

Roma

THE LIGHT IN TROY
Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry

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Twelve • Wyatt: Erosion and Stabilization

One way to trace the development of early English humanism is to follow the growth of its historical consciousness. This consciousness passes through a number of serial phases, sometimes in the work of a single author. It will be convenient to distinguish four of these, each of them bearing the possibility of progressively sophisticated etiological retrospects.

The first phase can be represented by William Caxton, the fifteenth-century printer and translator. Caxton's prologue to the *Polychronicon*, a work translated into English by John Trevisa from the fourteenth-century Latin original of Ranulph Higdon with a continuation by the printer, might be said to reflect a minimal awareness of historical change. Caxton speaks of the wisdom gained from travel "by the experyment of jeopardyes and peryllys, whiche have growen of folye in dyverse partyes and contrayes." He goes on to say that the same wisdom can be gained with less risk "by the readyng of historyes conteyning dyverse customes, condycyons, lawes and actes of sondry nacions."¹ Here a dim conception of cultural difference seems to take shape, though one is obliged to note that the otherness of alien societies is virtually reduced to folly. At any rate Caxton was following in this very passage Diodorus Siculus or a French translation of Diodorus. Elsewhere he shows little evidence even of the limited awareness visible in this prologue. His *Eneydos* (ca. 1490) is an English prose rendering of a French version of an Italian version of Virgil; it excludes large parts of the *Aeneid*, including the last six books, and greatly expands book 4, so that essentially we are given a romance centering on the Dido story. Caxton's prologue speaks of the original author as "that noble poete and grete clerke Vyrgyle," and his (Caxton's) intended audience as "clerkys and very gentylnen that understande gentylnes and scyence."² Although his book represents literally the endpoint of a complicated itinerary, the language of the prologue collapses the itinerary by identifying Virgil as a noble clerk like the clerks and the elite who will be reading him. The brevity of the historical itinerary Caxton apprehended is revealed both by the anachronism of the prologue and the freedom of his revision, which attributed to the Aeneas story an absolute presence and thus an absolute flexibility.

This freedom was bitterly attacked by Gavin Douglas in the verse prologue to his vibrant translation of the *Aeneid* into Scots verse (1513). Caxton's feeble story, Douglas charges, has nothing to do with Virgil's.

It has na thing ado therwith, God wait,
Ne na mair lyke than the devill and Sanct Austyne.³

In this perceived unlikeness lies a seed of historical consciousness that can be regarded as marking a second phase of English (or British) humanism. Caxton's

version offends Douglas because it cuts and expands irresponsibly, because it gets names wrong (confusing the "Tovyr," or Danube, with the "Tibir"), gets the story wrong, and misses the truth concealed by the poetic fable. Douglas is conscious of an enormous gap not only between Virgil's poetic gifts and his own (some of this can be dismissed as a modesty ritual) but between Virgil's language and his own "bad, harsk spech and lewit barbour tong," a contrast that doubtless stood synecdochically at some level of Douglas's consciousness for a larger cultural contrast. In the prologue to the thirteenth book, Douglas justifies his decision to translate this epilogue from the Latin of the quattrocento poet Mapheus Vegius even though his style diverges from Virgil's: "Thocht hys stile be nocht to Virgill lyke" (l. 189). This sensitivity to the distance between Renaissance Neo-Latin and Augustan poetry opens up another perceived gap of sorts that Caxton doubtless would have failed to recognize. Yet Douglas's own version is itself full of anachronisms, consistently presenting Virgil's characters as late medieval knights and ladies. When Aeneas arrives at Carthage, workmen are busy constructing a castle. We hear of "Sir Diomed" and "nuns of Bacchus"; *duces* is rendered "douchty chiftanyes full of chevalry." The translation may well owe part of its charm, as its editor David Coldwell suggests, to its anachronistic naiveté.⁴ Anachronism can be considered a blemish only when a text demonstrates a greater degree of historical consciousness than Douglas's ever does. Where the cultural gap is so dimly perceived, there is no clumsiness in the failure to bridge it. Anachronism becomes a problem to the degree that history is a problem to the writer. This has not yet happened in the *Aeneid*. Only, in the poet's sense of responsibility to a master felt as remote, unlike, hard of linguistic access, his naiveté is qualified by the faint beginnings of a humanist outlook.

A third stage in the growth of English historicism can be discerned in the mind of Sir Thomas More, who touches the subject of literary imitation most closely in his polemics with a certain French humanist named Brixius (Germain de Brie). The origins of the quarrel need not occupy us; what matters is that two of More's Latin epigrams (1520) responding to Brixius's *Chordigeræ navis conflagratio* deal sarcastically with the Frenchman's inept use of classical phrases.⁵ In the more interesting of the epigrams, Brixius is alleged to be guilty of stealing passages from the ancients without attention to the art required for mingling old and new, in other words without regard for the risk of anachronism. More praises his opponent ironically for reanimating what otherwise might perish from neglect.

Ars O beata, quisquis arte isthac tamen
Vetusta novitati dabit,
Is arte nulla (quamlibet sudet diu),
Novis vetustatem dabit.⁶

[O blessed art! And yet whoever, employing your artistic method, shall insert his antique borrowings in a new context, will by no effort of art, however long he sweats about it, succeed in imparting their antiquity to his new verses.]

More's prose *Letter to Brixius* (1520) renews the criticism by ridiculing Brixius's *Antimorus* for its "purple patches plucked from various authors and inserted quite

out of place in your own crude woolen cloak." By quoting Horace on linguistic change in this letter, More demonstrates his own perception of the difficulties attendant on true imitation as well as the embarrassments attendant on its perversion. His stress on the imitator's obligation to consider context and concrete historicity⁸ studied with philological precision can serve to represent a newly enlightened stage of British humanism. More would have been incapable of the flagrant, engaging, anachronistic violence of Douglas upon his source.

More however did not himself produce any major imitations. If one looks for a fourth phase, heuristic imitation in the full Renaissance sense, one must turn to the translations and adaptations of Sir Thomas Wyatt and, to a weaker degree, those of his younger contemporary, Henry Howard, earl of Surrey. These texts breathe an atmosphere incapable of producing Douglas's Bacchic sisters. But this does not mean that the effort to deal with cultural distance is everywhere definitively fulfilled. In a weaker poem like Wyatt's translation of Petrarch in poulter's measure, entitled "In Spain," one must admit that the effort has failed. Petrarch writes:

Il tempo passa, e l'ore son sì pronte
a fornire il viaggio,
ch'assai spacio non aggio
pur a pensar com'io corro a la morte. [Canz. 37.17-20]
[Time passes and the hours are so swift to complete their journey that I have not
enough time even to think how I run to death.]

Wyatt's version runs:

The tyme doth flete and I perceyve thowrs how thei bend
So fast that I have skant the space to marke my comyng end.⁹

That couplet, like the poem as a whole, fails to do anything with Petrarch's anguish of temporality; there is no equivalent anguish, no equivalent sense of time in Wyatt, nor is there any transformation into something else; there is simply a deadening of Petrarch's pathos. There is a clash of cultures not under artistic control.

Thus one can trace a continuing effort in Wyatt and Surrey to open up a historical space. But they seem always to show at least a rudimentary alertness to cultural context. Thus in Wyatt's rendering of three passages in Boethius, beginning "If thou wilt mighty be," he writes, "see thou kepe thee free / From the foule yoke of sensuall bondage." This corresponds to Boethius's "Nec victus libidine colla, / foedis submittat habenis." This appears in Chaucer's prose translation as "[he should] ne putte nat his necke overcomen under the foule raynes of lechery."¹⁰ Chaucer's "lechery" in its context cannot fail to evoke the anachronistic framework of the seven deadly sins, whereas Wyatt's "sensuall bondage" in its context does not.¹¹ Wyatt's poem, although it freely condenses and omits, clearly constitutes an attempt to find a diction, imagery, and moral style appropriate to the late classical subtext. It respects the mode of being of Boethius's meters without attempting to reproduce them mechanically. The attention to context More

implicitly required is reflected to varying degrees in the poetry of both Wyatt and Surrey. Both moreover must have been aware of themselves as attempting something new, as filling a vacuum. (This is the way they were perceived during the remainder of the century and for that matter today.) Given this self-awareness, they must have seen the intertextual itineraries contained in their poems as crossings of a cultural rupture. To the extent that these crossings were effected, they did achieve at least a weak degree of heuristic creativity.

But in the finest imitations by Wyatt, of which there are more than a few, historical consciousness goes still further. Imitation becomes fully heuristic and frequently dialectical; it takes the full responsibility for its cultural moment and location, "in Kent and Christendome," with the vulnerability as well as the strength these involve. To demonstrate this degree of consciousness, one need only cite the superb little version of Seneca, doubtless written after the execution of Wyatt's patron Cromwell.¹²

Stond who so list upon the Slipper toppe
Of courtes estates, and lett me heare rejoyce;
And use me quyet without lett or stoppe,
Unknowen in courte, that hath suche brackishe joyes: 4
In hidden place, so lett my dayes forthe passe,
That when my yeares be done, withouten noyse,
I may dye aged after the common trace.
For hym death greep'the right hard by the crophe 8
That is moche knowen of other; and of him self alas,
Doth dye unknowen, dazed with dreadfull face. [176]

This derives from a chorus of Seneca's *Thyestes* (391ff.)

Stet quicunque volet potens
aulae culmine lubrico:
me dulcis saturet quies:
obscuro positus loco 4
leni perfruar otio.
Nullis nota Quiritibus
aetas per tacitum fluat.
Sic cum transierint mei 8
nullo cum strepitu diēs,
plebeius moriar senex.
Illi mors gravis incubat
qui, notus nimis omnibus,
ignotus moritur sibi. 12

Wyatt Englishes this by suppressing the Latin "leni . . . otio" (l. 5), the easy leisure that despite the *Thyestes* legend calls up an aristocratic Roman villa. Wyatt's language identifies him as an Anglo-Saxon countryman whose quietude will not be voluptuous, "dulcis," and whose death will not simply go unremarked, "nullo cum strepitu" (l. 9), but will in its obscurity adhere to the perennial manner of ordinary folk, "after the common trace" (l. 7). "Trace" is itself one of those rustic

words that help to situate the speaker. Wyatt omits the hint of sensual satisfaction in Seneca's "saturet" (l. 3), adds the powerful modifier "brackishe" (salty, nauseating) in his fourth line, plays the force of "rejoyce" against the sobriety of "quyet" (ll. 2-3), with its echo of the poet's translation of Plutarch, *The Quyet of Mynde*. Above all Wyatt rewrites the closing lines, roughening Seneca's neat antithesis in lines 12-13 and suppressing his sinister image of suffocation ("incubat" [l. 11]—settles down upon, broods on like a bird) for the more violent clutch of Death's abrupt hand: "hym death greep'the right hard by the crophe." The five stressed monosyllables in unbroken sequence violate the rhythmic pattern with a wrench that corresponds to the action, and the harsh Anglo-Saxon folk words maintain the identity of a speaker hidden in the countryside outside a Latinate court. The control of verse movement, expert throughout, culminates in the majestic rallentando of the last line and a half, its terrible subsiding intensified by the pitiless alliteration. Brilliantly, Wyatt chooses not to explain why the lack of self-knowledge renders death's grip so much harder, nor to explain the brilliant concluding phrase, his own addition—"dazed with dreadfull face." The great man is "dazed"—stupefied, bewildered, numbed—because death's assault has been so sudden, because its numbing physiological effect has already begun or is completed, because we can assume the dying man has fallen from the slipper top of eminence, and perhaps because in his naive egoism he had thought of himself as immune from mortality. He is "dreadfull"—inspiring reverence, awe, or fear—because as a power at court he has always inspired these, because he is suffering the humiliation of death after so much sway, because conceivably he has been publicly executed like Cromwell, and because, most profoundly, he is suffering this death in the limelight without the redeeming possession or acquisition of self-knowledge; he remains "of him self . . . unknowen." Wyatt's use of the Latin chorus only serves to help him find an idiom that is radically anti-Latinate and calls attention to its own parochial rusticity; his use of the somewhat facile Stoic morality helps him to adumbrate a drama of his own time and place. By insisting on its English provincialism the text assumes a vulnerability toward the elegant classicism of its subtext, and only by accepting this vulnerability can it implicitly criticize the subtext's facility. This is an intensely Tudor poem and conscious of itself as such, awake to the diacritical distinctions it has created. By achieving this degree of control over potential anachronism, Wyatt made it possible for the first time to speak of mature English imitation.

2

The richest body of Wyatt's imitative poetry draws not on antiquity but on Petrarch. It is true that the *Penitential Psalms* paraphrase the Old Testament psalmist mediated by Aretino, Campensis, and others, that the first satire follows Alamanni, the third Horace somewhat more distantly, that the second satire might have drawn on Horace, Caxton, Pynson, Henryson, or any combination of these for its version of Aesop, that Seneca is again put to use elsewhere, that Serafino of

Aquila along with lesser known Italians provided subtexts for several poems, that one rondeau adapts Jean Marot, and that the presence of Chaucer makes itself felt repeatedly on Wyatt's pages. Nonetheless the deepest involvement is unmistakably with Petrarch, most particularly with twenty-five specific poems from the *Canzoniere*, and in a single chapter devoted to Wyatt as imitator the stress must fall primarily on this relationship. The involvement has to be sure already profited from a good deal of critical attention, including one book,¹³ but from the perspective of this study, a few things remain to be said. It has to be stated at the outset that the body of Petrarchan imitations contains both distinguished and mediocre poetry, work highly characteristic of Wyatt's idiolect and work that is close to colorless. The interest here will be directed to those versions where the idiolect is most distinctly heard, the historical consciousness most active, and where patterns of distancing can be most coherently described.

The gap between the two poets begins with the poetic means available to each. Measured from the early Tudor perspective, the *mundus significans* on which Petrarch could draw as vernacular love poet reveals its wealth and firm definition. The verse forms he inherited—the sonnet, canzone, sestina, madrigal, and *ballata*—were already securely established at the opening of his career; the poetic tradition they collectively circumscribed contained a large number of stock images, motifs, conceits, tropes, myths, and commonplaces whose resonance was far from exhausted. Petrarch would refine the psychologistic analysis and would thicken the rhetorical impasto to produce his *cantar soave*; he would alter his *mundus* in various subtle and profound ways, but both before and during this alteration, the poetic vocabulary at hand possessed range, dignity, elegance, and expressiveness.

This needs to be pointed out again only because the poetic vocabulary available to Wyatt was seriously shrunken. Most of the verse forms and styles of the fifteenth century in England were losing their appeal or had lost it as he began writing: the ballade, the carol, the "broken-backed" alliterative line, the aureate style were fading rapidly, and the inspired doggerel of Skelton was not to find any followers. The alliance of verse with music had produced lyrics without obtrusive rhetorical features. A drift had already begun that would lead the poem away from performance and occasion. Wyatt in certain respects intensified this reduction of poetic means. He suppressed classical mythology; he avoided descriptions of nature and of women; and he led the English lyric a few steps further toward its eventual parting from music. He seems deliberately to have muted whatever imagistic brilliance he found in the *Canzoniere*. What rhetorical equipment remained at his disposal tended to be somewhat stiff and narrow. Given this inherited poverty and willed asceticism of the poetic word, we may ask what kind of passage from the one *mundus* to the other an imitation of Wyatt's could dramatize. What kind of genuine passage was possible other than an impoverishment?

One immediate answer to this question concerns the reality of the woman, the addressee of the love poetry. If in the *Canzoniere* the poetic consciousness repeatedly fails to make authentic contact with an external presence, if it constitutes a

closed, circular system, in Wyatt our sense of an external presence in any given poem, an object of desire and of trust, is very strong, even though paradoxically this presence lacks *enargeia*, descriptive vividness. The poetic consciousness as a system is no longer closed. We are aware of the woman through the mediating mind of the speaker, but we know that she is there; we know that interaction between individuals is occurring, partly because the outcome of the interaction in so many poems is problematic.

Madame, withouten many wordes
 Ons I ame sure ye will or no;
 And if ye will, then leve your bordes,
 And use your wit and shew it so.¹⁴

[34]

Within the poetic fiction, the speaker is truly responding to a second person who is responding to him, and the guarantee of this mutuality is the uncertainty. Frequently we don't know with assurance what will be the issue of the relationship, as we do know in reading Petrarch that one phase of the oxymoronic cycle is about to yield or is already yielding to its antithesis. Thus the etiological passage from the Italian text to the English can be described as an *engagement* of the closed system with its human surrounding, an opening up to the nonself, an involvement, a contextualization. This involvement does not, as in Ronsard, lead beyond the woman to a universal force. It may lead at most to a dangerous or debasing involvement with a given social circle. Most commonly it stops short of any circle wider than the tense, unsentimental interplay between the isolated couple.

The passage into engagement inevitably affects the oxymoronic iteration that dominates Petrarch's rhetoric. The oxymoron in English love poetry goes back at least to Chaucer, whose "Complaint to his Lady" addresses her as "my swete fo" and "best beloved fo." It is possible that a statistical count would find as many oxymorons in Wyatt as in Petrarch. Hietsch states that Wyatt added more to those he found in his subtexts.¹⁵ Yet in those poems of Wyatt where an original voice is heard most distinctly, the oxymoron has to be regarded as superficial; it does not as in Petrarch determine the sensibility where speech and feeling are grounded; it is not as in Petrarch absolutely fundamental to the imagination, the voice, and the experience evoked by the voice. The involvement of the speaker's consciousness with an unpredictable human being outside itself weakens the oxymoronic linguistic structure because the oxymoron in Petrarch imposes a predictable linguistic and experiential course. The endlessly spinning Petrarchan cycle with its corollary, the iterative present verb tense, tends to be interrupted in Wyatt's most characteristic imitations.

When in Wyatt we do know the issue of the involvement with a woman, we are led to see it as irreversible. It tends to grow from a deliberate commitment to which the speaker deliberately binds himself.

It was my choyse, yt was no chaunce
 That browght my hart in others holde.

[121]

This commitment by the speaker may or may not be matched by the woman in whom he has placed his trust, and if it is matched, this trust may or may not be betrayed. If it is betrayed, he will perceive the betrayal and make known his perception. Thus the two crucial acts on the speaker's part are first, commitment, and the second, when it is called for, perception of inauthenticity. Most of the original love poems by Wyatt tend to depend on one or both of these two acts. In comparing the speaker's experience with that of the speaker of the *Canzoniere*, we may note that what matters is that these two actions do not allow for circularity. Within a given personal relationship, they cannot be reversed or repeated; they are definitive. Thus the dramatic situation characteristic of Wyatt will not be oxymoronic in the radical Petrarchan sense; it will depend rather on crises—a crisis of fidelity or a crisis of discovery.

This distance between the two poets is less marked in Wyatt's versions of Petrarch, but we can frequently watch him in these poems pulling away in his own direction. The first poem in the Egerton manuscript, "Behold, love" (1), which adapts a graceful but slender Petrarchan madrigal (*Canz.* 121), attributes a betrayal to the woman that would have shattered its subtext.

The holy oth, wherof she taketh no cure,
 Broken she hath.

There is nothing in the Italian of this incipient crisis of discovery. Another imitation, "The lyvely sperkes that issue from those lyes" (47), transforms the sestet of a Petrarchan sonnet to dramatize a stunned allegiance that is rejected.

L' alma nudrita sempre in doglia e 'n pene
 (quanto è 'l poder d' una prescritta usanza)
 contra 'l doppio piacer sì 'nferma fue,
 ch' al gusto sol del disusato bene,
 tremando or di paura or di speranza,
 d' abandonarme fu spesso entra due. [Canz. 258]
 [My soul, nourished always in sorrow and pain (how great is the power of an established habit!) was so weak against the double pleasure that at the mere taste of the unaccustomed good, trembling now with fear, now with hope, it was often on the point of abandoning me.]

Dased ame I muche like unto the gyse
 Of one istricken with dynt of lightening,
 Blynded with the stroke, erryng here and there,
 So call I for helpe, I not when ne where,
 The pain of my falt patiently bering:
 For after the blase, as is no wounder,
 Of dedly nay here I the ferefull thounder.

The lightning of the lady's eyes leaves the speaker like one blinded, patiently bearing his pain. Beneath the patience, the unshaken acceptance of an altered condition, we subread the restless divisions of Petrarch's vacillating speaker,

"tremando or di paura or di speranza," his very life in suspense: "d' abbandonarme fu spesso entra due." This last phrase "entra due" would normally mean the speaker's life was in doubt (Durling's reading), but in the *Canzoniere* and in this context it also means inescapably "with a divided mind." (Patricia Thomson cites the sixteenth-century Petrarchan commentator Vellutello: "cio è fu spespe volte tra 'l si e 'l no," implying that the lady keeps the lover in suspense.) The cycle of hope and fear in the Italian sets off the steadiness of the shaken but patient Wyatt, dazedly, loyally surveying the effect of a fall that is definitive.

Thus the heuristic passage from the subtext to the surface text can be described as a process of *linearization* as well as of engagement. This linearization is clearly present in Muir 29, another free imitation from Petrarch's Italian.

Mirando 'l sol de' begli occhi sereno,
ov' è chi spesso i miei depinge e bagna,
dal cor l' anima stanca si scompagna
per gir nel paradiso suo terreno. 4

Poi trovandol di dolce e d' amar pieno,
quant' al mondo si tesse, opra d' aragna
vede, onde seco e con Amor si lagna
ch' a sí caldi gli spron, sí duro 'l freno. 8

Per questi estremi duo contrari e misti,
or con voglie gelate or con accese,
stassi così fra misera e felice.

Ma pochi lieti e molti penser' tristi, 12
e 'l piú si pente de l' ardite imprese:
tal frutto nasce di cotal radice. [Canz. 173]

[Gazing at the clear sun of her lovely eyes, where there is one who often makes mine red and wet, my weary soul leaves my heart for its earthly paradise;

then, finding it so full of sweetness and bitterness, it sees that whatever is woven in the world is cobwebs, and it complains to Love, whose spurs are so hot, whose bit is so hard.

Between these two extremes so contrary and so mixed, now with frozen desires, now with kindled, it stays thus half miserable and half happy;

but few happy thoughts and many sad ones: mostly it repents of its bold enterprise, such fruit is born from such a root.]

Avysing the bright bemes of these fayer Iyes,
Where he is that myn oft moisteth and wassheth,
The werid mynde streght from the hert departeth
For to rest in his woroldly paradise, 4

And fynde the swete bitter under this gyse.
What webbes he hath wrought well he perceveth,
Whereby with himself on love he playneth;
That spurreth with fyer, and bridilleth with Ise. 8

Thus is it in suche extremitie brought:
In frosen thought nowe and nowe it stondesth in flame;
Twyst misery and welth, twist ernest and game;

But few glad, and many a dyvers thought; 12
With sore repentaunce of his hardines:
Of suche a rote commeth sfruyte fruytles.

Wyatt's version seems about to forsake linearity and to introduce iterative action with the adverb "oft" in his second line, corresponding to Petrarch's "spesso." But in fact his version pulls away from iteration by the close to establish its own pattern; it presents again a crisis of discovery, not of betrayal in this case but of sterility. The crucial breakaway appears in line 9. Petrarch's line "Per questi estremi duo contrari e misti" and what follows contain an almost classic expression of an oxymoronic sensibility. Wyatt alters the entire drama with brilliant economy by altering the number of the noun: no longer extremes—"estremi"—but an "extremitie," the drastic moment when the futility of living between extremes is recognized.¹⁶ The perception of Love's webs in line 6 is critical here as it never is in Petrarch; it means that the experience of "paradise" won't contain equal measures of sweet and bitter, "di dolce e d' amar pieno," but rather that the sweet is perceived as essentially, definitively bitter. Thus in retrospect "worldly paradise" in line 4 has to be read ironically, as an instance of the subdued sarcasm that is characteristic of Wyatt's voice but that is altogether missing from the Italian "paradiso suo terreno." Wyatt follows a single, linear progression into lucidity, which culminates in the finality of the last line and even the last word, "fruytles," for which the subtext has no basis. Petrarch's speaker repents his audacity; Wyatt's repents the entire relationship and is already detaching himself irreversibly in the act of articulating his discovery. The sentimental poles of misery and wealth are yielding to the stable recognition of vanity.

This process of linearization, transforming a circular plot to a unique, unrepeatable plot, occurs in the *Penitential Psalms*, where it can be related to a shift from the Roman to the Protestant theology of justification. Here is the account of R. A. Rebholz:

Wyatt departs from Aretino in order, I think, to create a shape for the whole work that presents a Reformed Christian's view of the individual's experience of redemption rather than a Roman Catholic's. Aretino's David vacillates between hope and a fear bordering on despair throughout the work; he thereby creates the impression that, even though he is seeking forgiveness for his sins against Uriah and Bathsheba, he is in fact caught up in the continuing cycle of sin and forgiveness and sin typical of much Roman Catholic spirituality: as he says in the last psalm, his soul dies to grace as often as it sins and therefore must be reborn each time with new acts of contrition and divine forgiveness. Wyatt, on the other hand, is trying, I think, to make David the type of the Reformed Christian who experiences the genuinely profound, almost despairing sense of his sinfulness only once before the critical act of believing that God forgives him, justifies him by imputing righteousness to him, loves him, and will make him holy.¹⁷

This interpretation of the Psalms is supported in my view not only by the somewhat unwieldy text but also by the movement away from vacillation in so many of the imitative love poems. The abrupt, alert, impatient temper of the lover

in these poems, endowed with moral intelligence, resistant to self-pity, unsparring of inauthenticity, quick to sarcasm toward others and himself—this lover is not given to vacillation. It would be an error to conflate his voice with that of the Psalms, but the parallel diachronic passage in two such contrasting modes is all the more notable.

The linearizing force of the lover's temper is nowhere clearer than in "The longe love, that in my thought doeth harbar," a sonnet that has become a touchstone if not a warhorse of Wyatt criticism. One change in the Petrarchan original that has not been adequately weighed is the simple suppression of an adverb in the first quatrain.

Amor, che nel penser mio vive e regna
e 'l suo seggio maggior nel mio cor tene,
talor armato ne la fronte vene;
ivi si loca' ed ivi pon sua insegna. 4 [Canz. 140]

[Love, who lives and reigns in my thought and keeps his principal seat in my heart, sometimes comes forth all in armor into my forehead, there camps, and there sets up his banner.]

The longe love, that in my thought doeth harbar
And in myn hert doeth kepe his residence,
Into my face preseth with bolde pretence,
And therein campeth, spreding his baner. [4]

Petrarch's "talor" (sometimes—l. 3) is the signal that the little drama he recounts is played out an indefinite number of times. Because of this repetition not much is riding on any given reenactment and no moral decision is called for. The lover and his master Love act the way they have to act and the lady responds the way she must. No one can break out of the ritual. This situation is perpetuated in Surrey's translation, which contains the adverb "oft." But Wyatt drops the adverb, and the singleness of the event in his version helps to explain the tauter dramatic intensity. Thus the progression from "harbar" (lodge, encamp, conceal one's self) to "preseth with bolde pretence" carries a real risk missing in the Italian as it calls for a moral judgment that cannot be fully approving. The captain's audacity may well be ill-advised, and in the light of this suspicion the act of spreading a banner looks like a further provocation. The rest of the sonnet justifies the suspicion.

Quella ch' amare e sofferir ne 'nsegna,
e voi che 'l gran desio, l' accesa spene,
ragion, vergogna e reverenza affrene,
di nostro ardir fra se stessa si sdegna. 8

Onde Amor paventoso fugge al core,
lasciando ogni sua impresa, e piange e trema;
ivi s'asconde e non appar più fore.

Che poss' io, temendo il mio signore,
se non star seco infin a l' ora estrema?
che bel fin fa chi ben amando more. 12

[She who teaches us to love and to be patient, and wishes my great desire, my kindled hope, to be reined in by reason, shame, and reverence, at our boldness is angry within herself.

Wherefore Love flees terrified to my heart, abandoning his every enterprise, and weeps and trembles; there he hides and no more appears outside.

What can I do, when my lord is afraid, except stay with him until the last hour? For he makes a good end who dies loving well.]

She that me lerneth to love and suffre,
And willes that my trust and lustes negligence
Be rayned by reason, shame and reverence,
With his hardines taketh displeasur. 8

Wherewithall, unto the hertes Forrest he fleith,
Leving his enterprise with payn and cry;
And ther him hideth, and not appereth.

What may I do when my maister fereth
But in the feld with him to lyve and dye?
For goode is the liff, ending faithfully. 12

Wyatt splits up the association between lover and master implied by "us" (ne—l. and "our" (nostro—l. 8), reassigning the roles so that the lover is the one who learns restraint and his master the one who violates it. The captain Love remains morally ambiguous to the end: Wyatt's omission of the Italian qualifier "pavento" (terrified) and his addition of the expressive phrase "lustes negligence" (logically applicable to either but attracted to Love by the context) recast the character of the chief actor, distinguished throughout for his "hardines," his erot overreaching. This moral ambivalence is what makes the lover's moral decision the end difficult and interesting. The master has returned, not to his comfortable main residence as in Petrarch, but to the "hertes Forrest," a tangled, dark region of seclusion, obscurity, and confusion. So we have at the end another crisis of commitment; the speaker is left out there in the cold, bivouacking with his liege lord, vulnerable to an exposure and a finality that are new.¹⁸ The aphoristic line, talking about life and faith rather than death and love, makes its feudal deal against the grain, against the knowledge of cost and moral ambivalence. repudiates in advance, with its hard-bitten clairvoyance and its throwaway feminine ending, the handsome pose struck by Surrey's aphorism: "Sweet is the deal that taketh end by love."

3

The study of mistranslations is particularly rewarding in the case of Wyatt, since meanings in his heuristic imitations tend to shift with unusual mobility under the pressure of context. The clash of cultures and sensibilities is focused microscopically in the passage from "estremi" to "extremities," or in the sonnet "Such was thought . . ." the passage from Petrarch's narcissistic "a me stesso m'involo" to the cool withdrawal "from company to live alone," or in the sonnet just discussed

from "I gran desio, l' accesa spene" to "my trust and lustes negligence," a coupling that complicates the moral and sentimental relationship while replacing the story of deferred desire with one of a divided will. Most significant is the mistranslation elsewhere (in the sonnet "Though I my self be bridilled of my mynde") of Petrarch's "vertute" by the key term "trouth," the Chaucerian word that organizes Wyatt's moral code. ("Sotto quell' arme / che gli dà il tempo, amor, vertute e 'l sangue" becomes "under the defence / Of tyme, trouth and love.") In the rondeau "Goo burnyng sighes" Wyatt replaces

che 'l nostro stato è inquieto e fosco,
sí come 'l suo pacífico e sereno. [Canz. 153]

[Our state is as unquiet and dark as hers is peaceful and bright.]

with

I must goo worke, I se, by craft and art,
For trueth and faith in her is laide apart. [20]

Each of these mistranslations, kernels of diachronic interplay, focuses a conflict between cultures and moral styles; each is a key to the specificity of Wyatt's art.

Many of his lyrics could be gathered under a rubric taken from the refrain of a rondeau: "What vaileth trouth?" (2), a question which the canon of his poetry poses not as a rhetorical or cynical but serious and open question. The word *trouth* gathers into itself most of the various values which in Wyatt are repeatedly threatened with debasement. Its richness of accumulated but beleaguered signification serves to illustrate the ways moral ambiguities turn out to be semiotic ambiguities. As it appears in Wyatt's poems, it is already a shrunken thing, leaking the ethical and spiritual certitudes that inform Chaucer's "Balade de Bon Conseyll" with the refrain "And trouthe shal delivere, it is no drede." Wyatt's poems demonstrate a shrinking of the values whose resonance was still full even when Chaucer (in another ballade, "Lak of Steadfastnes") accused his society of violating them.

Trouthe is put down, resoun is holden fable;
Vertu hath now no dominacioun . . .
The world hath mad a permutacion
Fro right to wrong, fro trouthe to fikelnesse.¹⁹

The ethical centrality of "trewthe" is also the supreme message of Langland's Holy Church.

Whan alle tresores aren tried, quod she, trewthe is the best; . . .
It is as derworth a drewery as dere god hym-selven.²⁰

It is the word from which our modern words *truth* and *troth* are both descended, having split apart at some point during the sixteenth century. In a philosophical context *trouth* meant "reality"; in a social context it meant a covenant, the kind of engagement on which the medieval system of fealty rested; ethically, it meant

"integrity," a recognized continuity in word and act that renders a man authentic, which is to say real; psychologically, *trouth* meant "faith" or "trust," a disposition to credit realities, including the supreme Reality; in this sense, it was one of the three theological virtues. It also meant, as early as 1380, "a true statement, a true doctrine, an established principle" (*OED*). In Wyatt's first letter to his son, he ends the list of his own father's virtues by praising "trough above all the rest."²¹

Many of Wyatt's poems use the perceived leakage in this word as a focus of their moral disorientation. The woman's lack of *trouth*, her betrayal or her "dyversite," seems to stand synecdochically for some larger absence.

What vaileth trouth? or, by it, to take payn?
To stryve by stedfastnes for to attayne? [2]

Ffor fansy at his lust
Doeth rule all but by gesse;
Whereto should I then trust
In trouth or stedfastnes? [43]

And of this grief ye shalbe quite
In helping growth steadfast to goo;
The time is longe that [he] doth sitt
Feble and weike and suffreth woo. [93]

Light in the wynde
Doth fle all my delight;
Where trouth and faithfull mynd
Are put to flyght. [84]

Ago, long synmys, that she hathe truly made
Dysdayne for uowght, sett lyght yn stedfastnes,
I have cause goode to syng this song. [88]

Most wretched hart most miserable,
Syns the comferte is from the fled,
Syns all the trouthe is turned to fable,
Most wretched harte why arte thou nott ded? [91]

There is no Petrarchan equivalent for the term *trouth*. In Petrarch the threat to the word lies in cyclical contradiction and in the tendency of apparently objective reference to betray its subjective character, to collapse into purely solipsistic reference. This perpetual Petrarchan threat of collapsing reference yields in Wyatt to a different semiotic threat, the collapse of traditional, principled relationships on which a coherent society has depended and in which language has been grounded. In the satires as in the lyrics, the word is in danger of losing its *trouth*, its basis in common practice, and the poet records the ungrounding of *trouth*, a property of human relations that is also a property of language.

Wyatt's poetry, like Du Bellay's *Les Regrets*, is postfeudal; it reflects the moral, social, and linguistic disarray caused by the disappearance of medieval ethical-political norms. The satires spell out what many lyrics suggest indirectly: that the

moral problem posed when money and intrigue replace the feudal hierarchy is a verbal problem, a problem of signifying. "I perceive I lacked discretion / To fashion faith to wordes mutable," writes Wyatt (19). This predicament of the lover is also the maker's. One of his solutions was to build his poems consciously around words whose meanings are pointedly eroded or debased, like the word *trouth* itself.

There was never file half so well filed,
To file a file for every smythes intent,
As I was made a filing instrument
To frame othres, while I was begiled. [16]

Among Wyatt's editors Daalder supplies the widest range of glosses for the central term, *file*: as a noun he gives "1) the instrument for polishing, 2) deceiver"; as a verb "1) to polish, 2) deceive, 3) defile."²² But surely the medieval meaning of "whore" is also relevant to the noun, and the following meanings of the verb: "to charge with a crime, accuse"; "to violate the chastity of, to deflower"; "to taint with disease, infect." The poem sketches an obscure plot of courtly erotic manipulation and passes judgment on it by letting the seamiest implications show through the language. But "file" as used by a smith is at least a morally neutral word; in the *setet* a more "noble" word is subtly devalued.

Yet this trust I have of full great apearance:
Syns that decept is ay retourneable,
Of very force it is aggregable
That therewithall be done the recompence. 12
Then gile begiled plained should be never,
And the reward lile trust for ever.²³

The "trust" of the last line is the central act of commitment, here as so often betrayed; thus the trust that remains in line 9 is merely the bleak belief in the justice of deceiving deceivers. That moment typical of the poet when scales fall from his eyes means a rearrangement of assigned meanings: no longer a superannuated, naive trust, the earnest belief in steadfastness, but a hollow reliance on the workings of the world. The poem records and hinges on these verbal readjustments. Its irony stems from the fluctuations of its referents.

The drabness of Wyatt's language is of course essential to his moral style. He systematically reduced the tones of Petrarch's highly ornamented surface. He refused the Petrarchan *cantar soave*, and when in his version of the long canzone that refers to this suavity (*Canz.* 360), he reached the relevant passage, he took an inhabitual liberty and skipped the entire section. This suppression of ornament and Petrarchan decorative richness, this imagistic asceticism, is essential to Wyatt's language because it strips the word of its esthetic pretentiousness and leaves it as a naked gauge of integrity. He seems almost to have invested with value the impoverished formal poetic means available to him. When integrity is revealed as inauthentic, then the semiotic crisis is not infrequently thematized. The last line of "They fle from me"—"I would fain knowe what she hath deserved"—means

among other things "I would fain know what language is appropriate," even "what poem I ought to write."

Perhaps the one service one can perform for this much-worried poem is to show how its linguistic texture helps to answer this question through a calculated series of redefinitions and devaluations.

They fle from me that sometyme did me seke
With naked foot stalking in my chambre.
I have sene theim gentill tame and meke
That nowe are wyld and do not remembre 4
That sometyme they put theimself in daunger
To take bred at my hand; and nowe they raunge
Besely seking with a continuell chaunge.
Thanked be fortune, it hath ben otherwise 8
Twenty tymes better; but ons in speciall,
In thyn arraye after a pleasaunt gyse,
When her lose gowne from her shoulders did fall,
And she me caught in her arms long and small; 12
Therewithall swetely did me kysse,
And softly saide, *dere hart, howe like you this?*
It was no dreme: I lay brode waking.
But all is torned thorough my gentilnes 16
Into a straunge fasshion of forsaking;
And I have leve to goo of her goodenes,
And she also to use new fangilnes.
But syns that I so kyndely ame served, 20
I would fain knowe what she hath deserved. [37]

"Stalking" (l. 2) at first appears to mean "walking cautiously" and "walking with high stiff steps like a bird"; only on rereading does it reveal itself to mean "approaching an animal stealthily in order to kill it." This ambiguity of hunter and hunted affects several words. "Caught" (l. 12) first seems to mean "embraced" and only later is seen to mean "trapped," as "hart" (l. 14) first seems to mean "heart" and later "prey." "Straunge" (l. 17) first seems to mean "unfamiliar," then "cold, unfriendly," then is seen to possess its Tudor meaning of "prostituted." "Kindly" (l. 20), which is understood to be sarcastic immediately, fluctuates between "generously," "affectionately," "aristocratically," "characteristically," and "naturally"—this last implication suggesting the natural law of the jungle. Other wobbly words are "daunger" (l. 5), "gyse" (l. 10), and "fasshion" (l. 17). The wobblest and richest of all is "gentill" (l. 3), which means first "tame" and "grateful" and then is set off ironically by "gentilnes" (l. 16), which draws with varying degrees of subversion on a range of meanings: "inner nobility," "innocence," "naiveté," "adherence to a traditional code of the well-born," "lack of ruthlessness." In the background lies another Chaucerian poem, "Gentillesse."

The firste stok, fader of gentillesse—
What man that claymeth gentil for to be

Must folowe his trace, and alle his wittes dresse
 Vertu to serve, and vyces for to llee. . . .
 This furste stok was full of rightwisnesse,
 Trewe of his word, sobre, pitous, and free.

The semiotic inconsistency of Wyatt's great poem, wherein signifiers keep trading in meanings for new, often uglier ones is a constitutive structural element in the poem. It helps to define the plight of the nobleman who has thought he knew the rules of the games that were dirtying his hands, only to discover that the games are dirtier than he realized, have no fixed rules and thus no reliable vocabulary. The reader's progressive semiotic discovery of eroded signifieds corresponds to the speaker's own existential discovery of moral groundlessness. He has to deal with linguistic as well as political and sexual "new fangilnes"; words as well as men slide from their slipper top. This use of the Chaucerian stanza, rhyme royal, which initially serves to place the speaker, only turns further the ironic screw of his isolation at the end between two social and verbal worlds.

Recent editions of Wyatt, especially Daalder's, have contributed to our awareness of the density of proverbs in the texture of his verse. They seem to form one solution to the problem how to keep one's language stable. Thus the third satire.

These proverbes yet do last.
 Reason hath set them in so sure a place
 That lenght of yeres their force can never wast. [198]

As the verbal "stedfastnes" leaks away, the postfeudal social extremity is seen as a linguistic extremity. The poet cannot, so he says, frame his tongue to feign; he can't or won't frame it to adorn; the proverb supplies a certain stiffening but it scarcely suffices. What essentially keeps the language of these poems from being "wasted"?

Doubtless many things, but one solution we have already met is particularly distinctive and needs more analysis. It seems to surface obliquely in the lyric beginning "Ys yt possyble?" That question, repeated eight times in the opening four stanzas, registers the stunned disbelief that accompanies a crisis of discovery. Is it possible, asks the poet, to find so diverse, so changeable a mind that turns "as wether and wynd"?

Is it possible
 To spye yt in an lye
 That tornys as oft as chance on dy?
 The trothe whereoff can eny try?
 Is it possible? [111]

Rehholz glosses "to spye yt" as "to discern the real attitude." The eye apparently turns even faster than the mind, turns with the speed of a die and with the same random result. Whoso list can try its "trothe," since the eye will dally with "eny" and betray its own diversity. Without that guarantee of authenticity, there are no limits to the credible, so that the last stanza concludes sarcastically, "All ys

possyble." With "trothe" spinning like a die, the only other option seems to be total credulity; since no real knowledge is possible, one can only close one's eyes and propose.

All ys possyble,
 Who so lyst beleve;
 Trust therfore fyrst, and after preve:
 As men wedd ladyes by lycence and leve,
 All ys possyble.

The whole erotic or matrimonial ritual is turned to scorn, but so presumably is the use of language. Characteristically the sexual dilemma seems to adumbrate a larger uncertainty. Any social act or any speech act would seem to require a modicum of trust, a shared agreement, a common expectation. Wyatt's own response to the uncertainty is not formulated but it is illustrated here as elsewhere: it is that irony we have already come to know and whose relation to *truth* is a mainspring of his moral style.

Irony is appropriate because it makes use of the duplicity which does always remain possible in language but which irony can manipulate and control. It introduces two or more voices into a single word but in so doing it imposes a hierarchy on these voices; it valorizes one at the expense of the other or others. When Wyatt writes, "all ys possyble, / Who so lyst beleve," we hear both the voice of the dupe and the voice of the skeptic, who is capable of moral criticism. When he writes "As men wedd ladyes by lycence and leve," in the single word "ladyes" we discern the tramp who puts on chastity and the disenchanting poet whose curt intelligence invests the sarcasm with its power. Classical irony of this kind establishes a hierarchy of moral voices within the "diversity" of language; it loads the dice on which "trothe" is spinning; it polarizes and stabilizes the play of inauthenticities by distinguishing perspectives. Thus to the question "I would fain knowe what she hath deserved," one answer would be: she deserves to have it said of her, "I have leve to goo of her goodenes." Because one voice is valorized at the expense of others, ironic statement seems to acquire a certain stability that resists the attrition of conventional meanings. Beset by debasements and erosions, overcommitments and pseudocommitments, betrayals of principle and betrayals of the word, it maintains a certain continuity and affirms the integrity of the isolated moral observer.

. . . On my faith me thinck it goode reason
 To chaunge propose like after the season.
 Ffor in every cas to kepe still oon gyse
 Ys mytt for them that would be taken wyse;
 And I ame not of suche maner condition. [10]

The knowing duplicity that so cunningly advertises its surrender of one guise has found a means to remove itself from the play of guises and preserve its own equilibrium.

Thus when we read a Wyatt poem that requires us to subread a Petrarchan poem, we experience the passage between them as a process of *stabilization*. The English tends to settle the restlessness of the Italian as it linearizes the cycle and arrests the iteration. This is observable even in the contrast of copulas. Consider again two passages we have already examined.

L'alma nudrita sempre in doglia e 'n pene
(quanto è 'l poder d' una prescritta usanza)
contra 'l doppio piacer sì 'nferma fue,
ch' al gusto sol del disusato bene, 12
tremando or di paura or di speranza,
d' abandonarme fu spesso entra due.

The instances of the verb "to be" in lines 11 and 14, both in the past definite tense, illustrate well the insecurity of Petrarch's oxymoronic copula. The verb "fue" in line 11 is employed to affirm the weakness of one emotive pole weighed against the other; the copula "fu" in the last line also carries, as we have seen, the sense of division between antithetical extremes. Even the copula in the parenthetical line 10 only serves to weigh the power of one pole against the other. Wyatt's corresponding "dazed am I" conveys no comparable division. The speaker may wander "here and there" but he continues to bear a pain that is continuous and whole. Wyatt's affirmations are beset by overcommitments, debasements, betrayals, exposure to changefulness, but they do typically tend to maintain their meaning with a stubborn endurance that shores up the copula's predications.

For goode is the liff, ending faithfully. [4]

Was I never yet of your love greved,
Nor never shall while that my liff doeth last. [9]

But ye, my birdes, I swear by all your belles,
Ye be my fryndes, and so be but few elles. [170]

It is not tyme that can were owt
With me that once ys fermly sett . . .
Yet am I hyrs, she may be sure,
And shallbe whyle that lyff doth dure. [114]

As a conductor for metaphor, Wyatt's copula (explicit or implicit) tends to be conservative, and probably more conservative when there is no significant subtext. It functions most responsively as a vehicle for shades of assertion, and its stubborn toughness remains when the thematic statement expresses doubt or is exposed to ironic skepticism.

It may be good, like it who list,
But I do doubt; who can me blame? [21]

Noli me tangere, for Cesars I ame. [7]

I have her hert in my possession,

And of it self there cannot, perdy,
By no meanes love an herteles body;
And on my faith, good is the reason,
If it be so. [18]

Through out the world, if it wer sought,
Faire wordes ynough a man shall finde:
They be good chepe, they cost right nought.
Their substance is but onely winde:
But well to say and so to mene,
That swete accord is seldom sene. [192]

It was no dreme: I lay brode waking. [37]

It was no dream; the experience was real if misleading; it was valid, in a world the context reveals to be lacking in validity. Wyatt's copula measures out degrees of validity; it tends to support a lonely, existential steadfastness always exposed to attrition and always lacking metaphysical underpinning. It is beleaguered but it endures.

An openness to skepticism seems to provide a certain resistance to attrition. It anticipates the debasement of language and norms by retaining a double focus on the earlier, uncorrupted stage and the modern degradation. This diachronic interplay of codes can be facilitated by imitation. In the well-known sonnet "Who so list to hount . . .," the irony debases the emblematic and visionary subtext but confers a certain repose of lucidity on the Petrarchan play of presence and absence not untouched at the close with hysteria.

Una candida cerva sopra l' erba
verde m' apparve, con duo corna d' oro,
fra due riviere, all' ombra d' un alloro,
levando 'l sole a la stagione acerba. [Canz. 190]

[A white doe on the green grass appeared to me, with two golden horns, between two rivers, in the shade of a laurel, when the sun was rising in the unripe season.]

Who so list to hount, I knowe where is an hynde.
But as for me, helas, I may no more:
The wayne travaill hath wried me so sore.
I ame of theim that farthest commeth behinde. [7]

Doubtless it is possible to feel in Wyatt's brutal rewriting (and the brutality is not really affected by the possible mediation of Petrarchan commentators)²⁴ a certain nostalgia for the visionary spirituality of the Italian, the purity of the white, green, and gold in medieval illuminations, as well as nostalgia for the hunt as a noble sport of kings. A good deal of the speaker's self-referential irony is aimed at this irrational performance in an outmoded exercise. Once the allusion to Petrarch has been made from the perspective of a parodic hunt, the nostalgia is hard to suppress. "Hynde" becomes a savage mistranslation of "cerva," anticipating the double debasement below in "*Noli me tangere*," with its introduction of a second, supremely privileged subtext.

Who list her hount, I put him owte of dowbte,
 As well as I may spend his tyme in vain:
 And, graven with Diamonds, in letters plain
 There is written her faier neck rounde abowte:
Noli me tangere, for Cesars I ame;
 And wylde for to hold, though I seme tame.

12

But in the dismissal of the visionary, in the refusal of illusions about the woman, about the ineffectual speaker or the duped Caesar who wants to hold a wild creature, there lies a tranquility of the intelligence to counterbalance nostalgia. The devaluation of Petrarchan symbols implies a criticism of the phantasm as it reveals the poverty of its own alternatives. This is a dialectical imitation that points to a rupture broader than humanism could traditionally tolerate; having exposed two antagonistic vulnerabilities, it bases its own claim to integrity on the steadiness of its controlled indirection.²⁵

In the satires, where the irony is not self-referential, we find in the speaker's representation of himself the most successful English assimilation of Roman classicism before Jonson. The speaking voice belongs to a civilized critic capable of friendship, anger, discrimination, and wisdom, a well-traveled man *in situ*, located in a social, historical, geographical context, synthesizing in his firm moral style the native tradition with the ancient, confident of his unblinking estimates, registering depravity, hypocrisy, and suffering without hysteria, strong in his independence—"wrappid within my cloke"—which is a token of dignity and poise. This temper is neither quite Horatian nor Senecan nor Juvenalian nor Chaucerian, though all four voices have been absorbed. In the first and third satires, the erosion of signification is thematized as it had seldom been in comparable Roman poetry. The third satire is framed by proverbs because, as the passage already quoted has it, "their force can never wast." By introducing the threat of verbal "wasting," Wyatt adds a level of linguistic self-consciousness missing in the principal subtext, the fifth satire of Horace's second book. Both poems consist mainly of cynical advice for worldly success which the reader is meant to reject, but in Wyatt the interest lies as well in the manipulation of language to dispense with *trouth*.

Thou knowst well first who so can seke to plesse
 Shall purchase frendes where trowght shall but offend.
 Ffle therefore trueth: it is boeth welth and ese.

[198, ll. 32-34]

The body of the poem amounts to a textbook example of the flight from *trouth*, and nowhere in Wyatt are the linguistic and moral components of the term more densely interfused.

In this also se you be not Idell:
 Thy nece, they cosyn, thy sister or thy doghter,
 If she be faire, if handsom be her myddell,
 Yf thy better hath her love besoght her,

Avaunce his cause and he shall help thy nede.
 It is but love: turne it to a lawghter.

[ll. 67-72]

The corresponding passage in Horace²⁶ leads us to think about the ethical but not the rhetorical violations; fine as the Latin poem is, it has nothing quite so brilliantly self-damning as the last line quoted. Thus the passage from Horace to Wyatt moves toward a complication of rhetorical awareness, a functioning perception of the inextricability of word and act. To keep one's language clean in Wyatt literally *costs*.

Nay then, farewell! And if thou care for shame,
 Content the then with honest povertie,
 With fre tong what the myslikes to blame,
 And for thy trowth sumtyme aduersitie.

[ll. 85-88]

In the shorter poems, the unassailable poise of the satires tends to be attenuated and the irony, because it is diffused, more original. It is not the classical irony of Jonson and Pope, because it is capable of including the ironist himself in its referential field. But it is not on the other hand the irony of Du Bellay because the primary act that essentially defines the speaker—in Wyatt's case, the exercise of critical intelligence—is exempted from subversion. One can speak of the imitative itineraries in both Du Bellay and Wyatt as processes of ironization, but the end points of this process diverge: Wyatt in his most characteristic poems keeps an equilibrium the speaker of the *Antiquitez* is still unsure of. The shadings in Wyatt's play with subtexts, like the shadings of self-presentation, are curiously, hauntingly modern. Standing at the opening of the mature humanist endeavor in England, Wyatt at his ablest demonstrated the potential force of diachronic poetry with a subtle power only a few of his successors would surpass.

- Rinascimento italiano*, ed. E. Garin (Milan: Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, n.d.), pp. 70-71.
- 20 George Hersey, unpublished paper kindly communicated to the author.
- 21 Expressed in a letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, quoted in Garin, *Il Rinascimento italiano*, pp. 51-52.
- 22 The "antre tenebreux" with its Cimmerian darkness is described in lines 37-43 (Chamard 4:5). For the arch, see lines 493-96, p. 25, and for the temple, lines 512-16, p. 26.
- 23 *Gargantua*, chap. 1.
- 24 *Paradise Lost*, 1.713-15.
- 25 Michel de Montaigne, *Journal de voyage en Italie*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. A. Thibaudet and M. Rat (Paris: Pléiade, 1962), pp. 1212-13. In his essay "De la vanité," pp. 975-76, Montaigne pays a more traditional homage to ancient Rome and its ruins. A study of his relation to antiquity would reveal him to be no less *ondoyant* in this matter than in others. In his "Défence de Seneque et de Plutarque," Montaigne wrote that his book was pieced together from fragments of these two authors: "La familiarité que j'ay avec ces personnages icy, et l'assistance qu'ils font à ma vieillesse et à mon livre massonnée de leurs despoilles, m'oblige à espouser leur honneur" (p. 699).
- For Rome as its own tomb, compare the line in Du Bellay's "Romae Descriptio": "Ipsaque nunc tumulus mortua sui est."
- 26 Dora and Erwin Panofsky argue that the arresting painting by Jean Cousin, *Eva Prima Pandora*, in the Louvre was originally intended to be a *Roma Prima Pandora*. Part of their argument depends on this sonnet. In the painting, dated by the Panofskys around 1550, Eva/Roma has left open the lid of the red urn containing forms of evil, thus allowing them to prey upon men. This discussion appears in *Pandora's Box* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), pp. 62ff.

Chapter 12. Wyatt: Erosion and Stabilization

- 1 *Caxton's own Prose*, ed. N. F. Blake (London: Deutsch, 1973), pp. 128-29.
- 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 80.
- 3 *Virgil's Aeneid*, translated into Scottish verse by Gavin Douglas, ed. D. F. C. Coldwell (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1957), vol. 2, bk. 1, ll. 142-43.
- 4 Coldwell discusses Douglas's anachronisms in the introduction to his *Selections from Gavin Douglas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), pp. vii-viii.
- 5 These two epigrams have heretofore been regarded as one, and are so printed in the edition of More's Latin epigrams by Bradner and Lynch. Daniel Kinney however argues persuasively that lines 13-26 of epigram 177 in that edition constitute a separate poem. See his article, "More's Epigram on Brixius' Plagiarism: One Poem or Two?" *Moreana*, no. 65 (1981): 37-44.
- 6 *The Latin Epigrams of Thomas More*, ed. L. Bradner and C. Lynch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), epigram 177 ll. 23-26. Translation by Daniel Kinney, "More's Epigram."
- 7 ". . . purpureos aliorum pannos hinc atque inde insutos illi tuo crassissimo bardocucullo." *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. E. F. Rogers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), Epistle 86, pp. 130-31. Richard Sylvester comments on this passage: "More's own literary principles emerge quite clearly as he castigates Brixius for lifting phrases from the classics without showing any awareness of the context from

- which they came. . . . More's lesson . . . must surely run something like this: we must always ask whether or not the writer who tessellates his work with classical phrases is using them as real echoes that draw upon their original context to reinforce the new passage in which they appear" (R. S. Sylvester, "Thomas More: Humanist in Action," in *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, ed. R. S. Sylvester and G. P. Marchadour [Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1977], p. 468).
- 8 More writes: "Ego igitur quum in te taxassem alia furto subrepta veteribus, alia perabsurde tractata, omnia denique sic abs te narrata, ut neque in rebus veritas esset, neque in verbis fides." *Correspondence*, Ep. 86, pp. 218-21. (I arraigned some elements in your poem which you snatched like a thief from the ancients, other elements which you handled most absurdly, and all the elements which you narrated in such a way that there was neither truth in the matter nor credibility in the words.) Translation by Daniel Kinney, who comments: "Inattention to *fides rerum*, a discreditable scorn for his own real historical context, has made it inevitable that Brixius' own choice of words should lack *fides*, or 'credit,' in much the same way that his style of retelling the facts does: in denying the historical reality of the gulf between Classical poets and himself, Brixius makes it impossible for himself to achieve enough critical distance from his models to determine just what in their style he should imitate and what he should avoid." ("More's Epigram," p. 42).
- 9 Quotations from Wyatt's poetry are taken from *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, ed. K. Muir (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950). I have modernized the usage of u, v, i, and j. The number in parenthesis following each quotation refers to the numbering of this edition. The passage here quoted is from 96. "In Spayne," ll. 15-16. We still lack a definitive text for Wyatt and doubtless will never see all the questions pertaining to his canon resolved. The most sensible solution so far to this latter problem seems to me incorporated in the edition of the modernized text by R. A. Rebholz: Sir Thomas Wyatt, *The Complete Poems* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1978).
- 10 Quoted in *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, ed. K. Muir and P. Thomson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1969), p. 436.
- 11 This distinction holds in my view even if Patricia Thomson is correct in taking Chaucer's "Balade de Bon Conseyll" as a subtext of Wyatt's poem in her article "Wyatt's Boethian Ballade," *Review of English Studies* 15 (1964): 262-67. I argue below that the values expressed in Chaucer's ballade are essential for understanding Wyatt.
- 12 This poem is discussed and compared to other English versions of the same Senecan chorus by H. A. Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), pp. 181-86.
- 13 Otto Hietsch, *Die Petrarcaübersetzungen Sir Thomas Wyatts* (Vienna and Stuttgart: Braunmuller, 1960). Among the many other discussions of the Petrarch-Wyatt relationship, the following are particularly full: Sergio Baldi, *La Poesia di Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1953); Patricia Thomson, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and his Background* (Stanford University Press, 1964); D. L. Guss, *John Donne, Petrarchist* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966). The notes to the relevant poems by Thomson in the Muir-Thomson edition are especially helpful.
- 14 The fact that Wyatt is here translating a madrigal by Dragonetto Bonifacio makes his song no less characteristic of his own poetic temper. Wyatt chose to English this poem in preference to others.
- 15 Hietsch, *Die Petrarcaübersetzungen Wyatts*, p. 72.

- 16 Thomson's note to line 9 accuses Wyatt of missing Petrarch's point, but she seems rather to have missed Wyatt's.
- 17 Rebholz edition, p. 454. Rebholz's analysis is indebted to Mason's, *Humanism and Poetry*, pp. 206-21.
- 18 Thomson's note comments on the phrase "in the field." "Wyatt's addition is not altogether appropriate, since Love has fled from the battle." I take this phrase to refer not to the battlefield but to military life in the open air, without the protection from the elements of a "residence."
- 19 For a fuller discussion of this word and an analysis of its importance in another medieval work, see K. A. Burrow, *A Reading of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), pp. 42ff.
- 20 "Truth is as precious a jewel as our dear Lord Himself." Passus I, ll. 85, 87. Holy Church continues to praise this virtue. The excerpts cited below (ll. 88-91, 94-101) are given in the translation of J. F. Goodridge (Baltimore: Penguin, 1959), p. 72.

He who speaks nothing but the truth, and acts by it, wishing no man ill, is like Christ, a god on earth and in Heaven—those are Saint Luke's words. . . . And kings and nobles should be Truth's champions: they should ride to war and put down criminals throughout their realms, and bind them fast till Truth has reached a final verdict on them. That is clearly the proper profession for a knight—not merely to fast one Friday in a hundred years, but to stand by every man and woman who seeks plain truth, and never desert them for love or money.

- 21 Kenneth Muir, *The Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1963), p. 38. Thomson, *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, p. 37, quotes the poet's father on receiving the news of his son's imprisonment in 1536: "If he be a true man, as I trust he is, his truth will him deliver."
- 22 Sir Thomas Wyatt, *Collected Poems*, ed. J. Daalder (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 18.
- 23 In the editions by Muir and by Muir and Thomson, a semicolon is placed after "agreeable." This is removed by Daalder and Rebholz, I think correctly.
- 24 The commentary and edition of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* by Giovanni Andrea Gesualdo, published in 1533, presents sonnet 190 as the description of an "amorosa caccia." It is uncertain whether Wyatt had seen this edition when he composed "Who so list." Thomson has discussed his relation to the various commentaries on the *Canzoniere* in "Wyatt and the Petrarchan Commentators," *Review of English Studies* 10 (1959): 225-33.
- It is perhaps worth noting that the *impresa* of Lucrezia Gonzaga portrayed a white hind under a laurel with the motto "Nessun mi tocchi." See A. Salza, *Luca Contile* (Florence: Carnesecchi, 1903), p. 214.
- 25 Alastair Fowler writes: "Even if 'Who so list to hunt' belongs to a love-complaint sub-genre with a Petrarchan tradition, Wyatt was free to modify its individual types. He could use or ignore its forms, to make a distinct work in neither obedience nor reaction to Petrarch. What matters is the poetic use to which Wyatt puts his material and his forms, whether Petrarchan or other" (*Conceitful Thought: The Interpretation of English Renaissance Poems* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975], p. 4). Wyatt was certainly free to modify, but once he chose his subtext, he was not free not to react. He was not committed to obedience, but once he had made an allusion to the

- well-known poem by Petrarch a constitutive element of his own, he was committed to some form of reaction.
- 26 Horace, *Satires*, 2.5, 75-76, 93-98.

Chapter 13. Accommodations of Mobility in the Poetry of Ben Jonson

- 1 One easy way to measure this importance is to consult Vives's name in the index of T. W. Baldwin's survey, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944).
- 2 *Joannis Ludovici Vivis Valentini Opera omnia*, 8 vols. (Valencia: Monfort, 1782-90; repr. London: Gregg, 1964), 6:389. The English text is from *Vives: On Education*, trans. Foster Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. 232. References are to these editions.
- 3 "No art or discipline was ever conceived at the beginning in such unblemished condition that it did not have a mixture of useless and perishable waste. The powers of human nature never produce something perfect and complete; there is always something missing to the peak of possible perfection" (Quoted by Carlos G. Noreña, *Juan Luis Vives* [The Hague: Nijhoff, 1970], p. 150). Latin text in *Opera omnia*, 6:16.
- 4 *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-51), 8:567. Future quotations from Jonson will be taken from this edition; references will indicate the volume and page.
- 5 Quoted by Noreña, *Vives*, p. 161. *Opera omnia*, 6:61.
- 6 Roger Ascham, *The Schoolmaster*, ed. L. V. Ryan (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 115. In the case of Ascham I have decided to alter my practice of quoting Renaissance authors in the original spelling, since Ascham is not a poet and since sixteenth-century spelling would impose a misleading quaintness on his prose for many modern readers.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 8 Ascham criticizes Ricci's treatise on imitation for stopping short of the detailed, exhaustive comparisons that would really illuminate the art of the imitator. Ricci might have cited a number of episodes in which Virgil follows Homer (Ascham lists them), and other briefer passages: ". . . as similitudes, narrations, messages, descriptions of persons, places, battles, tempests, shipwrecks, and commonplaces for divers purposes, which be as precisely taken out of Homer as ever did painter in London follow the picture of any fair personage. And when these places had been gathered together by this way of diligence, then to have conferred them together by this order of teaching: as, diligently to mark what is kept and used in either author in words, in sentences, in matter; what is added; what is left out; what ordered otherwise, either *praeponendo*, *interponendo*, or *postponendo*, and what is altered for any respect. . . . If Riccius had done this, he had not only been well liked for his diligence in teaching but also justly commended for his right judgment in right choice of examples for the best imitation" (*Ibid.*, pp. 124-25; see also pp. 117-18).
- 9 Colet writes that the pupil at Saint Paul's school should "above all besyly lerne and rede good latyn authours of chosen poetes and oratours, and note wysely how they wrote, and spake, and study alway to folowe them, desyryng none other rules but their examplis." Colet goes on to state that rules and precepts are less useful to the pupil than reading,