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Résumé de l'article

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Mourning the Living: Surrey's "Wyatt Resteth Here," Henrician Funerary Debates, and the Passing of National Virtue

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Les critiques semblent ne pas avoir encore remarqué comment l'épigramme « Wyatt Resteth Here » (1542) de Henry Howard, comte de Surrey, illustre une relation importante entre la poésie et le rituel religieux dans l'Angleterre des débuts de la modernité. L'auteur propose qu'en créant un modèle funéraire pour la commémoration de Thomas Wyatt, Surrey profite de l'intérêt populaire pour les questions théologiques portant sur les fins dernières (mort, jugement, paradis, enfer) et qui a connu un regain dans les années 1520 et 1530, suite aux publications de Sir Thomas More, William Tyndale et de leurs collègues. L'auteur montre comment Surrey donne à ses lecteurs la possibilité d'assister à un service funéraire imaginaire en l'honneur de Wyatt. Ces lecteurs se rassemblent, forment une communauté à travers l'Angleterre, et portent le deuil pour la personne dont le corps est présent dans le poème. De plus, Surrey utilise l'aspect communautaire de la mort de Wyatt pour faire voir à ses lecteurs l'importante crise de l'identité nationale par la perte de la vertu anglaise. La mort de Wyatt entre en relation d'analogie avec la disparition de cette vertu, qui a souffert sous le règne tyrannique d'Henri VIII. Surrey identifie la poésie comme source de restauration nationale, en raison de sa capacité à commémorer le passé, offrir une autre vision de la réalité, et à redonner aux lecteurs les outils pour repenser leur monde conformément à cette vision.

The Henrician elegy "Wyatt Resteth Here" by Henry Howard, earl of Surrey (1516/17–1547), is a sophisticated early modern exploration of the relationship between ritual and poetry. Through its use of contemporary funerary imagery, the poem establishes a communal setting for mourning, as readers and the nation are invited to an imagined funeral service for the

recently deceased Thomas Wyatt. What are we to make of the elegy's funerary atmosphere in a historical moment when debates over purgatory, intercessions, and prayers for the dead were at their height? What does Surrey achieve by structuring his epicedium as a performed ritual? Most importantly, in the tenebrous later years of Henry VIII's despotic reign, what does the loss of a national figure such as Wyatt mean for national identity?¹

Critical assessments of "Wyatt Resteth Here" have done much to illustrate its place as one of the great English elegies and to show its significance amid political, religious, and social tensions in Henry's court in the early 1540s. However, they have not pointed out how Surrey uses funerary imagery to create a service for Wyatt, or how the poem traffics in debates on soteriology and the afterlife between religious conservatives and reformers. In his seminal study *The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne*, Douglas Peterson praised "Wyatt Resteth Here" as a "confluence of the plain and the eloquent traditions."² Focusing on the poem's religious concerns, Alastair Fowler showed how each body part in the blazon represents one of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.³ Like Peterson, C.W. Jentoft positioned the elegy within its political context, and he identified it as a lament for a passing Golden Age in England.⁴ Attending to the question of corporality, Frederic Tromly pointed out the centrality of Wyatt's body to Surrey's project of commemoration.⁵

Later critics have exhibited sustained interest in the religious content and aims of "Wyatt Resteth Here." A. C. Spearing notes the poem's use of reformist keywords and posits that "this is clearly a Protestant poem."⁶ W. A. Sessions captures Surrey's vision of a socially revitalized England, and he suggests that Surrey offers his readers "a new social anthropology, redemption by work."⁷ Situating "Wyatt Resteth Here" within doctrinal controversies of the 1530s and 40s, Susan Brigden shows how the elegy exhibits a new Protestant poetic of grace and faith.⁸ Greg Walker highlights the elegy's anti-absolutist tone and demonstrates how Surrey is able to "envisage a plausible alternative to Henrician rule, to step outside the dilemma of 'to serve or not to serve,'" and to critique the political status quo.⁹

While these studies and others have shown how "Wyatt Resteth Here" interacts with religious and political issues of the later Henrician period, they have not fully explored the relationship between ritual and national identity in the poem. This paper shows how Surrey creates a funerary setting in "Wyatt Resteth Here" to lament not only the passing of a friend, poet, and statesman,

but the English qualities that he represented — namely, the virtue of character that for Surrey defines an Englishman. I suggest that in the poem, what begins as an imagined funeral service for Wyatt becomes a funeral service for the death of English virtue, which has suffered under Henry’s tyranny. When assessing Surrey’s play with liturgy, I share David Cressy’s perspective that “early modern culture was not only highly ritualized but ritually creative, supporting a blend of continuity, adaption, and reinvention.”¹⁰ Surrey’s poem capitalizes on popular interest in the proper commemoration of the dead, which had been quickened anew in the 1520s and 30s by the reformist movement and debates between Sir Thomas More, William Tyndale, and other writers over the nature of death, purgatory, and Christian community. As Surrey assesses the current state of England, he identifies a crisis of national value and identity. Consequently, the elegy forces the English reader to confront two difficult questions: If we as a nation are no longer defined by our virtue, then by what are we defined? If Wyatt’s death marks the end of a Golden Age of virtue, then into what foreboding future are we headed? By the poem’s conclusion, it is the reader and the English nation who are to be mourned, rather than the faithful departed Wyatt.

English debates on purgatory and intercessions

While Surrey and his father were campaigning against the Scots in the fall of 1542, a different kind of war — a war of pens and pamphlets waged over human souls — continued to be fought across England with unflagging intensity. This second war hinged upon a conceptual reformulation of τὰ ἔσχατα (*ta eschata*), the theological “last things” of death, judgment, heaven, and hell.¹¹ The debates constituted a radical new way of carrying out university-style disputation by means of printing presses and the vernacular. As early as the 1520s, a grass roots movement for justification *sola fide* and the abolition of purgatory had been gaining momentum. As Carl Trueman notes, these English expatriates were no “ivory-tower academics” but men “intimately involved in the events of their day.”¹² Claiming to be “restorers of the pure doctrine of the early Church,” they brought to England the reforms of Luther, Calvin, and others.¹³ Their writings were immediately infamous.

Their texts reveal a fascinating narrative of point and counterpoint as reformists and conservatives competed for the minds of England's literate citizens. Within that narrative, we can distinguish three historical moments to the Henrician debates. First, the stakes of the game — no less than the eternal fate of souls — established between Simon Fish, Sir Thomas More, William Tyndale, and others in the late 1520s to early 1530s. Second, John Frith's achievements during the 1530s in working out the fine details of English doctrine regarding atonement, Christ as intercessor, the Holy Spirit as *παράκλητος* (*paraklātos*), and justification *sola fide*. Third, the heated controversies between John Standish, Miles Coverdale, and Thomas Becon in the early 1540s. Paying attention to these debates allows us to see how, in the fall of 1542, Surrey appeals to increasing interest in the last things by creating a funerary setting in "Wyatt Resteth Here." In the poem, severed communication with the dead acts as an analogy for the loss of national virtue, as that virtue — like Wyatt — passes out of reach.

One starting point for the English debates was Simon Fish's *A Supplication for the Beggars*, which was published in Antwerp but was being read in London as early as the spring of 1529.¹⁴ Fish's influential pamphlet attacks the English clergy as "bloudsuppers" [i.e., blood suckers] and "rauinous wolues" who prey upon the defenceless laity and rob the nation blind — thereby creating "beggars."¹⁵ Clerical abuses with regard to burial practices are a major source of Fish's discontent. He laments that "Euery man and childe that is buried must pay sumwhat for masses and diriges to be song for him or elles they [the clergy] will accuse the dedes frendes and executours of heresie" (2^r). He notes wryly the beneficence of the pope, that "cruell tyraunt," in requiring payment for an act of grace (6^r). If the pope can deliver one soul out of purgatory for a fee, then "he may deliuer him aswel without money [and] if he may deliuer one, he may deliuer a thousand; yf he may deliuer a thousand he may deliuer them all, and so destroy purgatory" (6^r). Fish's arguments introduced Henrician society to a possible future in which the Christian community ceases to be dependent upon clergy for the well-being of departed loved ones.

Sir Thomas More's response to Fish's *Supplication* is an impressive literary rebuttal, as More brings the full force of his intellect to bear on Fish's arguments. In *A Dyaloge of syr Thomas More knyghte* (1529), More had condemned Luther's denial of purgatory as one of his "many lewd doctrynes."¹⁶ In *The Supplication of Soulys* (1529), More puts Fish in the crosshairs and denounces *A*

Supplicacyon as an “vnhappy boke” and “venymous wrytynge.”¹⁷ More’s *Supplicacyon* is as much a literary essay as it is a doctrinal treatise. He uses the debates as a platform for launching into an exploration of literature’s ability to postulate and imagine — in this case, to envision a world in which the souls of family and friends in purgatory are cut off from the living and ignored. The suppliant souls are horrified that “the hole world wold clene forgete vs” (Aii^r). Unity is central to More’s vision of *ecclesia*. As he looks out at the church, divided as it is between *militans*, *penitens*, and *triumphans* and across time and space, More sees only one entity: the body and bride of Christ.

For More, what is at stake in the reformist controversies is not only doctrine but the very definition of Christian community. Any refusal to honour the dead properly is a neglect of Christian fellowship. “Nature & crystendom byndeth you to remember vs,” the suppliants chide, and they implore the living not to “race out of your hartys the care of your kynred” (Liii^r). More’s argument supports broader observations about religion in the period, such as Robert Whiting’s statement that “death itself did not release the layman from his dependence upon the Church” and Eamon Duffy’s comment that “the dead needed to be remembered, for the dead were, like the poor, utterly dependent upon the loving goodwill of others.”¹⁸ Central to More’s understanding of the relationship between the living and the dead is reciprocity of intercession. The living intercede for the dead with masses and prayers, and the dead intercede to Christ, Mary, and the saints on their behalf. The suppliants claim they “pfyte [i.e., profit] of your prayours,” for “the prayour of eny member of cristendom may profyte eny other that yt ys made for, whych hath nede and ys a member of the same” (Iii^v). Moreover, the giver of prayers will receive “the prayour of vs, whyche wyth great feruour of hart pray for our benefactours incessauntly” (Iiii^v). *The Supplicacyon* anticipates Surrey’s “Wyatt Resteth Here” in that amid a national crisis, More turns to literature’s capacity for imagining an alternative to reality to point out what he sees as a growing problem. For More, the national crisis is England’s faltering faith under the reformers’ evil counsels. For Surrey, as we shall see, the national crisis is the hemorrhaging of England’s lifeblood — her virtue — under Henry’s despotism.

In Tyndale’s response to More’s *Supplicacyon*, titled *An Answere vnto Sir Thomas Mores dialoge* (Antwerp, 1531), and in *The Obedience of a Christen man* (Antwerp, 1528), he endeavours to establish a replacement for the traditional way of thinking about death — effectively, he tries to shoulder out

purgatory with justification by faith.¹⁹ Tyndale claims in *The Obedience* that the clergy “robbe” the English people, teaching them “to trust in their [the priests’] prayars and not in Christ” (Lii^r). “The Pope,” he writes, “for money can empty purgatory when he will” (Lii^r). Moreover, if paying for intercessions continues, “there wold not be a foote of grounde in Christendome neither any worldly thinge which they that wilbe called spirituall only shulde not possesse” (Liii^r). Instead of commissioning priests and friars to pray for their souls when gone, people ought instead to pray the “prayer of fayth” and live confident of their justification (Ov^r). Tyndale’s *Obedience* offers its readers a radical redefinition of Christian community by severing lines of communication with the dead. He focuses on the faith of the living, but he is not unique in that respect — More and the conservatives do the same. As Walker reminds us, “in the early stages of the Reformation in England, religious differences were far more a matter of different emphases and tendencies than of clear-cut divisions between groups of ‘catholics’ and ‘protestants.’”²⁰ The works of Tyndale and Frith were not innovative in that they used mortality to “promote virtue and sociability in this world,” which, as Duffy notes, was common practice in traditional religion.²¹ They were innovative because they did so while simultaneously excising any concomitant obligations to the cult of the dead.

John Frith is often eclipsed by Tyndale in modern accounts of the English Reformation, yet two works, *A Disputacion of Purgatorye* (Antwerp, 1531) and *An Other boke against Rastel* (1535–36), were remarkable contributions to reformist assaults on purgatory and intercessions.²² In them, Frith employs all the dazzling rhetorical acrobatics of his classical training. He attacks More’s *Supplycacyon* as working “agenst the comen consent of all men,” thereby demonizing More as an enemy to humanity.²³ Frith professes amazement that Englishmen still harbour “the vayne & chyldyshe feare which oure fore fathers haue hadde of that place of purgatorye.”²⁴ In so doing, he positions his readers at the cusp of a new, modern age. Traditional superstitions become a “chyldyshe feare” of a gothic past, just as justification by faith becomes the trademark of the progressive, informed Protestant. Frith introduces a dualistic worldview that forces the reader to choose sides. One must either stand with Christ and his sheep, or with the “wilye foxes” who have pulled the “cloke of purgatorye” over the eyes of the English people (*A Disputacion*, A7^r). He often employs irony and humour to win his readers over — asking, for example, “what blessednesse

were that to broyle in purgatorie?" (*A Disputacion*, E5^v). Frith also takes More's concern for Christian community and turns it against him:

Now as concerninge mennes good deades and prayers, I saye that they profite oure neyghbours...But if I shulde graunte that such workes and prayers shuld helpe them that are departed, then shulde I speake cleane with out my boke [i.e., the Bible], for the worde of god knoweth no such thinge. Let them therefore that praye for the deed examine them selues well with what faith they do it...[for] if their prayer procede not of faith, surelye it can not please god. (*A Disputacion*, H3^r)

For Frith as for Tyndale, efficacious prayer is always and only faith-based prayer. Any other kind of prayer "can not please god." Consequently, Last Rites and intercessory prayers are false practices both because they are driven by doubt and because they do not have a scriptural origin. Frith lavishes attention on his reader by focusing on those things "which helped the living," rather than those that help the dead.²⁵

The pamphlet war over purgatory continued into the early 1540s between Miles Coverdale, John Standish, Thomas Becon, and other writers. In *A Lytle treatise composyd by Iohan Standysshe* (1540), Standish launches a smear campaign against the martyr Robert Barnes, who had recently been burned at the stake for heresy. Throughout the dialogue, Standish uses Barnes as a whipping boy for evangelical errors regarding the last things and the afterlife. When Barnes denies purgatory and boasts he will soon "inheret the kyngdome of heuen," Standish mocks his "blynde arrogauncye" and "damnable presumption."²⁶ Like More, Standish emphasizes the unity of *ecclesia militans*, *penitens*, and *triumphans* as one church body. "We and they be all but one body misticall, Christ our heade," he writes; "but naturally membres of one body must euery one helpe other" (Dvii^r). Standish argues that spiritual penance and purification are essential to the ultimate perfecting of the individual. He claims, "As no good dede can be vnrewarded, so shal no sine be vnpunished" (Bv^r). He states that Barnes and other reformers are in error by teaching that "after the synne is forgyuen no punishment [is] to remayne for the penitent to accomplishe" (B^r). Standish's emphasis on purgatory rests on a traditional view of the relationship between living saints and faithful departed wherein

communication flows in both directions, as the living intercede for the dead and the dead for the living.

Coverdale's rebuttal to Standish was titled *A Confutacion of that treatise, which one Iohn Standish made* (Zurich, 1541). Following in the tradition of Tyndale and Frith, he insists that it is the office of Christ and no other "to make intercession for us."²⁷ He attacks the need for purgatory, for "what payne satisfactory then is there, that [Christ] hath not deliuered us from?" (Fii^r). He declares that the scriptures make clear that "Christ hath as well satisfied his heauenly father for the paine due vnto your sinne, as for your sinne itselfe" (Fii^v). Christ, Coverdale maintains, is the only intercessor. His sacrifice on the cross paid the debt of sin, and Christian saints live now under the rule of grace, not law, and are justified by faith alone.

From the 1520s into the 1540s, these writers positioned issues of Christian identity, commemoration of the dead, and the efficacy of intercession at the forefront of literate English society. The concern for More and Standish was that a third of Christianity — the *ecclesia penitens* — was being hewn off the church body, discarded, and forgotten. "Remember vs," the souls in purgatory plead (More, *Supplicacyon*, Liiii^r). Reformist attacks upon the cult of the dead were intent upon disrupting and severing those traditional routes of communication with purgatory — namely, intercessions for the dead. They emphasized the practical piety of the living. As Tyndale wrote, instead of paying for prayers for the departed, the Christian saint should pray a "prayer of fayth" in Christ's death as the ultimate sacrifice for sins, and as the means by which the faithful walk through this life confident of their justification (*The Obedience*, Ov^v).

A funeral service for Wyatt

Amid this climate of debate on the afterlife and the nature of the church, Surrey composed "Wyatt Resteth Here." Capitalizing on popular interest in the last things, Surrey writes his elegy not only as epicedium and epitaph, but also as Wyatt's public funeral service. Anyone who can read is invited to attend, as readers gather around the imagined coffin wherein Wyatt "resteth here." In a unique historical moment when conservative and reformist elements of religion co-existed and intermingled, that service — with its evangelical keywords and imagery — takes place within the familiar space of traditional

liturgy, as evinced by its echoes of *hic requiescit* and the *Commendatio animae*. Moreover, the poem espouses one profound reformist principle upon which hangs Surrey's analogy between Wyatt's death and the death of English virtue: a Protestant soteriology and the complete severance of communication between the living and the dead.

When Wyatt died of a fever in October 1542, Surrey and his father, the third duke of Norfolk, were in the north campaigning against the Scots.²⁸ When Surrey heard the news of Wyatt's death, he wrote the elegy and immediately sent it to London. It was printed by John Herford, along with two other poems, as a pamphlet titled *An excellent Epitaffe of syr Thomas Wyat, with two other compendious dytties, wherin are touchyd, and set furth the state of mannes lyfe*:

Wyat resteth here, that quicke coulde neuer rest.
Whose heuently gyftes, encreased by dysdayne
And vertue sanke, the deper in his brest
Such profyte he, of enuy could optayne[.]

A Head, where wysdom mysteries dyd frame
Whose hammers beat styll in that lyuely brayne
As on a styth, where some worke of fame
Was dayly wrought, to turn to Brytayns gaine[.]

A Uysage sterne and mylde, where both dyd groo
Uyce to contempne, in vertues to reioyce
Amyd great stormes, whome grace assured soo
To lyue vprighte and smyle at fortunes choyse.

A Hand that taught what might be saide in rime
That reffe Chaucer, the glorye of his wytte
A marke, the whiche (vnperfit for tyme)
Some may approche but neuer none shall hyt.

A Tonge, that serued in foraine realmes his king
Whose curtoise talke, to vertu dyd enflame.
Eche noble harte a worthy guyde to brynge
Our Englysshe youth, by trauayle vnto fame.

An Eye, whose iudgement, no affect coulde blind
 Frenedes to allure, and foes to reconcyle
 Whose pearcyngye looke, dyd represent a mynde
 With vertue fraught, reposed, voyde of gyle.

A Harte, where drede yet neuer so imprest
 To hide the thought y^t might the trouth auance
 In neyther fortune lyfte nor so represt
 To swell in welth, nor yelde vnto mischaunce[.]

A valiaunt Corps, where force and beautye met
 Happy, alas, to happy but for foos.
 Lyued, and ran the race that nature set
 Of manhodes shape, where she the mold did loos[.]

But to the heauens that symple soule is fled.
 Which lefte with such, as couet Christe to knowe
 Witnes of faith that neuer shal be deade
 Sent for our welth, but not receiued so
 Thus for our gylt, this iewell haue we lost
 The earth his bones, the heuen possesse his goost[.]
 AMEN.²⁹

The opening line, “Wyat resteth here, that quicke coulde neuer rest,” ushers the reader into the midst of a funeral ceremony, and he or she becomes immediately involved in the scene’s action. The reader joins an imagined congregation surrounding Wyatt’s body and participates in the activity of commemoration. This activity occurs, I suggest, on three different levels. The first line allows for a fascinating slippage between three genres of commemorative writing: the elegy, the epitaph, and the funeral mass. First, “Wyatt Resteth Here” is an elegy. Like the ancient Greek *ἐλεγεία* (*elegeia*), it is a song of sorrow for the dead.³⁰ It performs what Peter Sacks calls a cultural “work of mourning” as it reaches out in an “act of address” to a silent auditor — the reader.³¹ The poem allows the reader to join with other readers across England in offering a communal lamentation for the loss of Wyatt.

Second, as the pamphlet title *An Excellent Epitaffe* and the statement that “Wyat resteth here” indicate, the poem is also an inscription upon Wyatt’s

imagined gravestone. In this sense, the reader joins a community of family, friends, and neighbours who gather around Wyatt's burial site and read his epitaph — an epitaph which is his elegy, the poem. As Sessions notes, within Surrey's "communal and liturgical *hic requiescit* formula," the speaker and reader are "literally leaning over the dead body of Wyatt."³² Here Surrey echoes a rich tradition of Christian epigraphy. The phrases *hic requiescit* and *hic iacet* are distinctly Christian formulae, and their appearance on headstones dates back to the earliest centuries of the church.³³ Pagans did not use them, as *hic requiescit* and *hic iacet* represented death as a metaphorical "resting" and "lying down" that suggested the unique Christian hope of *resurrectio carnis*, the General Resurrection of the dead.

By beginning the poem with the phrase "Wyat resteth here" — *hic requiescit* — Surrey operates within the Christian epigraphic tradition. Moreover, "Wyatt resteth here, that quicke coulde neuer rest" is an English rendition of a particular Christian epigraphic phrase noted by epigraphists such as William Camden: "*Hic mortuus requiescit semel, qui vivus requievit numquam.*"³⁴ The funerary setting of "Wyatt Resteth Here," and its inclusion of the reader in the activity of mourning, are thus further established through Surrey's epitaphic imagery. The reader is invited to gaze upon — and read aloud — the poem inscribed on Wyatt's national headstone, which is the pamphlet that the reader holds in hand.

Finally, Surrey's use of the theological keyword "rest" in the poem's first line echoes another funerary phrase with which Henrician Englishmen were familiar: the Introit of the *Missa pro defunctis* or Requiem Mass: "*Requiem eternam dona eis domine et lux perpetua luceat eis* [Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them]."³⁵ The phrase "*Requiem eternam dona eis*" derives from the apocryphal second book of Esdras: "*Expectate pastorum vestrum, requiem aeternitatis dabit vobis, quoniam in proximo est ille, qui in finem saeculi adveniet*" [Await your shepherd; he will give you eternal rest, because he who will arrive at the end of the age is near].³⁶ Surrey's poem is not only an elegy and an epitaph, but also an imagined Requiem Mass held for Wyatt. This is made clear by Surrey's echo of the priestly *Commendatio animae* in the final line: "The earth his bones, the heuen possesse his goost." Although the elegy exhibits elements of traditional liturgy, Surrey's imagined funeral service espouses a distinctly Protestant assurance of immediate salvation. In that regard, the poem anticipates later soteriological reforms such as we find,

for example, in Thomas Cranmer's "The Burial of the Dead" in the Book of Common Prayer.³⁷

The mass for the dead dates back to the early centuries of the church, when it was characterized as viaticum and by a display of the body of the departed.³⁸ The *Commemoratio pro vivis et pro defunctis*, moreover, constitutes the oldest part of the ancient Roman Canon.³⁹ Into the sixteenth century, the mass continued to be the most important event in the funerary process.⁴⁰ The Requiem Mass was one of the most popular masses, and Englishmen of all social classes were familiar with the liturgical texts that comprised its formulary — hearing them, as they did, on a frequent basis. In Surrey's elegy, the echo of *requiem* in "resteth here" establishes a parallel between the poem and the actual mass, such that England's premier poet effectively recreates the funeral service for his departed friend and fellow poet.

In the Requiem Mass, as in all masses for the dead, the corporeality of the departed is a fundamental aspect of the funerary setting and the mourning process. In the elegy, Surrey sets Wyatt's corpse before us by declaring that he "resteth here." The blazon keeps our attention focused on the body. As Tromly comments, it "quite literally incarnates [Wyatt] into the poem."⁴¹ Similarly, Andrew Hiscock points out that Surrey uses the blazon in an act of "re-member-ing" Wyatt's life "on the page" of the printed pamphlet.⁴² Surrey praises "A Head"; "A Uysage"; "A Hand"; "A Tonge"; "An Eye"; and "A Harte." The parts form Wyatt's "valiaunt Corps, where force and beautye met." As we attend this poetic funeral service of Surrey's making, we cannot take our eyes away from Wyatt's body. In Tudor England, the body of the deceased marked the spatial centre of the funeral mass, as it rested in the church crossing between east and west transepts and between nave and chancel. In the same way, Wyatt's body, which dominates the elegy from the first stanza to the penultimate, occupies the imaginative centre of the poem and of Surrey's act of commemoration.

Surrey uses the blazon to envision Wyatt's body, but he also uses it to encourage the reader to pause and reflect upon the virtues once present within that body. In so doing, Surrey assesses Wyatt's qualities within a larger framework of national concerns and national identity. That is, Surrey values Wyatt's gifts precisely because they benefitted the nation. The "mysterries" that sprang from Wyatt's "Head" were "worke[s] of fame" destined for "Brytayns gaine." Wyatt's "Hand" contributed to the tradition of English poetry to such an extent that he "refte Chaucer, the glorye of his wytte."⁴³ As an ambassador to continental

nations, his “Tonge” “serued in foraine realmes his king.” He encouraged “Our Englysshe youth” to strive “by trauayle vnto fame.” Wyatt’s achievements represented by his “Uysage,” “Eye,” and “Harte” likewise epitomize the intellectual activity, moral integrity, and untiring constancy of a true Englishman. Surrey uses the blazon to praise English virtues through the synecdoche of Wyatt’s accomplishments. However, as I will show, that praise quickly turns sour when we realize the implications of Surrey’s synecdochic strategy. Just as Wyatt has died and his admirable qualities with him, so too, Surrey intimates, have the nation’s virtues begun to pass away.

Having drawn the reader into an imagined Requiem Mass, and having encouraged him or her to dote upon the body of the departed as family and friends would do, Surrey draws this scene of mourning to a close exactly as a funeral mass would end: with the *Commendatio animae*. The final line in the elegy — “The earth his bones, the heuen possesse his goost” — commends Wyatt’s soul to God in the same way the priest does in the *Commendatio*: “*Tibi domine commendamus animam famuli tui* [To you, O Lord, we commend the soul of your servant].”⁴⁴ The final “AMEN” at the poem’s end concludes the service, and the reader is dismissed. Surrey has given his reader a valuable opportunity to participate in the celebration of a national figure and to experience a sense of connectedness to other readers across England as they read and mourn together.

However, the final stanza of “Wyatt Resteth Here” does not provide the reader with the solace and comfort that we might expect at the end of a funeral mass. Rather, Surrey brings to the forefront a point of tension running throughout the poem, as Wyatt’s gifts — and by extension, the nation’s — are evaluated against a backdrop of apparent widespread wickedness: the “enuy” and “Uyce” of Wyatt’s enemies, and the “great stormes” that Wyatt endured. Instead of offering resolution and encouragement, the final stanza judges the reader and finds him or her wanting. In a brilliant rhetorical maneuver, Surrey makes an about-face. Heretofore, the reader has been encouraged to identify with Wyatt’s virtues inasmuch as they edify the nation. In the last stanza, the reader discovers that he or she is to blame for having failed to appreciate Wyatt and his virtues fully. Wyatt is now at peace, but the nation is left with a “gylt” that must be identified, addressed, and — if possible — remedied.

The passing of national virtue

In both Surrey's "Wyatt Resteth Here" and More's *Supplycacyon*, the theme of severed communication between the living and the dead prompts readers to recognize and confront a national crisis. For More, that crisis is the vivisection of Christian community in the excising of *ecclesia penitens*. In *The Supplycacyon*, he troubles the reader with disturbing images of souls in purgatory that have been forgotten. His intention is that the reader will do exactly the opposite — that is, that he or she will remember the faithful departed and continue to intercede for them. The souls urge the reader to picture what "heuynes of hart & what a sorowfull shame the sely soule hath at hys furst comyng hyther to loke his old frendys in the face here, whom he remembryth hym self to haue so foule forgotten whyle he lyued there" (Kiiii^v). More is concerned with the possible collapse of an age-old system of reciprocal intercession whereby the dead succour the living. His suppliants remind their readers that "the prayour of eny member of cristendom may profyete eny other" (Iii^v). For More, the grave is no bar to Christian fellowship. Just as the living aid the dead with their prayers, masses, and the like, so also do the dead intercede to Christ, Mary, and the saints in order to aid the living. Help us, the suppliants cry, and "we shall set hand to help you thwyther to vs" (Liiii^v). As More puts it, those channels of communication with the dead are in danger of being closed. This will pervert the church's understanding of itself, now that it is being encouraged, quite literally, to forget all the brothers and sisters who suffer in purgatory.

Surrey also uses the severance of the dead from the living to stage a national crisis in the loss of English virtue — a loss perpetuated by the ever-increasing despotism of their royal monarch. As Walker points out, in his writings Surrey repeatedly demonstrates a "fierce opposition to tyranny in all its forms." In "Wyatt Resteth Here," Surrey engages in a project of "presenting Wyatt as a saint of English reform, a secular, poetic Beckett, whose bones might furnish the centre of a new cult dedicated to aristocratic resistance to Henrician tyranny."⁴⁵ Like More, Surrey uses loss of communication with the dead as a means of encouraging his reader to assess the state of the nation. After emphasizing Wyatt's corporeality in the first eight stanzas, and encouraging his reader to identify with the national virtues represented in each body part, Surrey suddenly yanks the body from view in the final stanza. We go from looking upon Wyatt and contemplating his value to witnessing his sudden

absence. “But to the heauens that symple soule is fled,” Surrey writes, and we the readers and mourners are left behind — we who are “such, as couet Christe to knowe.” The imagery of the first eight stanzas operates upon the principle that Wyatt is still here, still with us. The final stanza deflates that notion, as an immense gulf emerges between Wyatt in heaven and us upon the earth.

The crisis in More’s *The Supplicacyon* was the possibility that fellow Christians could be shut away, and in Surrey’s “Wyatt Resteth Here” it is the painful realization that all “vertue” has passed from England. As I have shown, Surrey presents Wyatt as more than a national hero. Inasmuch as he represents a passing Golden Age, Wyatt is the quintessence of English virtues and ideals. Of the six stanzas comprising the blazon, no less than half point out his contributions specifically to the English nation. This, then, is the elegy’s crisis of national identity: having been cut off from men like Wyatt, and no longer possessing “vertue” such as his, the nation no longer knows what it is or where it is going. As Jentoft notes, the elegy evinces Surrey’s “love for his dying age” and his concern for what will follow.⁴⁶ The final stanza makes clear this separation and subsequent desolation. Wyatt’s “symple soule” has fled to the “heauens” and has left the reader and all England behind. What remains is an abomination: a generation and a nation that “couet Christe to knowe.” Just as Christ “came vnto his owne, and his owne receiued him not,” so was Wyatt “Sent for our welth, but not receiued so.”⁴⁷ As a result, the nation is plagued with “gylt.” The reader and the nation are suddenly associated with the Pharisees and other unbelievers who persecuted Christ. In the end, Surrey’s readers mourn not only the passing of an English icon but the best part of themselves — the very virtues that Wyatt put “to Brytayns gaine” but that they neglected to use.

Two aspects of the final stanza evince Surrey’s Protestant soteriology and show him emphasizing a reformist separation of the living from the dead to stage the passing of national virtue. The first is Surrey’s statement that Wyatt’s “symple soule” has fled to “the heauens” — not to purgatory — and to beatific union with God. His literary works are now a “witnes of faith” and he a “iewell” in the company of God and angels. As José María Pérez Fernández notes, Wyatt now resides “with the elect” of *ecclesia triumphans*.⁴⁸ In England in the 1540s, this is a statement of considerable doctrinal significance, as Surrey aligns himself with reformers such as Tyndale and Frith who insisted upon the departed soul’s immediate communion with God in heaven. Consequently, the many virtues Wyatt represented — the virtues that edified the nation — are gone with him.

The gulf between Wyatt and the English nation is the chasm between the crucified Christ and his pharisaical persecutors, between the virtuous departed and the wicked who abide in torment of their “gylt.”

The second reformist element in the final stanza is Surrey’s focus on the obligations of the living not toward the dead, but toward themselves. As with Wyatt going to heaven, Surrey again channels reformists such as Tyndale and Frith, who in their attacks on the cult of the dead emphasized the need to attend to the everyday faith of living Christians. That focus on the living takes the form of attending to national “gylt” at having failed to practise the English virtues that Wyatt did. While the first eight stanzas have been a celebration of those virtues, the ninth stanza is a dirge lamenting their loss, as Surrey notifies us of “our gylt” and need for atonement. In the final stanza, we are no longer mourning the dead, but the living.

Several times in the poem, Surrey specifies exactly what this “gylt” is and the role it has in his dark vision of an England bereft of moral virtue. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes, in the late medieval period, “guilt” signified not interior anguish but “A failure of duty, delinquency.” It was also “the state (meriting condemnation and reproach of conscience) of having wilfully committed a crime or heinous moral offence; criminality, great culpability.”⁴⁹ The elegy points toward two places where this “gylt” is located. First, some of it belongs to the court. More precisely, it belongs to Henry VIII, who as a tyrant abused his royal powers to the detriment of the nation. For Surrey, Henry is both “ThAssyryans king” and the usurper of true Justice — that “bloody beast” who with “fyerce and crwell mode” sits in the “roiall throne wheras that Justice should have sitt.”⁵⁰ In “Wyatt Resteth Here,” Henry and his court are a source of national decay, as Surrey writes of the “dysdayne” and “enuy” of Wyatt’s “foes,” as well as of the “great stormes” of fickle fortune for which Henry’s court was known.

While the elegy holds Henry and his court culpable for the loss of national virtue, Surrey also locates “gylt” in the English people as a whole. His use of the pronouns “we” and “our” makes clear that there has been a collective neglect of duty. Wyatt, Surrey states, was “Sent for our welth, but not receiued so / Thus for our gylt, this iewell haue we lost.” “Wyatt Resteth Here” thus forces the Henrician reader to confront a difficult question: deprived of such virtue, what now remains to us? Just as More’s readers potentially cut themselves off from the dead by doubting purgatory, so too do Surrey’s readers cut themselves off from

their true character as a nation by failing to embrace the virtues by which Wyatt lived. The former by their unbelief endanger the exchange of intercession. The latter, by their failure to act as Wyatt did, set ablaze the very fabric of English community as Surrey knew it. All that remains is “gylt” for which there is no apparent forgiveness — a “gylt” that remains to plague the reader with how things could have been different.

Although “Wyatt Resteth Here” ends on a forlorn note, and although the reader becomes the object of mourning, can we go so far as to claim for the poem a defeatist worldview? Does Surrey commit himself fully to *contemptus mundi*, and is his vision for England’s future entirely dark? The elegy gives no indication that the English people are capable of regaining their former virtue. As in Surrey’s “London, hast thou accusèd me,” ostensibly all that remains for the nation is divine judgment. I suggest, however, that the poem does contain one glimmer of hope, and that Surrey extends it to his reader. It is found in the act of remembering Wyatt and in appreciating his literary endeavours, which are the “witnes of faith that neuer shall be deade.” When the practice and imitation of virtue cease, the English people can perhaps recover their former character by commemorating and celebrating virtues such as Wyatt possessed. This activity takes place, Surrey indicates, in the act of reading poetry. Consequently, “Wyatt Resteth Here” establishes itself not only as a harbinger of passing national virtue, but as the first step toward its proper restoration. Surrey locates the potential for restoration within poetry’s capacity to envision an alternative to the present reality — as Philip Sidney would later write, its capacity to “growe in effect, another nature.”⁵¹ Wyatt’s literary works are a “witnes of faith” that will live on throughout the ages. They are a testament to virtue when all virtue has vanished. In the same manner, Surrey’s elegy for Wyatt will live on through printed texts as a similar “witnes” to a period of grace and virtue in England’s golden past. “Wyatt Resteth Here” evinces Surrey’s frustration at a new age devoid of that virtue. But the elegy also exhibits Surrey’s hope in the power of poetry to transform our world, as the literary “witnes” of a bygone age serves as a potential cornerstone for rebuilding the nation in the present.

Notes

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3. Alastair Fowler, *Conceitful Thought: The Interpretation of English Renaissance Poems* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), pp. 25–30.
4. C.W. Jentoft, "Surrey's Five Elegies: Rhetoric, Structure, and the Poetry of Praise," *PMLA* 91.1 (1976), pp. 23–32.
5. Frederic Tromly, "Surrey's Fidelity to Wyatt in 'Wyatt Resteth Here,'" *Studies in Philology* 77.4 (1980), pp. 376–87.
6. A. C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 322.
7. W. A. Sessions, "Surrey's Wyatt: Autumn 1542 and the New Poet," in *Rethinking the Henrician Era: Essays on Early Tudor Texts and Contexts*, ed. Peter C. Herman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 168–92 at 187. See also Sessions, *Henry Howard, the Poet Earl of Surrey: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 240–59.
8. Susan Brigden, "Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and the 'Conjured League,'" *The Historical Journal* 37 (1994), pp. 507–37.
9. Greg Walker, *Writing under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 392.
10. David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 412.
11. Studies on early sixteenth-century eschatology include Bryan Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660* (Leiden: Brill, 1975); Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth-Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism, and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay, 1978); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400–c.1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), esp. pp. 299–368; and T. F. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church: A Study in the Theology of the Reformation* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1956).

12. Carl Trueman, *Luther's Legacy: Salvation and English Reformers, 1525–1556* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 9.
13. Trueman, p. 31. Richard Rex notes that the Reformation in England “owed much to the success of the early Reformers in aligning themselves with the aspirations of an increasingly literate laity,” in Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), p. 91.
14. See J. S. W. Helt, “Fish, Simon (d. 1531),” in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), online, accessed February 24, 2012, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/>.
15. Simon Fish, *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars* (Antwerp: J. Grapheus, 1529), sig. 3^v, 1^r. STC 10883. Once a primary source is documented, all subsequent references are cited parenthetically in-text.
16. Sir Thomas More, *A Dyaloge of syr Thomas More knyghte* (London: J. Rastell, 1529), sig. Sii^r. STC 18084.
17. Sir Thomas More, *The Supplycacyon of Soulys* (London: W. Rastell, 1529), sig. Aii^r. STC 18092.
18. Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 18; and Duffy, p. 328.
19. William Tyndale, *An Answere vnto Sir Thomas Mores dialoge* (Antwerp: S. Cock, 1531), STC 24437; and Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Christen man* (Antwerp: J. Hoochstraten, 1528), STC 24446.
20. Walker, p. 399.
21. Duffy, p. 303; see also p. 343.
22. See David Daniell, “Frith, John (1503–1533),” in *ODNB*, accessed February 25, 2012.
23. John Frith, *A Disputacion of Purgatorye* (Antwerp: S. Cock, 1531), sig. F8^r; STC 11386.5.
24. Frith, *An Other boke against Rastel* (Canterbury: J. Mychell, 1535–36), sig. Aii^r, STC 11385.
25. Roger Mitchels, “*In the midst of life*”: *The Aristocratic Funeral Ceremony in Early Modern England, 1450–1700* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1979), p. 210.
26. John Standish, *A Lytle treatise composyd by Iohan Standysse* (London, 1540), sig. C^v, Bviii^r, Dvi^r, STC 23209.

27. Miles Coverdale, *A Confutation of that treatise, which one John Standish made* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1541), sig. Liiii^r, STC 5888. Similarly, Thomas Becon, who later served as chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer, argued that “intercessions and merites of saintes, Purgatorye, prayenge for the dead, trentalles, diriges, comendacions, masses of Requiem” are among the “lyes, dreams and fantasyes of Antichrist the bishop of Rome” in that they posited other means of intercession than Christ, in Becon, *A Comfortable Epistle, too Goddes faythfull people in Englande* (Wesel: J. Lambrecht, 1542), sig. Avi^v, Avi^r, STC 1716.
28. See Colin Burrow, “Wyatt, Sir Thomas (c.1503–1542),” in *ODNB*, accessed February 25, 2012.
29. References to the text of “Wyatt Resteth Here” are from *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, 1542), sigs. Ai^r–Ai^v, STC 26054.
30. See *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ἐλεγεῖα, ed. Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968).
31. Peter Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 1, 170. See also David Kennedy, “Chapter 3: The Work of Mourning,” in *Elegy* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 35–56.
32. Sessions, “Surrey’s Wyatt,” p. 187.
33. Brent Shaw, “Latin Funerary Epigraphy and Family Life in the Later Roman Empire,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 33.4 (1984), pp. 457–97. On the development of the *hic requiescit* formula in Britain, see F. Haverfield, “Early British Christianity,” *The English Historical Review* 11.43 (1896), pp. 417–30; Jeremy Knight, “An Inscription from Bavai and the Fifth-Century Christian Epigraphy of Britain,” *Britannia* 41 (2010), pp. 283–92; Elisabeth Okasha, *Corpus of Early Christian Inscribed Stones of South-West Britain* (London: Leicester University Press), pp. 31–42; and A. C. Thomas, “The Early Christian Inscriptions of Southern Scotland,” *Glasgow Archaeological Journal* 17 (1991–1992), pp. 1–10. See also Maureen Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 260–78; Orazio Marucchi, *Christian Epigraphy: An Elementary Treatise* (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1974); and William Tabbernee, “Epigraphy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Harvey and David Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 120–39. Examples of early Christian epigraphs can be found in *Inscriptions*

- Christianae Urbis Romae Septimo Saeculo Antiquiores*, ed. Giovanni Battista de Rossi et al. (Rome: ex Officina Libraria Pontificia, 1861–88).
34. See William Camden, “Epitaphs,” in *Remains Concerning Britain*, ed. R. D. Dunn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 330. Emrys Jones notes this connection in Surrey, *Poems*, ed. Jones (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), p. 123, as does Sessions in *Henry Howard*, p. 253.
 35. “*Missa pro fidelibus defunctis*,” in *The Sarum Missal*, ed. J. Wickham Legg (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 431–33 at 431. References to liturgical text are from this edition; all translations are my own. Recent studies on funeral masses include Christopher Daniel, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066–1550* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Duffy, pp. 299–368; Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1450–1770* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); and Julian Litten, *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral since 1450* (London: Robert Hale, 1991). See also Pietro Piacenza, “Masses of Requiem,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), online, accessed February 20, 2012, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12776d.htm>.
 36. 2 Esdras (i.e., Liber IIII Ezrae) 2:34 in *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, ed. Roger Gryson and Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007).
 37. Massey H. Shepherd points out that Cranmer’s most significant change to the burial office was “the restoration of the note of assurance and trust and home to their formularies, by such devices as the opening sentence of the procession (‘I am the resurrection and the life,’ etc.)” in Shepherd, “The Place of the Prayer Book in the Western Liturgical Tradition,” *Church History* 19.1 (1950), pp. 3–14 at 8.
 38. Damien Sicard, “The Funeral Mass,” in *Reforming the Rites of Death*, ed. Johannes Wagner, *Concilium: Theology in the Age of Renewal* 32 (New York: Paulist Press, 1968), pp. 45–52 at 45.
 39. G. G. Willis, *A History of Early Roman Liturgy to the Death of Pope Gregory the Great* (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1994), p. 38. See also Thomas J. Hefernan and E. Ann Matter, eds., *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 2001).
 40. Christopher Haigh notes, for example, Sir Piers Legh of Lancashire in 1522, who prioritized the mass in his will: “£20 was to be used for masses and alms on the day of burial, and within a month of this 100 priests were to say one mass each, all on the same day, in the form of 20 masses of Jesus, 20 of the Five Wounds, 20 of Our Lady, 20 of the Holy Ghost, 10 of the Trinity and 10 requiem masses,” in

Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 68.

41. Tromly, p. 377.
42. Andrew Hiscock, "'To Seek the Place Where I Myself Had Lost': Acts of Memory in the Poetry of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey," in *The Anatomy of Tudor Literature: Proceedings of the First International Conference of the Tudor Symposium* (1998), ed. Michael Pincombe (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 34–43 at 35.
43. Similarly, Richard Tottel claimed to have printed his miscellany — which included many poems by Wyatt and Surrey — for “the honor of the english tong, and for profit of the studious of Englishe eloquence,” in Tottel, ed., *Songes and Sonettes* (London, 1557), sig. A^v, STC 13861.
44. “*Commendatio animae*,” in *The Sarum Missal*, ed. Legg, pp. 423–31 at 428.
45. Walker, pp. 386, 399.
46. Jentoft, p. 32.
47. John 1:11. References to the Bible in English are from The King James Version of 1611, reprinted as *The Holy Bible, Quatercentenary Edition*, ed. Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
48. José María Pérez Fernández, “‘Wyatt Resteth Here’: Surrey’s Republican Elegy,” *Renaissance Studies* 18 (2004), pp. 208–38 at 238.
49. See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “guilt” (Oxford, 2010), online, accessed February 20, 2012, <http://www.oed.com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/>.
50. “Th’Assyryans king, in peas with fowle desire,” ln.1, and “Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes,” chap. 3, ln. 44–46, in Surrey, *Poems*, ed. Jones.
51. Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London: Thomas Crede, 1595), sig. C^v, STC 22534.5.