

Henry Howard, Thomas Nashe, Christopher Marlowe, and Queer Humanism in the  
Sixteenth Century

By

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## Abstract

This dissertation inspects the recurrent tendency of the verse works of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, Thomas Nashe, and Christopher Marlowe to draw on classical *topoi* to reflect critically on individual and collective memory as a source of alienation, trauma, and affective distance from the past. It defines this largely untheorized pessimistic orientation towards the past as a queer aesthetic born out of “failed” acts of imitation and argues that it emerges clearly in Surrey’s partial translation of the *Aeneid*, which replaces the optimism of its closest source material, Gavin Douglas’s 1513 *Eneados*, with an ambivalence towards the narrative and its characters. The dissertation also excavates the process through which Howard’s poems were taken up by Richard Tottel in the decade after his death, and then by Nashe and Marlowe in the final decade of the century, with the latter writers producing a similarly tense, queer relationship with memory and the humanist epic in their own texts.

## Introduction

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and son of the most powerful man in England aside from the king himself, was alone when he wrote these words:<sup>1</sup>

“O place of blyse! renewer of my wo[e]s!  
 Geve me accompt wher is my noble fere,  
 Whome in thy walles thow didest eche night enclose,  
 To other lief, but unto me most dere”<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps expecting his father, the Duke of Norfolk, to protect him, Surrey had struck another courtier in the presence of King Henry VIII, and was for this transgression

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To improve the readability of quoted texts I have made the following emendations universally throughout this dissertation: where they are interchangeable u’s have been emended to v’s, i’s to j’s, the long s to s, and the letter yogh to y or gh as appropriate.

<sup>1</sup>Henry Howard was the eldest son of Thomas Howard, third Duke of Norfolk. “Earl of Surrey” was a courtesy title bestowed upon him by his father which did not come with any estates and was not strongly associated with the region of the same name. He is “Surrey” in almost all places throughout this dissertation to avoid confusion with the many other relevant figures with whom he shares a surname.

<sup>2</sup>Quotations from this poem and others by Surrey are cited as they appear in *The Poems of Henry Howard Earl of Surrey* (ed. F.M. Padelford, Haskell House 1966), with this poem appearing pp. 69-70. Richard Tottel titles this poem “Prisoned in windsor, he recounteth his pleasure there passed” in his *Songes and Sonnettes* of 1557.

briefly imprisoned in Windsor castle.<sup>3</sup> Yet, as Surrey clarifies in these lines and those which precede them, his physical confinement is “lesse” a grief than the personal loss he has come to dwell upon: the death of the king’s son and his own most beloved companion, Henry Fitzroy, from illness the previous year.

As Surrey charts a path backwards through his recollections of Windsor’s gardens and halls in search of memorial consolation, he finds instead that “eche swete place returns a taste full sowre.” Seen in the dim light of memory, his experiences and learning offer the poet no reliable guide. The possibility of abstracting or overcoming his own pain is banished by the “voyd walls” that enclose the poem’s speaker, until his exhausted memory can only grasp at the ironic relief offered by total surrender to the present experience of trauma:

Thus I, alone, where all my fredome grew,

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<sup>3</sup> On the events of Surrey’s life and the dating of his poetic works I am indebted to William A. Sessions’ magisterial biography *Henry Howard, The Poet Earl of Surrey: A Life* (Oxford University Press 1999). Other accounts of Surrey’s life consulted in this dissertation, in addition to the brief but informative sketch offered by Padelford, include Susan Brigden, “Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1516/1517-1547)” in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press 2004), Jessie Childs, *Henry VIII’s Last Victim: The Life and Times of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey* (Jonathan Cape 2006), and David Head, *The Ebbs and Flows of Fortune: The Life of Thomas Howard, Third Duke of Norfolk* (University of Georgia Press 1995). Greg Walker reads this period in relation to Surrey’s poetry in *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford University Press 2005) p. 379-388.

In prison pyne with bondage and restraint;  
 And with remembraunce of the greater grief  
 To bannishe the lesse, I finde my chief reliefe.

Surrey's turn away from consolation and towards his surroundings at the end of this poem (most often called "So Crewell Prison" after its first line) demarcates a queer aesthetic space in which it is possible to question not just the efficacy of the flawed individual human memory, but memory's general utility as a moral and emotional guide.<sup>4</sup> Once Surrey's faith in memory is shaken a new set of objects come into focus for him, and Windsor appears not only as a temporally inchoate and inadequate designator for a physical place, but also as a political metonym for the vicious and paranoid court environment that sprung up in the wake of Henry Fitzroy's death.<sup>5</sup> With this reorientation accomplished, the trite inconvenience of Surrey's confinement in Windsor becomes instead a symbol of the present's alienation from the imagined freedom of the past. Acknowledging that this gap remains unbridgeable even through memory allows Surrey

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<sup>4</sup> My use of "space" here follows Stephen Guy-Bray, who himself draws upon Michel de Certeau's conception of "space as a practiced place." See Guy-Bray, *Homoerotic Space: The Poetics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (University of Toronto Press 2002) p. 7; and Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (trans. Steven Rendall, University of California Press 2011). On the epistemology of space as queering see Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press 2006) p. 25-64.

<sup>5</sup> Sessions 70-71.

to position his grief for Fitzroy as not only calculatedly immodest in its depth, but also as powerfully exclusive, unique to his and Fitzroy's shared lovers' chronotope. Like Troy in the *Aeneid*, Fitzroy stands as the poem's historical center, with Surrey's attempts to reach back to a moment before his absence finding only that absence's traces.

This dissertation argues that Surrey's turn backwards in "So Cruell Prison" is one example of a recurrent tendency within his poetry to reflect on both individual and collective memory as a source of alienation, trauma, and a sense of distance from the past.<sup>6</sup> Surrey's original verses and translations testify not only to his fixation on scenes of irrevocable bereavement and frozen trauma, but also to his persistent sense of history as

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<sup>6</sup> I reference the concept of "temporal distance" repeatedly throughout this dissertation to describe an active sense of the present's alienation from the past, often accompanied by a corresponding sense of loss. The idiom through which I describe this linked pair of ideas, which I do not see as being a historically-specific creation of the events of a particular time but instead as a broad pattern visible in the writing of many queer poets across time, is drawn from Leonard Barkan, *Transuming Passion: Ganymede and the Erotics of Humanism* (Stanford University Press 1991) and Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (Yale University Press 1999); and Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (Yale 1982). The phrase "temporal distance" itself is intended as a literary counterpart to the historian Johan Huizinga's concept of "historical distance," as is laid out in Hollander et al., "The Metaphor of Historical Distance" in *History and Theory* 50 (December 2011). Some of the language of shock, recency, and modernity in relation to which I discuss this concept is additionally inspired by Larry F. Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (University of Chicago Press 2011). Finally, my work on queer time is indebted to my colleague Emily Loney, whose 2021 dissertation is titled "Preposterous Revisions: Reordering Space and Time in the Sidney Circle."



a site of alienation. Despite his place at the zenith of personal privilege and unearned status Surrey looked down on the society that elevated him so high, and complained incessantly throughout his verse that the people of the present age were “lechers” mired in “lothsome vyce,” that his king was “drenched in slouthe a[nd] womanishe delight,” and even that his own “rakhell life” of shallow pleasure had gradually “growne into disdayne” and “endles dispaire.”<sup>7</sup> When he looks towards the classical tradition he is similarly drawn to its discontents, but finds little to suggest hope or the promise of providence in Homeric scenes of exile, warfare, and suicide. For Surrey, the guiding trope which defines memory and history alike is loss, which provides a common language for expressing both alienation from the past and longing for that which is absent.

After I spend the first half of this dissertation establishing the parameters of this melancholy pattern in Surrey’s verse, I move on to examining the way that the theme of alienation from the past reoccurs in the work of the Elizabethan writer Thomas Nashe. Nashe was fascinated by Surrey’s era and set several of his works during it, even including Surrey as a prominent character in *The Unfortunate Traveller*. I follow Marshall McLuhan in seeing Nashe’s work as a hyper-critical palimpsest of the learning of his age; he is “a defender of the old theology” of patristic exegesis and interpretation who puts

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<sup>7</sup> Padelford 70,75,77-78. The idea that the Sardanapalus poem reflects negatively on Henry VIII is ubiquitous and largely uncontroversial in studies of Surrey’s poetry. On its specific political context see Walker 408-410.

his penchant for stylistic innovation to use in satirizing those whom he feels are perverting the Christian humanist tradition by promoting shallow knowledge and rote memorization.<sup>8</sup> Nashe's portrayal of Surrey attributes a similar kind of intellectual shallowness to him, but his parodic imitations of Surrey's poetry also disclose a somber, even nostalgic recognition of how unreachable that not-too-distant past seemed during the century's final decade. The final chapter's reading of Nashe and Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragedie of Dido, Queene of Carthage* suggests that this way of looking at the past is at least partially inherent to both the classical text and the humanist method of hermeneutics itself—that, if we take the humanist commitment to representation seriously, the past is necessarily both a foreign country and a mirror to the self.

In reflecting upon memory's shortcomings and failures, this dissertation is indebted to the past several decades of medieval and early modern scholarship on the subject.<sup>9</sup> As Timothy J. Reiss has emphasized, Augustine's philosophy of justification

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<sup>8</sup> McLuhan, Marshall. *The Classical Trivium: The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Learning of His Time* (ed. W. Terrence Gordon, Gingko Press 2006) pp. 213.

<sup>9</sup> A non-exhaustive list of works on memory consulted in this dissertation include Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge University Press 2008); Stephen Clucas's "Memory in the Renaissance and Early Modern Period" in *Memory: A History*, edited by Dmitri Nikulin pp. 151–175 (Oxford University Press 2015); Andrew Hiscock, *Reading Memory in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge University Press 2011); Judith Pollman, *Memory in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (Oxford University Press 2018) .

accords memory the central role in determining both a person's moral character and their ability to experience Christian salvation; this in turn made it the faculty most worth training according to most educators.<sup>10</sup> Faith, for Augustine and his inheritors, is a matter of remembering one's pre-material place in the universe as an extension of God's divine will. However, Stephen Clucas has observed that, despite memory's core importance to early modern theology and theories of cognition, a student at an early modern European university who searched for the term *memoria* in his dictionary was likely to be confronted by a confusing heap of authoritative definitions: he would learn that "memory" might refer to a purely mental process of attenuating thought and experience through time (as in Aristotle), to the central part of the soul which sorts between sense experience and true knowledge (as in Plato and Augustine), or even to a mere product of *fantasia*, the imaginative faculty.<sup>11</sup> In the queer aesthetic space opened by poetry memory can be even more than that, serving as a semi-transparent, magical medium which joins the dead and living together in dialog. Because the concept of memory was flexible and largely scalar, it could stand in for and relate to broader questions of moral and political normativity;

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<sup>10</sup> Timothy J. Reiss, *Mirages of the Self: Patterns of Personhood in Ancient and Early Modern Europe* (Stanford University Press 2002) pp. 236-266.

<sup>11</sup> Clucas 133-139.

because it was an ordering force, denying memory's power often reads as a question or threat to order more broadly.

Despite *memoria's* wide-ranging powers, the individual human memory was universally regarded as imperfect by these same classical authorities because even a well-trained faculty could still err, producing knowledge that seemed certain but was not. Early modern memory as a generalized concept implies a vision of an ordered, understandable universe; the particularities of the individual memory, by contrast, tended to highlight the mind's weakness and unreliability. For the poets I read in this dissertation, neither secular nor religious philosophy offered an acceptable answer to the problems memory and forgetting posed. Instead, they approached memory through the humanist methodology of imitation, a deep and complex hermeneutic process that could "go wrong" in countless ways.<sup>12</sup> Those ostensible mistakes are the subject of this dissertation, and I argue that they open space for the queer interpretation of literary history and practice in ways that more "successful" attempts at synchronizing humanist hermeneutics with particular texts do not.

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<sup>12</sup> On imitation in humanist poetry see Greene; Elizabeth Bearden, *The Emblematics of the Self: Ekphrasis and Identity in Renaissance Imitations of Ancient Greek Romance* (University of Toronto Press 2012); George W. Pigman III "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance" in *Renaissance Quarterly* 33.1 (Spring 1980); and *The Reception of Antiquity in Renaissance Humanism* (ed. Manfred Landfester, Brill 2018).

In the remainder of this introductory chapter I lay out the structure of the dissertation, followed by brief explanations of several key terms.

## Methodologies and Key Concepts

### QUEER HUMANISM

Surrey's chain of continuous turns backwards in "So Cruell Prison" reflects a larger set of tensions that inhere in the early modern humanist poet's relationship with the past, memory, and the notion of loss. What makes Surrey's poetry and the other works featured in this dissertation unusual is their resistance to resolving these tensions, which they instead repeatedly re-stage and even revel in.

I read Surrey's negative relationship with pastness in two related ways in this dissertation, with the same heuristics applying more loosely to Nashe. First, the slow march towards non-consolation which suffuses "So Cruell Prison" and much of Surrey's other poetry reflects a sense of time experienced as "pyn[ing] with bondage and restraint," as well as a recognition of the fact that this experience of time is out of joint with that of others ("To other leefe, but unto me most dere.") Surrey's moribund sense of time enables a necromantic form of relationality for the speaker of "So Cruell Prison," lending him an idiom through which to express the particularity of his and Fitzroy's specific affective bond and to distinguish it from those which Fitzroy shared with others.

In so cloistering himself and Fitzroy, Surrey asserts a relationship with the past which is unsettled, traumatic, and self-consciously restricted to the limited realm of personal experience. In place of seeking consolation through comparison, Surrey avers that his and Fitzroy's experience is singular; in its insistence on difference from normative relationalities and histories this difference in turn constitutes a queer aesthetic.<sup>13</sup> The simultaneously arrogant and mournful sense that the speaker's way of loving and relating to others is different and must be addressed differently is a form of queer relationality because it rejects the binarism of comfort, restitution, and cure as responses to trauma; instead, it accepts and builds a subject around historical alterity. In place of wishes for enduring poetic fame or hope for a literal spiritual afterlife, Surrey denudes his own personal history and exposes it as a chronicle of unrestituted agonies.

Second, we can read Surrey and Nashe's shared backwards turn as a set of relatively conventional engagements with early modern humanist poetry and aesthetics which, in part due to the unusual situations both writers found themselves in, nevertheless tended to accentuate the queer and discordant elements within humanism. In Surrey's case, this is because he was executed at the age of thirty, with his poems and translations being printed during the following decade out of a desire to keep alive (and

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<sup>13</sup> On narcissism as a queerly productive and utopian mythic paradigm see Steven Bruhm, *Reflecting Narcissus: A Queer Aesthetic* (University of Minnesota Press 2001).

trade on) his personal reputation. Compared to the other pre-eminent *Aeneid* translations from the same century, Douglas's 1514 *Eneados* and Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twyne's *Aeneid* of 1584, Surrey's is clumsy and laden with mistakes. Although Surrey had been extraordinarily educated for a sixteenth-century English nobleman, being both conversant with the classical poetic and historical canons and a fluent reader of Latin and Italian vernacular texts, his education was narrow and abbreviated compared to that of virtually any other humanist figure from the period, and even more so those from later decades.<sup>14</sup> His reputation as a humanist translator instead rests almost entirely on the aesthetic qualities of his *Aeneid* itself, and in particular Surrey's ability to replicate the compression and weight of Virgil's Latin through his starkly laconic blank verse.<sup>15</sup>

I argue that Surrey's place in the wider world of humanist letters and philosophy is interesting precisely because he was at most only partially involved in it, being instead a young, precociously talented amateur with no professional or financial interest in proving his acumen. Surrey's translations were not widely printed in the

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<sup>14</sup> Sessions 18-19, 46-57.

<sup>15</sup> On Surrey as a humanist translator see Ridley, *Aeneid* 30-46; O.B. Hardison Jr., "Tudor Humanism and Surrey's Translation of the *Aeneid*" in *Studies in Philology* 83.3 (Summer 1986) and *Prosody and Purpose in the English Renaissance* (Johns Hopkins University Press 1989); David A. Richardson, "Humanist Intent in Surrey's *Aeneid*" in *English Literary Renaissance* 6.2 (Spring 1976).

decades after his death and appear to have fallen out of the English public consciousness by the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> The reasons for this are likely a mixture of untimeliness and the general quality of his work, for, although Surrey has an eye for imitating Virgil's style, his lack of a more scholarly translator's command of Latin results in frequent errors, and the meter itself is so unrefined that the poem "simply fails to imitate the sound and movement of the Latin epic" for much of its length.<sup>17</sup> Surrey's odd place within the history of English humanism as a momentous and influential failure is born out of material circumstances, as he both benefitted from the privilege to choose the life of the mind and suffered the misfortune of living that life only partially. Thus, he has the rare distinction of being a truly amateur translator whose translations were actually printed, and for whom we cannot point to a later work as evidence of the writer's development. Reading his poetry while centering the uniqueness of his position highlights the value of adopting a novitiate positionality in relation to the text, as well as pointing towards the unsettled queerness of the relation

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<sup>16</sup> Hardison, "Tudor Humanism" 243. The fact that Nashe mentions Thomas Faire's *Aeneid* but not Surrey's in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* despite his obvious interest in Surrey as a historical figure strongly suggests the work was not widely known by the later Elizabethan period.

<sup>17</sup> Richardson 205.



with history that defines both early modern humanism and our contemporary orientations towards that concept.

As Rebecca Bushnell has observed, present-day political questions about “humanism”—what that word means, whether it is a religious or secular ideology, whether we ought to embrace or reject it—are inevitably present whenever we discuss humanism in the early modern period, even if we treat it as an entirely separate historical phenomenon.<sup>18</sup> A glance at the diverse political uses that the word has been put towards in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries suggests that its political stakes are still active, particularly if we view secular and religious forms of humanist discourse as being produced dialectically through one another rather than existing as two separate ideological strands.<sup>19</sup> This dissertation therefore proceeds from the assumption that it is impossible to detach the historicist’s idea of “humanism” from our (even unwilling) affective engagement with the stakes of humanist education as it exists in the modern day. For this reason, interpreting humanist poetry and prose historically must necessarily involve methodologically foregrounding the historical distance inherent in our own perspective as moderns.

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<sup>18</sup> Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Cornell 1996).

<sup>19</sup> On humanism as a dialectic see Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism* (trans. Otto A. Bird, University of Notre Dame Press 1996.)

This bifurcation of our shared perspective compounds an already-existing problem of definition, for even if we confine the meaning of “humanism” to the specific set of educational practices recommended by Leonardo Bruni (as in Paul Oskar Kristeller’s formulation of the concept,) we nevertheless run into the problem of understanding exactly what Bruni meant, and whether his students interpreted him correctly.<sup>20</sup> Bruni’s description of the proper fields of study as the “*studias humanitatis*” is a reference to an apparent neologism found in Cicero’s *Pro Archia*:

“*Etenim omnes artes quae ad humanitatem pertinent habent quoddam commune vinculum[.]*”

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Indeed, all the arts pertinent to [*humanitatem*] have a measure of common bond[.]<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See especially Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Classics and Renaissance Thought* (Harvard University Press 1955) and *Renaissance Thought and its Sources* (Columbia University Press 1979), and contrast with Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Harvard University Press 1986). Nicholas Orme makes a convincing historicist counter-argument for the presence of a continuous English tradition of schooling incorporating these elements from the thirteenth century in *Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England* (Hambledon Press 1989).

<sup>21</sup> On the popularity of the *Pro Archia* in the quattrocento see Benjamin G. Kohl, “The changing concept of the “*studia humanitatis*” in the early Renaissance” in *Renaissance*

In his letters to Quintus, Cicero had used “*humanitatem*” to mean something close to compassion or civility.<sup>22</sup> In the context of the *Pro Archia*, however, the word suggests a more nebulous set of relations between rhetoric, poetry, and a generalized sense of moral virtue (in a sense which is perhaps closer to Greek ἀρετή than Roman *virtu*, but not quite as anodyne as the English “excellence.”) For this reason, as Benjamin Kohl observes, “ambiguity surrounding the meaning of the *studia humanitatis* existed from the very introduction of the term”—the promise of cultivating one’s human capacities was present, but what those capacities might be varied tremendously by context.<sup>23</sup> In Italy, the *studia humanitatis* meant grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy in the schools of small handful of masters; even then, however, the methods used in these schools tended to concentrate so closely around the practices of translation and imitation that, by the middle of the sixteenth-century, “[the *studia humanitatis*] meant close

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*Studies* 6.2 (June 1992) pp. 185-209. This and other unattributed translations from Latin throughout this dissertation are my own.

<sup>22</sup> Cicero, *Letters to Quintus* etc. (ed. D.R. Shackleton Bailey, Harvard University Press 2002) l. 109. The line is “docere videris istius generis humanitatem, qua quidem ego nihil utor abs te,” which Bailey translates as “it looks as though you are giving me a lesson in this kind of thoughtfulness, for which I have no use when it comes from you.” Paul Oskar Kristeller discusses the Greek origins of this concept in Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts: a Study in the History of Aesthetics Part 1” in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12.4 (October 1951) pp. 496-527.

<sup>23</sup> Kohl 201.

philological comment on one or two set Latin texts rather than instruction in five specific disciplines.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, even a purely historical definition of humanism must account for the always-existing play of reference between the idea of the *studia humanitatis* as a collection of fields; as a “set of shared practices” reflecting “a shift from scholasticism’s emphasis on logic to the study of ‘grammar’ and rhetoric”; as the set of uncodified and individualized hermeneutic practices that grew out of that emphasis; and as a generalized term for works of high social or cultural acclaim.<sup>25</sup> This fact needn’t preclude us from adopting a historicist idea of what “humanism” might mean, but it suggests that any such definition would need to view humanism as an emergent set of educational and reading practices with a porous set of boundaries, rather than a top-down regime of study. For the purposes of this dissertation, I define humanism (much) more loosely as the set of epistemological relationships between objects and time through and in which the individual humanist finds themselves represented. Even a humanist who slavishly follows a particular teacher or method still acquires a unique identity in a historical sense,

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<sup>24</sup> Kohl 201.

<sup>25</sup> Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching* 8. For a more thorough evaluation of the disjuncture between Guarino’s theory and practice see Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, “Humanism and the School of Guarino: A problem of Evaluation” in *Past and Present* 96 (August 1982) pp. 51-80.

as a participant in a tradition in which all practitioners are aware of themselves as distinct from those in other places and periods. One might think of Umberto Eco's metaphor of the church as a series of river deltas—the line of transmission becomes infinitely thin at certain points, but it never stops flowing.<sup>26</sup>

For Bushnell, recognizing the multiplicity of the humanist tradition entails a focus on the particular interests and proximate, local knowledges which inform the creation of individual texts: “ideally, a focus on the ‘local,’ whether in the complex rhetoric of a text or the shifting dynamics of a single relationship, allows us to appreciate the multiple and contradictory *possibilities* of a historical moment.”<sup>27</sup> There is a productive paradox here, as Bushnell theorizes that a focus on the only-partially-overlapping particularity of historical objects can reveal a general tendency of humanist writing and hermeneutics to produce a sense of possibility or historical indeterminacy— attempts to read texts for their specific local context inevitably also create a general sense of what “the local” is and does.<sup>28</sup> If one extends this logic very slightly, it applies equally as well to humanism: local, particular humanisms, originating even from a single poet's ham-fisted explorations

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<sup>26</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (trans. William Weaver, Harcourt 1983) p.198.

<sup>27</sup> Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching* p. 22.

<sup>28</sup>The anthropologist Clifford Geertz, from whom the modern “local knowledge” paradigm largely originates, writes extensively on this relationship throughout Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books 1973) and *Local Knowledge* (Basic Books 1983).

outside the context of the early modern academy, can reveal the presence of certain general elements in humanism as a whole.

In this dissertation, that intersection between the general and particular is found in the way that particular texts relate to the past by expressing both filiation and difference. As has been observed in many of the works which influenced this dissertation, such moments of hermeneutic individuation frequently involve fragmentary conversation with once-acceptable but, by the sixteenth-century, anathematized ideas like Lucretianism, republicanism, and the acceptability or preferability of homosexual relationships (these subjects are discussed in the humanist critiques of Jonathan Dollimore; Bushnell and Greg Walker; and Leonard Barkan, respectively).<sup>29</sup> As Stephen Guy-Bray compellingly argues, however, this is not purely a case of early modern poets encountering alien cultural norms and not knowing what to do with them—rather, it was entirely possible for early modern humanists to read homosexual (or for that matter atheistic, or anti-monarchical) themes into works which were not read the same way in

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<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Palgrave Macmillan 2003); Rebecca Bushnell, *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Cornell University Press 1990); Greg Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford University Press 2007).

their original context.<sup>30</sup> When examined in their particularity, such instances can produce plausible historical knowledge of a given hermeneutic process—but when several such instances are taken together, as this dissertation does, they instead begin to cast light on the essentially queer qualities of humanism itself.

Elizabeth Freeman links the sense of possibility one encounters in trans-temporal filiation, disaffiliation, and philology to what she calls “temporal drag,” “the classically queer drag practice of drag performance [...] as a counter-genealogical practice of archiving culture’s throwaway objects.”<sup>31</sup> In Freeman’s sense temporal drag refers to the tendency of queer culture<sup>32</sup> to recycle its own aesthetic creations in ways that disrupt normative hierarchies dependent on habituated senses of timing or timeliness—or, to put it less grandiosely, to operate in a “mode of stubborn identification with a set of social coordinates that exceed [one’s ] own historical moment.”<sup>33</sup> Freeman’s example of

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<sup>30</sup> Guy-Bray, *Homoerotic Space* 23-25.

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Duke University Press 2010) p. xxiii. The concept originates from Freeman, “Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations” in *New Literary History* 31.4 (Autumn 2000) pp. 727-740.

<sup>32</sup> Although Freeman’s work concerns twentieth and twenty-first century queer media, temporal drag as a concept does not require a totally time-bound understanding of what “queer community” might entail (and a phrase like “modern queer culture” would enforce.) See Max H. Hirsch, *Queer Theory and Social Change* (2013) pp. 13-31, 116-117.

<sup>33</sup> “Packing History” 728.

temporal drag is a young student “dressed like my feminist teachers had in college [...] Birkenstocks, wool socks, jeans, and a women's music T-shirt,” but we might just as easily associate the notion with Surrey, who not only brought Roman poetic styles into English, but also played at being Julius Ceasar as a child and at least once sat for a portrait which “looks exactly like the bust of a Roman emperor,” seemingly wearing a toga.<sup>34</sup> As in Freeman’s example, the queerness of these acts are chiefly relational: regardless of whether they were intended as performance of queer filiation, they are always subject to being read as such by (momentarily) temporally fixed onlookers.

To my knowledge, the first modern scholar who noticed that there was a common element between the way that early modern humanists interacted with texts and the way that the queer subject relates to history was Barkan, whose 1991 monograph makes the case that, for at least some humanists, the discourses of translation were a simultaneous framework for thinking about and shibboleth for speaking to same-sex desire. For Barkan, the key semiotic figure for this transfer of meaning is transumption (*metalepsis*), the process whereby one sign comes to stand for another through a repeated chain of (cross-generational) repetition.<sup>35</sup> Guy-Braye,

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<sup>34</sup> “Packing History” 727; Sessions 78, 150.

<sup>35</sup> Barkan, “Transuming Passion” 43-44.



however, points out that a metaleptic reading of the interpretive tradition positions the core of that tradition as “essentially repressive” despite the fact that the same tradition consists in part of queer people writing to one another and about themselves. Instead, Guy-Braye argues that “homosexual desire does not inhere in the ancient forms or texts themselves; rather, it inheres or can inhere in interpretation.”<sup>36</sup> That is, something about the humanist methodology of textual comparison, translation, and interpretation itself constitutes a historical other that can be read in terms of homosexual desire, the desire to embody or experiment with gender, and other forms of potentially destabilizing or socially stigmatized affective relationships to the text. Hence, even critical approaches which explicitly reject identification as a category of analysis, such as Valerie Traub’s, have nevertheless tended to uncover strong affective links between the humanist hermeneutic process and the hermeneutic processes through which we, as queer scholars writing in modernity, come to understand ourselves.<sup>37</sup>

What makes humanist literary imitation queer in this context is less its relationship to sexuality or gender expression and more its contradictory relationship to history. For certain humanists, this allows the humanist approach to history and myth

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<sup>36</sup> Guy-Braye, *Homoerotic Space* 13.

<sup>37</sup> Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge 2002) pp. 326-354.

to operate as queer theory today does in relation to history — that is, as a total methodological engagement which also unsettles the normative arrangements of the present.

The contradiction for the humanist is as follows. On the one hand, the humanist finds in history the essential proof of their discipline: the fact that there is a historical “human” object to be studied and understood, which maintains enough similarity of character to be recognizable as another self rather than an Other. However, the humanist idea of imitation cannot exist without historical distance. The work which defines the early modern humanist and modern humanist academic, imparting social capital unto both, consists of communication with the aesthetic designs of a dead and in some ways inscrutably alien society. This paradoxical sense of grounding and indeterminacy is expressed neatly in Barkan’s definition of the term:

“‘Humanism’ in the technical Renaissance sense is intrinsically a kind of anthropology — one that begins by seeing the remote culture as having rules, practices, systems, and so forth. Only by self-conscious reflection on that study does it proceed to realize that its own culture might also be a defined object in a similar sense.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Barkan 9.

Although “humanism” and “anthropology” share an identical etymology, the terms signify differently because both methods are temporally alienated from each other. To say that humanism is “intrinsically a kind of anthropology” is a self-conscious historical backreading, which takes as its first principle a positivist (and at least implicitly secularizing) study of humanity and casts it back in time to apply to a field of disciplines that on their surface “lacked a metaphysic.”<sup>39</sup> Yet, Barkan’s “humanism” gets somewhere in a way that the more limited historicist definition does not because it incorporates the downward causality that incites the “problem of humanism” in its method—rather than seeking historical stability, Barkan acknowledges that both imitation and the interpretation of imitative works are always contingent upon imminent structures of feeling. His definition of “humanism” recognizes that the presence of queer humanism is detectable only upon our recognition of humanism (singular)’s permanent and trans-temporal unreachability. A humanist ethos that precludes the possibility of an authentic return to the original opens a door to contrapuntal and in some respects more vivacious modes of historical interpretation.

If some individuals—particularly, but not exclusively those whose sexual, political, and philosophical attractions lead them to be fascinated with the seemingly infinite hermeneutic possibilities of textual imitation and comparison—have continually

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<sup>39</sup> Kohl 185-186.

strived to achieve the form of radical historical communion Barkan describes, it only stands to reason that many more so must have attempted to do so and failed. Implicit in the soaring claims of humanist teachers was a tacit acceptance of the idea that not everyone was worthy of gnosis; it took an unusually virtuous moral character to achieve the deep self-and-other knowledge their methods promised. These theoretical failures would still call themselves humanists, though, and may still lay a claim to the contested narrative of humanist history. Nor does the failure to synchronize a historical view of the world with a view informed by the culture of the present necessarily result in uninteresting or aesthetically lesser works of art.

I argue that the works of Surrey, Nashe, and Marlowe appear radical in their orientation towards morality and society precisely because they rest upon an incomplete process of *metalepsis*. Rather than viewing the shared sign (Aeneas, for example) as the grounding similarity between past and present, the poets surveyed in this dissertation take the classical past as a point of disjunction. For Surrey and his fellow failures, history is not a mirror to the present but instead a magnifying glass, through which the society of the present appears as fatally flawed and lesser in comparison to the occult majesty of the past.

#### FAILURE

The deeply imbricated relationship of historical distance and humanist translation is in part a product of the success/failure heuristic which has long been

applied to translations in the tradition.<sup>40</sup> Robert Greene's *The Light in Troy* contains a robust critical description of humanist failure as one of the building blocks of its core thesis. Greene argues "the imitation of [classical] models was a precept and activity during which [the early modern period] embraced not only literature, but pedagogy, grammar, rhetoric, esthetics, the visual arts, music, historiography, politics, and philosophy" in a historically unique way—that is, Renaissance humanists (or more specifically, for Greene, Petrarch) invented a new method of imitative reading and writing during this period, which we now call "Renaissance humanism."<sup>41</sup> Unlike the historicist understanding of humanism as a set of practices, Greene's post-facto humanism has an explicit *telos*: "Renaissance imitation at its richest became a technique for creating etiological constructs, unblocking—within the fiction of the work—the blockages in transmission which create humanist *pathos*."<sup>42</sup> Although Greene does not attribute failure in any moral or intellectual sense to medieval poetry, he argues that medieval poetics simply "must diverge from the structures of more modern metaphors"

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<sup>40</sup> Another way to put this might be that humanism processes the queer aspects of translation itself as different forms of failure. On the queerness of translation see Marc Démont, "On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts" in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Activism, Practice* (Taylor and Francis 2017) pp. 157-171.

<sup>41</sup> Greene 1.

<sup>42</sup> Greene 19.

because the medieval poet did not perceive historical distance in the same way, instead seeing history in terms of similitude and continuous, active filiation.<sup>43</sup> Regardless of whether we buy this description of medieval poetry (it seems to me to paint with much too broad a brush), it nevertheless sets up a useful hermeneutic frame for understanding the argument that follows. In Greene's conception, the poet's "goal" (or at least the standard by which a successful process of humanist transmission is to be judged) is to produce an anthropology that recognizes and processes historical difference and the dissonance that accompanies it.

For Greene, humanist history, philology, and hermeneutics are all produced at the same historical moment, from the same source: Petrarch's recognition of the profound difference between ancient Rome and the Rome of his own day. Greene argues that Petrarch, in the older Rome, "recognized the possibility of a cultural alternative" and "the basis of a radical critique of his culture [...] that calls [its] ideals themselves into question."<sup>44</sup> Greene calls this Petrarchan proto-humanist method of

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<sup>43</sup>Greene 24.

<sup>44</sup>Greene 90. Ronald K. Witt argues persuasively that the traditional characterization of Petrarch as the "father of Humanism" is reductive, and that a historical account of Italian humanism might instead position its origins in the Franco-Italian conflicts of the thirteenth century. See Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Brill 2000).

interpretation “subreading,” and he links it to a larger quattrocento tendency to approach poetry as “a decipherment of the latent or hidden or indecipherable object of historical knowledge beneath the surface.”<sup>45</sup> In assuming a historical object with unstable and (to an extent) unknowable contours, the subreader engages in a radical and self-directed act of narrative creation which requires them to choose a particular interpretation of the present and its differences from the alien societies which preceded it (it is not an exaggeration to say that Greene gives Petrarch credit for the invention of modern historiography as a concept.) In encountering the foundations of the old Rome and imagining what it (to him) must have looked like, Greene’s Petrarch constructs a philosophical, erotic, and spiritual self chosen from an expansive milieu outside the narrow window that defines the contemporary. According to Greene, this is the origin of the humanist preference for “dialectical imitation,” imitative strategies which “expose the vulnerability of the subtext while exposing [the contemporary author] to the subtext’s potential aggression,” and which at their most successful enable the expression of “a self nourished and matured by the digestive absorption of others.”<sup>46</sup> Through historical distance, the initiate into “the new science of philology” generates a

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<sup>45</sup>Greene 93-94.

<sup>46</sup>Greene 151.

fully formed and encompassed humanist subject who can, at the height of his imitative powers, “assert a limited but authentic shaping power of the imagination over the passage of history.”<sup>47</sup>

Greene’s exposure of “a certain element of courage” in Petrarch’s nearly *ex nihilo* creation of this hermeneutics reads as a kind of Homerization of early humanist history, in which Petrarch and Erasmus are cast as epic heroes wringing some drops of historical agency from a medieval worldview in which the creative poet’s particular agency is minimized. My goal in this dissertation is not to critique that project, but rather to point towards a particular path it fails to take. As Greene acknowledges, the Petrarchan experience of synthesizing a narrative of the historical present “more or less alone” is deeply exceptional, and it requires resources and abilities which almost all (in Petrarch’s time and today) lack access to. Consequently, most attempts at classical imitation fail:

The foregoing analysis of imitative strategies should not lead to the assumption that imitation cannot fail; it *can*, of course, and doubtless in more ways than it succeeds. It can fail if the original imitative gesture is made in bad faith, if the subtext is ornamental rather than constitutive, or if the subtext is misread so ineptly as to kill the possibility of a vital

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<sup>47</sup>Greene 47.



passage. It can fail if either subtext or surface text overwhelms the other by a disproportionate contrast of substance and value. The text can lapse into a misplaced scrupulosity of sacramental piety, or into a fruitless game of eclectic manipulation; or it can simply fail to produce an interesting model of history; it can fail to be heuristic.<sup>48</sup>

I suspect that most academic readers of early modern poetry today would be less inclined to see “failures” in these instances than they would deliberate choices, *imitatio* mixed and remixed to suit a particular occasion, genre, or affect. While this orientation towards the text reveals much, its ubiquity has resulted in our loss of the most important benefit that Greene’s taxonomical approach brings with it. In carving a narrow window of historic acceptability, his form of literary history illuminates the precise qualities which imbue failures with disruptive potential—their queerness, if we understand that word to describe relations to history rather than identity.<sup>49</sup>

Humanist failure in this sense is a trait of what art historians Christopher Wood and Alexander Nagel refer to as “anachronic” media: works of art that thematize their own folding of time and chronological instability in a manner not unlike Freeman’s temporal

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<sup>48</sup> Greene 47.

<sup>49</sup>On this sense of the queer see Traub 326-354.

drag.<sup>50</sup> As opposed to an “anachronism,” a “term that carries with it the historicist assumption that every event and every object has its proper location within objective and linear time,” a work of art is anachronic “when it is late, when it repeats, when it hesitates, when it remembers, but also when it projects a future or an ideal.”<sup>51</sup>

Anachronic works queer the workings of time, in other words, but unlike works or objects recognized as anachronistic they can do so without assuming history should flow in a particular direction or order itself around particular nexuses.

The ruins which Petrarch looked on, imagining a Rome that fit them, were anachronic, aliens pulled from an unknown period. They did not become anachronisms until Petrarch and others like him subread them into the history they wished to see, in which Rome was once glorious and could be so in the future. At no point does the queerness of the object fade, but it is more apparent (to the modern eye) in the pre-processed state—as Barkan observes in relation to Roman marbles, the site at which the imitated object is rediscovered “is not only the place where *a* canon is being formed; it is also a place where canonicity itself is receiving some of its crucial modern definitions.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Christopher S. Wood and Alexander Nagel, *Anachronic Renaissance* (Princeton University Press 2010).

<sup>51</sup>Wood and Nagel 13.

<sup>52</sup> Barkan, *Unearthing the Past* p. 3.

A “failure” in Greene’s reading practice results in the prorogation of this in-between state, potentially infinitely.

As Greene’s situation of Petrarch in the ruins amply demonstrates, achronic objects and themes—misrememberings—can implicate their subjects in ways that they themselves do not expect. In considering early modern humanists (especially queer humanists) as implicated subjects I draw upon Michael Rothberg’s formulation of the category.<sup>53</sup> As he observes, the implicated subject is neither perpetrator, nor victim, nor bystander, and yet “helps propagate the legacies of historical violence and prop up [...] structures of inequality” through the daily accidents of being-in-history.<sup>54</sup> Implication varies from ‘complicity’ in that it is looser, and does not necessarily entail an ontological position closer to that of perpetrator and victim—subjects who are implicated, “folded into” historical events, exhibit a wide range of sympathies and affiliations, and may themselves feel victimized by or move against the forces they identify as responsible for their subjection.<sup>55</sup> What Greene names as translatory conflict, moments in which “either subtext or surface text overwhelms the other by a disproportionate contrast of substance

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<sup>53</sup> Michael Rothberg, *The implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford University Press 2019).

<sup>54</sup>Rothberg pp. 1-2.

<sup>55</sup> Rothberg pp. 31-58.

and value," is partially a result of the reader's overwhelming implication in the text and the history it carries.

In Greene's reading practice, correct imitation requires moderation, and an allusion must be suited to its context to ensure the right interpretation. Failures of imitation and their implications are potentially problematic in this regard. Yet, classical translation often provokes these instances of incommensurate comparison when the precedents of history are found to be insufficient to address the urgency of the present crisis. We see such an attempt in the couplet that introduces the Windsor elegy:

So crewell prison! how coulde betyde, alas!  
 As prowde Wyndsour, where I, in lust and joye,  
 With a Kinges soon my childishe yeres did passe,  
 In greater feast than Priams sonnes of Troye:

We might expect the epic hyperbole of these lines to give way to consolation through sustained comparison or dialogue with figures of the past, as in Dante's *Comedia* or Petrarch's *Secretum*. However, Surrey never manages to abstract his sorrow to the plane of history, theology, or even literary reception writ large. Instead, he devotes the next thirty-six full lines of perfectly balanced quantitative verse to explaining how far the delights of Windsor outstripped those of prelapsarian Troy:

The palme play, where, dispoyled for the game,  
 with dased eyes oft we by gleames of loue,

Have mist the ball and got sight of our dame,  
 To bayte her eyes, which kept the leddes above.  
 The graveld ground: with sleeves tyed on the helme:  
 On fomyng horse, with swordes and frendlye hertes:  
 With chere, as though the one should overwhelme,  
 Where we have fought & chased oft with dartes,  
 With sylver dropps the meades yet spredd for rewthe,  
 In active games of nymblenes, and strengthe,  
 Where we dyd strayne, trayled by swarmes of youthe.  
 Our tender lymes, that yet shott upp in length:

In his dejection, Surrey looks back on his everyday memories of companioned play as a unified Homeric games-scene, to which he conjoins the erotic and generically romantic topos of an exchange of gazes between the spectators and “dispoyled” (partially undressed) athletes.<sup>56</sup> However, where the games at Actium and Sicily renew the Trojans’ spirits and reaffirm their commitments to the customs of their home, Surrey’s memories of his and Fitzroy’s games constitute a loss which is simultaneously more personal and literally universal, with the “voyd walls” that once enclosed and protected him having been unexpectedly revised into “renewer[s] of [the poet’s] woes.”

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<sup>56</sup> See for comparison *Aeneid* V.104-150.

*Copia*, the Ciceronian quality of linguistic richness and flexibility so valued by humanist rhetorical theory, is here turned towards the progressive lengthening of the present moment in which the imprisoned self exists, with the poem taking on an exhausting and languorous but also epic quality as Surrey repeatedly attempts to translate his own sorrow into verse.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, Surrey's experiments with alliteration (from *alliteratio*, a word coined within his lifetime)<sup>58</sup> read as desperate grasps at the outermost confines of the language in the hopes that one set of sounds, images, or affects will provide the "relief" the poet seeks.

The result is a poem of ostensible consolation in which the dominant strains are the totality of the speaker's defeat and the immediacy of his despair, and which lacks any clear spiritual element.<sup>59</sup> This is one clear way in which his poetry might be distinguished from Petrarch's, in which the possibilities of death and afterlife are a source of comfort as well as pain:

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<sup>57</sup> See Erasmus, *De Copia* (trans. Donald B. King and H. David Rix, Marquette University Press 1963).

<sup>58</sup> In Giovanni Panto's *Actius* of 1519, which has recently been edited and translated by Julia Haig Gesser (Harvard University Press 2020).

<sup>59</sup>In my thinking on Petrarch and consolation I am deeply indebted to Elizabeth B. Bearden's forthcoming chapter on Petrarch and consolation, which she kindly shared with me. See also George W. McLure, *Sorrow and Consolation in Renaissance Humanism* (Princeton University Press 1990) pp. 18-72.

A quell poco di viver che m'avanza  
 Et al morir degni esser tua man presta :  
 Tu sai ben che 'n altrui non ò speranza.

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Over that little life that still remains to me,  
 And at my death, deign that your hand be present:  
 You know You [God] are the only hope I have.<sup>60</sup>

Surrey's elegy, and his poetry in general, shears away the salvific context, allowing his poetic voice to express a grief which is historically and even spiritually singular. Fitzroy becomes the *locus mundi* for the Windsor elegy, whereas Laura must share that position with some combination of God and Petrarch's own immortal soul as it journeys through the peaks and valleys of his love and grief.

This magnification of the now is a mistake from the early modern Christian perspective—it reflects an inflated view of the individual human life and its meaning—and it is a cause for profound pain throughout many of Surrey's lyrics. Surrey's "froosyn hart" would like to follow the natural movement of the seasons but cannot; he responds to even passing rejection with raging splutters of "might never"s and "thus

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<sup>60</sup> *Canzoniere* 365.12-14.

evermore”s; and although he paints Wyatt’s life vividly he cannot help but see him as “a valiant corps.”<sup>61</sup> Although the future is not absent from Surrey’s verse, these recurrent waves of present-tense trauma leave it queerly marginalized—or squeezed into strange new shapes, as when the “faithful lover” of one particularly long complaint, his earthly “carcass” exhausted, “bequeath[s] [his] weary ghost to serve [the beloved] afterward.”<sup>62</sup> In this persistent uncertainty in the speaker’s spiritual futurity, Surrey’s poetics resemble those of Wyatt and Petrarch, his immediate poetic ancestors, less than they do those of Virgil.

#### THE *AENEID*

In the first chapter of this dissertation I primarily focus on Surrey’s translation of the second and fourth books of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which he probably composed while fighting the king’s wars in France during the 1530s.<sup>63</sup> However, the *Aeneid* as a narrative and cultural mythos is present in some way in every chapter which follows, both because frequent allusions to it are a key signature of Surrey’s poetic style, and because early moderns encountered the *Aeneid* as a text already loaded with associations with learning, childhood, and classical inheritance.

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<sup>61</sup> Padelford 46, 49, 81.

<sup>62</sup> Padelford 67.

<sup>63</sup> Sessions 260-287.



In approaching the early modern *Aeneid* as an ambiguous, polyphonic text, this dissertation draws heavily from the scholarship of Craig Kallendorf as well as Christopher Baswell, Sheldon Brammall, Marilynn Desmond, Andrew Wallace, Marjorie Curry Woods, and uncountable others who have over the last several decades largely overturned what was once a consensus view that during and before the sixteenth-century “the classics [...] spoke with one voice in the schools, urging the students to respect authority, to work for the good within existing systems, and to adhere to the conservative values of discipline, fortitude, and hard work.”<sup>64</sup> Instead, as Kallendorf argues, for at least some of his translators and readers Virgil “served as a filter through which a series of highly original thinkers could construct a series of meditations on marginalization, colonization, and revolution.”<sup>65</sup> Adaptations and translations of the *Aeneid*, as well as commentaries and marginal notations by medieval and early modern readers,

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<sup>64</sup> Craig Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil: ‘Pessimistic’ Readings of the Aeneid in Early Modern Culture* (Oxford University Press 2007) p. 10. See also Kallendorf’s earlier *In Praise of Aeneas: Virgil and Epideictic Rhetoric in the Early Italian Renaissance* (University Press of New England 1989). See also Sheldon Brammall, *The English Aeneid: Translations of Virgil, 1555-1646* (University of Edinburgh Press, 2015); Clare Kinney, “Epic Transgression and the Framing of Agency in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*” in *Studies in English Literature* 40.2 (Spring 2000) pp. 261-276; and Andrew Wallace, *Virgil’s Schoolboys: The Poetics of Pedagogy* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>65</sup> Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil* 14.

demonstrate that the text was often read in creative and surprising ways, even if those readings would be described as errors by their tutors.<sup>66</sup>

I agree with Kallendorf's thesis and have taken it as a critical starting point, but my own project has a more limited set of historical claims. Surrey was an original thinker in many ways, but he did not really need to be to meditate on marginalization and the long tail of historical violence as he translated—those strains were already present not just in Virgil, but in recent decades of history that had unfolded before his and his family's very eyes. By the time Surrey sat down with Douglas "quite literally at his elbow," the Scottish nationalist project Douglas had dedicated his own translations to had collapsed, due in no small part to Surrey's grandfather, Thomas the Duke of Norfolk, overrunning and killing King James IV during the battle of Flodden.<sup>67</sup> I read the facially "radical"

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<sup>66</sup> On the diversity of medieval and early modern responses to Dido see Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge University Press 1995) pp. 19-27, 72-79, 151-160; Marilyn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid* (University of Minnesota Press 1994); Marjorie Curry Woods, *Weeping for Dido: The Classics in the Medieval Classroom* (Princeton University Press 2019). On reading marginalia see Joshua Calhoun, "Reading Habits and Reading Habitats; or, toward an Ecobibliography of Marginalia" in *Early Modern English Marginalia* (ed. Katherine Acheson, Routledge 2019) pp. 15-34

<sup>67</sup> The "elbow" quote is from Gregory C. Kratzmann, *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations 1430-1550* (Cambridge University Press 1980) p. 173. Surrey references his grandfather's regicide in the poem "Eache beeste can chuse his feere according to his minde," in Padelford 73-75.

elements of Surrey's translation, including the general pessimism of the text, as being largely a product of the complex, queer relationality which is produced when humanists interact with texts in which they are personally implicated.

Surrey has a certain room to maneuver around Virgil's poetics because he translates as a student, not a master humanist providing excursus on the text. It was to some extent expected that a young man in Surrey's position would find himself chasing interpretations and translations that break the rules of poetic convention; the difference for Surrey is that his immense privileged prevented him from being punished for them. In circulating his translations, he at most opened himself up to gentle criticism from social inferiors, rather than professional scorn. We might compare his position against that of Petrarch's young copyist and student Giovanni Malpaghini, of whom Petrarch writes

Nunc usque autem imitationibus gaudet, quod suum habet aolas illa,  
 et interdum alieni dulcedine raptus ingenii, contra poeticam  
 disciplinam sic in altura desilit.

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But even now he rejoices in imitations (because he has his own), and sometimes captured by a foreigner's genius, he jumps high against the discipline of poetry.<sup>68</sup>

Greene notes perceptively that "we will not greatly distort the meaning of [Petrarch's] phrase if we link the sweetness with the *alien* character of Virgil's genius," less supportably, he claims that "Petrarch himself was perhaps the first modern man to be intoxicated by this sweetness."<sup>69</sup> Surrey's experience provides evidence that the situation is the opposite of how Greene envisions it: rather than the copyist learning from the master, what Malpaghini has and Petrarch (to his credit) never fully lost is the freedom to indulge in unprescribed and potentially erroneous forms of hermeneutics.

Petrarch, as a loving and critical student of Augustine, would have easily recognized his student's errors as an essential component in the long-term hermeneutic process that leads one to wisdom. In his *Confessions*, Augustine famously writes:

quibus tenere cogebat Aeneae nescio cuius errores, oblitus errorum  
meorum, et plorare Didonem mortuam, quia se occidit ab amore, cum

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<sup>68</sup> Petrarch, *Epistolae de Rebus Familiaribus et Variis* (trans. Josephi Fracassetti, Le Monier 1883) Vol III p. 259. Cited on Greene 94.

<sup>69</sup> Greene 94.

interea me ipsum in his a te morientem, deus, vita mea, siccis oculis  
ferrem miserrimus.

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[I was compelled to learn by heart the errings of Aeneas, forgetting my  
own erring, and to mourn over the death of Dido, who slew herself for  
love, while I looked with dry eyes upon my own miserable death,  
wandering far from God, my life.]<sup>70</sup>

The *Aeneid* fulfills two different roles for the adolescent Augustine: on the one hand his study allows him to learn the language that will eventually save his soul, but on the other, the intense emotion which he feels when he reads Virgil's text risks distracting him from his spiritual pursuits. Beyond the pathos of the Dido and Aeneas narrative, its thematization of erotic love, set in opposition to the duty (*pietas*), reflects the central role that Augustine assigns desire as the active force which pushes us towards both goodness and sin.<sup>71</sup> Distinguishing between these two directionalities of

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<sup>70</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* (trans. Carolyn J.B. Hammond, Harvard University Press 2014) V.1 1.13.

<sup>71</sup> On the concept of "miraculous passion" in Augustine see Melissa E. Sanchez, *Queer Faith: Reading Promiscuity and Race in the Secular Love Tradition* (New York University Press, 2019) pp. 34-44.

love is the work of an entire spiritual and moral life for Augustine, and as both he and Petrarch realize, it represents a form of knowledge that cannot be achieved without errors along the way.

As I discuss in my second chapter, the queerness of Surrey's *Aeneid* from this perspective stems not only from Surrey's own positionality in relation to the text, but also that his translations ended up being printed in the first place. Surrey's *Aeneid* is fragmentary, it includes many clear mistranslations, and it lacks any form of readerly apparatus.<sup>72</sup> As the prefaces to its printed editions testify, the work would not have seen print were it not for Surrey's execution in 1547, which in addition to motivating their publication sacralized his works and shielded them from criticism. Thomas Nashe, writing at the end of the century, will play on this quality in his *Unfortunate Traveller*: the Surrey he depicts in that work is not only a poor student of the classics but a continually failing poet, whose privilege shields him from knowledge of his own ridiculous behavior. Both of these strategies for representing Surrey depict him as an immature poet taken before his time; in doing so, they offer a unique glimpse into the kinds of stretches an errant reader of his class might be permitted.

#### MEMORY

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<sup>72</sup>See Ridley, *Aeneid* 38-39 on Douglas's errors and Surrey's comparatively.

Early modern Christians encountered the *Aeneid* as a text deeply concerned with matters of memory, forgetting, and moral duty. While these themes are unambiguously present in the text, their centrality to subsequent interpretations can probably be traced to Augustine, for whom the *Aeneid* represented both the aesthetic and potential moral depravity of secular literature.<sup>73</sup> Douglas references Augustine's tears in his preface to the fourth book of his *Eneados*:

Thy dowbill wound, Dido, to specify,  
 I meyn thyne amouris, and thi funeral fait,  
 Quha may endyte, but teris, with eyn dry?  
 Augustyne confessis hym self wepit, God wait,  
 Redyng thy lamentabill end mysfortunat.  
 By the wil I repeyt this vers agane,  
 Temporal joy endis wyth wo and pane.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See Sabine MacCormack, *The Shadows of Poetry: Vergil in the Mind of Augustine* (University of California Press 1998).

<sup>74</sup> Douglas, *The Eneados: Gavin Douglas's Translation of Virgil's Aeneid* (Priscilla Bawcutt and Ian C. Cunningham eds., Boydell and Brewer 2022) v2 p.IV 215-221. All citations to Douglas's *Eneados* are listed by volume, book, chapter (or prologue) followed by line numbers.

That “Augustyne [...] hym self” is the benchmark against which Douglas’s own reaction (weeping for Dido while assigning her complete blame) might be measured suggests we are not meant to envision the youthful Augustine as its speaker, who read the *Aeneid* over and over again and prayed the student’s prayer of “*da mihi castitatem et continentiam sed noli modo!*” ([God] grant me chastity and self-control—but not yet!)<sup>75</sup> Instead, Douglas expects us to read with foreknowledge that the young Augustine will eventually grow to reject the worldly love that he, only at that later point, recognizes Dido as personifying. Augustine weeps for the achronic Dido, not the one he (eventually) comes to distance himself from; *The Confessions*, written as an adult, are a record of how that initial, ambiguous temporal relationship was processed as distance and eventually disavowal.

Memory is core to Augustine’s hermeneutics in several respects: it sets experience in narrative order, allowing it to be processed as knowledge; it (in the form of recollection) makes true knowledge accessible at a remove; and, most importantly, it recalls the human soul to its pre-worldly experience of God’s divinity.<sup>76</sup> Memory is also the point at which the reading process is most likely to break down, resulting in a

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<sup>75</sup> *Confessions* v.1 7.7.

<sup>76</sup> On memory in Augustine see Carruthers 32, Hiscock 21, Reiss 250-260.



“failed” interpretation. To foreclose this possibility, Douglas glosses both his and even Augustine’s emotional reaction to the text as a failure to remember that the rejection of “temporal joy” is the goal of interpreting *Aeneid* in the first place. In doing so he makes explicit the question implicit within Augustine’s hermeneutics: if “temporal joy” inevitably results in its own undoing, why do we nevertheless seek it out, and seek to experience it through the narratives of others?

In all of its forms, Surrey’s poetry sits with this paradox of memory without ever resolving it into Augustine’s serene certainty. In his *Aeneid*, these questions break through in his dramatic and unmoralized portrayal of Dido, who appears as a “wounded Queen” overwhelmed by imminence of the present rather than the shallowly characterized “sely Dido” of Douglas’s text. In the Windsor elegy, however, memory itself takes on qualities of confinement as Surrey inverts the *campos et lata pretoria memoria* (“fields and spacious palaces of memory”) promised by Augustine into an endless range of memorial prisons, all unified by Fitzroy’s absence from them.<sup>77</sup> This inversion is itself a classical theme, recalling the general Themistocles’s nonplussed response to a demonstration of the *ars memoria*:

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<sup>77</sup> *Confessions* 10.8. Hammond’s translation.

Themistocles quidem, cum ei Simonides an quis alius artem memoriae polliceretur, 'Oblivionis,' inquit, 'mallem; nam meminisse etiam quae nolo, oblivisci non possum quae volo.'

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In fact Themistocles, when Simonides or some other man offered to teach him the arts of memory, said "I would prefer that of forgetting; for I remember even things I do not want to, but I cannot forget that which I wish to."<sup>78</sup>

As much as memory discourse strains at the edges of human capacity and perfectibility, it also reveals where those borders are. The Windsor elegy takes that logic to its most extreme conclusion by formulating a space in which the activity of memory, rendered uncontrollable by grief, gradually annihilates the entire world outside its walls. Even Surrey's fond recollections of "wide vales [...] that harborde us ech night" and the "walles [that] does eche night enclose" serve to remind us that time inside the poem has ceased to flow, being instead solidified into an unending non-progression of interchangeable points.

In this way, Surrey's poetry seems to reorient itself oppositely to the forward momentum Greene describes in Petrarch, who broadens his own capacity to see and

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<sup>78</sup> Cicero, *De Finibus* (trans. H. Rackham, Harvard University Press 1961), II.105.

exert agency in the world through a continuous series of turns towards the past.

Surrey's range of imagery and syntactic variety instead continuously narrow as he plunges back into memory's depths:

Wherwith, alas! reviveth within my brest  
 The swete accord, such slepes as yet delight,  
 The pleasaunt dreames, the quyet bedd of rest,

Is this last line a failed poetic phrase, or perhaps simply a bad one? If so, perhaps Surrey's inability to describe his yearning for a more restful past in anything other than the most crudely repetitive cliché ("the quyet bedd of rest") itself communicates an affect. Having come full circle from the warm-weather games which began the poem, the memorial voyager's quest for consolatory imagery and language is exhausted. His search for comfort has come up empty. Eventually he is reduced to a pitiful piling-on of labile consonants as the poem's universe constricts to the utmost point of the individual body:

And with this thought the blood forsakes my face,  
 The teares berayne my chekes of dedlye hewe;  
 The which, as sone as sobbing sighes, alas!  
 Upsupped have, thus I my playnt renew:

Surrey pours all of the passionate energies and images that have heretofore characterized the poem into an action with no classical antecedent, in which the

imprisoned poet is further restrained by his own body and must wait for his sobs to subside before continuing. The bilious physicality of his mucous circulating before being reabsorbed reflects an understanding of early modern memory reduced to its most pessimistic formulation, in which it becomes a mere physical impression of the world upon the body. If in the *Aeneid* the tears of others move the hero to manful action and an understanding of his mature place in the epic's world, Surrey's tears have opposite effect—they reduce him to a desperate childishness, as he begs the departed Windsor of his youth to revive.

Defeat opens up new possibilities for identification and expression throughout Surrey's poetry in part because his poetic voice depicts that experience as humiliating, ignominious, and effeminizing. He is intensely sensitive to the transfer of power, whether real or imagined, and he never hesitates to depict the loss of even fantasized power as enduring trauma. Jonathan Crewe reads Surrey's rage as a "suicidal poetics [...] of willfully embraced failure or defeat," but this diagnostic reading risks downplaying just how outward-facing the poet's passion actually is.<sup>79</sup> Although he admits his "plaint" is "hollow," Surrey nevertheless still demands that Windsor "geve [him] account" — that the universe furnishes him a narrative framework for

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<sup>79</sup> Jonathan Crewe, *Trials of Authorship: Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstruction from Wyatt to Shakespeare* (University of California Press 1990) p. 51.

understanding Fitzroy's loss, even if such a thing is impossible. Ultimately, it is this sense of history as a bleeding wound, imminent, palpable and in need of urgent attention, that connects Surrey's classical poetics to Nashe's more deliberately subversive uses of history in *The Unfortunate Traveller* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, as well as the modern discontents that rage at the heart of queer theory. In all of these cases, the impossibility of adequate consolation or recompense spurs not only poetic creation, but the recontextualization of poetry and the aesthetic world in general in light of the immediacy of historical and present trauma.

### Chapter Summaries

Each chapter in this dissertation analyzes one or more sixteenth-century literary works connected to Surrey and his memory. Like nearly all early modern literary works, these were printed and transmitted with the intention<sup>80</sup> of forwarding particular personal, regional, and identarian interests. With the exception of Richard Tottel and his wildly popular *Songes and Sonnettes*, I argue that each of the productions analyzed in this dissertation can be characterized as, at best, a mixed success from this perspective. As contingency intruded into the respective processes through which these works were

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<sup>80</sup> Note that "intention" here and throughout this dissertation is used primarily in reference to the sum of the directed actions which produce the text, rather than referencing the idea of a particular set of goals in the mind of a particular author. On this distinction see Mark Vareschi, "Intention" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Literary Theory* (Oxford University Press 2022) pp. 458-469.

produced, all metamorphosed into surprising forms, taking on unintended associations and implications. When later editors, collators, and imitators took up those same works they were made to account for their alien qualities, and their interventions allowed further layers of hermeneutic and historical alienation to accrete upon the original text. Viewed in this light, the reception history of a particular humanist poet (Surrey) can be seen as a chain of marvelously productive mistakes, each of which prompts a new and unpredictable encounter with the distant original text and the time which produced it.<sup>81</sup> The primary goal of this dissertation is to illustrate the range of hermeneutic possibilities which are unlocked when we relate texts to one another in this way, by concentrating on the gaps in the chain of reception.

My first chapter turns towards Surrey's translation of the second and fourth books of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which he likely produced while abroad (and then, at war) in France and Burgundy during the early 1540s.<sup>82</sup> Compared to its most immediate predecessor,

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<sup>81</sup> In my focus on "failure," and in particular the failure of memory, as a queerly productive paradigm I am indebted to much recent work in queer studies. See Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past* (University of Minnesota Press 2011); Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke University Press 2011) pp. 1-26, 87-122; José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York University Press 2009) pp. 1-18, 131-184. A fuller bibliography of works on the subject can be found in the recently published *Routledge International Handbook of Failure* (ed. Adriana Mica et al., Routledge 2023).

<sup>82</sup> Sessions 260-287.

the Scots-language *Eneados* of the eminent Gavin Douglas, Surrey's *Aeneid* is a student's flawed work which its author never had a chance to improve or complete.<sup>83</sup> It is also a formally innovative poem which Surrey wrote entirely in unrhymed, decasyllabic blank verse long before that style was introduced to the stage by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorbuduc*. I argue against previous critics who have positioned the vast gulf between Douglas's and Surrey's respective *Aeneids* as a reflection of Surrey's more "modern" humanist philosophy of translation, which they see as privileging stylistic similarity to Virgil when compared to Douglas's "medieval" focus on representing the long tradition of Virgillian interpretation and commentary. Instead of contrasting Douglas and Surrey through their place in the teleological narrative of humanist literary development implied by the medieval/modern divide, I instead center their relationality<sup>84</sup> as two translators of the same work separated by mere decades. I argue that their

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<sup>83</sup> A thorough survey of Surrey's dependence on Douglas can be found in Florence H. Ridley, *The Aeneid of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey* (University of California Press 1963) pp. 13-28.

<sup>84</sup> In saying Surrey relates himself to Douglas I mean to imply a complex, dialogic, and dependent process through which the axiomatic assumptions and values we associate with "identity" form. On the concept of queer relationality and its relationship with identity see Ahmed *passim.*; Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (trans. Betsy Wing, University of Michigan Press 1997); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Harvard University Press 2007); John Emil Vincent, *Queer Lyrics: Difficulty and Closure in American Poetry* (Palgrave Macmillan 2002).

respective histories were entwined *not* when Surrey undertook his translation with Douglas's open beside him, but rather when Surrey's grandfather slew both Douglas's king and his patron on the field of battle in 1513, thereby bringing Douglas's literary career and national poetic ambitions to an abrupt halt. Surrey's *Aeneid* not only indexes his resultant ambivalence towards Douglas, but also his alienation from a poetics of translation which, by the time Surrey encountered it, loudly proclaimed its own failures to live up to its author's soaring claims.

My second chapter follows the thread of Surrey's *Aeneid* translations to the decade following his execution in 1547, when over the course of ten years almost all of Surrey's poetic corpus entered print for the first time.<sup>85</sup> I juxtapose three attempts from that period to memorialize Surrey's legacy in different contexts, which together paint a conflicted reception history: a poem signed "H.S." inscribed by an unknown hand as a preface to a handwritten manuscript of Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder's *Paraphrase of the Penitential Psalms*, a printed edition of the fourth book of Surrey's *Aeneid* printed in 1554 by John Day for the Howard family's "orator" (Latin tutor) William Owen, and, finally, the nearly complete Surrey corpus which was printed in Tottel's *Songes and Sonnettes* of 1557.

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<sup>85</sup> One poem of Surrey's, "Wyatt resteth here," was printed during his lifetime. On this event see Sessions 211-212, 239-247. A final Surrey poem, the infamous satire "London! Hast thow accused me", existed only in a single manuscript owned by the Harrington family until Thomas Park included it in his *Nugae Antiquae* of 1804. See Sessions 234-238, Padelford 70-72, 190-191.



Where the former two texts memorialize Surrey's poetic output chiefly in terms of his relationship with Wyatt and Wyatt's son, Tottel's preface and editorial decisions instead assert a radical new form of nationalist literary relationality premised upon Surrey's status as an emblem of a particularly "English" eloquence. I argue that Tottel's decision to reframe Surrey's text in this way was predominantly a response to the Crown's increasing tendency to censor and jail printers (including Day) in the wake of Sir Thomas Wyatt the younger's rebellion in 1554. By positioning Surrey as a romantic occasional poet whose verses relate chiefly to his erotic love for a (decidedly female) Petrarchan beloved, Tottel strategically de-emphasizes Surrey's effusive love for Wyatt, which had become an extreme liability in the years after Wyatt the younger was hanged, drawn, and quartered. I argue that Tottel's nationalist reframing, while ensuring the future success of the miscellany in monetary and literary-historical terms, also strips away the melancholy ambivalence towards the act of poetic production which is otherwise central to Surrey's poetics.

The following chapter skips forward nearly half a century to the printing of Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, a 1594 prose work which features Surrey as a character who engages in historical hijinks alongside the text's narrator, the "King of Pages" Jack Wilton. I argue that Nashe's portrayal of Surrey is influenced by both sides of the reception history examined in the previous chapter: his Surrey appears primarily as a ridiculous parody of Tottel's Petrarchan knight errant, questing about Italy for the

glory of “faire Geraldine,” but additionally discloses a pessimistic, self-destructive poetics that strongly distinguish his acts of literary creation from both Wilton’s and Nashe’s. Nashe captures his and Surrey’s shared ambivalence towards memory and poetry in a series of three imitated lyrics, each of which he attributes to the fictional Surrey despite their readily apparent differences from his real counterpart’s poetic oeuvre. However, where Surrey’s poetry had thematized and embraced the alienness of the classical period and its aesthetics, Nashe instead does the same for the early Tudor world in which Surrey and his contemporaries lived. *The Unfortunate Traveller’s* imitated Surreyan verses articulate a queerly humanist poetics of desire across both physical and temporal distance which disrupts the heterosexual reproductive logic of Tottel’s continuously reprinted miscellany as well as any notion of the possibility of an unproblematic or failure-free literary transmission.

My final chapter turns to *The Tragedie of Dido, Queene of Carthage*, a joint production by Nashe and Christopher Marlowe which was printed in 1594 after having been performed by the Children of Her Majesty’s Chapel at Blackfriars during the previous decade. *Dido* contains no direct references to Surrey’s partial *Aeneid*, which had only been printed twice in the 1550s and was seldom referenced during Marlowe and Nashe’s time. Nevertheless, it turns to the same persistent question of historical memory which attends each of the previous texts as Nashe and Marlowe invert the *Aeneid’s* persistent associations with education and rhetorical attainment to better interrogate the story’s

relevance in the face of despair, violence, and nihilism. Like Surrey's elegy for Henry Fitzroy at Windsor, *Dido's* forgetful poetics suggest a persistent and wide-ranging skepticism on the part of its authors towards the idea that the events of the past can be understood at all, much less turned towards productive or moral purposes. I argue that the conceptual and affective imbrication of these two temporally distant texts is more than a mere coincidence. Instead, I posit that their mutual attention to the question of historical distance is the result of their shared turn towards the same kernel of queer alterity which always inheres within the humanist encounter with memory, history, and imitation, especially as it is present within the Homeric epic.

I conclude with a short essay which positions the hermeneutics of memorial failure showcased in each of the previous chapters as an early modern parallel to what Heather Love has named as a perennial "backwards turn" in queer literature and theory.<sup>86</sup> In Love's parlance, the backwards turn is a consistent (re-)orientation towards relationalities built upon abjected or degraded socialities characterized by ruination, failure, and sterility, through which many queer authors recognize themselves as historically-

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<sup>86</sup> On queer negativity see Love; Lorenzo Bernini, *Queer Apocalypses: Elements of Antisocial Theory* (trans. Julia Heim, Palgrave Macmillan 2017); Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Harvard University Press 1996); Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Duke 2004); Jack Halberstam, "The Politics of Negativity in Recent Queer Theory" in *PMLA* 121.3 (May 2006) pp. 823-825.

constituted subjects and objects of injury.<sup>87</sup> I argue that the poetics of distance which I unearth in each of the preceding chapters point to the same recurrent discontents with history that arise in Love's work. This continual reoccurrence of the same themes demonstrates the extent to which humanism has always been, for some students of it, a discourse and philosophy of history from which the queer subject might be mined.

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<sup>87</sup> Love 22-30.

## Chapter 1:

### Failure in the *Aeneid* Translations of Gavin Douglas and Henry Howard

In this chapter, I argue that previous comparisons between Surrey's *Aeneid* and its primary source, the Scots-language *Eneados* of Gavin Douglas, have broadly overlooked the extent to which Surrey problematizes and contradicts his predecessor's interpretations of the text. I argue that these divergences are less indicative of a different philosophy of translation on Surrey's part than they are of his ambivalence towards the hyper-didactic framework of Douglas's exegesis, which insists that the narrative be understood exclusively in terms of the triumph of Douglas's own moral and political values. Surrey's translation, by contrast, pilfers from Douglas's language while cultivating the text's ambiguity and sorrow—traits which make it a less successful translation by the standards Douglas sets out. The result is a text which relates queerly not only to its immediate predecessor, but the humanist translation tradition as a whole, by virtue of being premised on an act of deliberate and productive error.

The extent of Surrey's indebtedness to Douglas was first proven conclusively by Florence H. Ridley, whose collation of all the extant editions of Surrey's *Aeneid* revealed that nearly half of Surrey's lines include some degree of borrowing from the second and fourth books of the *Eneados*.<sup>88</sup> The consistency and pervasiveness of shared language

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<sup>88</sup> Florence H. Ridley, "Surrey's Debt to Gawin Douglas" in *PMLA* 76.1 (March 1961) pp. 25-33.

between the texts suggests that Surrey “worked, quite literally, with a copy of Douglas at his elbow,” checking himself by and sometimes replicating errors found in the earlier translator’s work.<sup>89</sup> However, Surrey’s poem is a complete formal departure from Douglas’s, replacing his rhyming couplets with heavily enjambed blank verse and radically foreshortening the verbosity of Douglas’s numerous and florid descriptions. As a result of this decision, his translation leaves open the pessimistic and elegiac interpretations of the text which Douglas intentionally closes off, particularly in regard to the character of Dido.<sup>90</sup> Where Douglas insists on framing Dido as a normative exemplar of (degraded) womanhood, Surrey seems, rather transparently, to interpret her emotions in light of his own. Surrey extends a degree of sympathy to Dido that may initially seem surprising, given the bitter and at times violent misogyny of his other verse, but his choices are suggestive of the degree to which the Surreyan “troubled lover” as a queer aesthetic and its associated poetics may transcend putative norms of gendered poetic identification.

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<sup>89</sup> Katzmann p. 173.

<sup>90</sup> On Douglas’s overt didacticism see A.E.C. Canitz, “The Prologue to the *Eneados*: Gavin Douglas’s Directions for Reading” in *Studies in Scottish Literature* 25.1 (1990) pp. 1-22.

In arguing that Surrey's conversation with Douglas is truly dialogical—that he speaks to the specific concerns of his direct predecessor, rather than simply using Douglas's text as a dictionary—I am responding to a long-standing tendency for some of the most influential modern studies of Surrey to frame him as an explicitly more modern, less "medieval" translator than Douglas. Ezra Pound and C.S. Lewis are arguably the primary parties responsible for creating Douglas as a medieval poet, with Lewis in particular considering Douglas's rollicking vernacular style to be one of the last great gasps of stylistic innovation before the "Drab Age" of the early and middle sixteenth century.<sup>91</sup> Writing in 1976, however, David A. Richardson argues that Lewis had been largely right to identify various ostensibly medieval elements in Douglas's translation practices, but wrong to assert that those "interpolated details, didactic explanations, and sprightly mood make [his translation] more Vergilian."<sup>92</sup> Although Richardson does not rigidly insist on the "medieval" label for Douglas, he nevertheless posits that Surrey's "humanistic concern for form" had led him to develop "a new esthetic" in blank verse, which Richardson characterizes as "a radical break with the

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<sup>91</sup>Ezra Pound, "Notes on Elizabethan Classicists" in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (ed. T.S. Eliot, New Direction 1968) pp. 227-248; Clive Staples Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954) pp. 76-90.

<sup>92</sup> David A. Richardson, "Humanistic Intent in Surrey's Aeneid," *English Literary Renaissance* 6, no. 2 (1976): 204-19.

forms and language of the medieval tradition” and “a bold experiment to search out the spirit of the Ancients and to lay new foundations for a national literature.”<sup>93</sup> His speculation as to Surrey’s motives (and it must be speculation, because Surrey, unlike Douglas, never wrote on his own philosophy of translation) yokes Surrey’s well-established interest in the work and ideas of continental humanism to a concept of the nation as embodied in the vernacular.

However, Richardson’s assumption that the presence of one idea implies the other has been strongly troubled by further decades of scholarship on early modern humanism in England and Scotland, which has shown that, while many humanists (including Douglas) promoted vernacularizing for nationalistic purposes, this position was only one of a wide range of possible understandings of the relationship between people, language, and nation.<sup>94</sup> Studies of early modern English nationalism in particular have tended to reinforce the idea that a widespread conception of the English

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<sup>93</sup> Richardson 205, 218.

<sup>94</sup> For a thorough examination of the role of the nation in different strands of early modern English humanism see Cathy Shrank, *Writing the Nation in Reformation England 1530-1580* (Oxford University Press 2004) esp. 1-26, 66-69. On nationalist humanisms in Surrey’s own lifetime see Allistair Fox, *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII* (Basil Blackwell 1989). On the background of Douglas’s conception of the Scottish nation see “The Scottish Identity of Gavin Douglas” in *The Anglo-Scottish Border and the Shaping of Identity, 1300-1600* (Palgrave MacMillan 2012), pp. 195-20.



nation as a collective body centered around the South and predominantly represented by the dialects spoken there had only started to become commonplace after Henry's break from Rome during the 1530s.<sup>95</sup> We can hardly assume without evidence that Surrey bought into this nascent vision, not in the least because he openly hated London, hated the King nearly as openly, was the scion of a religiously conservative house based in the (relatively peripheral) region of Norfolk, and deliberately chose to mix what Douglas called "the langage of Scottis natioun" with his own ostensibly English text as he translated.<sup>96</sup> While Surrey unquestionably considered himself "English," it is hard to say what—if any—resonance that category of identity actually had for him, especially in those areas in which Englishness as early moderns understood it was in tension with his regional and dynastic loyalties and cosmopolitan upbringing.

The question becomes complicated further when we consider Surrey's strained relationship with the king, as well as his idealization of an aesthetic and stylistic

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<sup>95</sup> For examples of recent works examining the regional and dialectical diversity of English language and religion during the middle and late Tudor period see Catherine Nicholson, *Uncommon Tongues: Eloquence and Eccentricity in the English Renaissance* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2013); Jennifer R. Rust, *The Body in Mystery: The Political Theology of the Corpus Mysticum in the Literature of Reformation England* (Northwestern University Press 2014).

<sup>96</sup> Douglas "Incipit Prologus" 101.

Stoicism patterned after the civic heroes of the late Roman republic.<sup>97</sup> While Surrey was not a republican in any meaningful political sense, he was sensitive to the resemblance between the government he lived under and those which he knew from history as tyrannies.<sup>98</sup> On at least some level, to be English for Surrey was to be the long-suffering and disempowered subject of a tyrant, with all the ambivalence and rage that position implies. This is not to say that Surrey's preference for Roman culture and his attempts to embody Roman social roles throughout his life are disavowals of Englishness (the categories are too imbricated for that,) but instead that, given these factors, we should demand concrete and persuasive evidence before accepting a nationalist motive on Surrey's part.<sup>99</sup>

A decade later O.B. Hardison took up the idea of Surrey's *Aeneid* as an early modern humanist linguistic experiment, and while he acknowledged that "there is no direct way to reconstruct Surrey's motives for deciding to use blank verse in his

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<sup>97</sup> José María Pérez Fernández argues for Surrey's sustained engagement with the "Ciceronian" ideals of Luigi Alamanni and other Italian republicans in "'Wyatt resteth here': Surrey's Republican Elegy" in *Renaissance Studies* 18.2 (2004). I am not fully convinced that Surrey's engagement is as deep as Fernández argues it to be, but he certainly read Alamanni's *Aeneid* and known the dramatic details of his exile from Florence. See also Walker 298-304 on Wyatt and Alamanni. For additional background on republicanism and rhetoric see Daniel J. Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press 2011).

<sup>98</sup> See Walker 407-412, 425, 430.

<sup>99</sup> On Surrey's *romanitas* see Sessions 143-318.

translation of the *Aeneid*," he nevertheless forwards an interpretation of Surrey's text which implies just such a set of motives:

In contrast to [Thomas] Wyatt, then, Surrey appears more cosmopolitan and more conscious that he is beginning a tradition rather than renewing or carrying forward an old one. What he did share with Wyatt was a commitment to improving English by introducing new artistic forms. The object was only partly to modernize the language. It was also to make the language expressive to be a vehicle of values typical of other, superior, cultures, both ancient and modern, and thereby to elevate the quality of English culture.<sup>100</sup>

Hardison's contributions to the study of Surrey's work in this essay and his later monograph can hardly be overstated, but these claims are not substantiable. Gavin Douglas saw his translations as Hardison describes and we know this because he wrote as much, but there is no corpus of text which suggests the same of Surrey. Perhaps Surrey did view Roman culture as being superior to his own (it was hardly an unpopular idea among humanists of the period,) but it does not proceed from this fact

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<sup>100</sup> Hardison, "Tudor Humanism" 238-239. See also this line on p. 258: "[Surrey's] translation of Vergil was a conscious attempt to introduce the nobility and elevation of Vergil, as well as the story of the *Aeneid*, into English, and that this effort was closely related to the belief of civic humanists that a great culture is impossible without greatness in the use of language."

that his poetic experimentation was intended as a solution to that ostensible problem, or that he saw the current state of the English language as a problem at all.

Nevertheless, Richardson and Hardison's respective characterizations of Surrey have passed with little scrutiny through decades of heavy citation, and their claims are frequently echoed even in contemporary criticism. James Simpson, writing in 2016, characterizes the split between Douglas and Surrey in terms of how the former translator's formal additions to the text (the apparatus, the introductory poems, the on-page commentaries, and so on) presence the interpreting reader; "Surrey's text, by contrast, is Virgil's text, shorn of the visible presence of the translator as reader."<sup>101</sup> Although Simpson dodges the potentially problematic "medieval" label for Douglas (and indeed for Simpson Douglas is an archetypal "'renaissance' author,") he nevertheless endorses and reiterates the earlier scholarship's key claim: that Surrey's *Aeneid* is first and foremost a (successful) attempt to imitate Virgil, whereas Douglas's *Eneados* sacrifices resemblance to its original in order to enshrine its translator's own interpretation of the text as authorial.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> James Simpson, "The *Aeneid* Translations of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey: The Exile Reader's Presence" in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature* v.1 (ed. Rita Copeland, Oxford University Press 2016) pp.601-624 p. 603.

<sup>102</sup> Simpson 606. On Douglas's "posture as a translator" Simpson cites Kantik Ghosh, "'The fift Queill': Gavin Douglas's Maffeo Vegio" in the *Scottish Literary Journal* 22 (1995) pp. 5-21.

In sidestepping the term “medievalism,” Simpson rounds off the sharpest edge of the Surrey/Douglas distinction by dodging the implication that the Scottish translator occupies a belated or less sophisticated position in relation to his English counterpart. Even so, the characterization of the imitative relationship between the translators which emerges from his and other historians’ various attempts to locate a historical difference between the two is contradictory. It suggests that Surrey looked at Douglas only as a source of language rather than as a model translator in his own right, despite the fact that Surrey’s translation is influenced by Douglas’s at every level. Surrey’s works show him to be a careful and voracious reader, and he would have easily read and understood the very extensive notes on translating ethos and methodology with which Douglas opened his text.<sup>103</sup> He also would have understood that the “lord of renown” Douglas dedicated his book to, his cousin and “speciall gud lord Henry lord Sanct Clair,” had been killed alongside King James IV by forces led by Surrey’s own grandfather at the Battle of Flodden, only two months after Douglas finished his work on the text.<sup>104</sup> Yet, however Surrey felt about either Douglas’s methodology or the , he

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<sup>103</sup> Ridley points out that Douglas’s introduction is in fact “the first analysis in English of the art of translation,” being in many respects an unprecedentedly candid and thorough exploration of humanist textual practice. See Florence H. Ridley, “The Distinctive Character of Douglas’s *Eneados*” in *Studies in Scottish Literature* 18.1 (1983) pp. 110-122.

<sup>104</sup> *Eneados* v2 p.I 79-80, v3 “Heir Follows [...]” 2-4. Douglas writes that he completed his translation in July, during the feast of St. Mary Magdalene. On the political aftermath of

still chose to produce a translation which is nearly as much Douglas's as his own. My contention is simply that it would have been almost impossible for Surrey to have done so without thinking very carefully about the work he was drawing upon.

A careful reading of Surrey's divergences from Douglas suggests that, far from simply using his predecessor's work as a lexicon, Surrey followed Douglas's instructions to his readers by analyzing, comprehending, and applying the historical lessons contained in Virgil's characterizations of Dido and Aeneas. However, the choices that he makes as he translates, particularly around Dido and her passions, suggest that his interpretations of the work differed from Douglas's to just as vast an extent as his methodologies.

More fundamentally, the claim that Surrey's text is closer to Virgil than Douglas's arbitrarily privileges style and the absence of additional material as determinative factors of resemblance. Although Surrey's implementation of blank verse results in a poem that better captures Virgil's compression and ambiguity, it also distorts the literal syntactic meaning of the original and results in botched series of lines like the following, in which Aeneas defends himself from Dido's accusations of duplicity. I have provided Virgil's version, followed by Douglas's and then Surrey's:

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Flodden see Ken Emond, *The Minority of James V: Scotland in Europe, 1513-1528* (John Donald 2019).

pro re pauca loquar. neque ego hanc abscondere furto  
 speravi (ne finge) fugam, nec coniugis umquam  
 praetendi taedas aut haec in foedera veni.

--

As the mater requiris, a litil heris:

I purposyt nocht forto hyde thyftuusly

My vayage, nor, as ye weyn, secretly

Away to steil; quhat nedis you sa to feyn?

For I pretendit nevir, be na meyn,

With you to mak the band of mariage,

Nor in that yok, ne frendschip in Cartage,

--

It is not great the thyng that I requyre:

Neyther ment I to cloke the same by steith

Sclaunder me not, ne to escape by flyght,

Nor I to thee pretended maryage:

Ne hyther cam to joyne suche leages.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>*Aeneid* IV.337-339. *Eneados* v2 IV.6 112-118. See Padelford p. 142; this text is from John Day and William Owen's 1554 printing of Book IV of Surrey's *Aeneid*.

Surrey translates the first line overly literally, introducing unnecessary ambiguity as to “the thing” Aeneas requires (Dido’s attention, which in Virgil is contextually obvious) and orphaning “the same” in the following line. The mistake is corrected in Tottel’s 1557 edition of the text, either by Surrey himself in a later manuscript or else by an editor (perhaps Tottel himself).<sup>106</sup> Douglas by contrast is a deliberate, additive, and unambiguously motivated editor. He elaborates Aeneas’s “*nec finge*” (do not imagine that) into an accusation of duplicity as well as having him deny that he sought even “friendship in Carthage,” much less political and connubial alliance. One might argue that these additions, which present Douglas as Virgil’s translator and editor, push the resultant text away from its original, but the same could surely be said of the frequent distortions in Surrey’s version.

Rather than attempting to fit Surrey into the normalized category of humanist translator, I would prefer instead to center the novitiate qualities of his translation, which allow him to explore interpretations of the text which are closed to Douglas.

Unlike Douglas, who viewed his own translation as a “a neidfull wark / To thame wald

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<sup>106</sup> Compare to the same lines in Richard Tottel’s 1557 text:

For present purpose somewhat shal I say.  
 Neuer ment I to clok the same by stelth  
 Sclaunder me not, ne to escape by flight,  
 Nor I to thee pretended mariage:  
 Ne hyther cam to joine men [sic] such leage.



Virgill to childryn expone" and feared being "mokkyt behynd [his] back," Surrey enjoyed the freedom to interpret the text as he personally saw fit, with no fear of misleading his readers or exposing himself to public ridicule.<sup>107</sup> This amateurism manifests in the translation's formal qualities (which mix error and innovation in equal parts,) but also in its clear sympathy for Dido as a character, which has long been seen as a hallmark of the student's stereotypical first misunderstanding encounter with the *Aeneid's* text.

Teachers of the *Aeneid* have long expected their students to, like Augustine, weep for Dido for a time before drawing the ostensibly "correct" moral lessons from the text.<sup>108</sup> Douglas unambiguously places himself in this camp, and dutifully guides the reader towards a perspective which devalues her subjectivity by tagging her as "wraith" [wroth,] "fey," "silly," and in one instance "fey onsyilly."<sup>109</sup> His insinuation is that Dido's divinely inflamed passion has made her unreasonable, and so her accusations of treachery against Aeneas need not be taken seriously. Surrey excises these epithets where they appear within the text he translates, instead replicating

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<sup>107</sup> *Eneados* v.2 "Heir the Translatar [...]" l. 23, 43-44. Surrey likely circulated his *Aeneid* translations in manuscript, but they were never printed within his lifetime.

<sup>108</sup> Woods *passim*.

<sup>109</sup> Douglas v2 IV.XI.32. The equivalent phrase in Virgil is "infelix [...] Phoenissa" [the unhappy Phoenician] (IV.710-714).

Virgil's rich diversity of language as he renders Dido by turns as "wounded," "wretched," "raging," "rich," and "good."<sup>110</sup> This linguistic variety is an expression of *copia*, but it also represents an imaginative exploration of a subject position very different from Surrey's own. Unlike Douglas, Surrey wonders

quis tibi tum, Dido, cernenti talia sensus,

quosve dabas gemitus,

---

Quhat thocht thou now, Dydo, seand thir thingis?

Quhou mony sobbys gave thou and womentyngis,

---

Beholding [Aeneas preparing to depart], what thought might Dido have?

What sighes gave she [...] <sup>111</sup>

I find it implausible that Surrey misunderstood the very simple "quis [...] tum" of the first line and translated Virgil's question into the third person by accident. Rather, I suspect that he, like many students of the *Aeneid* before and hence, simply translated the line as he would have liked it to be, as a question that he himself may have

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<sup>110</sup> The last and most unconventional tag is a one-off, on Padelford 145. The equivalent phrase for Surrey's "good Dido" in Virgil is "Sidonia Dido" [Sidonian Dido] (*Aeneid* IV.613).

<sup>111</sup> *Aeneid* IV.408-409. *Eneados* v2 IV.8 1-2.

wondered. Surrey's freedom to translate according to desire rather than need in turn allows us, as modern readers of the text, closer access to an understanding of his personal desire for understanding than we have to Douglas's desires, which are mediated through his book's grand purpose. Surrey's "error" of lingering on Dido, and the mistaken translations it produces, in this way reveal more ways of reading his poetry than a putatively successful act of transmission ever could.

In the following section of this chapter, I explain the role that Dido plays in Douglas's theory of Virgilian transmission. As he lays out in his prefaces to books one and four, Douglas views his most important duty as a translator to be the replication and clear transmission of what are, to him, authorial moral lessons conveyed through exemplary characters. To this end he uses both the preface and the body of the translation itself to construct an argument that Dido "throw fulych lust wrocht [her] awyn ondoynng," with Virgil in turn presenting her tragedy as an example of the dangers of non-procreative sex (i.e. sodomy), over-indulgence in wine, and "wild amouris" with "strangeris of onkouth natioun."<sup>112</sup> Surrey never references Douglas's prologues and, more significantly, scours his text clean of Douglas's interpolated attacks against her character. The result is not truly a more Virgilian *Aeneid*—Surrey is often further from Virgil's sense than Douglas is—but instead a unique historical

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<sup>112</sup> *Eneados* v2 p.IV 227, 267.

product that interrogates Dido's place in the Virgillian tradition from one particular point in time.

### Gavin Douglas's *Eneados*

In Gavin Douglas's prologue to the first book of the *Eneados*, he claims two overarching virtues for the work: that it is written "braid and plane, / Keeping nae sudron [English], but our awyn [Scots] langage," and that it portrays the Dido and Aeneas episode exactly as Virgil does, unlike Chaucer or William Caxton.<sup>113</sup> As Terrell observes, Douglas's goal in positioning himself against his English forebearers is twofold: he intends his work to further both a nationalist project of asserting the difference of the Scots language from English, and an educational project of disseminating virtue and learning through Scottish society.<sup>114</sup> Douglas describes the scope of these projects in terms that, at least at times, verge on the universal: in the "Direction," for example, he urges "maisters of grammar schools" to teach his translation to their charges, while his "Exclamation against detractors" imagines how

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<sup>113</sup> Douglas v2 p.1 110-111.

<sup>114</sup> Katherine H. Terrell, *Scripting the Nation: Court Poetry and the Authority of History in Late Medieval Scotland* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2021) p. 169-200. See also Priscilla Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas: A Critical Study* (University of Edinburgh Press, 1974) p. 69-192; and Gordon Kendal, Introduction to *Gavin Douglas's Aeneid* (Modern Humanities Research Association 2013) p. xi-xlii.

the book might “to unletterit folk be read on heicht.”<sup>115</sup> At times Douglas also (albeit somewhat derisively) imagines audiences of women among his readers, as when he repeatedly scolds “laies and maidens young” to take care in distinguishing between lust and love founded upon reason in his prologue the fourth book.<sup>116</sup> Even in these moments, however, particular audiences are always framed as part of a whole. Dido’s tragedy in particular is not purely one of personal loss, but the needless wastage of her and her nation’s “gloryus name, [...] moblys, tresour, and werkis infinite[.]”<sup>117</sup>

Douglas’s vistas of his text’s reach are for the most part mere flights of rhetoric. As Priscilla Bawcutt points out, Douglas was well aware this his manuscript would in practice circulate only among noblemen and their children “who read Chaucer or Dunbar with ease and pleasure, but who were less at home in the world of Virgil, even if they had some acquaintance with Latin.”<sup>118</sup> Instead of reading these fantasies literally, however, Douglas’s universal overtures and castigations as “literary” in Victoria Kahn’s

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<sup>115</sup> *Eneados* v2 “Direction” 41-49, v2 “Exclamation” 43-44.

<sup>116</sup> *Eneados* v2 pIV 201.

<sup>117</sup> *Eneados* v2 pIV 260-261.

<sup>118</sup> Priscilla Bawcutt *Gavin Douglas: A Critical Study* (University of Edinburgh Press, 1974) p. 94. On the myth of the Douglas family as Scottish “werwall” see Nicola Royan, “The Scottish Identity of Gavin Douglas” in *The Anglo-Scottish Border and the Shaping of Identity, 1300-1600* (Palgrave Macmillan 2012) pp. 195-209, pp. 197-198.

sense of the term: they do not acknowledge readers who exist, but readers who might plausibly exist, or who might be plausibly interpreted as existing within the bounds of the text.<sup>119</sup> They gesture towards the national future of a Scotland which, as Douglas believed in July of 1513, was “poised on the brink of political as well as poetic greatness,” with his own extended family playing an important role in creating the political conditions which lead to this relative apogee of Scottish political might.<sup>120</sup> They also reflect Douglas’s anxieties as to that future’s fragility, which would prove well-placed when his king was killed at the Battle of Flodden later that year, leaving his seventeen-month old son on the throne and Scotland at risk of falling under the control of the English Crown.<sup>121</sup>

Douglas’s distinct, clearly delineated national frame for understanding Virgil’s text explains his overt didacticism and rigorous insistence upon a narrow range of interpretations; moreover, it sheds light on why Douglas seems at times to deviate entirely from *The Aeneid* itself. In his prologue to the tenth book, he digresses from an

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<sup>119</sup> Victoria Kahn, *The Trouble with Literature* (Oxford University Press 2022) p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Terrell 198.

<sup>121</sup> Terrell 200, Royan 196. See also Gordon Kendal’s observations on Douglas’s later career in *Gavin Douglas’s The Aeneid (1513)* p. xi-xiii.

already-digressive theological justification of the Holy Trinity to explain Augustine's tripartite division of the human soul:

Lyke as the sawle of man is ane, we wait,  
 Havand thre poweris distinct and separate,  
 Understandyng, rayson, and memor:  
 Intelligens consideris the thing befor,  
 Rayson discernys, memor kepis the consait.<sup>122</sup>

From the standpoint of contextual relevance there is little reason for Douglas to include these lines (except of course that Augustine discusses the human soul alongside the Trinity, and Douglas follows Augustine in all things.) Instead, moments of didactic explanation like these serve to create the impression of the *Eneados* (and by extension Virgil's *Aeneid*) as a systemic and resolutely truthful text which can be reliably turned to as a source of moral guidance. To that end, it must teach the reader not only how to act but how to learn, even up from the barest foundations of understanding, reason, and memory. Douglas's *Aeneid* is in this sense perhaps the most optimistic translation of the text ever produced—it proposes not only that Virgil can teach truthful knowledge, but what truth is in the first place.

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<sup>122</sup> *Eneados* v3 p.X 66-70.

Douglas's optimism reflects not only the circumstances under which the text was composed, but also the intentionally Virgil-centric humanist worldview which informs his philosophy of translation.<sup>123</sup> Beyond its utility for the Scotts, Douglas claims that his translation is necessary because English transmitters of the Aeneas story have displayed too much interest in Dido's part of the tale, and in doing so have mistranslated a text which is meant to center around the praise of Aeneas.<sup>124</sup> Douglas's first prologue contains a paean to Aeneas's noble qualities which seems carefully arranged to counter Chaucer's presentation of Aeneas as an eloquent seducer and "fals lover" in the *Legend of Good Women*:<sup>125</sup>

[Aeneas] hated vice, abhorring craftiness [...]

Just in his promise ever, and stout in mind,

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<sup>123</sup> The extent of Douglas's humanism has long been a point of debate among scholars. See Bawcutt 29-36; Royan 119-136; Richardson 217-219; A.E.C. Canitz, "From *Aeneid* to *Eneados*: Theory and Practice of Gavin Douglas's Translation," in *Medievalia et Humanistica* 17 (1991) pp. 81-99; Douglas Gray, "Virgil in Late Medieval Scotland: *Aeneid* and *Eneados*," in *Focus on Literature and Culture: Papers from the 2nd Conference of the Polish Association for the Study of English*, Kazimierz, ed. Bystydzieńka Grażyna (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 1993), 11-22.

<sup>124</sup> On Douglas's deep (if bellicose) dialogue with Caxton see Jacquelyn Hendricks, "Gavin Douglas's *Aeneados*: Caxton's English and 'Our Scottis Langage'" in *Studies in Scottish Literature* 43.2 (2017) pp. 220-236.

<sup>125</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Legend of Good Women," in *The Riverside Chaucer* (ed. F.N. Robinson, Oxford University Press, 1987), 587-630 ln. 1069-1070.



To God faithful, and to his friends kind, [...]

In love's cure enech here shall ye find.<sup>126</sup>

Chaucer was simply repeating the charges against *Aeneas* which are made in Ovid's *Heroides*; Douglas certainly knows this, but Chaucer is English and a softer target than Ovid.<sup>127</sup> Read through Douglas's frame, Chaucer's negative depiction of the character does not simply depart from Virgil's characterization of the hero, but instead constitutes an intentional falsehood:

Thus, wenyng allane Ene to have reprevit,

[Chaucer] hes gretly the prynce of poetis grevit,

For, as said is, Virgill dyd diligens,

But spot of cryme, reproch or ony offens

Eneas for to loif and magnify,

And gif he grantis hym maynsworn fowley,

Than all hys cuyr and crafy engyne gais quyte

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<sup>126</sup> These lines are not present in some texts and typically excluded from numbering by line; see Kendal v.1 p. 10.

<sup>127</sup> For a much more complete analysis of Douglas's portrayal of Dido as a response to the Ovidian strain in medieval Aeneas legends see Desmond pp. 167-189.

His twelf yheris laubouris war nocht worth a myte.<sup>128</sup>

The hyperbolic and aggrieved tone of these lines, as well as Douglas's exasperation when he later characterizes Chaucer as "ever (God wait) all womanis frend," seems at first at odds with his obvious respect for the English poet and his works.<sup>129</sup> However, as Marilyn Desmond observes, the vigor of Douglas's attacks against Chaucer and Caxton serve to align his book (and by extension, the Scottish tradition) with the relatively new and predominantly Italian epideictic tradition inaugurated by Maffeo Vegio, which insisted on Virgil's applicability to life as well as Aeneas's moral perfection as a character.<sup>130</sup> From Douglas's perspective, the effectiveness of his *Eneados* as a text is premised upon its effectiveness in communicating this vision; to that end, it must simultaneously be epideictic, Virgilian, and narratively plausible.

Douglas's rigid insistence on a narrowly epideictic interpretation of the text, and that deviations from Virgil's source text are not mere variation but malicious "lees,"

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<sup>128</sup> *Eneados* v2 p1 417-424. Douglas seems to slightly misremember Donatus here, who alleges Virgil spent eleven years composing the *Aeneid*.

<sup>129</sup> *Eneados* v2 p1 449.

<sup>130</sup> Desmond 192-194.

stems from a desire to defend the moral validity of poetic fiction (especially the works of pre-Christian poets) within a critical Christian humanist framework:

For so the poetis be the crafy curys  
 In similtudes and under quent figuris,  
 The suythfast materis to hyde and to constreyn;  
 All is nocht fals, traste weill, in cace thai feyn.  
 Thar art is so to mak thar warkis fair [...] <sup>131</sup>

Douglas echoes the Horatian platitude that poetry ought to instruct and delight while affirming that within that instruction there is a core of real, mimetic benefit for a reader who can discern the innermost text. The affirmation that there is a hidden wisdom within Virgil must come, Douglas suggests, from a complete trust in the master poet's secret truthfulness. Thus, Douglas excoriates Caxton for failing to translate Aeneas's journey to the underworld (which Caxton found "feignit") over the course of more than one hundred lines not only because the English prosaist deviates from Virgil, but because in doing so he calls into question Virgil's trustworthiness and moral authority.<sup>132</sup> Douglas cites the scene of necromancy in the book of Samuel to prove that

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<sup>131</sup> *Eneados* v2 p1 195-200.

<sup>132</sup> *Eneados* v2 p1 138-270.

the katabasis is, if not possible, a plausible representation of real communion with the dead:

[...] I will noth say all Virgil beyn als true,

Bot at syk thingis ar possibill this I shew.<sup>133</sup> (Prologue 1.213-214)

For Douglas, there is no distance at all between Virgil's text, the most realistically plausible potential reading for Virgil's text, and the potential reading which most accords with Douglas's own preconception of what that text ought to mean. From this perspective, it is perfectly logical that an additive translation (even a grossly expanded one) could in fact achieve greater proximity to the original. This is also why, as Bawcutt points out, Douglas tends to prefer names, words, and devices which were already familiar to his readers, rather than introducing them to new ones.<sup>134</sup> For Douglas's flying text to do its imaginative work, it is imperative that the unfamiliar reader is able to instantly orient themselves to and around it while recognizing the correct, didactic interpretation shining through.

Critically, Douglas does not simply aim to disseminate a source of "eloquence" to a noble readership which can benefit from it, but instead to construct a plausible

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<sup>133</sup> *Eneados* v2 p.1 213-214.

<sup>134</sup> Bawcutt 129-131.

fiction which illustrates the virtues of a sufficiently educated nation, and the downfall of those which are not. By his prologue to the fourth book, however, Douglas's conflation of his own standards of moral and civic virtue with Virgil's has begun to run aground on the *Aeneid's* alien shores. Douglas begins by indicting sexual lust and attributing Dido's downfall to her inability to distinguish between "imperfite" love, "this furyus flambe of sensualitie," and "lawful" love, "a kyndly passioun, engendryt of heyt / kyndlyt in the heart" (Prologue 4.108-120).<sup>135</sup> Readings of Aeneas's departure from Carthage as a rejection of erotic love in favor of duty is very common throughout the early modern *Aeneid* tradition, but Douglas takes the premise so implausibly far that he casts Virgil as a kind of chiding parish priest:

Be nevir our set, myne author techis so,

With lust of wyne nor warkis veneryane [...]

Childir to engendir oys [use] Venus, and not invane;

Hant na surfat, drynk bot quen thou art dry.<sup>136</sup> (Prologue 4 91-99)

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<sup>135</sup> *Eneados* v.2 p.4.108-120. Douglas's position here inverts that which he adopts at the beginning of his *Palyce of Honour*, a dream-allegory dedicated to Venus.

<sup>136</sup> *Eneados* v2 p.4 91-99.

Needless to say, Douglas chooses not to acknowledge Virgil's bisexuality or his medieval reputation for lechery.<sup>137</sup> The moral frame he assigns the text also fails to cohere to the actual events of Virgil's fourth book, in which the only reference to wine occurs as part of an omen and in which strife is engendered not by the fact that Dido and Aeneas have sex, but that they disagree as to whether doing so was precipitated by a rite of marriage.<sup>138</sup>

Douglas's seemingly willful misreading of the text he proclaims such reverence for is a consequence of his refusal to accept the presence of historical dissonance within it. In collapsing the complex set of motivations and influences at work upon Dido to "foolish lust," though, Douglas avoids not only the Chaucerian suggestion of Aeneas's culpability in her death, but also the question of whether she, in attempting to secure a political alliance with the Trojans, acted in the best interests of Carthage. Douglas's gloss notably undersells Anna's list of arguments for courting Aeneas, which, while it includes "the plesour [...] of Venus' lawys" as a single point, is far more concerned with their dynasty's precarious political position ("Consideris thou not [...] amyddis quyass grond heir thou remanys?") and Carthage's flourishing ("this realm may [...] beyn

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<sup>137</sup> Our primary source on Virgil's sexuality is Suetonius, *Life of Virgil* (trans. John Rolfe, Harvard University Press 1998).

<sup>138</sup> See *Aeneid* IV.454-455.

upheyt throu sa nobil a marriage!")<sup>139</sup> As this discourse implies, the “unlawful” courtship that Anna proposes and Dido follows through with in fact has everything to do with her stately obligation to secure her dynasty by engendering children. Ignoring Dido’s self-represented motivations as a head of state, however, allows Douglas to present a version of the text in which her putative moral weakness can be held up as an antitype to Aeneas’s stoic virtue, with the English transmitters favorable to Dido likewise being tarred by the association.

Douglas’s decision to ascribe Dido’s actions to an undifferentiated notion of “lust” aligns his text with what Debora Shuger has identified as an intense skepticism towards sexual pleasure running through the neo-Stoic tradition in early modern political writing.<sup>140</sup> This tradition, which included both Cicero and Augustine among other authorities whom Douglas respected, broadly agreed that all forms of private pleasure represent potential temptations away from the strict virtue that pursuing the public good requires, and they additionally agreed that the problem became

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<sup>139</sup> Douglas v2. II.I l.63-113.

<sup>140</sup> Deborah Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare’s England: The Sacred and the State in Measure for Measure* (Palgrave 2001).

exacerbated when power was concentrated the hands of an unvirtuous monarch.<sup>141</sup>

When Douglas writes of Dido's "amouris and [...] funeral fait" as a "dowbilll wound," and laments that she "unwhile in riches and shining glory reigning/ Through foolish lust wrocht [her] ain undoing," he is thinking of Carthage as well as its queen, and expecting the reader to recall that Dido's ever-doubling dying curse dooms the city itself, as well as later generations of Tyrians:<sup>142</sup>

Tum vos, o Tyrii, stirpem et genus omne futurum

Excrete odiis [...]

litora litoribus contraria, fluctibus undas

imprecor, arma armis; pugnent ipsique nepotesque.<sup>143</sup>

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Yon clan, with thar successioun and kynrayd,

Persew with haitrent perpetual and invaid [...]

Batail to batail mot thai debait in fight,

Thir costis [causes] mot be to tharis contrar ay,

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<sup>141</sup> Shuger 13-29. A characteristic articulation of this position can be found in Cicero's *De Re Publica*, in which the viewpoint is associated with the heroic general Scipio Aemelianus. See *De Re Publica* I.xvi.

<sup>142</sup> *Eneados* v2 p.IV 226-228.

<sup>143</sup> *Aeneid* IV.622-629.



And to thar stremys our seys frawart, I pray,

That ofspring eik amang thame self mot debate.<sup>144</sup>

Douglas's expansive approach to these lines succeeds in drawing out nearly all the possible connotative meanings of Virgil's text, although his interpretation of the ambiguous final line gives the impression that Aeneas's descendants will fight among themselves rather than with the Carthaginians. At the same time, Douglas's emendation of Virgil's *odiis* to "haitrent perpetual" and his addition of the specter of a future invasion seems poised to remind the reader of the stakes of this moment as a semi-historical cause for the Punic Wars, which ended (as Cicero relates it) with the physical destruction of the city, and the perverse consecration of its ruins as a memorial.<sup>145</sup> In both versions, Dido's bloody anger towards Aeneas and his kin shares a common set of terms with the sexual rage she expresses earlier upon hearing his well-crafted memorialization of Troy, and again after she is pricked by Cupid. Douglas's overt misogyny towards Dido acts in part to tame this errant relation between sexual satisfaction and vengeance which is present throughout the *Aeneid* (including

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<sup>144</sup> *Eneados* v2 IV XI l. 81-93

<sup>145</sup> Cicero, *De Lege Agraria* 2.5. For context on Douglas's tendency to reference historical events as a translation practice see Bawcutt 129-131.

especially, and most disturbingly, in Aeneas's killing of Turnus.)<sup>146</sup> Tying the rage that haunts Dido and Aeneas's relationship to the former's femininity allows Douglas to insulate Aeneas from implication in the cyclical violence which forms the beating heart of the *Aeneid's* relationship with history.

It is Douglas's distance from Virgil in this particular regard, his ascription of total moral culpability in Carthage's downfall to Dido, which Surrey will move to correct in his own translation. As his prologue draws to a close, Douglas illustrates the parallel relationship between queen and city in turmoil:

Se quhou blynd luffis inordinate desyre

Degradis honour, and resson doith exile !

Dido, of Cartage flour and lamp of Tyre [...]<sup>147</sup>

Douglas's metaphor paradoxically suggests that Dido is at once the flower generated by her domain's soil and the sun which gives that soil life, and it elevates the problem of excessive and unruly monarchical desire from tragic flaw to civic crisis. The metaphor of the lamp further reinforces the epideictic frame which has enclosed the entire prologue in that it presupposes an unreflected transmission of meaning which is

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<sup>146</sup> See Mihoko Suzuki, *Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic* (Cornell University Press 1989) pp. 94-95.

<sup>147</sup> *Eneados* v2 pIV 250-252.

so straightforward and unambiguous that it can be compressed into the preceding couplet without need for further clarification.

Desmond notes that Douglas's interpretive apparatus aims to "foreclose the reader's engagement in Virgilian ambiguity" in moments like these, but that it is not always successful.<sup>148</sup> Because Douglas's method is essentially additive it results in the amplification of *aporia* already present in Virgil's text, as in the passage in which Dido attempts to explain her initial attraction to Aeneas:

[...] heu! quibus ille  
 iactatus fatis! quae bella exhausta canebat!  
 si mihi non animo fixum immotumque sederet,  
 ne cui me vinclo vellem sociare iugali,  
 postquam primus amor deceptam morte fefellit  
 si non pertaesum thalami taedaeque fuisset,  
 huic uni forsan potui succumbere culpae[.]  
 ---  
 Allace, quat wonder fatale aventuris  
 Hes hym bywaif! Quat travel, pane and curis [cares],  
 How huge batellis, be hym eschewit, tald he!

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<sup>148</sup> Desmond 191.

Now certis, war it not determyt with me  
 And fixit in my mynd onmovabilly [...]  
 War [were] not also to me is displesant  
 Genyvs chalmyr or matrymone to hant;  
 Perchans I mycht be venquisht in this rage,  
 Throu this a crym of secund marriage.<sup>149</sup>

Both Virgil and Douglas draw a direct causal link between Aeneas's description of his own travels and Dido's growing infatuation for him. However, where Virgil presents Dido as the active subject of her own experiences, Douglas renders the final lines in the passive voice instead. He also, in preferring "be venquisht" over the more obvious cognate of "succumb" for Virgil's *succumbere*, highlights the implicit contrast between Aeneas as a survivor of battles and Dido as the victim of his rhetorical prowess. At the same time, there is a disjunction here between the effect of Aeneas's enthralling rhetoric upon Dido, which Douglas seems to emphasize by inserting extraneous "travel, pane, and curis" and inflating Virgil's *bella* into "huge battles," and his earlier assertions of the hero's blamelessness in the book's prologue. Douglas's additive method gives him little choice but to magnify Virgil's presentation of Aeneas's

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<sup>149</sup> *Aeneid* 1.13-19; *Eneados* v2 IV.1 29-40.

character lest his audience mistake the intended meaning, but in doing so he also unintentionally underlines the hero's faults.

For Douglas, the simplest resolution to this disjuncture lies in continually insisting that the story is an Augustinian morality tale in which Roman discipline and piety triumph over Carthaginian worldly pleasure.<sup>150</sup> Dido is vanquished "in this rage," a construction which neatly elides the subject doing the vanquishing (Aeneas? Cupid?) by turning instead toward an inner cause. Later in the book, Douglas again turns to the volatility of Dido's passions to explain away a textual crux:

non licuit thalami expertem sine crimine vitam

degere, more ferae, talis nec tangere curas;

non servata fides cineri promissa Sychaeo.

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Was it not lefull, allace! But company,

To me but cryme in chawmyr alane to ly,

Or led my lyfe lyke to thir beistis wild,

And not beyn thus with thocht nor harmys fild?

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<sup>150</sup> Douglas is again following Vegio in stressing the national element in Dido and Aeneas's respective characters. See Clayton, Margaret Tudeau-. "Supplementing the *Aeneid* in Early Modern England: Translation, Imitation, Commentary." *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4 (1998) pp. 507–25 p. 523.

Allace! Onkepit is the trew cunnand

Hecht to sycheus assys [ashes], my first husband."<sup>151</sup>

This passage is famously ambiguous, causing commentators to debate its semantic meaning since the time of Quintilian. Is Dido's "non licuit" the beginning of a question, an explanation for her actions, or a subjunctive plaint?<sup>152</sup> Is the life of the beast unsociable chastity (as Quintilian argues) or is it merely the fantasy of not having to worry about human concerns?<sup>153</sup> Rather than choosing one interpretation or the other Douglas's translation provides both options, with Dido suggesting that she views solitude and "my lyfe lyke to thir beistis wild" as opposed but equally illicit paths; at the same time, she seems to see her suffering as emanating from both too much "thocht" and (conversely) having not properly remembered her nuptial promises to Sychaeus. The fact that Douglas remains neutral on this point suggests that neither interpretation conflicts with his overall design. Each reading locates Dido's weakness within herself (rather than being a product of her relationality to Aeneas and the gods); from there, it may spread outwards to Carthage. The final couplet further elides any distinction

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<sup>151</sup> *Aeneid* IV.548-552, *Eneados* v2 IV.10 56-62

<sup>152</sup> Ogle, Marbury B. "On a Passage in Vergil, *Aeneid*, IV, 550-551". *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, vol. 56, 1925, pp. 26-36.

<sup>153</sup> Ogle 27-28, Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* (trans. Donald A. Russell, Harvard University Press 2002) IX.2.64-65.

between monarch, subject, as Douglas elevates Dido's pledge to Sychaeus from a promise [*promissa*] to "the trew cunnand" ("covenant," but also suggestive of "command.") This substitution not only elevates the pledge's importance but rewrites what was once a private vow (not dissimilar from Aeneas's own alleged promise of marriage to Dido) into an agreement between multiple parties.

Thusly elevated to a symbol of the original crime which led to Carthage's founding, Sychaeus's ashes come to stand in for the city itself. The "cryme" here is thus not so much adultery (while Douglas is highly preoccupied with sexual morality, even he does not object to the concept of a widow remarrying) as it is forgetting, which is symptomatic of Dido's broader orientation away from her own nation and towards that of an ostensible stranger. It is easy to imagine why Douglas, as an ardent nationalist, was repelled by this orientation—and why Surrey, the cosmopolitan and semi-exile, may have been so attracted by it.

Douglas's emendations to the scene of Carthage's mourning correspondingly emphasize the connection between "vanquished" monarchs and their subjects:

[...] it clamor ad alta  
 atria; concussam bacchatur Fama per urbem.  
 lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu  
 tecta fremunt, resonat magnis plangoribus aether,  
 non aliter, quam si immissis ruat hostibus omnis

Karthago [...]

---

[...] The clamour than and rerd,

Went to the toppys of th large hallys;

The noys ran wild out our the cite wallis,

Smate all the town with lamentabil murnyng,

Of greting, growling and wyfly womentyng.

The ruffis dyd resound, bray and rayr,

Quhil huge bewalyng al fordynnt the air—

Nane other wys than thocht takyn and doun bet

War al Cartage [...]<sup>154</sup>

In describing how news of Dido's death spread through Carthage, Virgil recalls his earlier attacks on fame or rumor as a *monstrum horrendum* that bears a degree of responsibility for the Carthaginian tragedy. Uncharacteristically, Douglas discards this reference and instead leaves the nature of the "noise" which spreads through Carthage ambiguous, allowing it to refer either to the surprise of Dido's guards or (more poetically) to her final words themselves. In Virgil the focus in these lines falls upon the universality of the outcry and the great extent of the Carthaginians' mourning for their

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<sup>154</sup> *Aeneid* IV 665-670; *Eneados* v2 IV XII 43-51.



fallen queen, but Douglas shifts the tone slightly by replacing Virgil's *femineo ululatu* ("the wails of women," a commonplace mourning phrase in Roman texts) with the curiously doubled "wyfly womentyng," suggesting a further nebulous linkage between Dido's hyper-feminized queer agony (her "silly" nature, for Douglas,) and the wellbeing of the people she leads. This moment, in which the language of the people merges with what has until this point been Dido's exclusive prerogative of mourning, reflects the relationship between the nation and the vernacular in Douglas's own text—virtues, perfect or flawed, are envisioned as flowing from the great and good to the "onletterit folk" in an act of perfect transmission.

The logical consequence of Douglas's perspective on power and the transmission of cultural virtue is the sole agency of the transmitting class (that is to say, Douglas, and by extension his patron and that patron's king). As in Virgil, the political question at play is what the consequences of Dido and Aeneas's qualities as leaders are, not what their followers ought to do about it. The *Eneados* is rather a paean to the political potential of sovereign virtue, with the implications of framing Aeneas as a "marciall prynce, this r[o]yll lord Enee, / As victor full of magnanynte" likely seeming clear enough in July of 1513 as James IV, having just declared war against the English in

support of France, prepared to take advantage of his Southern neighbor's distraction.<sup>155</sup>

By the time Surrey encountered the text, though, Douglas's inflation of his own position was fatally undermined by the progression of history, which had swept in at Flodden and washed away his clearest proximate figures of comparison.

Surrey therefore encountered the *Eneados* without any obvious political referents ready to hand. The so-called Sardanapalus poem ("Th' Assyryans king—in peas, with fowle desyre") strongly suggests that he viewed his own king as dissolute and unwarlike, with his own personal experience of combat in that kings' wars being so ignominious and tragic that he considered suicide after a disastrous loss at Boulogne.<sup>156</sup> That event occurred in 1545, only two years before his execution, but it was not his first experience of combat, and his *Aeneid* at times seems to index other, unknowable battlefield traumas—in any case, he never falls into the celebratory, bellicose praise of violence which Douglas is prone to.<sup>157</sup> On a more general level, Surrey's translation

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<sup>155</sup> *Eneados* v3 XII.1 3. On the events immediately before the Battle of Flodden see Emond 87-88.

<sup>156</sup> On this poem see p.5 n.7 of this dissertation. On Surrey's disastrous, nearly fatal military adventures see M. Bryn Davies, "Surrey at Boulogne" in the *Huntington Library Quarterly* 23(4) (1960). 339–348.

<sup>157</sup> Compare especially Padelford 107 l. 455-474 against their equivalent in Douglas II.V 105-116, II.VI 1-6. The difference in the affective terror of Surrey's "among our foes we ran, / Upon their swerdes, unto apparant death" compared to Douglas's confident "So throw the wapynnys and our fays went we" is stark.

reflects the fact that the thematic emphases in Douglas's text are misaligned with the culture and time in which he himself wrote, although these differences are reflective of the later translator's specific positionality as a member of England's high nobility, as a (voluntary) exile, and as an error-prone student rather than a general historical divergence in the intervening generation. What is significant about Surrey's translation is that it alone retains the evidence of these aporias (principally in the form of Douglas's language); from them, we may begin to ask what it meant for him, as a sixteenth-century person in queer circumstances and with a queer relationship to history, to engage in the hermeneutics of sub-reading. The final portion of this essay investigates that poetic process, insofar as we can reconstruct the various intentions surrounding it, and in surfacing Surrey's ambivalence points to the degree to which it is produced from the humanist mode of history itself.

#### *Surrey's Aeneid*

In summary, I disagree with Richardson and Hardison that Douglas's approach to the text is any more "medieval" in its predominantly additive approach than Surrey's is "modern" in its reductive approach. Although the former translator draws upon a wider *Aeneid* tradition which includes late classical and medieval commentaries, Douglas does so discriminatingly, picking and choosing the interpretations that suit his own nationalist hermeneutic agenda and discarding those which do not. The work's goal, as Richardson observes, was to communicate a "literature of knowledge" to the

reader which they might then put to use.<sup>158</sup> However, Douglas believed that communicating real and practicable knowledge had also been Virgil's goal—as, almost certainly, did Surrey, who grew up with the same tradition of education in which Virgil was believed to have been a great teacher as well as poet.<sup>159</sup> No less so than any putatively “Renaissance” translator did Douglas attempt to replicate what he believed to be an authentic text in the mind of its author, although we may with fairness judge his impression of that mind as being surprisingly shallow. The fact that Douglas imagines Virgil to have been a misogynistic, xenophobic, petty prude lies heavier upon his own character than it does the overall *Aeneid* tradition.

For the same reasons, I am inclined to frame Surrey's text less in terms of the differences of his conjectured philosophy as a translator and more in terms of the lessons that he may have drawn from this imagined, pedagogical Virgil. Seen in this light, Surrey's blank verse style appears less as an innovation *per se* and more as a sharpening of the late medieval tendency to center the text's role in rhetorical education. To this end, Surrey trims Douglas's phraseology whenever possible, creating powerful laconic phrases that both replicate Virgil's formal compression and emphasize Aeneas's own careful attention to his speech. The stylistic contrast this creates when set

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<sup>158</sup> Richardson 218.

<sup>159</sup> Wallace *passim*.

against Douglas's method is most noticeable in the scenes from Book II which Aeneas himself narrates. This is the slaying of Polites, with Douglas's translation following Virgil's and Surrey's presented last:

ut tandem ante oculos evasit et ora parentum,  
 concidit ac multo vitam cum sanguine fudit [...]  
 persolvant grates dignas et praemia reddant  
 debita, qui nati coram me cernere letum  
 fecisti et patrios foedasti funere vultus.  
 at non ille, satum quo te mentiris, Achilles  
 talis in hoste fuit Priamo [...]

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[...] when he is comin (I ween)  
 Before his father's and his mother's een,  
 [Pyrrhus] Smat him down deid, in their sicht where he stood.  
 The ghaist he yald with abundance of blood. [...]  
 [Priam:] 'The gods mocht condignly thee foryeld,  
 After thy desert rendering sic gainyeld;  
 Causit me behald my ain child slain, alas!  
 And with his blood filit his father's face.  
 But he, wham by thou feigns thyself beget,

Achilles, was nocht to Priam sae hard set.

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[Polites] fleeing fourth till he came now in sight  
 Of his parentes, before their face fell down  
 Yelding the ghost, with flowing streames of blood.  
 [...]’According thanks the gods may yeld to thee  
 And send thee eke thy just deserved hyre,  
 That made me see the slaughter of my child,  
 And with his blood defile the fathers face.  
 But he, by whom thow fainst thy self begot,  
 Achilles, was to Priam not so stern [...] <sup>160</sup>

Surrey closely follows Douglas in rendering Priam’s speech, but being without the need to fit Virgil’s verse to rhyme he can instead focus on economy of speech, creating a series of short, weighty allegations that drive home the sense of deliberate blasphemy which accompanies the Greek assault on Troy. However, I suspect that this is not the only reason that Surrey’s version *feels* simultaneously more modern and closer to Virgil than Douglas’s to most contemporary readers, including myself. As Andrew

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<sup>160</sup> *Aeneid* II 531-541; Padelford 112-113; *Eneados* v2 II IX 43-58. These specific lines from Douglas are quoted as they appear in Kendal.

Hiscock observes, part of what defines Surrey's poetics is his fixation on ruined and painful scenes of memory, which in his *Aeneid* translates into a tendency to frame Aeneas's poetic recounting of his past as an "apotropaic practice—a means of keeping death, and thus forgetfulness, at bay" which is nevertheless "riddled strategically with fissures designed to create space for self-assertion and self-justification."<sup>161</sup> I have found that, likely as a consequence of this apotropaic frame, Surrey's translations from the second book tend to de-emphasize the mediation of the narrative through Aeneas while sharpening Virgil's descriptive language, creating the impression of Aeneas as not only a persuasive speaker, but a student of rhetoric in his own right.

Once again, however, this divergence is not so much a matter of Surrey "modernizing" the text so much as attempting to achieve a different end than Douglas had with it. Douglas's added "I ween," for example, underlines the role of memory in this moment and presents a layer of mediation between Aeneas and the direct experience of Polites's grisly killing. Likewise, his introduction of the personal pronoun reminds the reader that Aeneas is doubly present in this as both a direct witness and as its narrator, emphasizing both his role as the overriding subject of Douglas's text and our own as his audience. In Surrey's version this layer of mediation is de-emphasized, however, with Polites' grisly killing taking place "now," not only within his parents'

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<sup>161</sup> Hiscock 56-57.

sight but in their immediate proximity. There is a similar grisly immediacy to the “flowing streames of blood” which accompany Pyrrhus’s blow, which implants in the imagination a movement forward in time when compared to the copious but stagnant pools of Douglas’s text.

For Surrey, on the other hand, the choice of “defiles” over “fillit” returns the perceptive reader’s attention to the present-tense rhetorical frame by echoing the wording of an earlier line in which Ulysses had “defile[d]” the Palladium with “hands embrued in blood.”<sup>162</sup> This linguistic connection, which is not present in the original text, nevertheless identifies and furthers one of Aeneas’s own political goals in making his oration to the Carthaginians: the assertion of the moral supremacy of his “pious” Trojans over the “insidious” Greeks. At every turn Surrey’s Aeneas reminds his audience of Greek blasphemy and deceit, with even references to Ulysses which have ambiguous or non-existent epithets in the original instead becoming indictments of the “false” and “wicked Diomedes” as “the forger of all guile.”<sup>163</sup> What this speaks to, beyond perhaps simply the general preference for Latin and Virgilian works over

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<sup>162</sup> Padelford 102. The verbs which Surrey translates as “defile” are *contingere* in line II.167 and *foedasti* in line II.539.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. *Aeneid* 2.90, 2.127, 2.164 vs. the equivalent lines in Padelford 99, 100. Of these, only Virgil’s first reference to Ulysses as *pellacis*, signifying his craftiness, approaches the negative register of Surrey’s version of the text.



Hellenistic and Homeric ones which Surrey shared with most of the early humanists, is a dedication to not only transmitting but improving Aeneas's oratory.

Surrey's reasons for burnishing the language of the text are personal, rather than being indicative of a difference in his humanism from Douglas's. As Hiscock observes Surrey "wished to promote and participate within a cultural narrative of male heroism in which the high-ranking are allowed to express their multiple identities as warrior, orator, politician, and lover;" to this end, he wrote an Aeneas who, like himself, cares deeply for the control and quality of his oratory.<sup>164</sup> William Owen, himself an "Orator" (Latin tutor) in service to Surrey's father, would later repeat this action by collating several manuscripts of Surrey's fourth book and choosing the translation that "was bothe to the latyn moste agreable, and also best standing with the dignity of that kynde of mytre."<sup>165</sup> For Owen too, oratory and appreciation of rhetoric are ways of drawing connections across time—like Surrey, he could see potential for self-representation in the accomplishments of those who had come before.

As Surrey's version of the text draws out and emphasizes the text's relationship to questions of dynastic futurity, with Aeneas's retelling of the Fall of Troy also serving

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<sup>164</sup> Hiscock 57.

<sup>165</sup> On Owen's preface to the 1554 *Aeneid* see the following chapter.

to establish his independence and care in that regard. Consider how Douglas translates Aeneas's relation of Anchises' prayer as the family flees Troy:

di patrii, servate domum, servate nepotem.

vestrum hoc augurium, vestroque in numine Troia est.

cedo equidem nec, nate, tibi comes ire recuso (Loeb II.701-704)

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I follow, and quidder ye gyde me sal I wend.

O native goddis, your awyn kynrent defend,

Salwe your nevo [nephew]; youris is this oracle,

In your protectioun is Troy, for this miracle

I wil obey, and grantis onto your will.<sup>166</sup>

The passage is slightly ambiguous in the original, as the *domum* and *nepotem* which Anchises begs the gods to save might be taken to refer either to his own home and kindred or, as Douglas interprets it, those of the gods themselves. In Douglas's version, the Gods are written as protecting Aeneas out of concern for what Katherine H. Terrell, quoting a later passage, refers to as "kyndness of blude" — the gradually unfolding circle of blood kinship that was imagined to extend from immediate family to

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<sup>166</sup> *Aeneid* II 701-704; *Eneados* v2 II.11 39-44.

more distant relations, down through to the level of the nation.<sup>167</sup> Anchises prays to his “native Gods” and expects their protection under much the same terms that Douglas begs his kinsman Sinclair’s patronage. What is offered is not worship in the strictly religious sense, but instead a mingled sense of feudal and familial obligation in the form of service which (hopefully) results in a reward based on the senior partner’s recognition of their similitude with the junior.

Surrey maintains Douglas’s interpretation of Anchises’ plea, but shifts the logic of the argument:

Folow I shall where ye guide at hand.  
 O native gods! Your familie defend;  
 Preserve your line. This warning comes of you,  
 And Troy stands in your protection now.  
 Now geve I place, and wherso that thou goe,  
 Refuse I not, my sonne, to be thy feer.<sup>168</sup>

What matters in Surrey’s version is not that the family is “kynrent” with the gods, sprung of the same race, but rather that Aeneas (and by extension, Ascanius)

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<sup>167</sup> Katherine H. Terrell, “‘Kyndness of Blude’: Kinship, Patronage, and Politics in Gavin Douglas,” *Textual Cultures* 7.1 (Spring 2012): 107–20.

<sup>168</sup> Padelford 118.

stand at the end of their divine “line.” This relatively minor change signals a shift away from Troy’s national destiny as the proper frame of reference for understanding Anchises’s rhetoric and towards questions of dynastic continuation, which is cemented when he “gives place” not to the demands of the gods (as in Douglas), but rather to his son, Aeneas. In relaying this narrative, Surrey’s Aeneas engages in a type of rhetorical performance which the translator was intimately familiar with: the assertion of the self within the bounds of the patriarchal family structure, in which father and dynastic scion occupy simultaneous and constantly shifting positions of preeminence.<sup>169</sup>

That Surrey presents Aeneas as relaying Anchises’s words to support his own dynastic interests need not be taken as an indication of duplicity or misrepresentation—Surrey’s Aeneas, while not the “mirror of virtue” Douglas writes of, is also not Chaucer’s seducer. Rather, Surrey writes in the courtly idiom with which he is familiar, emphasizing the corporeal dimensions of the passion Aeneas feels for his family and fellow Trojans and connecting this sense of familial affection to the future success of his bloodline. When the shade of Creusa appears before Aeneas to authorize his flight to Rome, she seamlessly joins these ideas:

illic res laetae regnumque et regia coniunx

parta tibi [...]

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<sup>169</sup> On Surrey’s relationship with his father see Walker 379-386.

iamque vale et nati serva communis amorem.

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[In Italy] salt thou have a realm, thar salt thou ryng

And wed to spows the douchtir of a kyng [...]

Thou be gude frend, lufe weill and keip fra skath

Our a yong son is common till ws baith.'

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There [in Italy] mirthful wealth, there kingdom is for thee;

There a kings child prepared to be thy make [...]

And now farwell, and keep in fathers brest

The tender love of thy yong son and myne.<sup>170</sup>

As Woods notes, the classical grammar curriculum encouraged students to identify with Creusa's emotions in this moment, not only Aeneas's.<sup>171</sup> Surrey, however, writes this sense of identification into the text itself by physically locating the parents' στοργή (parental love) within Aeneas's body, thereby fully identifying his duty to memorialize Creusa and Troy with his lineage's kingly destiny. The image in turn reflects Surrey's own understanding of what Jean E. Feerick has named "race as blood":

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<sup>170</sup> *Aeneid* II 783-789, *Eneados* v2 II.12 44-56, Padelford 120.

<sup>171</sup> Woods 24-28.

the early modern ideology of aristocracy in which the ostensible quality of one's house, duty to one's family, and the public good are rendered effectively indivisible through an (often starkly literal) language of blood and inheritance.<sup>172</sup> Compared to Douglas, Surrey's idea of the nation is oriented inward, rather than out—rather than viewing service to the state as an aristocratic duty, it formulates the continued survival of aristocratic lineages as a civilizational goal.

While this emphasis on the personal relationships of aristocratic characters suggests a strong similitude between translator and hero (and drawing such comparisons is a veritable tradition within Surrey scholarship), it is worth noting that, for readers of Tottel's 1557 edition and all subsequent editions of the text, this promise of dynastic ascendancy was immediately followed by the opening of the fourth book, which details how in Dido's "brest / imprinted stak [Aeneas's] wordes and picture[']s forme" ("*haerent infixi pectore vultus.*")<sup>173</sup> Dido's desire, and the narrative aporia which accompanies it, is as present in Surrey's text as it is in Douglas's, but while Douglas aims to minimize the inciting role of Aeneas's rhetorical performance by reducing the multiple dimensions of Dido's "rage" to "foolish lust," Surrey instead centers the

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<sup>172</sup> Jean E. Feerick, *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in the Renaissance* (University of Toronto Press, 2010).

<sup>173</sup> *Aeneid* IV 4-5; Padelford 122.

multiple, complex causes which produce her feelings. Where for Douglas the tragedy of the narrative arises from Dido's "silly" lustful nature, which leads her to "clepe [her love] 'spousage'; and with that fair name / Cloak and hide her crime of open shame," Surrey's version instead allows for the possibility that Dido has understood Aeneas's overtures correctly, making her death at least a partial result of his earlier rhetorical performance.<sup>174</sup>

Thus, while I agree with Hiscock and many others that Surrey figures himself in Aeneas, I find that this portrait lacks the rhetorical optimism typically associated with Renaissance self-fashioning. Instead, it centers those aspects of the classical relationship between rhetoric and desire which are most precarious, unforeseeable, and tragic, all while tying these unruly elements not to Dido's femininity, but instead to the normative rhetoric of procreation and lineage. A comparison of Douglas and Surrey's respective translations of Anna's attempts to persuade her sister to pursue Aeneas amply demonstrate this difference in orientation between the two texts, with the latter nudging Douglas's fable of desire and moral weakness into a more believable and complex tragedy of circumstances:

o luce magis dilecta sorori,  
solane perpetua maerens carpere iuventa,

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<sup>174</sup> *Eneados* v2 IV.4 89-90. These lines are quoted as they appear in Kendall.

nec dulcis natos Veneris nec praemia noris?

id cinerem aut Manis credis curare sepultos? (Loeb IV.31-34)

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[...] O thou, sa mot I thryve,

To thi systir derrar tan hir awyn lyve,

Quhiddir gif thou wilt alane, in wedowhed,

Evir murnand thus waist away thy yowthed [youth]

Nowthir yyt the comfort of sweit childring thou knawis,

Nor the plesour felis of Venuy lawys?

Quat, wnyss thou assys cald and gastis in grave

Of al syk walyng ony fest sal have? (Douglas IV.I.63-70)

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O syster, dearer beloved then the lyght:

Thy youth alone in playnt styl wylt thou spyll

That chyldren sweete, nor Venus gyftes doest knowe?

Doth dust (thynkest thou) mynde thys? or graued gostes?<sup>175</sup> (JD 6)

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<sup>175</sup> *Aeneid* IV.31-34; *Eenados* IV.1.63-70. The lines from Surrey are quoted as they appear in the 1554 John Day/William Owen *Aeneid*.



As one might expect, Douglas frames Anna's attempts to persuade her sister as an expressly moralistic scene of temptation. In his version of the text, Anna presents Dido with a binary set of choices: either embrace "wedowhed" and mourning, or else "Venuy lawys" [Venus's laws], rendered illicit and adulterous by the presence of the "cunnand" between herself and Sychaeus. In stressing the primacy of the Dido-Sychaeus relationship and its attendant question of adultery, Douglas reiterates the lust/love distinction of the prologue and recalls its relationship to the body politic, centering once more the idea that social strife can be engendered by "warkis veneryane."

Surrey does not entirely reject this frame, but he emphasizes its affective, rather than its transgressive dimension. In translating Dido's *maerens* as generic "playnt" rather than widowhood, he turns the reader's attention away from her ostensible moral weakness or failure and towards desire itself as an object of poetic interest. Nor is it a coincidence that "pleasure" as such is absent, with "Venus gyftes" instead being relegated to one set of relations among many which define family life in opposition to solitude.

At the same time, Surrey's translation of Dido's interactions with the disguised Cupid clarify that the desire for family she feels is not easily assimilable into same unproblematic *στοργή* that characterizes Aeneas and Creusa's love for their son:

Aut gremio Ascanium, genitoris imagine capta,

detinet, infandum si fallere possit amorem

---

oft in her lappe she holdes

Ascanius, trapt by his father's form:

so to begile the love cannot be told.<sup>176</sup>

As Anne Rogerson notes, Ascanius (and Cupid's impersonation of Ascanius in Book I) perpetually stand in not only for the continuation of Aeneas's dynasty, but also the "uncertainty, the contingency, and the malleability" that accompanies the future as it is "shaped by different desires and competing agendas."<sup>177</sup> Dido's entrapment speaks to her political ambition in desiring to control this future, but also to the fact that (at least in Surrey's version of the text) Aeneas's rhetoric has done its work in framing the pairing of father and eldest son as the two poles of that temporal narrative, rendering them disturbingly interchangeable. The syntactic ambiguity (some might say clumsiness) of Surrey's translation speaks to the difficulty of accessing Dido's perspective at this moment, during which her desire (for Aeneas? Or for a future for herself?) is assimilated fully into the image of the adversary (Cupid) who will undo her.

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<sup>176</sup> *Aeneid* II.84-85. Padelford 126.

<sup>177</sup> Anne Rogerson, *Virgil's Ascanius: Imagining the Future in the Aeneid* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) p. 1.

The violence of Dido's passion mirrors that of so many of the male voices in Surrey's poetry, who also burn as their loves are stymied by fate or circumstance. As Elizabeth Heale has observed, vernacular translation afforded courtly poets such as Surrey the opportunity to demonstrate their rhetorical flexibility and confidence in a performative manner broadly coherent with the courtly virtue of *sprezzatura*, careful control of one's speech, affect, and visage.<sup>178</sup> Within this courtly economy of performance, Heale argues, "ventriloquizing a female voice" can give the poet "expression to aspects of his own experience not easily articulated by a male voice in the cultural codes of his time," such as "experiences of marginality and passivity."<sup>179</sup> Read in a similar light, Surrey's vivid and varied descriptions of Dido's powerlessness in the face of the "gentle flame" that consumes her over the course of the poem might easily be thought of as performances of weakness—they allow Surrey to rest in the position of the lover, beguiled and helpless, rather than proceeding to the rage at stymied love that characterizes so much of his own poetry, and in doing so offer him opportunities to demonstrate his own rhetorical skill in new ways.

Even so, however, in Surrey's text this performance is undermined by the same *aporia* which interrupts Douglas's argument. The Virgilian narrative, while on some

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<sup>178</sup> Elizabeth Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey, and Early Tudor Poetry* (Longman 1998) pp. 39-63.

<sup>179</sup> Heale 62-63.

level extolling Aeneas's and the poet's rhetorical skill, also presents it as at best a destabilizing force and at worst an utterly insufficient response to the problem of absence. Surrey's epideictic descriptions of his subject's rhetorical prowess tend to turn back on themselves, suggesting both Aeneas's complicity and imperfections in the poet's control of the translation:

At regina gravi iamdudum saucia cura

vulnus alit venis et caeco carpitur igni.

---

Be this the queyn, throw hevy thochtis onsound,

In every vayn nursys th greyn wound,

Smytyn so deip with th blynd fyre of lufe.

---

nowe the wounded Quene wyth heuy care,

Throughout the veines she nourisheth the [plage],

Surprised with blind flame [...]<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> *Aeneid* IV.1-2; *Eneados* IV.1 1-3; Padelford 122. The substitution of "plage" for the otherwise incongruous "playe" is drawn from Padelford's collation of ms. Hargrave 205.

Douglas rewrites Virgil's *caeco igni*, signifying a passion hidden from others, through the poetic commonplace of a "blynd fyre of lufe" which cements Dido's "wound" as a form of "greening," yearning lovesickness.<sup>181</sup> Surrey in turn maintains this interpretation of the *caeco igni*, but complicates the desire imputed by it. Where Douglas translates *carpitur* to "smittin" in order to maintain the wound metaphor of the previous line and thereby emphasize the depth and fatal consequences of Dido's desire, Surrey breaks the metaphor to draw attention to its unexpectedness and immediacy. Once again, Surrey acknowledges a psychological complexity in Dido that Douglas lacks any interest in—it is not only important that she feels deeply, but that she herself is "surprised" by the violence of her passion.

Following Heale's point, there is a clear contrast here between the measured and carefully paced *sprezzatura* of the poet (represented by Aeneas's memorial oratory) and the desire which spurs uncontrollable activity within Dido's body. At the same time, as Elizabeth Bearden observes, the ideal of the carefully-controlled voice and body of the court poet "presupposes that most, if not all people" deviate from it to some extent, and that these deviations may be compensated for in other ways.<sup>182</sup> Dido's experiences of

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<sup>181</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites this sense of "Green" from the fifteenth century.

<sup>182</sup> Elizabeth B. Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019) p. 57

stymied desire, “rage,” and bodily loss of control were themselves a daily part of the courtier’s life—perhaps even more so for Surrey than others, given the oft-remarked upon violence of his passions, and his careful attention to controlling representations of his own body in the many portraits he sat for over the course of his short life.<sup>183</sup> We should not discount out of hand the possibility that Surrey simply feels a certain affiliation with Dido and writes accordingly, just as he does for Ulysses.<sup>184</sup> Likewise, it is difficult to avoid reading of Dido “in outward cheare, dissemblyng her entent” (*consilium vultu tegit ac spem fronte serenat*) as she looks forward to her own death without considering the series of accusations, imprisonments, and executions which the Howards in the years before he began writing, and without wondering whether the attempt to project rhetorical confidence by ventriloquizing Dido does not also function for Surrey as an act of defiance in the face of his family’s slow winnowing at the hands of the Crown.<sup>185</sup>

This is not to fully identify Surrey with his heroine, or to endorse uncritically Jonathan Crewe’s characterization of his “suicidal poetics,” but instead to point towards the extent to which the question of ‘affect’ in Surrey’s *Aeneid* triangulates the operations

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<sup>183</sup> Sessions 333-351.

<sup>184</sup> See the poem with the first line “I that Ulysses yeres have spent” in Padelford 57-58.

<sup>185</sup> *Aeneid* IV.477, Padelford 150.

of biography, translation, and hermeneutics, rendering them equally determinative of the text's meaning. Taking these factors into account, Surrey's turn away from Douglas starts to seem less suggestive of a normative, linear historical movement from one humanism to another and more indicative of two translators, arriving at the same text from different positions in life and moments in history but with essentially the same goal of replicating the Virgilian text as *they* read it, translating according to their own interests and experiences. The fact both of their translations can be accurately described as "humanist" is a testament to the flexibility of that term, as well as its dangerous potential to flatten dissimilar perspectives.

What we lose through that flattening is predominantly a sense of the poet's agency within the narrow field or tradition they read and translate within. Any conclusion we can draw from examining that limited agency will by necessity small, even hyper-localized, and often quite obvious (it is, for example, very predictable that Douglas and Surrey would translate Aeneas's language of familial piety differently, according to their own understandings of the concept). However, those fine distinctions, a minor divergence from a mentor or predecessor, are often where the sense of alienation rests. It is one thing to recognize that the world has changed since Virgil's time, and quite another to recognize that it has changed since the time of one's parents. Surrey's failure to follow Douglas must be seen in this light—not only as a

practice exercise and genuine attempt to achieve Virgil's imputed aims, but also as an attempt to express a sense of alterity through the means he had available to him.



## Chapter 2: The Nation in Surrey's Reception History

This chapter examines the reception of Surrey's poetic works in the decade following his death through three texts: a sonnet with the first line "The Great Macedon that Out of Perse Chased" signed 'H.S.' inscribed on a manuscript of Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder's *Penitential Psalms*; a partial *Aeneid* printed by John Day for William Owen in 1554; and several poems printed by Richard Tottel in his *Songes and Sonnetes* of 1557. In all three cases, the actors involved in preserving and transmitting Surrey's poetry sought to mobilize his memory to particular political and dynastic ends, but I argue that Day and Owen failed whereas Tottel succeeded in doing so because he, unlike the others, reframed Surrey's poetry in explicitly English nationalist terms. The cost of *Songes and Sonnetes'* success was an editorial reduction and de-emphasis on the aspects of Surrey's poetry which were most problematic in the 1550s, including especially Surrey's openly romantic adoration of Wyatt as a republican political martyr.

During the Edwardian and especially Marian governments, questions of what and who the English nation was took on an increasing popular urgency, with calls for political unity among the English being mobilized both for and against the Crown.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> On Mary I's ascension and marriage to Philip II of Spain as a catalyst for national identity discourse see Shrank, *Writing the Nation* 143-181 and Herbert Grabes, "England or the Queen? Public Conflict of Opinion and National Identity under Mary Tudor" in

Although all three of the poems surveyed here speak to the place of verse in establishing an “English nation” and its literature, it is not until Tottel’s *Miscellany* that Surrey becomes recognizable as a figure in the mold of a poetic national hero. Even as late as 1554, Surrey’s editors valued his poetry not in terms of any abstract benefit to the nation as a whole, but instead by its concrete potential to affect the fortunes of Surrey’s and Wyatt’s surviving families. By 1557, the failure of Thomas Wyatt the younger’s rebellion, the Marian state’s escalating anti-Protestant policies, and the Crown’s growing interest in controlling the press meant that the political and religious calculus involved in printing Surrey’s works had changed. In contrast to his forebearers, Tottel decentered the Surrey-Wyatt relationship in favor of appealing to a radically de-historicized and anomalous English nation composed around linguistic and literary-historical (rather than historic) claims. Over the ensuing decades the interpretation of Surrey’s memory forwarded by Tottel’s anthology came to dominate the popular understanding of the poet’s relationship with nationhood, resulting in the Anglocentric, nationalist conception of “English literature” that even now dominates Surrey’s reception history.

I argue that this idea of Surrey's particular "Englishness" or especial nationalism was introduced at a particular point in time, through Richard Tottel's introduction to and editorial choices within his *Songes and Sonnettes* of 1557. Tottel's miscellany originates almost all of Surrey's poetry and most of Wyatt's, and it was popular enough to go through at least twelve more editions before the end of the century.<sup>187</sup> However, as Christopher Warner has observed, Tottel risked incurring serious professional and (potentially) legal consequences by printing the miscellany in mid-1557, "the summer of martyrs' fires" and a mere three years after Wyatt's son had attempted unsuccessfully to rebel against the queen and was subsequently hanged, drawn, and quartered.<sup>188</sup> Warner argues that the intense atmosphere of suspicion and heavy press censorship that the Crown instituted in the following years contributed to Tottel's decision to frame himself as having published the text to prove "the honor of the Englishe tong,

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<sup>187</sup> Rollins identifies twelve editions from before the end of the century, with J. Christopher Warner discovering a thirteenth in 2011. See J. Christopher Warner, "'Sonnets en Anglois': A Hitherto Unknown Edition of Tottel's Miscellany (1559)" in *Notes and Queries* New Series 58 (2011) 204-206.

<sup>188</sup> J. Christopher Warner, *The Making and Marketing of Tottel's Miscellany, 1557: Songs and Sonnets in the Summer of the Martyrs' Fires* (Routledge, 2012). See also Eamon Duffey, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (Yale University Press 2009); D.M. Loades, "The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England" in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 24 (1974): 141-157.

and for profit of the studious of Englishe eloquence."<sup>189</sup> In doing so, Tottel imposed a singular reading on a set of texts which are otherwise ambivalent in their relationship to people and places we tend to now think of uncritically as "English," such as London and the home counties. A reading more closely attuned to Surrey's nugatory relationship with the past reveals a body of poetry which conceives of the nation not in the language of a shared identity, but instead almost exclusively in terms of a reciprocal personal duty it fails to live up to in not properly memorializing its most virtuous people.

In this chapter, I chart a course the poem in Egerton ms 2711, which was almost certainly inscribed in the text in the years immediately following Wyatt's death and Surrey's execution.<sup>190</sup> I further contrast the first of these printed works, the John Day and William Owen *Aeneid* of 1554, against the third (and by far most successful,) Tottel's miscellany of 1557. The manuscript poem and the Day and Owen *Aeneid* each take care to preserve evidence of the established networks of prestige and obligation that govern the emergence of poetic works into print during this time, as well as both

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<sup>189</sup>Warner 159-214. The quotation is from Tottel's preface to his 1557 Miscellany.

<sup>190</sup> Jason Powell, "Thomas Wyatt's Poetry in Embassy: Egerton 2711 and the Production of Literary Manuscripts Abroad" in the *Huntington Library Quarterly* 67.2 (2004-2006) pp. 261-282.

burnishing the reputations of the still-living Howards and trading on their conservative religious affinities. By the end of that year, though, Wyatt the younger was dead and Day was imprisoned in the Tower of London for the newly codified crime of printing “corrupt and naughty opinions, unlawful books, ballads, and other pernicious and hurtful devices engendering [...] discord.”<sup>191</sup> Little wonder then that Tottel reverses course by strategically de-emphasizing Surrey’s place in courtly literary networks and retitling, re-arranging, and “regularizing” his works into a comparatively harmless compendium of occasional verse forms defanged by the titles he has assigned them. In doing so, Tottel (largely unintentionally) erases and obscures the queer aspects of Surrey’s poetics, including both the depth of his affection for the comparatively lowborn Wyatt and the pervasive sense of alienation which accompanies his encounters with classical history. Nevertheless, some ambivalence still shows through, and this emergence appears all the more starkely when Tottel’s use of Surrey’s text is contrasted with that to which it was put earlier in the centuries.

1541: “The Great Macedon that Out of Perse Chased”

Some years before it was included in Tottel’s *Miscellany*, a sonnet attributed to ‘H.S.’ was inscribed as a preface to a manuscript containing Wyatt’s handwritten copy

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<sup>191</sup> “The Marian Injunctions” in *Documents of the English Reformation*. Ed. Gerald Bray (ed. Gerald Bray, Lutterworth Press 1994) pp. 281-283. On Day’s arrest see Duffey pp. 57-58.

of his *Penitential Psalms*.<sup>192</sup> Wyatt likely composed his psalms in the first half of 1541, during his second incarceration in the Tower of London.<sup>193</sup> Surrey originally wrote “The Great Macedon” in the same period, and Sessions argues that the two may have collaborated from Wyatt’s cell.<sup>194</sup> The two men had remained close friends despite their vastly different statuses relative to one another, even after Wyatt fell from favor following the execution of his patron, Thomas Cromwell.<sup>195</sup> Cromwell’s persecution marked the ascendancy of the noble, conservative faction in the court, who by and large supported the dissolution of the Roman Church in England but opposed any plans for a more wide-ranging religious Reformation.<sup>196</sup> Surrey’s father, the Duke of Norfolk, had masterminded the coup against Cromwell and may have played a part in having Wyatt arrested; in addition, Norfolk was by far the loudest voice in favor of the Act of Six

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<sup>192</sup> Egerton Ms 2711 has been digitized by the British Library, and was available online prior to the current (as of 2024) suspension of that institution’s digital services. On dating this inscription see Powell *passim*. and Sessions p. 247.

<sup>193</sup> On the dating of Wyatt’s *Psalms* see Walker 520-521 n. 1.

<sup>194</sup> Sessions 247-248.

<sup>195</sup> On Wyatt’s life and the dating of his compositions see Susan Brigden, *Thomas Wyatt: The Heart’s Forest* (Faber and Faber 2014); and Kenneth Muir, *The Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool University Press, 1963).

<sup>196</sup> Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (Yale University Press, 2017) p. 274-277.

Articles, a conservative religious measure that banned the Reformed mass practices Wyatt adhered to under pain of death.<sup>197</sup> Thus, although Wyatt was still alive when Surrey composed “The Great Macedon,” the exigencies of its composition nevertheless suggest that it would have been a personal elegy intended for a small audience exclusively, and in this as a private counterpart to Surrey’s later, more famous and more public elegy on Wyatt.

That elegy, “Wyatt resteth here,” had been printed in 1542 following Wyatt’s death after an extended illness the previous year. The poem is the only work of Surrey’s printed in his own lifetime, and it is likely that the Earl gave at least his tacit endorsement to the project (at very least, he never declaimed it).<sup>198</sup> If so, the first two stanzas of the elegy render Surrey’s intentions in publicly remembering Wyatt for a national audience explicit:

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

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<sup>197</sup> Brigden, *Thomas Wyatt* 519-521.

<sup>198</sup> Sessions 245-250.

A hed, where wisdom misteries did frame;  
 Whose hammers bet styll in that lively brayn  
 As on a stithe, where that some work of fame  
 Was dayly wrought to turne to Britaines gayn.<sup>199</sup>

The court's persecution of Wyatt inverts the expected course of poetic fame, and although as a national poet he actively labors for "Britaines gayn," his exhausting daily efforts ultimately go unrewarded. The lyrical gifts Wyatt thereby produces are "misteries," prophetic visions that surpass even the greatest of terrestrial poets:

A hand that taught what might be sayd in ryme;  
 That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit;  
 A mark the which, unparfited for time,  
 Some may approche, but never none shall hit.<sup>200</sup>

Wyatt surpasses Chaucer in part because the model of poetic heroism he embodies is less English than Roman. Surrey's Wyatt is not only a balladeer but a statesman, whose ceaseless labor for "fame" fulfills the Ciceronian ideal of the patriotic

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<sup>199</sup> This poem was the only one printed during Surrey's lifetime, probably with his permission. See "An excellent Epitaffe of syr Thomas wyat, with two other compendious dytties, wherin are touchyd, and set furth the state of mannes lyfe" (London: John Herforde for Roberte Toye, 1545).

<sup>200</sup> "Epitaffe" 13-16.



*vita activa*.<sup>201</sup> As José María Pérez Fernández argues, the poem “articulates the political inscription of Wyatt’s body as the universal model of the active citizen” and a “symbol of the entire commonwealth.”<sup>202</sup> As a master of both domestic ballad and foreign metrical forms, Surrey argues that Wyatt makes a claim to English cultural hegemony in the field of humanist reception. However, when that claim is placed in the appropriate historical context, it becomes clear that its persuasive force rests on a strong sense of *romanitas*, a classicizing sense of “Britishness,” rather than an innate faith in a specifically English excellence.

The chronicler John Leeland’s ode to Wyatt was also written during the poet’s second incarceration, likely with Surrey’s collaboration. Its praises Wyatt in much the same terms as “Wyatt resteth here”:

Beautiful Florence of Dante justly boasts,  
 And Kingly Rome approves the excellence  
 Of Petrarch’s songs. In his own tongue as worthy,

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<sup>201</sup> Cicero’s association with the stoic ideal of an active life was especially prominent in the late medieval Italian tradition—see John G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) pp. 49-80.

<sup>202</sup> Fernández 222-238.

Our Wyatt bears the palm of eloquence.<sup>203</sup>

Cathy Shrank detects a telling incongruity in the two poets' attempts to "fashion Wyatt into a poet with a national programme," a goal which is "far from the impression made by Wyatt's poetry, which is [...] the work of private spaces and defensive self-reflexivity from which a notion of 'Britain' is notably absent."<sup>204</sup> For Shrank, the logic which animates Leland's crowning of Wyatt as an "*ornamentum patriae*" is identical to that which Surrey employs in his elegy: "the figure of Wyatt as the cultivated, courtly, national poet [...] fulfills a need on the part of Leland and Surrey to provide a suitable example with which to counter England's long-standing reputation as a country bereft of literary accomplishment."<sup>205</sup> If we accept Shrank's reading of both texts, it is easy to draw a relatively clear line between Surrey's memorialization of Wyatt as "Britaines gayn" in 1542 and Tottel's attempt in 1557 to establish the two poets as the English answer to the entirety of the Italian and Latin poetic traditions.

I find Shrank's reading of "Wyatt resteth here" persuasive, but it is worth emphasizing just how much of an oddity that poem is within Surrey's larger body of

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<sup>203</sup> John Leeland, *Naeniae in mortem Thomae Viati equitis incomparabilis* (1542), as translated by Muir. This quote and translation are also found in Shrank, *Writing the Nation* 74-75 fn 30.

<sup>204</sup> Shrank, *Writing the Nation* 75.

<sup>205</sup> Shrank, *Writing the Nation* 75.

work (this is not to say that we should ignore it, merely that there is value in acknowledging the multiplicity of the total oeuvre.) Unlike Surrey's other works, the elegy was a public poem of praise intended to inspire acclaim for Wyatt even from those who did not know him. Surrey surely hoped that presenting the disgraced Wyatt as not only a 'national poet' but a servant to the public's interests would make that public more likely to view his memory and his surviving family favorably.

Additionally, the convenient vagueness of the phrase "Britaines gayn" serves to draw together a wide variety of potential allies with differing ranks, religious convictions, and regional loyalties, once again expressed in terms of a shared sense of history rooted in the Roman episteme. Even this appeal to history is gestural rather than explicit, however, being largely confined to the sense of idealized, public civic virtue exuded by Wyatt's "valiant corps, where force and beauty met." A comparison to the rest of Surrey's writings, from which this sense of virtue as service to a shared national public is largely absent, strongly suggests Surrey imagines Wyatt in such a way chiefly because it is in the best interests of Wyatt's memory and surviving family to have him remembered as a latter-day Cicero rather than as an incidentally-poetic secretary to cruel men of high station.

Unlike "Wyatt resteth here," "The Great Macedon" is a private poem which appeared in only a single manuscript before Tottel later included it in his miscellany. Nothing is known about the poem's scribe, whose "unusual secretary hand appears

nowhere else in the Egerton manuscript."<sup>206</sup> The fact that the poem was not copied by John Harington, a friend of both Wyatts who came to possess the manuscript in the immediate aftermath of the elder's death, suggests it may have been added to the text slightly later, perhaps as the manuscript was being prepared for Wyatt the younger as a gift or memento of his father.<sup>207</sup> Surrey had been personally acquainted with Thomas Wyatt the younger, who was closer to him in age than the elder Wyatt, and the two shared an affinity for equestrianism and games of athletic skill. In addition to a longstanding friendship, Surrey and the younger Wyatt had also participated in both the siege of Boulogne as well as the riot that Surrey later memorialized in "London, Hast thou accused me."<sup>208</sup> If the manuscript was indeed intended for Wyatt the younger, it may have served as window into an aspect of his father's life from which he had been largely excluded, as well as a reminder of the affective ties which bound the three men.

"The Great Macedon that out of Perse chasyd" is considerably more allusive than "Wyatt resteth here," and assumes familiarity with both the circumstances of Wyatt's

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<sup>206</sup> Sessions 247. See also Brigden, *Thomas Wyatt* pp. 508-509 on the political context of this poem.

<sup>207</sup> Powell 194.

<sup>208</sup> Eric N. Simons, *The Queen and the Rebel* (London: Muller, 1964) pp. 30-31.

two imprisonments and the content and themes of the *Penitential Psalms*. It is presented here in its entirety, in part to emphasize the striking rapidity with which Surrey pivots towards what he sees as injustice:

The great Macedon that out of Perse chasyd  
 Darius of whose huge power all Asy rang  
 In the riche arke of Homers rymes he placyd,  
 Who fayned gestes of Hethen Prynces sang.  
 What holly grave, what wourthy sepulture,  
 To Wyates Psalmes shuld Christians then purchase[?]  
 When he dothe paynte the lyvely fayths, and pure:  
 The stedfast hoope the swete returne to grace  
 Of just Davyd, by parfite penytence;  
 Where Rewlers may see in a myrroure clere  
 The bitter frewte of false concupiscense,  
 From Jewry bought Uryas deathe full dere.  
 In Prynces hartes goddes scourge yprynted depe  
 Myght them awake out of their synfull slepe.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Egerton MS 2711 f.85.v.

As in “Wyatt resteth here,” Surrey imagines his subject as having written in the national interest, with his poetry serving as a *specula principis* that might instill conscience in a conspicuously dissolute monarch.<sup>210</sup> He is aided in this by the fact that, as many readers of Wyatt’s *Psalms* over the years have noted, the doctrine of penitence depicted in that work mirrors Wyatt’s own Reformed beliefs, which emphasized the importance of personal conscience.. As R.A. Rebholz argues, Wyatt’s David is “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.”<sup>211</sup> Clare Costley King’oo finds that the form of the poem is likewise suggestive of a Reformed ethics of reading, with the overt presence of Wyatt’s editorial voice “disrupting any kind of experiential or associational reading of the psalms,” instead demanding rigorous analysis from the reader.<sup>212</sup>

Surrey’s poem extends this spiritual frame for understanding literary hermeneutics to the political realm. As Greg Walker persuasively argues, the poem

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<sup>210</sup> On the *specula principis* tradition in translations and adaptations of the penitential psalms see Clare Costley King’oo, *Miserere Mei: The Penitential Psalms in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), esp p. 96-97

<sup>211</sup>R.A. Rebholz, ed., *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 1978) p. 454.

<sup>212</sup> King’oo 119.

envisions Wyatt as both a political martyr and small-scale prophet, with his poetry being praiseworthy not only for its aesthetic quality but its potential to accomplish a mimetic reordering when the imagined princely reader “returns to grace” and achieves “parfite penitence” by following the example of David.<sup>213</sup> In this way, Surrey prefigures Sidney’s later, neo-Horatian theory of poetry as “a speaking picture [...] with this end: to teach and delight,” a repertoire of plausibly real examples with which one might inform their behavior.<sup>214</sup> W.A. Sessions notes that this sense of poetry’s function as didactic mimesis enables Surrey to conjecture a future in which satire actually plays an efficacious role in restructuring the body politic’s relationship with its head, enabling poets in turn to “protect the moral life of the community.”<sup>215</sup>

As Sessions acknowledges, however, Surrey’s place in the Reformed Christian community he addresses is ambiguous. Although Surrey cultivated a circle of Reformed acquaintances, he also maintained an affective attachment to the rituals and trappings of the Catholic mass, and his religious leanings were either so uncontroversial or so

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<sup>213</sup> Walker 397.

<sup>214</sup> Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry: or, The Defense of Poesy* (ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, Manchester University Press 1973) pp. 47.

<sup>215</sup> Sessions 248.

well-hidden that they generated little controversy within the Howard family.<sup>216</sup> Beyond the religious question, Surrey was the eldest son of the Reformers' chief persecutor, and his love for Wyatt was matched by a derision for Cromwell and the other newly made men of the court.<sup>217</sup> If any rift existed between Surrey and his father because of the latter's torturing and killing of the former's Reformed acquaintances, little evidence of it has survived. Even after Catherine Howard's beheading, Surrey was said to boast that his father was the most powerful man in England, and that he expected Norfolk to become regent after the King's death.<sup>218</sup> Within this context, the seemingly ecumenical address to Wyatt's fellow "Christians" in the second stanza might well be read as an olive branch, but it does not signify personal filiation or even necessarily sympathy. If a Reformed "nation" is being addressed here, it is one in which Surrey was a peripheral figure, and one which he felt he could judge by virtue of his privileged status.

Read in this light, the question in the poem's second stanza has a much harsher ring: if Wyatt is more worthy than Homer of praise, why have his supposed friends

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<sup>216</sup> Clark 319-320.

<sup>217</sup> On Surrey's notoriously poor relationship with Cromwell see Bradley J. Irish, *Emotion in the Tudor Court: Literature, History, and Early Modern Feeling* (Northwestern University Press, 2018) p 88-90.

<sup>218</sup> Susan Brigden, "Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and the 'Conjured League'" in *The Historical Journal* 37, no. 3 (1994): 507-37.



failed to memorialize him? No obvious answer to this question is forthcoming. Instead, the seemingly straightforward relationship between the clarity of Wyatt's "myrroure" and his "worthiness" as a poet is complicated by courtly poetry's total imbrication in the contingent, political world of its production. Within this world, the longevity of Homer's verse is explained by the "huge power" and geographical reach of Alexander as its legendary patron as much as it is by any innate excellence. Thus, the second half of the poem turns not towards the "Christians" who will (according to Walker's and Sessions' readings) memorialize Wyatt, but instead towards the sinful "prince" whose "awakening" constitutes the *Psalms'* ultimate *telos*. In Alexandra Halasz's words, in the final lines Surrey "substitutes the divided story of David [for] an answer to his question about the place of Wyatt's Paraphrase," and in doing so "exposes a fault line between the traditional idealization of a penitential David and the negative political example of his story."<sup>219</sup> The implication is that one's poetic immortality depends less upon the quality of one's work than the righteousness of one's patron—a quality that the Davidic allegory, with its formalized association between sexual lust and political tyranny, cannot help but call into question and make materially relevant to the late Henrician court.

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<sup>219</sup> Alexandra Halasz, "Wyatt's David" in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 30, no. 3 (Fall 1988): 320–44 p. 321.

By itself, the notion that poetic fame is contingent upon the political sphere is not inherently transgressive—to deny that notion in the sixteenth century would have meant usurping the prince’s right to control the flow of “prestige,” cultural capital, within their demesne. However, the nature of this contingency differs markedly between Wyatt’s and Surrey’s respective interpretations of the Davidic narrative.<sup>220</sup> Wyatt’s *Psalms* retell the section of the book of Samuel in which David betrays the Hittite general Uriah by deliberately sending him into a losing military engagement to be killed, thereby allowing the king to marry Uriah’s wife, Batsheba. When the prophet Nathan confronts David with “the great offence, outrage, and injury / that [David] hath done to God” through this murder, the king repents and begs God to “in a moment” cleanse the “hundred years’ offence” of Uriah’s killing.<sup>221</sup> However, although Wyatt assures the reader that God “hath perfect / intelligence of heart contrite” and “shall ‘stablish the just assuredly,” he gives very little indication of the king’s regeneration.<sup>222</sup> Instead, as Rebholz observes, the tension and enduring mystery of the *Penitential Psalms* derives from the “essentially Reformed, non-cyclical nature of the king’s repentance,

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<sup>220</sup> Susan Brigden draws a useful distinction between the overt satire of Surrey’s poem and the ambiguity of Wyatt’s David in Brigden, “Henry Howard, Earle of Surrey, and the ‘Conjured League’” in *The Historical Journal* 37.3 (1994) p. 509.

<sup>221</sup> Wyatt 155-156.

<sup>222</sup> Halasz 322-324.

which arrives (if it arrives at all) only at the singular point of his utmost self-abjection.”<sup>223</sup> “Tyranny” in Wyatt’s theorization combines the political sense of abuse by a sovereign power and the theological sense of oppression by desire:

[...] of my flesh each not well cured wound,  
 That fester’d is by folly and negligence,  
 By secret lust hath rankled under skin,  
 Not duly cured by my penitence.  
 Perceiving thus the tyranny of sin,  
 That with his weight hath humbled and depress’d  
 My pride; by gnawing of the worm within,  
 That never dieth, I live withouten rest.<sup>224</sup>

Wyatt follows the common wisdom of the period, which holds that lust and tyranny proceed from the same cause: the individual (whether monarch or subject) surrenders their agency to appetite, thereby becoming capable of progressively more extreme sins of fornication, adultery, and murder. In the Reformed conception especially, the logical

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<sup>223</sup>*Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (ed. R.A. Rebholz, Penguin 1978) p. 194. Thomas M. Greene insightfully extends this observation to Wyatt’s erotic verse, noting his tendency to “move away from vacillation” in his imitations of Petrarch. See Greene 284-285.

<sup>224</sup> Rebholz 204.

implication is what Debora Shuger refers to as a “domino theory of vice” at work, as the “ruler’s private vice inevitably leads to public and political corruption.”<sup>225</sup> The political question of what the tyrant’s subjects should do about their situation is subsumed fully into the theological; for Wyatt, repentance is the answer to both.

A similar understanding of lust as the root cause of tyranny is also present in Surrey’s poem, but there the relation of the political and theological spheres is unsettled, with even the hesitant optimism of the notion that poetry ‘myght’ provide ‘a myrrour clere’ that leads to the tyrant repenting his cupidity being belied by Uriah’s entry into the poem as a secondary, problematic nexus for allegorical reading. In Surrey’s conception, the “bitter frewte” of the ruler’s lust is not sin itself but rather its consequence, Uriah’s death in battle. This shift in emphasis does not derive from the contents of Wyatt’s *Psalms*, which instead mention Uriah only in passing and instead concentrate almost exclusively on David himself. As a victim of his king’s jealousy, however, Uriah might plausibly stand in for Wyatt, whose troubles with the Crown had begun when Henry learned of rumors that he and Anne Boleyn were or had been lovers.<sup>226</sup> Surrey’s prefatory poem enacts a kind of imaginative revenge for Wyatt’s

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<sup>225</sup> On the equation of sexual desire with tyranny in the Tudor era see Shuger 36-38.

<sup>226</sup> Brigden, *Thomas Wyatt* 145-151, 274-288.

subsequent treatment, with both Wyatt's fallen state and his actual poetic output both serving to "scourge" the parties who brought him so low.

For readers encountering the poem in later decades, the reference to Uriah in the third stanza could just as easily stand in for Surrey himself. Surrey's own military career had come to a disastrous end in 1546, when he was forced to flee the city of Boulogne in ignominy after impulsively leading his soldiers into a losing engagement with a larger and better-positioned French force.<sup>227</sup> The chronicler Elis Gruffydd reports that Surrey was so shamed by this defeat that he, in imitation of Brutus, called upon his captains to impale him in the aftermath of the battle.<sup>228</sup> They did not, and for the rest of his life Surrey remained keenly aware of the role that the king had played in his dishonor by ordering the ill-fated occupation in the first place. In this way, Surrey's Uriah becomes by sheer coincidence one amongst countless attempts to reproduce himself in image as an active, yet defeated political subject.

The frame of reference slips easily from one man to another despite their profound differences because Surrey, in all of his poetry, always praises through the same idiom. As Fernández has observed, Surrey's attempts to locate virtue in Wyatt

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<sup>227</sup> Davies 342.

<sup>228</sup> Davies 342-344.

have a strongly republican political character.<sup>229</sup> For Surrey, having lived his entire life in the second half of Henry's reign, republicanism was not a concrete theory of politics but instead a set of rhetorics and literary tropes constellated around the examples of mythic and historical men, particularly Cato and Cicero.<sup>230</sup> Perhaps this is why he, even in this poem which was written while Wyatt was still alive, nevertheless treats his friend's poetry (and by extension, Wyatt himself) as entombed among the honored dead, its worth defined by its "holly grave" and "worthy sepulchre." As a republican orator, Wyatt is defined not only by his service to the state but that state's willingness (or unwillingness) to return his sacrifices through memory. The "hope" that the tyrant might actually "returne to grace" after being travestied in poetry is rhetorical, and secondary to subject's performance of active, masculinized resistance in the face of tyrannical acts. Surrey goes against the traditional Biblical exegesis's chronology, having "just Davyd, of parfite penitence" precede the record of his tyranny, in part because the circuit of repentance is not the subject of his poem—what matters more to him is the "scourging" of the tyrant, and the poet's willingness to attach both his and Wyatt's names to it. The fact that the process of excoriation and repentance is still incomplete at the end of the subjunctive final couplet in turn draws attention to the

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<sup>229</sup> Fernández 308-309.

<sup>230</sup> Bushnell 19, Walker 379-386.

limits of the poem's efficaciousness in actually prompting such a change of heart. As in Lucan, who does praise to the republican orator Cato by stacking the gods and Ceasar against him, Wyatt's virtue is enabled by the architecture of failure which Surrey builds into his poetics.

Writing at the end of the decade, Tottel will instead measure Wyatt's poetic success by the extent to which he can be imitated as a source of a demotic, uniquely English "eloquence." This notion of poetic success as popularity is wholly antithetical to the kind of memorialization which Surrey undertakes in his elegies to Wyatt, in which poetic activity is a marker of exceptionality and difference from the greater mass of English subjects. Even in the public elegy, there is a profound sense of exclusivity to Surrey's mourning:

A valiant corps, where force and beauty met;

Happy, alas, to happy, but for foes;

[...] Sent for our helth, but not received so.

Thus, for our gilte, this jewel have we lost.

The earth his bones, the heavens possesse his gost.

Surrey's aggrievement in these lines underscores both his sense of Wyatt's personal uniqueness and the insufficiency of other men of his rank, whom Surrey characterizes as being unable to value Wyatt in the way he alone can. Wyatt's surpassing of those around him contributes to his downfall in Surrey's retelling (in fact

his “heavenly giftes [are] encreased by disdain,”) but this makes the man himself all the more remarkable and worthy in comparison to the unappreciative upstarts who made up his circle. However, although Surrey here implies that he views himself as a part of the collective of mourners that surrounds Wyatt in this public elegy, this is at least partially performance—another poem, his third elegy to Wyatt, suggests a more intimate and exclusive memorialization:

But I that knowe what harbourd in [Wyatt’s] hedd,  
 What vertues rare were tempred in that brest,  
 Honour the place that such a jewell bredd,  
 And kisse the ground where as thy coorse doth rest  
 With vapored eyes; from whence such streames availe  
 As Pyramus did on Thisbes brest bewaile.<sup>231</sup>

Within the rarified field of Wyatt and Surrey’s poetic communication, his startlingly romantic comparison of the older man to the mourned-for Thisbe reads as a testament to a grief which Surrey professes to feel so keenly that he must reach back into myth to describe it. By comparing Wyatt to Thisbe, Surrey both establishes the late poet as an appropriate (and appropriately Petrarchan) object for his own erotic agony

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<sup>231</sup> Padelford 80. Tottel lists this poem as “Of the death of the same sir T.W.” See also Sessions’ excellent reading of this poem in *Henry Howard* 249-250.



and equates the value of their respective lives. The compliment Surrey's tears pay Wyatt functions in part on their difference in rank: Wyatt is not only worthy of mourning from his social superior, but quasi-religious reverence and potentially even suicidal despair. In contrast to the more restrained public elegy, the love Surrey expresses for Wyatt here and in the "The Great Macedon" is figured as an idealized *eros*. It is experienced in the body, immoderate in its expression, and remains undiminished by the object of desire's death.<sup>232</sup> Surrey's attempts to establish Wyatt as similar to himself may cause our interpretation of their affection to shift towards idealized friendship, founded (in the Senecan tradition) on exact similitude, but the traces of their profound differences in status and religion are inescapable. In contrast to virtually every description of their relationship since, Surrey in his private poems portrays Wyatt less as a mentor than a Homeric companion, with all the mingled eroticism, violence, and disdain for the cowardly and passive that role implies.

Much like the elegy composed at Windsor, Surrey's poems to and about Wyatt enshrine both him and his subject in a uniquely set-apart chronotope, from which their own difference from (and, from Surrey's position, superiority to) the collective "national" body is a point of both pride and dissonance. "The Great Macedon" in

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<sup>232</sup> Irish's description of Surrey's "benign envy" is also useful as a point of comparison here. See Bradley J. Irish, *Emotion in the Tudor Court: Literature, History, and Early Modern Feeling* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018) p. 63-67.

particular portrays Wyatt and Surrey as sharing a doomed “hope” for their tyrant’s “return to grace,” but one which is ultimately meaningful despite the wished-for political and religious miracle failing to take place. It affirms, even after Surrey’s death, a form of queer life lived in manuscript, subtext, and the uncertainties of historical memory.

In 1541, “The Great Macedon” and its manuscript were held as a private treasure of the Wyatt and Harington families, who may have seen it as encoding the affective traces of the poets’ comradeship, against which the sufferings of the ‘nation’ are of lesser importance and perhaps even deserved. Perhaps it is little wonder that the son raised to receive this work would, at the beginning of 1554, rise in unsuccessful rebellion against his queen’s plans to marry the king of Spain—an act which he framed, convincingly to many, as a service to the nation.<sup>233</sup>

#### 1554: the John Day and William Owen *Aeneid*

Of the three works examined in this chapter, “The Great Macedon” is by far the most exclusive in its approach to national memory, while Tottel’s is the most expansive. The version of the fourth book of Surrey’s *Aeneid* printed by John Day for William

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<sup>233</sup> On the motivations and context behind Wyatt’s rebellion see Alexander Samson, *Mary and Philip: The Marriage of Tudor England and Hapsburg Spain* (Manchester University Press 2020) pp. 72-91.

Owen<sup>234</sup> in 1554 is somewhere in the middle. Despite being produced by one of England's most prolific (and, after his arrest later that year, notorious) printers, Owen's introduction situates the work almost exclusively in terms of the posthumous personal relationship between Surrey and Surrey's son, Thomas Howard.<sup>235</sup> As in Surrey's *Aeneid* itself, Virgil's Augustan themes of prophecy and national destiny are subordinated to the primacy of the father-son relationship, which is enabled by the shared experience of Virgilian transmission in spite of Surrey's absence. Owen gambled that, within this political and dynastic context, emphasizing the "strangeness" of Surrey's text—meaning most especially its resemblance to foreign verse styles—would constitute a political advantage for the Howard family, who stood to benefit from even purely symbolic connections to the wider arena of Catholic politics on the continent. He could not have predicted that England's political situation would change so drastically during

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<sup>234</sup> Owen's name is also spelled "Awen" in various places, including most prominently on the title page of the work in question. He appears to have used both interchangeably, and so I have preferred the former spelling as it is more common in secondary sources.

<sup>235</sup> Henry Machyn records that Day was jailed in 1554 for printing "noghty bokes" of an unspecified but almost certainly Protestant nature. During Elizabeth's reign he went on to print many well-known Protestant devotional works, the most famous of which is Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* of 1563. See Machyn, *A London Provisioner's Chronicle, 1550-1563* (eds. Richard W. Bailey, Marilyn Miller, and Colette Moore, Michigan Publishing at the University of Michigan Library, n.d.) y. 1554.

the next four years, rendering his celebration of Surrey's "straunge meter" incongruous to later generations of critics.

Parliament had assented to the acts attainting Norfolk and Surrey on January 27<sup>th</sup> of 1547, one day before the death of the king.<sup>236</sup> King Henry's sudden death saved Norfolk from execution, but he remained incarcerated in the Tower of London until Mary's ascension in 1553. Upon his release, Norfolk brought a bill into parliament contesting his attainder and the subsequent division of his lands by the council of Edward VI on the grounds that Henry was too sick to attend parliament and had not in fact signed the act with his own hand, rendering it invalid (a claim which Mary's privy council confirmed).<sup>237</sup> The text of the bill which Norfolk presented to Parliament reads in part:

[...] The Law of this Realm is and always hath been that the Royal Assent or Consent of the King [...] ought to be given in his own Royal Presence, being personally present in the Higher House of the Parliament, or by his

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<sup>236</sup> *Statutes of the Realm* (ed. Alexander Luders et al., Dawsons of Pall Mall 1964) vol 1. lxxv. On the legal mechanism of attainder during the late years of Henry's reign, see Stanford E. Lehmborg, "Parliamentary Attainder in the Reign of Henry VIII," *The Historical Journal* 18, no. 4 (December 1975): 675–702.; *Wealth and Power in Tudor England* 92-93.

<sup>237</sup> Jennifer Loach, *Parliament and the Crown in the Reign of Mary Tudor* (Clarendon Press 1986) p. 64-66.

Letters Patent under his Great Seal, assigned with his Hand, [...] and that the said pretended Act, whereby it is supposed your said Suppliant [Surrey] to be attainted, is by the common Laws of this your Realm void and of none Effect [...].<sup>238</sup>

Rather than begging the queen for a reversal of the attainder under her own power, Norfolk accuses the king's commissioners of violating precedent by allowing a dry stamp to condemn him, and thereby absenting the real presence of the monarch's body from the judicial process. This leaves the bill attainting Norfolk as not only wrongful but a "pretended act" — a curious and unprecedented category of legal fiction which Norfolk does not elaborate further upon. The assembled lords appear to have found this argument persuasive, however, for rather than the duke being "restituted in blood," as were Surrey's son Thomas Howard and some dozen other nobles during the parliament of October 1553, the parliamentary roll instead records "an Act declaring the supposed Attainder of Thomas Duke of [Norfolk] to be void and of none effect."<sup>239</sup>

What was Norfolk attempting to accomplish in setting himself and his case apart from those of his peers? Perhaps he saw this novel legal strategy as a more likely way to recoup the seized Howard lands, although if this is the case he was sorely mistaken—

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<sup>238</sup> *Statutes of the Realm* vol. 1 lxxv-lxxvi.

<sup>239</sup> *Statutes of the Realm* vol. 4 xvi.

instead, “because [Norfolk’s] act of attainder was thus annulled, rather than reversed, the question of the legality of grants made from the Howard property after its confiscation was a torturous one.”<sup>240</sup> The dispute ultimately outlived the duke, who died in 1554 months after leading a portion of the forces who put down Wyatt’s rebellion. Afterwards the Howard lands were only partially restituted to Surrey’s son Thomas, who was also made to pay for the lands he did receive by parliament.<sup>241</sup> They would be stripped from the family again when Thomas was convicted for treason following his participation in the Ridolfi plot against Queen Elizabeth in 1572.

All of this is to say that in 1554 the saga of Surrey’s attainder was critically unresolved, with Norfolk having pushed to the end of his powers, only partially successfully, to restore both the family’s honor and its vast land holdings. John Day first printed the fourth book of Surrey’s *Aeneid* in September or October of the same year, at the hands of the printer John Day on behalf of William Owen, “[the] Duke of Norfolk’s... most humble orator,” or Latin tutor. Despite the fact that Thomas Howard had only just succeeded his grandfather that August, Owen’s preface avoids any mention of the late duke. Instead, it frames the poem as a “monument” to Surrey’s “noble wyt,” taken from a manuscript “written wyth the authors owne hand” but

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<sup>240</sup> Loach 65.

<sup>241</sup> Loach 64-71.

rendered unreliable “by reason of [Owen’s] speedy writing.” The grandiosity of this metaphor is belied, however, by Owen’s inordinate caution over the quality of the resultant copy, which he recounts comparing to two other manuscripts to determine “whych was bothe to the latyn moste agreable, and also best standing with the dignity of that kynde of mytre.” Even having undertaken this comparison, Owen claims he only had the work (which may be a synthesis of those he examined) put to print “because [he] coulde understand of no man that had a cople thereof, but he was more wyllyng the same should be kept as a private treasure in the handes of a fewe, then publyshed to the common profyt and delectacion of many.” The purpose of bringing the work to those unspecified “many” is left unstated; instead, Owen turns again towards the circle in which Surrey’s manuscripts were circulating, beseeching them to “publyshe” if they “haue a better copy of the text” and promising to “bring other works [of Surrey’s] to light, as they shal come to my hands.” Where Tottel, writing three years later, would excoriate the “ungentle horders” of Surrey’s manuscripts for refusing to share their bounty with the public, Owen in 1554 clearly views printing those manuscripts as a way to ingratiate himself in the same courtly circles.

A clue to understanding both Owen’s assumption that those close to Surrey would want his work printed and his trepidation at exposing that work to the public may be found on the title page, which reads:

“The fourth boke of Virgill, intreating of the love betwene Aeneas & Dido, translated into English, and drawne into a straunge metre by Henrye late Earle of Surrey, worthy to be embraced.”

Within the extant critical literature (excepting O.B. Hardison, whom I discuss later in this chapter), most references to Surrey’s “straunge” meter interpret that appellation as a recognition of the form’s novelty.<sup>242</sup> Yet, in his introduction, Owen makes no claim to the innovativeness of the work’s style. If anything, his offhanded mention of assessing “the dignity of that kind of meter” emphasizes Surrey’s continuity with his Latin original by suggesting that the same poetic rules might be used to judge both.<sup>243</sup> Instead, it appears that, for Owen, the utility of having Surrey’s work printed lay less in the poet’s innovation of a new English verse form than his ability to demonstrate eloquence and facility with the classics. This in turn allows Surrey’s Latin to be read a form of indirect inheritance passed from father to son with the help of Owen’s tutelage. Appropriately for a Virgilian text, the metaphor for this pedagogical/parental nexus is a profoundly physical turn of phrase: the repeated

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<sup>242</sup>See for example Dereck Attridge’s argument in *Well-Weighed Syllables: Elizabethan Verse in Classical Metres* (Cambridge University Press 1974) p. 94.

<sup>243</sup> As Tim W. Machan points out, this assumption was very much the norm for most of the early modern period, and only began to be challenged rarely during the Elizabethan period. See Machan, “When English Became Latin,” in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (Oxford University Press 2010), 247–63.



invocation of the “hands” which alternately scribe, preserve, and (twice) receive the text, forming an immediate and affective chain between the three men as well as the small, intimate circle of Surrey manuscript holders. Far from mere pedantry, Owen’s claim to have examined multiple manuscripts and chosen that which was most faithful to the Latin serves to preserve the integrity of this bond—the “common profyt and delectation of the many” are at most a secondary concern.

The “strangeness” of Surrey’s meter does not therefore index innovation as such, but it may to a limited extent connote a kind of necromantic wonder, a new discovery thought impossible or at least remote but now made present and real.<sup>244</sup> Much had changed between the writing of Surrey’s *Aeneid* in the 1540s and his son’s reception of the work in print form in 1554—in addition to the whirlwind shifts in the Crown’s religious policy and the material fact of the Howard lands being dissolved and redistributed, the family had gone from being enemies of an overwhelmingly dominant Henrician state to allies of a newly minted and still unstable Marian government. Although King Henry’s state had faced its own share of internal opposition (not least the Pilgrimage of Grace which Norfolk quelled in 1536,) the simple fact of his success in

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<sup>244</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites *Troilus and Criseyde* as an example of “strange” as the unfamiliar, new, and unexpected: “I wot yow þenketh straunge, No wonder is, for it is to yow newe, Tha queyntaunce of þese Troians to chaunge For folk of Grece þat ye neuere knewe.”

appropriating long-held aristocratic lands stood in stark contrast to his daughter's state, which repeatedly failed to reverse those transfers and instead remained necessarily preoccupied with the pressing questions of religion and Mary's marriage.<sup>245</sup> Wyatt's rebellion earlier in the year surely underscored this sense of precarity around the Crown and its operations, and provided further incentive to diversify the Howard family's interests without acting against the monarch who favored them.

Within this context, Owen's bridging the temporal gap between the 1540s and 1550s offered a unique opportunity to rewrite and resituate the Howard family's material history by consolidating its political and cultural capital within one person—a newly ascendant Duke of Norfolk, barely out of his minority, who could benefit from his father's heroic reputation as much as he could his grandfather's properties. While it is entirely possible that the young Thomas Howard already had manuscript access to his father's work, such a fact would not necessarily detract from Owen's utility to his cause. Rather, the value Owen brings to the Howard family table is the public performance of handing off the ostensibly most perfect version of the text to the ascendant Duke, and thereby reinforcing his claim to his father's poetic legacy. Still, the work's strangeness in this sense is surely secondary to the more common period use of the term to denote that which is foreign, as in Douglas's "strangers of

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<sup>245</sup> Duffey 29-56.

uncouth nation." Along these lines, Hardison argues that Surrey's meter is "strange" primarily because it is written in the unrhymed Italian *versi sciolti* ("loose verse") style, which Surrey knew through the multi-author Venetian *Aeneid* translations of the 1540s and (possibly) Luigi Alamanni's *Coltivazione*.<sup>246</sup> By the early 1550s, *rime diverse* miscellanies featuring excerpts from both works alongside others in the same style were being printed by the thousands in Venice and other major Italian print markets.<sup>247</sup> It is difficult to estimate how many such works made it to England, but Warner argues convincingly that during this period "it was probably not more difficult to get copies of vernacular romances and books of verse" than it was Latin texts produced on the continent.<sup>248</sup> If the readers of the Owen-Day *Aeneid* had encountered any of these miscellanies, it would have been easy enough to make the connection to Surrey's own translations, with the shared lack of rhyme standing out as a particularly obvious foreign influence.

That Surrey's verse was more obviously Italian than Latin may account for some of Owen's trepidation in presenting the work to the public, as well as his insistence on

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<sup>246</sup> O.B. Hardison Jr., *Prosody and Purpose in the English Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) pp. 135-136.

<sup>247</sup> Warner, *Making and Marketing* 33-34.

<sup>248</sup> Warner, *Making and Marketing* 34.

allegedly choosing the version closest to Virgil's (although it is worth observing that Owen's version is not nearly so metricizing as Tottel's 1557 edition of the text). As Hardison notes, insufficient Latinity is the ultimate basis of Roger Ascham's criticism of Surrey's *Aeneid* in *The Scholemaster*, where Ascham lumps it in with the "foule wrong" versification of Petrarch and Ariosto because its meter is predominated by "feete without joyntes" (i.e. the stresses are irregular.)<sup>249</sup> More pressingly, there is the fact that Surrey's interpretations of Virgil's Latin are frequently awkward and occasionally incorrect, as in a few of the examples canvassed in the previous chapter. As a complete edition of Douglas's *Eneados* had been printed in London the year before Owen's text, it is possible that some of his trepidation was a product of his anxiety that readers might compare the two texts and find Surrey's overall lesser mastery of the Latin conspicuous. If this was Owen's concern, it turned out to be unnecessary. Surrey's *Aeneid* was printed only once more (by Tottel in 1557, working from a different manuscript than Day and Owen) and after that no readers appear to have attempted a sustained comparison between Surrey's and Douglas's texts before the twentieth century.<sup>250</sup> Day's arrest and Owen's disappearance from the historical record make it impossible to say whether the

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<sup>249</sup> Hardison, *Prosody and Purpose* 101-105.

<sup>250</sup> On the probability of two separate manuscripts being the respective sources for each publication see Ridley, *Aeneid* 35-36.

*Aeneid* they produced together was financially successful, although the fact that no sixteenth- or seventeenth-century printer other than Tottel ever attempted to profit off the work suggests it may not have been.

Owen's motives, however, were very unlikely to have been exclusively pecuniary. The Day/Owen *Aeneid* fits most plausibly into the history which surrounds it if one considers it as one of many unsuccessful attempts by promoters of vernacular literature to break into the culture of the Marian court, in this case by currying favor with what was, in 1554, that court's most prominent and promising family. Emphasizing the "strangeness" of Surrey's verse may have been a calculated move to appeal to Thomas Howard and other Marian loyalists who were increasingly motivated to demonstrate their interest in continental literary culture as England re-entered the Catholic sphere.<sup>251</sup> However, even this gesture was not enough to overcome the court's notorious aversion to English-language poetry. The psalmist William Forrest was the sole exception to this rule; no other vernacular poets were openly patronized by court insiders in this period.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> On the political uses of courtly poetry in the Marian period see Valerie Schutte, *Mary I and the Art of Book Dedications: Royal Women, Power, and Persuasion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) pp. 117-142.

<sup>252</sup> Steven W. May "Popularizing Courtly Poetry: Tottel's *Miscellany* and its Progeny" in *The Oxford Handbook Tudor Literature, 1485-1603* (Oxford University Press 2009) pp. 418-435 p 434 n. 2. However, note that Mary and Philip's court played host to a coterie of

If Thomas Howard or any other member of the court were interested in taking Day up on his offer to surface and print further Surrey poems, that interest was surely quashed by Day's arrest. When Surrey's works did eventually see print, it was at the hands of court outsiders who saw his verse as a corrective to the dominance of continental verse. The idea that Surrey's "strange meter" is exceptional for the history it originates from, rather than its originality as such, thus came to be eclipsed by the romantic, nationalist myth of an ahead-of-his time "poet earl."

1557: Richard Tottel's *Songs and Sonnettes*

As the Day/Owen text demonstrates, the print form did not by itself transform Surrey's poetry into the shared cultural property of the English nation. As late as 1554, the concerns of Surrey's printers were only one step removed from those who preserved and circulated his manuscript works: the maintenance of the Earl's image, and (to an even greater extent) that of the Howard family's surviving members. Surrey's poetry was, if not written for this purpose, then at very least particularly suited to it. The egomaniacal pride of Surrey's courtly voice is openly premised upon his bloodline, and its long access to aristocratic privilege; within the framework of valuation implied by this rhetoric there can be no greater mark of virtue than intimacy,

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Latin-language poets centering around the German poet-historian Nicolaus Mameranus—see Matthew Tibble, *Nicolaus Mameranus: Poetry and Politics at the Court of Mary Tudor* (Brill 2020).

whether in the form of a shared family name or enduring poetic collaboration.<sup>253</sup> It is probable that Surrey thought he was doing his friend an honor and a service by echoing his style and repeatedly reinscribing his name throughout his poetry.

It is hard to exaggerate how quickly the name “Wyatt” transformed from a mark of honor to an extreme political liability. After the rebellion, defenders of the Marian government set to work on delegitimizing Wyatt the younger by smearing him as a heresiarch and attempted regicide; in doing so, they unintentionally established him as a Protestant martyr rather than a mere rebellious noble.<sup>254</sup> John Mychell’s printed and widely distributed chronicle of the revolt accused Wyatt of “pretending to defende the realm from Spaniards and other straungers” while in reality “intending to maintain there [the rebels’] heresyes, & to destroy our most gracious and cathelyke quene Mary.”<sup>255</sup> The Marian propagandist John Procter’s *Historie of Wyatt’s Rebellion* expands on this theme, claiming that Wyatt’s ostensible political opposition to Mary’s marriage

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<sup>253</sup> Guy-Bray argues that the relationship between Surrey and Wyatt is determinative of both of their poetics in “Petrarch, Wyatt, and Surrey: sonnets, teleology, sexuality” in *Textual Practice* 33.8 (2019) pp. 1297-1309.

<sup>254</sup> The apogee of Wyatt the Younger’s posthumous fame was the acting of John Webster and Thomas Dekker’s *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, an Elizabethan propaganda play first printed in 1602.

<sup>255</sup> William H. Wiatt, “The Lost History of Wyatt’s Rebellion,” in *Renaissance News* 15, no. 2 (1962): 129–33.

was mere “false persuasion” meant to conceal an anti-Catholic agenda.<sup>256</sup> Some of Wyatt’s co-conspirators were also well-known Protestants, such as the “hot gospeller” William Thomas.<sup>257</sup>

Thus, although modern historians broadly agree that Wyatt’s Rebellion as motivated more by dynastic politics than confessional difference, it is not surprising that the Marian state responded to it by lashing out at their perceived religious enemies—namely, Protestant pamphleteers like John Knox, who despite living abroad retained connections and allies in the London print industry.<sup>258</sup> As a result, the relative freedom that printers had enjoyed during Edward’s minority began to contract as successive royal commissions attempted to prevent the “printing of false fond books, ballads, rhymes and other lewd treatises in the English tongue concerning doctrine now in question and controversy.”<sup>259</sup> As Grabes notes, Mary’s persecution of Protestants did not actually succeed in slowing the spread of propaganda; on the contrary, “[anti-

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<sup>256</sup> Alan Bryson, “Order and Disorder: John Procter’s *History of Wyatt’s Rebellion* (1554)” in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature* (Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank eds., Oxford University Press 2009) pp. 323-336.

<sup>257</sup> Malcolm R. Thorp, “Religion and the Wyatt Rebellion of 1554” in *Church History* 47, no. 4 (1978) pp. 363–380, pp. 368-369.

<sup>258</sup> Thorp 363-364, 378-380.

<sup>259</sup> Loades 151.



Marian] pamphlets increased in number and extremism” after the burnings began in 1555.<sup>260</sup>

Tottel’s attempts to navigate this volatile religious landscape were highly cautious, to the point that his actual confessional affiliation during this period remains a point of debate.<sup>261</sup> Wyatt and Surrey both had varying degrees of sympathy for Reformed doctrinal positions and maintained wide circles of broadly Protestant friends, but their sympathies were (particularly in Surrey’s case) largely unknown to those outside those circles.<sup>262</sup> For this reason, Tottel’s choice of headlining poets for his miscellany has traditionally been thought of as relatively ‘safe’ in the Marian context, despite the obvious association between Wyatt and his son. However, the same cannot be said for the *Miscellany’s* other named contributor, Nicholas Grimald, who originates fifty of the poems found in *Songes and Sonnettes’* first edition and may have had a hand

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<sup>260</sup> Grabes 48.

<sup>261</sup> Stephen Hamrick and Seth Lerer, for example, both argue for Tottel’s investment in the Protestant cause, to varying degrees. On the other hand, May argues that two of the works Tottel published in the year after Mary’s accession “reveal his Catholic sympathies” (May 420 n. 3).

<sup>262</sup> It is worth noting that several members of Surrey’s family were quite open to Reformed ideas, even against the objections of Norfolk as *pater familias*. See Nicola Clark, “A ‘conservative’ family? The Howard women and responses to religious change during the early Reformation, c.1530-1558” in *Historical Research* 90.248 (May 2017) pp. 318-340.

in its editing.<sup>263</sup> Only two years ago, Grimald had been imprisoned for his association with Nicholas Ridley, the one-time bishop of London and a prominent supporter of Jane Grey's claim to the English throne. If Ridley's epistolary testimony is to be believed Grimald was nearly sentenced to death. When he was then released and Ridley burned, the rumor arose that Grimald had converted to Catholicism while confined, and that his testimony had sent the bishop to the pyre.<sup>264</sup>

It is hard to say what message Grimald's involvement sent to the *Miscellany's* prospective purchaser—did Reformed buyers, for example, believe the accusations of apostasy against Grimald, and were those that did any less likely to purchase the collection? I tend to agree with Rollins that such a scenario is far-fetched, but Tottel's audience at the Inns of Court would certainly be aware of Ridley's status as Grimald's patron.<sup>265</sup> Tottel removed the majority of Grimald's poems from future editions of the *Miscellany* and struck his name from the text (albeit including the initials "N.G." by the remaining compositions)—a decision that has been read alternately as a product of Grimald's controversial reputation, as a strategy for emphasizing the "courtly" nature

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<sup>263</sup> H.J. Byrom, "The Case for Nicholas Grimald as Editor of 'Tottel's Miscellany,'" in *Modern Language Review* 27, no. 2 (1932): 125–143. May 424 argues compellingly against Grimald's sole editorship.

<sup>264</sup> L.R. Merrill, *The Life and Poems of Nicholas Grimald* (Archon 1925) p. 45-47.

<sup>265</sup> Rollins 78.

of the collection, as evidence that the poems were published without Grimald's permission in the first place, and (conversely) as proof that Grimald as editor intentionally "sacrificed" his own works to produce a smaller volume.<sup>266</sup>

Studies of Tottel's sources offer a clearer idea of the literary networks in play. Jason Powell has recently argued persuasively that Tottel's *Miscellany* originates from manuscripts owned by a clique of Wyatt the Elder's friends and admirers, although there is no indication that this fact was known outside of the circle itself.<sup>267</sup> Tottel also included a small selection of unattributed poems by Sir John Harington of Stepney, who had been sent to the tower for his participation in Wyatt's rebellion.<sup>268</sup> However, for as much as the *Miscellany* appears to originate from predominantly Reformed literary circles, the conflicting threads in its history makes it difficult to say whether its readers would have recognized that fact.

In any case, very little about the work suggests Tottel was courting controversy, religious or otherwise. Instead, as Warner puts it, the poems as edited by Tottel are

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<sup>266</sup> These are the positions advanced in Merrill 366, Rollins 87-88, May 424-425, and Byrom 132-133, respectively.

<sup>267</sup> Powell 193-202.

<sup>268</sup> Wyatt the elder's secretary John Harington is also a possible source for some of Tottel's manuscripts, although see May 420-421 and Powell 219 for evidence against this theory.

“safely all-purpose, proving as fit to print in Elizabeth’s reign as they were in Mary’s.”<sup>269</sup> To effect this end Tottel removed several references to points of confessional controversy, as well as a reference in the anonymous “Praise of Audley” to “Wyat [the younger] [...] forsaking the fylde” during the rebellion.<sup>270</sup> This last edit is the most frequently addressed in studies of Tottel, and it is sometimes taken as evidence of a subtle pro-Wyatt agenda.<sup>271</sup> Yet, as Warner rightfully points out that, while “Tottel desired to make the *Miscellany* as uncontroversial as possible,” the small number of total excisions suggests that “very little trouble had to be taken to achieve that end.”<sup>272</sup> Ultimately, “‘censorship’ was accomplished mainly just through the selection of poems” which lack any explicit reference to the events of the past decade (with one possible, minor exception).<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Warner 168

<sup>270</sup> Rollins 96-97.

<sup>271</sup> See for example Matthew Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard: Pen, Sword, and Ego* (Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 52-53.

<sup>272</sup> Warner 169.

<sup>273</sup> The uncertain work with the first line “Of the troubled comon welth restored to quiet by the mighty power of god” is often read as an occasional poem relating to Wyatt’s rebellion, although Warner argues this is impossible based on the dating of the manuscript it is taken from. See Warner 169-174.

With all specific political referents elided, Tottel was free to frame his text as a popular vernacularizing project which set itself not against the Crown, but instead against continental verse poetry (a “safe” choice which nonetheless rendered *Songes and Sonnettes* “decidedly out of step with the prevailing atmosphere at court.”)<sup>274</sup> Verse miscellanies in Latin, Spanish, and Italian had been popular in and outside of the court for decades at this point, but they still lacked any real counterparts in English.<sup>275</sup> *Songes and Sonnettes* stages that absence as the site of an open conflict, to the degree that Jason Powell speculates that the collection may have been intended by its sponsors as a deliberate antidote to the predominance of Latinate culture in the court, “a continuation of Wyatt’s rebellion by other means.”<sup>276</sup> Tottel’s address to the reader is overall a bit too circumspect to plausibly sustain Powell’s reading, but it does undeniably draw a bright line between English and its neighboring tongues:

That to have wel written in verse, yea and in small parcelles, deserueth  
great praise, the work[es] of divers Latines, Italians, & other, doe prove  
sufficiently. That our tong is able in that kinde to do as praise worthelye as  
the rest, the honorable stile of the noble earle of Surrey, and the

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<sup>274</sup> May 419.

<sup>275</sup> On the transnational context of Tottel’s *Miscellany* see Warner 27-93.

<sup>276</sup> Powell 223.

weightnesse of the depe witted sir Thomas Wiat the elders verse, with several graces in sondry good Englishe writers, do show abundantly. It resteth now (gentle reder) that thou thinke it not evil don, to publishe, to that honor of the english tong, and for profit of the studious of Englishe eloquence, those workes which the ungentle horders up of such tresure have heretofore envied the[e]. And for this point (good reder) thine own profit and pleasure, in these presentlye, & in moehereafter, shal answer for my defence. If parhappes some mislike the statelinesse of stile removed from the rude skil of common eare: I aske help of the learned to defende their learned frendes, the authors of this woork. And I exhort the unlearned , by reding to learne to be more skilfull, and to purge that swinelike grossenesse, that maketh the swete maierome not to smell to their delight.

On its surface, Tottel's discourse in this preface resembles Leeland's paeon to Wyatt earlier in the century: the poet is imagined as a channel for national greatness, an English equivalent to the luminaries of the continent. However, where Leeland poses Wyatt as a direct analogue to Petrarch, Tottel is at once vaguer and more encompassing, comparing not only the quality of specific examples of different vernacular traditions, but the "ability" of each language to "prove" itself through verse.

For Tottel, Surrey and Wyatt are both the ideal exemplars of a specifically English poetry and, implicitly, correctives to the long-standing classical notion that English is a peculiarly deficient language, too different from Latin on a grammatical level to achieve the full heights of romance eloquence or even to convey the same range of semantic meaning.<sup>277</sup> These arguments as to the expressiveness of English took on a heightened importance during the early Reformation period, when disputes over proper syntactic meaning broke out not only between grammarians and pedants but also church officials and theologians; the attendant codification of the language “bespeaks not an abstruse academic topic but a discipline that, to the early modernists, formed the foundation of culture.”<sup>278</sup> As had been the case with Ascham’s criticisms of Surrey and the other vernacularists in *The Scholemaster*, among humanists there existed a shared, deeply ingrained cultural assumption that “eloquence” consisted of emulating Latin (usually Quintilian or Virgil’s Latin) as closely as possible, regardless of the medium. Within this classical frame, English’s difference from Latin are not

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<sup>277</sup> Warner 6-8; Machan 250.

<sup>278</sup> Machan 249.

opportunities to express thought differently, but instead hard limits on the speaker's *actio*, their performance and clarity of speech.<sup>279</sup>

For the time he wrote in, Tottel's response is quite radical, going significantly beyond the oft-quoted argument from Dante that the vernacular is preferable to Latin because of its naturalness and ease to those who speak it.<sup>280</sup> Instead of pursuing this ecumenical line or embracing variation in linguistic expression, Tottel imagines poetry as an international arena in which the "honor of the English tong" is taken up by Wyatt and Surrey as the language's knightly champions. As Wall points out, the slightly emasculating reference to "small parcelles" of verse in other languages "names poetry by its placement within coterie circuits: as 'parcelles' to be sent."<sup>281</sup> His emphasis on the "weightinesse" and "stateliness" of his poets' respective "stiles," and the "learnedness" from which those styles derive, blend the terms of achievement, eloquence, and personal virtue—Wyatt and Surrey embody not only good poetic practices, but courtly values which are imagined by Tottel as trickling down to the deserving reader.

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<sup>279</sup> Sylvia Adamson, "Literary Language" in *The Cambridge History of the English Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) v3 pp. 539-653.

<sup>280</sup> Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (trans. Steven Botterill, Cambridge University Press 1996).

<sup>281</sup> Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Cornell University Press 1993)



More so than the presence or absence of a particular confessional poetics at work in Tottel, it seems likely to me that this overtly nationalist frame is the source of the miscellany's eventual appeal to Elizabethan England. As Carla Mazzio notes, English notions of "articulacy" in this period were "defined by both humanist ideals of persuasion and Reformation ideals of plain speech."<sup>282</sup> In turn, the English Protestant claim to "vernacular plainness" rested in part on the depiction of Catholic liturgy as an indistinct "mumbling" which in fact conceals and obfuscates deeper semantic meaning.<sup>283</sup> The grammarian Richard Mulcaster drew on this contrast when he, in 1582, argued that English "without anie foren help, and with those rules onelie, which ar, and maie be gathered out of our own ordinarie writing."<sup>284</sup> Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* goes a step further still in arguing that English is better off for lacking "cumbersome differences of cases, genders, moods, & tenses;" that in fact its seeming rusticity eases the speaker's way in "uttering sweetly and properly the conceits of the mind, which is

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<sup>282</sup> Carla Mazzio, *The Inarticulate Renaissance: Language Trouble in an Age of Eloquence* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) p. 2.

<sup>283</sup> Mazzio 19-55.

<sup>284</sup> Richard Mulcaster, *The first part of the Elementarie which Entreateth Chieflie of the right writing of our English tung* (London: by Thomas Vautroullier dwelling in the blak-friers by Lud-gate, 1582) p. 77. Quoted in Machan 258.

in the end of speech.”<sup>285</sup> Tottel is another link in this chain—he does not go quite so far as the later Sidney, but he shares Sidney’s belief that poetry may be an arena in which the English excel beyond their rivals on the continent.

At the same time, it is important to distinguish Tottel’s claims about “English eloquence” from those which would later be made as to the exceptionality and favored status of the English nation. In the writings of Spenser and other Elizabethans, England was imagined as an “empire nowhere”—a particularly blessed, even fantastical or unreal nation set apart from the Crowns of Europe by its unique geographical position, religion, and sovereign.<sup>286</sup> Tottel, by contrast, is less interested in claiming an exceptional national space for England and its poetry than he is in selling books by arguing that they will materially benefit their purchasers. Clearly, Tottel was not aiming for an elite courtly audience, nor is that audience gestured to beyond the vague reference to the “ungentle horders” of manuscript poetry.

The exact nature of Tottel’s “gentle” readership is uncertain, but Wall is probably right to surmise that mode of address is meant to “reverse the class distinction generated by coterie circulation, inscribing the act of publishing as the more noble [...]”

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<sup>285</sup> Sidney 59.

<sup>286</sup> Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from Utopia to The Tempest* (University of California Press, 1992.)

mode of exchange."<sup>287</sup> Wall additionally ascribes him a nationalist motive: "Tottel [...] sought to disclaim the reputed 'evill' of publishing in order to safeguard the medium by which English poetry was to be proven."<sup>288</sup> The tastes of that non-elite but upwardly mobile audience may have in turn affected the content of the collection, for, as Heale argues, "although the *Miscellany's* titles appear to place the poems in the kind of social context within which they were produced, they actually distort the witty and essentially anonymous or generic nature of the poems," thereby making them "more palatable to a growing Protestant suspicion of insincerity and verbal manipulation."<sup>289</sup> More recently, Warner has compellingly demonstrated that Tottel enjoyed a sizable audience among the students and teachers at the Inns of Court, among whom some of the anonymous verses in the anthology likely originated.<sup>290</sup> For such men, "it was to their interest that the poetry they wrote and trafficked in evade charges of impiety and corrosive influence [and] that the Petrarchan language of Venus-worship and martyring oneself to love not be interpreted as an invitation to sin or a flouting of religion, let alone a taking of sides in doctrinal controversy, but that it be permitted its utility as a benign

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<sup>287</sup> Wall *Imprint of Gender* 29

<sup>288</sup> Wall *Imprint of Gender* 30

<sup>289</sup> Heale 192-193

<sup>290</sup> Warner, *Making and Marketing* 159-214.

vehicle for profitable practice and pleasant recreation."<sup>291</sup> To maintain this façade, it was imperative that the verse they read remained uncontroversial, prestigious, and above all eloquent by the standards of the Inns of Court. Almost every line in Tottel's introduction to the collection references one of these three salable points—for example, the collection's "Stateliness of style removed from the common ear" also theoretically guarantees that it will not turn up the ears of authorities. If there is objectionable content within the *Miscellany*, Tottel promises, it is locked behind the humanist science of hermeneutic analysis—there is no "plain speaking" to be found here, Protestant or otherwise.

Ultimately, however, it is Tottel's regularization of the text's meter (or as Rollins puts it, his "modernization") that testifies most intently to his interest in Continental verse forms. Spenser and Surrey's occasional breaks in meter are rigorously curtailed throughout Tottel's text, resulting in a steady stream of iambic pentameter verse across dozens of different ballad forms, occasionally interspersed with poems in poulter's measure. Steven May observes that the style, while distinct, is consistent with works which Tottel's printing house produced earlier in the decade, including Grimald's metrical Cicero, the 1554 Sternhold and Hopkins psalter, and a heavily edited third

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<sup>291</sup> Warner, *Making and Marketing* 10.

edition of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*.<sup>292</sup> Although not necessarily recognized by his readers, the fact that Tottel followed the same practices here he had in those translated works is suggestive of his intent for the *Miscellany*—that despite its claims to a peculiarly “English eloquence,” Tottel still wanted the poems in it to be recognizably Latinate in style and presentation.

The sum of this conflicting set of incentives is an introduction which roundly contradicts the themes and assumptions of Owen's three years before. That text's narrative of itself as a public gift originating with the Surrey family and made possible through aristocratic patronage is replaced with a vaguely demotic framework in which patriotic poets and readers are joined in a national, mutually-protective circle of learned “friendship.” Owen and Day's notion that Surrey's poetry should be made as “agreeable” to the original language as possible is entirely discarded; a reader might even peruse the entire collection without realizing that it contains dozens of translations from Petrarch's Italian (all assiduously edited and regularized by Tottel).<sup>293</sup> Most critically, however, the *Miscellany* lacks any markers of confessional identity outside of that which can be inferred from its authors and poetics; instead it strategically avoids “representing England as a religious battleground, without doubting the confessional

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<sup>292</sup> May 425-426.

<sup>293</sup> For a summary of all changes in Tottel's *Aeneid* see Ridley, *Aeneid*.

allegiance of its readers or their loyalty.”<sup>294</sup> Nor does the work speak with the anti-Spanish (and generally anti-foreign) tenor that characterizes much of the writing against Mary’s government.<sup>295</sup> While Tottel claims that English verse deserves praise “as worthily as the rest,” he does not devalue the romance verse traditions themselves—rather, recognition as one among the literatures of Catholic Europe is a desirable outcome. In holding English up to the agreed-upon Latin and Italian standards, Tottel sells his readers a fantasy in which the English verse tradition may recognize and be recognized by its continental peers without the necessity of religious reconciliation. For the reader entreated by Tottel, aesthetic judgement takes priority over any affective bonds to the poets or poetry held in the collection—quality, not quantity of connections, guarantees artistic longevity. This may account for the vast (even, as Walker notes, encyclopedic) array of verse forms present throughout the *Miscellany*—Tottel is more concerned with proving the overall versatility of English for verse, rather than its suitability to the particular styles that were popular abroad.<sup>296</sup>

Ironically, it is this very quality of referring to an unbounded, now-and-forever sense of England’s national literature which made Tottel’s miscellany so peculiarly

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<sup>294</sup> Warner 94.

<sup>295</sup> Grabes 58-59.

<sup>296</sup> Walker 111-112.

suited to its particular time, and the Elizabethan era of national Protestantism which followed it. Tottel's introduction stages a confrontation not just between English and continental verse forms, but also between the internationalist Catholic culture of the 1550s and a conjectured, more distinctively "English" vernacular culture of the previous decade. The reason for this is basically accidental: Tottel had access to the manuscripts he had access to, and he needed to sell them to an audience which had demonstrated little interest in them up to this point. Nevertheless, rather than placing Surrey and Wyatt within the existence of a historical tradition of English verse (by comparing them to Caxton or Chaucer, for example) or a continental lyric tradition (through Petrarch,) or even emphasizing the courtly connections that produced their manuscript poetry (as Owen did,) Tottel invented a trans-temporal notion of national aesthetic capacity and asserted that both poets demonstrated "English eloquence."

In this way, the prefatory notice establishes an unbounded present in which a historical leapfrogging becomes possible, such that poetry in Petrarch's style, divorced from its namesake and made "English," simultaneously proves itself equal to, surpasses, and makes unnecessary its continental object of imitation. For Tottel's audience of lawyers and civil servants, the fantasy of vernacular eloquence being delivered from a single book and by poets of a single generation was surely appealing, for it at once obviated the need to study the Latin poetic canon and condensed the

variegated and changing art of “English eloquence” to a single, conveniently recent point in time.

How does this nationalist, unbounded, frame accord with the poetry found within *Songes and Sonnettes*? The answer in most cases is decently well, but there are always incongruous elements—reminders of the specific, sometimes alien historical circumstances which gave birth to the voice of a particular poem at a particular moment. In the poem which Wyatt assigns the rather misleading title “The lover comforteth himself with the worthiness of his love,” this trace takes the form of an acrostic:<sup>297</sup>

When ragyng love, with extreme payne  
 Most cruelly distrains my hart;  
 When that my teares, as floudes of rayne,  
 Beare witnes of my wofull smart;  
 When sighes have wasted so my breath  
 That I lye at the poynte of death:

I call to mind the navye greate

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<sup>297</sup> Brigden points out this acrostic, which she read as a tribute to Wyatt by Surrey enclosed within a poem they may have plausibly worked on together. Brigden, *The Heart's Forest* pp. 550-553.



That the Greekes brought to Troye towne:  
And how the boysteous windes did beate  
Their shyps, and rente their sayles adowne;  
Till Agamemnons daughters blood  
Appeasde the Gods that them withstode.

And how that, in those ten years warre,  
Full many a bloudye dede was done;  
And many a lord, that came full farre,  
There caught his bane, alas! too sone;  
And many a good knight overronne,  
Before the Grekes had Helene wonne.

Then thinke I thus: 'Sithe such repayre,  
So long time warre of valiant men,  
Was all to win a ladye fayre,  
Shall I not learne to suffer then,  
And thinke my life well spent, to be  
Servyng a worthier wight than she?'

Therefore I never will repent,  
 But paynes, contented, stil endure:  
 For like as when, rough winter spent,  
 The pleasant spring straight draweth in ure;  
 So after ragyng stormes of care,  
 Joyful at length may be my fare.

Tottel's title imposes an optimistic poetics of historical comparison onto an otherwise ambiguous conceit. In his conception the speaker, through the act of "calling to mind" Homeric myth, establishes a stable mimetic relationship with the past which enables a hyperbolic Petrarchan compliment when the speaker compares his beloved (ostensibly a yet-fairer "Lady Fayre") to Helen. However, it is only Tottel's inclusion of the poem in a heteronormative context, hemmed in by a critical apparatus referencing 'his beloved' and 'fair Geraldine,' as well as the conventions of Petrarchan poetics which points towards this interpretation. If we instead read this poem alongside Surrey's repeated re-inscriptions of Wyatt's worthiness in verse, his view of Wyatt as a Thisbe to his Pyramus, the overtly determinative factor of the acrostic, and the simple fact that the ungendered tag of "worthier wight" is a near homophone for Wyatt, it is surely plausible to consider that Surrey intended this poem as a tribute to his lifelong friend and poetic collaborator prior to Tottel's editorial intervention. Reading the poem this way, with Surrey serving worthy Wyatt, only sees within the text the queer desire

which is already visible on its surface: that Surrey wants his poetry to set himself and Wyatt apart, as observers who perceive the past both as history (“those ten years warre”) and as imminently present, risen up through contingent structures of feeling (“[...] his bane, alas! too sone;”).

That Tottel unintentionally “straightens” Surrey here by conjecturing a heterosexual context through which the poem might be read is only one symptom of the overall teleology of his editorial practice, which is invariably oriented towards the transformation of Surrey’s verse into an easily understood set of clichéd erotic tropes. This is a particularly ill-fitting frame for this poem, which, as Sessions observes “reduces a whole erotic tradition of *petrarchismo* to a few clichés” disposed of in the first stanza.<sup>298</sup> From thence on the lovers can be understood only through their memorial proximity to the Trojan War as the primigenial, universal historical referent, “the crucial myth for defining subjectivity and eros.”<sup>299</sup> In this interpretation of the text, contra Tottel, the unstable time of the lover’s complaint is resolved into the regular, seasonal unfolding of history by reference to the classical past, which provides a stable point for

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<sup>298</sup> Sessions 182.

<sup>299</sup> Sessions 177.

both rhetorical and syllogistic (“sith such repayre [...] Shall I not learne to suffer then[?]”) comparison.

Figures of Troy proliferate throughout the poem, offering reference across two related axes.<sup>300</sup> As national myth, the Trojan War provides a (literal, if debated) common ancestor to the abundance of nations, languages, and names across Europe; simultaneously, the words of the *Aeneid* are a foundational shibboleth shared by countless generations of Latin speakers. The allusive figure of the Trojan War therefore offers an unparalleled staging ground for the generation not just of historical narratives, but narratives about history: myths of origination like Aeneas’s mandate to found Rome, and the Tudor claim to an ancient British tradition of empire on the basis of their supposed lineage from Brutus, Aeneas’s descendant.<sup>301</sup> Historical distance is both the medium and the essential problem of such narratives; although it provides the empty space into which fictive detail can enter, recognizing its existence requires a hermeneutic confrontation with otherness which is unpredictable in its outcome.

Tottel’s editorial choices move to contain the expansive sense of aimless conflict that originates from this necessary alterity, but they are never entirely successful.

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<sup>300</sup> Troy is a recurring motif throughout *Songes and Sonnettes*. See Alex Davis, “Tottel’s Troy” in *Tottel’s Songes and Sonnettes in Context* (ed. Stephen Hamrick, Routledge 2013) pp. 73-96.

<sup>301</sup> Similar points are made in Knapp 42-43 and Barkan, *Unearthing the Past* xxxi.

The classical past's place in the early modern nationalist imagination is entirely dependent upon the cohesion of the syllogistic logic that underlies the historical comparison—if one wants to be “contented” by it, they must accept the reproductive logic of grand human story which is at once linear and repetitive. In the case of Surrey's “Troye towne,” with its “Chaucerian double syllable,” that language is additionally anchored in a politicized British poetic tradition which also includes the likes of Caxton and Douglas.<sup>302</sup> Commensuration across the vastness of time becomes possible through a simultaneous act of literary making and historical remembering, which in turn inscribes classical rhetoric and European mythic history as (implicitly exclusive) markers of a shared humanity. The result is a new chronotope in which historical distance and descent, emblemized in Western Europe's supposed common heritage in the wars of Troy, can be simultaneously acknowledged and overcome. Hadfield usefully draws out the implications of this radical act of historical syllogism: “The persona of the [...] poet speaks in ‘homogenous empty time’, a time without origins, which is the desired time of the nation.”<sup>303</sup> The nation comes to exist in the void which alienates the past from the present, but lingering in that void, as we do when we read Surrey closely and resistively, reveals that the concept rests on an essentially

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<sup>302</sup> Sessions 179-180.

<sup>303</sup> Hadfield 146.

arbitrary, *ex nihilo* act of imaginative creation. To put it a bit reductively: Tottel (mis)recognizes the queer restlessness of Surrey's relationship to history in poems like "When ragyng love," its recognition of the past as self and other simultaneously, as a relationship to Englishness, which itself is defined largely through a series of fraught self-and-other relationships in this period.

There are a few small remainders of Surrey's style and intent which push against Tottel's essentially reproductive logics and nationalist poetics. The remembered history that allegedly "comforts" Surrey is also profoundly alien to him, for although the setup is classically chivalric, it is shocking to Surrey that the "blood" which binds "lords" and "good knights" to their lives and duties would be wasted on a "ladye fayre." The metonymic allusion to Iphigenia meanwhile imagines a family life defined by sacrifice and betrayal, the rewards of which are only further violence. As with the "bloody deeds" of the following stanza and Wyatt's efforts to work "Britaine's gayn," heroism for Surrey means giving up much to gain little. While the poem's final lines offer a resolution to the speaker's anxieties, its image of "raging storms of care" parting also recalls the "boysteous windes" which necessitated Iphigenia's sacrifice in the Homeric narrative of Troy's fall. The poetic commonplace of cyclical weather, repeated to the point of dead cliché even in Surrey's time, instead comes to stand in for a classical inheritance replete with acts which are incomprehensible, violent, and (as Surrey saw them) simultaneously heroic and worthy of emulation. Its seeming celebration of

Homeric heroism is tinged with the knowledge that the modes of comparison it employees (such as the hyperbolic celebration of the “worthier wight” than Helen, who is herself then reduced to a generic chivalric topos) are premised on the classical world’s distance, unknowability, and pagan-ness, and therefore cannot be relied upon as truth outside of a narrow rhetorical circle.

Leonard Barkan posits that humanist approaches to historical comparison are part of the reason that “high-flown pedagogy, Platonism, and the recuperation of pagan culture,” as markers of the new *studia humanitatis*, acquired an association with homosexuality in late medieval Italy.<sup>304</sup> The trans-temporal filiation the attempt at historical recovery involved, the act of placing oneself in personal and familial relation to a time which is alien and deathly, inevitably conjured the “problematics of endogamy perceived as inherent in homosexuality,” particularly when combined with the positive attitudes towards male-male sexual relationships found in the works of Homer and Plato.<sup>305</sup> Wyatt the elder’s inscription into “When raging love with extreme pain” functions in the same way—not only as a marker of an emotional bond which extended beyond the norms of courtly interaction (particularly where Surrey was

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<sup>304</sup> Barkan, *Transuming Passions* 48.

<sup>305</sup> Barkan, *Transuming Passions* 53.

concerned), but also as a way of imaginatively communicating with an absent other across bounds of distance and time.

Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, printed exactly fifty years after Wyatt the younger's rebellion, contains some faint traces of this relationship, as well as more obvious evidence of Tottel's success in raising Surrey to the status of poetic hero. Although neither Wyatt appears in Nashe's narrative, his fictional Surrey's extempore verses to "statelie Geraldine" nevertheless encode a similarly agonized, self-destructive, queer poetics of yearning across impassible distance. Like Surrey, Nashe too finds that his encounter with the poetics and mythology of an earlier point in time interacts strangely with his own, in some ways alienating him and in others drawing him forward into their embrace. For Nashe, however, that alien time is not Homer's but Surrey's, the final decades of a Henrician era which seemed to Nashe (born in 1567) both grander and more naïve than his own.

Nashe knew Surrey's time, in part, from Tottel, and so his portrayal of Surrey in *The Unfortunate Traveller* folds together Surrey's queer poetics of yearning with a burlesque Petrarchism clearly influenced by the prominence of "Geraldine" in Tottel's titling scheme. In deliberately failing to accurately represent the idiom Surrey actually wrote in, Nashe instead transmits something new, strange, and queer: a Tudor poetic voice displaced in time which tells us more about Nashe's place in history than it does Wilton's.



## Chapter 3:

The Surrey Poems in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*

In this chapter I examine three poems from the middle third of Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, a 1594 prose work in the picaresque genre which depicts the travels of the fictional "King of Pages" Jack Wilton as he engages in hijinks with a cast of historical characters drawn from the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>306</sup> Nashe attributes all three of the poems to Surrey, who takes part in Wilton's journey through continental Europe as part of an imagined chivalric quest to justify the fame of his distant beloved, "faire Geraldine." In reality, however, the poems in *The Unfortunate Traveller* were written by Nashe himself and have very little resemblance to the Surreyan verses included in Tottel's miscellany, except in broad terms of genre and form. Where the real Surrey tends to assume dramatic postures of self-destructive rage and desperate despair in his poetry, the poems of Nashe's Surrey operate more as

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<sup>306</sup> On the genre of *The Unfortunate Traveller* see Madelon S. Gohlke, "Wits Wantonness: 'The Unfortunate Traveler' as Picaresque" in *Studies in Philology* 73.4 (1976) pp. 397-413; Louise Simons, "Rerouting *The Unfortunate Traveller*: Strategies for Coherence and Direction" in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 28.1 (Winter 1988) 17-38; Stephen Guy-Bray, "How to turn prose into literature: the case of Thomas Nashe" in *Early Modern Prose Fiction* (ed. Naomi Conn Liebler, Routledge 2007).

parodies of the stock figure of the eternally-sighing, imminently self-absorbed Petrarchan sonneteer which had sprung up in the intervening decades.<sup>307</sup>

I argue that when these successive, slightly askew imitations are read together, however, they reveal instead a distinctly Nashean (that is to say, pessimistic) poetics of historical distance, within which the mimetic imperative for authenticity in depicting Surrey's voice takes a backseat to accurately capturing its temporal unreachability from Nashe's perspective. Together, these poems constellate both Wilton and Nashe himself as Surrey's "shadows" — not his opposite, but instead distorted projections which can never fully intersect with the body which produced them.

It is worth emphasizing just how ubiquitous the small, easily recognizable corpus of Surrey's verse actually was during Nashe's lifetime. Between Richard Tottel's first printing of *Songes and Sonettes* in 1558 and the two editions of Thomas Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller* which Thomas Scarlet and Charles Burby produced in 1594, there was never a period in which Henry Howard's name and verse were not prominent

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<sup>307</sup> Cathy Shrank argues that English sonnet poets develop a complex, contradictory imitative relationship to Petrarchism during the 1560s and 1570s. Hallmarks of this relationship include a skepticism towards Petrarchan stylistic conventions and a "habitual resistance to the idealization of women" on the part of many English sonneteers. See Shrank, "'Matters of love as of discourse': the English Sonnet, 1560-1580" in *Studies in Philology* 105.1 (2008) pp. 30-49.

within London's poetry culture.<sup>308</sup> At least twelve more editions of *Songes and Sonettes* were printed in London during that time, in addition to a handful of other poetic miscellanies which emulated the Petrarchan lyric conventions Tottel's had popularized.<sup>309</sup> By the 1470s, the simultaneous presence of imitation and original in the same literary market had allowed a stereotype of the sonneteering poetic style to emerge which incorporated pseudo-Petrarchan clichés, with the weeping lover and wept-for beloved central among them.<sup>310</sup> Although Surrey and Wyatt are still spoken of positively throughout the period, the style of poetry they popularized became increasingly subject to parody and ridicule. By Shakespeare's time, Petrarchan and

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<sup>308</sup> Although the first edition of *The Unfortunate Traveller: or, the Life of Jack Wilton* is dated to 1593 on its title page, its printer delayed publication until the following year. On variants between the first and second 1594 editions of *The Unfortunate Traveller* see Chiaki Hanabusa, "Notes on the Second Edition of Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*" in *Notes and Queries* 56.4 (December 2009) pp. 556-559.

<sup>309</sup> Tottel died in 1574, but John Windet continued to produce editions of *Songes and Sonettes* until 1587. Hyder Rollins identifies eleven separate sixteenth-century editions in *Tottel's Miscellany* p. 24-26. In 2011 J. Christopher Warner discovered a twelfth edition: see Warner, "'Sonnets en Anglois': A Hitherto Unknown Edition of Tottel's *Miscellany* (1559)" in *Notes and Queries* 58.2 (2011) pp. 204-206.

<sup>310</sup> Shrank, "Maters of Love" *passim*.

pseudo-Petrarchan poetics could be drawn upon to connote both nostalgia and laughable outmodedness, sometimes simultaneously.<sup>311</sup>

*The Unfortunate Traveller* arrives at the midpoint of this trajectory. It depicts Surrey as both a continually weeping Petrarchan poet and as a romance knight errant questing in honor of “statelie *Geraldine*” (here an adult woman and courtier of Catherine of Aragon “come out of Italie to bewitch all the wise men of England.”)<sup>312</sup> Surrey’s signification in this latter capacity is profoundly ambiguous, to the point that scholars have credibly read him in such contradictory terms as “a leftover from a discredited romance world,” “a model for the interconnection of poetry and patriotism,” or a “symbol of clichéd fantasies about the rebirth of Italian culture,” all without distorting the compacted layers of Nashe’s satire.<sup>313</sup> Jonathan Crewe observes rightly that Surrey’s poetic style plays a part in the ambiguity of his signification: “Petrarchan Surrey is

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<sup>311</sup>See for example Peter R. Moore, “*Hamlet* and Surrey’s Psalm 8” in *Neophilologus* 82.3 (1998) pp. 487-498.

<sup>312</sup> Nashe 243. The historical Elizabeth FitzGerald was Irish, but she traced her lineage to the Florentine Gheraldini family. See Sessions 194.

<sup>313</sup> These quotes are from Louise Simons, “Rerouting *The Unfortunate Traveller*: Strategies for Coherence and Direction” in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 28.1 (Winter 1988); Stephen Guy-Bray, “How to turn prose into literature: the case of Thomas Nashe” in *Early Modern Prose Fiction* (ed. Naomi Conn Liebler, Routledge 2007) pp. 33-45 p. 35; Rebecca Helfer, “Wit and the Art of Memory in Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*” in *English Literary Renaissance* 47.3 (2017) pp. 325-354 p. 350.

aligned not just with projects of Latinization and cultural success [...] but, less admirably, with everything that is puerile, narcissistic, flashy, self-promoting, pseudomagisterial, and pretentiously cosmopolitan in Tudor humanist culture.”<sup>314</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Nashe’s portrayal of the times his parents and grandparents lived in is complicated and perhaps conflicted: it contains both blame and praise, alongside a sense of non-recognition or alienness which continually adheres to Wilton in his attempts to understand Surrey.

The recurring theme which governs nearly all of Wilton’s interactions with his master is misunderstanding. While Wilton refers to his master as a “poet without Peere” who “contemne[s] the world” and loves only verse, Nashe’s Surrey discloses a masochistic obsession with sex and (especially) violence that rivals Wilton’s own.<sup>315</sup> The uneasy similitude between the pair is highlighted when they “agree to change names” such that “I [Wilton] shoulde bee the Earle of Surrie, and he my man [...] because in his owne person, which hee woulde not have reproched, he meant to take more libertie of behaviour,” with the ease of Wilton’s imitation of his master being belied by the fact

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<sup>314</sup> Crewe 62.

<sup>315</sup> Nashe 241-242. Citations to Nashe are to *The Unfortunate Traveller* in *The Works of Thomas Nashe* v.ii (Ronald B. McKerrow ed., Oxford University Press 1948) pp. 206-328.

that he obeys without question when ordered to change back.<sup>316</sup> Surrey's status, which at times seems to queerly elevate him above the fray of *The Unfortunate Traveller's* roiling precarity, is one of the two immutable facets of his character which set him apart from Wilton, even in disguise. The other is Surrey's enduring fixation on Geraldine, which, as Wilton eventually discovers, is really a bewitchment with his own poetic creation.

In reading these kernels of difference as evidence of Nashe's self-conscious alienation from the period he wrote about, I am explicitly rejecting the anxiety of influence framework through which the Nashe-Surrey relationship has sometimes been understood. Mihoko Suzuki in particular reads Wilton's lack of interest in the voluntary subjugation of the Petrarchan poet as an example of his keener Elizabethan understanding of the problems of poetic, civic, and religious authority, against which poor overmatched Surrey appears buffoonish and outmoded.<sup>317</sup> For Suzuki, this gap in "worldliness" is confirmed when Jack succeeds in inventing a fictional story to deceive the "Magnifico[e]'s wife" Diamante into a tryst after Surrey fails to court her with a poem (Wilton's commentary is slightly ironic given the circumstances: "A holy requiem

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<sup>316</sup> Nashe 253.

<sup>317</sup> Mihoko Suzuki, "'Signiorie ouer the Pages': The Crisis of Authority in Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*" in *Studies in Philology* 81 (1984) pp. 348-371 p. 365.

to their soules that thinke to wooe a woman with riddles.”)<sup>318</sup> In Suzuki’s reading, Nashe through Wilton demonstrates not only a semi-ironic respect for his literary predecessor, but also a degree of authority and dominance over the earlier poet which is relayed through a puerile rhetoric of masculine sexual conquest. As Wilton relates it, “my master beate the bush and kept a coile and a pratling, but I caught the birde [Diamante], simplicitie and plainnesse shall carrie it awaie in another world.”<sup>319</sup>

I agree with Suzuki that the entire exchange reflects Nashe’s desire to destabilize the authorities of the past, but I also share Constance J. Relihan’s concern that the flattened reading of the Jack-Diamante relationship it employs ignores the text’s fraught relationship to heterosexuality.<sup>320</sup> Relihan argues that “Diamante becomes positively distinguished from all other representations of the female within the narrative” because she saves Wilton from his imprisonment rather than presenting him with a threat, temptation, complication, or delay. As Relihan sees it, because this is the only instance of a heterosexual coupling that goes against *The Unfortunate Traveller’s* overall thesis on the dangers of travel (and, implicitly, foreign women,) Nashe presents the scene to the

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<sup>318</sup> “Signorie ouer the Pages” p. 366, Nashe 262.

<sup>319</sup> Nashe 263.

<sup>320</sup> Constance J. Relihan, “Rhetoric, Gender, and Audience Construction” in *Framing Elizabethan Prose Fictions: Contemporary Approaches to Early Modern Narrative Prose* (Kent State University Press 1996) pp. 141-152 p. 146.

reader with constructed indirectness, such that it *discourages* emotional identification with Wilton.<sup>321</sup> Simultaneously, this is the same scene in which Wilton comes the closest to achieving a realistic perspective on Surrey, as he—in contrast to his earlier high estimation of his master’s wisdom—begins to understand that the earl is “more in loue with his owne curious forming fancie than [Diamante’s] face.”<sup>322</sup> A reading of the Wilton-Diamante-Surrey triangle as straightforward sexual one-upmanship or purely anti-Petrarchan satire therefore erases both the text’s fraught relationship with sexuality in general, and also the specific, queer act of negotiation taking place in this scene, as Wilton simultaneously experiences and attempts to relay multiple forms of desire at once.

The satisfaction Wilton achieves through his relationship with Diamante (whom he eventually, perhaps to the surprise of the reader, marries) underscores the incompleteness of the understanding between himself and Surrey, the latter trapped in an “intransced mistaking extasie [from which] could no man remove him.”<sup>323</sup> This

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<sup>321</sup> Relihan 147. Joan Pong Linton builds on this argument in Linton, “Counterfeiting sovereignty, mocking mastery: trickster poetics and the critique of romance in Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*” in *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading* (ed. Naomi Conn Liebler, Routledge 2007) pp. 130-147 ; pp. 144-145.

<sup>322</sup> Nashe 262.

<sup>323</sup> Nashe 262.



distance is predominantly a product of time upon the episteme—for while Wilton embraces a degree of fluidity regarding sexuality and gender, he cannot achieve complete identification with his master because he remains stubbornly and helplessly a product of 1594, not the 1520s and 30s.

Nashe's mock-imitation of Surrey's style offers him an opportunity to reflect on the distance between Surrey's time and his own outside the narrow strictures of Wilton's voice and perspectives. The very considerable extent to which Nashe's poems differ from Surrey's actual verse is therefore less telling as to Nashe's perspective on history than is the extent to which they differ from Wilton's narration, by which they are surrounded and framed. In reconstructing the performative elements of an earlier poetic discourse (even parodically,) Nashe creates a hermeneutic space in which queer and unlikely associations might be drawn. His attempts to write in Surrey's style are together a performance of temporal drag, "with all the associations that the word 'drag' has with retrogression, delay, and the pull of the past upon the present."<sup>324</sup> His goal is not the mimetic recreation of the object of imitation, but the production of a new form which freely mixes elements from multiple sources. In his failure to reproduce Surrey's style Nashe succeeds in representing both the incompleteness and ambivalence of his own vision of the past as well as that past's irresistible magnetic draw.

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<sup>324</sup> Elizabeth Freeman, "Packing History" p. 728.

Wilton relays his place in the triangulation between his master and his author with a certain self-awareness when, meeting back up with Surrey after having impersonated him while gallivanting across Italy, he brags of having “had such art in my budget, to separate the shadow from the bodie.”<sup>325</sup> Appropriately, Wilton draws this umbrageous comparison as the two arrive in Florence, where Leonardo da Vinci had less than a century ago developed his own methods of projecting, enlarging, diminishing, and coloring shadows.<sup>326</sup> Wilton’s mastery of such projections is yet another marker of the distance between himself and his master, for while he may by modulation of the circumstances under which the light is cast enlarge himself and his position, it remains impossible for the two bodies to ever fully intersect. However, this dark metaphor also contains a seed of possibility: Leonardo had additionally discovered that there are degrees to shadow, with the *ombra semplice* (“simple shadow”) being surrounded by the *ombra composta* (“compound shadow,”) or penumbra.<sup>327</sup> Paradoxically, the incompleteness of Wilton and Surrey’s identification contains degrees of proximity within it.

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<sup>325</sup> Nashe 267.

<sup>326</sup> Thomas Da Costa Kaufman, “The Perspective of Shadows; The History of the Theory of Shadow Projection” in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 38 (1975) pp. 258-287.

<sup>327</sup> Kaufman 265-266.

1. "All soule, no earthly fleshy why dost thou fade,"

Wilton first encounters "Lord *Henrie Howard*, Earle of Surrey, [his] late master" directly after witnessing the massacre of the German Anabaptists and the execution of their leader, John of Leiden.<sup>328</sup> The pun on Surrey's "lateness" is the clearest reference to his death in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, but it is also conspicuous in its adjacency to the far more ignominious execution of Leiden, who dies "like a dog [...] hanged and the halter paid for."<sup>329</sup> This illusion of metalepsis between executed Leiden and soon-to-be-executed Surrey anticipates the morbid elements of the latter's poetics as they are represented in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, rendering them at once hyper-obvious and potentially ridiculous in their distance from the real violence at Münster. Where the "lamentable massacre" there had seen both men and women dissolved into an Illiadic mass of "swords," "pikes," "bils," "bows," and "caleevers [...] slaying, empiercing, knocking downe, shooting through, [and] overthrowing," the plot of Surrey's romance with Geraldine is epic only in its rhetorical scope.<sup>330</sup> Surrey is charged "*I pete Italiam, go and seeke Italie with Aenoas,*" but when the time for his combat against the knights of

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<sup>328</sup> Nashe 241.

<sup>329</sup> Nashe 241.

<sup>330</sup> Nashe 240-241. On the relationship between these genres see Colin Burrow, *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Clarendon Press 1993).

Florence arrives it is skipped over in an instant (“to particularize their maner of encounter, were to describe the whol art of tilting.”)<sup>331</sup> His “honourable carryage in armes” has nothing to do with the resolution of the Imperial soldiers who do violence “lyke a Father that weepes when he beates his child, yet still weepes and still beates” — although both draw on the language and themes of the epic they never encounter one another, except indirectly through the limited means that Wilton’s relentless present tense allows.<sup>332</sup>

From this initial meeting, Wilton as Surrey’s shadow enacts a strategy of strategic occlusion which at once discloses and fictionalizes the tragic elements of the historical Surrey narrative. From the start, his praise of Surrey satirizes both the outmoded poetic ideal Surrey has been made to stand in for and Wilton’s own inability to recognize how far Surrey diverges from that ideal in practice:

O, it was a right noble Lord, liberalitie itselfe, (if in this yron age there were any such creature as liberalitie left on the earth), a prince in content because a Poet without peere. [...] None [other than poets] come so neere to God in wit, none more contemne the world, *vatis avarus non temere est animus*, sayth Horace, *versus amat, hoc studet unum*, Seldom have you seene

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<sup>331</sup> Nashe 244, 278.

<sup>332</sup> Nashe 240.

anie Poet possessed with avarice, onely verses he loves, nothing else he delights in: and as they contemne the world, so contrarily of the mechanicall world are none more contemned. Despised they are of the worlde, because they are not of the world: their thoughts are exalted aboute the worlde of ignorance and all earthly conceits.<sup>333</sup>

The baroque irony of Nashe's appropriation of Horace conceals a much more sincere borrowing of Ovid, who like Wilton sees markers of degeneration towards an "yron age" in impiety and betrayal, rather than violence itself.<sup>334</sup> Suzuki rightly points out that Surrey's "unworldliness" in fact stems from his ignorance and aristocratic indifference to scruple, which Wilton nostalgically (and perhaps willfully) misreads as enlightened detachment.<sup>335</sup> Wilton's implication that Surrey himself was "despised [...] of the worlde," however, is surely a reference on Nashe's part to Surrey's sudden downfall and death. In this way, although Wilton's fawning paeon to his master lampoons the latter's privilege as a playboy aristocrat traipsing into the territory of learned men, it also subtly acknowledges that a greater force of violence existed from which this privilege could not protect him.

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<sup>333</sup> Nashe 242. Wilton quotes Horace, *Epistles* 2.119-120.

<sup>334</sup> *Metamorphoses* 1.125-150.

<sup>335</sup> Suzuki, "Signiorie Ouer the Pages" p. 364

From here, a pattern of disconcerting melancholy follows Surrey through *The Unfortunate Traveller's* narrative and becomes his poetic signature. As a result, Nashe's Surrey is queerly singled out along three axes: he is alienated from Wilton as a parody of outmoded poetic conventions, he is singular within his own time as a "Poet without peere," and finally, he is the subject of a tragic personal history which repeatedly intrudes into his poetics. The recurrent, exaggerated obsession with life, death, and "spirit" that haunts Nashe's Surreyan imitations reads unpredictably at turns as an expression of this third form of historical queerness, which might be thought of in generic terms as an at most semi-intentional flirtation with tragedy in the midst of Nashe's romance satire.

The poems are, additionally and co-constitutively, queer in the sense that they surface adulterous and homosexual desire in both their speakers and their listeners. Surrey's exaggerated descriptions of his and "celestiall Geraldine[s]" respective erotic agonies echo the melodrama of the Petrarchan cliché, but the imitation is slightly askew—the lover, not the beloved, is doomed to die. The salvific overtones of Laura's death, and Petrarch's resurrection in her spirit, are therefore absent. Whereas Petrarch moves fluidly from erotic to theological desire, Surrey remains in the nebulous

between-space of desire deferred.<sup>336</sup> Melissa Sanchez rightly observes that the desire that the Petrarchan form gives voice to is only partially compatible with the master narrative of heterosexual relationality, being instead “premised on the deferral not only of sexual relation but also of coherent gendered subjectivity.”<sup>337</sup> Wilton will later play on the fact that the lover’s identity is polysemous, transversing multiple poles of gendered signification (erotic, Platonic, theological, historical) simultaneously. Surrey’s desire for Geraldine, similarly, rejects any consistent gendered position, and instead asserts the primacy of mortal flesh as the determining similarity between lover and beloved. An obsession with separating these categories of “Earthly Flesh” from “Soul” lies at the heart of all three of Nashe’s Surrey poems, but as they progress the category of spirit inevitably collapses into the pleasures and tortures of the material.

Within the narrative, Nashe frames all three of Surrey’s lyrics as spontaneous expressions of his passionate erotic love for Geraldine, whom we encounter only indirectly. He delivers the first during a scene in which he and Wilton are shown a

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<sup>336</sup> On Petrarch’s Augustinian turn see Kenelm Foster, *Petrarch: Poet and Humanist* (Edinburgh University Press 1987); John Freccero, “The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch’s Poetics” in *Diacritics* 5.1 (Spring 1975) pp. 34-40.

<sup>337</sup> *Queer Faith* 47. I believe Sanchez’s use of “coherent” here is not meant to attribute an epistemological incoherence to the Petrarchan voice’s gendered subjectivity, but instead to associate it with the agential and potentially liberatory anti-coherence of the Augustinian self.

magical scrying mirror by the occultist Cornelius Agrippa, through which Surrey sees his beloved “sicke weeping on her bed [...] for the absence of her Lord.”<sup>338</sup> His oration takes the form of a fantasy of connection, and immediately announces the theme of mortality which attends all three sonnets:

All soule, no earthly fleshy why dost thou fade?

All gold, no worthlesse drosse, why lookst thou pale?

Sickness how darst thou one so faire invade?

Too base infirmitie to worke hir bale,

Heaven be distemperd since she grieved pines,

Neuer be drie these my sad plaintive lines.<sup>339</sup>

Inevitably, Surrey’s attempts to definitively situate the beloved’s qualities bend back into rearticulations of her relationship with his own aesthetic creations, which he imagines as being drawn forth continually from his innermost self. The signs of lovesickness and physical illness read indifferently to him because each produces the same concern from him; from there, it is easy for Surrey to stretch his and Geraldine’s shared “distemper” (regardless of its nature) to a matter of universal importance.

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<sup>338</sup> Nashe 254.

<sup>339</sup> This poem is found on Nashe 254-255.



However, the distinction between soul and flesh in the first lines is immediately belied by his use of "spirit" as a metaphor for the verse itself:

Pearch thou, my spirit, on hir silver breasts,  
 And with their paine-redoubled musike-beatings,  
 Let them tesse thee to a world where all toile rests,  
 Where blisse is subiect to no feares defeatings,  
 Her praise I tune whose tongue doth tune the spears,  
 And gets new muses in hir hearers eares.

As the poem ascends towards abstractions its imagery becomes at once more bodily and more creative, culminating in the unprecedented, mythically confused image of the beloved as omnipotent Zeus begetting new muses upon the lover seahorse-style. Notably, this act of doubled reproduction entails a degree of mediation: the lover generates the muse, but Surrey generates the poem. At the same time, Surrey's frame of reference is entirely material and erotic, with his "world where all toile rests," like Wilton's "another world," standing in for the satisfaction of the speaker's sexual desires rather than a spiritual afterlife. Because the promise of heaven here signifies so narrowly, Surrey can imagine his poetic spirit ejecting the beloved into it without recognizing the violence that metaphor, if stripped of its euphemism, suggests. Instead, Surrey emphasizes the effectiveness of his own verse in continuing the creative cycle, even as his metaphors teeter into the realm of hyperbolic camp.

The self-reflexive character of Surrey's seeming fear for his beloved's life is only heightened when, wishing to thank the "glasse" for the "kindnes [he] felt," he "kisse[s]" it and, presumably, his own reflection.<sup>340</sup> In exchanging the abstract image of the beloved for the medium through which he sees her, Surrey becomes a ready (if literal) emblem for the stereotypical Petrarchan imitator, an "'eternally weeping lover' steeped in [...] narcissistic autopoiesis" whose every expression of care for his beloved in fact re-entrenches his centering of the poetic self.<sup>341</sup> It is, however, a mistake to assume that Nashe's thematization of Petrarchan narcissism necessarily evacuates the perspective he parodies of its affective potency or value. Rather, as Steven Bruhm reminds us, there may be "a utopian impulse governing Narcissus, an impulse we can detect in Ovid [...] it imagines a perfect original to which it then wants to return."<sup>342</sup> For Nashe's Surrey, satisfaction in the sexual and spiritual senses are collapsed together in the ideal of physical proximity to the beloved. If, for Nashe, this speaks to the shallowness of Surrey's class or his generation's mindset, it also speaks to his retrospective sense that the early half of the century was a time when satisfaction seemed possible to attain. Whether this is actually true is less interesting than the way

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<sup>340</sup> Nashe 255.

<sup>341</sup> Sanchez 46.

<sup>342</sup> Bruhm 176.

Surrey's goonish self-satisfaction contrasts against Wilton's constant, restive seeking, and what that contrast suggests about Nashe's sense of his own time as temporally out of joint with those which preceded it.

Surrey's physical separation from Geraldine renders his desired proximity impossible, and the resultant agony forces him into endless productive and reproductive labors:

Phoebe rules tides, she [Geraldine] my teares tides forth drawes,  
In her sick bed love sits and maketh lawes.

Surrey's voluntary subjection to his bewitchment is total, encompassing both the nebulous but inviolable "lawes" of love and the very motions of his own body. He imagines his beloved drawing forth and manipulating his humors like the moon, without meaning to. In this way, Nashe's Surrey frames his poetry as a natural byproduct, an inevitable and even unconscious flowering of the enthusiasm incited by the beloved. Poetic creation for him is a closed circuit, with his only agency in relation to it being his ceaseless drive for proximity to Geraldine. This sense of self-completion, rather than his lack of satisfaction as such, is an expression of historical distance from Wilton. Although the majority of both of their individual acts are equally unmotivated and arbitrary, Surrey's poetic outpourings at least occur within a hermeneutic framework (that of autonomic poesis) which is capable of satisfactorily explaining them.

## 2. "If I must die, O let me choose my death:"

Much of *The Unfortunate Traveller's* nexus of empowered and disempowered voices is recognizable as a parody of the epic and romance trope of delay, which Barbara Fuchs calls the "productive longing" which "paradoxically yields text."<sup>343</sup> In her present absence Geraldine is both Penelope and Circe to Surrey: her being at once demands his disappearance while prompting his return, and tests his fidelity ("but bee more true than *Aenoas*") while motivating his lapses from it ("sometimes he woulde imagine [Diamante] in a melancholic humour to be his Geraldine, and court her in tearmes correspondent.")<sup>344</sup> In this way, Surrey's intoxication defines not only the content of the latter half of *The Unfortunate Traveller's* narrative but also its form and length. Between Leiden's death and the yet-more-brutal violence of the remaining narrative, little occurs which is not in some way related to Surrey's pursuit of Geraldine. Throughout, the moribund sexuality of the romance quest narrative, ironically emphasized by Surrey's Platonic language of aesthetic reproduction, lends a further, ambiguously mortal set of stakes to the questions of whether and for how long the delay will proceed.

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<sup>343</sup> Barbara Fuchs, *Romance* (November 2004) p. 65. See also Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton University Press 1979).

<sup>344</sup> Nashe 244, 262. On the Penelope/Circe diad see Fuchs 20-21.

The consequent morbidity of the Surrey sonnets sets them apart from Wilton's prose voice in affect, if not content. Although Nashe is equally "obsessed with physical corruption, dismemberment, or some form of physical breakdown" when he writes in Wilton's voice, he greets those descriptions in a "tone and manner of description [which] could just as easily be describing the contents and activities of a Sunday picnic."<sup>345</sup> Surrey's voice conversely raises the melancholy question of his physical distance from Geraldine to one of maximally heightened, life-or-death stakes, which are not entirely deflated by the camp humor of his poetry's constant sexual euphemisms. The sonnet he delivers to Diamante in his "intranced mistaking extasie" in Venice makes for a particularly preposterous parody of Petrarchan sexuality which nevertheless maintains a certain creative edge:

If I must die, O let me choose my death:  
 Sucke out my soule with kisses, cruell maide,  
 In thy breasts christall bals enbalme my breath,  
 Dole it all out in sighs when I am laide.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Raymond Stephanson, "The Epistemological Challenge of Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*" in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 23.1 (1983) pp. 21-36.

<sup>346</sup> This poem is found on Nashe 262-263.

Surrey's first line grandiosely suggests that his melancholy does not stem from the delay in his journey towards Geraldine's good graces (or the fact that Diamante seems to reject his advances,) but instead from the universal condition of mortality, which the knowing reader may relate to his historical execution. Aware that death is to be his end, he begs the small, proximate mortality of Diamante/Geraldine's kiss in a bid for agency. The seemingly straightforward nature of Surrey's euphemistic desire to "die" in the arms of his beloved is belied, however, by the surprising image of metaphysical transformation that precedes the final line's pun on "laide." The "embalming" of the lover's sighs which are then "dole[d] [...] out" like milk from her breasts might be missing an indirect object (to whom are the lover's appropriated sighs doled?); beyond this ambiguity, the conceit positions the beloved as both the master and the medium of Surrey's transformation and in doing so shatters the pretended agency of the poem's first line. In regards to this final element, the imitation is very close—there is a genuinely Surreyan element to Nashe's blending of the terms and agents of love, murder, and suicide, the rhetorics of which conspire to ironically disempower the speaker and lengthen the duration of his suffering.

At the same time, Nashe also exaggerates the self-destructive elements of Surrey's poetics, producing an affect of weeping melancholy in place of the violent

“rashness” which suffuses the real earl’s work.<sup>347</sup> “Eache beeste can chuse [...]” and the Sardanapulus poem demonstrate that the violence of Surrey’s poetry can be directed outwards as easily as it can in, and even his Petrarchan lyrics provide ready examples of fire and acidity.<sup>348</sup> In Nashe’s imitations of Surrey, though, the speaker imagines himself as the object of passion instead of its agent, and although he describes love as conflict, its battles are as one-sided as the contest at Münster:

Thy lips on mine like cupping glasses claspe,  
 Let our tongs meete and strive as they would sting,  
 Crush out my winde with one strait girting graspe,  
 Stabs on my heart keepe time whilest thou dost sing.  
 Thy eyes like searing yrons burne out mine,  
 In thy faire tresses stifle me outright [...]

These lines resemble nothing in Surrey’s actual poetry, but, as Dorothy Jones insightfully notes, they share a sexual metaphoricity of spirit and breath with Nashe’s

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<sup>347</sup> Crewe writes that for Surrey “suicide is never a simple fact or an end in itself. Its pursuit is inseparable from a process of aggressive-defensive self-construction in a matrix of power-infused social relations, and in pursuing it Surrey yokes neoclassical poetics to a seemingly perverse teleology. The Surrey suicide-plot is typically double: in it, *Selbstmord* has *Brüdermord* for its counterpart [...]” in *Trials of Authorship* p. 52.

<sup>348</sup> Padelford 73.

own "Choice of Valentines."<sup>349</sup> Spoken in Surrey's voice, though, Nashe's euphemisms signify as queerly pleasurable disempowerment: unambiguously penetrative "stabs [...] keepe time" through the speaker's body, while his primary agency resides in "begging [his] lover to delay his sexual climax."<sup>350</sup> As the poem proceeds the focal conceit of the lover's breath metamorphoses into tortures, silencing, and suffocation. The beloved is a *pharmakon* whose healing and killing capacities are equally and simultaneously operative: her lips are "cupping glasses," medical devices for drawing supposed impurities out of the bloodstream by creating a vacuum, which are here employed as the sucking power behind the poem's overwrought machinery of osculation. The exchange of gazes, the key intercourse which constitutes the Petrarchan erotic, is imagined as a singular torture with no direct corollary among the narrative's various deaths and executions (even Cutwolfe's eyes are left intact, so "hee might behold his flesh legacied amongst the foules of the aire.")<sup>351</sup> Its violence is open-ended but cyclical—the same "faire tresses" which provoke Surrey's extempore verse "stifle [him] outright," if only in his own imagination.

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<sup>349</sup> Dorothy Jones, "An Example of Anti-Petrarchan Satire in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*" in *The Yearbook of English Studies* 1 (1971) pp. 48-54.

<sup>350</sup> Jones 50. Jones supposes on the basis of the commonalities between these lines and *The Choice of Valentines*, that Surrey "imagines himself as a woman" here, but I find little to support this contention in the poem as a whole.

<sup>351</sup> Nashe 327.



Although Wilton recognizes his master's worshipful "extasie" as symptomatic of an inward turn, his only framework for understanding Surrey's melancholy is as a problem of reference. As Wilton sees it, Surrey "include[s] everie thing under the name of his love" only because Geraldine is absent and he longs for her. Diamante should thus be able to stand in for Geraldine, but so should Surrey's own verse, to the point that Wilton begins to "perswade [himself] he [Surrey] was more in love with his owne curious forming fancie than [Diamante's] face."<sup>352</sup> In identifying this narcissism for the first time, Wilton genders Surrey as the unreformed Petrarch of the early *Canzoniere*, who wrestles with the innate unruliness and adulterousness of a desire which cannot accept that the object it reaches out for is always present in a more profound sense. In the *Canzoniere*, though, Laura eventually dies, and Petrarch, while not necessarily overcoming his bereavement at her loss, nevertheless succeeds in achieving a measure of consolation through his love for God. Surrey's outpouring of self-love does not admit any similar possibility, instead presenting the frustration of his desire as fully equivalent to worldly death and the pain of the lover's absence as the height of possible agonies.

Ultimately, though, Wilton's reading of Surrey's "extasie" as arousal cannot account for the second half of the "fair tresses" couplet, in which the speaker suddenly

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<sup>352</sup> Nashe 262.

and without warning presents another solution-fantasy in response to the dilemma of Geraldine's absence before lapsing back into bland cliché:

Like Circes change me to a loathsome swine,  
 So I may live for ever in thy sight  
 Into heavens joyes can none profoundly see,  
 Except that first they meditate on thee.

Having begun his poem prepared to choose his own death, Surrey suddenly arrives at a vista of eternity. His identification of Geraldine with Circe, the original delaying enabler of the epic and romance tradition, is neither negative nor deathly, but instead asserts the value of even abject life lived in the presence of the beloved. In a Petrarchan lyric space defined through “emphasis on the necessarily promiscuous and unfaithful structure of [...] secular eroticism” and the mixed fear/anticipation of death, delay is associated with erotic agony and yearning but also the indefinite forestalling of negative forms of closure (overcoming desire, death, etc.)<sup>353</sup> Surrey's nugatory self-imagination rejects transcendence as a byword for annihilation and the promise of heaven; instead, he begs his beloved to liberate him through a metamorphosis which is

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<sup>353</sup> Sanchez 46.

explicitly “loathsome,” worldly, and constructed through purely poetic (rather than divine) agency.

Nashe is not only trading on Surrey’s association with the epic in this line. Plutarch’s “Gryllus,” (γροῦλος) is a dialogue in which the eponymous Odyssean soldier-turned-pig argues that his new lot in life is to be preferred.<sup>354</sup> In it, Gryllus mocks Odysseus and other humans for presuming to hold a monopoly on virtue, instead contrasting humanity’s fear of law, captivity, and war with the bravery with which he and other animals defend their own life and freedom. However, a reversed version of the fable, in which “Grills” transformation is portrayed as a just reward for his “hoggish mind,” appears in the second book of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, which had been printed in 1590.<sup>355</sup> Nashe’s Surrey finds himself caught between these interpretations: he stands to benefit from the freedom from consequence promised by Plutarch’s Gryllus, but there is also a suggestion (born out by the imitations) that beneath the praise and status heaped upon him by the narrative lies the same shallow self-satisfaction which Spenser condemns in Grills. Both of these equally plausible interpretations of Surrey’s

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<sup>354</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia* XII.477-533.

<sup>355</sup> Nashe mocks the circumstances around *The Faerie Queen’s* first printing in his *Pierce Penilesse* of 1592. See Andrew Zurcher, “Printing *The Faerie Queen* in 1590” in *The Review of English Studies* 54.213 (February 2003) pp. 1-26.

transformation fantasy read it as delay lengthened into permanence, whether in the form of Gryllus's heroic refusal to trade his freedom for human moral norms or the queer-coded "feminine stasis" that Grills encounters and is seduced by in the Bower of Bliss.<sup>356</sup>

Regardless of whether Surrey's Homeric transformation marks him as a noble animal or a beast, it offers an escape from his historical role which is not entirely unlike Wilson's impersonations of him. In exchanging the very highest for the very lowest (the page for the master; the pig for the Earl,) the fungibility of flesh, status, and time offer opportunities for new forms of connection and proximity.<sup>357</sup> Wilton, recognizing both that this is his master's point of utmost abjection and the multivalent, formless nature of Surrey's desire, considers offering himself as a substitute for the absent beloved:

Sadly and verily, if my master sayde true, I shoulde if I were a wench  
make many men quickly immortall. What ist, what ist for a maide fayre  
and fresh to spend a little lip salve on a hungrie lover[?]<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Fuchs 18.

<sup>357</sup> On the historical poetics of pigs see Peter Stalleybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Cornell University Press 1986) pp. 49-59.

<sup>358</sup> Nashe 263

Wilton refuses the idea that Geraldine is singular, and so he can easily imagine another taking her place. That he places himself (Surrey's "shadow") in the open position can be read as another play on Surrey's narcissism, as well as a more sophisticated articulation of the tendency for the Petrarchan beloved, figured through every place and thing, to lose her particularity. It also reveals another essential disjunction between Wilton and Surrey, in the fact that, where Surrey seems to exude poetry upon even second or third-degree contact with the beloved's absent presence, Wilton simply views composing verse as an ineffective means to a sexual end. In equating the queer immortality of Surrey's porcine transformation with the satisfaction of the earl's (presumed) sexual desire for Diamante/Geraldine/himself, Wilton elides the queer possibility of *preferring* poetically productive non-satisfaction. Instead, his lack of recognition of the partial-but-present sincerity behind Surrey's words becomes yet another marker of the unreachability of the century's first half.

At the same time, there is no reason to believe that Wilton is insincere in this moment, given that earlier in *The Unfortunate Traveller* he happily recounts dressing as "a halfe a crowne wench" to seduce a "Swizer Captaine that was farre gone for want" and supplying him some unspecified "antipast to iniquitie" before absconding with the mercenary's money.<sup>359</sup> His "if I were a wench" bespeaks a lack of equipage, not

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<sup>359</sup> Nashe 225.

inclination. His distance from Surrey spurs his desire to make contact with him, and his inability to understand Surrey's subjectivity and the poetic philosophy it springs from prompts him towards a form of desire which is new in both orientation and affect. It is worth noting that this is the only instance in which Wilton contemplates engaging in a sexual act which is consensual and not based in some form of deception—feeling differently, for him, means brushing up against a past which is in some respects kinder than the present.

### 3. "Faire roome, the presence of sweet beauties pride,"

Surrey's final sonnet describes Geraldine's ornately decorated, empty chambers in Florence:

Faire roome, the presence of sweet beauties pride,  
 The place the Sunne upon the earth did hold,  
 When Phaeton his chariot did misguide,  
 The towre where Iove rained downe himselfe in golde,  
 Prostrate, as holy ground Ile worship thee;  
 Our Ladies chappell henceforth be thou namd;  
 Heere first loves Queene put on mortalitie,  
 And with her beautie all the world inflamd.  
 Heavens chambers harbering fierie cherubines,  
 Are not with thee in glorie to compare,

Lightning it is, not light which in thee shines,  
 None enter thee but straight intranced are.  
 O if Elizium be above the ground,  
 Then here it is, where nought but ioy is found.<sup>360</sup>

Unlike the other two poems, here Surrey entirely drops the conceit of the strained lover at the edge of semi-euphemistic death in favor of a conceit which understands the beloved by the traces of her passage. There is very little praise of Geraldine herself except two compliments paid to her “beauty.” Instead, the entire poem truly is dedicated to the chamber, and how far it excels over other (theoretical) rooms. As “Our Ladies chappell” it is threateningly laden with meaning, Italianate and Catholic—ambiguous signifiers for Nashe, in whose writing tolerance and distrust are near cousins.<sup>361</sup> It is also, however, a chapel in the etymological sense, a place imbued with holiness through its association with the relics of a saint.<sup>362</sup> This kernel of authentic

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<sup>360</sup> Nashe 270.

<sup>361</sup> On Nashe’s possible Catholic sympathies see Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (Routledge 1984) pp. 154-165.

<sup>362</sup> Chapel originates from the Latin *capella*, originally in reference to the cloak of Saint Martin of Tours which was preserved under the care of the first church chaplains (*cappellani*). The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that the term originally referred to vaults used for this purpose exclusively.

devotion differentiates Surrey's lyrical worship of Gerladine from Wilton's cynical dismissal of the Anabaptists, for whom "inspiration" likewise "was their ordinarie familiar, and buzde in theyr eares like a Bee in a boxe euerie houre."<sup>363</sup> Uniquely within *The Unfortunate Traveller's* otherwise consistent satire of religious belief, Surrey's amatory piety has a slight shade of nostalgic reminiscence to the universal religion of pre-Henrician times, now written as secular love poetry.<sup>364</sup>

Despite this, only Wilton describes the reliquary chamber in concrete terms. In Surrey's mind the wonders of the room are purely abstract and celestial, with their specifics mattering less than the fact that they excel all metrics of comparison by virtue of their association with Geraldine. In Surrey's optimistic desire to make contact with even a vestige of his beloved's presence, he ignores (makes "nought" of) the "other Poems and Epigrams" previous errants have left engraved in the chamber's walls.<sup>365</sup> Like Geraldine herself his suffering is singular, entailing no sense of solidarity with others whose desires are similar or expressed in the same way. Instead, Surrey contents

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<sup>363</sup> Nashe 237.

<sup>364</sup> On religious satire in *The Unfortunate Traveller* see Allyna E. Ward, "An Outlandish Travel Chronicle: Farce, History, and Fiction in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*" in *The Yearbook of English Studies* 41.1 (2011) pp. 84-98.

<sup>365</sup> Nashe 270-271.



himself with “anatomizing” (engraving, apparently using a diamond) several “bodie-wanting mots” of his own.<sup>366</sup> The lines he adds are themselves worth dissecting:

- “*Dulce puella malum est.*” (Woman is a sweet poison): *Amores* II.IX.25, the speaker falls back into his loves after renouncing them in the previous lines.
- “*Quod fugit ipse sequor.*” (Who flies I follow in turn): *Amores* II.IX.36, the speaker describes his thrill at the erotic chase, in the context of begging his interlocutor to put up more resistance to his affair with the interlocutor’s wife. Surrey does not quote the first half of the line, “quod sequitur, fugio;” [While I flee who chases me;].<sup>367</sup>
- “*Amor est mihi causa sequendi.*” (Love is the cause of my pursuit): *Metamorphoses* I.507, Apollo shouts this while chasing Daphne.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Nashe 271.

<sup>367</sup> This poem is particularly noteworthy not only for its obvious applicability [to](#) Wilton and Surrey’s relationship, but also its construction of “a notion of masculinity as boundless desire” which “defines itself not against its own absence, but against the jealous, ever-desiring impotence that the figure of the cuckold represents.” See Bruce Bohrer, “Ovid and the Dilemma of the Cuckold in English Renaissance Drama” in *Ovid and the Renaissance Body* (ed. Goran Stanivukovic, University of Toronto Press 2001) pp. 171-188 pp. 177-178.

<sup>368</sup> Suzuki points out that this is the second time in the story that Nashe quotes this “mot,” which Wilton mischievously mistranslates as “I serve because I love.” See Suzuki, “Signorie ouer the Pages” 361-362.

- “*Non patienter amo.*” (I cannot be patient for love): *Heroides* XIX.4, Hero begs Leander to swim to her. Note this is the only one of the tags spoken by a female character.
- “*Tantum patiatur amari.*” (Might she permit herself to be loved): *Amores* I.III.3, the speaker ironically promises his fidelity to both Venus and the beloved he longs for.

Among these quotes are also a few somewhat inelegant original Latin phrases meant to resemble them: “*O infle]lix ego. Cur vidi? Cur perii?*” [O unhappy me. Why do I see? Why do I die/pine?] <sup>369</sup> Through these very short and direct tags Nashe imagines Surrey imagining Ovid, but in doing so he has the earl reveal an inexpert grasp of Ovid’s poetics and perhaps also the Latin language as a whole. Even those lines that have a genuine Ovidian pedigree are “bodie-wanting” not only in their amorousness (they are all expressions of illicit, violent, or ill-omened desire,) but also in the sense that they are alienated from the textual corpus that spawned them. The one consistent theme of these lines throughout is the painful deferral of desire, which ironically undercuts the magnificent and enduring promise of the final line of Surrey’s sonnet. Together with his diminution of his fellow sonneteers, there is a suggestion in this cacophonous assemblage

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<sup>369</sup> Nashe 271. I’ve included both the literal and poetic sense of *perii*, as they seem equally operative here.

of Surrey's overall relationship to the Petrarchan tradition: after being built up as a poetic authority by pages of Wilton's effervescent prose, he casually casts away the insights of his predecessors, preferring the products of his own inspiration. Little wonder that Wilton, depending on the printing, describes the lines as either as "generall" or "veneriall monuments" — whatever they signify, they refer to Surrey's object-less desire, rather than the beloved herself.

From the kind of humanist perspective that guided Gavin Douglas nearly a century before these words were written, Nashe's portrait of Surrey appears deeply unflattering—it is without a doubt "narcissistic, flashy, self-promoting," and especially "pseudomagisterial," with Surrey rejecting and devaluing the memorial corrective which is embodied in the learning of his predecessors. Nevertheless, his narcissism takes on a queerly optimistic quality in this final poem's inversion of *Rime Sparse* 37, in which Petrarch writes "*Ogni loco m'atrasta ov'io non veggio lquei begli occhi soave*" ("Every place makes me sad where I do not see those lovely sweet eyes.")<sup>370</sup> Instead of following Petrarch fully, Surrey in this moment is like Augustine as he appears in his own writings, continually delighted at the repetitive hermeneutic labor of transforming

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<sup>370</sup> As translated in *Petrarch's Lyric Poems* (trans. Robert M. Durling, Harvard University Press 1976) p.98.

each new signifier he encounters into a sign of the beloved (in Augustine's case, God.)<sup>371</sup> He succeeds, despite his immaturity, in the effort that Petrarch in the early *Canzoniere* cannot help but fail at: "short-circuiting the referentiality of signs" by both finding the beloved's presence and, moreover, finding that presence satisfying even in its incompleteness or virtuality.<sup>372</sup> Because of this, the movement through the poem's various spaces reads as a gradual swelling of Surrey's poetic voice, which expands from the incomparable "Chapell" to "the world" and then eventually into the supernal. The poem's final couplet completes it by returning to the terrestrial root of Surrey's faith and avowing that corporeal joy is co-extensive with the airy wonders of "Elizium" (from "Ἠλύσιον," the tranquil Homeric afterlife.) As Surrey's rejection of deathly closure implies, both readings of the final line are true: he can equally say to have found nothing but joy, and to have found nothing and taken joy in it.

## 5.

Wilton does not provide further commentary on his master's poetry, and of "what adventures happened him after we parted" he is "ignorant."<sup>373</sup> Nevertheless, one can

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<sup>371</sup> See for example the discussion of rhetorical "delight" (*delictatio*) in DDC IV. Fish notes the ludic nature of Augustine's hermeneutics in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* 41.

<sup>372</sup> Freccero 38.

<sup>373</sup> Nashe 279.

infer Surrey's future fate when Wilton informs the reader that his master's "fame was quite cut off by the shins" when he was recalled to England "*Bazelus manus*" — a phrase which, although originating from the Spanish *bezo las manos* ("I kiss your hands," farewell,) initially reads closer to *Basileus Manus* (dog-Latin suggestive of "the hand of the king.")<sup>374</sup> Along the same lines, during the tournament Surrey's panoply is described in fanciful but ominous terms, with the "nettles and weedes" depicted upon his armor threatening to "overgrow their liege Lordes."<sup>375</sup> Wilton, however, overlooks the obvious implication that such weeds might risk being similarly "cut off" — instead, he simply allows Surrey to exit the narrative, having "eternally glorified" Geraldine and proven her "the exceptionlesse fayrest of women."<sup>376</sup>

These parting words tell us nothing at all about Surrey, but they adequately summarize the hyperbolic portrait of his poetics around which Nashe's own queer poetics are constituted. Perhaps most critically, they offer a narrative, if a simplistic and openly fictionalized one, through which the earlier poet's artistic contributions can be recognized and which is not dependent upon his status as a political martyr. In this Nashe's Surrey differs not only from the person we encounter in Day and Owen's

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<sup>374</sup> Nashe 279.

<sup>375</sup> Nashe 271-272.

<sup>376</sup> Nashe 278.

preface, the austere “noble wyt” taken too soon, but also in Tottel’s, where the “dignity” and “honour” of Surrey’s verse are simply assumed. The same cannot be said of the both comic and comedic place of Surrey’s poetry in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in which tragedy accretes to his character only incidentally through the intrusion of history. Instead Nashe paints Surrey’s poetry with a fuzzily penumbral quality, piling together a mishmash of hackneyed tropes that are alien to his object of imitation on their surface but suggest the shape of something more authentic lurking at their center. In choosing to portray this center as an impenetrable darkness rather than a knowable quantity, Nashe arrives at something resembling a poetics of queer relationality—or more precisely, a poetics of relationality which is so relentlessly queer in its refusal to assert a normative chronotopal logic that it disrupts the norms of the sexual, literary, and historical relationality that it touches.

Nashe would contribute, alongside Christopher Marlowe, to the creation of *The Tragedie of Dido, Queen of Carthage*, which although probably performed in the 1580s was also printed in 1594. Like *The Unfortunate Traveller*, it presents on its surface as a text with connections to Surrey, but includes no verses quoted from or directly referencing his own. In *The Unfortunate Traveller*, however, Surrey’s absence is overtly conspicuous because he is present as a character, and Nashe’s fictionalized narrative takes place in front of a backdrop drawn painted to resemble his own time. *Dido* presents the poetics without the poet—like Surrey’s *Aeneid* it retells the Dido and Aeneas story while

concentrating on its points of failure (especially Aeneas's failure to remember himself), but unlike that work (which wears Surrey's indebtedness to Douglas on its sleeve) *Dido* does not link itself to any poetic lineage outside of the Virgilian narrative itself. This genetic solipsism is the play's greatest asset: it allows it to retell the Dido and Aeneas narrative not as any given interpreter would have it be, but instead as it reads *in situ*, shorn of any educational or spiritual justification.

## Chapter 4:

*The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage* and the Failure of Memory

This final chapter moves beyond Surrey by considering how a poetics of historical distance and memorial skepticism uncannily similar to his own is present in Thomas Nashe and Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragedie of Dido, Queene of Carthage*.<sup>377</sup> Nashe and Marlowe would have been familiar with the Surrey poems anthologized by Tottel, but it is relatively unlikely that either of them ever read Surrey's *Aeneid*, which saw its final sixteenth-century printing in 1556.<sup>378</sup> Nevertheless, the melancholy convergence of form and theme in *Dido* is strongly reminiscent of that work, which likewise emphasizes Dido's erotic subjectivity while remaining skeptical as to the moral

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<sup>377</sup> The question of how much of *Dido* was written by Nashe and how much by Marlowe has long been a subject of intractable academic debate, with several recent essays employing stylometric analyses to make the case for either Marlowe's sole authorship or Nashe's collaboration—on these respective positions see Ruth Lunney and Craig Hugh, "Who Wrote *Dido, Queen of Carthage*?" in *Journal of Marlowe Studies* 1 (September 2020) pp. 1-31; and Darren Freebury-Jones and Marcus Dahl, "Searching for Thomas Nashe in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*" in *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 35.2 (June 2020) pp. 296-306. The problem boils down to the fact that Nashe wrote no plays other than this one and *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, a radically unusual comedy with little in common with *Dido*, whereas none of Marlowe's prose survives, making persuasive and useful comparison of the two largely impossible. In the absence of persuasive evidence that Nashe played no part in authoring the text, I have chosen to simply assume that both men collaborated to produce the play.

<sup>378</sup> It is conspicuous for example that Nashe does not reference the text when discussing the English-language translation tradition (including Twine's *Aeneid*) in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*.



force of virtue, memory, and character. I argue that this convergence, which arises only through contingency and not through any conventional notion of a genetic relationship between texts, demonstrates an essential similarity between them. In both works, the ubiquitous student relationship with the *Aeneid* as a text—a positionality defined by the vast gulf between Virgil’s time and the reader’s, the always-alloyed mixed success of memorization, and the reader’s seemingly inevitable sympathy for Dido—bounces off the surface of the story and refracts into a diffuse queer poetics.

This chapter begins by situating Nashe and Marlowe’s portrayal of Dido in opposition to Surrey’s. While both share an interest in representing the character as an agential poetic subject, Nashe and Marlowe’s Dido is less conflicted than she is aggrieved, frustrated by both the totality of the force stacked against her and its pitiless injustice. However, like the inconsolable sorrow of Surrey’s elegies, the unremitted and unjustified violence of *Dido*’s narrative demands a justice which is not present and can scarcely be imagined either within the space of the narrative or in the long tail of its transmission. I go on to argue that the deliberate thematization of the actors’ sexual exploitation in the play’s opening scene, the humanist embrace of history in its alterity entails the reproduction of horror after horror and crime after crime, which can never (in the sixteenth century or afterwards) constitute a morally neutral act. I then conclude the chapter by applying the poetics of educational violence present in the induction as a

lens through which to read the play's repeated stagings of Aeneas failing to "remember who thou art [and] speake like thy selfe."

As I argued in the first chapter of this dissertation, I view Surrey's approach to Dido's subjectivity as largely uncritical. Although Surrey asks "what thoughts might [Dido] have had?" and his lyrics attempt to provide some conjectural answers to that question, they never cohere into a theory of her or Virgil's place in history, literary or otherwise. The same is not true of Nashe and Marlowe, who had far more occasion to consider (and in Nashe's case, frequently wrote on) classical education in the abstract or meta sense. Nashe and Marlowe were products of a vastly more formalized and in many ways more comprehensive regime of humanist education than Surrey, and more importantly they grew up in a period in which humanist pedagogy was both changing rapidly and becoming more widespread (although not "democratized," which suggests a non-existent bottom-up educational movement).<sup>379</sup> Nashe, at least, was deeply concerned that the education young men of his generation were receiving was inadequate; that educational reformers (less charitably, "Divinitie Dunces") like Petrus Ramus were "striv[ing] to make their pupills pulpit-men before they are reconciled to Priscian; [with] those yeares which should bee employed in *Aristotle* [...] experied in

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<sup>379</sup> On the very rapid production of a system of widespread humanist education across Europe during this period see Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (Harvard University Press 1986) and Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching* 10-18.

Epitomes.”<sup>380</sup> As McLuhan observes, Nashe’s opposition to the patchwork memorization-based educational schema of Ramus and his disciples springs in part from his belief, alongside that of Erasmus and nearly the entire humanist tradition up until that point, that the classical canon could be easily misinterpreted and misapplied if its transmission was not accompanied by a rigorous moral, philosophical, and literary education.<sup>381</sup> Another part of it though, is simple respect for the truth: Nashe knew as well as anyone that Ramus’s claims to be able to impart “perfecte knowledge” of Plato and Aristotle “in the space of two monthes” by memorizing a handful of phrases was a lie which does a disservice to both text and pupil.<sup>382</sup>

I do not view *Dido* as an allegory for the new education, but I do think that it bears the hallmarks of Nashe’s pessimistic outlook on the manner in which the classics were being transmitted in his own day. By virtue of its form and the circumstances of its performance (i.e. by a children’s company), *Dido* replicates the form of the new education as Nashe saw it—it re-utters the dead words of the Virgilian myth, without context or interpretation. When the story is transmitted in this way, it is cruel, farcical,

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<sup>380</sup> Thomas Nashe, Preface to Greene’s *Menaphon* (printed by T.O. for Sampson Clarke, 1589). On Nashe’s virulent opposition to Ramus see McLuhan 217-219.

<sup>381</sup> McLuhan 209-253.

<sup>382</sup> McLuhan 217-218 n.13.

and unsatisfying for both characters and audience. Nashe and Marlowe's divergences from Virgil are designed to sharpen this sense of irresolution: both Aeneas's and Dido's respective traumas are magnified and their volition diminished, with the playwrights' willingness to experiment with plot signifying only new and creative avenues to tragedy. Read outside Augustine and the hermeneutic tradition he originated, Virgil's mythic narrative appears as a cruel farce. This reactionary perspective, which by the end of the play is the unambiguous victor over any attempt to impose meaning upon its violence, is accidentally rather revolutionary in its suggestion that celebration of historical or mythic trauma may, *de facto*, represent a harm.

#### Sidonian Poetics in 1554 and 1594

There is one line from *Dido* that bears a resemblance to its equivalent in the Surrey *Aeneid*, probably indirectly through some unknown chain of reference or perhaps completely by accident. A comparison of the context in which the line appears in *Dido* to its original serves to demonstrate both the shared core of a queerly distant historical experience which motivates both texts, as well as the very different affective ends to which Marlowe and Nashe mobilize the Virgilian narrative. Virgil and Surrey describe Dido's lovesickness in the following terms:

Uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur

Urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva [...]

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Unhappy Dido burns, and in her rage

Throughout the town she wandreth up and down:

Like the stricken Hinde [...] <sup>383</sup>

I argued in the first chapter of this project that one of Surrey's primary interventions in his translation was to introduce (or, depending on how we read Virgil, restore) some measure of the urgency and active character of Dido's passion by avoiding the epideictic vocabulary of shame present in other translations.<sup>384</sup> Marlowe and Nashe share Surrey's essential interest in the narrative's tragic subversion of Dido's agency, but they radically denature the original line by entirely removing the simile from which it originates. Instead, Marlowe and Nashe reassign this description of Dido to Iarbas, in an invented scene in which he makes a "plaining prayer" to Jupiter that the god might "warne [Aeneas] to his ships":

[Iarbas]: The woman that thou [Jupiter] wild us entertaine,

Where straying in our borders up and downe,

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<sup>383</sup> *Aeneid* II.66-72; Padelford 126.

<sup>384</sup> For example, the Twyne and Faire *Aeneid* of 1573 (a translation Nashe praises in his preface to *Menaphon*) gives these lines as "So sely Dido burnes, and through the town with raging chere / Astray she wanders wide, as doth sometime the stricken dere." Although in many ways a more sophisticated translation ("astray she wanders wide" for Virgil's "tota[...] vagatur" etc.), the Douglassian choice of "sely" for Virgil's "infelix" does little to convey the tragic fatalism of the simile, which relies in part on our understanding of Virgil's Dido as an agent whose desires are subverted or stymied.

She crav'd a hide of ground to build a towne,  
 With whom we did devide both lawes and land,  
 And all the plentie els sends forth,  
 Scorning our loves and royall marriage rites,  
 Yeeld up her beautie to a strangers bed.<sup>385</sup>

Iarbas defines Dido primarily as a sovereign lawgiver and builder of cities, to a degree that outstrips even the first book of the *Aeneid*.<sup>386</sup> By the point in the play at which he speaks these lines Iarbas is fully embittered against Dido, but nevertheless, he still remembers her as a measurer of walls and adjudicator of the common weal rather than a wounded deer in its death throes. However, as Margo Hendricks perceptively notes, this identification of Dido with her labors combines with the play's total elision of her paternity (from King Belus of Carthage, and therefore from Neptune) to "make geography, Africa and Carthage, the origins of Dido's racial history."<sup>387</sup> Unlike Aeneas,

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<sup>385</sup> All citations to *Dido* are found in Fredson Bowers ed., *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe* vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press 1981). This quote appears on Bowers 39.

<sup>386</sup> Compare *Aeneid* 1.494-519, esp. 507-508 ("iura dabat legesque viris, operumque laborem/ partibus aequabat iustis aut sorte trahebat") ["She was giving rights and laws to the people, and assigning them tasks equally or by lot."]

<sup>387</sup> Margo Hendricks, "Managing the Barbarian: 'The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage'" in *Renaissance Drama*, New Series 23 (1992) pp. 165-188 p. 173. See also Ruth

her identity is premised upon the lands and peoples she has come to govern and her own accomplishments in the course of that governance, not her bloodline.

Hendricks is right to point out that Dido's deracination in turn allows other characters to racialize her according to European stereotypes of North African peoples as uncontrollably emotional, unruly, or barbarous.<sup>388</sup> However, Hendricks' argument that the presence of racializing discourse necessarily makes Dido "racially inferior" in the conception of the play's audience is at least partially complicated by the play's repeated stagings of the character as a source of rhetorical power and moral clarity.<sup>389</sup> Although Dido's slide into megalomania in the later stages of the play trades on Orientalist notions of "Eastern despotism," it is significant that before that she succeeds

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Lunney, "Dido, Queen of Carthage" in *Marlowe at 450* (eds. Sarah Munson Deats and Robert A. Logan, Ashgate 2015) pp. 13-50.

<sup>388</sup> On connections between Roman humoral racism, medieval and early modern racisms, and the fetishization of African characters in the romance tradition (which *Dido* manifestly borrows from extensively) see Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press 2018) pp. 31-44, 181-190, 210-213.

<sup>389</sup> Hendricks 174. While I agree with Hendricks that there is a doubled vision of Dido present in the play, I see its binary as turning on the desirability/undesirability of characters and concepts which are coded as alien to the play's (putatively white, European, Christian, English, and in the case of all the period performances we know of, predominantly genteel) audience, rather than Dido's personhood or supposed inferiority as such. Mary Floyd Wilson's engagement with Tamburlaine's "Scythian-ness" as a marker of simultaneous "barbarism" and desirability throughout *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge University Press 2003) is one example of how this form of "barbarism"/desirability binary can operate while still remaining rooted in humoral racism.

in modelling a form of kingship which is not just effective in keeping the peace in Carthage but at least partially motivated by justice. She even prevails in the tricky business of “devid[ing] [...] land,” a detail absent from Virgil and which surely would have seemed significant in a century shaped by the English Crown’s failure to do so to the satisfaction of the kingdom’s nobility.

These facts are not necessarily in contradiction with one another. The racialization of Dido’s character, like Othello’s, is an ongoing facet of the play’s tragedy—the narrative shocks the audience through Dido’s Carthaginian barbarism even as it confirms their suspicions of the African Other, with neither fact of its characterization seeming to contradict the other. The nuance of Dido’s portrayal does not abnegate the fact that the play shares a grammar with *Tamburlaine* and *Selimus* (the latter also printed in 1594), equally participating in the same imaginative constitution of non-European authority as alterity.

At the same time, late in the play Dido’s expanded condemnations of Aeneas explicitly rejects the epideictic logic of readings which, by framing the narrative’s moral stakes exclusively in terms of their exegetical value towards Aeneas’s character, abstract away the concrete harm his sudden flight is doomed to cause. When she asks Aeneas “hast thou [...] forgot how many neighbour kings / were up in armes, for making thee



my love?", he cannot provide a sufficient answer to the question.<sup>390</sup> While the play does suggest there is something inherently prone to unrest or chaos in Carthage's mixture of different peoples (a racist trope about the city that dates back to Cato the elder's time),<sup>391</sup> it also provides no opportunity to excuse Aeneas for pushing the city over the edge into despotism followed by chaos. As Emily Bartels' observes, Dido's dying words ("from mine ashes let a Conqueror rise/ That may revenge this treason to a Queene / By plowing up [Aeneas's] Countries with a Sword") clarify the mortal stakes of Virgil's loose cycles of epic violence, to the point that the play can be read as a "pointed critique of colonialism."<sup>392</sup> From my point of view, this critique arises less from Nashe and Marlowe's actual consideration of colonialism as-such and more from the fact that Aeneas himself is always and in all contexts a post-facto metonymy for a "Western" literary tradition which has from the beginning validated colonial violence. Thus, the rewriting of the *Aeneid* is inherently destabilizing, regardless of the era in which it is done. To do so is to move that most ancient layer of history from the past to the present,

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<sup>390</sup> Bowers 53.

<sup>391</sup> Cicero attributes this opinion to Scipio and (implicitly) Cato in *De Re Publica* II.

<sup>392</sup> Emily Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe* (University of Pennsylvania Press 1993) pp. 37-51. See also Lunney 30 on this line.

and in doing so to shift all the sedimented layers of interpretation which have accrued around it.

*Dido* arrives at a more pointed critique of Aeneas than Surrey does in part because Marlowe and Nashe conceive of the problem of memory differently. For the speaker of “O happy dames, that may embrace” as well as for Surrey himself, imprisoned alone in Windsor, the essential problem raised by memory is its uncontrollable creative power, which threatens the self (a vessel “freight with remembrance”) with storms of unexpected emotional disquiet.<sup>393</sup> Memory is similarly uncontrollable in *Dido*, but here the trouble is that it is impotent: despite the urging of those around him, Aeneas cannot follow Dido’s instructions to “remember who thou art, [and] speak like thy selfe.” The great joke of the play (and it is a joke, just a cruel one) is that this is a preposterous thing to ask because the play’s Aeneas is a young child [actor](#) made merely to recite the dead words of the myth, rather than to understand their meaning or learn from them. Dido tells him to “remember” when she should tell him to recollect—to regurgitate rather than conjure and interpret. The trauma entailed by the former process is too much even for Aeneas himself to fully reckon with it, and

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<sup>393</sup> Tottel titles this poem “Complaint of the Absence of Her Lover being upon the Sea,” notably gendering the speaker despite the poem never explicitly doing so. See Padelford 58.

the play ends in a scene of bacchic hyper-tragedy that denies any attempt at moral exegesis.

*Dido's* poetics reflect this shift away from the absence of consolation and towards the impossibility of learning. For Surrey's speakers, memory often causes time to flow more slowly, stretching out the period of the lover's absence infinitely. The rapid pace and galloping end-stops of *Dido's* verse, conversely, contribute to Aeneas's expression of an experience of time (and especially the time of Troy's fall) as multiple iterations of the same moment occurring in rapid simultaneity. Thus, where Surrey's pasts are "yonge wanton tyme[s]" and "freshe grene yeres, that wither [...] and fade" with tragic inevitability, for Marlowe and Nashe's Aeneas "memory [is] like pale deaths stony mace," a repetitive staccato truncheoning of "daily [...] broyles and Massacres."<sup>394</sup> Both sets of metaphors are pessimistic, but where tragedy of Surrey's past lies in the fact that it is unattainable and imagination may not compensate for its absence, *Dido's* dismal action reflects the anxiety of failure that accompanies the tragedy genre's attempts to intellectualize and systematize trauma.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Padelford 49, 79. Bowers 19.

<sup>395</sup> Throughout this chapter my use of "trauma" as a heuristic broadly follows that of Matthew R. Martin, who identifies the focus on what we would now call trauma in the early modern English stage tragedy with the Aristotelian turn in dramatic studies in *Tragedy and Trauma in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Ashgate 2015) p. 2.

The core motif of Aeneas's crisis of memory and identity is the destruction of Troy, which represents a loss of such immensity that it causes Aeneas to rethink the essential premises his identity rests upon. He inverts his Virgilian counterpart's boastful greeting to Dido into a plea for help:

coram, quem quaeritis, adsum,

Troïus Aeneas, Libycis ereptus ab undis."

[I, the one you seek, stand here,

Trojan Aeneas, having burst forth from the waves of Libya.]<sup>396</sup>

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[Aeneas.] Sometime I was a Troian[,] mightie Queene[.]

But *Troy* is not, what shall I say I am?<sup>397</sup>

In addition to its comparative deference to Dido (and the potential for effeminizing mondegreen in the first line), Aeneas's question pierces the accreted cultural prestige of the *Aeneid* narrative to question its essential premise and stakes. Subsequently, each attempt to induce Aeneas to "remember who thou art" and "speake

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<sup>396</sup> *Aeneid* 1.595-596. Early modern translations sometimes inflate the bravado of line even further, as in Twyne and Faire's translation: "to the Quéene he steps, and said (all sodeinly) behold / He that you séeke, lo here I am, Aeneas Troian I: /Escapid from the Lyby seas where lost I was welny" (T&F 1573).

<sup>397</sup> Bowers 18.

like thy selfe" fails, and the play ends without addressing the question of his character. The result is something other than a tragedy because in its depiction of trauma it annihilates its subjects, rather than revealing them. We might therefore think of *Dido* as a hypertragedy, with the *hyper-* prefix denoting an excession of boundaries that changes the essential nature of the genre such that it relates queerly to the master category of "tragedy." The key to this generic coup is the play's mobilization of the audience's sense of moral judgement, which demands a justice that cannot be supplied by the absent interpretive frame.

#### Memory, Judgement, and Injustice in the Ganymede Induction

The play's very first lines prompt the audience to engage with the narrative as moral spectators, as the curtains draw on Jupiter "dandling Ganymede on his knee" as "Mercury [is] lying asleepe":

Jup.: Come gentle *Ganimed* and play with me,  
I love thee well, say *Iuno* what she will.

This staging has no clear precedent in the period, although Jupiter's seated position of authority is consistent with his role as Olympian sovereign. Instead, the play sources its Ganymede myth from Orpheus's short "*pueros [...] canamus dilectos superis*" (song of a boy beloved by the highest [i.e. Jupiter]) in the tenth book of Ovid's

*Metamorphoses*.<sup>398</sup> The digression on Ganymede ends open-endedly, with the lines “*qui nunc quoque pocula miscet / invitaque Iovi nectar Iunone ministrat*” (even now, against the will of Juno, [Ganymede] mingles the nectar and attends the cups of Jove.)<sup>399</sup> For centuries, Christian humanist pedagogues (perhaps uneasy with the have interpreted Ganymede’s perpetual life and youth as a metaphor for the acquisition of lasting wisdom, and the entire myth as an idealization of the student-scholar’s relationship to knowledge.<sup>400</sup> If one strips away the abstractions of this interpretation, though, the Ganymede myth serves as a metaphor for the early modern classroom in a more material sense: for most early modern students (and especially for those who, like Nashe and Marlowe, lacked aristocratic privilege) education was frightening, non-consensual, frequently humiliating, and involved being subject to physical violence.<sup>401</sup> In the emblematic reading of the text, Jupiter’s “gift” of eternal youth situates

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<sup>398</sup> *Metamorphoses* X.152-153.

<sup>399</sup> *Metamorphoses* X.160-161.

<sup>400</sup> In addition to Barkan’s book-length study of humanist use of the Ganymede emblem in *Transuming Passions*, see also Stephen Orgel, “The Further Adventures of Ganymede” in *Childhood, Education, and the Stage in Early Modern England* pp. 143-161 and Orgel, “Ganymede Agonistes” in *GLQ* 10.3 (2004) pp. 485-501.

<sup>401</sup> Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching* pp. 23-72. As Bushnell points out, early modern pedagogical writing frequently considers, acknowledges, and moves to contain the possibility that the teacher might beat the student simply because they enjoy doing so.

Ganymede's rape as a logical, even normal component of an orderly moral universe which in turn justifies the many forms of violence that permeated the early modern classroom.

As Stephen Orgel notes, the presence of this secondary myth of Ganymede-as-student has led to a tendency for "early modern commentators, and more significantly [...] modern historians of Renaissance art and society" to romanticize the story while downplaying its violence.<sup>402</sup> The interpretive distance between the literal events of the myth and its Christian humanist abstraction, combined with the attenuating, distancing effect of time, have created in it a text which, in David L. Orvis's words, "could be marshaled either to denounce physical intimacy between *erastes* and *eromenos* or to condone it."<sup>403</sup>

Many modern critics see *Dido* as operating in the latter vein, with Jeffrey Masten (among others) arguing that the play in fact innovates upon the "classical pattern" of Ganymedic pederasty literature by "giving us boys speaking back" and engaging Ganymede's agency as he negotiates the terms of his and Jupiter's relationship by

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<sup>402</sup> Orgel, "The Further Adventures of Ganymede" pp. 143-144.

<sup>403</sup> David L. Orvis, "Lustful Jove and his adulterous child: Classical *paidierastia* as Same-Sex Marriage in Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*" in *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England: Gender, Instruction, and Performance* (eds. Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson, Ashgate 2011) p. 101-113.

demanding petty material baubles in exchange for his “love.”<sup>404</sup> A greater attention to the dynamics of imitation between Ganymede and Jupiter, however, underlines the fact that Ganymede’s agency within this exchange is essentially non-existent. Moreover—and perhaps more relevantly for an early modern audience—it shows that Jupiter’s promises of protection are essentially unreliable, empty words in a universe which operates according to Lucretian dynamics of physical force and unmovable natural laws. I argue that the imbrication of the Ganymede myth as metaphor for humanist pedagogy within the play’s depiction of the Ganymede myth as pederasty operates to destabilize any conception of the former as an unalloyed good, not to excuse the latter. The fact that Jupiter immediately frames Ganymede’s captivity as adulterous and potentially worthy of Juno’s scorn as the play’s first spoken lines suggests that the playwrights were aware of this tension. There is an air of moral transgression around his molestation, even if the play frames it in homophobic terms by parsing the act as a crime against heterosexual marriage rather than Ganymede’s person and agency.

Significantly, Ganymede does not present himself as a student or idealized “boy lover” in his interactions with Jupiter, but instead as a political subject whose loyalty is theoretically contingent upon Jupiter’s ability to protect him from harm:

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<sup>404</sup> Jeffrey Masten, *Queer Philologies: Sex, Language and Affect in Shakespeare’s Time* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2016) pp. 150-173.



Gan.: I am much better for your worthles love;  
 That will not shield me from her [Juno's] shrewish blowes;  
 To day when as I fild into your cups  
 And held the cloathe of pleasance whiles you dranke,  
 She reacht me such a rap that I spilde,  
 As made the bloud run downe about mine eares.<sup>405</sup>

Juno plays only a small part in Marlowe's play, but when she appears she is a bloodthirsty Medea-figure menacing "Aeneas cursed brat, that ugly impe" Ascanius with mortal peril. There is no comic aspect to her character, supposed "shrewishness" aside, and the threat she poses to Ganymede is unambiguously mortal in nature. The pun on "spilde," which might refer to either the ambrosial wine Ganymede holds or the blood falling from his head, constructs a circuit between both ideas; Ganymede's sexual "service" to Jupiter is what makes Juno envy him, and creates the need for protection that Jupiter (rhetorically) fills, thereby justifying said service.

While we might, along with Jonathan Goldberg, read the interactions that follow as "Jupiter titillating Ganymede with sadistic promises to rack his queen," it is worth

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<sup>405</sup> Bowers 7.

bearing in mind that Ganymede initially only requests to be “shielded” from Juno.<sup>406</sup> It is Jupiter who initially threatens violence against her, with an implication that Ganymede will be unsafe outside of his protection:

If she but once frownne on thee [Ganymede] more,  
 To hang her meteorlike twixt heaven and earth,  
 And bind her hand and foote with golden cordes,  
 As once I did for harming *Hercules* [.]<sup>407</sup>

Jupiter’s reference to Juno’s attempt to slay Hercules in his crib is a rewriting of the myth as it exists in its original sources, none of whom make mention of a punishment for Juno/Hera. Instead, Jupiter seems here to borrow from another myth of Hercules’s birth, in which Hercules creates the Milky Way by biting Juno’s breast.<sup>408</sup> Jupiter frames himself as both an arbiter of justice and as a protector of Ganymede

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<sup>406</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Fordham University Press 2010) p. 129.

<sup>407</sup> Bowers 7.

<sup>408</sup> The attempted snaking of baby Hercules is recounted without a corresponding punishment of Juno in Pindar, *Nemean Odes* 1.45-60, and more briefly in pseudo-Apollodorus, *Library* 2.4.8, and Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* iv.10. Both myths were constantly told and retold through art and statuary during this period, such as the striking *Origin of the Milky Way* painted by Tintoretto in the 1570s and later imitated by Reubens. It is entirely possible that Nashe or Marlowe had simply heard or otherwise encountered some version of the myth in which Hera is punished.

through this narrative, with Juno's binding specifically restraining the "hand" with which she might otherwise strike him.

Goldberg's reading of the scene as manipulation fails to account for the tendency of children to repeat the actions, words, and behaviors of adults through imitation, which is an occasional source of comedy in early modern plays. Imitation of this kind enables, for example, the joke of the scene from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in which Mistress Quickly berates the Latinists William and Sir Hugh for "teaching [a] child [...] to hick and hack; which they do fast enough for themselves, and to call whorum."<sup>409</sup> That scene can play the notion of exploiting the childish impulse to imitate for humor while still making the unsettling translatory leap between rhetorical education and sex, in part because no actual pederasty occurs in that play. Harry Levin's description of how the Jupiter-Ganymede exchange frames "the sexual climate of [*Dido*]"—its tenderness toward youths, its passivity with women, its childish delight in the presents and promises of courtship" must therefore be supplemented with the qualification that the rhetorics of this "childish" eroticism in fact originate from and are taught by the play's (nominally) adult characters.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Kathryn Rebecca Van Winkle, "'Then Speak, Aeneas, with Achilles' Tongue: *Ethopoeia* and Elizabethan Boyhood in Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*" in *Theatre Symposium, Volume 23: Theatre and Youth* (University of Alabama Press) pp. 42-51, p. 48.

<sup>410</sup> Levin 16.

After this exchange, Jupiter bestows upon Ganymede what had formerly been Juno's bridal equipage:

Hold here my little love these linked gems,  
 My *Juno* wore upon her marriage day,  
 Put thou about thy necke my owne sweet heart,  
 And trick thy armes and shoulders with my theft.<sup>411</sup>

Within the space of a scene, the play transposes the image of Juno's bound limbs to Ganymede's, "tricked" (another ludic pun) with gems that simultaneously "appropriate a sign of [Jupiter and Juno's] marriage" and mark with an ironic permanence the ultimate fungibility of Jupiter's own affections.<sup>412</sup> We might see this gesture as violently effeminizing, as Simon Shepherd does—and in which case, as Shepherd acknowledges, we must read the play as creating a homophobic semiotic circuit between the categories of 'effeminized man' or boy, 'woman,' and 'victim.'<sup>413</sup>

Nevertheless, it is worth separating the action of the scene from the gesture of the

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<sup>411</sup> Bowers 8.

<sup>412</sup> Goldberg, *Sodometries* p. 130. See also Orvis p. 107 on euphemism in this scene.

<sup>413</sup> Simon Shepherd, *Marlowe and the Politics of Elizabethan Theatre* (Harvester Press, 1986) pp. 178-207.

gift itself, permutations of which are repeated several times over the course of the play in different contexts: Venus enticing Ascanius with “a silver girdle, and a golden purse,” Dido’s sad fantasy of “making me bracelets of [Aeneas’s] golden hair,” the “jewels” and “wedding ring” from Sychaeus that Dido gives to Aeneas in the cave, and all of this in addition to the scenes from Virgil in which Dido gifts Aeneas with luxurious sundries for his voyage.<sup>414</sup> While many of these gifts and imagined gifts do indirectly feminize the recipient, others do not; what they instead share is symbolic value as tokens of truth or *fides*. Jupiter himself might intend to effeminize Ganymede, but the theatrical purpose of his regifting of Juno’s jewels lies in the way that the act reflects Jupiter’s own character, and the dire consequences it may imply for Ganymede’s future. The Ganymede myth can only function to justify the violence of the classroom by promising transcendence, such that the student’s suffering will eventually be rewarded with a higher understanding of that selfsame suffering. If the promise of eternal life cannot be counted upon—if it depends for its legitimacy on an unmoved mover who gives no indication of having his student’s best interests at heart—then the internal logic of the violence-learning syllogism it implies correspondingly cannot hold.

Fred B. Tromly argues that this exchange, and the way that it turns around the prospect of Juno’s spectacular punishment, incipits a broader pattern of “Ovidian

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<sup>414</sup> Bowers 24, 28, 38.

game-playing and [...] smiling at tears" at work in the play.<sup>415</sup> Reading this scene alongside its original in the *Metamorphosis* reveals that Jupiter, like Dido, "burns with Love" (*amores / arsit*), while in turn Dido turns out to be "an erst-while controlling figure who is rendered helpless by frustrated desire."<sup>416</sup> For Tromly, the play's Ovidianism inheres not only in its language but in the affect of cruel mockery which pervades it, with the audience being repeatedly prompted by the *bathos* of the verse to laugh at scenes of deception and coercion in a "problematic mixing of tragedy and farce."<sup>417</sup>

My reading of the play's generic frame largely coheres with Tromly's, however, as I see it, he pre-emptively discounts the possibility that representing Ganymede's molestation on stage, in front of an audience who are aware of one another and can hear one another's laughter, creates an inherently unstable affective hermeneutics which then at least partially inheres in the subsequent printed text. This is to say, *Dido* is not a work which occurred on the imaginative stage but a particular physical one, in which the audience's reception and interactions with one another had real material and social

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<sup>415</sup> Tromly 58.

<sup>416</sup> Tromly 58. *Metamorphoses* x.155

<sup>417</sup> Tromly 58.

stakes—particularly when one considers the fact that much of the play’s initial audience was directly financially invested in the boys’ education in rhetoric, locution, and memory.<sup>418</sup> To laugh in such an audience necessitates taking a position on the object (the play, the theater) around which one is oriented, even if that position is the seemingly deracinated one of the active audience member enjoying the show.

This orientation towards or away from the theater takes on a particular importance when we read *Dido* in conjunction with anti-theatrical texts, including most notably the Protestant pamphleteer Phillip Stubbes’s 1579 *School of Abuses* and its continuations.<sup>419</sup> The movement against the theaters remained constant (if largely unsuccessful) until the publication of William Prynne’s *Histrion-Mastix* of 1633, which made explicit the charges that those earlier pamphlets had only implied: that the owners of boys companies were “Sodomites” who “usually clad their Ganymedes in womens apparell, caused them to nourish, to frizle their haire, to weare Periwigs and

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<sup>418</sup> See Julie Ackroyd, *Child Actors on the London Stage, Circa 1600: Their Education, Recruitment, and Theatrical Success* (Liverpool University Press 2017) pp. 1-3, 23-58.

<sup>419</sup> Jackson I. Cope connects *Dido* to the anti-theatrical tracts in “Marlowe’s ‘Dido’ and the Titillating Children” in *English Literary Renaissance* 4.3 (Autumn 1974) pp. 315-325. On the development of anti-theatricalism as it pertains to sexuality during this period see Laura Levine, *Men in Women’s Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization 1579-1642* (Cambridge University Press 1994) pp. 10-25. Note that although Stubbes is often described as a “Puritan” in a loose sense he supported the established church throughout his life, technically putting him in the same camp as Nashe.

Love-Lockes," all to effeminize them and therefore (by anti-theatrical logic) make them more amenable to sex with adult men.<sup>420</sup> *Dido's* first scene reads a satirical response to the first stirrings of this anti-theatrical conspiracy-theorizing, but we should not assume that this satirical bent was as obvious to the audiences of the sixteenth-century as it is to modern scholars of literature—on the contrary, we must expect that at least some among the audience not only saw evidence of institutional-scale sodomy materially realized on stage, but were themselves personally implicated in it. If, as Lucy Munro has argued, laughter was viewed as indecorous and a potential point of social shame for the Blackfriars audience, then *Dido* really was playing with fire in the burlesque elements of this opening scene, which implies the moral degeneracy of the playhouse environment while bringing the patrons the company relied upon to secure its financial solvency down to its level by inciting their laughter at it.<sup>421</sup> As Jackson I. Cope suggests,

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<sup>420</sup> William Prynne, *Histrion-Mastix, The Player's Scourge, or, Actors Tragaedie* (Printed by E[dward] A[lldde,] et al. for Michael Sparke, London 1633) p. 1038. Interestingly, it is only here in the index of his interminable text that Prynne lands on an idea of "the sodomite" which is fully congruent with modern homophobic conspiracism; as Levine notes, his earlier definitions tend towards rambling lists of historical offenses which freely mix "magical" or legendary ideas of sodomy with mundane (if obviously negative) anthropological accounts of a wide variety of sexual and gendered cultural practices. See Levine 22-23.

<sup>421</sup> Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge University Press 2009) pp. 55-95.



this was “a private joke at best, riding upon the inevitable recognition that the boys and their masters were mirroring and mocking their own public reputations” — and for the rest of the audience, it was presumably not a joke at all.<sup>422</sup>

In raising the curtain on the scene of Ganymede post-abduction, the play confronts its audience with the conditions of its own production by referencing the alleged “reputation of boys companies” for the kidnapping, exploitation, and sexual and physical abuse of their charges.<sup>423</sup> In this way, the Ganymede myth as an emblem of classical learning and the idealized pederasty tradition is folded into the representation of the modern phenomenon of the boys company and its attendant controversies; in performance, one is confronted with the incontrovertible fact that the same dynamics of hierarchy and exploitation re-produced two conspicuously similar systems of sexual exploitation across time. To represent mythic pederasty this way is not necessarily co-extensive with condemning it, but I have very little doubt that the suggestion of similarity between the sexual predilections of ancient Greeks and modern Englishmen was, particularly when performed, inherently shocking for some members of the latter group. Even in a modern performance of *Dido* staged by adult actors, we might still (and not overly prudishly) find ourselves jolted by this scene, with our discomfort

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<sup>422</sup> Cope 317-318.

<sup>423</sup> Kinney 270-271.

arising in part from our own implication in the creation and survival of the scene of violence or exploitation across time. This is not a uniquely modern feeling—rather, as the fabricated, overwrought, and homophobic panic of the anti-theatricals amply demonstrates, early moderns also devoted extraordinary amounts of time and effort to considering the ethics of their own implication in the media they patronized.

Eventually Venus enters, suddenly replacing the abstract spectator-figure of Juno with the staged spectator of another boy (Venus's actor). The audience is confronted in this instant with the question of how pederasty is to be judged from another perspective, which they may associate with either Jupiter or Ganymede's subject position depending on questions of staging (for example, is the boy playing Venus older or younger than Jupiter?) In any case, Venus quickly establishes that she has been watching the scene unfold for long enough to render judgement:

*Venus.* I this is it, you can sit toying there,  
 And playing with that female wanton boy,  
 Whiles my *Aeneas* wanders on the Seas [...] <sup>424</sup>

As Goldberg correctly notes, Venus reads the scene of pederasty according to a phobic anti-sodomy paradigm which interprets the aesthetics of sexual penetration as

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<sup>424</sup> Bowers 8.

degrading and effeminizing, irrespective of consent.<sup>425</sup> However, even this rhetorical homophobia is largely sublimated to the interests of intra-dynastic politics. From her perspective, the problem is Jupiter's lack of responsibility for Aeneas's (and, therefore, her) interests, not the immorality of his molestation of Ganymede as-such.

Called upon to justify his aloofness from Aeneas's travails ("False *Jupiter*, rewardst thou ve[r]tue so? / What? Is not pietie exempt from woe?"), Jupiter dodges the question:

*Jup.* Content thee *Cytherea* in thy care,  
 Since thy *Aeneas* wandring fate is firme,  
 Whose wearie lims shall shortly make repose,  
 In those faire walles I promist him of yore:  
 But first in blood must his good fortune bud,  
 Before he be the Lord of *Turnus* Towne,  
 Or force her smile that hetherto hath frownd;<sup>426</sup>

As Clare Kinney observes, Jupiter's prophecy contains no reference to the "Julian/Augustan teleology" that drives Aeneas's divinely and narratively-preordained

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<sup>425</sup> Goldberg, *Sodometries* 130.

<sup>426</sup> Bowers 9.

success in Virgil's *Aeneid*; instead, "history—and prophecy—are more narrowly reconfigured on the level of immediate familial relationships."<sup>427</sup> Nevertheless, Jupiter's speech is also a concrete admission that, from this point forward, the play will follow a "Virgilian/Augustan master narrative," and concentrate on troubling "certain *lacunae* in Virgil's [*Aeneid*]" rather than entirely rewriting the original story.<sup>428</sup> As Kinney presents it, the presence of the original text shadows and restrains the play's "Dido script," its reimagination of the Queen of Carthage as a "revisionary historian" who openly confronts the long history of reciprocal violence embedded in the Trojan imperial narrative.<sup>429</sup> In powerful contrast to Surrey, we are presented with two Didos at once: Dido as she would be, an agent whose maximal rhetorical power effortlessly reshapes the narrative according to the demands of poetic justice, and Dido as she is at the end of the play, "a second Helen" carried along by the force of a pitiless mythic history.<sup>430</sup> In Ganymede's case, we are treated only to the latter interpretation—our sense that he has

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<sup>427</sup> Kinney 263.

<sup>428</sup> Clare Kinney, "Epic Transgression and the Framing of Agency in 'Dido, Queen of Carthage'" in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 40.2 (Spring 2000) pp. 261-276, p. 268.

<sup>429</sup> Kinney 271.

<sup>430</sup> Bowers 53.

been treated unjustly must come from our own moral judgement, and from the comparison to Dido.

Aeneas's paradoxically active "wandering fate," which draws its authority from the Virgilian original and periodically erupts from the background to cut off any other branches, is a potent synecdoche for the *Aeneid*'s accreted Augustan interpretations. Notably though, "fate" in the play operates in strictly physical, Lucretian terms and has a pantheistical quality, inhering in the raising and lowering of limbs, walls, and lips. It is nevertheless inviolable, in part because the play's status as a tragedy necessarily implies that Jupiter's bloody prophecy will come true. Nor are there any miracles here—on the contrary, the absent subject of the final line implies the opposite, with humans laboring to intervene in the realm of the divine. In *Dido*, those labors are themselves predetermined and essentially violent—whether we hear the "her" of the final line as a reference to Venus or Fortune, she does not smile until the goddess is "forced" to do so.

As Kinney notes, it is possible to read the play's subordination of both godly and human action to this Lucretian material fate as empowering, particularly if we view the play as "reconstructing a notion of individual human agency that Virgil displaces on to his divinities in the equivalent portion of the *Aeneid*."<sup>431</sup> Kinney's reading is cogent, but

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<sup>431</sup> Kinney 268.

it is worth underlining that it essentially disqualifies the play from the category of tragedy, if we understand tragedy historically as a mimetic representation of mythic events which, in the early modern Christian imagination, necessarily entailed a providential component.<sup>432</sup> Aristotle, who throughout the *Nicomachean Ethics* references Priam as a symbol of both virtue and misfortune, writes that

If [a person] suffers many major misfortunes, they oppress and spoil his blessedness, since they involve pain and impede many activities. And yet, even here what is fine shines thorough, whenever someone bears many sever misfortunes with good temper, not because he feels no distress, but because he is noble and magnanimous.<sup>433</sup>

From the Aristotelian viewpoint, the infliction of trauma enables the core work of the tragedy, which consists of a mimetic representation of virtue. Sidney makes the same point more viscerally: “the high and excellent tragedy [...] openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue.”<sup>434</sup> As space to avert,

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<sup>432</sup> In addition to Dollimore *passim*. see Martha Nussbaum, “Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency: Plato and Aristotle on Fear and Pity” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics* (ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, Princeton University Press 1992) pp. 261-290.

<sup>433</sup> Terence Irwin trans., *Nicomachean Ethics* (Hackett 1999) 1.10.12.

<sup>434</sup> Sidney 35.

mitigate, and process catastrophe is carved out, the bedrock of fate or chance in which virtue and poetic justice might operate shrinks—and, in what at first might seem a side effect, Jupiter is let off the hook. He becomes one passive observer among many others, likewise seated upon his spectator's chair. As the space in which human agency might operate contracts over the course of the play the gods remain aloof, such that by the work's conclusion Dido can state that "the Gods wey not what Lovers doe" and know the plot has proven her right.<sup>435</sup>

I suspect that part of what so many find troubling about *Dido's* narrative is its refusal to let this conclusion lie. Although the gods themselves may act with impunity, and the effect those actions have upon the mortal characters is ambiguous, the play nevertheless constantly if subtly prompts its audience to engage in the memorial moral labor of reconstructing and judging the action as it must have taken place during performance. Jupiter's easily overlooked final line before exiting the stage is one such reminder, which pointedly conjoins two of the bodies upon which this debate is being staged:

[Jupiter.] Venus farewell, thy sonne shall be our care:

Come Ganimed, we must about this geare.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> Bowers 52.

<sup>436</sup> Bowers 10.

This is the last time we see Jupiter and Ganymede (although both boys probably played other parts, with Ganymede perhaps sharing an actor with Ascanius and Cupid.)<sup>437</sup> Although we may, like Orvis, read their exit as an immortalizing or solemnizing gesture, this final line is surely also a reminder to consider Ganymede's position as we formulate our opinion on both this scene and the play which is framed by it.<sup>438</sup> For members of the audience who were earlier discomforted by the pederastic ideal espoused by Jupiter, the play's many invitations to judge and question the justice of the Aeneas and Dido narrative is inextricable from the positions taken in Jupiter's dialogue. For any among the audience who read the *Aeneid* as a perfect authority on poetics and virtue, the problem was compounded—stripped of exegesis, the narrative presents as not only pre-Christian but atheistic in the Lucretian sense, with even the gods themselves hemmed in by the physical world's brutal natural determinism.

Although Jupiter is mostly correct about the way that *Dido* unfolds as a play—a cruelly subversive fatalism is the norm, and Dido's protests of her own agency are mostly played for laughs—the audience is if anything prompted to deplore the fact of

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<sup>437</sup> Douglas Cole, *Christopher Marlowe and the Renaissance of Tragedy* (Bloomsbury 1995) pp. 46-48.

<sup>438</sup> Orvis 103.



the tragedy's plot. The play's final lines underscore this fact by reminding the audience of their duty to feel and pass judgement on what they have experienced:

[Anna:] But Anna now shall honor thee [Iarbus] in death,  
 And mixe her bloud with thine, this shall I doe,  
 That Gods and men may pitie this my death,  
 And rue our ends senceles of life or breath:  
 Now sweet *Iarbus* stay, I come to thee.<sup>439</sup>

The verbal paradox at work in these lines suggests that the lovers' "senceles" ends in fact have both dramatic and narrative purpose; in this, they are a fitting end to a play which continually restages gratuitous cruelty while prompting its audience to "pitie" those subjected to it. In this way *Dido*, while it may be "classical burlesque," nevertheless incites its readers to think critically and perhaps even soberly on the pessimistic universe in which the action takes place.

#### Aeneas and the Statue

Following the Jupiter-Ganymede induction, the play turns its burlesquing critical lens towards the originary violence of the fall of Troy. As Mary E. Smith observes, it is "only in Aeneas' opening Carthage beach-scene [that] he appears to be modelled

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<sup>439</sup>Bowers 58.

specifically on Virgil.”<sup>440</sup> After this scene he instead reads as a parody of Virgil’s take on the character, with his rapid vacillations between escapist hedonism, vengeful anger, and childish optimism echoing and compressing together genuinely disjunctive aspects of the original. Yet, a closer look at Aeneas’s words suggests that his appearance as “a man of action in a world of concrete realities” is shadowed by a force which threatens to reveal that facade as illusory:

You sonnes of care, companions of my course,  
 Priams misfortune followes us by sea,  
 And Helens rape doth haunt thee at the heeles.  
 How many dangers have we over past?  
 Both barking Scilla, and the sounding Rocks,  
 The Cyclops shelves, and grim Corianias feate,  
 Have you oregone, and yet remaine alive?  
 Pluck up your hearts, since fate still rests our friend,  
 And Chaunging heavens may those good daies returne,  
 Which Pergama did vaunt in all her pride [...]”<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>440</sup>Mary E. Smith, *Love Kindling Fire: A Study of Christopher Marlowe’s “The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage”* (University of Salzburg Institute for English Language and Literature 1977) p. 7-8.

<sup>441</sup> Bowers 11.

While Smith rightly notes that “Aeneas’s attention to duty in this scene reinforces Jupiter’s neglect of it in the preceding one,” his unfortunate reference to his men as “sons of care” mere moments after Jupiter’s promise that “[Venus’s] sonne shall be my care” suggests that his own rhetoric may prove to be similarly empty.<sup>442</sup> When Achates effusively assures Aeneas that “thou only art our god” and that “cloudy heaven will clear” with his smile, he underlines the play’s insistent implication that Virgil’s hero, for all of his good intentions in this moment, will similarly find his agency sidelined. As this speech suggests, the problem in Aeneas’s case is in part the recurrence of memory itself, with Aeneas’s tendency to forget himself arising from the weight of the past which “followes” and “haunts” him.

Matthew R. Martin argues that the shadow chasing Aeneas throughout the play is not just the trauma of living through Carthage’s fall, but of having “witnessed such atrocities—and fled!”<sup>443</sup> Although Marlowe’s Aeneas narrates himself as braver and more heroic than his Virgilian counterpart, he cannot escape that in the matter of Troy “manhood did not serve”—to achieve his imperial fate required him to abandon the manful virtues of confrontation and martial valor with which he had heretofore defined

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<sup>442</sup> Smith 7.

<sup>443</sup> Martin 32.

himself, a “self-castration” that is only made whole when Dido is sacrificed.<sup>444</sup>

Appropriately, Aeneas’s gifted sword, so readily legible as a symbol of his (in)fidelity, here becomes “this Sword that saved me from the Greeks;” an elision of responsibility and reframing of history that heralds trouble down the road.<sup>445</sup> In presenting this spectacle of loss to the audience, and in contrapuntally insisting on primarily staging “that which hurts” in the otherwise triumphal *Aeneid* narrative, Martin argues that the play incites an “unsettling [of] not only Virgilian but also Elizabethan triumphalist narratives of the origins and development of empire” — even aside from the allegorizing of the Trojan and English nations, the play’s relationship with trauma foregrounds the costs of empire as an act and methodology.<sup>446</sup>

Martin is doubtlessly correct that theatregoers may have been inclined to connect *Dido* to contemporary politics—the English had long imagined themselves as displaced Trojans, its titular character is a powerful ruler wavering between marriages, and the play ends in a nightmare of civic dissolution and war. However, reading Aeneas’s trauma as a dynastic allegory, or even as a reflection of generalized political

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<sup>444</sup> Martin 34-39.

<sup>445</sup> See D.R. Bradley’s classic essay on this subject, “Swords at Carthage” in *Classical Philology* 53.4 (Oct 1958) pp. 234-245; and H. Akbar Khan “Dido and the Sword of Aeneas” in *Classical Philology* 63.4 (October 1968).

<sup>446</sup> Martin 42.

uncertainty, risks overdetermining the text's negativity, which permeates not only its representations of Dido and Aeneas's respective imperial dreams but also its attempts to represent virtuous action in general. One is certainly primed to doubt Augustan notions of imperial greatness and destiny by the end of the play, but this is only the beginning of the wider-ranging sense of doubt that arises from its action.

Aeneas's pretensions to heroism are punctured two scenes later, when he encounters a statue of Priam risen incongruously from the sand. This scene replaces Aeneas's ekphrastic readings of the walls of the temple of Juno in the epic's first book, but unlike that scene, in which Aeneas explicitly "recognizes himself" among the carvings ("*se quoque [...] agnovit*") and in Troy's tragic history, here Aeneas experiences total disorientation upon seeing the past represented:<sup>447</sup>

*Aen.* Where am I now? These should be Carthage walls.

*Achates.* Why stands my sweete Aeneas thus amazde?

*Aeneas.* O my Achates, Theban Niobe,

Who for her sonnes death wept out life and breath,

And drie with grief was turned into a stone,

Had not such passions in her head as I.

Me thinkes that town there should be Troy, yon Ida's hill,

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<sup>447</sup> *Aeneid* 1.489.

There Zanthus' streame, because here's Priamus,

And when I know it is not, then I die.<sup>448</sup>

Time is flowing backwards in these lines, in which Aeneas first correctly identifies the place where he stands as the Carthage of the present before tumbling backwards again towards Troy. The last line positions the present ("it is not") as a collapse of Aeneas's entire future into a single point ("when [...] then I die"); accepting Priam's mortality means accepting not only the inevitability of death but the fact that representation and memorialization cannot ever fully compensate for loss. Before he has even been told once to remember himself, Aeneas has approached and exceeded the outer bounds of memory's powers.

Nevertheless, Aeneas attempts to call upon memory as a guide. He follows a humanist impulse in reaching for a classical precedent to order this sudden eruption of recent history, but in doing so he confuses two unlike cases. In Ovid's story of Niobe's petrification, she is punished for blaspheming the goddess Latona, who has her children Artemis and Apollo shoot Niobe's seven daughters and seven sons to death in front of her. She begs Latona to spare her youngest daughter ("unam minimamque relinque! de

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<sup>448</sup> Bowers 16.

multis minimam posco [...] et unam") but this mercy is also refused, and her weeping statue is transported to Mount Siplyus:<sup>449</sup>

ipsa quoque interius cum duro lingua palato  
 congelat, et venae desistunt posse moveri;  
 nec flecti cervix nec bracchia reddere motus  
 nec pes ire potest; intra quoque viscera saxum est.  
 flet tamen et validi circumdata turbine venti  
 in patriam rapta est: ibi fixa cacumine montis  
 liquitur, et lacrimas etiam nunc marmora manant.

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Even [Niobe's] tongue is silent, having been congealed to the roof her mouth, and her neck cannot flex nor can her arms yield movement nor can her feet lead her anywhere; inside even her organs are stone. Yet she grieves, and wrapped in a powerful whirlwind she is carried off to her native land: There, set on the peak of a mountain, she weeps, and even now her tears drip from marble.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> The Niobe story is found in *Metamorphoses* VI.146-312.

<sup>450</sup> *Metamorphoses* VI. 306-312.

In comparing himself to Niobe Aeneas confuses mourned marble and mourning flesh, conflating subject with object and eliding the brutal punitive logic of the original tale. Beyond this simple mismatch of referents, Aeneas also reverses the narrative of the original. Rather than Niobe being transformed into a continually weeping statue, Aeneas remembers her as experiencing an explicitly death-like metamorphosis through an expense of life in the act of mourning itself (less poignantly, he forgets her daughters entirely, only mentioning the male Niobids). He imagines a Niobe who has, like himself, been changed by and through trauma, and who, despite being called to further expend "life and breath" cannot move. Moreover, he insinuates that Niobe's transformation is in some ambiguous way connected to his and her shared "passions," which here and elsewhere in the play are always recognizable as *passio* in both that word's theological and medical senses: as pain which must be endured as a matter of necessity.

The seeming suddenness of Aeneas's leap into the fantasy that Carthage is Troy is therefore reflective of the imitative relationship to the original established in his retelling of the Niobe story, which remembers the past in the terms of the present rather than ceding primacy to history. Like in many scenes in the *Metamorphoses*, the story of Niobe figures transformation as an ambiguous semi-escape from the proximate cause of



trauma which nevertheless preserves and acknowledges that trauma's scars.<sup>451</sup> Ovid emphasizes that Niobe is not dead—her tears are actions, undertaken by a living person in a miraculously extended present. The possibility of present action is denied to Aeneas-as-Niobe, however, by the breakdown of historical logic entailed by the failed syllogism of “that town there should be Troy [...] because here's Priamus” (a close cousin to Sidney's historian who argues that “because it rained yesterday, therefore it should rain to-day.”)<sup>452</sup> If we buy Aeneas's logic, “death” is not the generic and childish version of a tragic end he makes it out to be here; rather, it is the necessary component that marks the end of the passion.

As those around Aeneas acknowledge, however, the indefinite suspension or deferral of action has an enticing quality given the inevitable tragedy of the narrative's culmination. The extent to which this possibility is both represented and stigmatized manifests in the persistent question of why, as Achates puts it (and as Hermes and Ilioneus later echo,) Aeneas “stands” instead of moving. Aeneas then reports his trauma

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<sup>451</sup> In viewing the trope of metamorphosis as both prompting questions of agency and obscuring their answers I am influenced by Lynn Enterline, “Medusa's Mouth: Body and Voice in the *Metamorphoses*” in *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 1-90, as well as Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (Yale University Press, 1986).

<sup>452</sup> Sidney 110.

with unambiguous clarity, before Achates steps in to quell this upwelling of negative possibility through a strategic use of imitation:

*Ach.* And in this humor is *Achates* to,  
 I cannot choose but fall upon my knees  
 And kisse his hand: O where is *Hecuba*?  
 Here she was wont to sit, but saving ayre,  
 Is nothing here, and what is this but stone?<sup>453</sup>

The humor of this scene relies upon the reversal of Achates and Aeneas's roles, as the wise mentor of Virgil's text becomes a servile follower in Nashe and Marlowe's. Nevertheless, the intent of his imitation seems clear enough: rather than remonstrating Aeneas directly, Achates aims instead to model for him a more normative process of grieving which accepts, in the end, that the statue of Priam is "but stone." Achates even makes a bungling attempt to downplay Aeneas's personal vulnerability in this moment (in which he is surrounded by his own followers and soon to encounter Carthage's emissaries) by insisting that his indescribable personal burden is instead a shared "humor," powerful but momentary and fated to pass.

Memory, however, proves inherently disjunctive: Achates's reference to Hecuba's absence, rather than making her "nothing," instead instantiates and makes

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<sup>453</sup> Bowers 16.

explicit her presence as a positive cipher within the text. Later, Anna rephrases the question in such a way as to make the ongoing aporia Troy's queen and her uncertain fate represents even more explicit: "O what became of aged *Hecuba*?"<sup>454</sup> It is a question that neither Aeneas's memory of events nor the audience's memory of Virgil can answer. When Shakespeare later has Hamlet ask whether the player's tears are "all for nothing? For *Hecuba*?", this is she whom he refers to—not Virgil's Hecuba, but the space in which she should be, the yawning absence which shakes the text's claims to higher-order moral truth.

Nevertheless, it does at first seem as though Aeneas might be coming around, and returning to follow the play's Virgilian "script":

*Aen.* O yet this stone doth make Aeneas weepe,  
 And would my prayers (as Pigmaliions did)  
 Could give it life, that under his conduct  
 We might saile backe to Troy and be revengde  
 On these hard harted Grecians, which rejoyce  
 That nothing now is left of *Priamus*[.]<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Bowers 16.

<sup>455</sup> Bowers 16.

Although Aeneas seems in this moment to have cobbled together a linear chronology of events in which he lives and Priam does not, his attempts to get there demonstrate a certain temporal unstuckness. The tropical reference to Pygmalion the sculptor, an Ovidian character not referenced in the *Aeneid*, is paranormastic with the name of Dido's usurping brother who goes unmentioned in *this* text. Aeneas is still living the world of *The Metamorphoses* rather than the *Aeneid*—a non-existent distinction in the Roman context, but critical for early modern Christians for whom Virgil represented stately virtue and Ovid beautiful sin. The aural and philological ambiguity is further compounded in performance by the “he” of the next line, which at first seems to refer to Pygmalion rather than Priam.

More revealingly, Achates later confirms that at this point their enemies have already “led [Helen] captive into Greece” and left the ruins of Carthage behind them. Aeneas's fantasy of sailing back to Troy would require time to turn backwards in both a narrative and historical sense. Martin reads Aeneas's fantasy as “delusional” in this scene, as does Achates:

*Aen.* Achates, see King Priam wags his hand,

He is alive, Troy is not overcome.

*Ach.* Thy mind Aeneas that would have it so,

Deludes thy eye sight, *Priamus* is dead.<sup>456</sup>

I suspect that for myself and most other modern readers, there is a perhaps subconscious temptation to assimilate Aeneas's mind's desire into a stages of grief model of trauma which would read it as denial. This ability to assimilate historically distinct experiences into potentially reductive rubrics is part of what makes applying "trauma" as a trans-historical normative model problematic, and why early modern trauma studies as a methodology attempts to foreground the plurality of trauma responses.<sup>457</sup> Such a reading, however, underestimates the literal register of Achates's response, as well as the sense of activity and volition which he attributes to Aeneas's mind.

The early modern English "delude" was often used synonymously with its Latin cognate *deludere*, meaning to mock or play a trick upon another—this is, for example, the sense that Nashe uses the word when he (mocking Gabriel Harvey's prose) writes that "no Husbandman but tilles and sowes in hope of a good crop, though manie times

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<sup>456</sup> Martin 33. Bowers 16.

<sup>457</sup> See Cynthia Richards and Erin Peters eds., *Early Modern Trauma: Europe and the Atlantic World* (University of Nebraska Press 2021) p. 12.

hee is deluded with a bad Harvest.”<sup>458</sup> Achates’s use conveys a similarly ludic sense of delusion as betrayal, and, his speech considered more broadly functions simultaneously to warn Aeneas that his mind is playing tricks on him while also promising the audience tricks to come. In doing so, Achates identifies two sets of impulses within Aeneas: the desire to experience the world as his mind “would have it,” with the restorative artifice of poetic justice compensating for the unimaginable losses he has endured, and as the other characters in the play insist he must, at the spear’s point of history.

Achates’s exhortation to Aeneas is futile because it frames memory as the solution to his disjunctive grief, rather than the cause, and ignores the desire which motivates it. Aeneas’s mind does not simply deny the historical reality he finds himself in, but instead crafts a compensatory fantasy for his eyes that retroactively ameliorates some measure of the purposeless violence of the mythic narrative. Thus, where in Aeneas’s subsequent account of the sack he recounts how Pyrrhus (in a detail not present in Virgil’s *Aeneid*) “strook off [Priam’s] hands” before killing him, here Aeneas’s memorial imagination steps in to remedy the indignity.<sup>459</sup> Thus, this Priam “wags his

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<sup>458</sup> Nashe, Thomas. *Have with you to Saffron-Walden* [...] (printed by John Danter, 1596) 20. Milton provides a less prosaic example in his 1671 “Samson Agonistes”: “Thrice I deluded [Delilah], and turn'd to sport / Her importunity” (l. 396-397).

<sup>459</sup> Bowers 22.

hand," a tiny concession to poetic justice, *de multis minimam*.<sup>460</sup> Yet, memory is unreliable even in such involuntary acts: later, when called upon to speak of the same scene, Aeneas cannot help but describe it with such ghastly accuracy that Dido must beg him to leave off.

Of all the Trojans, Ascanius articulates the clearest conception of a separation between the demands of poetic justice and the reality of Troy's destruction:

*Asca*. Sweete father leave to weepe, this is not he,

For were it *Priam* he would smile on me.<sup>461</sup>

The irony that Aeneas's young son must call him to order, rather than the reverse, is part and parcel of the play's overall infantilization of Aeneas as a character. This is not mockery, though. Rather, there is a strongly universal character to Aeneas's reduction, for, as Lucy Munro insightfully notes, "all believers are reduced to the status of a child in comparison with God, and all speakers will speak like children when they are brought face to face with his power. To speak like a child [...] is to achieve the state of receptiveness necessary for salvation."<sup>462</sup> Aeneas's infancy is a product not only of his

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<sup>460</sup> Bowers 16.

<sup>461</sup> Bowers 16.

<sup>462</sup> Lucy Munro, "Speaking like a Child" in *Childhood, Education, and the Stage in Early Modern England* (Cambridge 2017) pp. 82-99, p. 83.

difference from his mythic character, but also his awareness of that distance—his childishness in this case does not connote innocence (which presupposes a certain freedom from memory) but rather its opposite, a dawning knowledge of his own unreadiness in the face of the plot's material forces. I reject the reading of Aeneas as "deluded" (in the modern sense of being unmoored from a shared reality) in this scene in part because he, alone among the characters, seems here to understand what he is: a child on a stage, being tasked with making sense of events that defy any simple explanation.

*A Brief Digression on "Priam"*

It is not a coincidence that the object which provokes Aeneas's confrontation with the past is a statue, risen incongruously from the soil and confused with flesh. The collection of marbles which eventually came to be called the Florentine Niobids had been found in Rome in 1583. Numbering about fourteen and with some pieces almost completely intact, they remain to this day the largest and most complete set of classical Niobid statues ever discovered.<sup>463</sup> Perhaps one or two among *Dido's* audience had

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<sup>463</sup> The Florentine Niobids were long believed to have been either the same as the Niobe and children mentioned by Pliny in his *Natural History* or else a copy of the same, although modern archaeology has dated them to around the first century AD. See Attanasio et al., "The Greek and Asiatic Marbles of the Florentine Niobids" in *Journal of Archaeological Science* 66 (2016) pp. 103-111.



heard of this discovery; if not, they might have known of the strange and unsettling Laocoön unearthed in the vineyard of Felice de Fredis in 1506, or of the bewitching and paganistic Apollo discovered at Anzio which in 1594 still stood in the Cortile del Belvedere.<sup>464</sup> Alternatively, they may have heard of the alleged discovery of the perfectly preserved and lifelike body of Cicero's daughter, Tullia, on the Apian Way during the middle of the sixteenth-century, along with (so said the discoverers) an ancient lamp which had remained burning for almost a millennium.<sup>465</sup>

In continental Europe the earth and its treasures were wonderful, unpredictable, even terrifying in their ability to appear, arrest, and confront.<sup>466</sup> As Barkan observes, such excavated works "seem almost nonrepresentational" by virtue of "their alienness and the fragmentary nature of their exhumation;" they are atavisms of a history which

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<sup>464</sup> Hans Henrik Brummer, *The Statue Court in the Vatican Belvedere* (Almqvist and Wiksell 1970) pp. 44-52, 223-224.

<sup>465</sup> Barkan recounts this and a few other anecdotes concerning alleged discoveries of preserved bodies and ever-burning lamps in *Unearthing the Past* 56-57. This only scratches the surface of the archive however, especially in the seventeenth century.

<sup>466</sup> The Apollo Belvedere itself, now fully assimilated into the transparently white supremacist paradigm of the classical aesthetic, was seen by the iconoclastic religious conservatives of its own day as an emblem of the debauched and paganistic court culture of its owner, Pope Julius II. See Marco Piana, "Gods in the Garden: Visions of the Pagan Other in the Rome of Julius II" in *Journal of Religion in Europe* 12 (2019) pp. 285-309.

is real and material, and yet also potentially unlike any of that which followed it.<sup>467</sup>

Fewer such works were discovered in England—a fact which may well have made their appearance on stage all the more shocking.

Priam's statue is presumably representational in a more obvious sense, but certain disruptive characteristics mark it as achronic, at least from Aeneas's point of view—its resemblance to its subject, its restored hands, and the lack of a smile, all cannot assimilate easily into either the viewpoint of poetic justice or into a strictly historical chronology as the play represents it. As an aesthetic representation of the precise elements which are most disruptive to the demands of poetic justice (which are themselves predominantly aesthetic,) the statue of Priam is to Aeneas's memory of the sack of Troy as the play itself is to Virgil's narrative of the Aeneas and Dido story. As an intrusion of a the achronic into the mythic narrative, it has the potential to be as arresting to the audience as it is to Aeneas—provided, that is, that they see themselves as implicated in the ongoing unfolding of the Virgilian narrative that it emerges from.

#### Aeneas and Achates

Aeneas's queer relationship with memory recurs in one later scene in the play, in which Achates once again calls him to order his experiences:

*Aeneas.* Stoute friend Achates, does thou know this wood?

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<sup>467</sup> Barkan xxxii

*Achates*. As I remember, here you shot the Deere,  
 That sav'd your famisht souldiers lives from death,  
 When first you set your foote upon the shoare,  
 And here we met faire Venus virgine like,  
 Bearing her bowe and quiver at her backe.<sup>468</sup>

There is no other point in the play during which *pius Aeneas* so thoroughly inverts his Virgilian character: he has forgotten not only a travail experienced with his family and dearest comrades, but one involving his own Olympian mother. However, these lines interact strangely with the play's own fluctuating relationship to its representation of the source text—while it stages the aforementioned scene with Venus, the hunt itself goes unrepresented. The question of just how “virgine like” Venus appeared in the audience's own encounter with the character is also a matter of staging—the line reads seriously enough if Venus's actor can pull off the role, but becomes a joke and indicator of Achates's capacity for strategic reminiscence if Venus is obviously being played by a young boy. Given the overt *bathos* of that scene (Venus at one point declares to the audience “Here in this bush disguised will I stand,”) the second scenario seems more likely.

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<sup>468</sup> Bowers 35.

As in the previous scene, the audience is at the very least invited to consider the possibility that Achates is constructing a memorial fiction which blends elements of the “real” history (the meeting with Venus) with poetic fantasy (Aeneas, god-like, feeds his “famisht” companions through a miraculous hunt). Such an act would be out of character for the taciturn *fidus Achates* of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (famously, he has only four spoken lines in the entirety of the epic), but it matches up well with the ludic trickiness of *Dido’s* parody as well as its later characterization of the character as a homophilic *homo viator*:

[Achates:] This is no life for men at arms to live,  
 Where dalliance doth consume a Souldiers strength,  
 And wanton motions of alluring eyes  
 Effeminate our minds inur’d to war.<sup>469</sup>

Nashe and Marlowe, remarkably, impart desire and through doing so agency onto their Achates, who has deliberate and intentional designs on his friend’s future. For Achates, the scene of Aeneas feeding his men matters because it represents a different and more masculine-coded form of action than the exchange of “looks” which defines much of Aeneas and Dido’s relationship. Like any good humanist teacher, he understands that motions are habit-forming; he prefers instead to shape Aeneas

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<sup>469</sup> Bowers 42.

according to his own designs, towards a nebulous warrior's present that seems to contain little room for all the wooing and settling that Aeneas is meant to do in Italy. But, as in the case of the five year-long conquest of the Rutiles referenced by Jupiter in his prophecy, Achates's preferred form of historical action is downplayed and pushed off-stage by the medium of the play. In the conventions of theatrical representation, manhood will not serve—through the very form of the play (inhering, ultimately, once again, in its actors), Achates's actual agency to effect Aeneas's education is nullified.

In response to Achates, Aeneas chooses to exert a form of agency of his own by further distancing himself from the memory:

[Aen.] O how these irksome labors now delight,

And overjoy my thoughts with their escape:

Who would not undergoe all kind of toyle,

To be well stor'd with such a winters tale?<sup>470</sup>

As in the scene in front of Priam's statue, Aeneas's claim to be "overjoyed" serves to soften a near-total disavowal of the affective dimensions of Achates's memory. Where Achates emphasizes the conquering bravery of Aeneas's leadership, Aeneas himself can only see the raw labor and "toyle" that transpired (or rather, that he is being

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<sup>470</sup> Bowers 42.

told transpired—he refers to *these* labors, as in these presently conversed about, rather than *those*, as in those remembered in the past-tense.) Even this suspect degree of ownership is belied, however, by his reference to the incident as a “winters tale,” a fable or fairy story.<sup>471</sup>

It is easy to focus on Aeneas’s relationship to his labors here, which seems to recall the theme of Omphalian delay embodied in Homer’s *Καλυψώ* and Spenser’s *Grills*. But, ultimately, Aeneas is not so much sunken in pleasure as sunken in being—his past, especially as it is embodied in the Virgilian narrative, is so fully separable from the staged present that it can be imagined wholly in the subjunctive, with its poetics elements intermixing freely with what Achates considers to be the “real history.” Although he does not know it, Aeneas gives voice to a queer poetics of time which is irreconcilable with Achates’s demands upon his masculinity. In a limited and temporary way, the same relationship to time also offers an escape from relentless tragedy of the narrative—although, like most, this queer Utopian moment appears only in retrospect, by way of contrast with the play’s actual conclusion.

#### Aeneas and Dido

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<sup>471</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists the anonymous 1557 pamphlet *A Short Description of the Antichrist unto the Nobilitie of England* as its only pre-*Dido* citation for the phrase: “This Antichriste must not be understood [...] that he shuld be a certen wicked persone, that shuld be begotten betwixt a Freere and a Nonne, or betwixt a Monk and a Nonne, according to olde wives fables and winter tales” (f 7).

To remember this event, for Aeneas, means acceding to the role Achates has in mind for him: leadership and violence, ostensibly the proper topics for epic. Aeneas's interactions with Dido, on the other hand, frame their interactions as a present-tense exchange of gazes, which both lovers project infinitely forward. Aeneas for Dido is "the man that I doe eye where ere I am," a phrase which neatly suggests both the future-less optimism of this infinite present and the extent to which it traps both lovers in its prison.<sup>472</sup>

I am sympathetic to Clare Kinney's view that phrases like these position Dido as a "masculine sonneteer" or "over-reacher," an epic poet in her own right whose visions of shared sovereignty with Aeneas include pointedly Virgilian *topoi* of conquest, dynasty, and urban planning.<sup>473</sup> However, the remainder of her dialogue in the cave scene suggests that Dido's confidence belies a profound sense of the precarity of her position, which cannot hold against the Jovian violence of the play's mythically-determined plot:

The man that I doe eye where ere I am,  
Whose amorous face like Pean sparkles fire,

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<sup>472</sup> Bowers 36.

<sup>473</sup> Kinney 265. On Dido as a take on the Marlovian "over-reacher" archetype see Levin 31-39.

When as he butts his beames on Floras bed,  
 Prometheus hath put on Cupids shape,  
 And I must perish in his burning armes:  
 Aeneas, O Aeneas, quench these flames [.]<sup>474</sup>

Dido's address to Aeneas in the cave mixes the generic markers of Ovidian erotic poetry with Virgilian mythic metalepsis, resulting in a return to the mythopoetic burlesque of the play's first scene (the punchline comes shortly after, when Aeneas, oblivious, responds "What ailes my Queene, is she falne sicke of late?") As in the Jupiter and Ganymede scene, however, we are reminded in this moment that we are laughing at tears. Although an audience may initially be disarmed by the sickly-sweet poetic cliché of situating love as a disease and the beloved as a cure (underlined by the reference to "P[a]lean," the antique name by which Apollo is called as he attends to the wounds of Ares and Hades in the *Illiad*), the lines which follow register both the limits of Dido's agency ("must") and the stakes of her predicament ("perish [...] burning.")<sup>475</sup>

The most striking image, of Prometheus metamorphosing into Cupid, has no precedent or mythic referent. Instead, it is charged with metaleptic potential by the

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<sup>474</sup> Bowers 38.

<sup>475</sup> Παυήων is mentioned twice in *Aeneid*, at 5.363 and 5.899, respectively.



action of the play, which had previously seen the disguised Cupid “touching [Dido’s] white breast with [his] arrow-head” to beguile her while bragging that “every touch shall wound Queene *Didos* heart” in playful anticipation of her later suicide.<sup>476</sup> This line channels some of the cruel humor of that earlier scene, while reflecting poetically its central narrative conceit: if the figure in control of Dido’s desire is at once a lighter and thief of flames, her position is utterly dependent, and her sovereignty over her own self (much less Carthage) is fatally jeopardized.

The irony of Dido’s situation is compounded by the dramatic irony of the scene itself—the audience, knowing how the story ends, is aware that the seemingly infinite poetic present in which Dido “burns” and “dyes” while wrestling with the dramatic urgency of her desire (“and yet Ile speak, and yet Ile hold my peace”) is in terms of play-time a fleeting scene on the path to her death. However, although the possibility inherent in the frame of time she imagines ultimately crumbles to the inevitability of the Virgilian master narrative, Dido’s fragile lovers’ chronotope is not comparable to the disjointed fantasy of return to Troy pictured by Aeneas, or even the similarly infinite warrior’s future of Achates, both of which trade on counterfactual possibilities (Aeneas does, after all, settle down and marry eventually—“dalliance” *must* “consume [his]

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<sup>476</sup> Bowers 25.

Souldier[’s strength”).<sup>477</sup> Instead, Dido rewrites her personal history of erotic and dynastic politicking into an imminently plausible exchange of her personal sovereignty for the political security Aeneas’s Trojans offer her.

Aeneas himself opens the topic:

Aen. *Aeneas* thoughts dare not ascend so high

As *Didos* heart, which Monarkes might not scale.

In framing his obliviousness as deference to Dido’s seeming preference for remaining unmarried, Aeneas foregrounds another of the play’s departures from the Virgilian master narrative—unlike either her classical or romance prototypes, this Dido has made no vows against remarriage.<sup>478</sup> She does not represent herself as being pledged solely to Scyhaeus’s ashes, as Virgil’s Dido.<sup>479</sup> Instead she, like England’s own

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<sup>477</sup> Bowers 42.

<sup>478</sup> Smith writes that this fact “spares [Dido] the need to reconcile conscience with inclination,” and consequently reads “the comical-serious scene in which she hesitates between love for Aeneas and love for Iarbas” as “the first of a series of hesitation-patterns within which Dido admits her love and then denies it and which later Aeneas uses to frame his indecision whether to go or stay” (Smith 26-27). This is largely true, but we should not make the mistake of assuming that the absence of one particular tension negates the presence of others. For example, although the question of Dido’s faithfulness to her vows recedes in the play version, the precarity of her political situation is emphasized (see for example this exchange on Bowers 29: “Aen.: Wherefore would Dido have Aeneas stay? / Dido: To Warre against my bordering enemies”).

<sup>479</sup> For example, Dido lacks an equivalent line to Dido’s “*non servata fides cineri promissa Sychaeo*” (“I have not kept the vow I pledged to Sychaeus’ ashes”) in *Aeneid* IV.552.

monarch, carefully courts a gallery of “powerful” suitor kings without committing to any one in order to maximize her own political security. Even Iarbas himself acknowledges this reality (and the potentially superfluous position it puts him in) when, slighted by Dido’s sudden preference for Aeneas, he retorts “Am I not King of rich Getulia?”, neatly eliding his realm and person.<sup>480</sup>

Due to the absence of that vow, Marlowe and Nashe’s Dido cannot assimilate fully into either the romance tradition of Dido as faithful widow or the fickle “sely Dido” envisaged by Gavin Douglas. Aeneas’s question instead opens a space in which she might author an idea, plausible if fleeting, of an agency separate from the Virgilian master narrative. She begins to enact this rhetorical scheme as she responds to Aeneas, in lines that initially read as a submissive gesture:

*Dido.* It was because I saw no Kinge like thee,

Whose golden Crowne might ballance my content:

As with Ganymede’s imitative cruelty, there is a very strong critical tendency to read Dido’s acceptance of Aeneas’s sovereignty over other monarchs (and therefore, implicitly, herself) as evidence of her pathetic devotion or desperate infatuation without

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<sup>480</sup>Speculating on the relationship between Dido and Queen Elizabeth I has been a critical commonplace since at least William Leigh Godshalk, “Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage*” in *ELH* 38.1 (March 1971) pp. 1-18.

taking into account the play's insistent and often skeptical attention to scenes of education, remembrance, and declamation.<sup>481</sup> It is true both that in *Tamburlaine* the *topos* of the gifted, stolen, or lost crown symbolizes the fickleness of sovereign power, and that from this moment forward Dido begins to shower Aeneas with both rhetorical and symbolic tokens of her own sovereignty as gifts, culminating later in offers of "the Punic Sceptre" and "imperial crown of Libya." Yet, Dido also makes it clear that bequeathing said crown upon Aeneas entails more than a simple exchange of temporal power:

Stoute love in mine armes make thy Italy,  
 Whose Crowne and Kingdome rests at thy commande:  
 Sicheus, not Aeneas be thou calde:  
 The King of Carthage, not Anchises sonne  
 Hold, take these Jewels [...] these golden bracelets, and this wedding ring,  
 Wherewith my husband woo'd me yet a maide,

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<sup>481</sup> Even Smith, who is elsewhere an exceptionally careful reader of the narrative's shifting tides of personal power and agency, writes that from this point on in the play "passion has made [Dido] so gullible that, though her suspicions are confirmed before her eyes, she easily accepts as truth Aeneas' false denials of his intentions [to leave Carthage]" (Smith 28). Although this is a fair reading of the Virgilian narrative, I am unable to reconcile the notion of an Aeneas with intentionality as-such with the Aeneas we see in this play, who is almost a void into which choice disappears.

And be thou King of Libia, by my guist [.]<sup>482</sup>

In Virgil, it is Juno who attempts to arrange this marriage with Venus, using Dido as her proxy, but Venus perceives this as a deceitful attempt to “steer empery from Italy, towards Libya’s shores” (“*quo regnum Italiae Libycas adverteret oras.*”)<sup>483</sup> In his commentary on this line Servius suggests an emendation which further highlights Juno’s deviousness by replacing “*adverteret*” with “*averteret*,” thereby making explicit the goddess’s purported desire to divert the *regnum*, the royal power and authority symbolized by empire, from Italy towards Carthage.<sup>484</sup> Thus, Dido’s concession of power to Aeneas is also a moment in which she, momentarily and uniquely among the play’s mortal characters, steps in to fill a goddess’s shoes. From that lofty vantage she projects a plausible future which lies outside the narrow Jovian remit, in which Aeneas’s vengeful destiny and Olympian family duty (“Anchises sonne”) might be

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<sup>482</sup> Smith 38.

<sup>483</sup> *Aeneid* IV.99-100, 106. On Virgil’s use of *regnum* see Gary Miles, “Glorious Peace: The Values and Motivations of Virgil’s Aeneas” in *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 9 (1976) pp. 133-164 p. 148. Juno is craftier than her proxy, and assimilates Venus into the same first-person as herself in making the initial proposal: “*quin potius pacem aeternam pactosque hymenaeos / exercemus?*” (why do we not strive for peace and a pledge of marriage?)

<sup>484</sup> Mark Stansbury, Christopher McDonough, and Richard E. Prior eds., *Servius’ Commentary on Book Four of Virgil’s Aeneid: an Annotated Translation* (Bolchazy-Carducci 2004) p. 27-28.

suspended in favor of an alternate history (“The King of Carthage.”) In transforming Aeneas from Virgil’s Augustan dynasty-founder to a new Sychaeus and additionally creating him “King of *Libia*,” she imagines—if only momentarily—an imminently plausible political future of African imperium, and one which an even mildly sympathetic audience may see as more satisfactory in terms of poetic justice than the one we are actually left with at the end of the play.

Dido’s intervention in this scene, and the attempts to convince Aeneas to remain in Carthage which follow it, expose the nature of the agency she wields: it does not inhere in the tokens of power she distributes, but rather in her rhetorical reframing of the terms in which they are offered, accepted, and held. In opposition to Aeneas’s claim to lineage (both as god-child and “Anchises sonne,”) Dido’s mastery instead lies at the intersection of action and utterance:

Those that dislike what Dido gives in charge,  
 Commaund my guard to slay for their offence:  
 Shall vulgar pesants storme at what I doe?  
 The ground is mine that gives them sustenance,  
 The ayre wherein they breathe, the water, fire,  
 All that they have their lands, their goods, their lives,  
 And I the Goddesses of all these, commaund

Aeneas side as Carthaginian King.<sup>485</sup>

As Smith observes, Dido's tyrannical grandiosity is also a kind of narrow atheism that denies the theological precepts of inherited monarchical legitimacy: "neither Tamburlaine nor Dido, despite their personal claims to divinity, understands a divine right or conceives of an inherited divinity which might inhabit majesty, since each assumes the right and power to create new kings."<sup>486</sup> The comparison to Tamburlaine is highly instructive, as, in much the same way that Tamburlaine can without exaggeration boast his mastery over "Death, / keeping his circuit by the slicing edge," so too are Dido's megalomaniacal reaches coterminous with the extent of her power to wield violence. Where Iarbas had remembered Dido as being content to "divide both lawes and land" with the Getulians, she now reframes that division as a gift from a beneficent deity—and one which is ultimately rhetorical, having no actual effect on Carthage's ownership status or its queen's ability to command the lives of those who live there. Her tyranny, like Jupiter's, is performative to exactly the degree it seems to be.

Thus, while Dido returns to the terms of her first marriage, she makes it clear that the terms under which she does so are different: Aeneas-as-Sychaeus is still

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<sup>485</sup> Bowers 45.

<sup>486</sup> Smith 93.

Sychaeus as “a maide,” now wooed by ring-bestowing Dido. Aeneas’s transformation into Dido’s ideal king is accompanied by a gradual stripping of the accoutrements of masculine heroism:

*Aen.* How vain am I to weare this Diadem,

And beare this golden Scepter in my hand?

A Burgonet of steele, and not a Crowne,

A Sword, and not a Scepter fits *Aeneas*.

*Dido.* O keepe them still, and let me gaze my fill [...] <sup>487</sup>

The ambiguous “them” of the final line, which might refer either to Aeneas holding his Carthaginian regalia in perpetuity or else to “keeping [...] still” the tools of war so she might gaze upon him, complicates the Omphale *topos*. While Dido incites delay, we may read her as doing so to spare both Aeneas and herself (and by extension the civilizations propagated from them) from further plunges into the nihilistic and obliterating violence of the Virgilian master narrative. Yet, her power rests upon either violence or the potential for it, and her dialogue therefore aims to cultivate a particular sense of rooted sovereignty which also balances and fulfills his intertwined desires for reproductive futurity and vengeance:

*Dido.* Speake of no other land, this land is thine,

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<sup>487</sup> Bowers 44.



*Dido* is thine, henceforth Ile call thee Lord [...]

*Aen.* Then here in me shall flourish Priams race,

And thou and I, *Achates*, for revenge [...]

Will leade a hoste against the hatefull Greekes,

And fire proud *Lacedemon* ore their heads

Aeneas complies neither with the letter nor the spirit of Dido's demand, for while he puts Italy out of his mind, he cannot do the same for Greece. Whatever we can say of Aeneas here, he has *not* forgotten who he is, or failed to "speak like [him] selfe" — rather, we might think of Dido's dialogs with him as having produced a new Aeneas.

For the single brief scene that follows, it appears as though rhetoric has triumphed over memory, with Dido's Promethean act of narrative theft generating an entirely new history:

[Aeneas.] Triumph my mates, our travels are at end,

Here will Aeneas build a statelier Troy,

Then that which grim Atrides overthrew,<sup>488</sup>

In ascribing Troy's overthrow to either Atreus or his house, rather than his son who actually waged the war, Aeneas confirms that his essential position has not changed—he still considers Greek civilization itself his enemy and plans a future in

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<sup>488</sup> Bowers 49.

which his sons and grandsons will wage wars of revenge against their ancestral foes. Nevertheless, the fleeting abatement of his “wandering fate” marks the success of Dido’s project: she has taught him not only to abase those qualities which will eventually incite his flight, but also to accept a character which is in part other than himself.

This arc culminates in the farcical question of whether the “new” city (seemingly referenced as both being and being in “Carthage new erected town”) will share Aeneas’s name:

*Illio.* But what shall it be calde, *Troy* as before?

*Aen.* That have I not determined with my selfe

*Cloan.* Let it be term’d *Aenea* by your name.

*Serg.* Rather *Ascania* by your little sonne.

*Aen.* Nay, I will have it calde *Anchisaeon*,

Of my old fathers name.<sup>489</sup>

Cloanthus follows the third book of the *Aeneid*, which has Aeneas, Alexander-like, founding a city he calls “Aeneadae” before being waylaid.<sup>490</sup> Sergestus’s suggestion strays a bit further, although “Ascania” has precedent as the name for several different

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<sup>489</sup> Bowers 49.

<sup>490</sup> III.18. “*Aeneadas*[...]” is a hapax legomenon in the *Aeneid*, and it is likely that the name “Aenea” originates from Livy or another source discussing the real (albeit long abandoned) Greek city of the same name (Αἴνεα).

locations in the classical world.<sup>491</sup> “Anchisaeon,” however, is totally original, and encapsulates in its neologism a sense that the hero has sublimated the character of “Aeneas” into a different, more complex and more rooted sense of himself.

Hermes interrupts at precisely this moment to hasten the play to its conclusion:

Hermes. Aeneas stay, Jove’s Herald bids thee stay.<sup>492</sup>

The most semantically plausible reading of this line is that Aeneas’s followers are attempting to leave the scene before Hermes halts them (it seems a bit contrived that the band would suddenly walk off stage at this point, but, then again, *Dido* is a fairly contrived play.) Nevertheless, it is tempting to think that the swift-footed god of motion aims to stay Aeneas’s speech, rather than his gait, because something within this digression threatens to divert (or at least delay) the play’s hastening towards its end. Although the scene is played for humor, the naming of “Anchisaeon” is perhaps the closest that any historical tragedy of this period comes to positing a genuine historical counterfactual by inciting the audience to think about what the future might have held if the seat of Roman imperial power had been in Africa rather than Italy. The play’s largely unintentional critique of imperial power stems from the binary it creates in this

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<sup>491</sup> The most famous of these is the large Lake of Ascania (Ἀσκανία) referred to by Pliny and Strabo (HN 6.34.217; Geo 2.134), which is probably the same body of water as the modern Lake İznik in Bursa, Turkey.

<sup>492</sup> Bowers 49.

moment between those two possibilities—on the one hand the Augustan option, with its “bloud” and dead, subjugated, and revolting “barbarian[s],” and on the other something recognizably different, the Anchisaeon which we never quite get to see.

While the audience is clearly intended to laugh at, rather than with, Aeneas’s unsteady deliberations in this scene, they may nevertheless find the feminized model of kingship Dido has instilled in him as preferable to his earlier fantasies of flying backwards to Troy, or to Achates’s concept of a life of war free of allurements and all “wanton motions.” Dido’s vision of her future with Aeneas in Carthage is also more plausible in the sense that it allows for its own partial or total failure—while she fantasizes about a perpetual present (“If he forsake me not I never die / for in his looks I see eternity”) her projections are always conditional, hedged in by a forest of “ifs” and “shoulds”. Even at Dido’s greatest heights of hubris, her fantasies of immortality always turn back in on themselves to emphasize the contingency of her position:

[...] onely Eneas frowne  
 Is that which terrifies poore Didos heart.  
 Not bloudie speares, appearing in the ayre,  
 Presage the downfall of my Emperie,  
 Nor blazing commets threatens Dido’s death:

It is Eneas's frowne that ends my daies.<sup>493</sup>

Dido's description of these omens has been transposed from Marlowe's translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia*—they are the same “Comets that presage the fal of kingdoms” which accompany Caesar across the Tiber while the still-unbloodied spirit of Rome begs him not to proceed.<sup>494</sup> However, as Cheney observes, Dido “ultimately sidesteps astral determinism to emphasize her own Ovidian erotic subjectivity” as she reframes and rewrites (rather than ignores) the omens predicting the end of her empire.<sup>495</sup> Although the terms of this rewriting resemble Jupiter's own rhetoric (for both speakers, the stakes of the narrative are ultimately reducible to a “smile” or “frown,”) Dido rejects the essentially mechanical Jupiterian view of fate in favor of one that

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<sup>493</sup> Bowers 46.

<sup>494</sup> Marlowe's translations of Lucan were printed posthumously under the title *Lucans first booke translated line for line, by Chr. Marlow.* (P[eter] Short for Thomas Blount, 1600).

The lines in question are:

Great store of strange and unknown stars were seene  
 Wandering about the North, and rings of fire  
 Flie in the ayre, and dreadfull bearded stars,  
 And Comets that presage the fal of kingdoms [...]  
 The flattering skie gliter'd in often flames,  
 And sundry fiery meteors blaz'd in heauen:  
 Now spearlike, long; now like a spreading torch:  
 Lightning in silence, stole forth without clouds,  
 And from the northren climat snatching fier  
 Blasted the Capitoll[...]

<sup>495</sup> Cheney 85

maximizes human agency. In this, she stakes out a position which is nearly the opposite of Lucan's resignation to pessimism—rather, I think it is fair to credit Marlowe and Nashe with having, through Dido's dialectic with Aeneas, staked out a space for a form of queer futurity within the epic canon which exists in parallel (not tension) with the overt tragedy of the play's conclusion.

### Conclusion

Where the Jupiter and Ganymede induction generates discomfort in the audience through their implication in the text and its ambiguous situation of domination and cruelty, *Dido's* final scenes are equally uncomfortable for nearly the opposite reason: they confirm, resoundingly, that the injustice and cruelty of the play has always been the point. Stripped of greater purpose, the Dido and Aeneas narrative appears in its minimalist Ovidian form as a narrative of choice followed by tragedy.

In Virgil's text Dido indicts Aeneas for his impiety, saying that "neither great Juno nor Saturn can see what has passed as just" ("*nec maxima Iuno /nec Saturnius haec oculis pater aspicit aequis.*")<sup>496</sup> If we take Aeneas at his word that "Italy is [his] goal, not of [his] choosing" ("*Italiam non sponte sequore,*" a line Nashe and Marlowe leave untranslated) then Dido's line reads an indictment of the hypocrisy and fickleness of the

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<sup>496</sup> *Aeneid* IV 371-373.

Olympian gods, rather than Aeneas's piety *per se*.<sup>497</sup> For this reason, humanist translators often saw Aeneas as remaining essentially blameless, and could point to Dido's proclamation that "I do not detain you, I do not refute what you have said. Go! Seek Italy with the winds" ("*neque te teneo neque dicta refello/ i, sequere Italiam ventis*") as evidence that he has been let off the hook.<sup>498</sup> This is precisely how Gavin Douglas seems to interpret the lines as he expands upon them in his translation, and what Surrey seems to be pushing against when he inserts a skeptical "(He sayes)" into Dido's description of Aeneas's vision.<sup>499</sup>

Nashe and Marlowe essentially unwrite this interpretation by replacing these lines with a new speech that incorporates elements from both IV.305-330 and IV.365-387. While in this version Dido at first pursues a similar line to Virgil's Aeneas, asking

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<sup>497</sup> *Aeneid* IV 361.

<sup>498</sup> *Aeneid* IV 380-381.

<sup>499</sup> Douglas gives these lines as "Nothir wil I hald the, nor thi wordis contrar: / Pas on thi way, towart Itale thou fair; /Seik throu the fludis with wyndis to that ryng [...]" and while it is notable that his Dido is much more resigned to her fate than Virgil's, the extent of his transformation of Virgil's affective universe does not become apparent until he gets to IV.IV.384-388, at which point he fully drops Virgil's elegiac tone in favor of a darkly capacious vista of beyond-the-grave revenge:

Forsuyth, gif reuthfull goddis may ony thing,  
 Amyd thi way, I traist, on rolkis blak  
 Thou sal deir by thy treuth thou to me brak,  
 And clepe oft my richt name, Dido, Dido!  
 With fyre infernale, in thine absens also[...]

“wherein have I offended *Jupiter* [...]?”, she then immediately answers her own question:

O no, the Gods wey not what Lovers doe,

It is *Aeneas* calles *Aeneas* hence,<sup>500</sup>

Here, Dido articulates the exact core of her moral claim: Aeneas may choose to rule without acting, but in acting he knowingly betrays both her and the people they at this point jointly rule. On this basis, Dido delivers a macaronic tour-de-force which is, inarguably, the most difficult speech in the play for its actor:

And wofull *Dido* by these blubbered cheekes,

And by this right hand, and by our spousal rites,

Desires *Aeneas* to remaine with her:

*Si bene quid de te merui, fuit aut tibi quidquam,*

*Dulce meum, miserere domus labentis : & istam*

*Oro, si quis ad hac precibus locus, exue mentem.*

[If I have merited any well-treatment from you, or if anything of me was dear to you, take pity on a falling house: and, if there is any room left for payers, spare me by casting away from you that thought]<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> Bowers 52.

<sup>501</sup> Bowers 53. The final lines are taken word-for-word from *Aeneid* IV.317-319.



These lines are extremely close and then identical to Virgil's, the only notable differences are Dido's apparent implication that she is swearing upon her own right hand (the possessor of this particular "*dextra*[...]" is unstated in Virgil, and it is probably intended as Aeneas's hand which he previously swore upon) and the replacement of Virgil's laconic "*Oro* [...] *exve meum*" ("I pray [...] abandon this plan") with an affirmative vision of a chosen future projected infinitely forward. It would be another half a century before Hobbes would identify the coextensive nature of desire and agency—but there is perhaps an anticipation of that discovery here, in Dido's speech.

Aeneas also responds in Virgil's Latin, but recontextualized his words now read as an admission of his own emotional implication in the play that has transpired:

*Aeneas. desine meque tuis incendere teque querelis,*

[stop inflaming yourself and me with your complaints,]<sup>502</sup>

Although *querelis* in Virgil's usage narrowly conveys a generalized sense of grievance, its close counterpart, the English "quarrel," has a more tendentious character. Moving to this register is a mistake on his part, as Dido has both rhetoric and circumstance on her side, allowing her to plead a better case:

Dido. Hast thou [Aeneas] forgot how many neighbour kings

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<sup>502</sup> Bowers 53. This is *Aeneid* IV.360.

Were up in armes,for making thee my love?  
 How Carthage did rebell, Iarbas storme,  
 And all the world calles me a second Helen  
 For being intangled by a strangers looks;  
 So thou wouldst prove as true as Paris did[.]  
 Would, as faire Troye was, Carthage might be sackt,  
 And I be calde a second Helena [...] <sup>503</sup>

Apostrophic addresses are to be expected in a play, but here the undirected second-person pronoun of the second line serves an additional purpose of calling the audience to attention before they themselves are implicated in the “all the world” that follows.<sup>504</sup> The rapid, historicizing present-to-past polyptoton of Dido’s references to Helen in turn sets that section of the speech apart so that we, as audience members, can clearly see the exact contours of the deliquescent cycle of national liquidations we have been participating in by our passive consumption and regurgitation of the Dido and Aeneas story.

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<sup>503</sup> Bowers 53.

<sup>504</sup> On Lucanian apostrophe see Paolo Asso, “The Intrusive Trope: Apostrophe in Lucan” in *Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici* 61 (2009) pp. 161-173.

Aeneas's response is devastating in its brevity, and contradicts his earlier claim to be inflamed by Dido's rhetoric:

*Aen.* In vaine my love thou spendst thy fainting breath,  
If words might move me I were overcome.<sup>505</sup>

"If," Dido's favorite conjunction, which had once designated the precarity of her matrimonial position, now returns to signify its opposite, with the hopeless optimism with which she had once said "If he forsake me not, I never die" being traded for the nugatory fatalism of Aeneas's "if [...] might." His admission that Dido's cause is truly hopeless cruelly rewrites the action of the Dido and Aeneas scenes up until this point, rendering their stagings of a rhetorical education for Aeneas as fantasy. Anna's dying reference to her, Dido, and (even!) Iarbas's "ends, senceless of life or breath," plays on this newfound sense of futility, revealed only through the backward gaze.

That line is also a directive to the audience to ruminate on *Dido's* moral ends—what purpose is served by a nasty and brutal story of seduction and death preceded by a yet nastier and more brutish abduction? The traditional answer that the *Aeneid* is a tool of teaching both Latin and moral values has been thoroughly unbuilt by the play's end. Although the players may declaim well in beautifully crafted lines, the story is so evacuated of justice and moral justification that it cannot be said to teach rhetoric in the

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<sup>505</sup> Bowers 53.

early modern sense—the values communicated by Virgil’s Latin are, at best, too alien to form the basis of any effective means of persuasion. Instead, Nashe and Marlowe use the Ganymede induction to suggest that the Dido and Aeneas narrative teaches a different, unnamed art: a hermeneutics of desire and violence concentrated on negative possibility, which in the modern day goes by a variety of names (psychoanalysis, queer theory, or Barkan’s “a kind of anthropology”). I suspect that, for the two of them, this may have just been a joke, or perhaps a deliberate inversion of the moral or educational themes in one of the lost Dido plays which preceded their own.<sup>506</sup> The result, however, is a play which—like all of the works canvassed in this dissertation—reveals the *Aeneid* as a fatally alienated text, the historical ubiquity of which allows it to serve as a constant reminder of our alienation from the past.

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<sup>506</sup> For a list of other Dido plays from the period see Smith 172.

Conclusion:

“that town there should be Troy”

I have in part intended the recurrent references to Surrey’s backwards-looking poetics throughout the preceding chapters to reference the aesthetics of queer historical ambivalence that Heather Love discusses in *Feeling Backward*. Therefore, I think it is appropriate to conclude with some brief notes discussing my project in relation to hers.

As Love observes in her introduction to that book, the concept of being “backward” in one’s relationship towards time is a persistent theme in queer modernist literature and its reception history. She identifies a tension in such works between an “emphasis on damage” which makes the queer experience legible in time and, on the other hand, “the need to resist damage and affirm queer existence” which the representation of that damage morally imposes.<sup>507</sup> This tension tends to play out historically in questions of time and timeliness, which Love finds “particularly charged [...] in the works of minority or marginalized modernists” in part because “for those marked as temporally backward, the stakes of being identified as modern or nonmodern were extremely high.”<sup>508</sup> Because they are a consequence of reader and writer interacting at a remove, the resultant conflicts are representational and literary-

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<sup>507</sup> Love 3.

<sup>508</sup> Love 6.

historical at once: so Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, which depicts its main character as both a "sexual invert" and curiously old-fashioned aesthete, has itself been described as both dangerously modern (by conservatives of Hall's time) and as an outmoded representation of a pessimistic form of queer expression (by later readers, including many queer readers of the text.)<sup>509</sup>

I hope the preceding readings have sufficed to demonstrate that a sense of historical ambivalence and anxiety about one's affiliation with the outmoded is not relegated to individuals writing in the last few centuries. The sense that one inhabits "the crumbling center of culture," that an individual placed at the nexus of literary and historical privilege might express a genuine (and problematizable, as Love rightly does) desire to "drive to the margins," is to a large extent the product of the Christian humanist concept of history, and the from-the-beginning imbrication of humanism's literary production in the imaginary and then real political domination of said margins.<sup>510</sup> This sense is even more acute in a situation like Surrey's, given that he was both a humanist translator and the future Duke of Norfolk; had he lived, he would have looked forward to a life of translating Virgil's mournful lines on war between intermittently engaging in the mass slaughter of peasants and religious dissidents. His

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<sup>509</sup> Love 4, 100-128.

<sup>510</sup> Love 53.

privilege may well have shielded him from the social consequences of his personal relationships and various eccentricities, but it could not have possibly shielded him from the knowledge that his values were different from those of Virgil, Augustine, and Douglas (and that their values, in turn, differed from those of one another). The humanist historical methodology, in demanding communion with those spirits, inherently brings such tensions between present and past(s) to the surface.

Nashe shared Surrey's humanist education but wrote from a dramatically different social and temporal position; nevertheless, his *Unfortunate Traveller* points towards the importance of what we might call either affect or orientation in situating Surrey's historical poetics. C.S. Lewis once wrote that Nashe was "a great American humorist," a strange and brilliant claim that neatly captures the sense of historical and geographical unstuckness that accompanies so many of his works.<sup>511</sup> Nashe, as a hyper-educated perennial jailbird with a proclivity for bullying his elders, is surely a closer stand-in for the contemporary queer subject than Surrey; he also, like the aforementioned modern readers of Hall, demonstrates a certain ambivalence towards his predecessor. The fictional Surrey who appears in *The Unfortunate Traveller* unquestionably represents an outmoded form of expression—but Jack Wilton, if anything, privileges this outmodedness, and even Nashe himself demonstrates a certain

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<sup>511</sup> Lewis 416.

ambivalent admiration for the passionate creativity of (the real) Surrey's lyrical style as he imitates it. The identity that Nashe establishes through his historical relationship with Surrey is therefore a surprisingly humble one—it evinces little in the way to surpass his literary predecessor, and much wonderment at just how much time had passed in the last half-century.

What Nashe and Surrey share with the modern writers surveyed by Love is a sense of loss as the structuring poetic trope of historical narrative. They knew how distant they were from those who had come before through the absence of their predecessor's achievements and the presence of their ruins, and, just as it had for their predecessors, this ambivalence found its poetic embodiment in the story of the fall of Troy. Little wonder this is so: as Simone Weil wrote from Paris in 1939, "throughout twenty centuries of Christianity, the Romans [...] have been admired, read, imitated, both in deed and word; their masterpieces have yielded an appropriate quotation every time anybody had a crime he wanted to justify"; thus, the record of history is littered with direct reminders of our predecessors' failures to learn from the mistakes of the epics' characters.<sup>512</sup> At the same time, and as *Dido's* morbid, shrieking lurch towards its final conclusion reminds us, "the whole of the *Iliad* lies under the shadow of the greatest

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<sup>512</sup> Simone Weil, *The Illiad, or, The Poem of Force* (trans. James P. Holka, Peter Lang 2006) p. 64.



calamity the human race can experience — the destruction of a city,” and this is no less true for its successor epic.<sup>513</sup> Both works depict the fall of Troy as an event which is imminently plausible at all possible moments in human history, and nevertheless totally unique in its status as traumatic historical *omphalos*.

An authentic encounter with the epic as moderns requires us not only to recognize these facets of it are co-constitutive, but also that they exist in irreconcilable tension with one another. The trans-historical experience of the *Aeneid* as metonymy for Europe’s imperial story of itself is imbricated and compromised by the particularized experience of its second book (and the *Illiad* before it) as a representation of an exceptionally primal trauma: the dissolution of the social world and the erasure of its traces, enacted as violence on a personal as well as historical scale. Weil realized that the putative “universality” of this second set of feelings—Douglas’s “funeral fait [which] quha may endyte, but teris” —is rooted in the unreachability of the subject’s pain. Because hermeneutics relies upon the social world to provide context (a fact not even Augustine dared deny), the true mimetic representation of that world’s total loss is impossible; nevertheless, the exigencies of history repeatedly call upon us to do so as subjects beholden to moral reason. As Aeneas learns when he encounters himself represented in the carvings at the temple of Juno, recency is no cure for this curse of

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<sup>513</sup> Weil 65.

distance: the Troy we encounter in memory is never the same as the Troy we knew, nor that which we know now.

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