personal service to James, but exact truth is not altogether necessary, as the memories he stimulates are those held by James from childhood, important memories of love, protection and classical ideals that the poet draws forth to influence the king's present demeanour towards him in the hope of obtaining some form of remuneration or reward. Lyndsay is, however, not merely asking for adequate recompense from the king in the verse, though this was no doubt an important element, he is also making a bid for future preferment

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[15] *The Dreme*, lines 33-46.

and a position as the king's advisor when he suggests he has more advice he can give to James. He tells James:

> I sall the schwa ane storye of the new,
> The quhilk affore I never to the schew.[16]

He has new stories of wisdom, further advice that he can 'schew' James. He can, the verse suggests, if given the opportunity, be of future service to the new Scottish king. Lyndsay uses the rhetorical strategy of selective retrospective memory stimulation in order to remind James V of services previously rendered in order to obtain recompense and future patronage from the new king.

This rhetorical strategy is simultaneously entwined with that of outlining to the king and court the scope of the poet's own learning and wisdom. As Lyndsay adumbrates a catalogue of the stories he read to the infant James V, he outlines and displays his own classical learning and education. At the same time he also answers criticism levelled at James V from his contemporaries that James was an ill-educated prince, by suggesting that the young king had, at least in his early childhood, undergone an education steeped in the classics and the bible that was similar to other humanist educated princes. Furthermore, Lyndsay redefines not only his own position and relationship to the king, but also the relationship between the king and the other inhabitants of the court when he writes:

> Lovying be to the blysseit Trynitie
> That sic ane wracheit worme hes maid so habyll
> Tyll sic ane prince to be so aggreabill![17]

Lyndsay's assertion that he, who had previously been the carer, protector and main source of sustenance and pleasure for the young prince, was now, once James had taken his rightful place as monarch, nothing more than a 'wracheit worme', was a poetic image laden with political overtones. The image draws

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[16] Ibid, lines 48-49.
[17] Ibid, lines 26-28.

attention to, and redefines, the relationship between James V and his personal advisors, nobles and subjects. The roles are now reversed and it is the king who is now the source of all sustenance. As Hadley Williams has suggested, Lyndsay's 'deferential compliments made it plain, who had become the initiating participant at court, the leading patron and responsible "Potent Prince" ... who could provide to his needy realm the security and cheer that earlier had been provided to him.'[18] The image is a stark reminder by Lyndsay, to both the king and court, of their relative positions of influence and power, positions that were necessarily redefined, though not necessarily welcome by all, when James began his personal rule.

Lyndsay's rhetorical strategy to ingratiate himself with James and obtain the young king's patronage did not, however, merely rely upon panegyric praise, his demonstration of his own scholarly learning, or his reminding James of their previous relationship; his strategy becomes even more complex as the poem develops. As the dream begins, Lyndsay follows the well-established practice of having an allegorical figure guide the dreamer throughout his dream. As Hadley Williams has noted the choice of 'Remembrance' is particularly appropriate as Remembrance is associated with the Cardinal Virtue, Prudence, who was traditionally depicted with three eyes that looked to the past, present and future.[19] Through the use of Remembrance Lyndsay is able to allude to past experience, kingship and policies that provide a mirror for James V's present and future behaviour.

Dame Remembrance, in a 'twynkling of ane ee' takes the poet to the 'lawest hell', a place inhabited by 'papis', 'empriouris', 'kyngis' and the varied forms of ecclesiastics who were part of the Kirk:

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[18] Hadley Williams, 'David Lyndsay and the Making of James V', p. 212.
[19] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay: Selected Poems*, p. 211.

> … mony carefull cardinall,
> And archebischopis in thare pontificall,
>
> Proude and perverst prelattis out of nummer,
> Priouris, abbottis, and fals flattrand freris,
> To specifye thame all it wer ane cummer:
> Curious clerkis and preistis seculeris.[20]

The justification for their punishment and banishment to hell is provided by Remembrance when she tells the poet:

> … 'The cause of thare unhappy chance
> Was covatyce, luste, and ambitioun,
> …
> Als, thay did nocht instruct the ignorant,
> Provocand thame to penance, be precheing,
> Bot servit prencis insolent
> And war promovit be thare fenyeit flecheing.[21]

They failed to 'uphauld the Kirk in honestie…to sustene thare aistatis…[and] to be gevin to the puris.'[22] Instead of adhering to ideal Christian behaviour they had spent the wealth earned on behalf of the Kirk to play cards and dice. They had led loose living lives in which they spent their time with prostitutes rather than their parishioners and the needy souls of the Kirk. Even their bastard children had been provided for from the wealth of the Kirk. Lyndsay overtly outlines to his audience the incorrect behaviour of the ecclesiastical community and leaves us in little doubt just how despicable such behaviour is when he associates it with 'Symone Magus', 'the tratour Judas' and 'Machomete, that propheit poysonabyll'.[23] From an early sixteenth-century Christian point of view these three men, as well as others listed, represented all that was ungodly: they were for many Christians an anathema, and iconic representations of the antichrist. Simon Magus was a type of false prophet who offered money to the Apostles, Judas betrayed Christ for thirty

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[20] *The Dreme*, lines 161, 163, 169, 174 – 180.
[21] Ibid, lines 185-186, 190-193.
[22] Ibid, lines 203-205.
[23] Ibid, lines 217-219.

pieces of silver, and Machomete, Mohammed, was the founder of Islam. [24] Mohammed was, from an early sixteenth-century Christian perspective, a mortal enemy who advocated the worship of false idols.

The dreamer is then taken to 'ane den full dolorous' where 'prencis and lordis temporall' are further harshly tormented:

> Sum catyve kyngis, for cruell oppressioun,
> And uther sum, for thare wrangus conquest,
> War condampnit, thay and thare successioun.
> Sum for publict adultrye, and incest;
> Sum leit thare peple never leif in rest,
> Delyting so in plesour sensuall.
> Quharefor thare paine was thare perpetuall.[25]

This list of sinful, cruel and oppressive princely behaviour stipulates precisely those actions the poet deems inappropriate behaviour for a nation's sovereign. The verse makes it clear that such behaviour will result in the sovereign entering into the bowels of hell and extreme infamy. These points are forcefully and emphatically hammered home by Lyndsay in the next verse as he further associates this specific behaviour with particularly infamous historical and biblical despots and tyrants:

> There was the cursit Empriour Nero,
> Of everilk vice the horrabyll veschell.
> Thare was Pharo, with divers prencis mo,
> Oppressouris of the barnis of Israell;
> Herode and mony mo than I can tell.
> Ponce Pylat was thare, hangit be the hals,
> With unjuste jugis, for thare sentence fals.[26]

The Roman Emperor, Nero, was remembered for the murders of his brother and mother, his incest with his sister, his repression and persecution of Christians, and his numerous capricious acts, which culminated in the burning of Rome. Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt during the time of Moses and Aaron, was the oppressor of

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[24] Concerning Symone Magus see Acts 8: 18-19.
[25] *The Dreme*, lines 239-240, 246-252.
[26] Ibid, lines 253-259.

God's chosen people, the children of Israel. Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea who presided over the trial of Christ. As the poem continues and Lyndsay describes the sorrowful state of the nobility, women and common people who inhabit hell, the poet's condemnation of sinful man and his inappropriate behaviour becomes more inclusive. Women are described as having been:

> Plungit in paine, with mony reuthfull rair;
> Sum for thar pryde, sum for adultrye,
> Sum for thar tyisting men to lechorye;
>
> Sum had bene creuell and malicious,
> Sum for making of wrangous heretouris.[27]

Due to their envy the 'Comoun peple laye flitchrand in the fyre' and alongside them are perjuring merchants, 'Theiffis, revaris, and public oppressaris'.[28] In Lyndsay's depiction of Hell the unjust and sinful king inhabits a Hell where he rubs shoulder to shoulder with all of society's degenerates and this aids in reinforcing the poet's earlier delineation of what constitutes inappropriate princely behaviour.

Lyndsay, however, does not simply outline the incorrect behaviour of the sovereign. In the following section of the poem he has Remembrance take him on a cosmological journey with each of the planets he views associated with their respective classical gods, and over all the gods sits Jupiter, who is portrayed as an exemplum of the conduct and demeanour of an ideal secular sovereign. Jupiter is described as:

> That plesand prince, fair, dulce and delicate,
> Provokis peace and banesis debait.
>
> The auld poetis, be superstitioun,
> Held Jupiter the father principall
> Of all thare goddess, in conclusion,
> For his prerogatyvis in speciall,
> Als be his vertew in to generall.

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[27] Ibid, lines 271-275.
[28] Ibid, lines 302 & 312.

> To auld Saturne he makis resistance
> Quhen, in his malice, he walde wyrk vengeance.[29]

As opposed to the tyrannical Saturn, his father, who wreaked vengeance upon others through nothing more than his malice, and whom Jupiter deposed, Jupiter provokes peace and harmony within his sphere of influence. Jupiter was traditionally associated with the ideals of good governance, a point that Lyndsay highlights in the verse. The poet reinforces the idea that this is the correct behaviour that a prince should follow when he refers to 'the Kyng' who 'Satt in his speir, rycht amiabyll and sweit'.[30] Lyndsay is suggesting that those princes who imitate the virtues of Jupiter will find they rule a kingdom that, like Jupiter's, is one of harmony and peace. The juxtaposition between good and bad kingship becomes even more vivid as the dreamer continues his journey to 'enterit in the hevin impyre'.[31] Here sits 'God in to his holy throne devyne', with Christ at his side and Saint Peter nearby, and the description of the kingdom of heaven that follows is a tour de force of the effects of good governance.[32] The 'infinyte multytude', that is mankind, who make 'servyce unto this celsitude' experience 'compleit peace...interminabyll' and 'glore and honour was inseparabyll'; there was no rancour, no hunger, all was 'perfyte charitie'.[33] The poem is in effect a subtle form of *speculum principis* and Lyndsay holds up a bifocal mirror to his prince and the Scots court, one that reflects not only an image of negative kingship and its effect upon the country, but also one which reflects positive aspects of kingship and the harmonious results of good governance.

In placing before his sovereign a *speculum principis*, that is a poem in the 'advice-to-princes' genre, albeit in a subtle form, Lyndsay was not being original,

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[29] Ibid, lines 461-469.
[30] Ibid, lines 458 & 459.
[31] Ibid, line 514.
[32] Ibid, line 514.
[33] Ibid, lines 573, 578-579, 585.

he was continuing a literary tradition embedded in both Scots and English literature during the late Medieval and early Renaissance era. Chaucer's short poem, *Lak of stedfastness*, written in the latter years of the fourteenth century, is an excellent, if rather simple, but very concise example of this genre. Chaucer tells Richard II that:

> Trouthe is put doun, resoun is holden fable;
> Vertu hath now no dominacioun;
> Pitee exyled, no man is merciable;
> Through covetyse is blent discrecioun.
> The world hath mad a permutacioun
> Fro right to wrong, fro trouthe to fikelnesse,
> That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.
>
> *Lenvoy to King Richard*
>
> O prince, desyre to be honourable,
> Cherish thy folk and hate extorcioun!
> Suffre nothing that may be reprievable
> To thyn estat don in thy regioun.
> Shew forth thy swerd of castigacioun,
> Dred God, do law, love trouthe and worthinesse,
> And wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse.[34]

The poet's soul-suffering plea to his king is in many ways a microcosmic clash between the ideals of vice and virtue that is also evident in Lindsay's *The Dreme* and in many of the morality plays and the tropes of advice that flourished in the early sixteenth century. These poems and plays derive much of their force from an intersection of the timeless with the topical and local in a manner which frequently reinforces the focus upon the allegorical and political significance of the verse.[35]

Treatises, plays and poetry describing, allegorising and justifying the correct behaviour and lifestyle of princes, counsellors and courtiers found, as Greg Walker has noted, 'a more than ready audience' and the question that must be acknowledged and explored by historians and critics is what effect the writer

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[34] Chaucer, *Lak of stedfastnesse*, lines 16-28 in *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 654.
[35] Kratzman, p. 198.

expected this insistent, but fundamentally oblique, moral counsel to have upon the prince and those who served him at his court.[36] For some critics such tropes of advice were part of an attempt by writers to limit the power of the king. Judith Ferster has suggested that piety, respect for authority, and regard for his own safety made it necessary for a writer to attribute the ruler's crimes and misdemeanours to his advisors rather than to blame the king himself, but that 'always implicit in the genre of advice to the king was the idea of the control of the king.'[37] To some extent this is certainly a valid suggestion, as *speculam principis* typically stipulate the correct behaviour of a prince, but at the same time advice is only of any value if the person to whom it is offered is believed to be both capable of heeding the advice, and able to behave in the virtuous manner suggested. This implies that the prince being advised, in Lindsay's case, James V, is fundamentally virtuous, regardless of previous behaviour, something that James himself would likely never have doubted.

Even the popular morality plays of the early sixteenth century, such as *Hick Scorner*, *Mankind* and *Youth*, or similar thematic poems, such as Skelton's *Bowge of Court*, offered generalised recommendations concerning moral behaviour in a manner than can be seen as oblique 'advice-to-princes' that simultaneously delineate correct princely behaviour and inherent virtue in the protagonist. In such texts the personified, often exuberant vices and virtues contend over a passive protagonist. The protagonist is initially incapable of understanding his moral predicament but eventually, through a journey of self-discovery, proves he is a worthy prince or nobleman who is able to ameliorate his situation and achieve true virtue. The genre of 'advice-to-princes' implicitly acknowledges that the protagonist has within him the ability to be moral, just and

[36] Walker, *Persuasive Fictions*, p. 104-107.
[37] Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, p. 67-68.

virtuous, that it is merely the vice of those that surround him that is to blame for his present behaviour and situation. Though the suggestion that the prince is capable of true virtue is in itself a politically charged speech act of praise, the genre offered the poet far more than an opportunity to praise indirectly the sovereign's virtue: it also offered an opportunity for him to suggest that it was not the king, or the king's actions, that were responsible for the sorry state of the court and kingdom. It became an apologia, and in particular, depending on whether the writer was part of the prince's court and government, it offered the writer a means of 'exclusion and inclusion' similar to that discussed concerning More, Skelton and Hawe's use of panegyric verse in the previous chapter. It offered a subtle means of apportioning blame upon those who had advised, or presently advise, the prince, by associating them through court allegory with specific vices or inappropriate moral, social and political behaviour. This rhetorical strategy becomes apparent when we look at the next section of Lyndsay's *The Dreme*, in which the poem discusses the recent past and the reasons for the prevailing political situation in Scotland.

After the poet is taken on an extensive tour of the known world, in which Lyndsay gives an outstanding display of his geographical knowledge that we can safely assume would have impressed his audience, he then asks Dame Remembrance to show him 'the countre of Scotland' and explain:

> 'Quhat is the cause our boundis bene so bair?'
> Quod I, 'Or quhate dois mufe our misere?
> Or quhareof dois proceed our povertie?
>
> For, throw the supporte of your hie prudence,
> Of Scotland I persave the properties,
> And als considderis, be experience,
> Of this countre the gret commodities.[38]

[38] *The Dreme*, lines 788, 810-816.

Dame Remembrance had shown him a land surrounded by seas in which fish dwelled in abundance, a land of fruitful mountains capable of sustaining the nation's beasts and valleys where crops should be able to flourish. The river and lochs were full of fish of all sundry types. Forests teemed with deer, rabbits and hares. Mines provided gold, silver, precious stones and other metals. The land was capable of providing all that was necessary to sustain the people of Scotland: 'Meit, drynk, fyre, clathis'.[39] Moreover, there was no:

> More fairer peple, nor of gretar ingyne,
> Nor of more strength, gret dedis tyll indure.[40]

If the country is capable of such wealth the poet continues:

> Quharefor, I pray yow that ye wald define
> The principall cause quharefor we ar so pure,
> For I marvell gretlie, I you assure,
> Considderand the peple and the ground,
> That ryches suld nocht in this realm rebound.[41]

The 'falt', Remembrance informs the dreamer, is not 'in to the peple nor the land' as the people are pleasant and the land is fair.[42] The land, however, she continues, 'lakkis na uther thing/ but labour and the pepyllis governyng'.[43] She then becomes more specific and informs the dreamer that the cause of strife in Scotland is due in 'speciall' to the 'Wantyng of justice, polycie, and peace.'[44] It is the prince, the 'heid' of the nation, whom she claims is the 'hole relief' and 'remeid', and the one who 'countynewall…Sulde be in justice exicutioun.'[45] Lyndsay further reinforces the idea that the state of the nation is greatly influenced by the actions of the prince by having Remembrance use the metaphor of the prince as a shepherd. If the shepherd takes 'no cure in kepyng of his floke' then 'lupis cumis' – the wolf

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[39] Ibid, lines 832.
[40] Ibid, lines 834-835.
[41] Ibid, lines 836-840.
[42] Ibid, lines 844-845.
[43] Ibid, lines 846-847.
[44] Ibid, lines 859-860.
[45] Ibid, lines 878-879, 888-889.

– will kill the sheep and the flock will be destroyed.[46] If the shepherd does his job well, however, and looks after his sheep, he will have a prosperous flock. Lyndsay is not, as it might initially seem, attacking the behaviour of James V in this section, as James had, when Lyndsay produced the poem, just began his personal rule. He is attacking corrupt leadership and governance in general and laying the possibility of both the blame and solution of Scotland's future prosperity and peace firmly upon the 'heid' of the nation: the prince.

In the next section of the poem, however, the dreamer meets Jhone the Comoun Weill and the blame for the nation's current predicament becomes more historically specific and topical when the poem alludes to the Duke of Albany in the lines:

> My tender feindis ar all put to the flycht,
> For Polecey is fled again to France.[47]

Initially, Queen Margaret, as James IV had stipulated in his will, ruled as regent on behalf of her infant son. In 1515, however, the Duke of Albany, cousin of the dead king James IV, and next-in-succession to the throne after James V, was called to Scotland and made Lord Governor of the realm by leading Scottish nobles who would no longer accept Margaret Tudor, the daughter of King Henry VII of England as Regent.[48] From then until 1524, when he left Scotland for the last time, Albany was the acting head of the state. There was then a scheme devised amongst the lords in parliament whereby the physical safekeeping of the young James was to be entrusted to first one group of leading politicians for a three month period, and then another group, followed by a third and fourth group for subsequent quarters. Archibald Douglass, sixth earl of Angus, who was the queen's second husband, his kinsmen James Douglas, third earl of Morton, and

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[46] Ibid, lines 891 & 895.
[47] Ibid, lines 946-947.
[48] Shire, p. 119; Palmer, p. 67.

Gavin Dunbar, archbishop of Glasgow, were the principal members of the first group. When the first quarter came to an end Angus simply refused to hand over the young king and effectively executed a *coup d'etat.*[49] James V became a virtual prisoner and puppet, with Angus legitimising his position by having the king, in 1526, at the age of fourteen, declared by parliament as having reached his majority. In 1527 he became the Chancellor and continued to cement his influence upon the court and parliament by placing his relatives in positions within the royal Household that ensured the king was under the physical supervision of his own supporters.[50] His kin, George Douglass of Pittendreich, James Douglass of Drumlanrig and James Douglass of Parkhead became respectively carver to the king, master of the wine cellar and master of the larder; positions that initially may seem unimportant, but which meant that the king was under the constant care of the Douglass clan.[51] Angus's assumption of power did not go unchallenged and his years as Chancellor were those of bitter, violent internal turmoil and struggle amongst magnates for supremacy. James V would not rule in his own right until 1528, after having made, if we are to believe Pitscottie's dramatic tale, a dashing escape on horseback under the cover of darkness, from his stepfather's protection in Falkland to Stirling.[52]

The poem implies that the period of rule by Albany had been one of justice and peace but that of Angus which replaced it was a time of injustice, corruption and anarchy. The blame for the nation's predicament lies not with James V but with his immediate predecessors in government. Moreover, those who have

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[49] Cameron, pp. 9-11.
[50] Ibid, p. 9.
[51] Ibid, p. 9.
[52] Pitscottie, Robert Lyndsay of, (1899 – 1911) *The Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, vol i, pp. 323-326.

allowed this situation to take place are condemned by Jhone the Comoun Weill, for, he tells the dreamer:

> Lordis of religioun thay go lyke seculeris,
> Takin more compt in telling there deneris,
> Nor thay do of thare constitutioun;
> Thus ar thay blyndit be ambitioun.
>
> Oure gentyll men ar all degenerat;
> Liberaltie and Lawte, boith ar loste,
> And Cowardyce with lordis is laureate,
> And Knychtlie Curage turnit in brag an boste.[53]

The bishops are accused of having failed in their religious duties and having become ambitious, profit driven and secular. The nobility is accused of being degenerate, disloyal and little more than braggarts who lack any signs of courage. It has been a bad time, Jhone remarks, to have had 'ovir young ane king' for this has led to a sorry state of affairs which can only be put right by the 'wysedome of ane gude auld prudent kyng.'[54] Lyndsay, as the main part of the poem comes to a close, has adroitly removed the blame for the present state of the nation from the shoulders of James V and placed it upon those who forced Albany to return to France, such as Mary Tudor, Arran and Angus. The original audience of the poem, the comparatively small court of James V, would have brought to their experience of the poem not only a knowledge of both the poet and James's backgrounds, they would also have brought preconceived ideas concerning recent political and social events and the prince's culpability concerning the present state of the country. The poem, however, acts as an apologia on behalf of the new king that subtly coerces the audience into making a fresh reappraisal of recent events and to what degree blame can be placed upon James for the present situation. It is important to recognise and understand that autobiographical and historical facts are specifically selected and formalised to enrich and demonstrate the depth and

[53] *The Dreme*, lines 984-991.
[54] Ibid, lines 1011 & 1005.

applicability of Lyndsay's truth concerning these matters. Furthermore, whilst the 'Exhortatatioun to the Kyngis Grace' that ends the poem is full of moral advice on how the prince should behave, as we have previously mentioned, this implicitly acknowledges that James V is capable of being a moral, prudent and honourable prince who has the capacity within him to see through flatterers and recognise 'gude counsall'.[55]

In *The Dreme* moral and political sapience and request are closely and subtly entangled with the pragmatic imperatives of Lyndsay having to attempt to obtain the patronage of James V when the young king took personal control of his court and country in 1528. Like Skelton and More, Lyndsay was writing from a position of exclusion and he similarly adopted rhetorical strategies that not only included flattery of the new king but also emphasised the need for a change in court and government personal. As Hoyle has succinctly acknowledged:

> It must be admitted that those most concerned with counsel were men for whom (in twentieth-century parlance) the phone had ceased to ring, who, whilst they considered themselves entitled to a role in decision-making, were excluded by their political opponents.[56]

Unlike Skelton, however, whose appeals fell on barren ground in a conspicuous failure to regain a position at the court of Henry VIII, Lyndsay appears to have been far more successful in his bid for patronage. His success appears to have been almost immediate. He received in 1528 a double payment to cover the amount of arrears that he was owed for 1527 and, as James took personal control of the country, Lyndsay was quickly reinstated as a 'familiar' of the young king.[57] Throughout his career at the Scottish court he continued to receive substantial

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[55] Ibid, lines 1115.
[56] Hoyle, R. (2001) *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s*, p. 60.
[57] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay: Selected Poems*, p. viii; Hadley Williams, 'David Lyndsay and the Making of James V', p. 206.

financial rewards and his close proximity to the king led him into positions of trust and influence.[58] The 1530's were years of diplomatic travel for Lyndsay in which he not only represented Scottish interests regarding trade but was also involved in marriage negotiations to find a suitable spouse for James V.[59] This era would also see him become Lord Lyon King of Arms, the chief herald of the Scottish court, a prestigious position he held outright from 1542 but seems to have fulfilled as occasion demanded from as early as 1538.[60] As a royal herald Lyndsay was charged with the delivery of diplomatic messages both in Scotland and abroad, he was frequently dispatched on official business to the courts of Flanders, England, France, and Denmark.[61] When Lyndsay's second poem, *The Complaynt*, was produced in 1529, the poet was clearly no longer writing from the position of the excluded courtier but from a position of inclusion, as one of the king's privileged servants. This shows in the decisive changes that can be seen in the rhetorical strategies that underpin the poem.

Initially *The Complaynt* begins in a fashion similar to the earlier poem and typical of the genre of petitionary verse we find in Dunbar's oeuvre. Lyndsay asks James in a colloquial, personal, direct but always respectful tone why, after been 'so lang in servyce' he has been so 'infortunate' and not been 'with [his] brether in courte rewardit'.[62] The answer he provides himself, when James is told:

> I wald sum wyse man did me teche
> Quhidder that I suld flatter or flech.
> I wyll nochte flyte, that I conclude,
> For crabyng of thy celistude
> And to flatter, I am defamit:
> ...

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[58] Hadley Williams, 'David Lyndsay and the Making of James V', p. 206.
[59] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay: Selected Poem*, p. ix.
[60] Hadley Williams, 'David Lyndsay and the Making of James V', p. 206.
[61] Edington, *Court and Culture*, p. 26.
[62] Lyndsay, *The Complaynt*, lines 13, 12 & 20. In line 20 'my' has been changed to 'his'. All references to this poem will be taken from Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay: Selected Poems* and the poem will be referred to from this point on as *The Complaynt*.

> Debarrit fra me all gredynes.
> Gredie men that ar delgygent
> Rycht oft obtenis thare intent,
> And failyeis noch to conqueis landis
> And, namelye at young prencis handis.[63]

The poet claims to have failed to obtain rewards because he has not been willing to flatter, cajole or scold, nor has he been capable of the persistent greediness of those who have taken advantage of the young prince during his childhood. Lyndsay has instead offered long service to his prince, lying 'nychtlie be thy cheik' whilst others, those who 'full far to seik', were 'gevin many rich rewardis'.[64] The poet juxtaposes his own loyal personal service and lack of rewards, of his having lain in the young James V's chamber as his protector whilst he slept, with the absence of others, who have now received rewards at such a perilous time. He implies, through what can clearly be construed as a political use of verse, that many of those at court have obtained their wealth, land and positions of influence through flattery and greed, and that they have taken advantage of the young prince. In doing this Lyndsay offers not only an apologia for the present state of the country but justification for any changes in court and government positions that James V implements as he takes personal control of the nation. Moreover, the first section of the poem vividly establishes the political, financial and social dependence of the poet, and by implication all those at court, upon their royal patron. It is a stark reminder to the poet's courtly audience from where it is all power, prestige and reward flows: the king.

As the poem continues, Lyndsay again uses the rhetorical strategy of selective retrospective memory stimulation that has been discussed concerning *The Dreme* to remind James V of services previously rendered in order to define

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[63] *The Complaynt*, lines 29-33, 60-64.
[64] Ibid, lines 78-80.

his position as a trusted and long serving loyal servant. Calling upon others as his witnesses, the Queen, the Chancellor, and the deceased old Willie Dile, he briefly enumerates how he was the prince's childhood companion. The king is depicted as having been carried on Lyndsay's back as an infant, with the poet playing the lute to entertain him and the prince's first words are portrayed as having been 'Pa, Da Lyn'.[65] Hadley Williams has suggested that this is a child's attempt to say 'play David Lyndsay'.[66] It could also be that the poet implies that in the past the infant James had called him 'Pa': that is father, and this implies an even more intimate relationship between the poet and prince.[67] The poet does not, however, elaborate at great length or in great detail upon his own and James's past relationship, instead he reminds the king of past services by stimulating a more recent memory when he tells James that:

> … I, at lenth, in to my *Dreme*,
> My sindry service did expreme.[68]

Lyndsay draws specific attention to his recent verse, *The Dreme*, and the service to James that he has already outlined in that poem.

In the longest section of the poem, Lyndsay then delineates the causes of both the poet's and the nation's recent misfortune. The initial cause of this misfortune is made vividly apparent when Lyndsay informs his audience:

> …my hart is wounder sare
> Quhen I have in remembrance
> The suddand change, to my mischance.
> The kyng was bot twelf yeris of aige
> Quhen new rewlaris come in thare raige,
> For commoun weill makand no cair,
> Bot for thare proffeit singulair.[69]

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[65] Ibid, line 92.
[66] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay Selected Poems*, p. 230, fn. 92.
[67] An insight I owe to Greg Walker.
[68] *The Complaynt*, lines 99-100.
[69] Ibid, lines 124-130.

Lyndsay, now writing from a position of influence and under the protection of James V, is far more specific and caustic in his blame of others for the nation's recent political and social predicament. It was when James was twelve years of age that Albany returned to France and Margaret declared her son of an age to govern. Margaret, and her third husband Arran, are accused of having used the young prince to profit themselves rather than the country. They, and Archibald Douglass, the Earl of Angus, who took control of the government when he continued to keep James in his care, are accused of being 'lyk wytles fullis', who took the:

> … young prince frome the sculis,
> Quhare he, under Obedience,
> Was lernand vertew and science,
> And haistelie plat in his hand
> The governance of all scotland.[70]

Gavin Dunbar's post as the king's teacher, and effectively the king's education, ended in 1525 with the ascendancy of Douglass.[71] James is portrayed as an obedient student who was removed from the study of virtue and science through the corrupt stupidity of the 'new rewlaris'. That James was foolishly placed in a position he was not ready to hold is emphatically reinforced through the ship of state metaphor that follows. The poet asks:

> … quho wald, in ane stormye blast,
> Quhen marinaris bene all agast
> Throw dainger of the seis raige,
> Wald tak ane chylde of tender aige
> Quhilk never had bene on the sey
> And to his bidding al obey,
> Gevying hym haill the governall
> Of schip, marchand, and marinall?
> For dreid of rockis and foreland,
> To put the ruther in his hand
> Without Godds grace is no refuge:
> Geve thare be dainger, ye may juge.[72]

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[70] Ibid, lines 131-136.
[71] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay Selected Poems*, p. 231.
[72] *The Complaynt*, lines 137-148.

Would it, the poet asks, be regarded as sensible to place a child at the rudder of a ship in stormy weather when all about are dangerous rocks and headlands. Lyndsay, through his use of the metaphor, leaves us in little doubt as to the stupidity of placing the twelve year old James at the nation's helm. He may continue to remark that he will 'nocht say that it was treassoun', for even though he now had the king's protection it would have been foolhardy to make such an open accusation against such powerful nobles as Margaret or Douglass, but this line subtly implies that it should be regarded as a treasonous act to have placed 'ane chylde of tender aige' in such a position.[73]

As the section continues the poet draws, through vivid and lively descriptions, attention to James's recent behaviour: his lack of education, his gambling with cards and dice, his reckless gallops over the sands at Leith and his many sexual encounters. Lyndsay, however, does not cast blame upon James, instead he encourages a reappraisal of the king's actions by pointing out how James was guided by advisors who offered 'facound flattryng wordis fair' in order to benefit themselves. Advisors who:

> Sum gart him raiffe at the rakcat,
> Sum harl hym to the hurly hakcat.[74]

The poet implies through the use of 'gart' and 'harl' – 'caused' and 'dragged' – that the king was not merely encouraged, but rather persuaded, or even forced into dangerous and immoral activities and behaviour. As Hadley Williams has pointed out, the suggestion that James was an innocent, an ill-used participant in many of the activities, is strong in numerous lines of this section of the poem.[75] Even the king's sexual exploits, a topical issue of concern and discussion for many Scots,

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[73] Ibid, line 151.
[74] Ibid, line 175-176.
[75] Hadley Williams, 'David Lyndsay and the Making of James V', p. 214.

are presented as the result of pressurised counsel, almost a mini-drama in which James played a passive role as his courtiers cajole and persuade him into taking their immoral advice.[76] One courtier said to him:

> '…schir, I knaw ane maid in Fyfe,
> Ane of the lusteast wantoun lassis,
> Quhare to, schir, be Gods blude scho passis!'
> 'Hald thy toung, brother,' quod ane uther,
> 'I knaw ane fairer, be fyftene further!
> Schir, quhen ye plais to Leithgow pas,
> Thare sall ye se ane lusty las!'
> 'Now trittyll, trattyll, trolylow,'
> Quod the thrid man, 'Thow dois bot mow!
> Quhen his grace cumis to fair Sterlyng,
> Thar sall he se ane dayis derlyng!'
> 'Schir,' quod the fourt, 'tak my counsall,
> And go, all, to the hie boirdall.
> Thare may we lope at lybertie,
> Withouttin ony gravitie.'
> Thus every man said for hym self,
> And did amangis thame part the pelf.[77]

It is almost a free-for-all between the prince's advisors in their attempts to offer James sex with women. They coerce him into sexual relations in order that they can 'part the pelf', that is, obtain a share of the spoils that can be obtained through providing the young king with women who are willing to offer sexual gratification. The king's advisors, who should have been nurturing the young James with moral and virtuous advice, are portrayed by the poet as little more that pimps: a politically laden image when we consider that James was indeed provided with a string of mistresses by his nobility.[78] Rather than being an admonition of James's behaviour Lyndsay offers an apologia that casts the blame for the king's behaviour upon those who were his advisors during the years prior to his personal rule.

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[76] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay Selected Poems*, p. 232.
[77] *The Complaynt*, lines 238-254.
[78] Concerning James V's many mistresses see Thomas, A. (1999) ''Dragonis baith and dowis ay in double forme': Women at the Court of James V, 1513-1542' in Ewan, E. & Meikle, M. (eds.) *Women in Scotland c.1100-c.1750*, Tuckwell Press, East Linton.

The dispersion and dissemination of blame becomes even more specific and narrow as the poet begins to allude to the earl of Angus's assumption of power in November 1525. Lyndsay, who tells of how he saw these events take place with 'baith my eine', creates a subtle sense of tension and topicality in the verse as he recapitulates, from the perspective of a personal witness, the bitter and often brutal dissension and unrest that occurred amongst those who initially had joint custody of James and shared control of the Scottish government.[79] Queen Margaret and her allies were, in an image that reinforces the idea of illegitimacy, dishonesty and corruption, behind the earl of Angus and his allies' actions, soon:

> … harlit out be the heid
> And utheris tuke the governing,
> Weill wors than thay in alkin thing.
> Thay lordis tuke no more regaird
> But quho mycht purches best rewaird.
> Sum to thare freindis gat benefyceis
> And uther sum gat byschopreis;
> For every lord, as thocht best,
> Brocht in ane bird to fyll the nest,
> To be ane wacheman to his marrow;
> Thay gan to draw at the cat harrow.[80]

Margaret and Arran may have been 'wytles fullis' but Angus, we are told, was 'Weill worse' than they were in every way. Angus and his allies are accused of having abused their positions of power to profit themselves through 'benefyceis' and 'byschopreis'. Moreover, they are further accused of having sent men to 'fyll the nest', a play on the proverb, 'it is a foul bird that fouls its own nest', the implication being that these men were sent deliberately to foul the nest: to cause trouble and dissension at the court and within the council. They were not only 'wacheman to his marrow', spies on one another, but to 'gan to draw at the cat harrow'; like the game in which crossed loops of string are pulled in different ways, they aggressively oppose one another to thwart each other's plans. The

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[79] *The Complaynt*, line 290.
[80] *The Complaynt*, lines 298-308.

emphasis that Lyndsay places upon the illegitimacy of first Queen Margaret, and then Angus's, rules, simultaneously and subtly reinforces the idea of James V's rightful place as the nation's legitimate sovereign.

The poet, however, does not merely condemn the actions of the nobility in this section of the poem, he also condemns both the inaction and actions of the prelates of the Kirk. He tells of how:

> The proudest prelates of the kirk
> Was faine to hyde thame in the myrk
> That tyme, so failyeit wes thare sycht.
> Sen syne thay may nocht thole the lycht
> Of Christis trew gospel to be sene,
> So blyndit is thare corporall ene
> With wardly lustis sensuall,
> Taking in realms the governall,
> Baith gyding court and cessioun
> Contrar to thare professioun.[81]

Hadley Williams has suggested that Lyndsay's specific target in these lines may have been James Beaton, Archbishop of Glasgow (1509-23) and St Andrews (1523-39).[82] Beaton, who became the Chancellor in 1513, was forced by Angus in 1526 to give up the Great Seal. The accusation here is that Beaton, and other bishops and similar ecclesiasts, were deliberately blind, corrupt and negligent in their duties to both God and their king. They led secular lives in which they were involved in government and courts of justice rather than adhere to their true profession of preaching 'Christis law to the peple'.[83] Much of the discord that Scotland had recently experienced, the struggle for power that culminated in bloody battles to remove the king from Angus's charge, battles 'Att Lythigow, Melros and Edinburgh', are blamed upon the 'perverst prelates' who 'gar ilk lord

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[81] Ibid, lines 309-318.
[82] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay Selected Poems*, p. 234.
[83] *The Complaynt*, line 324.

with uther fecht.'[84] The behaviour of these prelates, and nobles such as Angus, created a court where:

> ... tyrannis, traitouris and transgressouris,
> And commoun publicit plaine oppressouris,
> Men murdresaris and commoun theiffis
> In to that court gat, all, releiffis.[85]

It is, according to the poem, certain nobles and prelates who are responsible for the nation's recent troubles and strife, not James V.

As Hadley Williams has suggested, Lyndsay deliberately reordered and interpreted political changes barely remembered by the young king in order to redefine the king's place within these early events.[86] Hadley Williams has further suggested that in doing this Lyndsay obliquely emphasises that the continuation of James's adolescent activities would be evidence of immaturity and that through the poem the poet brings 'James to question the nature of kinship'.[87] To a certain extent this is a valid suggestion, but the poem does much more than this, it draws the audience's attention, an initial audience that would have been the court, those of influence within the nation, important individuals who would have discussed and dispersed the poem's ideas to a wider populace, to reappraise both James V's personal behaviour and his contribution to recent political events. In what is a politically charged use of verse, Lyndsay uses the poem to act as an apologia that firmly deflects any blame for the previous state of the country away from the king. In doing this he was following a similar political tactic that was adopted by James V himself. The king wrote, in a letter to Henry VIII on 23 June 1528:

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[84] *The Complaynt*, lines 356, 344 & 348. Edington has suggested in Edington, C. (1997) 'Repentance and reform: political and religious culture in pre-Reformation Scotland' in *RS 11*, pp. 108-122, that in contrast to *The Dreme*, *The Complaynt* is informed by a somewhat more precise criticism: Lindsay attacks what he perceived as a corrupt ecclesiastical establishment and urges James to put an end to the prevalent abusive practices of the Kirk.

[85] *The Complaynt*, lines 361-364.

[86] Hadley Williams, 'David Lyndsay and the Making of James V', p. 213.

[87] Ibid, p. 214.

> Derrest uncle, Ze sall understand ye Estatis of oure Realme and Counsaile ar in ane parte discountit of ye ordoure of justice ministrant in tyme bypast be ye Erle of Angus ...[88]

James then continues in the letter specifically to lay the blame for recent disturbances and the lack of justice throughout the country firmly upon Angus. Writing to his uncle again, some nine years after the event, James describes how he had confronted Angus before members of his council and called him to task for his 'abusing of our auctorite'.[89] As Cameron has commented, 'the impression being given was of a king now willing to participate actively in governing his country and prepared to publicly upbraid his Chancellor.'[90] Simultaneously, he censures Angus's actions to imply the earl is culpable concerning the previous turmoil and injustice that has taken place within the country to remove any blame from himself. Also, during the September parliament of 1528, Angus and many of his supporters were charged with having committed treason when they acted against the terms of the 1525 act of parliament in which the scheme of rotation concerning the king's care had been agreed.[91] Lyndsay includes political propaganda within the verse that mimics that of his sovereign and patron.

As the poem continues the poet's rhetorical strategy becomes more complex when he tells of how:

> ... thay alone quhilk had the gyding,
> Thay culde nocht keip thare feit frome slyding'
> Bot of thare lyffis thay had sic dreid
> That thay war faine tyll trott over the Tweid.[92]

In these few short lines Lyndsay highlights very recent political changes to emphasise that the beginning of James personal rule has created a distinct

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[88] *State Papers of Henry VIII*, vol. iv, pt. iv, no. 183.
[89] Ibid, no. 548.
[90] Cameron, p. 14.
[91] Ibid, p. 16-17.
[92] *The Complaynt*, lines 369-372.

disjunction from the previous rule of Angus. The Earl, along with his brother George, his uncle, Archibald of Kilspindie, and Alexander Drummond of Carnock, were summonsed for treason on 13 July 1528.[93] Angus was found guilty, his lands and goods were forfeited and he was sent into exile in England on the southern side of the Tweed. Lyndsay implies that the subsequent immorality, political strife and overt corruption that he has associated with this era of Angus's rule, during the earlier sections of the verse, ended as the young James took control of the country and Angus was tried for treason and sent into exile.

The poet then continues his rehabilitation and transformation of James V's sovereign image as he delineates the king's present behaviour and virtues. In clear contradiction to the king's previous behaviour outlined earlier in the poem, the implicit promise that Lyndsay acknowledged in *The Dreme*, that James was capable of being a moral, prudent and honourable prince, has come to fruition. Lyndsay addresses the king in a more formal tone and style that emphasises James's elevated status as an independent sovereign to say:

> Now, potent prince, I say to the,
> I thank the haly Trinitie
> That I have levit to se this daye
> That all that warld is went awaye,
> And thow to no man art subjectit,
> Nor to sic counsalouris coactit.[94]

The poem stresses that the political situation in Scotland has now changed and how the poet is thankful to God to have lived long enough to see that the 'warld is went awaye' that was associated with Angus's rule. It is made emphatically clear by Lyndsay that James is no longer subjected to, or constrained by, immoral counsellors. The king is now associated with the four Cardinal Virtues of Justice, Prudence, Strength and Chastity to show the change in James's behaviour and the

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[93] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay Selected Poems*, p. 235.
[94] *The Complaynt*, lines 373-378.

effect of his direct rule upon the country. In order for James to take up the identity of sovereign greatness, Lyndsay shows that the young king now exemplifies ideal communal moral values to an extraordinary degree; the association with the Virtues symbolically signifying that James has now completed the necessary transactions of heterogeneity and homogeneity that sovereignty demands.[95] Justice now:

> … haldis hir sweird on hie,
> With hir ballance of equitie,
> And in this realme hes maid sic ordour,
> Baith throw the Heland and the Bourdour,
> That Oppressioun and all his fallowis
> Ar hangit heych apon the gallous.[96]

This alludes to specific actions that had recently been made by the king. In May and June of 1529, James held justice-ayres in the border towns, whilst at the same time he had Colin, Earl of Argyll, pursue and crush opponents in the Western Isles.[97] In June 1530 he summoned a second muster at Peebles and Dumfries at which pledges were taken and the troublemaker John Armstrong of Gilnockie, along with his followers was hanged. Hanging a notorious border reiver like Armstrong would have, as Cameron has succinctly noted, 'enhanced the royal image as a 'puir man's king'.[98] The fact that Lyndsay refers to this event in the poem and again in the *Interlude* demonstrates the impact and importance the reiver's death had upon the court and how such an event could be used as both flattery and propaganda.[99] In the *Interlude* – believed to be a shorter, earlier version of *The Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* – performed at Linlithgow in 1540, Lyndsay has his Poor Man point to, and identify the king in the audience, and not

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[95] Fradenburg, p. 120.
[96] *The Complaynt*, lines 381-386.
[97] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay Selected Poems*, p. 235.
[98] Cameron, p. 81.
[99] There is no extant version of the *Interlude*, but a summary of the play, performed in the palace at Linlithgow on 6 January 1540, was sent by Sir William Eure to Thomas Cromwell. The letter is dated 26 January 1540 and is provided in full in Hamer, vol ii, pp. 1-6.

the one on stage, as the real sovereign who had hanged Armstrong. The repeated allusions to the execution of Armstrong demonstrates the king's resolve in performing one of his primary duties as sovereign, that of bringing justice to all areas of the country, including the previously lawless border.[100] James's recent political and judicial activities are thus portrayed as his actively following the course of virtuous justice. Through the rule of James 'Sensualitie', 'Povertie', 'Dissimulance' and 'Foly' are all banished and:

> Polyce and Peace begynnis to plant,
> That verteous men can no thing want,
> And as for sleuthfull idyll lownis,
> Sall fetterit be in the gailyeownis![101]

Furthermore, the poem, having previously described the secular nature and lack of spirituality associated with ecclesiasts, places the prospect of religious reform firmly in the hands of James V. He will banish idolatry, superstition and vain traditions to:

> Cause them mak ministratioun
> Conforme to thare vocatioun,
> To preche with unfenyeit intentis,
> And trewly use the sacramentis.[102]

As we reach the last section of the poem, in which the poet humorously requests a loan of 'gold ane thousand pound or tway' and to be appropriately looked after in his 'letter aige', the poem ends in a serious tone with a firm reminder of the king's rightful place within the hierarchal system. He was 'ane instrument / to that gret kyng omnipotent': God.[103]

Only by placing the text accurately within the Scottish historical and cultural climate that prevailed at the time of its production can we obtain an understanding of the poet's motivation in creating it. As Mason has suggested,

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[100] Cameron, *James V, Foreword* by Norman Macdougall, p. x.
[101] *The Complaynt*, lines 403-406.
[102] Ibid, lines 413-416.
[103] Ibid, lines 462, 505 & 499-500.

Lyndsay's poetry only becomes truly comprehensible when set within political and historical contexts, within social and ideological tensions current at James V's court, and the Stewart dynasty's own desire to promote a self-image redolent of the aspirations of the Renaissance monarchies of Europe more generally.[104] Lyndsay, through the rhetorically balanced and provocative juxtaposition of the recent past and present political and social conditions delineated in the poem, creates a powerful and coercive piece of political propaganda. Through its dramatisation of the recent history and James's evolution as sovereign, the poem effectively and adroitly encourages a reappraisal of the young king's previously questionable moral behaviour and acts as an apologia concerning previous political events to cast specific blame concerning the nation's disarray on those who ruled in James's name. Lyndsay does not provide us with a biography but rather a hagiography as part of James V's personal mythology and image making, the historical facts rearranged and discussed in order to advance an alluring iconic image of the young king. Moreover, Lyndsay skilfully and imaginatively associates the peace and stability that the country was presently experiencing with the personal rule and policies of James. The poet does not imply that a change of court personnel should occur, as he had done in the earlier *Dreme*, but that continued stability can be obtained through the present rule of James V, and by implication, the continued service of the king's present advisors, advisors that included Lyndsay himself. Lyndsay now writes from a position of political and social inclusion and the rhetorical strategies he adopts, though not altogether dissimilar from his earlier verse, is clearly different as it now supports the present political status quo.

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[104] Mason, 'Laicisation and the Law: The Reception of Humanism in Early Renaissance Scotland', p. 22.

Lyndsay's use of this rhetorical strategy can also be seen in the poem *The Testament and Complaynt of our Soverane Lordis Papyngo*.[105] Written in 1530, a year after *The Complaynt*, when Lyndsay's position at court was secure, the poet is far bolder in his castigation and apportioning of blame upon those other than James V. Lyndsay, through avian allegory and the dying testimony of the poetic persona of Papyngo, an exotic parrot who has spent his life at the Scottish court, is now far more vitriolic in his condemnation of specific individuals and their actions. After describing the defeat of James IV at Flodden we learn:

> … quhat strainge adversities,
> Quhat gret mysreule, in to this regioun rang
> Quhen our yong prince could noder spek nor gang.
>
> During his tender youthe and innocence
> Quhat stouith, quhat raif, quat murthur and mischance!
> Thair was not ellis bot wrakyng of vengeance.
> In to that court thare rang sic variance,
> Divers rewlaris maid divers ordinance:
> Sun tyme our Quene rang in auctoritie,
> Sum tyme the prudent Duke of Albanie;
>
> Sum tyme the realme was reulit be regentis,
> Sum tyme, lufetenentis, ledaris of the law.[106]

Lyndsay outlines the culpability of those who ruled Scotland during the minority in the era's social turmoil, political instability and general lawlessness. The poet, through an emphasis upon James's youth and innocence, makes it vividly clear that no blame can be apportioned to the prince, who 'could noder spek nor gang'. What also becomes apparent through an analysis of this section of the poem is the fluidity and adaptability of Lyndsay's poetic rhetoric and craft. Where, a year earlier, Queen Margaret had been portrayed as a witless fool who had abused her position as regent for personal profit, the poet is now far more circumspect and

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[105] Lyndsay, *The Testament and Complaynt of our Soverane Lordis Papyngo*. All references to this poem will be taken from Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay: Selected Poems* and the poem will be referred to from this point on as *The Testament of the Papyngo.*

[106] Ibid, lines 525-536.

respectful in his description of the queen's role during the minority. Who, Papyngo asks:

> ...was more heych in honour elevate
> Nor was Margareit, our heych and mychtie princes?
> Sic power was to hir appropriate:
> Of king and realme scho wes governors.
> Yit, come one change, within ane schorte process,
> That peirle preclare, that lusty plesand queen,
> Lang tyme durst nocht in to the court be sene.[107]

The queen, who had by 1530 regained a degree of influence with her son James V and at court, is now portrayed as having been the lawful regent during the minority, which indeed she was, (as James IV declared in his will, against tradition, that Margaret was to be the guardian of the young prince and rule as regent until James came of age).[108] On 17 July 1528 Margaret and her third husband Henry Stewart had been granted the free barony of the lands of Methven in recognition of their marriage and as a reward for past and future services.[109] Margaret is now described figuratively, in a language that echoes Dunbar's panegyrics to her when she arrived in Scotland to wed James IV, as a 'peirle preclare'; the pearl being a symbol of purity and preciousness. The poet subtly adapts his rhetorical strategy and poetic discourse in order to respond to changes within topical political and social contexts. Moreover, in a similar fashion to that of *The Dreme*, the previous period of misrule and civil strife is juxtaposed against the present rule of James V. The king is described as a 'Prepotent prince, peireles of pulchritude' and his reign is one of justice, peace and wise counsel.[110] The rhetorical strategy is clearly that of an 'inclusive' member of the court who uses his verse for political propaganda, personal promotion and to protect the present status quo.

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[107] Ibid, lines 542-548.
[108] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay Selected Poems*, p. 248.
[109] Cameron, p. 18.
[110] *The Testament of the Papyngo*, line 227.

The politically underpinned and pragmatic imperatives of the court and poet that were exerted upon, and influenced, the production of Middle Scots poetry, and similarly early sixteenth-century English verse, were shaping influences that were not, as Kratzman has suggested, 'a fascinating accident of literary history'.[111] This is to make too simplistic an appraisal of the rhetorical strategies the poet employed in the verse's production and not fully to appreciate the poet's thought-provoking use of poetics. The verse was deliberately designed to influence a specific audience towards adopting a particular point of view. Recognition, by both James V and Henry VIII of the influential power of verse as a form of propaganda and a means of influencing contemporary thought is shown in a letter sent from Henry to James in March 1539. The English king thanked his nephew for proclaiming that no 'slanderouse rymes' defaming him should be circulated in Scotland and promised to send James a lion.[112] Court literature involves or implies some kind of performance. An initial performance that is usually oral and public, dramatic or quasi-dramatic, having an expressive quality that is not always immediately obvious on the printed page. To understand its effects it is necessary to reconstruct the performance's relationship with topical political and social contexts and view them alongside the audience's interrelated interaction with this social drama.

It is also necessary to understand that the poet deliberately manipulates his poetic voice, his persona, and the historical facts, in order to enlist his audience's sympathy and move them to share with him a commitment to a particular intellectual and moral point of view that simultaneously validates his attack upon

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[111] Kratzman, p. 261.
[112] *Letters & Papers of Henry VIII*, xiv, pt. I, nos. 170, 176.

aberration and justifies his own suitability to serve his prince.[113] An important aspect of the text's meaning is determined from an analysis of the audience's horizons of expectations and their expected response to the ideas propounded in the verse. The court poet, admittedly, not always, but certainly some of the time, fashions his literary creations specifically to provide benefits for himself within the complex world of courtly patronage and propaganda, either by attempting to initiate change, or by maintaining the status quo, of court personnel, government policy and the influential and affluent favour of the sovereign.

[113] Gray, D. (1984) 'Rough Music: Some Early Invectives and Flytings' in Rawson, C. (ed.) *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition*, p. 24. Gray discusses satire as having an aspect of performance to it, but his ideas are also applicable to court literature in general.

CHAPTER FOUR

†

Counsel, service, kingship and the moral reality of the court

> If I reveal, in this letter I'm writing you, that they are fools who serve kings, and that courtiers lead a life first unhappy but then utterly wretched, I fear that they might censure and curse me.[1]
>
> *Aeneas Silvius*

In the epistle *De curialium miseries*, addressed to John Eich in 1444 by 'pius' Aeneas Silvius, the writer distinctly highlights a reality of criticising those who served at court; a reality that continued to influence court literature in subsequent centuries. Those who criticised the court were themselves open to censure and criticism; their views were not always welcome, nor did they remain unchallenged by those who inhabited the political and social environs of the court. This at times could be in the form of direct censure, such as Henry VIII's treason laws; the king's or the Church's ban of a particular literary work; it could be in the form of a direct rebuttal, as in Skelton's and Dunbar's flytings; but at other times it could be in the form of a subtle challenge to the initial critic's point of view within drama or verse. The rhetorical strategies that the courtier adopts, as part of the inclusive polity of the court, as shown in Lyndsay's verse, are distinctly different from those of the excluded writer who writes from a position outside of the court. The complexity of this literary engagement and the pragmatic imperatives that are embedded in this literature can be explored further if we look at works from two Tudor writers: Thomas Wyatt and Thomas Elyot.

The courtier, diplomat and poet Sir Thomas Wyatt, born in 1503, belonged to a family that had risen to prominence with the new Tudor dynasty. His father,

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[1] Mustard, W. (ed.) (1928) *De Curialium Miseries Epistola*, p. 21.

Sir Henry Wyatt, because of his loyalty to Henry Tudor, had suffered imprisonment and torture during the reign of Richard III and he had fought under Henry VIII at the battle of the Spurs in 1513.[2] For these services Sir Henry was rewarded with a knighthood and an estate at Allington Castle in Kent. He was made Keeper of the King's Jewels in 1513 and Treasurer of the Royal Chamber in 1523.[3] Like his father, Thomas Wyatt spent his life either at court or in the service of his king. He made his first recorded appearance at court as a Sewer Extraordinary when he was only thirteen years old, was made Clerk of the King's Jewels in 1524 and on several occasions was appointed as an ambassador by Henry VIII and entrusted with delicate diplomatic missions abroad. In 1526 he accompanied Sir Thomas Cheyney to assist in the negotiations concerning the Holy League of Cognac in which France, Florence, Venice, Milan and Pope Clement VII agreed to combine their efforts against the rise of the power and aggression of the emperor, Charles V.[4] During 1527 he took over, after Sir John Russell was injured in a fall, the mission to the papal court in Rome that attempted to assist Pope Clement against Charles V. Wyatt would leave Rome only a few days before it was sacked by the emperor's forces and it is during this trip that he visited Italian cities and is likely to have made an acquaintance with the works of such Italian writers as Pietro Bembo, Lodovico Ariosto and Niccolo Machiavelli.[5] In 1537 Wyatt was made ambassador to the court of Charles V and would spend the next three years accompanying the emperor through Spain and France, attempting to prevent an alliance between Charles V and Francis I which would be a grave threat to England's security. He died in September 1542 when riding to

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[2] Muir, *Life and Letters*, pp. 1-4; for a more detailed history of Sir Henry Wyatt, see Foley, S. (1990) *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, pp. 4-13.
[3] Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 3; Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, pp. 7-8.
[4] Rebholz, p. 20.
[5] Ibid, p. 22.

Falmouth to meet the Spanish envoy Montmorency de Courrieres on behalf of the king.[6]

Wyatt might well have lamented, with good cause, that in Henry VIII's court - '*circa Regna tonat*' ('around the throne the thunder rolls'). He had himself experienced the indignity and danger of two imprisonments in the Tower and witnessed in person the execution of his patron Thomas Cromwell. He had seen two queens, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, as well as many others, beheaded for treason. Yet, generally, his had been a prosperous and well rewarded court career. It would also seem, as Greg Walker succinctly remarks that in the eye of the thunderstorm that surrounded Henry VIII 'there was a place of at least relative and conditional security in which it was possible for a courtier well versed in both the rules of the game and the mind of his sovereign, to articulate the dangerous utterance, to speak the otherwise unthinkable criticism' of both the moral and political reality of the court and those who inhabited its milieu.[7] An informed understanding of this aspect of a courtier poet's existence can be obtained by exploring Wyatt's satire *A Spending Hand*.

In *A Spending Hand*, Wyatt enters into a dialogue with Sir Francis Bryan, whom he characterises ironically as an idealistic courtier, to advise him how to obtain wealth and promotion within the court. Bryan is presented by the poet as a courtier eager to serve his king and country, a man who is appalled by the cynical advice he receives from the speaker on how to gain advancement and material wealth. Above all he epitomises a man of integrity who cherishes his 'honest name' and 'truth'.[8] Whilst critics recognise the biographical association with Sir Francis Bryan, the irony inherent in the poet's juxtaposition of the 'honest' Bryan,

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[6] Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 4; Scott, H. (ed.) (1996) *Sir Thomas Wyatt: Selected Poems*, p. 11.
[7] Walker, *The Politics of Performance*, p. 67. Walker makes this point concerning drama but during the reign of Henry VIII it applies more pertinently to court poetry.
[8] Wyatt, *A Spending hand that always poureth out*, lines 83 & 88.

to that of the nature of the real Bryan known to his fellow courtiers, has not been recognised by all critics and this almost strips a dynamic and threatening poem of any experienced anxiety, implicating presence, and, ironically, historical power.[9]

As Spearing remarks, 'it is crucial to recognise the sustained irony' in the characterisation of both the poem's speakers, especially in lines 32-79, where Bryan is counselled on how to make a success of his career at court.[10] Bryan is advised to avoid the truth and dissemble through flattery, to lend money only for profit, to follow the example of Kitson and be the fawn of a rich old man in order to curry his favour in the hope of becoming his heir.[11] If all this fails, then marry the old man's aged, decrepit and ugly widow, or act as a bawd to his own kinswomen for his personal profit.

The real Bryan, however, had no need of such advice, he was an adroit and skilful courtier, who had, like Wyatt, served Henry VIII most of his life and knew better than most how to survive and prosper amidst the daily trials and tribulations of the court. His was, according to Greenblatt, 'a career of conniving, betrayal, political marriage, sycophancy, and pandering.'[12] Bryan's immorality earned him the nick-name 'the Vicar of Hell' and part of the personal mythology associated with him was the rumour that, in order to obtain intelligence for Henry VIII, he slept with a courtesan at the papal court.[13] 'She lyenge a nyght with Sir ffraunces bryan/ Dysclosyde to hym the whole matter,' Cromwell was informed in a letter.[14] It was also Bryan who took the news of his cousin Anne Boleyn's execution to the

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[9] Typical of a commentary which recognises the biographical link to Sir Francis Bryan but acknowledges no irony in this is Gleckman, J. (2001) 'Thomas Wyatt's Epistolary Satires: Parody and the Limitations of Rhetorical Humanism' in *TSLL 43*, pp. 37-39.

[10] Spearing, p. 307.

[11] Spearing, p. 307. See Rebholz, p. 451, for a brief note concerning suggested historical possibilities to whom the reference to Kitson refers.

[12] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 135 & 280 (footnote 37).

[13] Brigden, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Francis Bryan', p. 6.

[14] Merriman, R. (ed.) (1902) *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell,* vol. 2, p. 12.

king's new favourite Jane Seymour.[15] The influence of Bryan and his circle of courtiers, called the king's 'minions', had been so great on the young Henry VIII that Cardinal Wolsey had devised ways of excluding them from the court. He sent 'the yong gentilmen...by yonde se on ambassades' to 'haue theym owt off the way.'[16] It is this event, the 'Expulsion of the Minions,' on which John Skelton is thought to have based his morality play, *Magnyfycence*; the many vices, such as Crafty Conveyance, Cloaked Collusion and Courtly Abusion, identifiable with the 'minions' who were viewed as being over-familiar with Henry VIII and regarded as having a potentially ruinous influence on the king. [17] The incongruity of describing the wayward Bryan as a principled courtier would no doubt have been not only humorous and entertaining to the king and court but would have caused a cognitive dissonance amongst Wyatt's contemporaries that added biting undertones to the sustained irony of the verse.[18]

The fact that Bryan had such a low and colourful moral reputation, and that his morality is treated with such irony by Wyatt in the satire, has led some critics to view the poem as a personal attack upon Bryan, an attack fuelled by dislike and debt.[19] This viewpoint is supported by a disparaging reference made

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[15] Brigden, S. (1996) ''The shadow that you know': Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Francis Bryan at the court and in embassy' in *HJ 39,* p. 4.

[16] Public Record Office, SP 1/54, fos. 244-52. Quoted in Brigden, p. 3.

[17] Schmidt, M. (1980) *50 British Poets: 1300–1900*, p. 57. Walker, G. (1991) *Plays of Persuasion*, Chapter 3, especially pp. 62-63. Schmidt argues in favour of the play being interpreted as an attack on Cardinal Wolsey, however, Walker, offers a convincing argument that the play does not satirise Cardinal Wolsey, whose influence on Henry VIII in 1516 resulted in the ill-advised financing of foreign armies to fight France. Since Henry might have seen such satire to be censuring him as well, and since Skelton during these years sought the king's patronage, a sharply critical play would have counteracted Skelton's intentions. Other factors, like the questionable dating of the play, and the inaccurate description of the clerical Wolsey as a foppish courtier, also suggest another interpretation.

[18] Spearing, pp. 306-307; Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 135. Both suggest how the character of Sir Brian in the poem is diametrically opposite to that of the real Sir Bryan.

[19] An example of this viewpoint is Burrow, C. (1993) 'Horace at home and abroad: Wyatt and sixteenth-century Horatianism' in Martindale, C. & Hopkins, D. (eds.) *Horace Made New: Horatian influences on British writing from the Renaissance to the twentieth century*, p. 46.

by Wyatt concerning Bryan in a letter of 1539. The poet was owed a substantial amount of money by Bryan and he wrote to Cromwell:

> I thank your lordshipp for the gyving ordre for my money that I lent Mr Bryan. If the kinges honour more than his credit had not been afore myn Ies, he shold have pypid in an yve for owght off me.[20]

Opposed to this viewpoint is that of Muir, who sees no animosity inherent in the verse and remarks that the lines of the satire 'could hardly have been written ironically' and that the poem is a condemnation of immorality prevalent at the Tudor court and an approval of the honest truth of Bryan.[21] Rebholz similarly views the satire as praise of political responsibility and personal integrity which is epitomised by the character of Bryan in the poem.[22] Neither of these viewpoints, however, appear to grasp the complexity of the satire, nor the implicit didactic point and possible pragmatic imperatives that emerge from a reading of the poem when it is placed within the context of the volatile and important topical debate that surrounded humanist ideals of court service and morality. If we turn to Wyatt's European intellectual contemporaries we find the same topic widely debated and discussed. Desiderius Erasmus raised the issue in his *Institutio Principis Christiani* (1516) and also in *In Praise of Folly* (1509), as did Medwell in *Fulgens and Lucrece* (1512), Baldassare Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), and to some extent also Francesco Guicciardini and Niccolo Machiavelli in their writings on political expediency.[23] Court service and humanist ideals were also topics of importance for closer contemporaries of Wyatt, men alongside whom he shared his life of service to the Tudor crown. It is

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[20] Spearing, p. 307: Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 83. The quotation is from a letter to Cromwell, Muir, p. 86. Rebholz includes a quote of this letter in the notes to the poem, p. 449, but this modernised version distorts much of the earthy manner of Wyatt's speech.

[21] Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 215.

[22] Rebholz, p. 450.

[23] Erasmus, D. (1997) *The education of a Christian prince*; translated by Cheshire, N. and Heath, M., edited by Lisa Jardine. Idem.; Erasmus (1876) *In Praise of Folly*. Medwell, H., *Fulgens and Lucrece* in Boas, F. (1966) *Five Pre-Shakespearean Comedies*.

a central theme of Thomas Elyot's works, *The Book Named the Governour* (1531) and *Pasquil the Playne* (1533).[24] Like these works *A Spending Hand* confronts both social reality and ideality concerning court service, courtliness, and the humanistic rhetoric of proverbial truth-speaking that had become popular in the Tudor court of the 1530's.[25] The satire does this by asking questions that through the relaxed conversational movement of the dialogue invite the audience's participation in the debate. This quality of the verse no doubt owes a debt to Horace's, and perhaps also Chaucer's, direct style of address, which stimulates and maintains interest in what is being said.[26] Yet, whilst Wyatt asks questions that are not only applicable to Bryan but courtiers in general, knowledge of both Bryan's and Wyatt's reputations and spoken idioms, of which the contemporary audience would be well aware, add an additional, powerful element that coerces the audience not merely to condemn immorality, but deeply question the credibility of the poetic character of Bryan's humanist actions and morals. Furthermore, the audience's personal knowledge of the poet's and his protagonist's reputations create a latent ambiguity, a binary opposition, with not only the morality and idea of humanist court service but also truth, honesty and dissimulation.

In antithetical juxtaposition to the Bryan who was known to the courtiers who inhabited the Henrician court, the Bryan of the poem is portrayed in the satire as a man of integrity and honour who is ironically shocked at the advice he is offered by the voice of Wyatt's poetic persona, that to succeed at court and to

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[24] Elyot, T. (1833) *The Boke Named the Governour*, edited by Croft, H., 2 vols; *Pasquil the Playne* in Elyot, T. (1967) *Four Political Treatises*, edited by Gottesman, L.

[25] Heale, E. (1997) "An owl in a sack troubles no man': proverbs, plainness, and Wyatt' in *RS*, p. 428.

[26] Fitch Lytle & Orgel, p. 6.

'bring in as fast as thou dost spend',[27] he should 'purchase friends where truth shall but offend'[28] and:

> Flee therefore truth: it is both wealth and ease.
> For though that truth of every man hath praise,
> Full near that wind goeth truth in great misease.
> Use virtue as it goeth now-a-days,
> In word alone to make thy language sweet,
> And of the deed yet do not as thou says.[29]

Bryan should use bribery, flattery and dishonesty to become successful. The speaker, as Heale adroitly points out, unpacks the Erasmian adage, 'Obsequium amicos veritas odium parit', which Tavener translated as 'Flattery & following of mens myndes geteth frendes, where speaking of trouth gendereth hatred'.[30] The insinuation made by the poetic voice of Wyatt is that this is the practice used 'now-a-days' and common amongst those courtiers who serve their prince at court. This is a very powerful and telling politically charged insinuation. Bryan is further cynically counselled to align himself to a rich old man, to pander and please him in the hope of becoming his 'Executor'. He should:

> Learn at Kitson, that in a long white coat
> From under the stall without land or fees
> Hath leapt into the shop; who knoweth by rote
> This rule that I have told thee herebefore.
> Sometime also rich age beginneth to dote;
> See thou when there thy gain may be the more.
> Stay him by the arm whereso he walk or go.
> Be near always and, if he cough too sore,
> When he hath spit, tread out and please him so.
> A diligent knave that picks his master's purse
> May please him so that he, withouten moe,
> Executor is, and what is he the worse?[31]

If this fails:

> ... if so chance you get naught of the man,
> the widow may for all thy charge deburse.
> A rivelled skin, a stinking breath, what then?

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[27] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, line 29.
[28] Ibid, line 33.
[29] Ibid, lines 34-39.
[30] Heale, 'An owl in a sack troubles no man', p. 430.
[31] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 47-58.

A toothless mouth shall do thy lips no harm.
The gold is good, and though she curse or ban,
Yet where thou list thou mayst lie good and warm:
Let the old mule bite upon the bridle
Whilst there do lie a sweeter in thine arm.[32]

Bryan is told to marry an old woman, even if she is so old her skin is 'rivelled', that is wrinkled, and she is toothless and her breath stinks. No matter how detestable she may be, the poetic voice of Wyatt affirms, 'gold is good'. Bryan is then told to then find himself a 'sweeter' lover and if the 'old mule' complains, he should have her 'bite upon the bridle.' This is an incredibly cruel and cynical image, as a 'bridle' was an instrument of torture used to punish scolds, though modern critics inadvertently misinterpret this metaphor. Rebholz, for example, suggests the line means: 'Let the old woman be vexed as a result of getting nothing for her pains.'[33] This interpretation mistakenly softens the biting cynicism and cruelty of the advice given to Bryan. A scold's bridle consisted of an iron framework that enclosed the head which had a sharp metal gag or bit which entered the mouth and restrained the tongue. Women who were punished in this way, would also suffer the indignity and humiliation of then being paraded through the town or village's streets in a scold-cart. Wyatt's contemporaries would have been well aware of the meaning of 'bridle', as it was in active use both in Scotland and England during the early sixteenth century.

Bryan is next told:

In this also see you be not idle:
Thy niece, thy cousin, thy sister, or thy daughter,
If she be fair, if handsome be her middle,
If thy better have her love besought her,
Advance his cause and he shall help thy need.
It is but love. Turn it to laughter.
But ware, I say, so gold thee help and speed

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[32] Ibid, lines 59-67.

[33] For this definition of a scold's bit, bridle – see, *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, Prepared by Simpson, J.& Weiner, E. (1989) 20 volumes, volume xiv, p. 664. See also, *Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language*. Rebholz, p. 452 (footnote 65).

That in this case thou be not so unwise
As Pandar was in such a like deed;
For he, the fool, of conscience was so nice
That he no gain would have for all his pain.
Be next thyself, for friendship bears no prize.[34]

This advice is intensely ironic, not only because the historical Bryan married one wealthy widow after another, including Philappa Fortesque, the wealthy widow of Sir John Fortesque, but because he also arranged important marriages for his own two sisters. Furthermore, being instrumental in Henry VIII's change of Queens, Bryan performed the 'vilest of services for one old or oldish man, Henry VIII'.[35] The depth and force of the irony are further added to by the fact that Wyatt himself performed such a service when he participated in the negotiations for Henry VIII's proposed marriage to Charles V's niece, the duchess of Milan.[36] Bryan is further told not to be as foolish as Chaucer's Pandarus, who gained nothing from Troilus for arranging the affair with Criseyde. He must, above all, 'Be next thyself' (be his own best friend) for it is only by putting his own interests first that he will gain wealth.[37] Bryan, however, responds to the advice he is given with laughter and the ironic claim that the advice is but a 'thrifty jest' and he would not:

Change that for gold that I have ta'en for best –
Next godly things, to have an honest name?[38]

Like the poem from which the satire is modelled, Horace's *sermo* II.v, a dialogue between two dramatic personae, Ulysses and the ghost Tiresias, about the rather dubious underhanded and immoral methods available to make a quick profit or to recover a lost fortune, Wyatt's two protagonists enter into a dialogue

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[34] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 67-79.
[35] Starkey, D. (1982) 'The Court: Castiglione's Ideal & Tudor Reality' in *Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes* 45, p. 236; Lerer, p. 162.
[36] Greene, *The Colonial Wyatt*, p. 166.
[37] Rebholz, p. 452. Rebholz suggests this is from Terence, *Andria* IV, I, 12: 'I am nearest to myself'.
[38] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 81-82.

that discusses the best way to obtain advancement and wealth at court. Certainly, on one level the satire can justifiably be seen as a ruthless and telling indictment of the social world of court service that embodies extremes of dysfunction and moral corruption.[39] The dialogue between the ironically 'honest' Bryan and Wyatt's 'corrupt' poetic persona, however, is not merely an epideictic form of rhetoric in which virtue is praised and both the duplicitous arts of the courtier and the perfidious nature of the court attacked, it also, within the cultural context of court service, engages with the concept of virtue to expose the clash and tension that existed between the ideology of civic humanism and the reality of the court.[40]

One of the consequences of the early Renaissance in England was the transformation of a 'cult of chivalry ... into a cult of service.'[41] The scholastic learning of universities, ascetic virtue and the chivalric code were challenged by an Erasmian programme of intensive training which placed an emphasis on classical languages and literature.[42] In the middle ages true virtue was found in renunciation, asceticism and withdrawal from earthly ambition, responsibility and wealth.[43] This form of virtue was to be found and exemplified in the cloistered monastic life and ascetic poverty. The ideals of humanism that became increasingly influential in England during the early sixteenth century, however, involved a turning away from that ideal to one of civic and public virtue. Humanist ideals would also add to the impetus of the violent rejection of monastic institutions that would not only reach a boiling point in the Reformation, but also prove to be useful to Henry VIII, James IV and James V in their acquisition of

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[39] Bates, C. (1993) "A mild admonisher': Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sixteenth-Century Satire' in *HLQ* 56, p. 246; Fitch Lytle, G. & Orgel, S. (eds.) (1981) *Patronage in the Renaissance*, p. 6.
[40] Concerning the branch of epideictic rhetoric as a form in which orators praised virtue and attacked vice, see Vickers, B. (2000) *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, p.vi.
[41] Gunn, S. (1991) 'Tournaments and Early Tudor Chivalry' in *History Today* 41, pp. 15-21.
[42] Smuts, R. (1999) *Culture and Power in England, 1585-1685*, p. 32.
[43] Spearing, p. 308; Evans, M. (1967) *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 12.

Church and Kirk property and wealth. As Elton has pointed out, the ideal of education changed from the theological to the rhetorical, from the training of priests and scholars to the training of accomplished courtiers able to serve the state.[44] The ethos of civic humanism was one which venerated the authority of the past, and the particular past being revered encompassed the writings of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero, which emphasised the virtues of justice, clemency, liberality, wisdom in the choice of councillors, personal integrity, and the maintenance of peace.[45] Moreover, proponents of civic humanism, such as Elyot in *The Book Named the Governour* and Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier*, exalted the virtues of participation in public affairs, the concept of the 'active life', as opposed to the contemplative life of ascetics and scholars and they viewed the acquisition of wealth and service to the crown not as an impediment to knowledge and salvation, but rather as a means to promote learning and morality.[46]

The dialogue of *A Spending Hand*, however, oscillates between celebration and condemnation of immorality which results in an uneasy but fascinating complexity of tone. Against the corrupt and insidious nature of existence within the court patronage system, Bryan holds up the humanist ideal of service, that he will be moral and:

> Though I seem lean and dry without moisture,
> Yet will I serve my prince, my lord and thine.
> An let them live to feed the paunch that list,
> So I may feed to live, both me and mine.[47]

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[44] Elton, *England Under the Tudors*, p. 431.

[45] Porter, R. & Teich, M. (1992) *The Renaissance in National Context*, p. 5; Mason, J. (1935) *Gentlefolk in the Making: Studies in the History of English Courtesy Literature and Related Topics from 1531 to 1774*, p. 10; Plumb, J. (1991) *The Penguin book of the Renaissance*, p. 301.

[46] See Crombie, A. (1986) 'Experimental Science and the Rational Artist in Early Modern Europe' in *Daedalus* 115, p. 49. Crombie defines and discusses *virtu* as the central concept in civic humanism. Concerning Thomas Elyot and *The Book Named the Governour*, see Major, J. (1964) *Sir Thomas Elyot and the Renaissance Humanism* in which *The Governour* is analysed within an English and European Humanist context.

[47] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 24 – 27.

But the satire ends with a proverb that offers no comfort to moral idealism, simply a stark truism that:

> ...for thy truth, sometime adversity.
> And therewithal this thing I shall thee give-
> In this world now, little prosperity,
> And coin to keep, as water in a sieve.[48]

If Bryan persists in leading a life of busy duty, if he is unwilling to adopt the means described to make it profitable, then he can expect nothing more than 'coin to keep, as water in a sieve.'[49] This is a very cogent and powerful end to the satire that leaves little doubt concerning the outcome of a life of moral idealism. Wyatt clearly recognises the moral heteronomy of service and reward, that not all service, even if it is honest, selfless and virtuous, secured a just reward. The immoral individual was just as likely, perhaps even more likely, to be rewarded for his dissimulation, dishonesty, and bad faith than the honest and virtuous individual. In doing this Wyatt's poetic voice leaves behind the unified eudemonistic and teleological ethics of civic humanism to stress that the rules for successful behaviour at court are unrelated to the rules of behaviour infused within civic humanist morality.[50] He denies any connection between happiness and traditional virtue and delineates how survival and the acquisition of wealth require behaviour at variance with civic humanist morality and that the courtier must be prepared to abandon such morality if he is to maintain the minimal condition for happiness, material wealth. The civic humanists believed as the ancients had done, in the idea that to exercise virtue would lead the individual to happiness. In their move away from the Medieval ideal of the contemplative life

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[48] Ibid, lines 88-91.
[49] Spearing, p. 308.
[50] Hankins, J. (2001) 'Humanism and the origins of modern political thought' in Kraye, J. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, p. 135-136. Hankins is referring to Machiavelli but there are many similarities between Machiavelli and Wyatt's pragmatic view of the political reality of the court.

and their attempt to revitalise the notion, that through honest and moral counsel they could play an active role within the sphere of court politics, civic humanists believed that their moral integrity could remain intact whilst they served the court and king.[51] Wyatt's plain, blunt and emphatic poetic voice in the poem, however, echoes Machiavelli's contention, that if a courtier should decide to participate within the foul arena of pragmatic politics and preferment, despite the inherent danger, he should know the best methods available, whether they are moral or not.

He further echoes Machiavelli's contentions in Chapter XV of *The Prince*, that:

> ... because I want to write what will be useful to anyone who understands, it seems to me better to concentrate on what really happens rather than theories or speculations ... how men live is so different from how they should live that a ruler who does not do what is generally done, but persists in doing what ought to be done, will undermine his power rather than maintain it. If a ruler who wants always to act honourably is surrounded by many unscrupulous men his downfall is inevitable ... doing some things that seem virtuous may result in one's ruin, whereas doing other things that seem vicious may strengthen one's position and cause one to flourish.[52]

Like Machiavelli, Wyatt challenged a set of assumptions that were fundamental to civic humanist ideals influenced by the writings of philosophers such as Plato and Cicero: that there was an unbreakable connection between happiness and virtue.[53] When humanists came to court, as come they must if they desired to play an active part in the nation's politics or obtain any form of power or prestige, they did not set the tone but had to attempt to adapt to, and deal with, the reality of an immoral world of duplicity, dishonesty and dissimulation that was fuelled by personal profit and advancement in which the courtier had few friends he could

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[51] Walker, G. (2002) 'The Renaissance in Britain' in Collinson, P. (ed.) *The Oxford History of the British Isles: The Sixteenth Century*, p. 147.
[52] Machiavelli, N. (1988) *The Prince*, translated by Skinner, Q. & Price, R., p. 54-55.
[53] Hankins, p. 135.

trust.[54] This is clearly the world of the court that the poetic voice of Wyatt in the satire takes pains to demonstrate to Bryan. The poet, however, does not simply highlight this point to Bryan but through the verse and interaction of the characters' ideals creates a dialogue with his audience concerning the paradox between the ideal and the reality of a courtier's existence and court service.

It has been claimed by Starkey that the satire is a deliberate challenge to Castiglione's attempt, in *The Book of the Courtier*, to reconcile these contradictions of service at court and civic humanist ideals.[55] Zagorin, however, dismisses this claim as inaccurate and flawed, pointing out that there is nothing in the satire, nor in any of Wyatt's other verse, that indicates the poet was influenced or had read Castiglione's writings.[56] This may be so, as Wyatt certainly does not directly quote Castiglione, but he does, as has already been outlined, engage with similar ideas, moral dilemmas and topics that were of paramount importance to Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier*. Like the debate that surrounds the possible influence of Machiavelli in early Tudor England, there may not be any direct proof that Castiglione was read by Thomas Cromwell, Wyatt or other Henrician courtiers, but if intellectual history is to be anything more than 'the decanting of ready-made thoughts from one mind to another' then the critic or historian must be open to the possibilities of the transference of attitudes, not merely specific documented evidence.[57] Smith and Burke have shown that throughout the European courts there was a great deal of reaction, both positive and negative, to Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* during the period that Wyatt was serving in Europe as an ambassador, and it is highly unlikely he was

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[54] Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period*, p. 86.
[55] Starkey, 'The Court: Castiglione's Ideal and Tudor Reality', pp. 232-9. This is Starkey's general hypothesis in the article.
[56] Zagorin, *Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII*, p. 140.
[57] Collingwood, R. (1946) *The Idea of History*, edited by Knox, T., cited in Rabb, p. 39.

unaware of the controversy that surrounded the book.[58] Although *The Book of the Courtier* was not translated into English until 1561, it was available to read in Spanish in 1534 and in French in 1537.[59] It is also possible that Wyatt may have had access to the library of his patron, Thomas Cromwell, who is believed to have had a copy of the book in Italian as early as 1530.[60] In 1530 Edmond Bonner wrote to Cromwell asking to loan 'the book called Cortegiano in Ytalian'.

The ideal courtier for Castiglione was the man who adds to the chivalric qualities of courage and martial prowess, the humanist ideals of cultivation and learning, and it is the courtier's duty to combine eloquence, wisdom and rhetorical skill in order to ingratiate himself with his prince so that he is able to persuade him to rule wisely.[61] True eloquence, according to such humanist sentiment, could arise only out of a harmonious union between wisdom and style and its aim was to guide men towards worthwhile goals and virtue, not to mislead others for vicious or trivial purposes.[62] Yet, despite Castiglione's intention to delineate the virtues of the perfect courtier, his poignant portrayal of courtier virtue was hardly free of

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[58] Smith, P. (1966) *The Anti-Courtier Trend in sixteenth century French literature*, *passim*, but especially chapter 2. Burke, P. (1995) *The Fortunes of The Courtier: The European reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano*, chapter 6, Polity, Cambridge. Chapter 6 deals with the reception and criticism of the book throughout Europe. Starkey dates the satire as 1538 (p. 237) and Mason suggests it may be as late 1541 in *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period*, pp. 203-4. Whilst I tend to agree with Starkey that the allusion to Bryan's financial difficulties suggest the date of the poem is 1538, either date is late enough to have allowed Wyatt to have read or become aware of Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*.

[59] Burke, P. (2002) 'The Courtier Abroad: Or, the Uses of Italy' in Castiglione, B. *The Book of the Courtier*, edited by Javitch, D., p. 391.

[60] Major, pp. 47-48. Major makes this point concerning Sir Thomas Elyot but it is equally likely that Wyatt would also have access to Thomas Cromwell's library. Major cites as evidence the letter in which Edmond Bonner, afterwards Bishop of London, wrote to Cromwell. to borrow some Italian books, which can be found in Ellis, H. (ed.) (1846) *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, vol. II, pp. 177-178.

[61] Concerning the idea that Castiglione promoted a synthesis of humanist learning with older courtly accomplishments, such as riding, dancing and military prowess, see Martindale, J. (1985) *English Humanism: Wyatt to Cowley*, p. 165; Major, pp.61-62; Plumb, J. (ed.) (1991) *The Penguin Book of the Renaissance*, pp. 273-278; Smuts, p. 39.

[62] Hannen, T. (1974) 'The Humanism of Sir Thomas Wyatt' in O.Sloan, T. & Waddington, R. (eds.) *The Rhetoric of Renaissance Poetry*, pp. 40-41.

ambiguity.[63] In order to gain the prince's favour and the admiration of the court, the successful courtier, as Castiglione depicted him, needed to be an adept at dissimulation, cultivating by means of *sprezzatura*, faculties of artifice, flexibility, and role-playing scarcely distinguishable from duplicity and falsehood.[64] This latent ambiguity is inherent throughout Castiglione's text but is most evident in the Second Book of the *Courtier* when the idea of the courtier's moral autonomy is raised during Ottoviano Fregosa's attempt to delineate how the courtier should use the numerous qualities and talents he had been endowed with by Count Ludovica da Canossa in the First Book.[65] Fregosa would have the:

> ... Courtier devote all his thought and strength of spirit to loving and almost adoring the prince he serves above all else, devoting his every desire and habit and manner to pleasing him.[66]

But this ideal is immediately challenged by Pietro da Napoli when he remarks:

> Nowadays you will find many such courtiers, for it strikes me that you have, in few words, sketched us a noble flatterer.[67]

This awareness of such flattery's prevalence at court is echoed by Wyatt's poetic voice when he advises Bryan to 'use virtue as it goeth nowadays / in word alone to make thy language sweet'.[68]

Fregosa further claims that man's moral duty should outweigh all other considerations, but this ideal is immediately challenged by Vincenzo Calmeta and

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[63] For a short but intuitive insight into the possible interpretative implications concerning *The Book of the Courtier*, see Richards, W. (2000) 'A wanton trade of living? Rhetoric, Effeminacy, and the Early Modern Courtier' in *Criticism* 42.

[64] Zagorin, *Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII*, p. 115; Javitch, D. 'Il Cortegiano and the Constraints of Despotism' in Hanning, R. & Rosand, D.(eds.) (1983) *Castiglione: The ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture*; Zagorin, *Ways of lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity*, pp. 7-8. For an insight into equivocation concerning dissimulation in the *Courtier*, see the debate between Federico Fregosa and Gaspar Pallavincino in Book 2: 40 of Castiglione, B. (2002) *The Book of the Courtier*, edited by Javitch, D., p. 101.

[65] Cox, V. (2002) 'Castiglione's *Cortegiano*: The Dialogue as a Drama of Doubt' in Castiglione, B. *The Book of the Courtier*, edited by Javitch, D., p. 315.

[66] Burke, 'The Courtier Abroad: Or, the Uses of Italy', p. 391.

[67] Ibid, p. 80.

[68] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 37-38.

Ludovico Pio when they question whether it is moral to follow the immoral orders of an evil prince. Calmeta's arguments force Fregosa into a position of moral equivocation and Fregosa, at this point floundering, refuses to continue. He claims that he does:

> ... not wish to go into that, for there would be too much to say: but let the whole question be left to your discretion.[69]

As Virginia Cox points out, the 'text at this point can offer no answers, only painful and difficult questions.'[70] Castiglione at this point in *The Book of the Courtier*, like Wyatt in his satire, brought civic humanist theory and ideals into awkward juxtaposition with common courtier practice.[71] Though he recognised this dilemma in the Second Book of the *Courtier*, Castiglione's courtier remained an equivocal ideal criticised by contemporary French, Spanish and Italian writers. Burke implies, in a recent book on Castiglione, that Pietro Aretino's *Courtesan* is a parody that is a 'systematic demystification of the virtues praised and codified in the Courtier.'[72]

When Bryan claims his 'honest name' is made possible because of his insistence on a 'free tongue', he echoes an ideal stated forcibly by Fregosa in the fourth book of the *Courtier*, when he says that the aim of the perfect courtier is:

> ... to win for himself, by means of the accomplishments ascribed to him by these gentlemen, the favour and mind of the prince whom he serves that he may be able to tell him, and always will tell him, the truth about everything he needs to know, without fear or risk of displeasing him; and that when he sees the mind of the prince inclined to wrong action, he may dare to oppose him.[73]

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[69] Castiglione, p. 86.
[70] Cox, p. 313.
[71] Ibid, p. 312.
[72] Burke, p. 106-7.
[73] Starkey, 'The Court: Castiglione's Ideal and Tudor Reality' p. 233; Castiglione, p. 210.

Bryan's claim, as his contemporaries would have known, is an ambiguous and ironic suggestion, as the historical Bryan, though admired for his ability to speak bluntly and openly with Henry VIII, was the epitome of dishonesty and dissimulation.[74] In exposing the ironic reality of Bryan's 'free tongue', which was, according to Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier*, a necessary element of good service, Wyatt exposes the highly disingenuous self-deception by which civic humanists thought they could successfully combine a career as a courtier with an 'honest name' and a 'free tongue.'[75] The twin poles of sixteenth-century culture, the court and humanism, which Castiglione attempts to merge in the *Courtier*, are shown by Wyatt to be perpetually and diametrically opposed.[76] But I would propose this is not in direct opposition to Castiglione, as Starkey suggests, but as part of a more general dialogue between civic humanism ideals of service and the stark reality of the court. Wyatt's verse, I would suggest, more closely engages prevalent ideas circulating the Tudor court, and perhaps directly, those posited by Thomas Elyot in his writings. Wyatt's satire in particular engages with the themes that are central to Elyot's *Pasquil the Playne*: flattery, honest speech, dissimulation and the rhetoric of courtier advice within the context of humanist education and courtier service to a prince.

Elyot's best known work, *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531), holds the distinction of being the first printed educational treatise in the English language, but his prescription for a gentleman is little more than an expanded reworking of the Erasmian system outlined in *Institutio, De ratione studii* coalesced with general humanist aphorisms and a splattering of continental

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[74] Starkey, 'The Court: Castiglione's Ideal and Tudor Reality', p. 237.

[75] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 133. See also Bates, C. (1993) '"A mild Admonisher": Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sixteenth-Century Satire' in *HLQ* 56, pp. 243-258. Bates, through a very close reading of *A Spending Hand* argues that Wyatt shows few courtiers could, for obvious reasons (the character of the court and the King) afford to be frank or open.

[76] Starkey, 'The Court: Castiglione's Ideal and Tudor Reality', p. 234.

influence from writers such as Castiglione.[77] This is not to deny that Elyot was perhaps one of the most outstanding humanists of his generation. Even if we ignore *The Boke Named the Governour* the list of his accomplishments, as Fox and Guy have remarked, is 'impressive by any standards'.[78] Elyot's *The Doctrinal of Princes* was the first translation direct from Greek into English and his medical treatise *The Castel of Helth* was extremely popular.[79] He also compiled a comprehensive Latin/English dictionary and wrote political and moral works that include *The Image of Governance*, *The Bankette of Sapience* and *Pasquil the Playne*.

Yet, regardless of these impressive literary achievements his career at court was a short lived, dismal failure. Initially Elyot's career at court had been a success as he followed the typical route of many ambitious scholars seeking a position within the administration: he sought the patronage of an influential and powerful figure at court, in his case Thomas Cromwell, and displayed his credentials and merit as a potential counsellor by dedicating a work to Henry VIII. *The Boke Named the Governour* may well be a treatise on how to educate a prince which is underpinned by Erasmian thought, but the first three chapters in particular flatter Henry VIII and are an apologetic defence of the courtly pastimes of hunting, dancing, music and chivalric ideals that were so important to the Tudor king.[80] Elyot, however, not only flatters Henry VIII in *The Boke Named the Governour*, he also reinforces the idea that the monarch's power was absolute, divinely ordained by God. This point is made emphatically clear when he declares himself, and by implication any other man, incompetent to write on the duties and

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[77] Introduction to Elyot, T. (1967) *Four Political Treatises*, edited by Gottesman, L., p. vii; Fox, A. & Guy, J. (1986) *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, Politics and Reform 1500-1550*, p. 43.
[78] Fox & Guy, p. 52.
[79] Gottesman, p. ix; Fox & Guy, p. 52.
[80] Stevens, p. 272: Fox & Guy, p. 56-57.

office of the sovereign, 'holy scypture affirming that the hartes of princes be in goddess owne handes and disposition.'[81] Elyot maintains that because all things are divinely fixed into a hierarchal order there is in a public weal the need for 'one sovereign gouernour ... for who can denie but that all thynge in heuen an erthe is gouerned by one god, by one perpetuall ordre, by one prouidence? One Sonne ruleth ouer the day, and one Moone ouer the nyghte.'[82]

It may be, as Fox and Guy have suggested, that Elyot's original purpose in writing *The Boke Named the Governour* was neither political nor for purposes of patronage as some critics have credibly suggested, as there is certainly an inconsistency between the unbridled power ascribed to the monarch in the first three chapters and the limitations imposed on his power by the virtues of Book Three.[83] But, whether or not the work was initially contrived as purely an educational treatise, with the opening chapters a later addition, the version dedicated to Henry VIII was underpinned with pragmatic imperatives. The work was forged to appeal to the king and advance Elyot within the Tudor court. Published in 1531, a year after Elyot had lost his position as clerk to the Council, it appears to have been a successful ploy by the writer to dedicate his work to Henry VIII, for in early September of 1531 he was appointed ambassador to Charles V and given the important and volatile task of promoting within the Spanish court Henry VIII's position concerning his divorce from Catherine of Aragon.[84]

Whether Elyot was playing a 'double game', secretly opposing the divorce whilst dissimulating the appearance of advancing the king's cause, as Fox and Guy suggest, the king had become discontented with him by January 1532 and the

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[81] Elyot, T. (1833) *The Boke Named the Governour*, edited by Croft, H., 2 vols, vol 1, pp. 23-24.
[82] Elyot, *the Boke Named the Governour*, vol 1, pp. 11-12. Fox & Guy, p. 56.
[83] Fox & Guy, p. 57.
[84] Gottesman, p. viii.

writer found himself quickly replaced by the more mutable Thomas Cranmer.[85] Elyot would never again be given an important government position and he would later express the belief that his own integrity and outspokenness had been responsible for his failure at court. In effect Elyot became excluded from the inner circle of government and court in 1532 and he seems to have made the decision, not altogether from choice, to abandon political discretion in favour of plain-speaking in an attempt to educate both his king and his fellow courtiers. He in effect became an excluded voice speaking against what he regarded as the principal cause of his own downfall and the failure of humanists to succeed at court. The crux of Elyot's own situation and that of civic humanism in general is embodied in the treatise of *Pasquil the Playne*.

Published for the first time by the royal printer Berthelet in 1533, and again in 1540, *Pasquil the Playne* is primarily an attack on the vices of flattery and time-serving silence which Elyot deemed were predominant within the sphere of the Tudor court. Elyot would write the year following the pasquinade's publication, in *Of the Knowledge Which Maketh a Wise Man*, that he did not allude to any particular person, for:

> … there be Gnathos in Spayne as wel as Grece, Pasquilles in Englande as welle as in Sicile, Harpocrates in France as wel as in Aegipt, Aristippus in Scotlande as well as in Cyrena, Platos be fewe, and them I doubte where to fynde.

The text is regarded by some critics as a thinly veiled evaluation of contemporary politics within the context of Henry VIII's 'great matter', his divorce, with speculation made as to whether More, Wolsey, Cromwell, Fisher and Elyot

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[85] Fox & Guy, p. 46.

himself are the historical figures delineated in the pasquinade.[86] The treatise, however, at both its basic surface level and within its somewhat shrouded subtext, fundamentally probes the role of the counsellor and the effectiveness and possibility of 'honest' and 'open' speech at court. It is also at another level a text, as I suggest is Wyatt's satire *A Spending Hand*, concerned with the effectiveness of a humanist education when juxtaposed against the reality of court service.

Pasquil the Playne is cast in a Lucianic dialogue and debate between Pasquil and two 'cosen germanes', Gnatho and Harpocrates.[87] Elyot makes it very clear at the outset what is going to be his central concern in the treatise when he himself addresses his 'gentile reders' to tell them:

> Sens plainness in speking is of wise men comended and diverse do ab-horre longe prohemes of Rhetorike : I have sette out this mery treatise, wherin plainnes and flateri do come in trial in suche wise as none honest man wil be offended.[88]

The need for such a treatise is made starkly clear by Pasquil's first words, for he tells us:

> It is a wonder to se the worlde nowe a dayes. The more straunge the better liked, therfore with greatte payne a man may knowe an honest man from a false harlotte.[89]

The dialogue that follows is concerned with how best to serve at court, and in particular the advice on how quickly to obtain promotion there given to Gnatho by a 'wise and verye well lerned' man who quoted the saying of Aeschylus, the

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[86] Gottesman, p. ix & xi; Fox & Guy, p. 66; Barrr, H. & Ward-Perkins, K. (1997) 'Spekyng for one's sustenance: The Rhetoric of Counsel in Mum and the Sothsegger, Skelton's Bowge of Court, and Elyot's Pasquil the Playne' in Cooper, H. & Mapstone, S. (eds.) *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, p. 260; Baker, D. (1999) *Divulging Utopia*, p. 90.

[87] Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, p. 62. All quotes from *Pasquil the Playne* will be taken from Gottesman, *Four Political Treatises* and referred to only as Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, from henceforth.

[88] Ibid, p. 42. 'harlotte' does not necessarily pertain to gender, but implies those who prostitute themselves more generally. Elyot is immediately introducing the idea that nowadays appearances are deceptive and it is hard to tell the honest man from those who are dishonest.

[89] Ibid, p. 45.

Greek tragedian, that the best way to gain advancement was by, 'holdyng thy tonge wher it behoueth the. And spekyng in tyme that whiche is conuenient.'[90] Each of the three protagonists interprets the words of Aeschylus very differently, and it is this conflict between interpretations that forms much of the tension and conflict that simmers throughout the debate. The central essence of much of the debate deliberates upon when, without damaging his own position and interests, a counsellor should speak and when not, in order to aid and best serve his prince.[91]

Pasquil is described by Elyot as an 'image of stone / sittinge in the citie of Rome openly' who 'by longe sittinge in the street, and heringe market men chat ... [has] become rude and homely'.[92] He has long since abandoned political discretion in favour of plain-speaking and whilst not denying the importance of time and opportunity he nevertheless asserts 'oportunitie and tyme for a counsayllour to speke do not depend of the affection and appetite of hym that is counsayled' otherwise 'counsaylle were but a vayne worde, and euery man wolde do as hym lyste.'[93] Counsellors would, according to Pasquil, be little more than flatterers if they were to hold their tongues through self-interest. Gnatho is described by Elyot as a character 'brought in by writers of comedies' who 'always affirmed, what so ever was spoke of his maister'.[94] He was also 'Greke bourne and therefore fauorith some what of rhetorike.'[95] As such he was the epitome of a flatterer and a symbolic representation of the humanist trained courtier who has turned his education towards dissimulation and loquacious flattery in order to gain personal advancement and profit. To Gnatho the meaning of Aeschylus's sentence 'semeth so playne, that it nedeth none expositor' and he asserts that:

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[90] Ibid, p. 49.
[91] Gottesman, p. x.
[92] Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, p. 42-43.
[93] Ibid, p. 55-56. Baker, p. 86.
[94] Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, p 42-43.
[95] Ibid, p. 43.

> It behoueth a man to holde his tunge, whan he aforeseeth by any experience, that the thinge which he wolde purpose or speke of to his superiour, shall neyther be pleasantly herde nor thankefully taken.[96]

Harpocrates, Elyot informs the reader, was a 'prelate of the temple of Isis and Serapis, whiche were honorid for goddis in Aegypt' and 'whose image is made holdynge his finger at his mouthe betokeninge silence.'[97] Originally an Egyptian deity, Harpocrates was one of the forms of Horus, the sun-god, whose statues represent the child Horus as a naked boy with his finger on his mouth. Misunderstanding this hieroglyphic sign for a child, the later Greeks and Roman poets made Harpocrates the god of both silence and secrecy.[98] Harpocrates in the treatise regards silence as the safest course of action in virtually all instances unless, he admits reluctantly when questioned on the subject by Pasquil, his own safety is at risk.

Pasquil at length delineates to Gnatho the advantages of forthright speaking, how speaking against an unwise policy prior to a battle can circumvent disaster, or how a friend can be saved from poverty if informed he is overmatched at cards prior to beginning a game, or gluttony and dishonesty be averted if those involved are informed of their peril, and how a friend who is honoured by men but has vices can be reproached and his behaviour amended so that his enemies cannot use their knowledge of his vices to harm him. Lastly, he discusses when it is appropriate to speak to his master, how it is necessary to speak:

> Before wrathe be increased in to fury, and affection into beastly enormitie ... For oportunitie and tyme for a counsayllour to speke do not depend of the affection and appetite of hym that is counsayled ...[99]

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[96] Ibid, p. 50.
[97] Ibid, p. 43.
[98] Peck, H. (1962) *Harper's dictionary of classical and literature and antiquities.*
[99] Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, p. 55-56.

For if it did depend upon 'the affection and appetite' of he who is counselled, Pasquil postulates, 'counsaylle were but a vayne worde, and every man wolde do as hym lyste'. Elyot has Pasquil embody a similar belief to that of Bryan in Wyatt's satire *A Spending Hand*, that above all a courtier should have a 'free tongue'. Also, like Bryan in Wyatt's satire, Pasquil is immediately informed of the negative consequences of such a 'free tongue' when Gnatho tells him to leave his:

> ... bourdinge and currishe philosophie sens it is neyther profitable / plesant, nor thankefull. Who wolde be so madde to drive about a myll, and is sure that all the meale that he gryndeth, shall fall on the floore : savinge a little mylduste, that shall flie into his eien, and put him to payne, and perchaunce make hym blynde? And thou studyest to speake many good wordes, whiche be lost in the rushes: and if any yll meaning may be pycked out, it is caste in thy nose to put the in daunger.[100]

It is pointless and unprofitable Gnatho implies, even if your words offer truth and knowledge, to offer advice to a master that you know does not listen to the words of his advisors unless they agree with his own thoughts. Only an unwise counsellor offers contradictory advice to a prince that would not welcome such advice. He further informs Pasquil that the meaning of his words may even be deliberately misconstrued by others at court and therefore place him in danger. Gnatho then outlines just how Pasquil should use his obvious wit and learning, he should 'tourney the lefe' and when he hears anything proposed by those who he has in the past offended, he should agree to what they say and advance their opinion through flattery, for 'he that can dispise spytefully, can if he liste, prayse and comende also incomparably.'[101] If Pasquil were but to 'laye apart the lesson of gentiles, called humanite' and instead 'pike out here and there sentences out of

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[100] Ibid, p. 59.
[101] Ibid, p. 60-61.

holy scripture to fournys [his] ... reason with authoritie.' he would quickly be called to counsel.[102] If he chooses not to follow this advice Gnatho tells him, he is likely to do nothing more than 'stande styl in the rayne and ones perchance to be throwen in to Tyber, in pieces or broke.'[103] Through the dialogue between the two characters Elyot clearly makes the accusation that those who currently serve at court, men like Gnatho, are little more than time-serving sycophants and flatterers who adhere little to the humanist teachings so popular during the era, teachings which formed the backbone of Henry VIII's own education and which he himself highly praised. Honest men, the text implies, like Elyot, who speak with humanist wisdom and a free tongue, are excluded from the court and their words misconstrued by the very flatterers they attempt to expose. Like Wyatt, in *A Spending Hand*, Elyot makes the implied accusation that 'now-a-days' counsellors 'use virtue ... in word alone to make' their 'language sweet' for 'though that truth of every man hath praise, / Full near that wind goeth truth in great misease.'[104] Though within different genres, pasquinade and satirical verse, the two writers similarly juxtapose the civic humanist ideal against the stark reality of court service.

Elyot, however, is not satisfied with merely delineating the harm done by open flattery such as Gnatho's; through the dialogue between Pasquil and Harpocrates, he exposes the perils of acquiescing to a corrupt policy or action through 'silence'. Gnatho tells Pasquil, when Pasquil is first introduced to Harpocrates, that there is little difference between himself and Harpocrates, a practitioner of self-interested silence, for they:

> ... both have one maister. And whan he spekethe or doeth any thynge for his pleasure: I studye with

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[102] Ibid, p. 61.
[103] Ibid, p. 69.
[104] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 34-36.

> wordes to commende it. If my couseyn stande by, he speketh littell or nothing but formynge his visage in to a gravitie with silence loketh as if he affirmed all thynge, that is spoken.[105]

As the dialogue between Pasquil and Harpocrates unfolds we learn that Harpocrates may adopt silence as his own course of action towards those he serves, but when virulently challenged by Pasquil concerning his own safety, he would have others speak up if his own life was ever in danger. He regards such silence in this instance as nothing less than an act of treason, though Pasquil is quick to point out that he is no prince or pope, merely a priest, and that as such, if he were harmed by another's silence, it could not be construed as treason.

Harpocrates at this point attempts to slip from Pasquil's entrapment by suggesting that, though he is generally silent, he would warn his master of danger at the moment it was imminent. Pasquil, however, pressurises Harpocrates to clarify his definition of 'imminent'. Is it imminent, he asks, the moment the act is planned, or is it imminent when the plan is put into place, or is it as the murder happens, which may be too late? Harpocrates is forced continually to redefine his understanding of 'imminent', as he previously did his conception of silence, and is finally applauded by Pasquil for being a good 'Duns man'.[106] This, however, is by no means a compliment, as the philosopher and theologian Duns Scotus, who died in 1308, whilst a sophisticated thinker and subtle reasoner, was also known in subsequent centuries as Doctor Subtilis and a telling fact of his works is his ability repeatedly to change his doctrine in the course of time, or at least for them not to have been uniformly precise in expressing his thought. Being a 'Duns man' was a somewhat derogatory term, for there was a thin line between subtlety and sophism.

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[105] Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, p. 63.
[106] Ibid, p. 78.

Pasquil next extols the humanist ideal to Harpocrates that truth should be spoken openly even when the listener does not wish to hear it, for:

> ... if ye warned youre mayster at the begynnynge though he toke it not thankfully, yet did you your duetie & can not lacke rewarde of god, who loveth truthe, for your fidelitie. And thoughe he, whom ye disapoynted or his affinitie, shall seke howe to be avenged on you: either god wyll defende you, or if there sall to you thereby any adversitie, finally falsehode longe kepte in wyll braste oute at the laste and than shal repentance cause your simplicitie to be had in renome and perpetual memorie: whiche parte of honour to every honest man passeth al other rewarde, that may be gyven in this lyfe that is transitorie.[107]

Through honest 'simplicitie', that is, sincerity, freedom from admixture, ornament, formality, ostentation and subtlety, even if the courtier is rebuked or punished by his prince, he will have done his 'duetie' and will obtain renown, perpetual memory and reward from God, which is the reward, Pasquil informs Harpocrates, that any honest man desires above all others. Pasquil develops this ideal and makes it more emphatic when he asks Harpocrates:

> Estemest thou life more than good renome, or the welthe of thy countraye? for the which so many puissant and noble princis, so many wise and excellent philosophers have lefte theyr lives willingly, who gladly wyl leve a better thynge for a warse? Except for wantonesse, or for the newe facion. Is any dethe so moche to be dradde as perpetuall infamie, the sub-vercion of the common weale...doest thou esteme the deth of the soule to be of lasse importance than the dethe of the bodye?[108]

To which Elyot has Harpocrates answer, 'In dede there ye touche me' and later admit, when asked by Pasquil 'than whan is your silence in season?', that he is 'abashed' by Pasquil's 'froward reson' for he has no answer.[109] Pasquil then makes a further attack upon those who sit in silence as counsellors in their king's

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[107] Ibid, p. 85-86.
[108] Ibid, p. 87-88.
[109] Ibid, p. 88 & 95.

chamber, they are worse than inanimate objects, for by their silence they 'cause many thynges to be broughte to an unluckye conclusion.' It would be far better, he claims, if an Emperor set in his chamber instead of counsellors the 'images of Cato, Metellus, Zelius, Cicero and suche other persones, who lyvinge ferre excelled in witte, experience and lerninge', for they would act as reminders of the wisdom and virtue of these men.[110] These were images of classical scholars, philosophers and statesmen who were highly influential upon the thought and ideals of civic humanists.

Regardless of Pasquil's humanist arguments, however, as the treatise ends neither Gnatho nor Harpocrates will change their ways and simply point out, as Pasquil himself acknowledges, that due to his honest speech he will profit little and 'never come unto privie chamber or galeri.'[111] Pasquil makes the only claim that a humanist excluded from court could, one of self-righteous indignation that he will continue to babble and act as a conduit for the exposure of vice. He will remain a symbol a protest, upon which the citizens of Rome will once a year pin notes to expose the sins and vices of their princes in order that they:

> ... shal perceive, that theyr vices, whiche they thinke to be wonderfull secrete be knowen to all men. And that I hope alwaye that by moche clamoure and open repentance, whan they see the thing not succeed to theyr purpose they wyl be ashamed.[112]

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[110] Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, p. 96-97. The *Cato* referred to here may be either *Cato the elder* (d. 149 BC) or *Cato the younger* (d. 46 BC). Both were renowned for their strict moral standards but the reference is likely to be to *Cato the younger*, who was popular with many Renaissance humanists and known in particular for his Stoic philosophy, high moral standards and incorruptible virtue which gained him praise even from his political enemies. *Metellus* was an ancient Roman family name and it is not posssible to be specific as to which member of the family Pasquil refers to. Many were generals and consuls serving Rome. *Zoilus* (d. c320 BC) was a Greek grammarian of Amphipolis in Macedonia. According to Vitruvius (vii., preface) he lived during the age of Ptolemy Philadelphus, by whom he was crucified as a punishment for his criticisms of the king. *Cicero* (106-43 BC) was an orator, writer, and statesman of ancient Rome. His many speeches to the Roman Senate are famous for their rhetorical techniques and their ornate style.

[111] Ibid, p. 98-99.

[112] Ibid, p. 99.

For, Pasquil claims, God shall judge all men and he ends the treatise by stating that he desires nothing more than a world where all things shall be good so that he 'mought ever be specheles / as it is my very nature to be.'[113]

Elyot's adoption of the persona of Pasquil, suggested or implied by most critics, can certainly be read as an attempt to find a new, more sceptical discourse concerning the awareness of the dilemma that faced the humanist counsellor at court; that political expediency is incompatible with moral integrity and speaking the truth inevitably forfeits political favour and personal profit.[114] Moreover, the debate between Pasquil, Gnatho and Harpocrates is a clear recognition of how the humanist ideals of honest service and open speech so highly praised by humanists such as Elyot and Erasmus were reinforced by the traditional behaviour and works of honourable men, princes and philosophers of high renown, and the idea that it was necessary to lead a virtuous life in order to gain God's rewards. It is also a clear accusation that it is not humanist ideals and education that are at fault concerning what many saw at court as a new 'facion' of corruption and vice, for if men were to follow the examples of such as Cicero, Cato and Zoilus, the text makes clear, they would offer honest and open advice first and foremost. This is a telling condemnation of flattery and self-serving silence and the treatise makes it abundantly clear Elyot regards this as being the prevalent moral system found within the world of the court and courtier. Furthermore, the treatise leaves the reader abundantly clear, during a period of history when many kept silent over the Henry VIII's 'great matter' of his divorce and the changes he was implementing concerning religion in general, that a counsellor would not be fulfilling his duty

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[113] Ibid, p. 100.

[114] Barr, H. & Ward-Perkins, K. (1997) 'Spekyng for one's sustenance: The Rhetoric of Counsel in Mum and the Sothsegger, Skelton's Bowge of Court, and Elyot's Pasquil the Playne' in Cooper, H. & Mapstone, S. (eds.) *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, p. 261.

either to his king or to God if he were to keep silent on matters of importance that effected the king physically or spiritually. Elyot also makes the subtle implication, through the dialogue between Pasquil and Harpocrates, that it is nothing less than treason to keep silent on matters of importance, even if speech on such matters were to upset the king or lead to the speaker's death. Somewhat ironically, Thomas More was to find at his trial, a few years after *Pasquil the Playne* was first published, that even silence could be construed as treason.

Clearly, Elyot's treatise is both a powerful and evocative humanist condemnation and discussion of courtier immorality and behaviour juxtaposed alongside the humanist ideal. At the same time, if we look beneath the surface of the text's concerns with courtier behaviour at the subtext of the treatise, we see that *Pasquil the Playne* is a text underpinned by the pragmatic imperatives of patronage. The treatise was written during a period when Elyot had recently been excluded from the inner circle of the court, his position as an ambassador to Germany given to the clergyman Thomas Cranmer. The subtext of the treatise is an anti-papal discourse that both aligns Elyot with increasingly influential and powerful supporters of evangelicals, such as Thomas Cromwell and Anne Boleyn, and also with Henry VIII in his conflict with Rome over his divorce from Catherine of Aragon and Supremacy over the Church. The corrupt flatterers Gnatho and Harpocrates are both servants of Roman princes, with Harpocrates a prelate and his master's confessor. Pasquil, the voice of honesty and truth has no place in the courts of the princes of Rome. Rome's 'Popes, emporours, kinges and cardinalles', Pasquil claims, are by their counsellors 'suche as thou [Gnatho] & Harpocrates ... with flatery and dissimulation brought in to the hate of god and the

people.'[115] If these Popes and cardinals had not lacked wisdom and succumbed to the flattery of false counsellors Pasquil informs Gnatho, then:

> ... many thinges mought have ben prevented, that were after lamented. Germany shulde not have kicked agayne her mother: Emperours and princis shuld not have ben in perpetual discorde & often tymes in peril prelates have ben laughed at, as dissardes: saynctes blasphemed, and miracles reproved for jougglynges lawes and statutes contemned, and officers littell regarded.[116]

Here Elyot has Pasquil refer to the rejection of Rome by the adherents of Luther as his teachings swept across Germany, and perhaps more specifically to the German Peasants' War of 1524-26 and Francois I's capture by Charles V in the battle at Pavia in 1525. The latter instance was a distinct time of 'peril' for the French monarch and kingdom.

The condemnation of the Catholic Church continues further when Pasquil tells Gnatho that:

> Yes I have tolde a tale to a frier or this tyme, with a grote in my hande, and have ben assoyled forthwith without any further rehersall: where if a poore man had told halfe so moche, he shulde have ben made equall to the divell, and have ben so chidde that whan he had gone from confession, he shulde have hanged doune the eres, as if he had ben lerninge of prickesonge.[117]

Pasquil reiterates not only a traditional accusation made against the corruption of the church by Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales* and subsequent poets, but an accusation that was made topical by Luther's *Ninety-five theses* (1517) and humanist works such as Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* (1511). It was also an accusation made even more politically volatile by Tudor ecclesiastical reformers and evangelists, such as Simon Fish and Christopher St German. Fish wrote *A*

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[115] Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, p. 56.
[116] Ibid, p. 58.
[117] Ibid, p. 66.

Supplication for the Beggars (1529), a vicious satire on the wealth and power of the clergy, whilst St German's anticlerical writings challenged the independence of the church and cogently synthesised the claims made by Henry VIII, first pronounced by him in 1515, that 'the kings of England in time past have never had any superior but God alone'.[118] Elyot's views concerning Rome are made even more emphatic when he has Pasquil subtly imply that Pope Adrian the fourth may have been 'poisoned by one of his cardinalles, bycause he wolde have minysshed theyr maiestie, and have broughte them to humbleness.'[119]

Pope Adrian IV, born Nicholas Breakspear (died 1159) was the only Englishman to have occupied the papal chair. Adrian was very much a reforming man of the Church and unpopular with many of his cardinals and bishops, as well as with European monarchs, such as Arnold of Brescia, King William of Sicily, Frederick Barbarossa and the Italian barons. Whilst there is no evidence Pope Adrian was actually poisoned, Elyot, through Pasquil, implies this was a possibility and suggests what may have been the reason for such an assassination of the only English pope. It was, no doubt, a sentiment that would have struck a cordial note when read by both Henry VIII and important ecclesiastical reformers.

If a polemicist, preacher or courtier supported Henry VIII against the pope during the era that *Pasquil the Playne* was initially printed, the king was not only, as Guy points out, 'prepared to turn a blind-eye to whatever outrageous heresies the man might espouse', he was also willing to advance and reward some of these men to positions of importance in his government.[120] The turbulent and outspoken evangelist Hugh Latimer was supported by several prominent courtiers and brought to court in March 1530 to preach before the king in support of the king's

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[118] Guy, J. (1990) *Tudor England*, p. 122.
[119] Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, p. 71.
[120] Wilson, p. 311.

divorce.[121] Prior to William Tyndale's condemnation of the royal divorce in his *Practice of Prelates*, Henry had even sought to bring the radical reformer to England and enlist his pen to aid in his dispute against Rome.[122] Tyndale's earlier work, the *Obedience of a Christian Man* (1529), in which he attacked the power of the papacy and the Church to argue that kings were anointed by God and that they therefore were godly servants for the reform of the church, a work the historian Scarisbrick colourfully regards as 'the first thorough-going apologia of Caesaropapism', had been brought to the king's attention by Anne Boleyn.[123]

Tyndale wrote concerning kings:

> God hath made the king in every realm judge over all, and over him is there no judge. He that judgeth the king judgeth God; and he that layeth hands on the king layeth hand on God; and he that resisteth the king resisteth God, and damneth God's law and ordinance.[124]

The crown is for Tyndale a sacrosanct institution, with the king the Lord's anointed who could do no wrong; at least that is, until he made the decision to seek a divorce from Catherine of Aragon. But it is through the rapid advancement of men such as Cranmer and Cromwell that Elyot would have seen that the best tactics for advancement was to adopt an anti-papacy stance.

It is a telling fact that Elyot adopts such a position when we consider that historians and critics seem unanimous in their view that Elyot was, though not openly, against Henry VIII's divorce and split with Rome.[125] Moreover, when Elyot has Pasquil delineate the ideal daily behaviour of a prince he is clearly flattering Henry VIII. Pasquil informs Gnatho and Harpocrates that in times past

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[121] Ibid, p. 311.
[122] Elton, G. (1969) *The Tudor Revolution in Government*, pp. 91-92.
[123] Fraser, A. (1992) *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, p.145; Scarisbrick, p. 247; Weir, p. 302.
[124] Walter, H. (ed.) (1848) *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures by William Tyndale*, p. 177.
[125] Fox & Guy are typical of historians who hold the view that Elyot was playing a 'double game' and 'secretly opposed to the divorce', see p. 46.

men used to occupy the morning in deep and subtle studies, and in counsel concerning the commonweal and:

> ... other matters of great importaunce. In like wise than to here countrouversies, and gyve judgement. And if they had any causes of thyre owne than to treate of them. And that dydde they not without a great consideration ... And after diner they refreshed their wittes, eyther with instruments of musike, or with redynge or heringe some pleasant storie, or beholdinge some thynge delectable and honest. And after theyr diner was digested, than eyther they exercised them selfes in rydynge, runnynge on fote shoting or other like pastime or wer with theyr haukes to se a flighte at the river or wolde se theyr grehoundes course the hare or the dere: whiche they dydde as well to recreate theyr wyttes as also to gette them good appetite. But now all this is tourned into an other fascion, god helpe us, the worlde is almost at an ende: for after noone is tourned to fore noone, vertue into vice into vertue, devocion into hypocrisie, and in some places men saye, faythe is tourned to herisye.[126]

The ideal put forward by Pasquil here is in part influenced by ideas central to Baldesar Castiglione's discussion of courtier behaviour in *The Book of the Courtier*. The most appropriate time for decisions of government and importance should be made in the morning, whilst the afternoon and evening should be a time for pastimes that revitalize the mind and body of the gentleman. Pasquil's activities are, however, very specific to Henry VIII, for the Tudor king preferred to deal with matters of importance in the mornings and then partake of his favourite 'pastimes' during the afternoon and evening. Henry was particularly renowned for his love of hawking, deer hunting and hare coursing with his greyhounds. Also his ability and passion concerning archery (for 'shooting' is not a reference to firearms) is well recorded. Pasquil's statement is, however, more than mere flattery of Henry VIII's daily behaviour. Elyot is not making a claim

[126] Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, pp. 62-63.

here that virtue has been turned to vice at the English court; for the treatise is set in Rome and the 'hypocrisie' Pasquil describes is that of Roman courtiers, where in 'some places' men would accuse Henry's faith as being heresy. Rome is a world, we are told, that is almost at an end, where 'noone is tourned to for noone.' Pasquil's words to his compatriots are a telling damnation of Rome and the papacy that would have patently pleased the English king.

Elyot, through a Janus-faced rhetorical strategy, claims both moral and political integrity, suggesting he understands the immoral reality of the court but will always himself seek the moral and honest path of a free tongue, that as a counsellor he would always put his king's concerns before his own life and rewards, whilst simultaneously he flatters Henry VIII's religious policy through the anti-papal discourse of the subtext. The rules of persuasive rhetoric urge an immediate effect on an audience, in this instance Henry VIII and influential courtiers, a particular audience whose intellectual capacity, beliefs and politics had been thoroughly considered. Elyot, at this point in his life, was obviously unwilling to reject the world of the court, and like humanists such as More, and to some extent Erasmus before him, followed a tradition of flattery and protestations of self-virtue in order to obtain either preferment at court or self-advancement. Yet, while Elyot is careful to flatter both Henry VIII and his policies, and he takes some care as the treatise closes, to suggest he has 'sayd nothynge but by the way of advertisement withoute reprochynge of any one person wherewith no good man hath cause to take any displeasure', it is unlikely that those serving at the Tudor court of Henry VIII would not have seen within the text an attack upon their own morals and behaviour.[127] It is even more unlikely that the courtiers serving the king would have been overly enamoured at having been so devastatingly

[127] Elyot, *Pasquil the Playne*, p. 100.

delineated, even if only by implication, as little more than sycophantic, time-serving dishonest flatterers.

It is similarly unlikely that those courtiers who surrounded the king, men who had themselves undergone a humanist education, men such as Wyatt and Bryan, would not have recognised, for all the treatise's anti-rhetorical positioning, that plain speech is a rhetorical construction and the text is underwritten by recourse to the very traditions it purports to eschew.[128] There would have been Tudor courtiers who recognised that the unmediated linguistic truth Elyot constructs in the treatise was rhetorically strategic. Tudor courtiers that would have recognised what Barr and Ward-Perkins have recently described as the 'the internal faultline between the actual complexity of the speech-act which the treatise performs and the apparently monosemic self-image of the honest counsellor.'[129] They would have seen that not only was the archetypical honest counsellor Elyot constructs through the treatise informed by rhetorical self-fashioning, but that the treatise was itself underpinned by pragmatic imperatives of patronage. That a moral bid for changes to courtier behaviour slides into a bid to fill an empty purse. Furthermore, these courtiers were highly unlikely to have merely accepted Elyot's criticism without some form of rebuttal or challenge.

Wyatt's satire *A Spending Hand*, which on the surface may seem an unlikely candidate for conservative, apologetic views of courtier behaviour is, as has already been mentioned, a poem that challenges one of the fundamental concepts of civic humanist ideals, an ideal affirmed by Pasquil in Elyot's treatise, that honest virtuous service was able to achieve a prosperous position and happiness within the reality of the prevalent moral world of the Tudor court. It is also a poem that challenges civic humanist theory concerning literature and

[128] Barr & Ward-Perkins, p. 262.
[129] Ibid, p. 263.

morality on other levels. As Vickers remarks, 'contrary to the opinions of some modern critics' civic humanist writers such as Elyot, More and Erasmus, 'had a perfectly coherent theory of literature'.[130] This derived from the branch of rhetoric known as 'epideictic', in which orators praised virtue and attacked vice with such vividness that they sought to stimulate the audience to follow a virtuous path through life.

In Wyatt's verse, however, this theory is undermined through self-subverting shifts in tone, for the more seductive poetic voice of Wyatt adopts the tone of authority but preaches corruption, and complicated juxtapositions of dialogue, in which the reader is invited to confirm one view of vice or virtue or the other, but then shown that either view can be undermined by the other protagonist's argument. The dialogue is surrounded by juxtaposed proverbs from classical, traditional and humanist authorities in such a way as to undermine the value of such wisdom. The idea that there is virtue in traditional wisdom, a central strand of all forms of humanism, is subverted by Wyatt when his poetic persona destabilises the authority of proverbs throughout the satire by using them to induce and legitimise the vicious deeds of usury, legacy-hunting, lying, and prostituting of female relatives.[131] Proverbs are shown to be nothing more than masks which lend humanism the outward form of morality.[132] Wyatt's poetic voice is fond of proverbs and aphorisms not for their quintessential expressions of traditional moral wisdom but rather because they can be recontextualised to suit the speaker's viewpoint, arguments, and concept of morality.[133] As Gleckman

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[130] Vickers, p. vii-viii.

[131] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 138; Rebholz, p. 450. Concerning Wyatt's use, and destabilisation of proverbs in *A Spending Hand* and other poems, see Ross, D. (1987) 'Sir Thomas Wyatt: Proverbs and the Poetics of Scorn' in *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, pp. 201-212.

[132] Ross, p. 211.

[133] Glassman, p. 38; Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 139.

points out, 'thus to 'be not idle' becomes a proscription for ever-vigilant greed; to 'be next thyself' means to betray one's friends; and to 'lend in no wise' is valid only if there is no profit to be made.'[134] In Wyatt's poem the well-worn maxims prove disturbingly malleable, for the sententious counsel provided by the poetic voice of Wyatt may be good, but it is certainly not moral and the entire poem is peppered with conflicting proverbs and interpretations.[135] Not only does Wyatt challenge the moral ideals central to the humanist-informed speeches of Pasquil but he also questions the evident truth of such proverbs that form Elyot's *Bankette of Sapience*, a collection of proverbs in which Elyot juxtaposes political self-serving with biblical and traditional wisdom without any sense of conflict.[136] It is entirely possible that *The Proverbes of Salmon*, thought to be written by Sir Francis Bryan using Elyot's the *Bankette of Sapience* as its source, was written and circulated prior to Wyatt writing *A Spending Hand*.[137] This, no doubt, as Heale has suggested, would have added to 'the network of 'insider' allusions to Bryan and his reputation with which Wyatt's poem already seems fraught'.[138]

This is apparent from the outset of the poem when Bryan is informed that:

> 'A spending hand that always poureth out
> Had need to have a bringer-in as fast'
> And 'on the stone that still doth turn about
> There growth no moss' – these proverbs yet do last.
> Reason hath set them in so sure a place
> That length of years their force can never waste.[139]

The 'rolling stone' proverb immediately becomes a subject of debate in which worldly experience is starkly juxtaposed against the sagacious authority of

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[134] Ibid, p. 38.
[135] Heale, 'An owl in a sack troubles no man', p. 428-429.
[136] Ibid, p. 427.
[137] Kinsman, R. (1979) "The Proverbes of Salmon Do Playnly Declare": A Sententious Poem on Wisdom and Governance, Ascribed to Sir Francis Bryan' in *HLQ 42*, pp. 279-312.
[138] Heale, 'An owl in a sack troubles no man', p. 428.
[139] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 1-6.

traditional meaning and humanist morality.[140] As Diane Ross has pointed out, the poetic voice of Wyatt suggests that 'a mossy stone has the mineral equivalent of the good life'; a life where one:

> ... mighst at home sleep in thy bed of down
> And drink good ale so nappy for the nonce,
> Feed thyself fat and heap up pound for pound?[141]

An interpretation of the 'rolling stone' proverb that is vigorously challenged by Bryan's exclamation that a mossy stone is symbolic of a 'fatted swine':

> ... 'For swine so groins
> In sty and chaw the turds moulded on the ground,
> And drivel on pearls, the head still in the manger.[142]

Wyatt, however, does more, at the outset of the poem, than to begin to challenge the latent implicit ambiguity of proverbs, of what Heale so colourfully describes as Erasmus having regarded as 'distillations of reason and custom', in order to show 'they were liable to speak like the Delphic Oracle, with a forked tongue, endorsing and subverting at the same time'.[143]

He does do this of course, but he is also deliberately placing his satire within the context of written treatises on service and counsel when he remarks to Bryan that:

> When I remember this and eke the case
> Wherein thou stands, I thought forthwith to write,
> Brian, to thee, who knows how great a grace
> In writing is to counsel man the right.[144]

Through the terse and laconic irony inherent in his treatment of humanist ideals and his subversion of the concept of 'honesty', 'wisdom', 'morality' and 'truth' to suggest how language and print are means of dissimulation, Wyatt subtly but

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[140] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 136; Idem., 'An owl in a sack troubles no man', p. 428.
[141] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 15-17. Ross, D. (1987) 'Sir Thomas Wyatt: Proverbs and the Poetics of Scorn' in *SCJ 18*, p. 211.
[142] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 18-20.
[143] Heale, 'An owl in a sack troubles no man', p. 431.
[144] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 7-10.

thoroughly undermines the concepts upon which humanist works are grounded. He subverts moral treatises on counsel that were likely to have been read by Bryan and others at court, works perhaps such as Castiglione's *Courtier,* but more than likely to have been Elyot's *Pasquil the Playne* and other recent publications by the dejected writer. Wyatt's satire constitutes what Heale rightly regards as:

> ... a critique of humanist eloquence as much as courtly service ... In Wyatt's satire, neither the eloquence of the counsellor, based on proverbs, nor the blunt views of the honest man, equally based on proverbs, provide us with a rhetoric to be trusted.[145]

Furthermore, the idea of a stoic withdrawal form the court, such as that suggested by Hythlodaeus, in More's *Utopia*, or led by the renowned humanist Erasmus, is devastatingly rejected when Bryan is asked 'Why dost thou wear thy body to the bones' when he 'mightst at home sleep in thy bed of down'.[146] Bryan's reply is brutal when he replies 'for swine so groins / in sty and chaw the turds moulded on the ground' and that:

> So sacks of dirt be filled up in the cloister
> That serves for less than do these fatted swine.[147]

Both the country life of contented 'swine' and the contemplative, quite specifically monastic life of the 'cloister', are dismissed as possible alternatives to the court. The poetic persona makes this point emphatically clear when he enthusiastically replies, 'By God, well said.'[148]

In doing this Wyatt undermines, at the core of its structure and composition, both the traditional and civic humanist criticism of the court in general and more specifically the indignant humanist accusations of insidious corrupt behaviour of which he and fellow courtiers are accused of performing

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[145] Heale, 'An owl in a sack troubles no man', p. 433.
[146] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 14-16. More, T. (1997) *Utopia*, trans. Robinson, R, Book 1, especially p. 83.
[147] Wyatt, *A Spending Hand*, lines 18, 19, 22, 23.
[148] Ibid, line 28.

within its environs by such a treatise as Elyot's *Pasquil the Playne*. He shows that civic humanist's rhetoric of barefaced plainness and truth proves to be highly disingenuous and systematically deconstructs their arguments and ideals to suggest the pragmatic reality that lies behind their virtuous stances. Wyatt does not, however, attempt to suggest that corrupt court behaviour does not exist: the dialogue of the satire is a clear recognition that he recognises his own culpability and understands emphatically the world he exists within is a complex one in which corruption is ubiquitous.[149]

In this compelling satire in which Wyatt blends comic entertainment with a serious poetic awareness of the issues that surround the complex and pluralistic political culture of civic humanism and court service during the reign of Henry VIII, the poet, somewhat characteristically, delineates a problem rather than provides an answer. Where Elyot's text has within it a steady confidence that it is possible to get to the real truth of the matter, Wyatt, in his satire, complicates the issue by juxtaposing reality and ideal. The real truth will lie within the reader's own perception of 'truth' and each reader will have a different conception of truth that is influenced by their own morality and ideals. Each has to search his or her own consciousness: Wyatt, unlike Elyot, Castiglione or similar civic humanists, is not offering a prescriptive ideal but rather casts a glaring light upon the latent paradoxes that are embedded within their works. Through the satire he reflects, engages and mediates between various civic humanist ideals and the reality of the court to provoke critical reflection on the nature of society and self whilst at the same time undermining the rhetoric of civic humanist critics of court and courtier.[150] Wyatt, by acknowledging how the very paradigms of civic humanist

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[149] Panja, S. (1988) 'Ranging and Returning: The Mood-Voice Dichotomy in Wyatt' in *ELR 18*, pp. 361.
[150] Goldberg, p. 526.

counsel fail within the political reality of the court, and how the language of humanist rhetoric is not to be trusted, displays to the court he is a politically astute, intelligent individual who honestly and pragmatically appraises the world in which he lives.[151]

In doing this, Wyatt fashions himself as an 'honest' individual of truthful integrity, discrimination and independence, to suggest he has the ability to live amidst the corruption of the court without becoming tainted. At the same time he is displaying his capacity as an able courtier and statesman through a deft display and manipulation of language and tone. Stephen Greenblatt has remarked, 'the court lyric is a kind of agent, sent forth to perform the bidding of its creator, to manifest and enhance his power at the expense of the power of someone else.'[152] Wyatt's verse does just this: it enhances his own persona as an honest courtier whilst at the same time it deflects the criticism of the court in which he exists. It does this by deconstructing the ideals and rhetoric of those who criticise contemporary court service. Though not initially evident, for whilst some critics have recognised that Wyatt's poetic works are not autotelic and self-ending, that his verse is infused with political currents and signifiers, the continuing trend is to regard the poet's verse as merely court critique or as a revelation of 'the self-destructive dialectic at work within man's consciousness and feelings'.[153] The verse, when seen in the light of pragmatic imperatives outlined in this chapter's analysis reveals a darker, more foreboding Wyatt who ruthlessly defends his position of privilege.

In the early sixteenth century, patronage effected all aspects of English and Scottish social and political life. Its influence upon literature was inevitable. This

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[151] Lerer, p. 170.
[152] Greenblatt, S. (1980) 'The Resonance of the Renaissance' in *ADE Bulletin 64*, p. 9.
[153] Scott, *Sir Thomas Wyatt: Selected Poems*, p. 16.

is clearly apparent when viewing the overtly complementary works dedicated to Henry VIII by such writers as Skelton, More and Hawes when he succeeded to the throne in 1509. It is equally apparent when looking beneath the surface of more subtle works of patronage, such as Elyot's *Governour* and *Pasquil the Playne*. These writers sought not merely artistic patronage, but social and political patronage, their verse an avocation rather than a vocation, an avocation that was used to win social prestige and preferment through successful exploitation of the precarious patronage system. To use literature in this pragmatic manner meant, however, that the poet could use his verse as a tool to make more than a bid to obtain the king's, or some great nobleman's attention. It also meant that those in positions of influence or privilege could use poetics to defend their position, both by proving their own worthiness and by denigrating, often in a subtle manner, the abilities and honesty of those other courtiers who turned their hand to verse or prose at court in their search for privilege, power and wealth. The desire to obtain, and keep, political power, social status and prestige set counsellor against counsellor, courtier against courtier, in what was at times open confrontation but at other times subtle antagonistic confrontation through works of literature.[154] This was a world in which Wyatt's satire *A Spending Hand* was created and excelled.

[154] MacCulloch, p. 29.

CHAPTER FIVE

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The 'honestye' of Thomas Wyatt's court critique and the unstable 'I' of his verse

> No position is weaker, more uncertain, more unstable, than that of the courtier who seems to be powerful. The masses emulate, imitate, and hate him; his power is subjected to everyone's envy.[1]
>
> *Aeneas Silvius*

Whilst Thomas Wyatt's pragmatic critique of humanism and the court in *A Spending Hand* may suggest that the poet is untainted by the corruption of the court, in other poems the idea of such independence is thoroughly challenged and through such a conceptual antithesis Wyatt develops greater depth and a feeling of balance to his honest persona. Through this crafted honest persona and the sense of insecurity that penetrates the fabric of much of Wyatt's verse the poet displays the weakness, uncertainty and instability of his position at court. He does so to convey to fellow courtiers his lack of power and inability to exert an influence upon his surroundings and those around him. This was a court, Sir Francis Bryan comments, in A *Dispraise of the life of a courtier* (1548), that abounded with courtiers who 'will do off with their bonnets to you that gladly would see your head off by the shoulders'.[2] A court that was full of 'gentleman so rooted in vengeance and hatred that by no means, request nor gentleness a man may direct them from their evil intents'.[3] Wyatt's display of veracity, weakness and vulnerability would have helped to deflect the emulation, hatred and envy of other courtiers that, as Bryan and Silvius recognised, were often all to willing to use a

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[1] Quoted in Mustard, p. 31.
[2] Sir Francis Bryan, (1548) *A Dispraise of the life of a courtier,* quoted in Baldwin Smith, L. (1986) *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia*, p. 53.
[3] Ibid, p. 53.

crafty tongue to cause the ruin, even death, of a fellow courtier they believed had become too powerful or influential.

Wyatt's use of this rhetorical strategy can be seen in the poem, *Some fowls there be that have so perfect sight*, a translation of a Petrarchan sonnet. In this sonnet Wyatt fashions himself as an honest person through his persona's display of self-awareness: that his soul's surrender and destruction has been caused by his attraction to the court. In the sonnet, Wyatt does not employ Petrarch's conceit of animals' reaction towards 'the great light' to express the destructive nature of unrequited love; rather, he transforms Petrarch's conceit into an exploration of the moral and psychological implications of service to the Tudor court. The hermeneutic key to understanding Wyatt's individuality in this, and many other poems, is the acceptance by the critic, that courtly love is an elaborate conceit for the Tudor court.

The octave establishes three classes of man through the metaphor of fowls, their principle division being their reaction to 'the sun', 'light' and 'fire bright', all of which can be perceived as metaphors for the court:

> Some fowls there be that have so perfect sight
> Again the sun their eyes for to defend,
> And some because the light doth them offend,
> Do never 'pear but in the dark or night,
> Other rejoice that see the fire bright,
> And ween to play in it, as they do pretend,
> And find the contrary of it that they intend.
> Alas, of that sort I may be by right.[4]

There are the fowls of 'perfect sight' that 'Again the sun their eyes for to defend', birds of prey, which represent the class of man or woman who fully belongs in the predatory world of the court. This may even be a possible allusion to Anne Boleyn, who had as the emblem of her heraldic badge a white falcon. She was

[4] Wyatt, *Som Fowls there be that have so perfect sight*, lines 1 – 8. Printed in Rebholz, p. 79.

also referred to, in English and Latin panegyric verse written to celebrate her coronation, as a 'byrd [who] shyneth so bright.'[5] There are the fowls that 'never 'pear but in the dark or night' because 'the light doeth them offend'; owls, which may represent men like the Renaissance humanist scholar, Desiderius Erasmus, who, though he vastly influenced Renaissance education and often criticised courtiers, sought, in his later years, no active part within government or the milieu of the court.[6] Wyatt is not praising such behaviour, as the owl was typically a negative signifier and derogatory symbol during this era, as Wyatt himself makes clear in his translation of Plutarch's *Quiet of Mind*, which was written for Katherine of Aragon and published in 1527. He wrote: 'thou seest other mennes vices with kytes eyes / & thyn own thou lettes passe / with wynkynge owles eyes'.[7] In the translation Wyatt uses similar bird imagery to that of the sonnet to express the lack of virtue in being able to see vice in others but not acknowledge it in oneself. In spite of classical and modern associations with wisdom, the owl was regarded as a symbol of the sinner and evil in churches during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In literature, as Tasioulas remarks, 'it was sometimes portrayed as challenging the authority of the noble eagle'.[8] Finally, there are those fowls who 'rejoice that see the fire bright' and who find 'the contrary of it that they intend'. These are foolish men who are duped by the court, men who are its prey, allured by its seductive promise of power and profit only to be destroyed once they come within its merciless sphere of influence.

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[5] Greene, R. (1960) 'The Meaning of the Corpus Christi Carol' in *MA 29*, pp. 14-16.

[6] The fowles that 'never pere but in the dark or nyght' have been interpreted by some critics to be 'bats' (Spiller p. 89) but as a bat is not a fowl, that is a bird, this seems inaccurate. Mason, H. (1986) *Sir Thomas Wyatt: A Literary Portrait*, p. 112. Mason suggests it is plausible to suppose Wyatt read all of the works of Erasmus as they became available.

[7] Muir, K. (ed.) (1949) *Collected Poems of Thomas Wyatt*, p. 442.

[8] Tasioulas, J. (ed.) (1999) *The Makars: The poems of Henryson, Dunbar and Douglas*, p. 742.

The last line of the octave tentatively identifies the speaker in the poem with this third group of men and this analogy is further developed in the sestet:

> For to withstand her look I am not able,
> And yet can I not hide me in no dark place,
> Remembrance so followeth me of that face
> So that with teary eyen, swollen and unstable,
> My destine to behold here doth me lead,
> Yet do I know I run into the gleed.[9]

Here, however, we find that the speaker is not deceived by the court, he is a man of rational thought, aware of the consequences of his life at court and, hence, responsible for them. He is conscious of the fact that though he could retreat to a 'dark place … Remembrance so followeth … of that face' that he would continue to desire a place within the court. In the couplet that ends the sonnet, the speaker expresses his self-awareness in a conclusive paradox: that he goes ineluctably and willingly into that which will destroy him.[10] The sonnet reveals what, in the humanist view, are the implications of the surrender of reason to desire and how, though the discourse of stoic withdrawal from the court may have been compelling to some, it was a choice to be detested and disturbingly powerless when faced with the attraction, the 'fire bright', of the Henrician court. It also displays to the court that Wyatt is a pragmatic individual who honestly appraises the court and recognises his own vulnerable and culpable position within its environs. This rhetorical strategy and Wyatt's crafted honesty is further envisaged in the epigram, *In court to serve*.

Wyatt's recognition of this moral and political reality is so crystal-clear, so transparent and seemingly unambiguous in, *In court to serve*, that most critics

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[9] Wyatt, *Som Fowls there be that have so perfect sight*, lines 9-14.

[10] Spiller, M. (1992) *The Development of the Sonnet*, pp. 87 – 90. Peterson, D. (1967) *The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne*, p. 97/98. Although my reading of *Som Fowls there be that have so perfect sight* is not based upon those made by the two critics, I must acknowledge my debt to the insight they gave me to the poem.

recognise the poem is unequivocally concerned with the courtier's existence within the court. An existence in which the courtier is:

> In court to serve, decked with fresh array,
> Of sugared meats feeling the sweet repast,
> The life in banquets and sundry kinds of play
> Amid the press of lordly looks to waste,
> Hath with it joined oft-times such bitter taste
> That whoso joys such kind of life to hold,
> In prison joys, fettered with chains of gold.[11]

Wyatt is recognised as exposing a life at court as one of 'sugared meats' that causes a 'bitter taste,' and that an individual's desire for such a life binds him, fetters him 'with chains of gold.' Yet, Wyatt may not merely be alluding to courtiers in general, but perhaps more specifically to those who hold 'high office,' prominent public servants, such as Sir Thomas More, Sir Thomas Cromwell and even Wyatt's own father, Sir Henry Wyatt, whose 'chains of gold' hung around their necks as symbols of their power. A coercive power Wyatt suggests imprisons them and causes a 'bitter taste.'[12]

This was a topical allusion, as by late 1513 the golden collar had become the general symbol of knighthood and a variant of Wyatt's witticism was already in vogue. When Henry VIII was presented with the Papal Sword and Cap of Maintenance in 1514, by Leonardo Spinelli, the pope's emissary, he reported that, at the English court, 'all bore such massive gold chains that some might have served for fetters on a felon's ankles, and sufficed for his safe custody, so heavy were they, and of such an immense value.'[13] The fashion of wearing gold chains had become so widespread and popular in the early period of Henry VIII's reign that a revised Act of Apparel was introduced in February 1515 that decreed

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[11] Wyatt, *In court to serve.*

[12] Mason, *Sir Thomas Wyatt: A literary Portrait*, p. 104. Mason points out how Sir Thomas More wears a chain of gold in the portrait of him by Hans Holbein.

[13] Venice, Papers II 445, quoted in Lancashire, I. (ed.) (1980) *Two Tudor Interludes: Youth & Hick Scorner*, p. 19.

'noman under the degree of a knight were any cheyne of gold or gilte or colour [collar] of Gold or any gold about his neck'.[14] In the morality play *Youth* (c. 1514) the topicality of gold chains as fetters is also apparent in the dialogue between Youth and Riot:

> *Youth.* God's foot! Thou diddest enough there
> For to be made knight of the collar.
> *Riot.* Yea, sir, I trust to God Almight
> At the next sessions to be dubbed a knight.
> *Youth.* Now, sir, by this light,
> That would I fain see!
> And I plight thee,
> So God me save,
> That a surer collar thou shalt have;
> And because gold collars be so good cheap,
> Unto the roper I shall speak
> To make thee one of a good price,
> And that shall be of warranties.[15]

The term knight of the collar had multiple meanings in the era Wyatt was writing.

It was a symbol of a knight who had obtained the king's special favour; however, it could also mean a prisoner who was chained around the neck by a collar in an English jail, or a convict hanging on the gallows.[16] Such allusions add to the depth of irony, cynicism and the biting realism that the poet conveys in the final couplet of the verse. 'Chains of gold' is also an allusion that could refer to those chains worn by the slaves and criminals that Hythlodaeus refers to in *Utopia*, chains which were described as symbols of 'reproach and infamy.'[17] In More's book gold chains and such regalia were also worn by the visiting ambassadors to Utopia and More satirises these symbols of the court, and what they represent, through the Utopian's belief that the visiting ambassadors were simply slaves because of their gold chains. Wyatt echoes More's ironic recognition that man's weakness for

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[14] Lancashire, p. 20.
[15] *Youth*, lines 269-281, in Lancashire, p. 121.
[16] Lancashire, p. 121.
[17] More, T. (1997) *Utopia*, trans. Robinson, R., p. 83. We cannot be certain that Wyatt read *Utopia*, but it seems highly likely and the prisoners in *Utopia* were bound by chains of gold.

material goods, the desire for 'sugared meats' and 'sweet repast', makes such men 'ambassadors' fools.'[18] The final couplet, when we look at it closely, creates an extremely complex image of profane cynicism that comments critically upon the political and materialistic reality of the Henrician court. Through this expression of cynicism Wyatt simultaneously portrays his own honesty, weakness and vulnerability.

Similarly, in the sonnet *Farewell Love,* Wyatt does not overtly criticise the political and moral world of the Tudor court, but rather he wraps his critique within a metaphor of love:

> Farewell, Love, and all thy laws forever.
> Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more.
> Senec and Plato call me from thy lore
> To perfect wealth my wit for to endeavour.
> In blind error when I did persevere,
> Thy sharp repulse that pricketh ay so sore
> Hath taught me to set in trifles no sore
> And scape forth since liberty is lever.
> Therefore farewell. Go trouble younger hearts
> And in me claim no more authority.
> With idle youth go use thy property
> And thereon spend thy many brittle darts:
> For hitherto though I have lost all my time
> Me lusteth no longer rotten boughs to climb.[19]

Initially, as we read the poem, it appears that the poet rejects the world of love in favour of the intellectual world of Seneca and Plato. He will, in future reject Cupid, whose fragile pleasures have caused him nothing but pain, and direct his attention towards the contemplation of goodness inherent within the works of classical authors. Love, with all its baited hooks, will be left to a younger generation.

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[18] Ibid, p. 84.
[19] Wyatt, *Farewell love, and all thy laws for ever!*, in Rebholz, p. 87.

That this is a poem concerned with more than love, however, becomes apparent when the reader assimilates the subtle and ambiguous imagery of the last line of the poem:

Me lusteth no longer rotten boughs to climb.[20]

This may at first seem as if it portrays a wearied lover who no longer desires to climb the rotten tree of love, yet it has a much deeper and profound meaning when we realise 'boughs' in old English meant shoulders.[21] Translated thus, the line reads:

Me lusteth no longer rotten [*shoulders*] to climb.

Moreover, according the *Oxford English Dictionary*, boughs can also mean gallows. It was an old Kentish legal custom – Kent the county of Wyatt's birth and home – to say 'The father to the bough, the son to the plough'. The implication being that the felon who was sent to the gallows does not deprive his children of the succession of his property. Wyatt, through the subtle play of the ambiguity in the meaning of the word 'boughs', compels the reader to make a re-evaluation of the poem; above all it renders it far more difficult, if not impossible to view the theme of the poem as being that of love. Love, we realise, is a metaphor for the court. Once we realise this, the poem becomes a discourse concerning power and morality in which the political reality of Tudor politics is portrayed as an innately corrupt arena in which there is no order, merely corruption, political intrigue and danger.

Such a reading allows us to see the cultural implications of a life at court, where Wyatt, because of his aspirations as a courtier, had constantly to negotiate his position relative to those around him in order that he could acquire patronage,

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[20] Ibid, line 14.
[21] *Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. ii, p.437.

loyalty and protection.[22] This a dangerous world in which, two decades later, his own son would pay the ultimate price: a trip to the executioner's block.[23] If, however, the reader of the poem does not recognise the ambiguity of the word 'bough', then the elaborate conceit veiled within the sonnet fails dismally and the reader is left with the questions that the usually perceptive Heale asks:

> … what does the last unpunctuated line – 'Me lusteth no longer rotten boughs to climb' – mean? Are the rotten boughs' women? If so, are all women rotten boughs, or is he renouncing the 'rotten' or unrewarding women?[24]

Heale's questions emphasise how, without due attention to the changing meaning and ambiguity of language, the reader can be left puzzled and perplexed concerning Wyatt's poetry. This was a point the poet was himself aware of during his lifetime. He wrote:

> How sore that it me wring;
> For what I sung or spake
> Men did my songs mistake.
> My songs were too diffuse.[25]

This may today seem a mere conventional trope, but not to take heed of Wyatt's warning and pay due attention to the resonance of language in his verse, would, like Heale, mean the reader inadvertently closes off the implications and suggestive power of Wyatt's poetry.[26] As Gavin Douglass makes clear in the Prologue of *Æneis*, his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* into middle Scots, the audience should:

> Reid, reid agane, this volume, mair than twyss:

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[22] Spiller, p. 89.

[23] Concerning Thomas Wyatt the younger's rebellion of January 1554 and his subsequent execution, see Wilson, pp. 513-514; McGurk, J. (1999) *The Tudor Monarchies 1485-1603*, pp.62-63.

[24] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 100.

[25] Wyatt, *Me list no more to sing*, lines 3-6.

[26] This may today seem a familiar and conventional trope, but I would suggest that it became conventional, stale and overused during the Elizabethan era and the early seventeenth century, and that during the early sixteenth century it was less conventional and maintained a degree of originality and force.

> Consider quhat hyd sentence tharin lyis;
> Be war to lak, less than ze knew weil quhat;
> And gif zou list not wirk aftir the wiss,
> Heich on zour hede set vp the foly hat.[27]

Readers must undertake the task of detailed interpretation in order to seek out and find the 'hyd sentence' and meaning within a text.[28]

Farewell Love may indeed portray the pain of love, but it also portrays a court system where 'baited hooks shall tangle' and 'pricketh aye so sore' and the only means to achieve success is by climbing onto the 'boughs' of powerful and corrupt patrons.[29] This is a Machiavellian world that 'is underpinned by a darkly pessimistic view of human nature,' where there are men: [30]

> …of the sort there be that feign
> And cloak their craft to serve there turn.[31]

A world where Wyatt cynically warns in a further poem:

> That they whom you trust most
> Soonest deceive you shall.[32]

Through the poetic persona of such poems Wyatt portrays himself as a man of honesty and integrity, displaying a vulnerable individual unable to continue living in such a corrupt world.

We should, however, take heed of Francesco Guicciardini's remarks when he tells us:

> Do not believe those who profess to have abandoned affairs and greatness deliberately and from love of a peaceful life. Nearly always the reason has been thoughtfulness or necessity. Hence experience shows us that almost everyone who is offered some opportunity of returning to their former life, will

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[27] Virgil, (1964) *Aeneid*, translated into Scottish verse by Gavin Douglas, 4 vols., ed. Coldwell, D., vol I, lines 12-16.
[28] Kratzman, p. 250.
[29] Wyatt, *Farewell love, and all thy laws for ever!*, 'baited hooks shall tangle', line 2, 'pricketh aye so sore' line 6.
[30] This definition of Machiavelli's world is by Skinner & Price, Introduction to *The Prince*, p. xviii.
[31] Wyatt, *Though of the sort there be that feign*, lines 1-2.
[32] Wyatt, *Farewell, all my welfare*, lines 33-34.

> leave their prized peace and quiet and throw themselves into work with the speed of fire spreading in dry and oily materials.[33]

Guicciardini, who had served three popes, then Alessandro de Medici, and after the murder of Alessandro in 1537, Cosimo de Medici, fell into disfavour after an attempt to check the new duke's absolutism and ended his days writing his political works and histories whilst in forced retirement. His advice is typical of his insightful, non-delusional and pragmatic writing, in which he shows the glaring discord between opinions and practice. Wyatt's verse may indeed suggest that he disliked the court, that he may even have wished to depart its environs, but as his contemporaries make clear, as do the extant biographical details of his life, this was neither an option nor a desirable course of action, and certainly not one that Wyatt appears to have ever seriously considered.

In much of Wyatt's verse, an unsophisticated verbal plainness is deliberately set against the suspect sophistication of the court and the unstable rhetoric of flattery to construct an honest poetic persona, a speaker of blunt truths, usefully differentiated from the oleaginous smoothness of the courtly flatterer.[34] Wyatt adopts such a blunt idiom in the terse rondeuax, *What vaileth truth*, which on the surface appears to be a complaint about falsity in love, but can equally be interpreted as a critique of the deceit, falsity and capricious nature of power that the courtier learnt to expect at court.[35] This can be seen clearly in the first stanza:

> What vaileth truth? Or, by it, to take pain?
> To strive by steadfast, for to attain,
> To be just, and true and flee from doubleness:
> Sithens all alike, where ruleth craftiness,
> Rewarded is both false, and plain.
> Soonest he speedeth, that most can fain;

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[33] Francesco Guicciardini, *Ricordi, version C, no 17* in Cecil Grayson, (ed.) (1965) *Francesco Guicciardini: Selected Writings*, p. 9.
[34] Heale, 'An owl in a sack troubles no man', 11, p. 423.
[35] Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII', p.125.

True meaning heart is had in disdain.
Against deceit and doubleness
What vaileth truth?[36]

The veil of the conceit in this poem is so transparent; the duplicity, craftiness and deceit so immediately vivid, that even though the speaker refers to 'a mistress' in the final stanza, we are, as Greenblatt accurately adduces, 'induced to read the poem as a brooding reflection on career, rule and reward.'[37] The unmistakable reference to a mistress, as Gleckman suggests, does not resolve the ambiguity of the verse 'since the court itself might be referred to as a mistress in the eyes of one who, like Wyatt, died in its service.'[38] This, the poem suggests, was a court culture where:

Deceived is he by crafty train
That meaneth no guile and doth remain
Within the trap without redress
But for to love, lo, such a mistress
Whose cruelty nothing can refrain
What vaileth truth?[39]

The repetition of the question, 'What vaileth truth?', whilst it makes emphatic the claim that truth has no value within the morality of the court, also implies the speaker really wants to know the worth of honesty in an environment dominated by treachery. This suggests that Wyatt, though an active courtier, is a decent man trying to find an honest and appropriate stance towards his experience.[40]

What vaileth truth is, in many ways, a simple poem, the sententious critique is stated in an aphoristic style with conversational directness, but within this simple structure Wyatt has imbued a bitterly cynical portrayal of the prevalent lack of morality within the court. The court is depicted as a world that is full of

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[36] Wyatt, *What vaileth truth*, first stanza. The version of the poem quoted here is not the modernised version but that which is reprinted in Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 143. The modernised version printed in Rebholz's collection of Wyatt's verse lacks the punctuation which is an important element of the poem.
[37] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 144.
[38] Gleckman, p. 32.
[39] Wyatt, *What vaileth truth*, second stanza.
[40] Hannen, p. 43.

danger, deception and dishonesty; this theme also evidenced in other poems by Wyatt, such as, *Take heed betime lest ye be spied*[41] and *If thou wilt mighty be, flee from the rage*, in which the morality of those who seek power at court is 'conquered' by 'foul lust and vice.'[42] In contrast to the ideal image of a courtier, such as that presented in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, Wyatt portrays those who serve at court as synonymous with dissimilation and falsehood. The well known aphorism, '*Nescit dissumalare qui nescit vivevre*' is shown to be the courtier's maxim.[43] Wyatt, through the sense of indignant betrayal his poetic persona displays, which arises from the recognition in these poems that the moral values his society preached count for nothing in the actual Tudor court, fashions himself as an honest man forced to exist in a corrupt world.[44]

There are, according to Peterson, numerous other poems in which Wyatt frankly states his opposition to equivocation and deceit:[45]

> Throughout the world, if it were sought,
> Fair words enough a man shall find.
> They be good cheap; they cost right naught;
> Their substance is but only wind.
> But well to say and so to mean –
> That sweet accord is seldom seen.[46]

In this epigram, 'Fair words,' that is flattery and lies, are 'cheap' and have so little value, their 'substance is but only wind' and truth 'That sweet accord is seldom seen.'[47] Peterson suggests, that not only does the epigram show Wyatt's disgust for the art of dissimulation prevalent in the court, it is also an example of the

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[41] Scott, *Sir Thomas Wyatt: Selected Poems*, p. 12.
[42] Wyatt, *If thou wilt mighty be, flee from the rage*, line 14.
[43] Zagorin, *Ways of lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity*, p. 8. Zagorin uses this aphorism to define court behaviour.
[44] Fox, p. 265.
[45] Peterson, p. 90.
[46] Wyatt, *Throughout the world, if it were sought.*
[47] The epigram may be an allusion to the biblical *Book of Job*, in which Job, though tempted by Satan and his honest words accused by all those around him as 'but a powerful wind,' maintained his integrity and had all his wealth doubled, as a reward from God. In *Job 6:26 & 8:2* the substance of words is connected to that of wind, but the whole book is a dialectic examination of the value and meaning of words and truth.

poet's refusal, on moral grounds to adapt to 'sophistic use of the "colours" of rhetoric.'[48] A sentiment that is echoed in Henry Howard's elegy to Wyatt, *Wyatt resteth here*, in which Howard portrays the poet as a man of intense integrity and virtue:

> Whose heavenly giftes increased by disdain,
> And virtue sank the deper in his brest.

Who had:

> An eye, whose judgement none affect could blinde,
> Frendes to allure, and foes to reconcile;
> Whose persing loke did represent a mynde
> With virtue fraught, reposed, voyd of gyle.
>
> A hart, where drede was never so imprest
> To hyde the thought that might the trouth auvance;
> In neyther fortune loft, nor yet represst,
> To swell in wealth, or yeld unto mischance.[49]

Nor was Howard alone in epitomising Wyatt as a somewhat saintly individual. In another elegy for the poet, by his friend John Leland, he is held in high esteem for his nobility of mind and that:

> Despite the ample gifts that fortune brought,
> He never swelled with pride, nor set his heart
> Upon the dazzling splendour of the Court,
> Nor on the noise of the great world, nor sought
> A great man's favour – he chose the better part.[50]

In many of his lyrics and epigrams Wyatt expresses figuratively the realities of suit, service, and recompense with which ambitious men were insistently concerned as well as the frustrations and disappointments experienced in a socially competitive culture.[51] His use of the theme of courtly love goes far beyond that of a courtier *poseur* who is content to please his audience with

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[48] Peterson, p. 89-90.
[49] Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, *Wyatt resteth here*, (composition date: 1542). Lines 2, 3, 21-28, printed in Padelford, F. (ed.) 1928 *The Poems of Henry Howard: Earl of Surrey*, p. 98.
[50] John Leland, *Funeral Songs on the Incomparable Sir Thomas Wyatt*, quoted in Muir, *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt* p. 269, *Nobleness of Mind*, lines 1-5.
[51] Marotti, A. (1982) '"Love is not Love": Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order' in *ELH*, 49, p. 398.

ingenious trifles.[52] The verse may, on the surface, often deal with the pain of love and frustrated desire, yet if we look beneath the surface and perceive that love, in much of the verse, is a conceit for the court, it is easy to discern in the poems a direct echo and transposition of his personal perception of the moral and political nature of the court. Wyatt found, particularly in his adaptation of Petrarchan sonnets, a way of using metaphors to express social rivalry and political frustration, converting what psychoanalysis calls "narcissistic issues" into "object libidinal" ones, that is frustration and ambition into love.[53] The problems the lover experiences when in love are a microcosm of the larger problems experienced by the courtier serving his sovereign at court.

It is certainly a valid argument that some of Wyatt's poems express integrity and individuality. We are able to detect in his verse ideological subversion, self-reflexivity, and even outright criticism of the court, in which Wyatt engages with issues concerning courtier behaviour, stoicism and humanism. Yet, the reader should ask, is it necessary, or even desirable, to see every protestation and presentation of honesty merely as autobiographical, as a truthful confession of the poet's inner angst? As Tydemann succinctly points out, for many critics and readers today 'the poet is essentially independent and individual, using his poems as a confessional, to tell us something about himself, his emotions and his opinions, and the way in which he sees the world.'[54] Poetry is regarded as a vehicle for communicating personal, even intimate, self-motivated and self-centred expressions of feelings: expression of desires, hopes, fears and love that are intrinsically and frankly those of the poet. Indeed, 'so completely do

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[52] Peterson, p. 97.

[53] Marotti, '"Love is not Love": Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order', p. 398. Marotti refers to love poetry in general, however, the point applies to Wyatt. See also, Kohut, H. (1977) *The Restoration of the Self*, pp. 271-3.

[54] Tydeman, W. (1970) *English Poetry 1400-1580*, p. 12.

readers endorse this identification, that they now expect a writer to adopt no other role but the self.'[55] This, however, is in many ways an extremely reductive way of analysing poetry, particularly that of the sixteenth century. Is it not possible that Wyatt was a pragmatic man of cold, calculating ambition who deliberately crafted an honest persona through his verse in order to aid his advancement at the court of Henry VIII? Through poetic utterances of vulnerability, disillusionment, and rejection of the immoral world of courtly intrigue the poet creates a persona that moves beyond the literary boundaries of the verse to enhance the public face he chooses to show the world. Nothing damagingly true of the self is necessarily being confessed; indeed, a self is being deliberately constituted through the subtle dissimulation and recurrent poetic displays of 'weakness, martyred innocence, passivity, marginality, and masochistic abjection' that is distinctly different from that of a dissonant and subversive rebel.[56] This was a crafted display of a self, a form of pre-emptive protection that helped enable Wyatt to dispel the avarice, jealousy and envy of his fellow courtiers.

Literature is not, however, merely the product of an individual poet, but also a product of the cultural matrix in which it was written, a cultural matrix that in certain instances crosses national boundaries.[57] Wyatt's crafted display of a self that allowed him to exist at court and aid in deflecting the envious and caustic attention of fellow courtiers was not a purely English phenomenon; it is a rhetorical strategy that underpins some of the verse that Dunbar wrote, particularly the poems that critics regard as his 'petitionary poems'. As Bawcutt has acknowledged concerning Dunbar, the self and personality 'are slippery concepts, not only in literature, but in life. It is a commonplace that most of us act

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[55] Ibid, p. 12.
[56] Crewe, p. 27.
[57] Newlyn, 'Images of Women in Sixteenth-Century Scottish Manuscripts', p. 56.

and talk differently, according to whether we are among friends or strangers; we are 'different people' in different circumstances, perhaps playing roles or striking poses.'[58] The impression remains for many critics, however, that Dunbar brought pitying attention to himself so often, in such poems as, *Schir, lat it never in toune be tald* (The Petition of the Gray Horse, auld Dunbar) and *Complane I wald*, because of a genuine desire to obtain a benefice and leave the court, or that he was simply a moaner by nature.[59] Certainly the poet appears to be more than happy to expound upon and perpetuate the image of a 'self-pitying' individual; his poems are punctuated throughout by the recurrent theme of unrewarded service.[60] But like Wyatt, Dunbar's adoption of such a vulnerable public persona would also have helped to deflect the avarice and envy of his fellow courtiers. The competitive nature of the patronage system that existed at the court of James IV is made starkly clear in the poem *Schir, at this feist of benefice*:

Schir, at this feist of benefice
Think that small partis makis grit service,
And equale distributioun
Makes thame content that hes ressoun,
And quha hes nane ar plesit na wyis.

Schir, quhidir is it mereit mair
To gif him drink that thristis sair,
Or fill a fow man quhill he brist,
And lat his fallow de a-thirst,
Quhilk wyne to drink als worthie war?

It is no glaid collatioun,
Quhair ane makis myrrie, ane uther lukis doun,
Ane thristis, ane uther playis cop out.
Lat anis the cop ga round about,
And wyn the covanis banesoun.[61]

Dunbar may ask for equality in the distribution of benefices, a strategy that would perhaps have enamoured him to others at court, but the unstated implications are

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[58] Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar*, p. 5.
[59] Jack, *The Poetry of William Dunbar*, p. 21.
[60] Macdougall, p. 287.
[61] Dunbar, *Schir, at this feist of benefice*, complete poem quoted.

vividly apparent, that the court is a place of limited patronage, benefits and wealth, where the cup is not plentiful enough to go around and one man's benefit is another man's loss.

It has been suggested by Kratzman that 'the strongest non-Scottish affinities of Dunbar's poetry are not with Chaucer and Lydgate', as critics tend to suggest, but with Skelton.[62] Certainly there are marked similarities between the verse of the two poets; both write occasional poems, religious and secular, and both experiment with the forms and techniques of allegory. Their language and tone are also at times equally acerbic and scurrilous. There are, however, when we look at more than literary influences and borrowings, such as genre and style, distinct similarities that can be observed between the verse of Dunbar and Wyatt. Many of Dunbar's poems, like Wyatt's, are introspective, terse, and full of brevity, their poems are similarly full of vigour and intensity that hints at personal biography, and both poets frequently make subtle use of the refrain to add significant depth to the vulnerability and honesty of their poetic personas.[63] The didactic, disillusioned tone heard in the verse of both poets, is part of a long-established literary tradition that crosses national boundaries and which aims to impart moral and homiletic reflections on the transience and instability of human life. A crucial point of further comparison between the two poets, however, is their similar development of rhetorical strategies that transform this didactic tradition in a manner which provides an illusory continuity between 'real-life' experience and art, and thus recreate private realities within the public sphere. Behind the adoption of their similar rhetorical strategies and the development of a persona who appears to see through the obfuscating complexities of court existence to a luminous core of truth, often through deeply introspective

[62] Kratzman, p. 149.
[63] Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar*, p. 31.

expression, is the awareness of the metafictional potential of poetics to create a dramatic and fictional self that exists outside of the verse.[64] They both used their poetry pragmatically to aid their existence within the cultural milieu of their respective monarch's court and the conscious shaping of their materials is evident throughout both their works.

The depiction of intense rivalry within the court, the indulgent self-regard, the assertions of moral turmoil, the fallible and unhappy tenor of the speaker's voice, are not a true 'personality' but a persona, as Bawcutt remarks: 'a mask to conceal rather than to reveal.'[65] A persona that makes the poet appear as if he is a deserving, long suffering servant who received little recompense for his service.[66] This, however, is far from the truth and the poets' complaints lack any real credibility, as Dunbar's annual pension in November 1507 was officially £20, and increased in August 1510 to the substantial amount of £80.[67] This was more than twice the stipend paid to the scholar, and Principal of Aberdeen University, Hector Boece, and that received by David Lyndsay as chief servitor and personal attendant to the infant James V.[68] The king personally attended Dunbar's first mass in March 1504, and gave him a gown as a Christmas gift in 1507.[69]

If Dunbar's poems were specifically designed to gain rewards from the king (or queen), why, we should ask, are they often so critical of the king and his court? Dunbar was an astute courtier and a thoroughly professional poet, so why bite the hand that feeds him? One answer to these questions is that Dunbar's petitions and scurrilous complaints were a standing piece of humour between the

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[64] Heijnsbergen, T. (2001) 'Dunbar, Scott and the making of Poetry' in Mapstone, S. (ed.) *William Dunbar, 'The Nobill Poyet': Essays in honour of Priscilla Bawcutt*, p. 110.
[65] Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar*, p. 115.
[66] Simpson Ross, I. (1981) *William Dunbar*, p. 130.
[67] *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, no 2119; *Treasurer's Accounts: Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, iii, 154, 181, 331, 361; iv, 69, 106, 127, 249-50.
[68] Simpson Ross, p. 70.
[69] Macdougall, p. 287.

poet, king and court. To some extent I would suggest this is true; entertainment and humour were important elements of court life. That Dunbar was capable of not only ridiculing others but also himself, however, also suggests he was an individual who is self-assured enough to make himself the butt of court humour. This to some extent signifies that the poet in reality was an antithesis to the vulnerable individual he often portrays. At the same time his intricate rhetorical strategy, which stretches across numerous poems and genres, helped to deflect the attention of envious contemporaries.

There was nothing new in criticising court corruption and the mendacious practices of courtiers.[70] Satires on corruption, venality and the wretchedness of court life already had a long history in European literature by Wyatt's time. Since the time of classical antiquity it had been traditional for a ruler's advisors to criticise the court and courtier in satirical and moral writings; the stock character of Roman comedy is the court parasite and Chaucer, more than a hundred years before Wyatt or Dunbar were born, criticised the English court and the ideal of courtly love in his verse; this can be seen in *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Parliament of Fowles*.[71] There was, throughout most of Europe during the early sixteenth century, an efflorescence of court criticism that aimed to impart moral instruction and homiletic reflections on the transience and instability of court

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[70] Walker, G. (1997) 'Henry VIII & the invention of the royal court' in *History Today*, Feb. 1997. Walker highlights the fact that anti-court literature had always existed and that it particularly flourished in the twelfth century. Tudor writers had, he makes abundantly clear, a tradition of criticism of court vice to draw upon when they were writing in the sixteenth century.

[71] See Jones, T. (1985) *Chaucer's Knight*. Terry Jones deconstructs the description of the knight in *The General Prologue* to show the knight was anything but chivalrous, certainly no "knight in shining armour" and argues that Chaucer was criticising courtly love.

existence.[72] Skelton, in the early reign of Henry VIII, launched merciless, abusive and vitriolic attacks against Cardinal Wolsley, the king's chancellor, in his three political and clerical satires, *Speke Parott, Collyn Clout,* and *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?* Through a reading of Skelton's poems Tudor politicians are revealed as insidious and duplicitous.

A similar portrayal of the darker side of a courtier's life was sarcastically and contemptuously portrayed by Erasmus when he wrote *In Praise of Folly.* Courtiers, Folly tells us, are as 'debauched as Penelope's wooers ... [they] sleep till noon ... thence they go to dice, tables, cards, or entertain themselves with jesters, fools, gambols, and horse tricks.'[73] It is also an error to believe that the king was unaware of the corruption that pervaded the court, that Dunbar or Wyatt were informing their respective kings of something they did not know. Henry VIII's awareness of the vice that surrounded him at court is made emphatically clear in the poem, *Pastime with good company.* In the poem which Henry himself wrote, he tells us:

I love and shall unto I die.
Grudge whoso will, but none deny,
So God be pleased,
This live will I.
For my pastance
Hunt, sing, and dance.
My heart is set
All godely sport
To my comfort.
Who shall me let?

Youth will have needs daliance,
Of good or ill some pastance.
Company me thinketh then best

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[72] Tydeman, p. 19. See also Smith, *The Anti-Courtier Trend in the Sixteenth Century French Literature*, for an in depth analysis of anti-court criticism in France during the sixteenth century. Smith suggests the 'French Renaissance is characterised by a preoccupation with social comment' and 'insistent attacks on the court and its members'. (p. 9) See also Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII', *passim*, concerning the moral work and critique of the Spanish court by Antonio de Guevara, during the early sixteenth century.

[73] Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*, p 153.

All thoftes and fantasies to digest.
For idleness
Is chief mistress
Of vices all.
Than who can say
But "pass the day"
Is best of all?

Company with honesty
Is virtue, vices to flee;
Company is good and ill,
But every man has his free will.
The best ensue,
The worst eschew!
My mind Shall be,
Virtue to use,
Vice to refuse;
Thus shall I use me.[74]

The king acknowledges that there are those who 'grudge', those who criticise how he spends his time hunting, singing and dancing. He reminds these critics that such activities keep him physically healthy and that he, as king, is answerable only to God.

Moreover, Henry recognises that his 'Company', his courtiers, are both 'good and ill', that he is surrounded by 'vices', but as he points out, he is still a young vibrant king with much to learn and the best way to learn about vice is to 'digest' the 'thoftes and fantasies' of both good and ill. This would allow him a clearer, practical, beneficial knowledge and understanding of both virtue and sin. He makes it vividly clear that both his mind and body are active, that to be otherwise would be a vice, 'For idleness / Is chief mistress' of all vices. The poem ends with a powerful declaration from Henry, that through the exertion of his own 'free will' he will be of the 'best', he will be akin to those who refuse vice and lead a life of virtue. The poem, often underrated and read as a simple ditty, or an example of Henry's intransigent and uncompromising egotism, deploys a

[74] Henry VIII, *Pastime*, complete poem. Printed in Chambers, E. (ed.) (1970) *The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse*, pp. 36-37.

rhetorical strategy that is underpinned by elements of propaganda and self-fashioning. Anti-court sentiment was a local pragmatic strategy that could at times even be deployed by the monarch. It was not intrinsically forceful, or resistant, but a common form of articulation in elite culture, a way in which members of the court could demonstrate their powers of independent acumen.[75] Both Dunbar and Wyatt's deliberate use of this tradition to emphasise their own independence would have similarly enhanced their self-fashioning of their individual personas.

Although some critics now seem to recognise Wyatt's verse is a crafted rhetorical stance, a form of self-display, there is still an insistence that the man who dissimulates the appearance of honesty, though he is tainted, is indeed an honest individual. They believe the bluff honesty of the Wyatt who admits in his *Defence*, 'I grant I do not profess chastity, but yet I use not abomination'.[76] The poems are viewed as indirect expressions of the poet's true feelings, as emotional rather than cerebral productions.[77] For Muir and Fox, the poet's psychological diathesis, that is, his mental disposition, is demonstrated when Wyatt experiences some displacement in his personal life, such as the execution of Thomas Cromwell or the poet having to give way to the king in the affections of Anne Boleyn. The anxiety and fear Wyatt portrays, the resentment, bitterness and betrayal in many of the poems, seems so vividly real and honest it has even led John Guy, in a recent general history of the Tudor period, to assert that 'when Wyatt translated Petrarch, the result was a poetry of protest'.[78] Another critic,

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[75] I owe this insight to Dermot Cavanagh of Edinburgh University.

[76] Muir, *Life and Letters*, pp. 187-209.

[77] Shawcross highlighted this problem concerning Wyatt and his critics in 1974 when he commented the 'significance of a poet's employment of rhetorical stance, the rhetor assumes a stance to achieve the aims of his oratory (or writing), and stance implies not the frequent modern blunder that literature is identical to spontaneous, highly emotive, and directly candid personal experiences which have given rise to that literary expression, but instead it indicates the orator has chosen a point of view, strategy, a set of techniques or devices, perhaps specific language to enhance his chances for success'. Shawcross, p. 5.

[78] Guy, *Tudor England*, p. 409.

Gary Waller, views Wyatt's poems as 'scarcely veiled hints of rebellion.'[79] Such criticism, though it acknowledges Wyatt's poetry is a form of self-fashioning, still treats the poems as a direct expression of the poet's feelings.[80]

It is reductive to believe that either Wyatt or Dunbar were rebels within the courts they served; their verse a subtle but deliberate form of subversion. The idea that many of the great figures of sixteenth-century literature wrote subversive literature that undermined the authority of the monarchy and court, even as the writer existed within the hierarchal structures of conservative power, is a very modern idea that is propagated by recent critics, particularly those critics influenced by the theories of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism. In *Radical Tragedy*, one of the most influential critical works in this area to be written in the latter half of the last century, Jonathan Dollimore asserts that literature is *ipso facto* oppositional.[81] Whereas Greenblatt, in his equally influential *Renaissance Self-fashioning*, tries to have it both ways when he argues that Wyatt's *Penitential Psalms* are subversive in their portrayal of Henry VIII as a sinful and adulterous David, but then throughout the book frequently assumes that all literature is appropriated, contained, or actually generated by the power structure to contain seemingly subversive utterances.[82] This is an argument he continues to reiterate in his later work. In *Shakespearean Negotiations* Greenblatt states 'the subversiveness that is genuine and radical ... is at the same time contained by the power it would appear to threaten. Indeed the subversiveness is the very product of that power and furthers its ends.'[83]

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[79] Waller, *English poetry of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 11.
[80] Selden, R. (1989) *Practising Theory & Reading Literature: An Introduction*, p.154.
[81] Dollimore, J. (1984) *Radical Tragedy, passim.*
[82] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, see Chapter 3 'Power, Sexuality, and Inwardness in Wyatt's Poetry'. For similar views concerning this appraisal of Greenblatt see Hadfield, A. (1994) *Literature, Politics and National Identity*, p. 19; Ferster, p. 4.
[83] Greenblatt, S. (1988) *Shakespearian Negotiations*, p. 30.

Underpinning this form of criticism is the idea that the writer covers his subversion behind strategies of ambiguity, dullness, translation and poetic voices.[84] Typically, Stephen Greenblatt tells us that:

> ... to protect his teeth, Wyatt's mask in the psalms is of double thickness: not only is the moral drawn from the life of the biblical ruler, but the setting is a translation from the Italian. The implied reflection upon Henry VIII has what government spokesmen now call "deniability".[85]

This central element of Greenblatt's argument, though slickly phrased, is something of a red herring. It seems beyond logical thought to imagine that Henry VIII, or others at court, would sit and listen to Wyatt's verse, or read the verse in private, and only those who were Wyatt's chosen friends would recognise the criticism he was making of the Tudor court in his poems, or that David, in the *Penitential Psalms*, could be interpreted as an allusion to Henry VIII. Even if Henry VIII did not recognise he was being satirised, that Wyatt's verse was critical and subversive, others at court would have assuredly brought this fact immediately to the king's attention. The court was full of humanist educated courtiers who would have been more than capable of 'reading' the hidden meaning of Wyatt's verse and have benefited from the downfall of a rival. As Greenblatt himself has remarked, Tudor poets could count on their contemporaries possessing 'substantial tacit knowledge, to flesh out certain stylised verbal designs into moving utterances, to complete the meaning of their poems.'[86] As Healy shrewdly reminds us:

> ... the educational processes these initial readers underwent was effectively wholly based on the acquisition of language skills, both in writing and

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[84] Ferster, p. 3.
[85] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 121.
[86] Greenblatt, 'The Resonance of the Renaissance', p. 7.

> speaking, they were particularly alert to nuance, cleverness of argument and word-play.[87]

Greenblatt's argument seems even more incongruous when we consider he himself remarks – in his criticism of Lewis's equally reductive comment that Wyatt's lyrics were merely after-dinner entertainment – that 'conversation with the king himself must have been like small talk with Stalin.'[88] A king who was comparable to the megalomaniac 'Stalin', a man individually more powerful and at times, more paranoid than Hitler, would be extremely unlikely to accept as an excuse 'political deniability'. To claim that Henry VIII, because his name was not directly uttered in the verse, or that the poem was to some extent a translation, would not take drastic, lethal action against those who criticised and opposed him does not accord with the historical details we have of the king. Even the briefest perusal of the historical facts of Henry VIII's reign suggest his retribution would be severe, immediate and possibly even fatal. The critic needs to be circumspect when dealing with the subversive elements inherent in Tudor literature and explore the possible advantages of the poet adopting a particular political or moral stance that can be construed as being subversive. Critics like Waller and Greenblatt offer intuitive and perceptive analysis of Wyatt's poetry, their critical commentary is at times bold, brilliant and a challenge to many an historiographical shibboleth, but the poetic 'I' of the verse may be far more slippery and unstable than they acknowledge.[89]

The image of a crafty, conniving and ambitious Wyatt, an image of the poet which seems to contest or sabotage the most fashionable interpretative discourses, is perhaps a figure more forbidding than appealing, as Crewe has acknowledged, yet this should not stop the reader from looking beneath the

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[87] Healy, p. 50.
[88] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 136.
[89] Eagleton, T. (2000) *Literary Theory*, p. 198.

surface façade of Wyatt's poetic honesty to question the integrity of the poet and attempt to deduce the possible functions of his verse.[90] We should be extremely wary of believing the poetic 'I' that expresses disgust at dissimulation in many of the poems, is truly that of the 'real' historical Wyatt. Recognition should be given to the fact that the repetitive use of first person singular – of the first 50 poems in Rebholz 45 involve 'I' – is a major attempt by Wyatt to fashion an individual persona of honest integrity through his verse and though the poet may write, 'My word nor I shall not be variable', in spite of this protest, his words were indeed variable.[91] Wyatt's own dissimulation becomes vividly apparent if we take a close reading of his first satire, *Mine Own John Poyntz.*

Zagorin is correct when he remarks that this satire stands out as 'one of the most forceful statements of the anti-court theme in sixteenth-century literature,' but the satire also reveals how we should not completely accept without question the good faith of the poetic voice within Wyatt's verse. [92] The satire was probably written during 1536 whilst Wyatt was at Allington Castle in Kent where, after his release from the Tower, the poet was sent to improve his character under the care of his father.[93] His imprisonment is generally assumed to have been caused by the suspicion that he was one of Anne Boleyn's lovers. Written in the form of a verse epistle, *Mine Own John Poyntz* is an adapted translation of Luigi Alamanni's satire, addressed to his friend, Thomas Sertini, in which court corruption is attacked and a stoic life of poverty in Florence is described as preferable to one

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[90] Crewe, p. 47.

[91] A further three of these first fifty poems in Rebholz uses the term 'my' which means 48 poems are first person singular. Wyatt, *Each man me telleth I change most my device*, line 13. Lerer, p. 188.

[92] Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII,' p. 137.

[93] For a detailed discussion on the dating of this poem see Rebholz, pp. 437-439. Although there is no definitive date for the satire as Rebholz points out the evidence favours Wyatt having written the poem after 1536 and prior to his departure to Spain in 1537. See also Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 251.

serving princes and kings.[94] Like Alamanni, Wyatt addresses his satire to a fellow courtier, John Poyntz, presumably a friend, and because of this we are inclined to identify the narrative voice within the poem as that of the historical Wyatt.[95]

The satire's theme is, like Alamanni's *Satira X*, the rejection of a life of vice and courtly immorality in favour of that of withdrawal to the country, the poet saying to Poyntz:

> … I cannot frame my tune to feign,
> To cloak the truth for praise, without desert
> Of them that list all vice for to retain.[96]

He cannot give false flattery, lie or deceive; which he informs Poyntz are the essential traits of a courtier. Instead, he chooses to withdraw from the court and:

> …maketh me at home to hunt and to hawk,
> And in foul weather at my book to sit.[97]

The poetic voice is imbued with integrity through the plain style of the satire, the blunt vernacular, the conversational tone of everyday speech, the stoic attitude and the poet's earlier confession, in which he admits:

> I grant sometime that of glory the fire
> Doth twyche my heart…[98]

The renunciation of the court and its deceits and betrayals that follow in the poem enhance the poetic persona of a morally serious man who offers the wise counsel gained from bitter personal experience, a man who virulently assails false flattery, hypocrisy and the courtiers' willingness and ability to 'cloak alway the vice.'[99] Through this voice Wyatt examines didactically the court's corrupt and distorted

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[94] Alamanni, *Satira X*. The Italian text and an English translation is printed in Mason, *Sir Thomas Wyatt: A Literary Portrait*, pp. 260-66. Mason also provides biographical information concerning Alamanni and suggests it is likely that he and Wyatt met whilst Wyatt served as an ambassador.

[95] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 131. Scott, *Sir Thomas Wyatt: Selected Poems*, p.15.

[96] Wyatt, *My Own John Poyntz*, lines 19-21.

[97] Ibid, lines 81-82.

[98] Ibid, lines 14-15.

[99] Ibid, line 61.

methods of communication and exposes the symbiotic relationship that exists between language and power. When language enters the world of the court it is shown that it is inevitably perverted, because its perversion is precisely what privileges and enforces court power, which is itself a form of distorted communication.[100] Essentially, the poet shows how it is the 'power of them, to whom fortune hath lent/ Charge over us' that distorts communication, but it is also language that empowers the court and if the language of the court is corrupt, then this reflects on the morality of the court, and vice-versa.[101]

The only option for the honest man, so the poet tells us, is that which he himself has chosen, to:

> … flee the press of courts, whereso they go,
> Rather than live thrall under the awe
> Of lordly looks, wrapped within my cloak.[102]

Yet, Wyatt's admits that:

> Save that a clog doth hang yet at my heel.
> No force for that, for it is ordered so
> That I may leap both hedge and dike full well.[103]

This makes a mockery of his assertion of lofty independence and unbending stoic integrity. We now learn the poet was 'ordered' to the country and through the metaphor of a 'clog' that hangs at his heel – a 'clog' being a block of wood attached to a prisoner's leg to impede motion – the poet implies he is under house arrest.[104] As Sir Francis Bryan so poignantly remarks in *A Dispraise of the Life of a Courtier* in 1548:

> The wisest being in the court may say every day that they die and at their houses in the country they live

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[100] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 130, states, 'that when speech enters the milieu of the court, it is inevitably perverted.'

[101] Heale, ''An owl in a sack troubles no man', p. 429. Heale suggests that the poem is a 'sceptical commentary on contemporary rhetorics of truth-telling that they help to authorise.'

[102] Wyatt, *My Own John Poyntz*, lines 3-5.

[103] Ibid, lines 86-88.

[104] For this meaning of 'clog', see Rebholz, p. 444; Fox, p. 272.

> ... but I dare affirm that for X pounds weight in they have of honest will [to leave] they have not half an ounce of honest liberty ... there is no liberty to depart hence. The yoke of the court is hard, the bonds tied fast.[105]

There is, however, much more to this poem than a critique of the insidious and pernicious nature of the courtier, or the self-deception by which humanists justify their absence from the court. Camouflaged behind the outward façade of the poet, the persona of the blunt country gentleman, is a second voice. This voice is cynical, knowledgeable and an astute political commentator, whose existence is unveiled if we look at the changes and additions made to the satire's source. The lines of Alamanni's satire read:

> To have such cold heart as,
> Against compassion, to harm him
> Whom I exalt in my mind[106]

These are changed by Wyatt to:

> I cannot wrest the law to fill the coffer
> With innocent blood to feed myself fat,
> And do most hurt where most help I offer.[107]

Fox interprets this as an inserted allusion that condemns Henry VIII's divorce from Katherine of Aragon and his execution of Anne Boleyn and Wyatt's fellow courtiers.[108] Fox's interpretation, however, is unconvincing and the allusion is perhaps better understood when the reader realises that the words 'wrest' and 'coffer' can also mean 'pervert' and 'treasury'. If the meaning of these words are comprehended in this way, the line becomes:

> I cannot [*pervert*] the law to fill the [*treasury*][109]

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[105] Bryan, (1648) *A Dispraise of the life of a courtier,* quoted in Baldwin Smith, p. 53.
[106] This, and further quotes or translation of Alamanni's, *A Thommaso Sertini*, are from Mason, *Sir Thomas Wyatt: A Literary Portrait*, pp. 260-66.
[107] Interpretation from Rebholz, p.441. The quote is Wyatt, *My Own John Poyntz*, lines 34-36.
[108] Fox, p. 271.
[109] For the definitions of 'wrest' and 'coffer' see the *Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. xx, p. 621 & vol iii, p. 440.

We realise that what is actually being referred to in the line, is the king's introduction of new laws; laws that fundamentally contradicted and challenged Papal authority at the time Wyatt is thought to have written the satire. The new laws, such as the Act for First Fruits and Tenths, passed by Parliament in 1534, and the Act for Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries, introduced in 1536, meant the crown took possession of all the land and wealth of religious houses with an income of less than £200, allowing Henry VIII to fill 'fat' the royal 'coffer' by systematically and thoroughly stripping the Roman Catholic Church in England of its vast wealth.[110] Henry VIII at least doubled his ordinary income during the 1530s as a result of these acts.[111] The dissolution of the monasteries may well have affected Wyatt personally, as it has been suggested the daughter Besse he refers to in one of his letters may have been the nun 'Eliz. Wyott' of Barking.[112]

It was the Act of Supremacy, however, that was the foremost of these laws and many Englishmen, Thomas More and Cardinal Fisher the most eminent, would find their 'innocent blood' spilt because they refused the Oath of Supremacy.[113] In the next passage of the poem the poet then proceeds to tell Poyntz how he is:

> …not he that can allow the state
> Of him Caesar, and damn Cato to die,
> That with his death did scape out of the gate
> From Caesar's hands (if Livy do not lie)
> And would not live where liberty was lost;
> So did his heart the common weal apply.

Alamanni's satire reads:

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[110] 26 Henry VIII, c.3; 27 Henry VIII, c.28. Concerning the laws introduced to strip the church of its wealth and the progress of the Reformation during 1536-1547, see Smith, *The Emergence of the Nation State*, chapter 2. For a discussion of Henry's reasons for dissolution as being financial, see Edwards, P. (2001) *The Making of the Modern English State, 1460-1660*, pp. 162-164.

[111] Smith, *The Emergence of the Nation State*, p. 29.

[112] This suggestion was first made by Hayes, A. (1934) 'Wyatt's Letters to his Son' in *MLN 49*, p. 447.

[113] O'Day, pp. 14-15, 54, 127-8. Lists of laws passed and general ecclesiastical and government development during the years 1535/6.

> Non di loda honorary chiara immortale
> Ceasar & Sylla, condannando à torto
> Bruto, & la schiera che piu d'altra vale.[114]

Alamanni tells Sertini he will not honour Caesar and Sulla with immortal praise whilst wrongfully condemning Brutus. Wyatt's lines, through the omission of Sulla and the substitution of Cato for Alamanni's Bruto, become equally politically charged. Caesar, as in the sonnet, *Whoso list to hunt*, becomes a metaphor for Henry VIII, a metaphor that only works because of the omission of Sylla. The reason for Wyatt's use of Cato however, is far more ambiguous. Marcus Porcius Cato of Utica was a fellow conspirator and uncle of Brutus who, rather than become Caesar's prisoner after being defeated at the battle of Thapsus in 46 B. C., committed suicide.[115] It may be, as Zagorin suggests, that 'it was unsafe to celebrate a monarch's assassin' and that Wyatt used Cato instead of Brutus because of political prudence.[116] This claim, however, is somewhat tenuous, if Wyatt had accurately translated Alamanni's original and not replaced Brutus, he would have had the maximum amount of what previously mentioned critics have termed 'defensive deniability.' Wyatt could claim any political implications were Alamanni's, not his own. As Heale suggests, Plutarch wrote of Cato as an epitome of upright honesty and plain speaking, who gave his life in defence of liberty and truth.[117] This reading of Cato is itself prevalent throughout much of the literature of the early modern period, and also within American literature up to and beyond the American Revolution in the late eighteenth

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[114] Alamanni, *Satira X*, lines 43-5. Quoted in Mason, *Sir Thomas Wyatt: A Literary Portrait*, p. 262. Translated, this reads, 'I could not honour with bright, immortal praise the dictators, Caesar and Sulla, while wrongfully condemning the Republican, Brutus, and the company which has no peer in worth.'

[115] Rebholz, p. 442.

[116] Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt ...', p. 137. Rebholz, p. 442, suggests a similar hypothesis.

[117] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, 135. Wyatt, *My Own John Poyntz*, line 86. Rebholz, p. 444. A 'clog' was a heavy block attached to a person's leg to impede motion and the poet uses it as a metaphor for his forced exile from the court.

century.[118] It may be that Wyatt deliberately aligns himself with Cato to imply that he too suffers, the 'clog doth hang' at his heel, because of his own honesty. The allusion, however, also has overt historically specific implications if we interpret Cato as a metaphor for Thomas More; it becomes a covert reference and condemnation of Henry VIII's judicial murder of More, who like Cato, 'would not live where liberty was lost' and gave his 'heart' to the 'common weal', that is, the nation.[119]

The attack upon the king becomes even more explicit later in the satire, when the poet informs Poyntz to:

> Say he is rude that cannot lie and feign;
> The lecher a lover; and tyranny
> To be the right of a prince's reign.[120]

Henry VIII is easily identified as the 'lecher', his reign, because of his sexual desires, one of 'tyranny.' *Mine Own John Poyntz* may be an adaptation of Alamanni's original satire, but due to the alterations and additions to the source, Wyatt has injected into his satire a distinct mark of sincerity and it appears that Wyatt, though he condemns courtier immorality in general, is also specifically concerned with the tyranny of the king.

Harold Child remarks that Wyatt's:

> … personality and his strong feeling are more patent in the satires than in any other of his poems; and their very ruggedness of form seems…to be adopted for the better expression of honest indignation.[121]

It is, however, all too easy for modern readers to sympathise with Wyatt's 'honest indignation' and his refusal in the satire to play the game of court politics when he tells us:

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[118] An insight brought to my attention by David Walker of Northumbria University.
[119] Fox, p. 271.
[120] Wyatt, *My Own John Poyntz*, lines 73-75.
[121] Child, H. *The New English Poetry*, chapter VIII in Ward, A & Trent, W. (eds.) (1907-21) *The Cambridge History of English and American literature,* vol. iii, p. 9.

> I am not he such eloquence to boast
> To make the crow singing as the swan,
> Nor call the lion of coward beasts the most
> ...
> None of these points would ever frame in me
> ...
> I cannot, I; no, no, it will not be![122]

His stance reflects all too well our own twenty-first century sense of moral superiority and individuality. We must, however, be aware that the defence of plain speaking in *Mine Own John Poyntz* and the ability to infuse shrouded criticism behind ambiguous allusions, requires an extraordinarily devious and Machiavellian use of language. Moreover, satire, by its very nature, not only attacks absurdity and vice, it is 'so deceivingly imitative of what it purports to attack' that it alerts us to the incongruities inherent in the poet's gesture of setting himself apart as an authoritative moral observer.[123] A close reading of the satire shows it would be a mistake simply to assume that because Wyatt expresses his disgust towards dissimilation and dishonesty in some of his verse; he is himself morally superior to other courtiers.

Wyatt's rhetorical skill clearly shows he is a virtuoso of dissimulation and the more elaborate the rhetorical construction, 'the more problematic is the innocence of the persona created by the poetic voices'.[124] Wyatt's use of metaphors is also a form of craftiness, for their essence is double meaning, and the cultivated plainness of language is a style whose aim is transparency.[125] Transparency purports to give unmediated access to truth and the integrity of the

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[122] Wyatt, *My Own John Poyntz*, lines, 43-45, 56, 76.
[123] Bates, p. 245; Seidel, M. (1979) *Satiric Inheritance: Rabelais to Sterne*, p. 10.
[124] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 140.
[125] Klein, p. 138; Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 142. Thomas Greene argues that the 'drabness of Wyatt's language is ... essential to his moral style' in Greene, T. (1982) *The light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, p. 256. See also Smith, H. (1946) 'The art of Sir Thomas Wyatt' in *HLQ* 9. Smith notes the subtle effects Wyatt achieves in his poetry by using a variety of associations of very plain words such as 'pain', 'fire' and 'liberty'. pp. 323-55.

speaker and as such it proves a powerful medium.[126] As the classical critic Longinus noted:

> A common phrase is sometimes much more expressive than elegant diction, for, being taken from everyday life, it is at once recognised, and carries the more conviction from its familiarity.[127]

Wyatt may tell us he 'cannot frame [his] tune to feign,' but when analysed under close scrutiny, the satire yields an image of Wyatt as a man who is willing, capable and superbly adept in the 'sophistic use of the "colours" of rhetoric.'[128] This is a point Heale is acutely aware of, when she suggests:

> Wyatt, even as he quits the court under dubious circumstances, subtly represents that withdrawal as a sign of integrity and independence, and demonstrates how accomplished a performer the court may have lost by his, temporary, disgrace.[129]

Although Wyatt adopts poetic voices of integrity and honesty in much of his verse, court poetry and court practice are inseparable, and dissimulation, indirection, ornament, calculated ostentation, are all characteristics that are simultaneously those of the poet and the courtier.[130] Lerer describes courtly life as having 'always been a show', in which the courtier 'must live behind the masks of theatre'.[131] Wyatt's poetry was a form of self-display within this 'courtly show' and his verse would have been passed amongst his equals, the elite members of the Henrician court, in manuscript form, from hand to hand.[132] This was the only

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[126] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 142.

[127] Longinus, chapter 31 (Familiar Language) in *Classical Literary Criticism*, trans. Murray, P. & Dorsch, T. (2000), p. 149.

[128] Wyatt, *My Own John Poyntz*, line 19. 'His' replaced 'my' for syntactical reasons. Peterson, p. 89-90. See also Klein, p. 139, who points out that Wyatt's use of metaphors is itself a form of 'craftiness, for its essence is double meaning.'

[129] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 135.

[130] Waller, *English poetry of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 16. See also Ross, D. (1987) 'Sir Thomas Wyatt: Proverbs and the Poetics of Scorn' in *SCJ* 18, pp. 200-212. Ross suggests that Wyatt's blunt and honest speaker has begun to yield to an image of the poet as a calculating courtier.

[131] Lerer, p. 1. Lerer recognises this point in the introduction.

[132] Healy, p. 55. Healy comments that the poetry of this age, passed in manuscript form, often amended on the page, was performed by the reader to an audience, it was not static repetition but always open to constant amendment.

audience that would have mattered to Wyatt and one far more capable than we are in decoding the hidden messages within the poet's verse.[133] The education those at court underwent, as has been discussed, was based primarily on the acquisition of language skills, both in writing and speaking, and would have made them more alert to the ambiguity, allusions and nuances within Wyatt's verse. Wyatt's verse was a 'tool of the trade', a tool that allowed him to compete as a courtier in this dangerous game of self-display, a game revealed through the poetry in which 'idealism and cynicism, aggression and vulnerability, self-revelation and hypocrisy were tensely conjoined.'[134] As such, many of Wyatt's poetic voices are masks behind which, chameleon like, are hidden both the true emotions of the poet and the intentional function of the verse. That Wyatt was capable of such dissimulation and calculated ostentation should, as has already been noted, make us extremely wary of putting too much faith in Wyatt's honest and indignant poetic voices. We should take note of the ironic warning Wyatt himself gives to us, that:

> Each man me telleth I change most my device,
> And on my faith me think it good reason
> To change purpose like after the season.[135]

The implied values of the poetic narrator are not necessarily the 'genuine' beliefs of the poet. They were deliberately adopted values that could be used by the poet to increase his chances of success as an active courtier within the volatile world of early sixteenth-century European religious, dynastic and national politics.

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[133] Baldi, S. (1971) *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, p. 5-7. Baldi comments that though a few of Wyatt's poems were published during his lifetime these appeared anonymously. The point is Wyatt had no need or desire to print his work, their circulation within the court was their function.
[134] Greenblatt, S. (1980) 'The Resonance of Renaissance Poetry' in *ADE Bulletin*, 64, p. 8.
[135] Wyatt, *Each man me telleth I change most my device*, lines 1-3.

Thomas Wilson, writing in 1553, makes the point that in a culture that at least claims to measure the courtier's ability by the mark of eloquence, the ability to astound through words was invaluable:

> … who is he, at whom all men wonder, and stande in a mase, at the viewe of his wit and whose doynges are best esteemed and who do we moste reverence, and compte halfe a God among men: Even such a one assuredly, that can plainly, distinctly, plaintifully, and aptly utter both words and matter.[136]

In the *Book of the Courtier*, Federico Fregoso tells prospective courtiers they must always strive to have everyone 'mavel at him and he at no man.'[137] It seems, when we read the elegies concerning Wyatt that were made by his contemporaries, such as John Leland and Henry Howard, this is precisely what the poet achieved through his verse. Leland wrote:

> Beautiful Florence of Dante justly boasts,
> And kingly Rome approves the excellence
> Of Petrarch's songs. In his own tongue as worthy,
> Our Wyatt bears the palm of eloquence.[138]
> …
> Wyatt, the source, the lightning and the light
> Of eloquence is dead, and now the night
> Of silence has come down on all things bright.[139]

The poet's verse and verbal dexterity clearly distinguished him from others within the Henrician court and within the fiercely competitive cultural and political arena of the court, the epicentre of power towards which all ambitious men gravitated. The power to provoke such reverence through his poetry would have been an invaluable aid to Wyatt in obtaining patronage. As Aristotle observed, the familiar is a tranquilliser and whatever is strange startles us into attention.[140] Wyatt's introduction of new poetic forms, however, was not mere novelty, through them

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[136] Thomas Wilson (1553) *The Art of Rhetorique*, p. 182, quoted in Biester, J. (1997) *Lyric Wonder: Rhetoric and Wit in Renaissance English Poetry*, p. 11.
[137] Castiglione, p. 99.
[138] John Leland, *Englishman equals Italian*, quoted in Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 264.
[139] John Leland, *The Loss of Eloquence*, quoted in Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 266.
[140] Biester, p. 3.

he shrewdly displayed his subtle skill for dissimulation, and his ability to adopt and translate the Italian and French forms would have demonstrated to his contemporaries his adept aptitude in the use of foreign languages.[141] These were the necessary requirements of a Tudor ambassador and Wyatt gave a versatile demonstration in his verse of suitability to hold such a position.[142] Poetry was not simply a decorative game, something to while away the hours: it served a class forever on the *qui vive* for personal and political gain. This was a class who constantly watched each other, weighing the words and gestures of their rivals in a courtly game of display and observation.[143]

In the rapidly changing Europe of the sixteenth century, European courts were places of deadly intrigue where each faction plotted against each other for power, wealth and prestige. Behind the artificial frivolity and macabre mask of charm, every deed, every word, was weighed for the information it could yield.[144] The Henrician court was a truly homogeneous culture in which the practice of mutual observation in the court was the dark, obverse side of the culture of self-display.[145] Greenblatt succinctly remarks:

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[141] Tillyard, E. (1929) 'Introduction to The Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt', reprinted in Thomson, P. (ed.) (1974) *Wyatt: The Critical Heritage*, p. 150. Tillyard points out how Wyatt would have gained his contemporaries admiration because of his ability to write in the Italian or French form. The French form being referred to here is the Rondeaux.

[142] As Smuts, p. 38, points out, 'An ambassador needed to recognise that the true nature of politics usually lies hidden from the casual observer, not only by the confusion of events but the dissimulation of rulers who do not want their intentions discovered. It is therefore necessary to penetrate disguises and anticipate events before they happened' This is precisely what Wyatt demonstrated he was capable of doing in the satires and many of his other poems.

[143] Archer, J. (1993) *Sovereignty and Intelligence*, p. 17.

[144] Hannen, p. 43-44. See also Thomson, p.48; Mattingly, G. (1955) *Renaissance Diplomacy*, p. 26, concerning renaissance diplomacy. Wyatt had experience with the two main sorts of Renaissance diplomatic activity: resident embassies and special missions. He accompanied Cheney on a special mission to the French court of Francis I in 1526, and in 1527 he went to the Papal court in Italy with Sir John Russell. In 1537 he was appointed resident ambassador to the Imperial court in Spain where he served until June 1539. In November 1539 he returned to the Imperial court, now in France, on a special mission to sow discord between the Emperor and Francis I. Envoys were sent not only to observe foreign affairs, but to spy on each other. Wyatt shows recognition of this fact in a letter where he mentions spying was the 'practyse of th'erle of Essex'; he was himself both watcher and watched; in Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 48.

[145] Archer, p. 17; Vickers, p. vii.

> Just as Wyatt was sent, on behalf of Henry VIII, to entice, threaten, to complain of ingratitude, to circumvent attack, so Wyatt's [poetry] circulated through the court on their author's behalf.[146]

Were the poems, however, merely sent on the poet's behalf as a dissimulative response to the intrusive surveillance that was part of court culture? Or were they, like Wyatt himself, when acting as the king's ambassador, sent to circumvent attack upon the king? Is it not possible that Wyatt's carefully crafted stance of honest indignation, frustration and bitterness may have had much more sinister implications than either subversion or public display in order to gain court patronage; that the poems were the tool of an agent provocateur and spy? This does indeed seem possible when we put into context both the political tensions of 1537 and the public image of Wyatt as he entered the Catholic court of Charles V as Henry VIII's ambassador.

1537 was a climacteric year in European diplomacy, the break with Rome had made the king a heretic and England schismatic and vulnerable to a Catholic crusade, to which, Wyatt remarked in a letter, 'wounded myndes in England' might feel a higher loyalty.[147] The imminent prospect of a general council, which would demand the restoration of England to papal obedience was the threat, that Cromwell wrote, 'the King dreads most'.[148] The main agent for stirring the Catholic powers of Europe against a schismatic England was Cardinal Pole, sent by the Pope in 1537 and 1539 as his legate. That Pole and his family had a claim to the English throne made his legation, his treason, all the more dangerous.[149]

English diplomacy during this period was primarily directed at ensuring neither

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[146] Greenblatt, *The Resonance of Renaissance Poetry*, p. 8.
[147] Brigden, 'The shadow that you know', p. 8; Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 90.
[148] Merriman, *vol. 2*, p. 218.
[149] Brigden, 'The shadow that you know', p. 8. See also Lacey, pp. 185-187, concerning the threat of Cardinal Pole to Henry VIII and the execution and extermination of Pole's family by the king.

Charles V or Francis I gave support to Pole, and if possible the Cardinal was to be captured or assassinated.[150] Cromwell said openly at court, that Bryan, a fellow ambassador and friend of Wyatt's 'was send into France to kyll hym [Pole] with a hangonne or othe they should see best.'[151] Other Englishmen had also sought the protection of foreign courts, such as Robert Brancestor, who Wyatt and Bonner attempted to capture during a visit to France in 1540.[152]

Wyatt entered the court of Charles V, not with the image of an unblemished loyal servant to Henry VIII, but with an image very similar to men such as Brancestor and other English dissidents. Only a few months earlier he had been imprisoned for what was rumoured to have been suspicion of adultery with Anne Boleyn. He had also experienced banishment from the court, and fashioned through his verse a public image of a man who was frustrated and bitter towards the court of Henry VIII.[153] The speed and incongruity of Wyatt's reversal of fortune is often overlooked by critics who tend to believe the poet's exclamation of amazement when he wrote:

> Goddes bloud, the kinge sett me in the tower and
> afterwarde sent me for an embassadoure. Was not
> this, I pray you, a pretie way to gett me credit?[154]

Moreover, the critique of the king's policies and actions that can be discerned in the satire *Mine Own John Poyntz*, thought to have been written prior to Wyatt's trip to Spain, would have suggested to European and dissident English Catholics

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[150] Brigden, 'The shadow that you know', pp. 8-9.
[151] Ibid, Brigden, cites PRO, SP 1/138, fos. 199-200.
[152] Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey & Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 16. Concerning Brancestor, see Scarisbrick, 'The first Englishman round the Cape of Good Hope?', pp. 165-77.
[153] Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII: The courtiers ambivalence', p. 128. Zagorin is one of many critics who believe Wyatt was arrested because he was suspected as one of Anne Boleyn's lovers. Warnicke, however, believes that he was arrested because of 'his reputation as a libertine'; Warnicke, p. 230. Regardless of which is true, and there is no evidence to support either argument, it seems more than likely that the rumour that still flourishes today would have circulated the court in 1536, when Wyatt was arrested at the same time as Anne Boleyn and those accused of committing adultery with her.
[154] Muir, *Life and Letters*, pp. 200-201; Brigden, 'The shadow that you know', p. 5.

that Wyatt had Catholic sympathies.[155] Cromwell wrote to Wyatt concerning Charles V:

> Your part shalbe nowe like a good Oratour, both to set furthe the princely nature and inclynation of his highnes and all dexteritie, and soo to observe Themperours answers ... as you may thereby fishe out the bottom of his stomake, and advertise his Majeste how he standethe disposed toward him.[156]

In another letter he was told by Cromwell to:

> Contiynue vigilant nowe in thenserching out of thinges mete to be knowen ... decipher the bottom of his harte ... if by any wisdom it may be drawen out.[157]

Henry VIII's enemies abroad would have been far more open and susceptible, even drawn towards, someone they believed held similar political views and fostered personal resentment towards the king. As Wyatt himself explained in his *Defence,* concerning the charge of treasonable correspondence with Cardinal Pole, 'To sett spies ouer traytors yt ys I thynke no newe practys of Imbassadours'.[158] We should perhaps give more credence to the possibility that Bonner's accusations of Wyatt's misconduct may have been true, that Wyatt, as part of his 'cover', did indeed frequently complain of his imprisonment by the king, and that the poet did actually have suspicious dealings with Pole.[159] Indeed, Wyatt's dissimulation appears to have been highly successful. As Bonner informs Cromwell in a letter, Wyatt was in such credit with the Emperor as an ambassador that 'no man is meet to fill that room'.[160]

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[155] Prescott, A. (2000) 'The Evoltion of Tudor Satire' in Kinney, F. (ed.) *English Literature 1500-1600*, p. 222.
[156] Quoted by Thomson, p. 46.
[157] Merriman, vol. ii, pp. 222, & 229.
[158] Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 195.
[159] For details of Bonner's accusations see Zagorin, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt & the court of Henry VIII', p. 132.
[160] Quoted in Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 70.

Such an 'honest' man as Wyatt would have been invaluable to his patron Thomas Cromwell, not only in the courts of foreign emperors, but also at the court of his own king, Henry VIII. The field of espionage was an integral element of patronage: lies, envy, suspicion and enmity was reported at all levels of society, as those who held political power within the court sought to gain advantage over their enemies.[161] This was a contemporary factor that Francesco Guicciardini made clear when he warned in 1530, that in order to discover your secrets a tyrant 'will have you observed by men he has ordered to become intimate with you'.[162] Yet, for such a tactic to work, especially in the paranoid court culture of Henry VIII, the *agent provocateur* must manipulate the cultural system of self-display in order to appear not only moral and honest, but as if he is criticising the king, as if he is embittered and angry. That Wyatt's verse can be viewed as a tool of an agent provocateur or spy can be seen if we take a close reading of the sonnet *Whoso list to hunt* and place it within its historical and cultural context.

In this sonnet, an adaptation of Petrarch's *Una candida cerva*, Wyatt brilliantly and deliberately transforms Petrarch's expression of transcendental idealism into one of exhaustion and bitterness.[163] A translation of Petrarch's original sonnet reads:

> A white hind appeared to me
> On the green grass, with two horns of gold,
> Between two rivers, in the shade of a laurel tree,
> As the sun was rising in the youthful season.
> Her look was so sweetly proud,
> That I left all work to follow her;
> Like the miser who as he searches for treasure
> Sweetens his trouble with delight.
> 'Let no one touch me,' was written
> In diamonds and topazes around her lovely neck;
> 'It has pleased my Caesar to make me free.'
> And the sun had already turned to midday;

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[161] Smith, *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia*, p. 154.
[162] Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections*, p. 67.
[163] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, p. 146.

> My eyes weary with looking, but not satiated;
> When I fell into the water, and she vanished.[164]

Petrarch's deceased beloved, Laura, is metaphorically the '*candida cerva*', an exalted figure of purity, a white deer with 'horns of gold' that signifies Diana, the goddess of chastity. The imagery of spring, the green grass and the rising sun all enhance this idea of purity. Wyatt's speaker, however, by introducing the imagery of a hunt, transmutes Petrach's mystical adoration for his mistress into an embittered expression of frustration at the power of the king.

Wyatt's translation, or rather his transformation of the poem, reads:

> Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
> But as for me, alas, I may no more.
> The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
> I am of them that farthest cometh behind.
> Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
> Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore
> Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,
> Since in a net I seek to hold the wind.
> Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
> As well as I may spend his time in vain.
> And graven with diamonds in letters plain
> There is written, her fair neck round about:
> *'Noli me tangere* for Caesar's I am,
> And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.'[165]

Wyatt abandons Petrarch's dreamlike atmosphere, pathos, symbolism, the picturesque landscape and, where Petrarch's hind is pure and unattainable, the hind in Wyatt's sonnet is only unattainable because she is literally Caesar's, she belongs to the king. She is cynically pragmatic and has allowed herself to be bought by the monarch.

In doing this, the translation becomes, according to Greenblatt's influential reading, so rooted in the cynical realities of Tudor court intrigue that we can identify the 'hind' as Anne Boleyn, Wyatt himself as the protagonist, and Henry VIII is omnipresent and implicit in the background as the Caesar for whom the

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[164] This translation is based upon that of Alistair Fox in Fox, p. 262.
[165] Rebholz, p. 77.

deer is intended, and before whom all others must give way.[166] To be sure, Greenblatt is correct to draw our attention to the fact that Wyatt does not directly write about the possible loss of Anne Boleyn to Henry VIII. Wyatt uses subtle implication and ambiguous imagery. '*Noli me tangere* for Caesar's I am', the penultimate line of the poem, is a prime example of how Wyatt blends multiple layers of imagery within a single line. This line may simply imply that the deer is under Caesar's protection, or perhaps, it has religious connotations and alludes to Mary Magdalene as she stood before the apparition of Jesus after his resurrection when he said to her, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my father.'[167] It may be interpreted as having either of these meanings, yet, the line also subtly insinuates that Caesar is Henry VIII and that the 'fair neck' around which is 'graven with diamonds and letters plain ... *Noli me tangere*'[168] is Anne Boleyn's, and it is from this politically charged insinuation that the 'intimation of power spreads backward like a stain through the preceding lines, so that the whole poem comes to be coloured by it'.[169] So powerful is the insinuation, that some critics have cited the sonnet as evidence that Wyatt and Anne Boleyn had once been lovers.[170]

Regardless, however, of whether or not we accept that Wyatt and Anne Boleyn were lovers, in the sonnet the poet articulates the political reality of the Henrician court in terms of domination and submission, a reality in which 'the options are to enforce submission or submit, to be the aggressor or to be the

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[166] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 146.
[167] John 20:17, *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, p. 1179.
[168] Wyatt, *Whoso list to hunt*, 'fair neck' – line 12, 'graven with diamonds and letters plain ... *Noli me tangere*' – lines 11 & 12.
[169] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 146.
[170] Fox, pp. 258-64. Though a relationship between Anne Boleyn and Wyatt is an attractive one and could perhaps be the cause of the tension in the sonnet, there is, however, no empirical evidence that this was actually true. Warnicke, pp. 64– 9, argues emphatically against a possible connection between Wyatt and Anne Boleyn, but like those who claim a relationship existed, offers evidence that fails to convince.

victim.'[171] This was a reality in which Henry VIII is at the apex of power and all must submit to him. The male speaker of the poem, like the hind, who is naturally wild, yet collared and made to 'seem tame', must submit and give way to the more powerful male.[172] To see Wyatt's use of such elaborate metaphors, analogies and bitter poetic voice, as Greenblatt suggests, as simply tactful indirection designed as a cover behind which the poet subversively criticises Henry VIII, is to fail fully to appreciate the ability of the courtly audience to understand the rhetorical strategy, themes and tone of one of their contemporary's verse.[173] If Wyatt was to infiltrate those who opposed Henry at the English court, or ingratiate himself with the Catholic opposition to the king when an ambassador in France and Spain, then his having voiced such sentiments would have suggested he was bitter towards the king. As such, the sonnet can be viewed as performing the art of courtly dissimulation and indirection, even in a self-advertising way, concerning Wyatt's possible relationship with Anne Boleyn. The need to reassure the king of his withdrawal from the 'hunt' and the bitterness of the poet's tone in describing Anne Boleyn as a possession bought by Henry VIII, whilst it expresses subservience to the king's power, would still have added fuel to any rumours concerning Wyatt's and Boleyn's relationship.[174] Those opposed to the king, over his involvement with Anne and his split with Rome, would have been much more likely to divulge information to someone they thought had reason to hold a grudge against the king and who expressed his resentment and bitterness towards the Tudor court in many of his other poems.

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[171] Waller, *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century*, p.118.
[172] Wyatt, *Whoso list to hunt*, line 14.
[173] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 121.
[174] Fowler, A. (1975) *Conceitful Thought*, p. 6. Fowler's interpretation relies a great deal on the extremely tenuous interpretation of the word 'wild' meaning chaste, yet he is correct to point out one interpretation of the poem may have been a reassurance to Henry VIII.

Wyatt's having acted as an agent provocateur and spy, perhaps answers why the poet seems to have led such a charmed life within the volatile world of the Tudor court. It may also answer why Cromwell suppressed Bonner's accusations; why, even when they re-emerged after Cromwell's death, Wyatt, rumoured to have been released by the whim of the king after a request from Katherine Howard, was only the second man to be acquitted of treason during the reign of Henry VIII.[175] Moreover, if it had been Wyatt's task to root out information concerning other courtiers, this may give some credence to the rumour that he warned Henry VIII against marrying Anne Boleyn, that he may indeed have told the king she 'is not meet to be coupled with your grace'.[176] If Wyatt truly was the king's competitor for Anne Boleyn's affections, as many critics often assume, it is surprising that the poet was not the recipient of the king's rage and wrath and both exiled and ostracised from the court. Yet, Wyatt was Chief Ewer at Anne Boleyn's coronation on 1st June 1533 and throughout his life continued to secure lucrative and honourable posts from the king.[177]

The use of verse in this manner; poems used to enhance, even create, a public persona that would assist the courtier's attempts to infiltrate and spy upon others, was neither peculiar nor unique to Wyatt. The use of humanist educated courtiers as both envoys and as surreptitious clandestine agents was, as Kenneth Graham has noted, quite common during the Renaissance era.[178] The early sixteenth-century Scottish playwright, political theorist and scholar, George

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[175] Heale, p. 19. See also Williams, P. (1979) *The Tudor Regime*, p. 381, concerning Lord Dacre, who in 1534, was the only person acquitted of treason during Henry VIII's reign. This is a point also mentioned in Wyatt's *Defence.*

[176] Nicholas Harpsfield, quoted in Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 20.

[177] Tydeman, p. 215. Concerning Wyatt's advancement at court, see Muir, *Life and Letters*, pp. 25-26.

[178] McFarlane, I. (1981) *Buchanan*, p. 73.

Buchanan, makes this point clear when he commented at his trial before the Lisbon Inquisition that:

> The king of Scotland, when he sought information in England, thought me suitable for this task as one who could pass as a religious refugee. To be sure, this was so close to the truth that the English very nearly sent me to Scotland to spy on their behalf, as I stated that I had friends through whom business could be secretly conducted. So the King of Scotland (to return to the point) informed me what was involved through a courtier and so ordered my departure to look like an escape.[179]

Buchanan had found it necessary to flee Scotland after he had enraged the Kirk with his anti-clerical poems *Somnium*, *Palinodia* and *Franciscanus*, in which he satirises scurrilously the Order of the Franciscans.[180] Cardinal Beaton, the most powerful churchman in Scotland at the time, accused the poet of heretical opinions and pressurised James V into having the poet imprisoned. The poet, however, with what Buchanan writing years after the events claims was James's direct connivance, soon escaped across the border to England.[181] Whether it was true or not James assisted his escape, Buchanan would reach London with a public persona, created through both his actions and his poetry, that implied he was an individual who was an inveterate enemy of Cardinal Beaton and seemingly opposed to the Catholic Church. Buchanan's verse echoed the sentiments of Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII's anti-Catholic propaganda. Moreover, we can further see the practical and pragmatic use to which Buchanan employed his verse

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[179] Translation and Latin text of this quoted material is printed in McFarlane, p. 73, from Aitken, J. (1939) (ed.) *The trial of George Buchanan before the Lisbon Inquisition...* pp. 6-8.

[180] These poems written by Buchanan and their relationship to the court of James V and religious contexts of the era are discussed in more detail in chapter six.

[181] Although we cannot be certain of the truth of Buchanan's claim the general consensus amongst his biographers is that James V was involved in his escape. See, McFarlane, p. 73; Ward, A. & Waller, A. (ed.) (1961) *The Cambridge History of English Literature: Renascence and Reformation*, Vol. III, p. 160; Buchanan, G. (1995) *The Political Poetry*, edited with translation and commentary by McGinnis, P. & Williamson, A., p. 6. This latter book will henceforth be referred to as Buchanan, followed by the poem number or Buchanan, *Commentary* or *Notes*, if a reference is being made to the editor's commentary or notes.

when we look at the poems that Buchanan wrote for Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII whilst in London. The two poems are clearly panegyric, written by the poet to help ingratiate him with either, or both, of the two most powerful individuals in England.

In the poem addressed to Henry VIII the poet celebrates the king's virtues through the personification of rumour. Rumour has allowed the world to know the king's abilities, his 'inclination from early childhood to the studies of Athena', his 'devotion to goodness and justice' and 'generosity to those in need [and] punishment of the wicked'.[182] She has, however, not been adequately able to encapsulate the 'grand total' of the king's character, his 'moderation' and ability to conduct himself 'in all things with a view to the mean between two extremes'.[183] Through this idea Buchanan claims his celebration is original and worthy of the king's attention. He describes Henry as:

> Not overly stern but not descending to frivolity;
> Not proud of countenance, not ill-humoured, threatening or grim looking,
> But friendly and kindly to the good, quick to put aside bad temper.[184]

These qualities simultaneously make the king more humane and, as the poet poignantly states, 'equal to the immortal gods' so that he is raised 'above the level of ordinary men'.[185] It is very informative to see how, some years later, when the poet no longer sought a place within the English court, he comments upon his own sovereign, Queen Mary. Speaking as if he were the queen, Buchanan alleges:

> If my uncle had not been so dangerous to me and so dishonourable,
> I, Mary, should have been the leading lady of the age.
> But he disgraced both his own repute and mine as well

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[182] Buchanan, Poem 29/3, lines 26-28, p. 104. The line should read: 'Your generosity to those in need, your punishment of the wicked'. The change has been made for syntactical reasons.
[183] Ibid, lines 31 & 35.
[184] Ibid, lines 36-38.
[185] Ibid, lines 41-42.

By those wrongs which turn whole kingdoms upside down.[186]

He portrays a far more jaundiced view of Henry VIII that casts credibility on the genuineness of his previous verse to the king. We obtain a clear perception from the poet's changing tone that he is capable of adopting a particular voice to suit necessities influenced by topical political determinants. The exigencies of time and place clearly have an important influence upon his poetic craft.

Though Buchanan flatters Henry VIII in the poem he addressed to the king, his real goal seems to have been to obtain the patronage of Cromwell. A translation of the Latin poem addressed to Cromwell reads:

> O Cromwell, thou art haven and safe harbour in
> these trying times,
> And the reliever of misery in this part of the world.
> Thou art the protector by whom the revived religion of our
> ancestors flourishes
> And their holy faith in its pristine simplicity.
> Accept with good grace these little gifts
> From one who desires with all his heart to be thy follower,
> A poor wandering exile tossed about on land and sea
> Through all the manifold evils the deceitful world holds,
> While [in Scotland] on one side the wild henchmen of an old
> enemy bare their teeth,
> While a royal court thunders forth awful threats,
> While the mountainous heights are snow-covered and impassable,
> While the streams in the valleys are swollen with floods.
> Worn out after so many misfortunes like one prostrate before the
> Athenian altars,
> As a suppliant kneeling at thy feet, I offer gifts,
> Sheaves from the scanty harvest of my sterile inspiration,
> The fruits of a field not entirely deficient, but not properly tilled.
> If they are pleasing, accept the book; if not, the good will of the
> author.
> If both, it will be more than I could have wished for.[187]

The poem is a shameless and enthusiastic bid for patronage in which Buchanan stresses, with overt clarity, a desperate desire and the necessity of obtaining the Chancellor's protection. Through the metaphor of the ship tossed about the sea, a typical fifteenth- and sixteenth-century method of representing the dangers and

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[186] Buchanan, Poem 41/3.
[187] Buchanan, Poem 28/3, p. 102.

hazards of political flux and insecurity, Cromwell is portrayed as the poet's 'haven and safe harbour'; the source of relief to Buchanan's present misery. A misery he leaves Cromwell in little doubt was due to his allegiance to the pure faith of Protestantism and the evil of 'the wild henchman of an old enemy': the Catholic clergy, specifically Cardinal Beaton. It seems safe to assume Cromwell would also have regarded Cardinal Beaton and the Scottish Kirk in a similar fashion and seen within the poet the possibility of Buchanan being of some use within the murky waters of the prevalent religious and political world of the era. The poet openly states his desire to be one of Cromwell's followers: to enter into the inner-circle of Cromwell's influence. Such a position would have provided Buchanan with innumerable chances of obtaining intelligence and information that would have been of use to James V. It would also have placed him in a valuable position where, if James chose, he could secretly confer with Cromwell on the Scottish king's behalf. Whether or not Buchanan would have been successful is a point that we cannot determine. Within a short time of Buchanan's arrival in England in 1539, Cromwell was arrested and subsequently executed. The poet crossed the English Channel to France sometime in the late summer of the same year and was soon writing a poem to celebrate the Emperor Charles V's entry into Bordeaux on the 1st December.[188]

The Buchanan and Wyatt who emerge from the suggestion that many of their poems are carefully crafted tools of an *agent provocateur*, intended to gain promotion and influence at court, is far removed from the generally accepted view of either poet. Like Dunbar, they are both something of an enigma, masters of dissimulation, who at times express sincere indignation and bitterness in their poems, but at other times use honest personas for their own advancement in the

[188] Ford, P. (1982) *George Buchanan: Prince of Poets*, p. 46.

game of intrigue that was the dramatic but murky world of courtly politics. This was a world where it is very difficult to see what truly was going on beneath the mosaic of colourful events.[189] It seems Henry VIII may have uttered a universal insight concerning the truth of the matter when he told the duke of Suffolk, 'Wyatt was a bold villain, not to be trusted'.[190] It would appear the king understood all too well what William Congreve would write a century later, that:

> No mask like open truth to cover lies,
> As to go naked is the best disguise.[191]

This may make Wyatt appear less heroic than is often portrayed, but consequently he becomes far more human. It may also complicate the possibility of 'knowing' the historical Wyatt, Dunbar or Buchanan, but it also makes the court poet a more complex and rounded individual who is capable of all the traits of man: truth, honesty, integrity, sycophancy, hypocrisy, and deceit.

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[189] Edwards, *The Making of the Modern English State*, p. 122.
[190] Nicholas Sander, quoted in Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 21.
[191] William Congreve (1694) *The Double Dealer*, quoted in Knowles, E. (1997) *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase, Saying, and Quotation.*

CHAPTER SIX

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The murky waters of religious politics and poetic propaganda

Prate and paint and spare not;
You know I can me wreck.
And if so be ye care not,
Be sure I do not reck.
And though ye swear it were not,
I can both swear and speak:
By God and by this cross
If I have the mock
Ye shall have the loss.
Thomas Wyatt[1]

There is a striking recognition in these lines by Wyatt of the powerful and brutal uses to which language and words can be appropriated. The sense of dire threat that is evident in the lines leaves the reader in little doubt that words, either written or spoken, can be used by the poet as a deliberately deceptive means of engaging in personal and political conflict.

Once we begin to recognise the early sixteen-century courtier poet's complex relationship with patronage, the complexity of their rhetorical craft and forms of self-display, the slipperiness of the poetic 'I' and the potential depths of the poet's dissimulation, we open the door to further possible exploration of both the poet's literary productions and the world in which they existed. To be sure, these aspects of court literature are not always initially apparent and this has led to them having not been fully appreciated by either historians or literary critics, but only a slender share of critical sagacity and imagination is necessary to realise that court literature, not only thematically, but through both the circumstances that underpin its production and those that surround the initial performance, relates to

[1] Wyatt, *To wet your eye withouten tear*, lines 9-17.

the religious, nationalist and socio-political contexts of the era in ways that were far more dynamic and pragmatic than have previously been recognised.

This becomes apparent if we take a closer look at the three poems George Buchanan wrote concerning the Franciscans and place them within the political and religious contexts of the era in which they were written. An appraisal of Lyndsay's court verse within the same contexts demonstrates further how the overtly pragmatic use of verse was a consistent strategy poets adopted throughout the reign of James V. Moreover, a clearer perception of how poetics could also be deliberately appropriated within the sphere of national and personal politics can be seen by looking at the verse of Dunbar and Wyatt. Wyatt's verse, in particular, provides an enlightening insight into how the pragmatic use of poetics was not particular to either Scotland or the overtly political world of religion and nationhood. This latter point is not always easy to discern, but if we look at some of the love ballads of Wyatt then it is possible to obtain an insight into the ways in which a court poet could pragmatically assist his monarch within the social sphere of the court.

I have suggested in the previous chapter how the production of Buchanan's poems concerning the Franciscans, and his subsequent escape from Cardinal Beaton's wrath, created a persona for the poet that would have assisted in his infiltration of the English court. This, however, was perhaps not the initial pragmatic reason for the production of the three poems but rather a beneficial side-effect that Buchanan and James V attempted to use to their advantage. The first of the three poems Buchanan wrote, *Somnium*, appears to have been produced due to a dispute he entered into with a Franciscan friar. On his return to Scotland in 1535 Buchanan had witnessed a trial in which a merchant had asked his judges to disallow the evidence of certain men who were his mortal enemies.

After the trial the poet had become embroiled in a heated debate with a Franciscan concerning the trial procedure for capital crimes, particularly heresy, in which the accused were not even allowed to know the name of their accuser.[2] Buchanan, years later, in his own defence before the Inquisition told of how:

> … this Franciscan, having failed to satisfy those listening to the disputation, spread abroad many suspicious rumours on my account. I retaliated by translating an old Scots epigram into Latin verse whose sense I conveyed to you earlier. Thereafter both of us indulged in hatred and abuse, and bandied about many insults without saying anything derogatory to religion.[3]

The old Scots epigram Buchanan refers to is Dunbar's verse, *This nycht befoir the dawing cleir*. This poem, Bawcutt points out, was for a long time thought to be an autobiographical, self-incriminating confession, but which is now regarded by scholars as a fictional device influenced by the anti-mendicant tradition in which the poet satirises the followers of St Francis of Assisi to imply their religion is little more than a superficial sham.[4]

Far from being a simple translation of Dunbar's poem, where Dunbar's satire is light, almost humorous in its mocking tone, Buchanan's satire, *Somnium*, is pungent and the poem a far more potent attack upon the Franciscan Order. Buchanan's poem begins in a similar fashion to Dunbar's, with Saint Francis visiting the poet in a dream as he sleeps to persuade the poet to become a friar. He offers Buchanan the holy habit, hood, mantle, sandals, staff and book that would enable him to become a Franciscan friar. The poet claims to initially have been 'struck dumb by this strange apparition' but soon recovers from his initial surprise and this is where *Somnium* distinctly diverges from Dunbar's verse and becomes

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[2] McFarlane, p. 52.
[3] Translation and Latin text of this quoted material is printed in Farlane, p. 52, from Aitken, J. (ed.) (1939) *The trial of George Buchanan before the Lisbon Inquisition*… pp. 2-4.
[4] Bawcutt, *William Dunbar: Selected Poems*, p. 318.

far more than a simple translation. Buchanan's treatment of the Franciscans is far more vituperative, scathing, specific and rhetorically structured. He replies to Saint Francis:

> 'By your leave,' I say, I should like to tell the truth
> about the Franciscan Order.
> This habit doesn't suit my shoulders at all.
> Whoever puts it on, let him have slavery for his
> calling,
> But my birthright is freedom, and that's what
> pleases me.
> Whoever puts it on, let him rub the blush of modesty
> from off his brow,
> But that's something my conscience would not
> permit.
> Whoever puts it on, let him cheat, flatter, and
> prevaricate as occasion prompts.
> But candour is what pleases me, and life
> unconcealed.[5]

The satire of the poem is tightly contained in Buchanan's reply, in which the vices of the Franciscans are forcefully expressed as general principles followed by antithetical statements which leave the reader with little doubt that the poet virulently rejects such immoral behaviour.[6] The depth of the poet's rejection is further heightened by the use of anaphora, the successive use of 'But' simultaneously heightening the sense of the Franciscan's vice whilst making it emphatically clear the poet, unlike the Franciscans, who Buchanan severely berates as dishonest, deceitful, and shameless flatterers, prefers a life free of deceit: a life of freedom, modesty and honesty.

As the poem continues, to this rejection of Franciscan immorality Buchanan adds further layers of contempt. He continues to tell Saint Francis that:

> It's not that the lice scare me off and all that awful singing,
> And living from day to day like a dumb animal,
> And bellowing in doorways like cattle,
> If heaven's palace stands open by such nonsense.[7]

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[5] Buchanan, Poem 55/4, *Somnium*, lines 17-24.
[6] Buchanan, *Commentary*, p. 52.
[7] Buchanan, Poem 55/4, *Somnium*, lines 25-31.

Through the mention of lice, the poet implies the Franciscans are unkept and unclean, that they live a life of dirt and grime that can be associated with the filth of the gutter. Through the common satirical device of reducing the friars to 'dumb animals', particularly that of 'bellowing...cattle', Buchanan further increases the intensity of his satire by reducing the Franciscan to the level of the farmyard animal. He then makes the specific and damning claim that few friars 'reach the kingdom of heaven'.[8] The poem ends with an unfavourable comparison of the friars to bishops, who 'shine on the honoured altars', where the habit of the friar is 'infrequently seen', and Buchanan tells Saint Francis, 'as far as I am concerned, give me a mitre and purple cassock.'[9] The comparison, however, seems to be somewhat mocking and ironic when we consider that it is not the bishop's moral virtue that Buchanan prefers but rather their more comfortable standard of living.

Buchanan's dislike of the Franciscans certainly appears to be genuine, and when we consider what the poet himself stated in his defence to the Inquisition, his reasons for writing the poem seem particularly personal. At the same time, however, the poem certainly brought the poet to the attention of James V and obtained him the king's patronage. James, far from censuring Buchanan's conduct, encouraged him to write an even fuller, far more biting and potent satire of the Franciscan Order, *Palinodia*.[10] On the surface, this poem appears to be an apology for his previous attack upon the Franciscans, but it would, as Ford succinctly comments, 'be a very dull mind that was taken in by the apparent recantation.'[11] Buchanan describes how, in another dream, he ascends to the golden doors of the heavenly temple to find an angry mob of Franciscan friars

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[8] Ibid, line 29.
[9] Ibid, lines 33-34, 40.
[10] Ford, *George Buchanan: Prince of Poets*, p. 45; Carpenter, S. (1988) 'Drama and Politics: Scotland in the 1530s' in *Medieval English Theatre 10*, p. 84.
[11] Ford, *George Buchanan: Prince of Poets*, p. 45.

waiting to drag him off to 'the tribunal of a merciless judge', whose 'head was shaved on top' and 'his countenance...angry and threatening.[12] The poet likens this crowd to the derogatory images of asses, wild geese and monkeys. Moreover, the implication is made that the judge, Saint Francis, is a rapist when he is described as bleeding from a wound inflicted upon him by 'some stubborn girl struggling too much'.[13] After being berated at length by the judge for his having dared 'blather about our brotherhood', the poet has his clothes torn from him and is severely beaten and whipped by the friars who knew no limit to their rage.[14] In a moment of respite Buchanan was given a chance to speak and he sought the friar's mercy, declaring his desire to see the 'order of Francis flourish'.[15]

The way in which he would have the Order flourish is, however, full of bitter cynicism and subtle irony. He tells the friars:

> May the crowds of deluded benefactors follow you
> Wherever you beg your way.
> May the credulous old lady never let you down, and
> here's hoping
> The ignorant people never catch onto your lies.
> And never see through your stupid tricks.
> And I pray with equal sincerity that your
> novices,
> Under strict tutelage, cleverly discover
> New channels of gain – to feign perhaps
> That ghosts or apparitions are coming forth by night
> From tombs unsanctified.[16]

As the poem continues Buchanan further highlights the immorality of the friars when he exposes the way in which they use superstition to prey upon the ignorant laity. He ends this part of the poem by saying he:

> ... will take back all the bad things
> Which in the past a tongue overly bold did
> not fear to utter

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[12] Buchanan, Poem 55/4, *Palinodia*, 'Part One', lines 23-24.
[13] Ibid, line 37.
[14] Ibid, line 41.
[15] Ibid, line 79.
[16] Ibid, lines 81-90.

Against the holy habit of the Franciscan brotherhood,
And I will repay ill-report with paeans of praise
And exalt the brother's fame to the stars.[17]

This ironic praise, however, is far more devastating in its satire of Franciscan behaviour than that of his earlier open condemnation in the poem *Somnium*. In 'Part Two' of the poem Buchanan's attack upon the Franciscans becomes even more acidic and vitriolic when he details the greed of their bogus religion and outlines at great length the grotesque hypocrisy of their sexual behaviour.[18] The friars are described as lacking modesty, virtue, self-respect, of never having worked; instead they profit only from the labour of others. Buchanan depicts the friars as being little more than thieves and robbers.

The poem culminates in the poet's further recantation in which he tells of how he will speak of the splendid deeds done by Saint Francis. These splendid deeds we learn were 'the thieveries of his tender youth', 'the pretended stigmata of his hands and feet', and at length Buchanan retells a deeply comic tale of how Saint Francis dealt with an 'overpowering onslaught of lust' that set the 'saint on fire'.[19] He could not 'seek out the cloister of the holy sisters', as this was too far away; everybody would notice if he visited the 'local whorehouse'; he could 'work his charms on the young mothers/ but his erect prick doesn't like to be kept waiting.'[20] Driven by lust, therefore, he stretches naked in the cold snow:

And finds cold comfort by boring his way through snowballs
He puts clumps of snow like collars on his penis,
And enjoins commencement of the pleasure desired.
'This,' he says, 'is Emilia, this is nobly-born Corinna,
This is Gellia, the blonde with the long hair.'
And on and on he goes, naming shapely and beautiful nymphs.

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[17] Ibid, lines 117-121.
[18] Buchanan, *Notes*, p. 178. McGinnis. & Williamson comment on how nineteenth-century historians had found the sexual content of *Palanodia* too shocking to translate. They thankfully had no such inhibitions and their translation allows us to analyse this poem in all its sexual explicitness.
[19] Buchanan, Poem 56/4, *Palinodia*, 'Part Two', lines 28-31.
[20] Ibid, lines 34-37.

There's nary a snowball without a girl's name.[21]

The poet adds a further layer to this comical imagery when he narrates that Saint Francis moved from one market town to the next, where people gaze as he:

> … stands exulting, his penis crowned with snow.
> One man is dumbstruck, another roars with laughter,
> still another is just sad.
> Yet the poor mothers, the girls both wed and unwed,
> could not keep their cheeks dry of tears.[22]

The satirical treatment of the Franciscan Order is brought to a climatic close when Buchanan tells of how Saint Francis:

> … was better equipped for lusty play than all the asses
> in the world,
> And even though he had never mastered Venus on a
> mare,
> Still he would beget in not many years such a race of
> mules.[23]

The Franciscan friars are associated not only with lust and depravity but with the derogatory imagery of infertility, stubbornness and lack of intelligence inherent in characteristic popular imagery that still continues to be linked to the mule.

James V, it would seem, was not content with these two poems and commissioned Buchanan to write a further poem in 1538, *The Franciscanus*, a lengthy diatribe in which the poet continues and develops in elaborate detail his earlier attacks upon the Franciscan Order. Certainly, on the surface the poet's criticism appears to be specifically aimed at the Franciscan Order, but much of the satirical content is also symbolically linked to the general anti-clerical criticism that circulated in both Scotland and England during the early sixteenth century. McGinnis and Williams have astutely noted, concerning *Palinodia* and *Franciscanus*, that *Palinodia* 'is best approached as a piece of theatre, and it is easy to imagine the poem being read aloud and with dramatic voice', and that

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[21] Ibid, lines 41-47.
[22] Ibid, lines 54-56.
[23] Ibid, lines 59-61.

similarly *Franciscanus* is a poem 'palpably intended to be read aloud.'[24] The courtly audience, listening to these dramatic performances, performances that would have been emotively charged, as the audience would have included both courtiers and nobles who held similar views to Buchanan and high ranking members of the clergy bitterly opposed to any criticism of themselves, would have been far more attuned to the inherent innuendo, allusion, irony and topical detail that was a generalised criticism of the Kirk, than the modern critic. This certainly seems to have been the case with the country's most powerful churchman, Cardinal Beaton, who sought Buchanan's arrest after either hearing the poems himself, or their content and tone having been reported to him. That the poet's verse can be seen as a more generalised attack upon religious practices than has been previously appreciated can be comprehended when we take a closer look at *Franciscanus.* This poem articulates and elaborates upon a remarkable range of spiritual, political and social dynamics underlying early sixteenth-century religion.

Set as a didactic dialogue, *Franciscanus* involves four poetic voices: that of Buchanan, a friend who is considering becoming a Franciscan, Eubulus, a friar who symbolically represents prudence and good counsel, and an old friar who explains to novice friars the tools of their trade and how to succeed in an era in which the laity was becoming more spirituality sophisticated.[25] On hearing his friend is considering becoming a friar Buchanan applauds his desire to serve God but warns that to become a Franciscan would result in his being 'led astray by the wrong idea.'[26] He warns that even though:

> ...from my tender years I have always honoured
> The pontiffs and the holy fathers whom outstanding virtue
> Has rendered worthy of everlasting fame.
> By no means, however, do I believe that I see Paul

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[24] Buchanan, *Notes*, pp. 170 & 184.
[25] Buchanan, *Commentary*, p. 184.
[26] Buchanan, Poem 57/4, *Franciscanus*, line 38.

> Every time I see the twisted cord, the wide hood,
> and the windowed shoes.
> For under that garb there often lurks
> A ferocious tyrant, with the soul of a savage,
> Often a robber, a gargantuan appetite, an adulterer,
> A simulated friendliness, and a false modesty of countenance,
> Which conceals the many frauds of a wolf in sheep's clothing.[27]

Though Buchanan describes the garb of the Franciscan, he initially makes the qualification that not all pontiffs and holy fathers should be honoured, only those who had outstanding virtue. It was also a traditional poetic claim that all forms of ecclesiasts, not just the Franciscans, donned religious regalia of some kind that could conceal the true nature of the individual. In the poem, *The manner of the world nowadays*, John Skelton similarly satirised clerics when he wrote of how:

> So many pointed caps
> Laced with double flaps,
> And so gay felted hats,
> Saw I never:
> So many good lessons,
> So many good sermons,
> And so few devotions,
> Saw I never.
>
> So many gardes worn,
> Jagged and all to-torn,
> And so many falsely forsworn,
> Saw I never.[28]

Skelton's irony oozes from the verse in this portrayal of corrupt clerics who wear the regalia of the Church: the pointed hats, felt caps and the 'gardes' (trimmings). He leaves us in little doubt that the cleric's outward appearance and actions can mask, as Buchanan claims, 'the many frauds of a wolf in sheep's clothing'. The cleric may give 'good lessons' and 'good sermons' to the laity but the reality is that many ecclesiasts themselves offer 'few devotions' and are 'falsely foresworn'.

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[27] Ibid, lines 49-59.
[28] Skelton, *The manner of the world nowadays,* lines 1-12.

That Buchanan's attack upon the Franciscans is a more generalised criticism of ecclesiasts from all sections of the Kirk becomes clearer as the poem develops. In the section of the poem in which Buchanan repeats the advice that he himself was once given by Eubulus, he echoes the contemporary criticism concerning clerical abuses typified by Erasmus in *In Praise of Folly*. Eubulus explains the Franciscans offer nothing that is productive within society, they cannot farm, nor do they 'make good soldiers or sailors', all they can do is prey upon the superstitions of the uneducated poor. The friars spend their time 'cheating widows' and:

> … go out into the country and work his wiles on the
> ignorant peasants,
> He'll give apples to the little boys, amulets to the
> little girls,
> And scapulars for the tender neck.
> Finally, with flatteries and marvellous little stories,
> Of ghosts and goblins and all sorts of spooks,
> He draws fish he's caught into his net.[29]

The disreputable behaviour of clerics is further emphasised when the novice is cynically advised how to fleece the laity by the old friar:

> And don't forget to stock up on little presents,
> Such as the people are easily taken in by – holy
> pictures,
> Indulgences, little statues made of lead,
> Scapulars, stuff you can buy for a few pennies.
> The experienced fisherman doesn't need golden
> hooks to catch fish
> And his nets don't have to be made of silk either[30]

The imagery of the fisherman is usually associated with Jesus, but here, like the teachings of the Lord, they have been subverted and corrupted by the clerics whose only true faith is profit.

Erasmus may have Folly tell the reader that she 'would not be thought purposely to expose the weaknesses of popes and priests, lest I should seem to

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[29] Buchanan, Poem 57/4, *Franciscanus*, lines 127-132.
[30] Buchanan, Poem 57/4, *Franciscanus*, lines 489-494.

recede, from my title, and make a satire instead of a panegyric', but there is little doubt as to the writer's true intention.[31] The humanist scholar, a proponent of liberal Catholic reform rather then radical reform, attacked the moral abuses, superstition and profit orientated behaviour of the Church. *In Praise of Folly* is a satire of ecclesiasts in general that touches upon similar concerns as those raised by Buchanan. Erasmus, like the Scottish poet, describes a clergy who:

> ... will muster up a thousand several strange relations of spirits, ghosts, apparitions, raising of the devil, and such like bugbears of superstition...And these absurdities do not only bring an empty pleasure, and cheap divertisement, but they are a good trade, and procure a comfortable income to such priests and friars as by this craft get their gain. To these again are nearly related such others as attribute strange virtues to the shrines and images of saints and martyrs, and so would make their credulous proselytes believe, that if they pay their devotion to St, Christopher in the morning, they shall be guarded and secured the day following from all dangers and misfortunes.[32]

This 'marketing of religion', in which they are 'wonderfully skilled in their respective dues of tithes, offerings, perquisites &c', Folly tells us, they have 'in common with other mechanics'.[33] Moreover, bishops and cardinals, 'all content to reap the profit', do not accept 'the burden, that they toss as a ball from one hand to another, and assign it ... to subordinate ministers to act in their name ... their deputies, vicars and curates.'[34] If the clergy, Folly scornfully remarks, was 'endowed with one dram of wisdom? Wisdom did I say? Nay, one grain of that salt which our Saviour bid them not lose the savour of. All their riches, all their honour, their jurisdictions, their Peter's patrimony, their offices, their dispensations, their licences ... in a word, all their perquisites would be

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[31] Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*, p. 164.
[32] Ibid, pp. 81-82.
[33] Ibid, p.163.
[34] Ibid, p. 157.

forfeited.'[35] Erasmus makes it clear that it is profit that drives the Church and not faith.

Erasmus, like Buchanan, also exposes the immoral and unjust ways by which the clergy defend their ill-gotten gains and unholy practices. Folly makes it vividly clear that to reprove of their behaviour and admonish them:

> ... may be very hazardous; for they are a sort of men generally very hot and passionate; and should I provoke them, I doubt not would set upon me with a full cry, and force me with shame to recant, which if I stubbornly refuse to do, they will presently brand me for a heretic, and thunder out an excommunication, which is their spiritual weapon to wound such as lift up a hand against them.[36] 121

This point is echoed in *Franciscanus* when the old Friar informs the novice that if anyone refuses to do business with the Franciscans to 'Raise the hue and cry that here' is a heretic.[37] The danger of reproaching or challenging the clergy is further delineated by Folly in her narrative when she later claims the clergy's:

> ... only weapons ought to be those of the Spirit; and of these indeed they are mighty liberal, as of their interdicts, their suspensions, their denunciations, their aggravations, their greater and lesser excommunications, and their roaring bulls, that fright whomever they are thundered against; and these most holy fathers never issue them out more frequently than against those, who, at the instigation of the devil, and not having the fear of God before their eyes, do feloniously and maliciously attempt to lessen and impair St. Peter's patrimony and though that apostle tells our Saviour in the gospel, in the name of all the other disciples, we have left all, and followed you, yet they challenge as his inheritance, fields, towns, treasures, and large dominions; for the defending whereof, inflamed with a holy zeal, they fight with fire and sword, to the great loss and effusion of Christian blood.[38]

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[35] Ibid, p. 157.
[36] Ibid, p. 121.
[37] Buchanan, Poem 57/4, *Franciscanus*, line 439.
[38] Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*, p. 159-160.

Not only are excommunication and the threat of heresy exposed as the means by which the clergy defend their simony and unchristian wealth, they reject all Christian ethics and even go to war against their own brethren to keep a grasp upon their affluence, claiming they do so in the name of God.

In a similar vein, as McGinnis and Williams have recognised, Buchanan also 'elaborates in detail the deleterious implications of the friars' order for political life.'[39] Eubulus warns that:

> Yes indeed, this order is supported on steadfast pillars,
> Of which the practice of confession is foremost
> And a rich source of revenue,
> Guaranteed never to fail the monk who keeps at it.
> The harvest may disappoint the farmer,
> The vines beaten down by hailstones may yield few
> grapes for the winepress,
> And the rage of war may have carried off the cattle.
> But confession is unique – it'll never let you down
> If you learn how to work it for all it's worth.
> Armed with this weapon, our order has shown itself
> terrible to kings,
> Has driven whomsoever we would from his
> long-established throne.
> It has raised others to the topmost rungs of power.[40]

The criticism here, however, is far more general than McGinnis and Williams suggest: the practice of confession was the 'steadfast pillar' upon which the whole Catholic faith was supported. It was not, as far as reformers were concerned, merely the Franciscan Order that was, as the old corrupt friar informs the novice, built up on these pillars - that is, hearing confession, preaching sermons, and pursuing gain - but the entire Catholic Church.[41] Confession, along with excommunication, was open to abuse and often the means by which the clergy, particularly Rome, regularly interfered within the political sphere at the highest of levels. As Buchanan has Eubulus make clear, it is a political weapon that was

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[39] Buchanan, *Notes*, p. 184.
[40] Buchanan, Poem 57/4, *Franciscanus*, lines 334-345.
[41] Ibid, lines 855-856.

even used against kings. This is a telling remark when we consider that James V's own father died on the battle field of Flodden an excommunicated king after he failed to obey Pope Leo X's order to keep the peace with Henry VIII and not break the treaty he had made with England.[42] Through the power of the clergy, Buchanan insists, society becomes divided and real power devolves to the corrupt Papal Curia.

The more detailed an analysis we make of *Franciscanus*, the more we comprehend what would have been obvious to the initial courtly audience watching a performance of the verse. The verse is imbued with political and religious signifiers that locate it within the cultural mainstream of anti-clerical debate and the criticism inherent in the poem was not merely aimed at the Franciscans but at the general clergy. If this is not yet vividly clear, then clarity is obtained when we look at how Buchanan has his poetic protagonists discuss pardons and indulgences. Eubulus tells of how the 'pious little priest goes to work on the sick man'; he promises him 'three hundred thousands measures of merit', 'Olympus', anything so that the man deluded by sickness and false promises will 'have all his best stuff turned over to the monks'.[43] These promises, however, are but snares:

> … set out for the fat partridges.
> These birds can buy their way into heaven.
> But poor Codrus and Irus the beggar are out of luck.
> If they die poor, religion takes a holiday. The bells
> don't ring.
> There's no processional pomp, there's no ceremony,
> There's no grief on display at their burials.[44]

A point that, typical of Buchanan's rhetorical strategy, is reiterated in the advice that is given by the old friar when he tells the novice:

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[42] MacDougall, p. 261.
[43] Buchanan, Poem 57/4, *Franciscanus*, lines 148, 151, 152 & 156.
[44] Ibid, lines 159-164.

> Sometimes to be satisfied to punish a serious sin
> with a penance that's not too heavy.
> But don't let him off for long prayers or tears-
> Relieve his purse of its coins, not his heart of his
> hurt.
> Have him endow a church, a monastery, or altars,
> Or remit fasting if he'll pay you to say masses.[45]

Erasmus had denounced the same practices when he had Folly ask:

> What shall I say of such as cry up and maintain the cheat of pardons and indulgences? that by these compute the time of each soul's residence in purgatory, and assign them a longer or shorter continuance, according as they purchase more or fewer of these paltry pardons, and saleable exemptions?[46]

It is not only Erasmus's satire that *Franciscanus* echoes, the verse also reverberates with the deeply critical and more volatile arguments raised by Martin Luther in his *Ninety-five Theses*. Luther denounced the practice of indulgences as follows:

> Ignorant and wicked are the doings of those priests who, in the case of the dying, reserve canonical penances for purgatory.
>
> They preach man who say that so soon as the penny jingles into the money-box, the soul flies out [of purgatory].
>
> It is certain that when the penny jingles into the money-box, gain and avarice can be increased, but the result of the intercession of the Church is in the power of God alone.[47]

The two writers even use similar fishing imagery, a point that would have been recognised by those at court familiar with Luther's thesis, to criticise the avarice of the clergy. Luther wrote that:

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[45]Ibid, lines 446-450.
[46] Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*, pp. 82-83.
[47] Luther, Martin. (1517) *Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* in Adolph Spaeth, L.D. Reed, Henry Eyster Jacobs, et Al., (trans. & eds.) (1915) *Works of Martin Luther*, Vol. 1, pp 29-38. Henceforth referred to as the *95 Thesis*. These points raised are 10, 27 & 28.

> Therefore the treasures of the Gospel are nets with which they formerly were wont to fish for men of riches.
>
> The treasures of the indulgences are nets with which they now fish for the riches of men.[48]

That the two men hold similar views concerning clerical abuse seems clear but it is the direct reference that Buchanan makes in the poem to Luther and his *95 Thesis* that leaves us in little doubt as to the thrust of general clerical criticism concerning indulgences. The novice is told by the old friar that 'much to the disgust of Luther, purgatory came back into prominence.'[49]

Initially, at least, Buchanan obtained the king's patronage and the necessary protection from the Scottish clergy, particularly from Cardinal Beaton, who, angered by the poet's verse sought his arrest and trial. Due, either to the cardinal's pressure or other political considerations, the king publicly ceased to be the poet's patron and Buchanan was arrested. He would subsequently escape across the border to England in 1539 with what has already been suggested was the king's connivance to infiltrate and spy upon the English court. The question that we need to ask at this point is not why would Buchanan have produced the verse: he seems to have genuinely disliked the Franciscan order and desired general ecclesiastical reform. It also seems to be clear that he wrote his verse to obtain the benefits associated with patronage. What we need to ask is why would James V, regarded by the critics Ward and Waller as 'a true son of the church', offer patronage to Buchanan and encourage the writing of verse that articulated a devastating and ever deepening anti-clericalism?[50] An examination of important

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[48] Ibid, points 66 & 67.
[49] Buchanan, Poem 57/4, *Franciscanus*, line 974.
[50] Ward, A. & Waller, A. (ed.) (1961) *The Cambridge History of English Literature: Renascence and Reformation*, Vol. III, p. 159.

religious and political contexts of the era in which the verse was produced will help to shed some light upon this question.

Buchanan wrote his three anti-clerical poems in an era when the Catholic Church was experiencing not only enormous pressure from reformers such as Luther, Zwingli and Calvin throughout much of Northern Europe, but more importantly for Scotland's closest neighbour, England, the 1530s was a decade of divisive and far reaching religious upheaval. England experienced the divorce of Henry VIII from Katherine of Aragon, the Act of Supremacy and the dissolution of monasteries. The significant constitutional and religious changes introduced by Henry VIII, in effect reversed the medieval position between Church and state to an extent where the Church was effectively reduced to a position of political subservience.[51]

Whilst Henry's divorce from Katherine does not wholly account for the Protestant triumph over Catholicism in England, it is certainly likely that had the crisis of the king's annulment from Katherine been resolved by Pope Clement VII, the king would have shown little toleration of evangelical reform.[52] Without papal opposition to his divorce Henry is unlikely to have introduced the determining factor of the Reformation, the Act of Supremacy, and the schism and iconoclasm that followed would have not taken place. Once, however, the doctrine of the royal supremacy was introduced as a means of exerting pressure upon the English clergy to support the king's campaign to persuade the pope to annul his marriage, the floodgates were opened for Henry's acquisition of the Church's land and wealth. The English king had always shown a voracious appetite towards the clergy's wealth. Prior to the Act of Supremacy, Henry already held wide powers over ecclesiastic patronage and he frequently extracted

[51] Rex R. (1993) *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, p. 2.
[52] Ibid, p. 6.

large sums of money from the Church. It was common during the 1520s for a ten percent tax to be imposed upon the Church and the clerical pardon of 1531, the first step in the reformation process, saw the king granted over £100,000 by the Southern Convocation.[53] With the introduction of the Act of Supremacy in 1534, which gave statutory recognition of the king as the Supreme Head of the Church of England, however, Henry's control over the Church became absolute and, with the aid of Thomas Cromwell, he began to implement a programme that would rapidly strip the clergy of much of its wealth. Almost immediately, through the 'Act for the exoneration from exactions paid to the see of Rome' (1534) all payments to Rome stopped and under the 'Act concerning the payment of first fruits and tenths' (1534), the first years net revenue of all new clerical incumbents, was now paid to the king and not the pope.[54] In addition, an annual levy of a tenth of net revenue was imposed upon all benefices.[55]

Supported by the propaganda of men like John Bale (*Kynge Johan*, c.1535), Richard Morison (*Apomaxis*, 1537) and Simon Fish (*Supplication of the Beggars*, 1528), whose drama and pamphlets castigated the moral shortcomings of the clergy and attacked the worship of icons and relics, Henry would continue to strip the wealth of the clergy through the dissolution of monasteries in England, Wales and Ireland. Though the king had already dissolved monasteries during the chancellorship of Thomas Wolsey, he now introduced legislation to suppress them on a large-scale. This resulted in an open revolt against the crown, the Pilgrimage of Grace (1536-37). Whilst religious justification is typically a claim made by rebels, Palmer sums up the general consensus of Tudor historians when he remarks that:

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[53] Graves, A. (2003) *Henry VIII: Profiles in Power*, p. 152; Rex, p. 15.
[54] 25 *Henry VIII*, c. 21, 1534; 26 *Henry VIII*, c.3.
[55] Rex, p. 58.

> The one common motive among all the rebels was the conservative desire to reverse the recent changes in religion. Everywhere the religious motive was listed among the grievances, but in Yorkshire it seems to have been the predominant one. The Pilgrim's first and last insistence was that the dissolved monasteries should be restored.[56]

Henry's reaction was both decisive and brutal: the gentry and clergy who had led the uprisings were tried and condemned in London, and of the 130 people who were executed, nine were heads of religious houses.[57] After the revolt the king intensified dissolution and between 1538 to 1540, 200 monasteries, 200 Friaries and 40 nunneries were suppressed.[58] At the same time iconoclasm was rampant throughout the country and the reformers demolished shrines and Catholic iconography, including the shrine of the murdered Catholic saint, Thomas Becket. Whether or not the main motive was a genuine desire for reform by the king or simple avarice, a point that continues to be debated amongst historians, it is an unquestionable fact that the financial benefits to the crown from the dissolution of the monasteries were immense.

Whilst James V resisted the example of Henry VIII in splitting with Rome, nonetheless his relationship with the Kirk was not altogether harmonious. In fact it was at times extremely tense as James IV followed the example of both his uncle and his father of exploiting the wealth of the Church by all the means at his disposal. As James V's most recent biographer has pointed out, the king's religious policy 'was summed up in the parliamentary roll for 1540-41: declarations against heresy and proposals to fund the Household from spiritual taxation.'[59] During the personal reign of James V thirteen taxes were levied, the bulk of which fell upon the first estate. In 1532, in commutation of the 'Great

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[56] Palmer, p. 57. See also, MacCulloch, p. 186; Hadfield, p. 6; Rex, pp. 148-151.
[57] Rex, p. 151.
[58] Ibid, p. 66.
[59] Cameron, p. 289.

Tax' of £10,000 per annum imposed by the pope to establish a College of Justice, James levied upon the Kirk a tax of £72,000 which was to be paid over a period of four years.[60] Its collection, added to other taxation of the clergy, provided a regular and reliable income for the crown. Even the king's four illegitimate sons were used as a means of exploiting wealth from the Church. In 1539 Robert became the abbot of Holyrood at the age of six. Cameron has made a conservative estimate that by 1539 the annual benefices received by James on behalf of his sons was just over £10,000 annually and that, because of the scarcity of references to benefices in the treasury records that allows him to be certain, they may have been worth four times as much.[61] In February 1540, James told the English envoy, Sir Ralph Sadler, that he thought it was 'against reason' to dissolve the monasteries and abbeys that would give him all that he needed.[62] It suited James nicely to preserve the religious status quo in Scotland and as Cameron has further astutely remarked, had the Church been less compliant:

> Had the spiritual income ever dried up, then James would have been in a position to review religious policy. He had available both the legal and financial expertise to make possible a dissolution.[63]

Understandably, the clergy did not always willingly accept many of James's policies concerning the Church's wealth and given a choice they would no doubt have clung onto every penny they had managed to accumulate. James, however, was more than capable, and certainly willing, to exert direct and indirect pressure upon the Scottish Church to ensure his demands for further taxation were always fulfilled.

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[60] Ibid, p. 260.
[61] Ibid, pp. 261-262.
[62] *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, xv, no. 248.
[63] Cameron, pp. 260 & 291.

Dramatic, anti-clerical literature, such as that produced by Buchanan, was an effective means of exerting indirect pressure upon the clergy to ensure that they acquiesced to the crown's demands. To have had the verse performed to a court audience, an audience that would have included the higher clergy, would have been a stark reminder, considering the events that were taking place over the border, that the Scottish Church was in a precarious position and that the king was all that stood between them and the religious schism of England. James may have been intrusive in some areas of religion, he may have burdened the Church with taxation, but his behaviour was infinitely preferable to that of his uncle. Even without taking into consideration the depth and topical detail in Buchanan's verse concerning clerical corruption and abuses; even if we discount the poet's claim that he was ordered to write the verse by James, for the king to have been known to be the patron and protector of a poet writing anti-clerical verse that was performed at court must have sent shivers down the spines of many of the Scottish bishops and cardinals. The poems, imbued with the preoccupations of the king, would have been a powerful piece of coercive political and cultural propaganda.

Buchanan's verse, its performance and its circulation within the court, would have also been a useful source of propaganda for the king to justify his aggressive taxation of the Church. James could not simply pass a new tax without the consent of his nobility and parliament. At the same time he also had to ensure that his treatment of the Church did not encourage popular dissent towards the crown. Through literature such as *Somnium*, *Palinodia* and *Franciscanus*, the corruption and abuses of the clerics were demonstratively highlighted and James's actions were given moral justification. Moreover, the king's deliberate patronage of anti-clerical literature demonstrates he was certainly not unaware that clerical abuse existed. His allowing such works to be circulated also effectively

dissociated him from the immoral behaviour of the clergy to provide a public image of a sovereign who sought to engineer ecclesiastical reform.[64] There was, of course, an inherent risk in allowing such critical verse to circulate; some of the ecclesiasts, such as Cardinal Beaton, were powerful individuals and capable of defending the Church and seeking retribution. The risk, however, was predominately to the poet, as can be seen by Buchanan's having to flee Scotland in 1539. It was all too easy for the king to distance himself from the poet when the political situation had become too heated.[65]

If it was only Buchanan's verse that can be seen to have been used by James V as a coercive, politically charged means of propaganda in relation to the Scottish clergy, we could perhaps dismiss the king's utilisation of both the poet and his poetry as little more than opportunistic. To be sure, if we ignore what the poet himself tells us, that the king requested he write both *Palonodia* and *Franciscanus,* we could simply suggest that James used the controversy that Buchanan had raised to his own advantage as a temporary political tactic rather than suggest the king had adopted a deliberate policy of patronising anti-clerical literature. There are, however, other instances of James having been the patron of anti-clerical verse and drama enacted within the public sphere of the court. John Kyllour, brought to trial by Cardinal Beaton and burnt at the stake as a heretic in 1539, had written a play on the Passion of Christ acted before the king at Stirling on the Good Friday of either 1535 or 1536. In the play the Pharisees resembled the prominent clergy of the day to such an extent that it caused great offence.[66]

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[64] Carpenter, p. 81.

[65] Edington, *Court and Culture in Renaissance Scotland*, p.168-169, details how Cardinal Beaton was driven to launch an offensive against reformers as their criticism became palpably more dangerous in 1540. She mentions how John Borthwick, who had urged the king to cast off papal authority and transfer ecclesiastical wealth to the crown, had to flee from the cardinal to England, an affair Edington suggests may have been arranged by James as a means of pacifying the cardinal.

[66] Aitken, pp. 120 & 130.

When we look at the writings of David Lyndsay, we can further see that James V's patronage of anti-clerical literary productions was a strategy adopted both prior to Buchanan's return to Scotland in 1535 and continued after his departure when he fled to England in 1539. As the analysis of *The Dreme* and *The Complaynt* in chapter two has shown, both poems accuse the bishops of being 'perverst prelates'.[67] The ecclesiastical establishment is portrayed as corrupt and accused of having caused much of the discord that took place within the country during the minority. But it is in the final section of *The Testament of the Papyngo* (c. 1530), when the papyngo's 'Holye Executouris', the pye, revin and gled (magpie, raven and kite) are portrayed as personifications of Augustine canons, Benedictines and holy friars, that Lyndsay's critique of the clergy becomes more explicit.

Whereas the first part of the poem is a fairly conventional exposition of court culture the final section, a long allegory which details the corruption of the Church and ends with a scene in which the symbols of the clergy tear the papyngo's body to pieces in their greedy rapacity, paints a grim picture of the Scottish clergy.[68] The pye was symbolically associated with an unattractive and untrustworthy nature; the revin was a bird associated with carrion and traditionally regarded as treacherous; and the gled, as far back as antiquity, was despised as a 'symbol of greed, thievery, cowardice, death and envy'.[69] When Lyndsay has the papyngo reply to the revin's offer to pronounce for him the mass for the dead, the poet's attack upon the moral depravity of clerics begins in earnest and becomes far more specific. The papyngo asks the revin:

> ... 'Father , be the rude,
> Howbeit your raiment be religious lyke,

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[67] *The Complaynt*, line 344.
[68] Lindsay, D. (1989) *Ane Satyre of The Thrie Estaitis*, Lyall, R. (ed.), 'Introduction', p. xvii.
[69] Hadley Williams, *Sir David Lyndsay: Selected Poems*, p. 251.

> Your conscience, I suspect, be nocht gude.
> I did persave quhen prevelye ye did pyke
> And checkin from ane hen, under ane dyke.'[70]

Like Buchanan and Skelton, Lyndsay highlights the fact that religious clothing and regalia can be a mask that covers a wicked and sinful conscience and nature. This is a point that is forcefully emphasised when we learn that the revin is little more than a thief. The revin informs the papyngo that:

> ...That hen was my gude friend,
> And I that checkin tuke, bot for my teind:
>
> Ye knawe the faith be us mon be susteind.
> So, be the Pope, it is preordinate
> That spirituall men suld leve upon thair teind.[71]

The theft of his friend's property is justified by the revin as being a cleric's right to impose a tithe upon the laity, a privilege granted to the clergy by the pope.

As the poem continues it is not only the materialism of the Catholic Church that is exposed, Lyndsay attacks the sale of indulgences, clerical hypocrisy, idolatry and the Church's enslavement to sensuality and the consequent corruption of its fundamental religious ideals.[72] As the poem comes to its close, the moment that the papyngo's 'hed full softlye on hir schulder laid':

> The ravin began rudely to ruge and ryve
> Full gormondlyke, his emptie throte to feid.
> 'Eait softlye, brother', said the gredy gled.
> Quhill scho is hote, depart hi revin amang us.
> Tak thow one half and reik to me ane uther;
> In tyllour rycht, I wat, no wycht dar wrang us.'[73]

The poem ends with a desolate image of the papyngo's still warm corpse being torn to shreds and devoured by the poetic representations of the clergy. This is a telling indictment of the Kirk and the squalid image left in the reader's mind is of

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[70] *The Testament of the Papyngo*, lines 675-679.
[71] Ibid, lines 680-684.
[72] Edington, *Court and Culture in Renaissance Scotland*, p. 196. Edington has made similar comments concerning last of Lyndsay's poems, *The Monarche*, but *The Testament of the Papyngo* is far more of a devastating criticism of the Kirk than she has acknowledged.
[73] *The Testament of the Papyngo*, lines 1146, 1148-1153.

a clergy devoid of Christian morality who are rapacious in their exploitation of the laity. Such a devastating portrayal of clerical avarice and corruption would have certainly aided in justifying James's curtailment of the clergy's power, privileges and wealth and offered an explanation as to why he was imposing taxes upon the Scottish Church.

Lyndsay's poem would not have helped to create good relationships with the First Estate, but as Cameron points out, relations between the king and his senior prelate, archbishop James Beaton, had already deteriorated by 1530 and Beaton and the king would continue to clash over the question of taxation until, in 1533, the archbishop was held in ward at St. Andrews.[74] As Cameron has further remarked, the *Treasurers Accounts* show that in 1534 taxation from the Church amounted to £7,600, a significant increase that 'may have owed much to the warding of the archbishop in the previous year.'[75] One of the methods of coercing the clergy to cooperate with his taxation was the literary, poetic and dramatic, denunciation of real and supposed religious and ecclesiastical abuses, but when necessary the king was capable of taking more direct action. Moreover, when we consider the 1540 *Interlude* performed at Linlithgow Palace, now generally accepted to have been a much shorter version of Lyndsay's *The Thrie Etaites* presented in Cupar and Edinburgh in 1552 and 1544, it becomes clear that James V maintained a consistent policy throughout his reign of exerting pressure upon

[74] Cameron, p. 134-135.
[75] Ibid, p. 136.

the clergy through the patronage of anti-clerical literary productions.[76] In this light we gain a picture of the Scottish king as a distinctly apt, able and capable politician, a somewhat Machiavellian figure who was at times two-faced and who used the religious and political climate of the burgeoning Reformation, political events in England, and the creative energy and power of courtly verse and performance to his own advantage.

No extant text of the *Interlude* survives, but a prose account of the play and a covering letter that includes information provided by Thomas Bellenden, justice clerk, concerning the occasion of the drama's performance, was sent by William Eure, dated 26 January 1540, from Berwick to Thomas Cromwell, Lord Privy Seal of England.[77] The detailed nootes and Bellenden's information reveal, as Carpenter has astutely remarked, 'perhaps even more vividly than a script could do, the electric opportunities open to live drama to intervene in the reality it comments upon.'[78] At the same time, the letter and nootes also acutely reveal to us the reaction of contemporary members of the drama's initial performance when it was performed at court. This is an important element when we consider the dearth of literary reviews and contemporary comment upon the reception of the initial performance of court literature in the early sixteenth century.

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[76] Walker, *Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama*, p. 128. Walker offers an insightful analysis of Lyall's reservation that 'this lost play [interlude] and *The Thrie Estaitis* are so great that it would be extremely rash to associate any specific passage of the extant play with this earlier piece.' (Lyall, 'Introduction', p. xii.) Recognising that we do not have an extant text of the play, only the 'nootes' Walker acknowledges there is little we can discern about the level of language and verse structure but comes to the conclusion that there are 'enough crucial similarities to demonstrate that we are looking at a single conception, an exploration of the same themes and problems in two very different circumstances.' (p. 128) Though an important point, for the purposes of this thesis, however, it is not necessary to read the themes of the later play backwards into the *Interlude* as the 'nootes' and William Eure's letter offer us a valid means of exploring James V's continued use of literary works to further his policy of coercive pressure upon the clergy to exploit the Kirk's wealth. The important point is that Lyndsay is now generally accepted as having written the *Interlude*.

[77] Complete copies of both Eure's letter and 'The copie of the nootes of the interluyde' are in Hamer, vol ii, pp. 1-6. From this point on 'The copie of the nootes of the interluyde' will be referred to simply as 'nootes'.

[78] Carpenter, pp. 87-88.

The nootes of the interlude describe a drama that begins in a fashion typical of morality plays; we have a king surrounded by vice, his courtiers are Placebo, Pikthanke and Fflattrye, and these are joined by a Busshope, Burges, Experience and a Man of Arms. The nootes, however, do not delineate a struggle over the king's soul, they list the grievances of the 'poor man' who represents the commonweal of Scotland, 'who did goe vpe and downe the scaffold / making a hevie complaynte'.[79] The 'poor man' then seeks the king in order to direct his complaint to his sovereign, but when he is pointed towards the king in the play he rejects the player-king:

> … he loked to the king and saide he was not the king of scotlande for ther was an other king in scotlande that hanged John Armestrang with his fellows / And Sym the larde and many moe / which had pacified the countrey / and staunched thifte / but he had left one thing vndon.[80]

The king that the 'poor man' seeks was in the audience, James V, the same king who had hanged the outlaws John Armstrong and Sim the Laird in order to bring justice and piece to the nation. The 'poor man' then directly addresses the king concerning the abuses and corruption of the clergy: their reformation the matter he had left undone. Through this device of audience involvement the boundaries of the literary complaint were vastly expanded and the criticism of the Church that followed became far more politically charged. The denunciation of clerical corruption in this manner would have been particularly disturbing for the ecclesiastical members of the audience. It is not hard to visualise them squirming uncomfortably as they sat near the king as the actor playing the 'poor man' told James V of:

> … the greate abusion of busshopes / Prelettes / Abbttes / reving menes wifes and daughters / and

[79] Hamer, nootes, p. 4.
[80] Ibid, p. 5.

> holding thaym / and of the maynteynyng of thair childer / and of thair Doughters / where thoroughe the nobilitie of the blode of the Realme was degenerate / and of the great superfluous rentes that perteyned to the churche / by reason of over muche temporall landes given to thaym / whiche haye proved that the kinge might take boothe by the canon lawe / and civille lawe / and of the greate abominable vices that reiagne in clostures / and of the common Bordelles / that was keped in closturs of nunnes.[81]

Not only, as in Lyndsay's earlier work and also Buchanan's verse, is the moral depravity of the clergy thoroughly denounced, the 'poor man' also prominently highlights the enormous amount of property and wealth that the Church possesses through its exploitation of the laity: he then leaves the audience in little doubt that if the king chose to, he had the right, under canon and civil law, to seize both.[82] In making this claim the performance becomes a stark reminder of the political and religious situation in England that warns the clergy of the delicate position of the Scottish ecclesiasts. Such a stark reminder would have encouraged them to be more amenable to any demands that James imposed upon the Church.

From Eure's letter, we further learn that even after the play had ended, the 'explosive interaction of drama and reality continued' when:

> ... the king of scotts Dide call vpon the busshopes / exorting thaym to reforme thair facions and manners of lyving / saying that oneless hay soe did / he wold sende sex of the proudeste of thaym vnto his vncle of England / and as those wer ordoured soe would he ordour all the reste / that wolde not a mende [83]

Greg Walker has commented that the threat made by James was not an assault upon the liturgy or the sacraments; it was 'not radical doctrinal innovation' meant to initiate a thorough reform of religion along the lines of Protestantism, but rather

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[81] Ibid, p. 5-6.
[82] Hamer, vol. ii, p. xxvii.
[83] Carpenter, p. 88.

it shows James sought reform that was essentially based upon Erasmian lines.[84] To be sure, James did not seek doctrinal reformation, but neither did he attempt to impose Erasmian reform. The king may have threatened the clerics but he never implemented measures to ensure the moral rehabilitation of the clergy. What did occur, however, was the persistent taxation of the Church to ensure that the crown's coffers remained full. James, to use Walker's phrase, 'continued to milk the church' and applied all the means at his disposal to squeeze every penny he could from the clergy through new forms of taxation.[85]

Eure's letter is also particularly informative on James's patronage of anti-clerical literature when he recaps that Bellenden had informed him that:

> ... so much that by the Kings pleasour / he being prevey therunto / thay haue hade enterluyde played in the feaste of the epiphanne of our lorde laste paste / before the King and Quene at Lighgive / and the hoole counsaile sprituall and temporall.[86]

The *Interlude*, we learn, was performed before James, his queen, and his noble and ecclesiastical councillors, probably in the Great Hall at Linlithgow, by the king's own command.[87] Walker has suggested that not only does the letter make it clear that the *Interlude* was a deliberate act of patronage, 'the passage seems to be describing a specific commission' and this 'suggests a very interventionist, 'hands on', form of patronage.'[88] He makes a further astute comment when he warns that literary critics are 'perhaps inclined to ascribe too great a control over the content

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[84] Walker, *Politics of Performance in Early renaissance Drama*, p. 131.
[85] Walker, G. (1989) 'Sir David Lindsay's *Ane Satire of the Thrie Estaitis* and the Politics of Reformation' in *SLJ* 16, p. 11.
[86] Hamer, Letter to Thomas Cromwell, dated January 26 [1540], p. 3.
[87] Cameron, p. 264. Cameron suggests that the *Interlude* was performed as entertainment following the formal opening of the king's new apartments in Linlithgow Palace. Walker comments ('Sir David Lindsay's *Ane Satire of the Thrie Estaitis* and the Politics of Reformation', p. 7.) that the *Interlude* was 'put on ... as a result of the request from the king and council.
[88] Walker, 'Sir David Lindsay's *Ane Satire of the Thrie Estaitis* and the Politics of Reformation', p. 7.

of their plays to playwrights and too little to their political patrons.'[89] Nor is it possible to dismiss the fact that James may have himself been directly involved in the stage direction and creation of the content of the play. The 'poor man's' dismissal of the player-king, and his directing his remarks to the real king, may well have been stage-managed with the king an active player in the drama. Regardless of the level of James direct involvement in the production and performance of the interlude, an analysis of the 'nootes' and Eure's letter offers an excellent illustration of how a sovereign could appropriate the subversive drama of reform for his own political purposes.[90]

The *Interlude*, as we suggested earlier, also offers an excellent demonstration of how James's policies regarding the Church and his use of literature to pressure and coerce the clergy were a strategy that the king employed throughout the 1530s. When, however, this continuation and continuity of James's policy is not fully comprehended, this leads to the suggestion made by Edington, that 'the reason for James's occasional sympathy for the cause of ecclesiastical reform is arguably less important than the fact of its existence, for it undoubtedly encouraged the evangelicals at court.' [91] It is certainly a valid point to acknowledge that James's patronage of anti-clerical literary works would have encouraged evangelical reformers, but not to explore the reason for James's encouragement of such literary works leads to the narrow assumption that the literary productions of Buchanan, and Lyndsay in particular, were simply subtle ways of advancing evangelical reform. This inevitably leads to the further assumption that in Lyndsay's court poems, those he wrote as an active courtier whilst serving James V, the poet's anti-clerical themes should simply be perceived

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[89] Ibid, p. 7.
[90] Carpenter, p. 88.
[91] Edington, *Court and Culture in Renaissance Scotland*, p. 167.

as signs of early Protestant inclinations. This, of course, is retrospectively to impose the historical contexts of the Scottish Reformation, and the tone and themes of Lyndsay's later works that were written after the death of James V, poems and drama written under distinctly different political and religious circumstances, upon the earlier literature. Lyndsay's early verse was produced specifically for the court and when the symbiotic relationships between the contexts of the literary work's themes, propaganda and the sovereign's political and religious policies are explored, we begin to see the possible pragmatic motives behind both the poet's production of his verse and the king's patronage of the poet. A courtier poet like Lyndsay, an intuitive and intelligent longstanding intimate of James V, would have been able to assess precisely what it was the king required from the Church and have adopted particular topics and rhetorical strategies to assist his sovereign. As has been suggested concerning the *Interlude*, Lyndsay's literary productions may have even been produced through the collaboration of the poet and his sovereign. Amid the cacophony of voices that were raised to criticise clerical abuse and immorality it is necessary to distinguish between traditional censors, Erasmian reformers, Protestant reformers and those who use the political and social controversies of the era for their own pragmatic reasons.[92] This latter voice, along with the depth of the courtier poet's possible deliberate contrivance to assist in facilitating his sovereign's political policies has all too often gone unnoticed or been ignored by literary critics and historians alike.

That a poet could use his verse in such a pragmatic manner overtly to pursue the political policies of his sovereign was not something that was specific to either anti-clerical literature or court poets writing in the 1530s. A brief look at

[92] Pollet, p. 4. Pollet raises this very valid point concerning John Skelton but it applies equally to the production of all anti-clerical literature, particularly that of a courtier poet during the 1530s.

William Dunbar's poem, *In vice most vicious he excellis*, believed to have been written in the Autumn of 1506, is illuminating in this regard.[93] This extremely polemical and topical poem focuses on the nature of the Highlander, with most scholars identifying the Donald Owyr mentioned in the poem with Donald Dubh. Dubh was the grandson of John Dubh, fourth and last Lord of the Isles, and became the focus of a serious revolt in the Highlands, particularly the Western Isles, between 1503 and 1506.[94] Along with Dubh, leading Highlanders were captured and put on trial, not only for treason, but also for robbery and other crimes. The full depth of Dunbar's harsh denunciation of the Highlander is vividly clear from the start of the poem:

> In vice most vicius he excellis
> That with the vice of tressone mellis.
> Thocht he remissioun,
> Haif for prodissioun,
> Schame and susspission
> Ay wth him dwellis.
>
> And he evir odious as ane owle,
> That falt sa filthy is an fowle:
> Horrible to natour
> Is ane tratour,
> As feind in fratour
> Undir a cowle.[95]

In a similar manner to Wyatt in '*Some fowls there be that have so perfect sight*', Dunbar draws upon the imagery of the owl, an image associated with treachery and evil, to reinforce his characterisation of the Highlander as treacherous, vice ridden and malignant. The Highlander in the poem is portrayed as so evil he is an abomination to nature. Further animal imagery is used as the poem comes to a close:

> Of the fals fox dissimulatour
> Kind hes all reffar, theiff and tratour:

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[93] Bawcutt dates the poem as autumn 1506: *William Dunbar Selected Poems*, p. 132.
[94] Ibid, p. 132.
[95] Dunbar, *In vice most vicius he excellis*, lines 1-12.

Eftir respyt
To wirk dispyt
Moir appetyt
He hes of natour.

War the fox tane a thowsand fawd
And grace him gevin als oft for frawd,
War he on plane,
All war in vane,
Frome hennis agane
Micht non him hawd.

The murtherer ay murthour mais,
And evir quhill he be slane he slais.
Wyvis thus makis mokkis,
Spynnand on rokkis:
Ay rynnis the fox
Quhill he fute hais.[96]

The Fox is an animal traditionally associated with slyness, deceit and dishonesty and the analogy that extends over these three stanzas is that Highlanders are treacherous, thieving, and, as Bawcutt remarks, 'above all, wild' and incapable of changing their ways.[97] In portraying the Highlander as wild, barbaric and barbarian, the poet adopts a strategy of creating the Highland culture as the 'other' to the domesticated Lowland society of the king and court.

The poet created an effective piece of propaganda that alienated the followers and supporters of Dubh, but Dunbar's short verse does much more than simply castigate and condemn rebellious individuals. The poet's deployment of rhetoric that 'others' the Highland culture as barbarian occurred at a time when James was pursuing a successful campaign to pacify the Western Highlands and Isles, and what we see in Dunbar's verse is a literary work that aligns itself with his sovereign's military and political objectives to centralise rule and power within the king's court and the Lowland Scots culture.[98] Scotland during James IV's reign possessed one of the most important and divisive regional splits within

[96] Dunbar, *In vice most vicius he excellis*, lines 31-48.
[97] Bawcutt, *William Dunbar Selected Poems*, p. 379.
[98] Fradenburg, p. 239.

any European country, a split that was topographical and cultural: the Highlands and the Lowlands.[99] The Highlands were feudal, clannish and Gaelic speaking, and both foreigners and the Lowland Scots regarded the Highlander as backward, barbarian and rebellious.[100]

That Dunbar used his verse to enhance the idea of the Highlander as the 'other', as a people beyond redemption, is suggested in the poem, 'The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis'. After listing the deadly sins, Mahomet called for a Highland pageant, and a fiend ran to bring MacFadyan: in other words, what followed the dance of sins was something worse: a pageant of Highlanders.[101] Dunbar's fashioning of the Highlander as an outsider is also vivid in his Flyting of Kennedy, in which Kennedy's Highland heritage, moral characteristics and language is attacked through the incredibly abusive scatological lines:

> Iersch brybour baird, vyle beggar with thy brattis,
> Cuntbitten cradoun Kennedy, coward of kind,
> Evill farit and dryit, as Denseman on the ratis,
> Lyke as the gledidis had on thy gule snowt dynd;
> Mismaid monstour, ilk mone owt of thy mynd
> Renounce, ribald, thy rymyng, thow bot royis,
> Thy trechour tung hes tane ane heland strynd;
> And lawland ers wald mak a bettir noyis.[102]

Kennedy is referred to as a Highland vagabond bard, impotent coward and evil monster, but it is Dunbar's utter rejection of the Gaelic language that is particularly interesting. The Highland tongue is associated with treachery and portrayed as being so inferior that it is not even equal to the noise that comes from a Lowlander's arse. Though comic in its denunciation of the Gaelic language, Dunbar's utter rejection of Gaelic - he would in other poems refer to his tongue as 'Inglis' - should be seen as a deliberate political act, not merely concerning

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[99] Sharpe, p. 20-22.
[100] Ibid, p. 20.
[101] Scott, *Dunbar: A Critical Exposition of the Poems*, p. 231.
[102] Dunbar, *The Flyting of Dumbar and Kennedie*, lines 49-56.

language but nationhood. By denying the Highlander his own language, at court, within law and in literature, the Gaelic speaking Highlander became a peripheral 'other' who needed to conform to the culture centre of the Lowland court in order to exist.[103] As Collinson has recently discussed, one of the:

> ... most important constituents of nationhood, or national self-consciousness, apart from the politics and laws defining and putting territorial limits ... [is] a shared language, expressed in written vernacular literature.[104]

In an era when the social life of the court was inextricably entangled with the politics of the sovereign and the state, Dunbar's verse was a powerful means of promulgating cultural and political sovereign policies.

Such a pragmatic use of verse was, as mentioned at the outset of this chapter, not specific to one particular country, sovereign or courtier. Skelton would adopt a similar rhetorical strategy as Dunbar in his 'othering' of the Scots in the two vitriolic poems, *Ballade of the Scottyshe Kynge* and *Against the Scottes*. In the poems, written after the defeat of James IV at Flodden in 1523, Skelton brutally and mercilessly vilifies both the Scot's king and the Scottish nation in a manner which simultaneously expresses English national unity and virtue. It takes little imagination to see these poems as poetic forms of propaganda. Nor is such pragmatic use of verse particular to the overtly political world of religion and nationhood. An appraisal of the epigrams, sonnets and ballads of Thomas Wyatt within the context of the socio-political world of Tudor amatory relations is particularly informative concerning the ways a poet could pragmatically assist his monarch within the social sphere of the court.

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[103] Jack, 'Of Lion and of Unicorn: Literary Traditions at War', p. 77. Craig, C. (1996) *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and British Culture*, passim. Central to Craig's arguments in this book are the ideas that through language, literature and culture the central 'core' of the dominant national culture exerts pressure upon peripheral culture.

[104] Collinson, p.222.

If, as has been discussed in the previous chapter, Wyatt's verse was a form of self-display deliberately crafted to impress powerful members of the court, it takes only a slight leap of imagination to realise that the poetic voices in some of the poems may not be Wyatt's. The poet may well have been adopting the voices of the powerful individuals who were his patrons. If this were so, and we imagine Wyatt standing next to Henry VIII in one of the great halls of the court sometime during 1527 to 1532, with Anne Boleyn in attendance as one of the many courtiers assembled in the crowded hall for their nightly entertainment, then poems such as *Disdain me not without desert* and *Behold Love, thy power how she despiseth*, take on dramatically different and politically charged connotations than those normally attributed to them. This was the period when the king was passionately, but seemingly unsuccessfully courting Anne Boleyn. These poems may well have been pragmatic and deliberately crafted literary works that represent the attitudes and preoccupations of the court's ultimate patron, Henry VIII, to engage in diplomacy between the king and Anne Boleyn. No longer is *Disdain me not* merely about Wyatt asking some unknown and unknowable lady not to refuse, mistrust, forsake, disdain or leave him, it is Henry VIII asking Anne Boleyn to remain steadfast in her love for him. It may not even have been Wyatt who orated the poem, it may have been the king himself; during the sixteenth century it was common for verse to be read as a form of performance by those other than the poet.[105]

The first four stanzas of the poem are rhetorical arguments:

> Disdain me not without desert
> Ne leave me not so suddenly.
> Sith well ye wot that in my heart
> I mean it not but honestly,
> Refuse me not.

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[105] Healy, p. 55. As Healy points out, poetry was passed around the court in manuscripts and there to be performed by the reader not as static repetition but rather open to constant amendment.

Refuse me not without cause why
Ne think me not to be unjust.
Sith that by lot of fantasy
The careful knot needs knit I must,
    Mistrust me not.

Mistrust me not though some there be
That fain would spot my steadfastness.
Believe them not sith well ye see
The proof is not as they express
    Forsake me not.

Forsake me not till I deserve
Ne hate me till I offend.
Destroy me not till that I swerve.
Sith ye well wot what I intend
    Disdain me not.[106]

The poem narrates what has occurred: rumours have circulated within the court, a place which was a continual cesspool of innuendo and gossip, that the king had sought out the affections of another. [107] It further implies that his delay in divorcing Catherine of Aragon was a sign of his insincerity and that Anne was thinking of terminating their relationship. The 'careful knot' is a metaphor that can be interpreted as alluding to the complexity of the political implications of Henry divorcing Catherine. The king asks Anne to 'Disdain me not' since I love you; 'Refuse me not' since I give you no cause; 'Mistrust me not' on the rumours of others; and 'Forsake me not' until I give you cause.[108] Each argument is reiterated briefly in the last stanza:

Disdain me not that am your own.
Refuse me not that am so true.
Mistrust me not till all be known.
Forsake me not now for no new.
    Thus leave me not.

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[106] This poem can be found printed by some critics without the half line at the end of each stanza; I have used the version found in Rebholz, p. 156. The complete poem is quoted so no reference to line numbers is provided.
[107] Concerning the court as a 'seedbed of rumours', see Warnicke, pp. 66-67.
[108] Shawcross, p.8.

Through a poem which is sinewy, economical and vernacular in style, the lady's emotions are manipulated, the validity of the opposing views questioned, and most important, the king is presented as a maligned person.[109]

In this poem Wyatt has the poetic voice express similar sentiments to those found in a letter Henry himself wrote to Anne Boleyn. I quote the letter in full as it offers a particularly informative insight into how the poet has dealt poetically with issues that are evidently in the thoughts of the king.

> To my mistress.
>
> Because the time seems to me very long since I have heard of your good health and of you, the great affection I have for you urges me to send this messenger to you to be better informed of your health and wishes: and because, since I parted from you, I have been told that the opinion which I left you is now completely changed, and that you are unwilling to come to court, neither with madam your mother nor in any other way. If this report is true I cannot marvel at it, seeing that I have since made certain that I have never offended you. And it seems to me very small return for the great love I have for you to be kept apart both from the presence and the person of the woman whom I most esteem in the world. And if you love me with great affection as I hope I am sure that this estrangement of our two selves must be a little vexing to you, though not so much to the mistress as to the servant. Consider well, my mistress, that your absence grieves me greatly, hoping that it is not your will that it should be so. But if I knew for certain that you wished it of your own will I could not do other than deplore my ill fortune while putting from me little by little my mad infatuation. And so, for lack of time, I make an end of my rude letter begging you to believe what the bearer will tell you on my behalf.
>
> Written in the hand of your entire servant
>
> H. Rex[110]

Like the poetic voice in the poem, Henry is clearly worried that Anne may be rejecting him and that something has occurred to change the former good opinion

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[109] Ibid, p. 9.

[110] Letter 2. This, and all of Henry's letters are quoted in full in Willliams, *English Historical Document*, pp. 699-706.

in which she held him. It may even be that, as the poem implies, she has heard a detrimental rumour concerning the king, as he makes abundantly clear, in a similar vein to the poem, that he has done nothing to offend Anne. Like the poem, the king also questions both the validity of Anne's rejection and the sincerity of her love for him.

Providing Henry with a poetic 'display' that echoed the sentiments of his own letters to Anne Boleyn would certainly have earned Wyatt the gratitude of the king. If the king had himself performed a reading of the poem then it would have been a powerful, persuasive and coercive display of his feelings. It may even be that the king had commanded Wyatt to write the verse on his behalf, or even collaborated with the poet concerning its topic. Henry was certainly not a king like James I, who left us lengthy artefacts of his literary ability. That writing was to him 'somewhat tedious and paynefull', is a fact often included in the many biographical works on the king.[111] Elton, has further highlighted how 'long letters would be written by a secretary, lengthy matters were committed to the memory of a messenger'. The king would on occasion revise letters to be sent in his name, 'as when he told Pace to bring a daft 'to hys Pryveye Chiambre, with penne and inke, and there he wolde declare unto me what I schulde wryte', but usually he was satisfied with the version prepared for him by others.[112]

In a similar vein, the sentiments expressed in the rondeaux *Behold Love*, if not uttered directly by the king, when performed in the Great Hall, or amongst an intimate gathering which included the king and Anne, would have been a powerful display. In this poem Wyatt has the poetic voice express with wry evocation the sexual frustration and at times aggressive courting that is echoed in

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[111] Quoted in Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government*, p. 68, from Brewer, Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII, III.
[112] Ibid, p. 68. Elton's quote is from *State Papers of Henry VIII* (1830 -1852), I. 79.

Henry VIII's letters to Anne Boleyn, seventeen of which survive in the Vatican archives. These letters, written between 1527 to 1529, betray the king's deep passion and longing to possess his rather elusive lady. 'I must of necessity force you to reply, as I have been for more than a year now smitten by love's dart, being uncertain either of failure or of finding a place in your heart and sure affection', wrote Henry in one of the letters. In another the king tells Anne, 'I trust within a while after to enjoy that which I have so longed for … that I would you were in my arms or I in yours for I think it long since I kissed you'. 'But if it please you to play the part of a true, loyal mistress and friend, giving yourself body and soul to me, who has been your loyal servant (if your coldness does not forbid me) I promise you not only that the title shall be yours,, but also I will take you for my only mistress' he pleads in yet another letter.[113] His passion and frustration is at times so evident in the letters it almost leaps from the page. A similar frustration permeates *Behold Love*:

Behold Love, thy power how she despiseth,
My great pain how little she regardeth.
The holy oath wherof she taketh no cure
Broken she hath, and yet she bideth sure.
Right at her ease and little she dreadeth.
Weaponed thou art and she unarmed siteth.
To thee disdainful her life she leadeth,
To me spiteful without cause or measure.
Behold, Love.
I am in hold. If pity thee moveth,
Go bend thy bow that stony hearts breaketh
And with some stroke revenge the displeasure
Of thee and him that sorrow doth endure
And, as his lord, thee lowly entreateth.
Behold, Love.

The speaker both confesses his loyalty to his lady and urges Love (a synonym for Cupid) to aid him in his conquest for her. His aggressive frustration is palpable in his description of her as 'disdainful' and 'spiteful'. In the first stanza the speaker

[113] Quoted in Williams, *Historical Documents*, Letters 4 & 6.

calls Cupid's attention to the woman's betrayal of her oath to love him, presumably 'holy' because he would have it so.[114] He pleads for Cupid to intercede on his behalf and to use his 'bow that stony hearts breaketh' to impel the woman to return his love.

It is also possible that the rondeaux, *Go, burning sighs*, was a poem written for either Henry to perform at court, or written by Wyatt within the context that the court audience would tacitly understand he expressed the king's thoughts concerning Anne Boleyn. The poem is clearly designed to be coercive:

> Go, burning sighs, unto the frozen heart.
> Go break the ice which pity's painful dart
> Might never pierce; and if mortal prayer
> In heaven may be heard, at last I desire
> That death or mercy be end of my smart.
> Take with thee pain whereof I have my part
> And eke the flame from which I cannot start,
> And leave me then in rest, I you require.
> Go burning sighs.
> I must go work, I see, by craft and art
> For truth and faith in her is laid apart.
> Alas, I cannot therefore assail her
> With pitiful plaint and scalding fire
> That out of my breast doth strainably start.
> Go, burning sighs.

In the first part of the poem the poet asks, in a fairly typical manner dealing with unrequited love, for help either to overcome the 'frozen heart' of his mistress, or to be aided in withdrawing from her altogether. In the closing section of the poem, however, the tone and rhetorical tactics of the poet change dramatically when we switch from how the poet himself feels, to how he would have the woman perceived for rebuking his love. She is portrayed as lacking 'truth and faith', and the final 'Go, burning sighs' encompasses so much bitterness it leaves us with the feeling that the poet really would have his sighs go and burn the woman. Such a poem would have been an emotive expression of the king's burning desire for

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[114] Rebholz, p. 337.

Anne, whilst it also simultaneously expressed a warning to her that love can quickly turn to bitterness.

Such poems, read out aloud amongst the gathered courtiers, an audience constantly alert to the intrigue and innuendo of courtly romance, may have boldly and entertainingly expressed the king's feelings of frustration at Anne Boleyn's continued resistance to his royal ardour, feelings of frustration echoed in his own letters.[115] It would certainly have conveyed the king's feelings much more forcefully than his telling Anne in a letter he was 'wishing myself, specially an evening, in my sweetheart's arms, whose pretty dukkys [breasts] I trust shortly to kiss'.[116] The massed stares of the courtiers who filled the great hall, their calculating eyes boring into the woman who would not submit to their king, a king who had given her his unrequited love, would have been a powerful form of pressure and persuasion.

The poem *Some time I fled the fyre that me brent* may also have a very different meaning than that normally attributed to it when placed alongside similar pragmatic contexts. The poem may well have been written in 1536, when Anne Boleyn had fallen from the king's favour after miscarrying his son and Henry now sought the affections of Jane Seymour.[117] *Some time I fled the fyre* is usually regarded as a bitter reflection of Wyatt's previous passion for Anne Boleyn and his relief at finding his old flame of desire extinguished:

Sometime I fled the fire that me brent
By sea, by land, by water, and by wind,
And now I follow the coals that be quent
From Dover to Calais, against my mind.
Lo, how desire is both sprung and spent!
And he may see that whilom was so blind,
And all his labour now he laugh to scorn,

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[115] Concerning Anne Boleyn's resistance to Henry, see Weir, p. 276.
[116] Quoted in Weir, p. 276.
[117] Concerning the king's growing annoyance and bitterness towards Anne Boleyn see, Wilson, pp. 383-386; Scarisbrick, pp. 348-349.

Meshed in the briers that erst was all to-torn.[118]

If the voice of the epigram, however, were that of Henry VIII, then this becomes a much more cynical and politically charged poem. It tells the courtly audience, in a tone imbued with bitterness, that the king's love for Anne is now a thing of the past, the fires of his passion quenched during the trip from 'Dover to Calais', when she is thought to have become his lover.[119] His love for Anne is here portrayed as having been nothing but 'blind' madness. The final couplet, which comments on the irony that he is now thrown into continued intimacy with someone he no longer loves, but had to 'labour' so hard to obtain, is almost a plea for the audience's sympathy.[120] Perhaps Wyatt wished the king to be excused of his past actions and offer an excuse for the adultery Henry was now committing with Jane Seymour, or perhaps it was a plea to those at court to disentangle the king from 'the briers that erst was all to-torn'.

In fact the 'I' of many of Wyatt's poems are so unstable that they can be construed as both narrative and active participants in the relationship between King Henry and Anne Boleyn. The context of courtly performance as a form of poetic dissemination that is charged with the political pragmatics of the sovereign or a poet's patron has huge implications for our understanding of early sixteenth-century court literature: performance is capable of multiplicity, instability and transformation.[121] This should alert the critic to the fact that many court poems may not be direct expressions of the poet's feelings. Poets may at times have been guilty of what the modern mind may perceive as fawning sycophancy, their verse

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[118] Both Muir, *Life and Letters*, p. 24 and Fox, p. 260, interpret the poem in this way. Fox actually cites the poem as having been written in 1532, but there is no evidence other than the allusion to the king and Anne's trip from Dover and Calais to give this any credence and the poem is just as likely to have been written years later.

[119] It is generally presumed by historians that Anne became the king's lover during this trip, for she fell pregnant shortly afterwards, for a specific reference see Wilson, p. 346.

[120] Rebholz, p. 374.

[121] Healy, pp. 55-56.

at times deliberately crafted to please the powerful at court. The court poet is likely, however, to have seen it differently, as an accepted means of obtaining and protecting his position, perhaps even as the fulfilment of his duty as his sovereign's servant.

CONCLUSION

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> For all the observations of the Ancients, we have our experience; which, if we use and apply, we have better means to pronounce. It is true they opened the gates, and made the way that went before us; but as guides, not as commanders.
>
> Ben Jonson, *Timber*.

The works of previous critics have offered insightful biographical and literary analysis concerning some of the most influential canonical courtier poets of the early modern era and have indeed opened the gates for further study. Whilst, however, this thesis is indeed indebted to past research, it has never been commanded by it.

In the introduction it was stated that this thesis would be underpinned by the critical idiom of performative pragmatics and the assumption that texts written within the environment of the courts of Henry VIII, James IV and James V, were never autotelic. In each chapter the thesis has explored the ways in which court literature existed within a complex system of entertainment, education, self-fashioning, dissimulation, propaganda and patronage that circumscribed the production and initial performance of court poetry or drama. The court literature of Thomas More, Thomas Wyatt, Thomas Elyot, William Dunbar, David Lyndsay and George Buchanan has been placed under close critical scrutiny within this idiom to explore the symbiotic relationship that existed between court literature and the important socio-political, economic and national contexts of 1500-1540.

After the initial chapter placed the literature of the Scots and English courtiers within many of the important political, social and religious contexts of the era, it was shown in the following chapter that patronage exerted a pervasive and specific influence upon panegyric court poetry. The effect of this influence,

the depth of which has rarely been appreciated by scholars, it is clear, affected canonical figures such as Erasmus and Saint Thomas More: humanist writers who are not usually associated with the dark and at times seemingly seedy world of patronage. The rhetorical strategies adopted by courtiers within their literary works, however, differed, depending on whether the writer was, at the time of writing the verse or drama, excluded or included from the environs of the court and was in receipt of the much sought after sustenance of the patronage system. The different, often elaborate rhetorical strategies have been delineated and discussed in chapter three on David Lyndsay and chapter four on Thomas Wyatt and Thomas Elyot. Lyndsay adopted very different strategies in the poem *The Dreme*, which he wrote during a period of exclusion from the court of James V, and that of *The Complaynt*, written after he was once again in receipt of the Scots king's patronage. Similarly, the rhetorical strategies adopted by Wyatt and Elyot were distinctly different. Elyot, as an 'excluded' courtier, vividly attacks the corruption of those at court in *Pasquil the Playne*. Whereas Wyatt, in *A Spending Hand*, as an 'included' courtier, acknowledges that corruption exists within the court in a way that suggests his own personal integrity and simultaneously, subtly undermines the humanist influenced criticism of the court that underpins Elyot's treatise.

Wyatt's integrity, his honest persona is, however, in chapter five, shown to have been a façade deliberately and adroitly created by the poet that allowed him to flourish and survive within the world of political intrigue that surrounded the Henrician court. This deliberate and pragmatic use of literature meant that court poetry or drama did not necessarily express the courtier's own views. Literature at times could be appropriated by the sovereign and specifically crafted on his behalf to further national and personal political objectives. The possibilities of this

appropriation have been explored in the final chapter through a scholarly informed imaginative analysis of the relationship between the works of Buchanan, Dunbar and Wyatt and the socio-political, religious and national contexts of the era in which they were written.

The key to a greater understanding and subsequent increased appreciation of court literature's complexity lies in the critic's recognition of the writer's rhetorical position and his dependence upon patronage and desire to obtain or preserve his position of influence and relative safety within a milieu that was competitive, corrupt and occasionally deadly. This is precisely what this thesis has explored. It has also directly addressed some of the reductive ideas concerning rhetorical stance, persona, subversion, inwardness and political deniability to suggest a far more symbiotic relationship existed between the literary artisan of the court, the sovereign and the pragmatic imperatives that may have underpinned the poem, drama or treatise's production and initial performance.

It may appear that the brush with which I paint upon the already smeared and smudged canvas of early sixteenth century relations between the court and literature is tainted with cynicism, for literary criticism and history is to some extent always a creation of the critic and inevitably speculative. Such a misanthropic approach is, however, far from reductive, it helps to cut through the idealised ideology of honour and honesty that surrounded court culture: a shroud behind which was hid a reality of sycophancy, subservience and intrigue. By adopting a methodological paradigm that reanimates the pragmatic imperatives that underpin the production of court literature and the way in which writers' rhetorical strategies interrelate with early sixteenth-century socio-political contexts it is possible to gain a more meaningful understanding of the relationship between literature, politics and court culture. Such an approach also allows us

more fully to appreciate the technical and poetic virtuosity of poets like Wyatt, Dunbar and Lyndsay and obtain a more penetrating understanding of their poems. Moreover, we also obtain a clearer picture of how particular sovereigns themselves pragmatically appropriated literature as a means of disseminating their own ideas and proactively engaged in topical political issues of propaganda and coercion. Some of the truths we learn, when the poems are analysed in close detail, though seemingly homely offer advice that is often downright ugly.

Through the process of exploring the range and reach of pragmatic relationships and socio-political influences upon literature it has also been possible to address the prevalent desire to associate historical difference and discontinuity between English and Scottish literature. Whilst poetic borrowings and direct allusions between English and Scottish literature are minimal the evident associations, parallels and similarities between rhetorical tactics and pragmatic motives that too often have remained undetected illuminate the cultural unity of court literature that crosses national boundaries. Poets like Dunbar and Wyatt, Lyndsay, Skelton and More, evidently adopted similar rhetorical stances and appropriated poetics in a similar manner for their personal gain. Bringing English and Scottish poets together, out of the relative isolation in which they are generally studied adds a fresh dimension to our understanding and conception of the relationship between literature and early sixteenth-century courts. Such a methodological paradigm will be a fruitful source for further investigation into the relationship of not only sixteenth-century literature but any literature produced in subsequent years within the milieu of the court.

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