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The Thundering Throne: Personality, Poetics, and Gender in the Court of King Henry VIII

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THE THUNDERING THRONE: PERSONALITY, POETICS, AND GENDER IN THE
COURT OF KING HENRY VIII

THE THUNDERING THRONE: PERSONALITY, POETICS, AND GENDER IN THE
COURT OF KING HENRY VIII

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of the Arts in English

By

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ABSTRACT

This work examines gender in the court of King Henry VIII, focusing specifically on the role that the power and weight of Henry's personal decisions played in shaping the contemporary social definitions of femininity, masculinity, and courtiership. The space of courtiership is particularly open to such inquiry because this space was so often one that revealed the fissures and failures in attempts to maintain the strict binaries that privileged hegemonic masculinity under Henry. These definitions, then, will be reflected in, as well as shaped by, court poetry and, as explored in the final chapter, prose. Literature produced within the context of the court provides a unique perspective on life under King Henry, because the authorship is necessarily limited and elitist, and the poets involved would have both exercised great social power and been particularly susceptible to the consequences of Henry's greater power. Of particular interest are works by Henry VIII, largely written at the beginning of his reign. A large section of this work focuses on Henry's wives, bringing together historically reliable information, poetry written under or about certain of his wives during their queenships, and contemporary folklore about that woman, the court surrounding her, or Henry's attitudes towards her. Though history has colored many modern constructions of Henry and his wives, the common perceptions and the personal histories of Henry's queens are important elements of the common perception of the court and Henry. Contemporary perceptions of courtiership, women, nobility, and marriage are also used as an important part of constructing the background information for analyzing and interpreting the court under these women. The project also includes examinations of how cultural influences model both sixteenth-century and modern perceptions of central figures, how communal values and constructs create artists and art, and the confluence of art and community in the emergence of new values and constructs, specifically focusing on gender as a social construct.

This thesis is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This work examines gender in the court of King Henry VIII, focusing specifically on the role that the power and weight of Henry's personal decisions played in shaping the contemporary social definitions of femininity, masculinity, and courtiership. The space of courtiership is particularly open to such inquiry because this space was so often one that revealed the fissures and failures in attempts to maintain the strict binaries that privileged hegemonic masculinity under Henry. These definitions, then, will be reflected in, as well as shaped by, court poetry and, as explored in the final chapter, prose. Literature produced within the context of the court provides a unique perspective on life under King Henry, because the authorship is necessarily limited and elitist, and the poets involved would have both exercised great social power and been particularly susceptible to the consequences of Henry's greater power. Of particular interest are works by Henry VIII, largely written at the beginning of his reign. The project also includes examinations of how cultural influences model both sixteenth-century and modern perceptions of central figures, how communal values and constructs create artists and art, and the confluence of art and community in the emergence of new values and constructs.

By examining poetry as a piece of a larger social puzzle, as encouraged by New Historicism, this work also provides an example of the ways in which interpretation of poetry can lead to richer historical understanding, specifically regarding the influence of powerful central figures during moments of great social change. Henry VIII had a specific influence on emerging social norms during the Renaissance and amidst the slow rise of capitalism and the middle class. In examining literature in the context of its contemporary, specific historical developments, the reader has the opportunity to access the projected personas of contemporary figures, thus learning more about both how such central figures felt and thought and, perhaps

more importantly, how those same individuals wanted their feelings and thoughts to be perceived. By focusing on a specific, powerful individual and a time of important social change, scholars can more accurately define the influence Henry had on history and within different levels of his contemporary society, and the relationship between individual and social power can be more carefully examined and understood.

A large section of this work focuses on Henry's wives, bringing together historically reliable information, poetry written under or about certain of his wives during their queenships, and contemporary folklore about that woman, the court surrounding her, or Henry's attitudes towards her. Though history has colored many modern constructions of Henry and his wives, the common perceptions and the personal histories of Henry's queens are important elements of the common perception of the court and Henry. For example, Katherine of Aragon's upbringing as Infanta of Spain would likely have lead her both to perceive herself and to be perceived by others very differently than a less well-educated, far less nobly born woman like Katherine Howard. Contemporary perceptions of courtiership, women, nobility, and marriage are also used as an important part of constructing the background information for analyzing and interpreting the court under these women.

The focus on literature produced at court for entertainment or personal pleasure allows for an interpretation of the ways that Henry's personal power influenced gender roles in the court, and such an interpretation then allows for a better understanding of the complex interplay of poetic persona and lived reality. The interplay of poetry and courtly projection will allow for an analysis of communal constructions and values, while the voice constructed by each of the court poets will encourage analysis of different facets of those constructions. The king and court, of course, influence each poet, but each poet also, necessarily, contributes to the opinions of king

and court, whether through complicity or through dissent. This work examines the exact components and implications of this kind of interplay in the works of major poets like Thomas Wyatt or Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, as well as in lesser known works, like those created by Henry VIII himself.

Following chronological order, the first chapter centers on the culture and poetry surrounding Katherine of Aragon, specifically focusing on the poetry written by Henry VIII in his ascendancy. This chapter examines the ways in which Henry used poetics and performances to establish the iconography of his kingship and of his court. Additionally, the chapter examines the relevance, within this context, of Henry's specific choice of Katherine as the queen to preside over his new chivalric court. The second chapter focuses on Anne Boleyn's slow ascent to, and rapid descent from, power. This chapter contains considerable analysis of many of Thomas Wyatt's poems, as the two figures have become considerably linked in literary history. I will not make a definitive claim, however, to any particular form of relationship between the two, nor do I want to simplify the theme of Wyatt's poetry as pointing exclusively to Anne. Rather, I want to examine the ways in which Henry's attraction to Anne influenced the feminine ideals at court and the ways in which those ideals are reflected or complicated by Wyatt. In this, as in all chapters, the influence of such gender roles for the masculine figures of the court will be considered as well; under Henry's reign, the masculine and feminine are almost equally precarious positions.

The reigns of Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, and Katherine Howard are all considered in a single section, linking the evolving ideas about the court to the poetry of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. Though certainly historically important figures in their own right, none of these women stood as Henry's wife for more than seventeen months. These brief reigns, combined

with the difficulty of accurately dating poems of the period, make it more helpful to view the arc of court literature in the years between Anne Boleyn's execution in 1536 and Henry's final marriage to Katherine Parr in 1543 than to attempt to pinpoint any possible literary quirks directly related to a single queen. The chapter largely explores the ways in which the increasing instability of the court is mirrored in the verse of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and links that instability to the gender problems most tellingly revealed in the fate of Henry's fifth wife, and Surrey's cousin, Katherine Howard. Henry's last wife provides some particularly interesting commentary on feminine and masculine gender roles at court, and so a satisfying conclusion. Katherine Parr, after all, was married almost as many times as the king. Further, she was that rarest of things at court: a published female author. Finally, in her authorship, Katherine publically espoused religious views which differed from those of her husband, the king (though to what degree is certainly open to debate). However, despite often not adhering to the anticipated restrictions of women of the court, she was the only of Henry's wives to avoid divorce, annulment, or death.

The projections of each of these personalities, combined with the complicated politics reflected in court verse, reveal the implications of the hierarchies of both power and gender that permeated the Henrician court. This project seeks to trace these implications, as well as the arcs along which they moved as Henry and his central court underwent and enacted the changes of the early sixteenth century.

II. THE THUNDERING THRONE: PERSONALITY, POETICS, AND GENDER IN THE COURT OF KING HENRY VIII

A. The King and his Queen: Henry VIII's Verse and Katherine of Aragon as Center of the Chivalric Court

The images of Henry VIII with which modern audiences are most familiar and most comfortable are all ones of strength and swagger. Though analysis may now often look at the possibility of underlying insecurities motivating Henry's actions, the king's consciousness of his own power and belief in his own ultimate sovereignty are equally important elements of almost every such analysis. Certainly, such a focus is fair and would have reflected the concerns of every courtier under Henry by the time his reign ended. However, the court over which a not-yet-eighteen year old Henry ascended in 1509 was a very different animal. Henry may, at this relatively young age, have already begun to conceive of his sovereignty as unimpeachable, but he was a fair distance from being able to enforce that conception. How he handled the problems arising from this gap between desire and action would determine many of the more defining elements of his reign, for it was in these first moments that Henry intentionally created, in contrast to his father, and through verse and performance, a court invested in the ideals of courtly love, chose as the subject center for that court the regal Katherine of Aragon, and began the drive towards absolute monarchy in its most ambitious sense that would make everything that followed possible. In the decisions he made in transitioning the court from his father's to his own and in establishing his own royal identity, Henry VIII created, by example, the definitions of masculinity, courtiership, and chivalric behavior which he expected to be followed in his court and to define his court in history.

Henry VIII's youth, exuberance, and desire for power must have come as something of a novel experience, if not an outright surprise, for the English court. Henry VII had, after all, acclimated the court to a rather different sort of kingship during his brief reign, though perhaps the initial impressions of both kings had rather more in common than the average member of the modern audience might expect. Describing Henry VII, Garrett Mattingly expresses that

When he first came to the throne, after the bloody scramble of Bosworth, the first things people noticed about him, after his blond good looks, were his generosity and clemency, his fondness for magnificence and for a joke. But the reckless spirit of adventure sank; the caution increased; the humor took a bitter edge. Crowns seemed harder to keep than to win, and the firmer his grasp on his own, the more uneasy he became. (26)

With a few edits to the statements about Bosworth, and the omission of the statements regarding the winning of the crown, this same description could as easily apply to the son as to the father. Indeed, such a portrait seems far from the clerkish, miserly portrayal of Henry VII which figures so often in Tudor histories. Further, Henry VII began his reign with much of the pageantry of which his son would be rather more famously fond. However, the tenuous nature of Henry VII's claim to his recently won crown led to his fiscal care, a more subdued central court as he reigned, and a perhaps undeserved later reputation as a pinchpenny. Nonetheless, his caution paid off in the relative stability of his reign, and by the turn of the century, near the middle of his reign, he was more or less securely king, with a secure line of succession, and secure finances with which to rule his kingdom.

This king, then, had every reason to believe himself in an enviable position at the time that he brought Katherine of Aragon to England to marry his eldest son in 1501. His two daughters were well set up to further his dynastic ambitions, and the very fact that Isabella and Ferdinand had sent their daughter to marry the Prince of Wales further validated England's position as a European power. Further, the Prince of Wales's young brother and sisters put on an

endearing and energetic performance throughout the wedding festivities, demonstrating for everyone in attendance the energy and health of the royal line.¹ However, within 15 months of the November wedding, Henry VII's dynastic stability had crumbled. The king lost his heir apparent, his wife, and the new child she had carried (as well as any immediate hope of new heirs) in the span of just a little over a year. In the aftermath of these losses, Henry VII adopted a more protective policy where his remaining heir was concerned; he also immediately began planning the new marriage through which he hoped to gain new heirs, even contemplating marrying his son's young Spanish widow (Mattingly 59-60). The situation necessarily catapulted the young Duke of York into an entirely new position. As J. J. Scarisbrick phrases the situation, "Arthur's tragic death transformed Henry's condition – translating him from the dynastic and political limbo of the second son to the limelight of heir apparent" (4).

The perception of the new heir apparent, however, would also color the initial perceptions of Henry VIII's reign in surprising ways. The evidence indicates that, for whatever reason, Henry VIII was not expected to be a particularly powerful or magnetic individual. Indeed, as Mattingly argues, from the reports of ambassadors, "The boy was not likely to have a will of his own. He was kept in closer seclusion than if he were a nubile girl...He was in complete subjugation to his father and his grandmother, and never opened his mouth in public except to answer a question from one of them" (116). These were reports coming near the time of Henry's ascension, seven years after Arthur's death, and after he had almost certainly had ample opportunity to gain the education in kingship that he might previously have lacked. Although the young king was soon to sweep dramatically aside any expectations of missishness,

¹ Sources from Mattingly to Scarisbrick, and on, describe the exuberance exhibited by Margaret and Henry, particularly, often bringing up the energy with which the young Duke of York danced and contrasting this with the more subdued energies of the bridegroom.

bookishness, or lack of self-assurance, such expectations point to some of the resistance and doubt that Henry would face at the beginning of his reign and to the motivations behind some of his first actions following the death of Henry VII. Indeed, many of these actions were calculated to emphasize not only youth and energy, but also aggression and even extravagance. In the years of his ascendancy, Henry had learned three very important lessons that would color his reign. One was that a seemingly secure dynasty could suddenly become dependent on a single remaining heir. Second was that a wife was a replaceable commodity, even if the union had been an affectionate one. Finally, the responses to his father's death, the reports, whether true or false, of his own timidity, and the widespread excitement over his theatric coronation taught him the importance of performance, and, more specifically, taught him that his people, both courtiers and commoners, loved an elaborate, boastful, thoroughly royal performance. Though the repercussions of one of the lessons would not be realized for several decades, the impact of the first and last of these lessons would be immediately apparent in many of the actions of the new king.

Almost the first of these actions was to claim as his future wife Katherine of Aragon. Henry VIII himself would explain, in a letter to Margaret of Savoy, that “[he] was charged by Henry VII on his deathbed...to fulfil the old treaty with Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain by taking their daughter Katherine in marriage” (Loades 20). Other motivations are possible, of course, from military ambitions in France, wherein an alliance with Spain might be of use, to a simple lack of willingness to begin his reign with disputes over dowry and treaty. However, whatever the consciously acknowledged reason, the choice of Katherine is likely equally linked to the other projects in which Henry immediately engaged in establishing the tone and power of his kingship. Even as her innate regality bolstered Henry's royal image, Katherine's maturity and

self-assurance might have struck a familiar and comfortable note for Henry, whose rather domineering grandmother, Margaret Beaufort, would almost necessarily have made as strong a mark on the young Henry as his father had. Scarisbrick goes so far as to speculate that Beaufort controlled Henry VIII's education (6); certainly she exerted a surprising amount of control over court life in general.² Katherine's six years of experience over the young king might have later worked to her detriment, but at the time of his father's death, followed relatively quickly by the death of this same commanding grandmother, these years instead underscored her stability and maturity. Additionally, though royal birth would hardly be a requirement for Henry's later queens, his first wife was attractive not least because of the dynastic stability and nobility she represented. Katherine of Aragon had been, and would be, for every minute of her life, every inch the princess, by her own concept and consciousness of self.

Unlike Henry, pushed into the role of heir by tragedy, Katherine could likely not remember a time in her early life when she was not referred to as Princess of Wales, knowing that her destiny was to be a queen. The marriage of Katherine to Arthur, Prince of Wales, had been contracted when the princess was only three years of age, and the arrangement had stayed rather remarkably steady for royal engagements of the period (Mattingly 14). Thus, while Henry had been raised for the first eleven years of his life as very much the second, if much beloved, son, Katherine had been aware of her future as Queen of England since her first moments of self-awareness. Following Arthur's death, Katherine was quickly pushed into contracting an

² It was, for instance, Margaret Beaufort who initially created and recorded the expected court etiquette for almost all events, from the order in which nobles ought to walk in to banquets to the material that was to be used for clothing each separate tier of the royal family during wedding or funeral processions.

arrangement with the new Prince of Wales.³ Indeed, it was in the months following Arthur's death that Katherine faced the first of several challenges regarding the transition from Arthur to Henry, for to contract a new engagement necessitated a specific definition of her previous marriage. During the extended arguments between Henry VII and Ferdinand regarding payment of the dowry, the original marriage between Arthur and Katherine itself came into question, and Katherine successfully defended herself in that quarter. This steadiness reflects Katherine's consistency in her self-conception, as well as the ways in which that consistency could become entrenchment. As Antonia Fraser phrases the results of this incident, "If Catherine as a girl could summon up her courage, friendless in a foreign country, to tell Henry VII that her marriage was 'irrevocable', and be proved right, she was not likely to change her mind on the subject in the future" (*Wives* 57). The very certainty of her own worth and regality that made Katherine an attractive choice to a young king desiring to establish his own legitimacy would be the quality that made her such a burden to an established king looking to disentangle himself. At the time of her marriage to Henry, though, this determination made Katherine only more attractive. Striving to establish his own kingship, Henry was likely drawn to the kind of statement made by marrying a princess of thoroughly noble lineage, one who had thought of herself as the future Queen of England for longer than he himself had been alive.

This self-assurance and maturity, perhaps natural to Katherine, were bolstered by the exceptional and highly specific education provided by the equally exceptional Isabella. Katherine's education in Spain created her consciousness of her duties as queen and wife. Fraser provides a useful catalogue of the skills Katherine acquired, acknowledging that:

³ While Henry VII did also evince interest in marrying Katherine himself, the first step to retaining the princess, and her dowry, in any capacity, was to keep her within English territory.

Catherine's intellectual attainments apart, music, dancing, and drawing – the traditional and graceful spheres of Renaissance feminine accomplishment were naturally not ignored. But Queen Isabella also passed on to her daughters another more universal feminine tradition of basic domestic skills...her daughters were taught to spin, weave and bake... (*Wives* 12)

Fraser goes on the point out that these skills “provide[d] a domestic counterpoint to the regality which [Katherine] brought to the English court” (*Wives* 12). Additionally, though, both her regality and her domesticity were only facets of a personality with another striking aspect: Katherine was a thoroughly educated woman. As Mattingly outlines, in Isabella's conception of her daughters, “they were to be queens, and the ambassadors of Spain to Christendom. For this task Isabella educated them as seriously as she educated Juan” (8). In marrying Katherine, Henry began a trend he followed in most, though not all, of his marriages to come: he chose for his wife an educated woman with the confidence to articulate her own ideas. In choosing how to define his kingship and his court, Henry VIII chose for his first consort someone with the potential to be a partner, even a leader, inasmuch as the basic misogyny of the age would allow.⁴

Alongside these various attractive qualities, though, Katherine also presented Henry VIII with a subject for the chivalric imagery and poetry with which he created his image and his court's. While it would certainly be naïve to argue that the courtly love or chivalric traditions were “about” the lady or beloved, it would be equally problematic to claim that such traditions could exist without her. As Ann Rosalind Jones so clearly describes in her work on women's poetry in the Renaissance, the “amorous discourses” of the period were “constructed by male writers, who represented women as the silent objects of love” (1). This is reinforced by Mattingly's outline of the early days of the new reign: “If the tireless, versatile, young King was

⁴ In fact, when Henry granted Katherine the regency while he fought abroad in France, she not only maintained order and stability in England, but also successfully engaged in combat with Scotland, displaying a more effective military performance, ultimately, than her husband.

the center of all this bustling life in England, its center and focus for Henry was Catherine, the chief trophy of his new reign, the necessary audience for all his triumphs” (134). Katherine’s queenly air legitimized Henry’s kingly boasts; her domestic skills ensured his comfort and legitimized his ideas of special masculine privilege; her intelligence guaranteed an appreciative audience for his art, wit, and argument. Further, if, in defining himself through verse and performance, Henry privileged certain characteristics and practices as noble, manly, or kingly, it is equally true that, in crafting so much of his performance and art as homage to Katherine, he made very particular statements about what ought to be privileged in the women of the court. Katherine’s own performance of femininity encompassed domestic skill, courtly pageantry, and no little humanist education, and Henry chose to elevate that particular performance above all others, using his queen, then, as an element in his own creation and projection of self.

At the beginning of his reign, Henry needed to distance himself from the iconography of his father and, in so doing, create an iconographic identity of his own. This identity needed to promote the Tudor dynasty in general, but also needed to privilege Henry’s own specific traits, turning his youth and his aggression into admirable aspects of the ideal king rather than drawbacks. This idea has already been explored by Peter C. Herman, who convincingly argues that Henry himself was the first important poet of his own court, and that he used poetry and chivalric imagery to assert his identity and the monarchic power he saw as connected to that identity. Indeed, Herman argues specifically that “Henry VIII is the first poet to adapt the language of courtly verse to reflect his position in the [English] court” (2). Just as Henry’s choice of wife made a statement about the masculine personality he wished to project, so his poetry clarified his own vision of his self and his power. Herman separates the poems Henry wrote in the first years of his reign into the overlapping categories of poems spoken in the voice of the

courtly lover and poems spoken in defense of the pastimes of youth (28-29). While a helpful categorization, especially given the lack of conclusive chronological evidence for dating the poetry, the overlap of the two categories reflects the unity of Henry's central poetic project: privileging courtly love and chivalry as court rhetorical bases, in order to privilege his own interests, ideals, and iconography.

For example, the first "courtly lover" poem Herman references is Henry's quatrain "O my hart":

O my hart and O my hart!
My hart it is so sore,
Sens I must nedys from my love depart
And know no cause wherefore. (Lines 1-4)

Indeed, the poem is spoken in the voice of the courtly lover. But, just as critics assume that Wyatt's audience saw the irony of Wyatt's protestations against court life, so it is reasonable to assume that Henry's audience was fully aware of the irony of the protestation that lies at the dramatic heart of this poem. The basic form here is that of a protest: the speaker speaks against that which thwarts his wishes. However, if the reader knows that the speaker is a king, then the dramatic tension of the poem is necessarily ironic: if the king knows "no cause wherefore" something ought happen, then there is no reason that the thing should or will happen, presuming that thing falls within the king's control. In the case of separated lovers, Henry would make it imminently plain during his reign that, by his beliefs, leaving, taking, or disposing of his lovers lay well within his control. In love poetry, then, this royal writer may assume the *voice* of a constricted speaker, but he never assumes that *identity*, and his own prerogative necessarily overshadows the voice on the page. After all, as Herman emphasizes, "It would have been impossible for Henry to constitute himself as a subject for the simple reason that in his own estimation he is *not* a subject" (34). Though checks certainly existed against Henry's power,

particularly in the beginning of his reign, Henry himself found it difficult to accept the existence of, and impossible to accept the legitimacy of, those same checks.

Similarly, the awareness of royal identity, particularly as constructed by Henry, affects the reader's reception of Henry's poem "Withowt dyscord." The speaker begins by decreeing "Withowt dyscord / And bothe acorde, / Now let us be" (Lines 1-3). Another poet could begin a poem this way and have it be received only as a fairly traditional love complaint from the chivalric tradition. However, as with all of Henry's poems, the point, here, is that this is *not* another poet. The language of treaty and compromise has all the force of the royal voice behind it, and, in claiming to create a courtly love lyric, the king must necessarily speak of and to a woman who is the poet's subject in both senses of the word. Thus, the king's prescriptions can never acquire the tone of the plaintive lover; they are too thoroughly tainted with royal command. When the speaker states, then, that "Both hartes alone / To set in one / Best semyth me," the "me" must be the focus of those lines (Lines 3-6). Naturally, whatsoever seems best to Henry will be what occurs, particularly if he is expressing this desire to a subject who is capable of enacting or being acted upon by his will. Thus, in assuming the voice of less power, Henry emphasizes the reality of his power through the audience's experience of the contradiction between verse and reality. In invoking the voice of the courtly lover, Henry underscores his own power and authority, while simultaneously using that power and authority to define his court as one that will adhere to chivalric and courtly love traditions. The definition of the court, then, forces the courtiers to define themselves by the new standards of this youthful king, rather than forcing on Henry a definition of continuity from his father and rule by his father's court.

Herman concurs with this argument, arguing that "'Henry VIII used verse at the start of his reign to establish his royal identity and to defend himself against his critics" (3).

He further argues that, in the process of establishing his poetic and monarchic identities, Henry was also implicitly answering and defending against threats against those identities. As Herman argues, “Defenses respond to attacks...and Henry’s asserting his right to live as he would strongly suggests the presence of an unignorable “they” who wanted to restrain the king’s liberty” (37). In this case, the “they” likely represents not only the elderly advisors Herman identifies, but also the external perceptions of kingship generally and of this king specifically. Discussing the early disagreements between king and advisors, Herman argues that “Although Henry ultimately got his way, at the time he could not have known that he would” (37), and that as such it is important “to situate his lyrics within the context of the real, if ultimately overcome, resistance to his policies and preferred modes of recreation” (37).

Herman identifies this thread in the self-defensive tone of “Lusty Youth should us ensue” and “Though sum saith that yough rulyth me.” The second lyric, particularly, seems to answer some specific source of critique, offering such specific self defense as “I hurt no man, I do no wrong / I love trew wher I dyd mary” (Lines 13-14). In response to these attacks, the lyric not only expressly delineates the virtues of the speaker, but also points to royal prerogative through two gestures. The first of these is in a clear reference to Henry’s royal motto, referenced in the line “God and my ryght and my dewtye” (Line 3). The second of these is more subtle, lying in the informed audience’s response to the repeated theme “Though sum saith that yough rulyth me” (Lines 1, 5, 10, 15, and 20). The lyric, after all, is written by a king: thus, there is, to Henry, an inherent absurdity in the idea of any being, physical or metaphoric, ruling him. Indeed, as would have been becoming increasingly clear, in Henry’s construction of his kingship, literally nothing at all, save God, ought to rule him, and even that limitation was to be defined, in England, by Henry’s terms by the end of his reign. As Herman illuminates, “...when Henry

invokes this convention, he in effect redefines it to endow Youth with the authority of kingship” (36). The force of the royal voice reverses the conventional, subordinate position of youth, clarifying that far from being an old man who rules youth—or a youth ruled by the elderly—the king has become an embodiment of youth who will use his force and energy to rule all others.

A combination of the various facets that Henry saw as central to his identity, including this force and energy, can be seen in an analysis of “Thow that men do call it dotage.” The speaker privileges, at various points, youth, nobility, courage, and chivalric, devoted love. Indeed, it is here that Henry writes “Love maynteynyth all noble courage / Who love dysdaynyth ys all of the village” (Lines 13-14), which, as Herman points out, privileges love by necessarily implying that “the person who disdains love...has lost his place in the aristocracy; his disdain marks him as a peasant” (29). Additionally, however, the poem provides the same emphasis on the importance of the lover’s faithfulness that Herman discusses in other lyrics, notably “Green grows the holly.” In “Thow that men,” the poem closes with the lines “For whoso lovith shuld love butt oone. / Chaunge who so wyll, I wyll be none” (Lines 19-20). The emphasis provided by placing this couplet at the end of the verse, combined with the repetition of devoted love as a motif in Henry’s verse, emphasizes the importance of Katherine to Henry’s court. In Henry’s chivalric court, the noble man defined himself partially by his service and fidelity to an equally noble woman. For the first several years of Henry’s reign, Katherine represented the uncontested feminine subject center, and it was only after almost twenty years of marriage that any real threat to her supremacy was presented. In the scandal and romance that surrounds Anne Boleyn, the longevity of Henry’s first romance is often forgotten, but that very longevity suggests the central importance, to a younger Henry, of stability, chivalry, and an enactment of the kind of love about

which romances were written as elements of his court and of his kingship, even after the rather elusive, if not illusive, nature of all of these things must have become clear to him.

This chivalric image was not limited to the voice the king adopted on the page. In the tournaments he reveled in, “King Henry as Sir Loyal Heart or Coeur Vaillant jousted under the colours of his lady, and his Queen” (Fraser *Wives* 57). In the court entertainments he demanded, Henry assumed roles in the company of mythical, heroic, masculine figures like Hercules and Robin Hood (Anglo 119, 158), assaulting or protecting “feminine” virtues and vices as befitted each respective occasion. However, these images revealed more of the edge that underlined the chivalric poetry the king wrote: each privileged love, yes, but each gave even greater privilege to masculine prerogative. Describing the *Chateau Vert* pageant, during which Anne Boleyn made her first official appearance at the English court, and which has since been (over) dramatized as the moment at which the maid might have caught the king’s eye, Herman describes how “the reassertion of male dominance at the “battle’s” conclusion emblemizes the reassertion of the king’s dominance over the (literally feminized) enemies who dared to defy him; the king’s sexual potency, in other words, symbolizes his political potency, and vice versa” (28). What is most telling about this performance is the privileging of masculine position, not the tempting but anachronistic focus on Anne and Henry’s joint performance.⁵ The general pattern of Henry’s

⁵ In the *Chateua Vert* pageant, eight ladies embodied the virtues of beauty, honor, perseverance, kindness, constancy, bounty, mercy, and pity. These women stood in a castle guarded by feminized figures representing danger, disdain, jealousy, unkindness, scorn, “malebouche”, strangeness, and an eighth, unrecorded, figure, under assault from male courtiers and the King, dressed to portray amorousness, nobleness, youth, attendance, loyalty, pleasure, gentleness, and liberty, for whom “ardent desire” stood as spokesman. It is interesting, now, to note the various historical figures who took part: Anne Boleyn played the part of perseverance in her first official court appearance. Mary Boleyn, likely already Henry’s mistress, played the part of kindness. The role of constancy was given to Jane Parker, who would shortly become the Boleyns’ sister-in-law, later be widowed by George Boleyn’s execution, and then finally be executed herself for her

masques focused on precisely this: the reassertion of normative structures in the particular figuration of a return to masculine power, specifically represented by the group among which the king stood disguised.

In the early days of his reign, then, Henry adopted a chivalric stance, linked to the courtly love tradition. Henry's monarchic voice, though, necessarily bent the conventions of such a stance to meet the demands of a royal speaker. This royal voice became stronger as Henry's reign continued and as his identity stabilized, and eventually Henry stepped away from poetry, apparently entirely, as something no longer necessary to buoy the performance of his power. This kind of adoption, appropriation, and manipulation became something of a pattern in Henry's policy as well as in his poetics, reflecting Henry's growing power to enact his extreme conceptions of power. Take, for example, Henry's treatment of the Catholic Church. At the beginning of his reign, Henry stridently and doggedly defended the Church, actually seeking and ultimately gaining, the title "Defender of the Faith." However, when this definition would not allow Henry to achieve what he wished, he began to widen the parameters of his own prerogative. The break occurred, not when Henry first desired something to which the Church would not acquiesce with suitable speed, but when Henry VIII first began to see in the Church's power a tangible threat to his own power and solvency.

Equally famously, at the beginning of his reign, Henry took for his queen an educated, deeply religious woman whose entire identity was bound to her role as Queen of England. This woman, though, could not give Henry the single thing he most desired: a male heir. Because Henry was basically incapable of doubting the legitimacy of his own desires, and equally unlikely to doubt his God's willingness to grant him the fulfillment of those desires, Katherine

role in encouraging and enabling Katharine Howard's adultery. The King's sister, Mary, took the role of beauty.

herself became, for Henry, the embodiment of a problem he could not solve and of obstacles which thwarted him. Adding to this anxiety, Katherine was increasingly a physical reminder of male powers that stood more immediately in Henry's way: first as daughter to the deceptive Ferdinand, then as aunt to Charles V. These men were, at least politically speaking, forgiven where Katherine was not, but that speaks to an important point of the impact of Renaissance thoughts on gender on Henry's political and personal practices. A threatening man might be forgiven once neutralized; in theory, the other royal men of Europe were Henry's equals and so could be forgiven their presumption once they no longer stood directly in his path. The threat created by power in a woman, though, could not be neutralized. The damage was of a different sort entirely, and even if she gave into the will of the King, she had already done irrevocable damage through the very existence of her challenge. Since, then, the damage could not be undone, a threatening woman could not be forgiven. The king had identified not only the voice of his verse but also his physical being with certain standards of chivalric masculinity, among the most basic of these being lineage, heritage, and the ability to sire an heir. In the failure of their marriage to produce a son, Katherine had slowly become a threat to the king's performative masculinity and so to the ideal image he wished to project. In the failure of Henry's military ambitions, the dangerous pattern that emerged consistently tied back to this same queen, further hindering Henry's performance. The subject of his courtly love traditions was useful only so long as she could remain a subject, and Katherine had the misfortune to be continuously connected to objects and individuals who denied Henry his desires.

This feeling of threat, then, partially contributed to the famous changes that followed. Though Anne Boleyn may have been, as she is traditionally presented, challenging on a personal level, nothing about her personal power could actually challenge Henry's immediate political

power as king; ergo, despite her ostensibly more aggressive personality, she was actually, for a king, a more comfortable choice than Katherine. Herman argues convincingly that the last poem Henry wrote, several years after the composition of his other verses, was a tribute to Anne, a lyric beginning “The eagle’s force subdues.” The poem is essentially a series of metaphors, each building on the relationship of an inescapable power and the medium on which that power works. As Herman argues, “Despite the clever turn at the end, suggesting that love transforms the monarchic speaker into a fool, there is no mistaking the superior position of this wooer” (50); however, that power is partly emphasized by the very ambiguity of the turn. The final line reads “The wysest are, with Princes, made but fools.” This does, of course, have the effect Herman describes, but the line simultaneously suggests that, in the presence of Princes, all others are made fools; other people are the medium on which the inescapable force of royalty works.

Herman makes the important point that

Henry pursued Anne Boleyn in very different terms than he had Katherine...he no longer invokes chivalric figures or adopts a subservient position toward his beloved...those images...[have] been replaced by images that unconditionally project the monarch’s authority. (49)

Certainly this is true; the voice in “The eagle’s force subdues” does not even make any real attempt to sound as though the speaker lacks control in the situation. Certainly, also, the king’s definition of his own masculinity has changed, but the kind of femininity he is conceptualizing as the target of his pursuit is equally central in understanding this shift. Further, the actual action in which Henry is participating needs to be clarified, for, at least in the extant verse, it is difficult to pin down any poem in which Henry can be said to be *pursuing* Katherine, as he seems to have already assumed the throne when he pens his first verses. Instead, the shift is not only one of authority of voice, but also one that outlines the differences between paying homage to a queen and equal and pursuing a subject: an individual who can never claim the kind of basic authority

that Henry believed to be his birthright. Though Katherine's connections may have ultimately contributed to the rift between her and her husband, they also preserved her unimpeachable position as his equal in noble and royal bloodlines, if not, though Henry would have been unlikely to admit it, superior.

Through a feeling of security, then, which is reflected in the more mature, assuredly monarchic voice of his last poem, Henry began, ironically, the more unstable acts that characterized his later reign. Henry conceived of himself as a whole, unified, masculine self; because he could not accept or understand the multitudinous nature of "self," the court was dependent on definitions that were inconstant and changeable, but the court also existed in an atmosphere of insistence that such change was not occurring. When he first took the throne, Henry had used performance, verse, and even his marriage to craft carefully a particular monarchic image. That image focused on youth, chivalry, and a particular version of the courtly love tradition that often privileged the faithful lover. In marrying Katherine of Aragon, Henry centered her as at least the most public subject of his courtly devotions, one that bolstered his own ideas of regality and of masculinity. However, Henry's conceptions of self and of kingdom could not bend to the reality of a faithful, valid marriage that failed to produce the male heir for whom he so wished. As this failure became more of a focus for the King, so Katherine's position became ever more tenuous. Further, as Henry's insistence on self-righteousness and on monarchic power became stronger, it became clearer that someone else must be blamed and that the changes necessary to enforce the King's will would be made. Thus, paradoxically, the strengthening of the King's position led to the weakening of court stability that would follow the annulment of Henry's twenty-four year marriage to Katherine of Aragon and the coronation of Anne Boleyn. Henry's decision reflected his true investment; the imagery which bolstered his

masculinity and his power had become more important to him than the chivalric constancy and devotion he had once expressed in his verse.

B. The Most Happy: Anne Boleyn, Thomas Wyatt, and Gendered Self-Creation in Henry's Court

The court's instability during and following Henry's divorce from Katherine of Aragon and his affair with Anne Boleyn provided an atmosphere for women that was, if not unique, certainly unusual in Renaissance England. Women were always in competition, but never again were the stakes as high as in King Henry's court. Anne's rise made it evident that embodying the perfectly feminine could lead to the crown, but one misstep, or at least misstep as perceived by the king, and the very fact that a woman had risen high could cost her head. The court itself was rapidly becoming inherently unstable, politically, religiously, and romantically speaking. Henry was hyper-sensitive, indeed paranoid, concerning any threat to perceptions of his masculinity. The men around him needed to define themselves as masculine in order to gain status, but Anne Boleyn's trial presented sufficient proof that no man should be too interesting or too visible. This chapter examines the changes in tone and import surrounding concepts of gender in Henry's court during the approximate ten years of Anne's major influence, three and a half of which she spent as queen. Such changes particularly emphasize the shift away from Henry's original conceptions of a chivalric court, as feminine power began to be perceived as ever more dangerous and as the men of Henry's court attempted to balance the tricky line of performing obediently, submissively, and often consciously duplicitously, without ever veering into the realm of that much-feared femininity. These changes are most specifically examined, within this section, through a focus on the mix of critical, historical, and literary evidence surrounding three of the court's major figures.

The first figure, naturally, is Henry himself. What particular factors began to drive Henry into the extreme displays of masculine power in which he increasingly reveled? How did his

recent experiences and prejudices regarding gender roles influence his mania for a son and his apparent distrust of all women? How, then, did Henry himself influence changes in gender roles at his court? The second figure is among those who paid the greatest price for playing the game of Henry's court: Anne Boleyn. In order to become queen, Anne must have been the ideal female courtier at some point. What version of idealized femininity did she reflect? How did she fall so rapidly and so far? The final represents one of the most interesting male courtier figures in any English court: Sir Thomas Wyatt. Wyatt's poetical works provide the most important commentary on Henry's court for this chapter; they are contemporary, often brazen, and, I will argue, highly personal. How did Wyatt feel about his role at court and in his relationship with Anne? In what ways might Wyatt have been typical of men at court? Wyatt's poetry indicates the tensions he experienced as he tried to reconcile masculine ideals with the ideals of courtiership under Henry. His poems also provide some speaking commentary on the feminine gender roles at court and examine where the ideals of femininity and courtiership overlap, as well as how that overlap complicates ideals of masculinity.

For the purposes of exploring gender in the court of King Henry VIII, one of the richest sources is a story concerning these three court players. The tale was originally recorded by George Wyatt in the *Life of Anne Boleigne*, though he gives as his source a maid to Anne Boleyn named Anne Gainsford.⁶ Kenneth Muir's record of the tale transcribes George Wyatt's story: first, he addresses Thomas Wyatt's initial attraction to Anne, and indicates that she "rejected all his speech of love" when she learned he was married, but did not take her rejection too far, aware that other men would "turn their looks to that which a man of his worth was brought to gaze at in

⁶ Many essays and books on Anne, Thomas Wyatt, and Henry himself record the story, but most give Kenneth Muir's *The Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt* as their source, due to the difficulty of accessing the original source.

her” (Muir 15-16). As the tale progresses, George Wyatt relates an incident between the King and Thomas Wyatt. Thomas Wyatt takes, either by force or through favor, depending on the interpretation of the source, a small jewel from Anne, apparently dangling by a thread or lace, determined “either to have it with her favour, or as an occasion to have talke with her” (Muir 18). King Henry, on the other hand, gets from Anne a ring, which he wears on his little finger. A few days later, while “sportinge...at bowles,” Henry claims as his own a cast which was made by someone else and, pointing with the little finger on which he wears Anne’s ring, says, “ ‘Wiat, I tel thee it is mine’” (Muir 18). Wyatt responds, “ ‘An if it may like your Majesty to give me leave to measure it, I hope it will be mine’” and measures the cast with the bit of lace on which Anne’s jewel dangles. The King’s final retort before ending the game is “ ‘It may be so, but then I am deceived’” (Muir 18). The story ends with Anne satisfying Henry’s jealousy (for the moment) with her innocuous explanation for Wyatt’s possession of the jewel (Muir 19).

Muir himself devotes little attention to this incident in his book; he is primarily concerned with the story as evidence of whether Anne and Thomas Wyatt did indeed have a relationship before her marriage to Henry. (He concludes that they likely did.) Catherine Bates, however, opens her article “Wyatt, Surrey, and the Henrician Court” by relating and then interpreting this story. She points out how much the gender roles of the Renaissance influence this tale and the reflections it provides on the characters of all three main players. These roles and reflections can then be juxtaposed with Wyatt’s poetry and Castiglione’s courtly ideals to reveal something of the complexity of court play under Henry. Indeed, one of Bates’s biggest concerns is with the role of the courtier as player. The assertion of “knowing” what play signified, Bates argues, was a powerful political weapon under Henry; in fact, it was a weapon used against Anne Boleyn and Thomas Wyatt during their respective trials (Bates 39-40). In Bates’s view, absolutist claims

about knowing precisely what play means are more destructive than helpful in attempts at true understanding, especially in modern criticism of Wyatt. Play, Bates argues, may have any number of meanings, or it may be impossible to discern a single “correct” meaning. She argues that Wyatt was not necessarily as concerned with winning as with simply playing; that is to say, Wyatt was not as invested in maintaining power as some critics imply (Bates 41). Rather, she argues that court poetry was often about dramatizing the speaker’s experiences as play and, in so doing, creating “the illusion...of a living human self, that is as opaque and mysterious as any other, yet, vulnerable and exposed in all its intimacy...” (Bates 44). The creation of this illusion was, in Bates’s view, pure play to the poet: Wyatt, specifically, viewed success in creating this illusion as success in the game he was playing.

However, this raises the question of whether Wyatt’s concern with success in the game is not linked to a real concern with power. Certainly, the expression of frustration at the speaker’s powerlessness is a powerful and recurring theme in Wyatt’s poetry. Further, much critical evidence points to an element of autobiography in Wyatt’s work that, while Bates does not deny, she may undervalue. When the poet dramatizes his experiences, he may add fiction to the fact, but that addition and signification does not eliminate the underlying element of truth. Nonetheless, while legitimate claims may thus be made that Wyatt is, indeed, quite thoroughly invested in the real pursuit of power, Bates’s concern with the self he creates on the page is legitimate, and that self has some interesting implications when considered in the light of certain Renaissance thought about gender.

An investigation of the ideals set forth by Castiglione in *The Courtier*, certainly an influential text when examining Renaissance thought, indicates that one of the courtier’s primary roles was, indeed, that of player. The central theme of *sprezzatura* is primarily one that deals

with playing a role without seeming to play a role. In his description of the ideal courtier, the character Federico Fregoso specifies, “[A]lthough he may know and understand what he is doing, in this also I wish him to dissimulate the care and effort that are necessary for any competent performance” (Castiglione 120). However, in contrast to many of Bates’s ideas, this kind of play was also inherently serious. The courtier achieved and maintained his position, and by extension a successful masculine performance, through success in this kind of role-playing. However, this kind of role-playing both inherently acknowledged *dependence* on the King and involved a kind of duplicity that would have been antithetical to ideals of the masculine. Renaissance thought largely conceived of the female temperament as one of double natures, duplicity, and contradiction. Wyatt may have been interested in ‘playing’ with the doubleness of femininity in order to address the complications of his role at court, but the consequences of his interest had real implications and were reflective of a real socio-psychological divide.

As Katherine Maus explored in “A Womb of His Own: Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body,” Wyatt would hardly have been alone in his interest in commanding the secretive, unseen nature of the feminine for his own purposes (Maus 272-273). If Wyatt’s poems are, in fact, an elaborate mask, that mask does not have to be one of *masculine* power. Instead, the mask may be an attempt to countermand the inherent secretiveness of the feminine (Maus 273). Naturally enough, however, even a mysterious feminine kind of power would be desired only insofar as it could be subjected to, and understood as, male power (Maus 275). The mask created by the poet is an elaborate illusion, and so is play in the sense that reflects both more and less than the poet’s own concept of selfhood. In this way, the mask is an appropriation of feminine doubleness to protect and distance the masculine speaker from scrutiny. However, it is also a protective cover and a way of coping with the demands against individuality inherent in adhering

to the ideals of courtiership. In addition, the very use of the mask further complicates the stance of the poet. In co-opting the feminine mask, the poet has both succumbed to feminine doubleness and sought the ostensibly weaker feminine as protection.

Indeed, Stephen Greenblatt convincingly argues for a more literal interpretation of Wyatt's work, and so his concern with power and retaining selfhood, in his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. The mask is not play to Greenblatt; rather, it is an attempt to retain masculinity: "Any expression of need or dependence of longing is...perceived as a significant defeat; the characteristic male...dream is for an unshakable self-sufficiency that would render all relations with other superfluous" (141). Greenblatt argues that Wyatt saw masculinity in exact opposition to feminine doubleness. Under this interpretation, Wyatt is not, precisely, imitating the feminine. Rather, his love poetry would reflect his poetry about court: he cannot release himself from bonds that he helps create, but he resents both his involvement and his own implication. Wyatt, then, is using the mask of poetry to express his own frustration and limitation, while still maintaining the distance required to identify such complaints as purely artistic, thus preserving the gendered ideals of masculinity and independence.

The expression of such frustrations can be clearly seen in Wyatt's "I Find No Peace." Throughout the poem, the speaker explores his untenable position in a kind of no man's land. Wyatt, as a courtier under the extreme strictures of Henry's court, would have identified his own place as somewhere in this kind of territory, caught between paradoxical ideals. The speaker expresses his emotions through contrasting imagery: "I burn and freeze like ice" (2) and "I desire to perish and yet I ask health" (10). Such imagery implies a feminization of the speaker in its expression of double nature and contradiction; the Petrarchan conventions take on important elements in the specific context of Henry's court and through Wyatt's careful implementation.

The poem may ostensibly be about a lover, but the speaker's dilemma is equally apt as a description of many of the feelings Wyatt expressed about court life. Especially applicable to this interpretation is the description of the "delight" (Wyatt Line 14) as one that "holdeth me not, yet can I 'scape nowise" (Wyatt Line 6). While there may have been no strictures binding gentlemen to the court, it was still essentially the only source of advancement, public honor, and fame. As such, even gentlemen who sensed, and wished to avoid, Henry's instability would have had little choice but to risk court for the sake of their ambition. The line "I love another and thus I hate myself" (Line 11), then, can be seen as both a frustrated statement on the impossibility of courting inconstant women and as a more nuanced expression of the consequences of owing loyalty and service to a tyrannical king. The courtier surrenders his self-respect in serving another man and in subjecting himself to that man for purely political reasons, which differ significantly from the more martial, and so more obviously masculine to the Renaissance mind, motivations that justify fealty under the older feudal system. In paying Henry service, the courtier is forced into duplicitous roles that challenge his selfhood. His surrender of agency to the king feminizes him, but any real acknowledgement of that feminization threatens his position under that same king.

"Farewell, Love" takes this same frustration and makes the links between the duplicities of courtiership and femininity even more clear. Throughout, love is presented as an equal alternative to man's laws. However, in presenting these two paths as the only options, the speaker also implies that freedom is simply not an option. The speaker, and in a general sense, the courtier, can only choose between two kinds of servitude: one to the "baited hooks" of love (Wyatt Line 2), the other to the "Senec and Plato" of logic and law (Wyatt Line 3). However, it is worth noting that obedience to the first noted law, that of love, should not have freed a courtier

from the strictures of other laws. A possible reading would be that, in this case, the speaker is referencing some sort of forbidden love, in which other law must implicitly be forgotten. Certainly Wyatt, who had desired the king's wife and was, throughout his life, something of a serial adulterer, would be no stranger to this sort of love, and would have no struggle in creating a speaker who could voice the paradox of love's laws superseding man's laws. Also possible, though, is that the speaker is slyly referencing self love. For a courtier to love and value himself, keeping true to the Renaissance definition of masculinity, would be to reject, necessarily, a position at court and the subjugation of courtiership. Thus, in rejecting love, the speaker brings himself back under the rule of societal norms and English law. The final lines are especially interesting: "For hitherto though I have lost all my time, / Me lusteth no longer rotten boughs to climb" (Wyatt "Farewell" Lines 13-14). The relationship between Wyatt and the speaker bears some examination under the context of these lines. Wyatt has constructed a courtier who is, ostensibly, rejecting the corruption and ambition of court life. Wyatt himself, however, never definitively left Henry's court or service. The use of "lusteth", then, besides drawing a further parallel between the demands of love and the demands of ambition, provides an important link between speaker and poet. Both want to reject the dangerous pursuits in which they are engaged, but this desire does not, at least for Wyatt, translate itself into an actual accomplishment. The surrender of self-determination and agency implicit in such a failure again links the speaker to characteristics generally considered, in the Renaissance, to be feminine, while simultaneously reflecting an ideal of courtiership that would have been considered positive: the construction of the courtier whose life is not his own.

Greenblatt's interpretation of Wyatt's poetry centers on this similarity of the feminine and the courtly; there is something inherently duplicitous about both. For a man to mask himself

is, as discussed above, implicitly feminine; to be a courtier is inherently to have a double self- to create, consciously, a social self. The goal, Greenblatt argues, for both the courtier and the male lover, is “domination and possession,” (goals that are only dubiously achievable when one must be subject to the king’s desires) but both cloak their motives in higher ideals (154). Greenblatt explores this further in his discussion of Wyatt’s historical “manliness.” Wyatt “appears to have fashioned it as his literary and social identity, in part perhaps as a flattering imitation of Henry VIII” (154). This characterization is intriguing in its implications. First, Henry, as king, becomes, naturally enough, the consummate version of the masculine. Second, imitation of Henry becomes a sound political decision for any wise (and by extension, manipulative) courtier. However, this imitation immediately complicates the courtier’s position. His role is to imitate the very masculine king; at the same time, imitation of the sort that does not pursue any sort of genuine change, but is only a performance for others, implies duplicity – a trait considered inherently feminine. A courtier, like Wyatt, must balance his social self in the complex space between the feminized action of imitation and the masculine ideal, as represented by the king, which he seeks to imitate.

What, then, are the implications of the proposed relationship between Anne and Wyatt, if Wyatt is choosing to imitate King Henry? After all, as the woman chosen by the king, the queen (or current paramour) represents his ideal of womanhood. Just as imitation of the king would involve an implied acceptance of that king as the masculine ideal, it would also involve acceptance of the roles he assigns to others. Acknowledgement of his ideal female’s superiority seems a sound political strategy for ingratiating oneself. Indeed, when speaking, in his biography of Anne, of one of the courtiers tried with her for her adultery, Eric Ives reports that “the pretence that Norris loved his sovereign’s wife was the common currency of courtly dalliance”

(335). But at some point, it seems Wyatt, Anne, and many others went too far. Perhaps Wyatt's masculinity was such that the king himself felt threatened. However, Anne, as the secretive feminine and the center of the scandal, seems a more likely source for Henry's insecurities; if Wyatt's poems are read as anything but pure play, she certainly presents an indecipherable problem for the poet, as well.

Women, in Wyatt's work, are inherently inconstant creatures. The theme of Wyatt's work on women can be construed as one of disappointed expectations and frustrations in pursuit. Often, especially in the poems that are interpreted as referencing Anne Boleyn, Wyatt uses imagery pertaining to wild animals, as in "They Flee From Me" or "Whoso List to Hunt," to signify these themes. In "They Flee From Me", the subjects are described as "stalking" (Line 2) creatures who easily forget the former kindnesses shown them by the speaker: "I have seen them gentle, tame, and meek / That now are wild..." (Wyatt Lines 3-4). The hind of "Whoso List to Hunt" is similarly "wild for to hold / though I seem tame" (Lines 13-14). The speaker cannot trust the women who are the subjects of these poems; they are animalistic and ergo untrustworthy. As less than human, they cannot be expected to fulfill the speaker in the way he craves- through human relationships. "They Flee From Me" emphasizes the "continual change" of the subjects as a source of frustration for the speaker (Wyatt Lines 7). Such a phrase was highly typical of constructions of the feminine in the Renaissance. However, this implication that women's inconstancy is elemental is complicated by the final line of the same poem: "I would fain know what she hath deserved" ("They Flee" Line 21). If the woman is simply acting in the way that the speaker most anticipates, the resentment of the speaker seems inconsistent, at least insofar as it can claim to stem from disappointed expectations. Such a reaction is especially problematic when contrasted with the more tolerant tone of many of Wyatt's other poems, like

“Divers Doth Use.” Wyatt here subtly acknowledges the impossible contradictions of Renaissance thought on women, both by indicating the impossibility of perfection and by showing the contradictions between the speaker’s expectations and his ideals. His speaker’s resentment is no less real for this complication, but the reader must acknowledge that either the conception of woman as untamable is not entirely accurate or the desire for her punishment is unjustified. The fact that the poem does not tip in either direction indicates the largest theme concerning women in Wyatt’s work: their mystery.

The limited, secretive nature of feminine power can be accessed through a return to the scene at bowls. Few of Anne’s own actions are described in the anecdote, but that is itself a reflection on her role. She is primarily acted upon: Bates characterizes her as “quarry” and “an object of homosocial desire” (38). However, her role is not by any means an entirely passive one. Anne is still one of the players in this game. Just as the poet may determine which social mask he wears, so Anne is active in influencing how she will be observed by the men (Bates 38). M. Bella Mirabella complicates this idea somewhat as she explores the lack of agency women experience as the objects of men’s gaze in her essay “Mute Rhetorics: Women, the Gaze, and Dance in Renaissance England.” Dance was primarily another expression of male control. Women were put “on display for those in power” and at the same time were “under constant surveillance...controlled and restrained” (Mirabella 415). However, Mirabella also points out that the near-paranoia surrounding the use of proper forms implied that men were not certain of their control and were, on some level, aware of their own need for women to fill the idealized role these men had created for them (Mirabella 415). The kind of resentment so often expressed in Wyatt’s poetry is a symptom of this repressed need. “In watching women dance, men hoped to see their idealized selves reflected back to them” (Mirabella 415). While dancing, as a highly

structured activity, was one of the safest outlets for this kind of investment, the men of Henry's court were always invested in the images and actions of their wives, always concerned that their women meet the ideal.

One can imagine, then, the weight on Anne Boleyn, in whom the King himself wished to see his own ideal. In exploring dance, we can begin to move further in court history, beyond our opening tableau. In his biography of Anne, Ives documents Anne's debut at the English court as an appearance in the Chateau Vert pageant at York Place, then still Cardinal Wolsey's palace, in March 1522 (37-38). Anne played the part of Perseverance; Ives argues that the "occasion...allowed her to show off all that she had learned in years abroad" (39). The masque itself, further, provides plenty of commentary on the presentation of gender roles in Henry's court, as the feminized virtues are claimed by the men through an assault on less receptive feminine qualities- those traits which might lead a lady to reject a true lover. In an interesting bit of gender play, the unattractive, demonized feminine qualities guarding the castle were represented by boys dressed as women; specifically, as Indian women. Anne's first appearance at court, then, is one in which she, along with other important women of the court, was a focus of attention, a focus of male gazes, and a player of structured gendered role created for her. She is occupying a space that is, in short, highly symbolic of the space of female courtiership.

Mirabella explains the lengths to which men went to keep women controlled, restrained, and unthreatening; she also relates these ideas to ideals outlined in *The Courtier*. The outline of ideal femininity created by Castiglione's characters is indeed one of extreme restriction and guidance. The male courtier is very restricted himself, but the female courtier is constantly subject to even more extreme dual tensions: she is both pushed forward to be observed and drawn back to be controlled. The Magnifico, Guiliano de Medici, pushes this tension into sharp

relief as he outlines the proper feminine behavior at court. Often, when referencing how a lady ought to react to something improper, the Magnifico says that if a lady reacts with too much overt modesty, she runs the risk of being accused of that same impropriety (Castiglione 212-213). The character admits of his ideal that “she must observe a difficult mean, composed as it were of contrasting qualities, and take care not to stray beyond certain fixed limits” (212). As discussed above, it was important for the preservation of Court masculinity that women adhere to his standard, but men also expected women to fail, or, to put it more clearly, they seem to have been aware on some level that perfection was unattainable and that perhaps the perfection described in conduct manuals, like *The Courtier*, was not even true perfection. Greenblatt glances at the inevitable of a court lady’s failure when he acknowledges that “court entertainments habitually express disillusionment, frustration, menace, hostility to the very women who are courted, and craving for a security that erotic love cannot offer” (139). Certainly, it is fair to say that Wyatt’s poetry about women often expresses very similar sentiments to those court entertainments- both the same idealistic desires and the same frustrations.

These images of idealization also project the danger that was involved in women’s inevitable failures. While generally characterized as too flirtatious, too proud, a coquette, many of Anne’s decisions, as documented by Ives, seem to indicate that, if not genuinely virtuous, she was at least wise enough to appear to align herself with the more subdued feminine values, as well. Of course, appearances ought to have counted as everything for a courtier. Ives recounts Anne’s response to Henry’s erotic demands prior to his divorce from Katherine: she falls to her knees and accuses Henry of testing her, since surely the noble king would not think of “wickedness which would justly procure the hatred of God and of your good queen against us”

(85). Whether real or false modesty, this is the proper response from a noble woman asked to become a king's mistress or to replace a queen. Anne showed a more subtle, crafty use of feminine values when she wrote, in a Book of Hours which she and Henry passed between them in morning mass, "By daily proof you shall me find / To be to you both loving and kind" (Ives 7). The words themselves are perhaps uninspired; their context, placed beneath an illustration of the Annunciation, is calculated genius from a woman trying to attract a man as desperate for an heir as Henry was by this time. At some point, however, Anne's calculations failed. Having reviewed Castiglione's prescriptions for feminine courtiership, it is less difficult to imagine how she might have failed (perhaps she blushed too much when gossip was brought up), than how, without royal blood to protect her, she managed to retain her position as long as she did. Ultimately, the magnitude of a woman's eventual failure was directly proportional to the magnitude of her earlier successes, and Anne's earlier successes had taken her as high as a woman in England could possibly go.

When considering Anne's fall, the man whose ideals she failed is as important as, if not more important than, which precise ideals she failed to represent. Greenblatt glances at the power that was quickly becoming Henry's most compelling trait when he writes, "conversation with the king himself must have been like small talk with Stalin" (136-137). This power was dangerously effective, at least superficially, in dealing with the many problems Henry had with his wives- as Henry had only recently both discovered and demonstrated. Henry VIII's united fear of, and desire for, the feminine largely determined the course of his reign. Some of his extreme behavior can be understood if we consider the feminine from Henry's point of view. Henry believed in his right to control, absolutely, everything and everyone around him. He stretched this power to its limits, more notably at the beginning of his reign, to aid in the creation of a strong, centralized

England. However, one pertinent point about that power was evidently becoming more and more evident to Henry: his efforts were essentially pointless if that which he had created could not be passed on to a son. The creation of that son depended, in Henry's mind, on the two things that even the king could not understand or control: the grace of God acting through the functions of the female body. While his desperation for a son thus likely spurred Henry, modern audiences can hardly feel sympathetic towards his reaction to the death of his first wife or his second. For the first, Ives reports, Henry and Anne appeared the following day in celebratory yellow (295). Within two weeks of the second, Henry had married Jane Seymour (Ives 360). Henry VIII was, in short, selfish, tyrannical, and, in the Renaissance, entirely kingly.

Greenblatt makes some interesting points about power that certainly extend to Henry's reign. Speaking of the fantasies of powerful men, he argues, "The point is not that anyone is deceived by the charade, but that everyone is forced either to participate in it or watch it silently" (13). Henry was all about the display; whether it was a court entertainment, a game, or his own life, his primary concern was exercising the power he had to force people to allow him to win. At the same time, he was completely invested in the self-deception necessary to believe that he had legitimately won, as we can see in his claim of another player's throw at bowls. For Henry, exercising his right to win at everything was as good as winning by skill. True, Henry often completely fails to fulfill Castiglione's ideals for a courtier, but the point, for Henry, is that those ideals absolutely do not apply to him. He is above definition; rather, he is that which defines others. Castiglione's Federico provides insight into this aspect of the ideal courtier when he describes the courtier's chief duty as "loving and adoring the prince he serves above all else, devoting all his ambitions, actions, and behaviour to pleasing him" (Castiglione 125). The

courtier fulfills his duty by allowing himself to be defined by his sovereign; the king fulfills his duty by providing definition to others.

David Kuchta explores the importance of display and definition at court in his essay “Semiotics of Masculinity in Renaissance England,” arguing particularly that extravagant clothing was pivotal in the line between masculine and effeminate display (234). He goes on to argue that just as clothes project, but do not create, the nobility of the wearer, the monarch clarified the meaning of the clothes (Kuchta 243). The wearer of the crown created the courtier’s uniform, and it then became easier for the courtier to wear extravagant clothing casually, as simply the appropriate uniform for a given occasion (Kuchta 244). “If clothes proclaimed the man, then it was the crown which proclaimed the clothes” (243). While Kuchta mostly explores these trends under Elizabeth and James I, Henry himself was thoroughly invested in the magnificent ideals of kingly clothing. Ives documents pages worth of data on the sumptuous clothing created for Anne: elaborate fur-lined gowns, embroidered sleeves, jeweled French hoods (252-253). Ives also documents the costume worn by Henry at the court entertainment in which Anne first appeared. He and the other men wore “caps and coats of cloth of gold and tinsel, with blue velvet buskins and ‘great mantle cloaks of blue satin’, each of which had forty-two scrolls of yellow damask on which were pasted, in blue letters, the name of the character...”(38).⁷ Henry’s endorsement of this kind of lavish spectacle encouraged his courtiers to similar actions, just as his endorsement of their subjection to him helped alleviate the tensions between the definitions of courtly and masculine behavior.

This acceptance of definition by the king, however, is one of the central problems in Wyatt’s poetry. As mentioned above, Greenblatt explains that many people in the Renaissance

⁷ Evidently, on a previous occasion, the names had been made of real gold and were snatched off of the costumes by spectators (Ives 38).

conceived of part of a man's power as his ability to force those watching his actions to "either to participate in it or watch it silently" (13). Historically speaking, Wyatt's downfall was that he neither participated in Henry's actions wholeheartedly nor watched events unfold silently, while his poetry reflects the tensions he experienced from trying to do both. Explorations of Wyatt's "Stand Whoso List" and "Who List His Wealth and Ease Retain" are apt when considering Wyatt's complicated view of his position at court. In "Who List His Wealth and Ease Retain," the repetition "*circa regna tonat*" (Lines 5, 10, 15, 20, 25) creates an inescapable and certainly unflattering portrait of Henry. The acknowledgement that "The fall is grievous from aloft" (Wyatt "Wealth and Ease" Line 9) mirrors the imagery of falling mentioned earlier in "Farewell, Love," but this time there is no mitigating possibility of the fall being only from love's favors: this time it must be Fortune's favors that have failed the speaker. Ambition is characterized as a certain route to a fall in "Who List His Wealth and Ease", as well as in "Stand Whose List", and yet again there is a tension between the speaker and Wyatt. However much Wyatt's speaker may claim that he will be "unknown in court" ("Stand Whoso" Line 4), the reader, whether one of Wyatt's contemporaries or a modern student, knows that this is untrue for Wyatt himself. Wyatt fairly baldly expresses contempt not only for the court, but for Henry himself, and yet he spends his entire life in service to both. The tone of frustration that runs throughout Wyatt's poetry, whether the subject is love or courtly ambition, is best explained as the frustration of the poet's attempts to reconcile his own desire for self definition, the definitions of masculinities imposed by his society, and the definition imposed upon him by his king.

Henry's decisions, naturally, determine the decisions of the entirety of his court. His definitions determine how his courtiers define themselves and others. As indicated above, his desire for lavish dress validates the courtier's costume: rather than something effeminate, the

extravagance becomes an imitation of the ultimate figure of male power: the King. Similarly, imitation and the creation of a duplicitous social self receive implicit endorsement from their places in the repertoire of the ideal courtier. The conventions of courtly love dictated that courtiers feign love for the Queen- the king's endorsed feminine ideal. Finally, then, we must assume that Henry's paranoia regarding the secretive nature of women would have tended to drive the rest of his court to similar views on women.

Henry's entire history with women indicates his obsession with establishing his own virility and the fear and contempt in which he held the female body. Something of this attitude is revealed in Ives's account of the exchange between king and queen following Anne's miscarriage in 1536. Henry, visiting Anne during her confinement, apparently said "as if in spite, 'When you are up I will speak to you'" (299). Ives goes on to show that Anne may not have alleviated Henry's fears: she apparently responded by blaming his indiscretions with Jane Seymour for her misfortune, reinforcing the inexplicable nature of the malfunctions of her body (299). Henry's response to the feminine body is thoroughly that of the Renaissance male: he fears the body because he cannot understand it. Henry's masculinity is partially defined by his virility, specifically his virility with his wives. Furthermore, for Henry, the defects of his body personal might be attacked by his critics as evidence of flaws in his body politic. The image of his country and his kingship is dependent upon the maintenance of his masculine image. Women are by nature mysterious and their reproductive function is hidden; Henry is highly reliant on that reproductive function, but can only understand it as some inferior thing which is controlling his fate. His fear and distrust are no different from the usual Renaissance view of women as untrustworthy (though his resentment may be exacerbated by his own visibility). Henry simply happens to be in a position, especially following the Reformation, from which he can fully

justify and exercise his paranoia. His overt endorsement of the more negative aspects of the usual Renaissance view had effects on the male courtiers beneath him which are often reflected in Wyatt's characterizations of women.

Though Henry may have been the cause of Anne's abandonment of Wyatt, both men nonetheless felt themselves betrayed by the same woman. Certainly, Wyatt's reflections on women in his poetry have revealed a preoccupation with their double nature. The speaker of "Divers Doth Use," for example, mocks lovers who are surprised when their beloved ladies turn away from them. In contrast, he will "think it is of kind/ That often change doth please a woman's mind" (Wyatt Lines 13-14). Further, he will not "call her false" (Wyatt "Divers" Line 12) but rather "let it pass" (Line 13). Despite the somewhat bitter characterization of feminine duplicity, the speaker here is ultimately forgiving of it. The speaker will, he claims, subject himself to the heartbreak that feminine failures make inevitable without complaining about that heartbreak. However, it is notable that the speaker does not simply give up on these relationships, perhaps accounting for the bitter undertones of the poem. Instead, the masculine speaker continually subjects himself to feminine inconstancy.

This is reflected again in the complexities of Wyatt's "Madam, Withouten Many Words". There is a clear play in the poem for a preservation of the speaker's masculinity and autonomy. The line "And I mine own and yours no more" asserts strongly the speaker's desire for independence (Wyatt Line 12). Indeed, the tone of the entire poem is one of masculine demand, from the first, formal "Madam". However, this domineering tone is undermined by much of the wording of the poem. Particularly at odds with the speaker's apparent demands is the admission that "with a beck ye shall me call" (Line 5). Despite the speaker's attempts to retain masculinity through demands and an appearance of control, the actual content of the poem argues for a

masculinity that is subjected to the desires and demands of the feminine. The poem also contains one sharp contrast to many of Wyatt's portrayals of femininity: "Once I am sure, ye will or no" ("Withouten" Line 2). The speaker here implies that the beloved will, ultimately, make one decision or the other. However, Wyatt typically portrays women as inconstant creatures who cannot make up their minds. The implication here, if the rest of Wyatt's work is considered, is that ultimately the speaker will be disappointed, whatever the woman's decision, because her decision cannot be trusted. At the same time, though, the speaker's masculinity *also* cannot be trusted. The demanding, masculine voice has failed the speaker just as thoroughly as he projects that the woman will. This failure reveals the doubleness of both the tone and the fundamental characterization of the speaker.

Wyatt's poetry expresses the frustrations that not only he, but also other courtiers, would have felt at both their own failures and the failures of those around them to reconcile the contradictions of various Renaissance gender constructions. The consequences of these common Renaissance thoughts on gender became catastrophic under the influences at King Henry's court. By examining the King himself, we can begin to understand the consequences for every member of the nobility and the way that those consequences might filter down through the social system—from the way he defines himself to the way he defines others, and the way those definitions interact. Wyatt and Henry both lend the modern scholar different vantage points on Queen Anne Boleyn, different masculine gazes on a single female courtier. Anne herself exemplifies the impossibilities of the ideals of female courtiership, as well as providing a pivotal example of the effects of failure on both the female courtier and the men around her. The complex interaction of all of these roles then reflects back on the frustrations apparent in Wyatt's poetry. By exploring

these frustrations, we can deepen our understanding of Wyatt and his work; through Wyatt, we can explore the complications of courtiership and masculinity under a king like Henry.

C. The Howards: The Dangers of Youth in Henry's Later Court

The instability of Henry's court following the execution of Anne Boleyn was, of course, largely a result of the changes Henry himself had enacted. However, the circumstances of the next seven years would contribute in ways that were largely beyond Henry's control. This, naturally, only exacerbated Henry's frustrations and paranoia, and it is largely the events of this period that inform the modern views of Henry as an uncontrollable tyrant. In the course of these seven years, Henry would lose the one wife whose life he never seems to have threatened, discard another for oft-contested, oft-over-simplified reasons, and finally, feel forced to execute his fifth wife on the basis of essentially incontrovertible evidence of infidelity. This increasing sense of instability led to higher penalties for less and less serious infractions, particularly when those infractions in some way interfered with or damaged Henry's masculine performance and self-conception. This chapter focuses first on the implications of Katherine Howard's dangerous betrayal of Henry's trust, while trying to examine the gendered influences that might have provoked both her actions and Henry's reactions. From there, the chapter moves into an analysis of the frustrations reflected in the work of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, the masculine performance Surrey tries to maintain, and in what ways the factors behind Surrey's fall might actually mirror those that led to his cousin Katherine's execution, as well.

Although, following his marriage to Jane Seymour, Henry was blessed with the security of a Prince of Wales, Henry seems not to have been ready to give up on the creation of a Duke of York. His difficulties in obtaining any son at all had already colored his view of women, and Henry became less and less inclined to tolerate that which did not produce what he wanted. That Henry was beginning to feel thwarted in his desires is especially clear in his unfavorable reactions to Anne of Cleves. The blatant disregard and disrespect which characterized Katherine

Howard's behavior, to Henry, could only have increased his feelings of perennial frustration. As Henry felt his masculinity threatened, perhaps the most dangerous position a courtier could occupy was one that reminded Henry of his failing virility or of the instability of his bloodline. Surrey was either unfortunate or arrogant enough to do both. Ultimately, then, the executions of both Howards are intrinsically linked to the problems of gender as a construct in Henry's court, particularly in the increasing difficulty of navigating the spaces of masculine performance without overstepping the bounds Henry had established.

Katherine Howard: Site of Projected Masculinities

Before attempting any real understanding of the short queenship of Katherine Howard, the most useful beginning is made at an understanding of the atmosphere into which she stepped. This atmosphere was largely controlled by Henry VIII, and Henry was increasingly controlled by his various maladies. The men who became involved with Katherine, especially Francis Dereham and Thomas Culpepper, would have been influenced by the extreme strain in which masculinities and courtiership coexisted. For Henry, Dereham, and Culpepper, Katherine became a space on which they could project what they wanted to see of themselves. For Dereham, Katherine was a patroness and bridge into courtly life. For Culpepper, Katherine provided proof positive of his basic superiority over even a king, an affirmation of his own masculinity, and, not least, a likely outlet for currying favor and position. For Henry, finally, and most damagingly, Katherine was the image of his reborn youth. Henry wanted desperately to see himself as the sort of man that ought to stand beside a young, lovely, vivacious girl-queen, and nothing could have been more self-destructive than Katherine's decision to jeopardize that image.

Henry's particular fear of the feminine has been thoroughly addressed in the preceding chapter, as has the ways in which that fear and suspicion must have trickled through the layers of

the court. Added to the atmosphere of paranoid fear of the feminine, many historical factors contributed to the general atmosphere of instability that characterized the court during Katherine's short queenship. Though the Reformation under Henry is often misrepresented as being the moment that Protestantism came to England, the fact is that Henry's understanding of the Church was still essentially Catholic in nature. Henry did not, necessarily, want any sort of real reform; he primarily wanted to be recognized as the highest power in England, subject to no external authority. There were, however, definitely Protestant factions present in England, who stood in direct opposition to more conservative voices, some of whom still hoped for a return to the Church in Rome. In her text on Katherine Howard's brief reign, Lucy Baldwin Smith characterizes her rise as directly influenced by these two opposing groups. Anne of Cleves, after all, was Protestant, and in Smith's analysis she quite accurately characterizes the movement that brought Anne to England as propelled by the Protestant side of the religious imbalance. As Smith says, "The party of reform and revolution rejoiced that [Anne] was journeying to London to consummate the alliance of schismatic England with Protestant Germany" (103). Smith further postulates that the conservatives would have already been examining the possibility of advancing their cause through another woman, as Henry had revealed himself to be particularly susceptible to this kind of influence.

Though Smith rather romanticizes this clash, casting Anne of Cleves as "the red queen" against Katherine Howard's black, her analysis points to one of the more obvious elements of the historical drama. Quite apart from the projections of individual men's masculinities, women at this time also frequently became the tools of entire ideologies in the jockeying for power. Though this most commonly took the form of sacrificing women for familial ambition, the larger interests surrounding Henry also understood women as an effective tool to be used to garner the

monarch's interest. This was, of course, part of the social fabric of Renaissance England, and likely no one, least of all the women, saw it in the mercenary terms we interpret now. Indeed, young men were auctioned off in order to further the family's connections, possessions, and bloodlines, as well. The key difference, here, is that, specifically where Henry was concerned, the process became not only about the marriage market, but also about the possibility of using any woman in any way to get the King's favor. This meant that, while families might hope for a royal wedding, they were more often aiming for the woman's position as temporary plaything. Further, the fulfillment of familial interests was predicated upon the continued meddling of the family during the affair: constantly pushing the woman concerned to represent consistently the interests for which she had been pushed into the King's path.

Henry invested his masculinity in his new wife from before the beginning of their marriage. This can be understood particularly clearly in consideration of his reaction to Anne of Cleves. From the moment of their meeting, Henry, as has been well-documented, was displeased, largely with her physical appearance. Fraser documents several of Henry's less charitable comments, while acknowledging this basic inconsistency: Anne of Cleves's portrait, by the celebrated Holbein, simply does not show an ugly woman. Though Fraser allows Henry's excuse to stand, claiming various possibilities of hidden disfigurements, the possibility also stands that Anne was simply unable to compensate for the impression made by her first meeting with Henry. Henry was quite fond of appearing in disguise; the trick, here, was that everyone in the English court recognized the unusually tall, red-headed king, no matter his garb. However, when Henry appeared before Anne for the first time as an "anonymous gentleman in a multi-coloured cloak," the newly arrived princess had no way of knowing what her reaction should be. It appears, unfortunately, that "Lady Anna...gave the fatal impression of being bored" (Fraser 305). For

Henry, especially as he aged, nothing would be less attractive than a woman who didn't find him attractive. As such, searching for the reality of her physical defects misses the point; Anne of Cleves failed to reflect what Henry wanted to see, and that was enough to overwrite her physical characteristics entirely.

This explains, then, the figure on whom Henry's attention would next fall. Katherine Howard was, if nothing else, an excellent reflective surface. By all accounts, she was young, pretty, graceful, and energetic. If she was not learned, well, Henry had not had the best of luck with educated women in his past. Further, despite her later indiscretions, the evidence indicates that Katherine was genuinely awed by the King, both by his generosity and by what she perceived as his omnipotence. In her adoration, Henry could see himself exactly as he was accustomed to: as the sort of man desirable to a highly desirable woman. Henry's transition from Anne to Katherine bears little relating, as Anne had the good sense to allow the King his freedom on whatever terms he wished to impose. Smith does elegantly identify the most striking feature of this separation: the similitude between all of Henry's marital transitions:

The ghosts of Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn must have smiled...for here was history repeating itself with almost ludicrous exactness. Again Henry's tender conscience was doubting the legality of his marriage; again he was justifying his actions in terms of an heir to the throne; and again his conscience had 'crept too near another lady' of the court, for by April the King's interest in one of the Queen's maids of honour was public knowledge. (117)

In the months following their marriage, Henry even made efforts to return to his former physical fitness, aware of the strain that his increasing weight was putting on his aging frame. As Fraser shares, "The fact that Henry went on a special regime in December 1540 – inspired no doubt by his passion for Katherine – is in itself evidence, not untouching, of his concern about his problem" (336). Of course, as Fraser points out, the very fact that Henry attempted this regime indicates that he was aware on some level of the fiction he was living; if he was actually

in the same state of his former glory, there would be no need to work to return to it. However, Henry was very good at seeing what he wanted to see, and so he was quite capable of sustaining the contradiction of believing himself to be every bit as great as at his peak, while still suffering under physical conditions that made his decline clear. The central figure for the maintenance of his illusions, though, was his young wife.

In all of her relationships with men, Katherine Howard emerges as subject rather than agent. Indeed, Katherine herself seems neither to have resisted nor resented this subjectivity, and much of her relationship with Henry seems based on his rather coddling the youthful energies she exhibited. However, Katherine was also dangerously unaware of the resentments that her energy could create in her new husband. Returning to Mirabella's arguments on dance, it is worth noting that, for Katherine Howard, dancing, unfortunately, worked in Henry's mind on two levels. On the positive end, he was represented by a lovely young woman, one who was perhaps characterized more often as "graceful" than by any other adjective. However, because of the damage to Henry's leg and his failing health, there was also no way that he could participate in the dance with her. On one level, dancing reaffirmed Henry's vitality through the vicarious representation of his wife; on the other, every dance would have necessarily also reminded Henry, on some deep, internal level, that the presentation *was* vicarious: he was no longer physically capable of keeping up with his young bride.

It is also, here, worth returning to Castiglione's notions of courtiership, especially of female courtiership. Anne Boleyn's failures in this arena, as already discussed, had represented the ease of falling at the Henrican court, but history indicates that Katherine would hardly have needed to be held to such strict standards to be found wanting. As Smith summarizes, "Katherine was a mirror of her age. Scantly educated, plagued by few inhibitions, and impetuously

passionate, she simply reflected the standards of a society which accepted as natural a certain amount of promiscuity” (63). However much Katherine was a product of her age, though, her basic failing was the lack of any understanding that, as queen, she was held to particular, higher standards—which she could not afford to fail to meet. Much of the evidence brought against Katherine at her trial essentially represented a failure to follow courtly standards; the ladies surrounding the queen attested that even her looks and conversations with Culpepper and Dereham raised their suspicions; as Smith points out, “Catherine was so transparent that her servants began to suspect the worst simply by the way she looked and spoke to Culpepper” (178). Many of Katherine’s other failings as a female courtier seem to have engaged, rather than repelled, Henry: her energetic attack of pursuits, her vivacity, even her rather vacuous nature. The one failure she could afford, though, was this utter failure at discretion.

Whatever her own actions may have directly contributed, though, Katherine’s fall is best represented as a confluence of several failing masculinities. The full details need not be addressed here; a short summary of each man’s roles will suffice. Henry Mannock, her first love, was jealous enough to leave a letter for Katherine’s guardian detailing her affair with Francis Dereham; this letter became public knowledge and proof of Katherine’s earlier relationship. Francis Dereham had foolishly gone about bemoaning his own replacement by Thomas Culpepper. Both Mannock’s and Dereham’s performances of masculinity were threatened when Katherine replaced them of her own volition, and that feeling of threat led to their careless complaints. Further, despite his apparent feelings of ill usage, Dereham was sufficiently ambitious to use the new queen to raise his own social status and to gain a position at court. His proximity would later be used against both himself and Katherine in the treason proceedings. Culpepper, though, had likely made the biggest blunder: actively indicating his belief that, if the

King were dead, Katherine would have chosen to marry him. To mention the King's death was unforgivable, immediate treason. In setting himself up as a possible possessor of that which Henry possessed, even if the statement was conditional on the King's passing, Culpepper had more than paved his own way to the block, allowing his boastful performance of supreme masculinity to overreach the limits Henry would allow. Henry, to put it simply, was not known for sharing well, or even for tolerating the suggestion of any encroachment on whatsoever he considered his territory. To a great degree, then, Katherine fell because of multiple failures of masculine chivalry, confidence, taciturnity, discretion, self-sufficiency, and loyalty.

As reflected in Wyatt's poetry, a courtier must balance his social self in the complex space between the feminized action of imitation and the masculine ideal, as represented by the king, which he seeks to imitate. This complexity would have led to a crisis in the masculine identity of every courtier, which, I would argue, necessarily led to the self-destructive actions of men like Culpepper and Dereham. Dereham was largely drawn to court because of Katherine's influence; this would have made him aware of his reliance on the presumably unreliable feminine, exacerbating his own anxiety regarding the maintenance of his masculine performance. Culpepper's position is somewhat different, but even more easily correlated to the common anxieties of courtiers. Culpepper was quite a favorite of King Henry's. Smith synthesizes an event immediately preceding Culpepper's involvement with Katherine wherein Culpepper raped a "park-keeper['s]" wife and murdered one of the men who tried to stop him (165-166). In this instance, it was the King's direct favor which saved Culpepper from persecution. As Smith wryly acknowledges, "The law applied to all subjects, but the Crown could enforce it with rigid brutality or suspend its operation altogether" (166). Consider, then, the portrait of Culpepper that emerges: a man characteristic of the worst stereotypes of Renaissance masculinity, but chained

by necessity to feminized service to his king. As has already been established, courtiers of all stripes were bound at least to perform as though they considered the king more masculine than themselves, while simultaneously demonstrating their own masculinity at every moment.

The central figure of masculinity, though, must be here, as it always was at court, Henry. Though Culpepper and Dereham's perceptions and performances of masculinity are interesting and ultimately contribute to their self-destruction, not one piece of this tragic puzzle is shaped without Henry's personality in play. As both Smith and Fraser acknowledge, one of the most striking things about Katherine's infidelity is simply how long it took the King to discover it. Henry was still quite astute; though his physical decline may well have contributed to a destructive paranoia, he never suffered any serious decline as far as intellectual accomplishments. Nonetheless, Henry had flatly refused to see, and then, for quite some time, refused to accept, that his young wife might not be as wholly infatuated with him as he wished.

As Smith writes:

Henry was stunned by the revelation [of Katherine's affair with Culpepper], and there is something pathetic in the picture of an elderly giant struck down by the knowledge of his wife's infidelities...Her fascination had never included the attraction of wit or great beauty; instead, what King Hal prized most highly was the image of youth that he himself had lost. Suddenly the tough armour of self-esteem that wards off the small voice of doubt and fear was ripped aside...the old Henry of consummate conceit and boundless energy died. (181)

Of course, it is not a far step from this dependence of identity into a discussion of masculinities.

Youth, vitality, self-importance, energy, even the image of armor: all of these are tied to the Renaissance conception of perfect manhood, a conception that Henry himself had actively set out to create. Now, however, the king could no longer participate in the physical conditions he himself had designed for masculine display. Further, the King's participation in the courtly love tradition that further defined masculinity had now been irrevocably threatened. Henry may have

been exceptionally talented at self-delusion, but this one blow brought to bear, for at least a moment, the truth behind the pomp: Henry was aging, and someday, Henry must die.

The actions of both Dereham and Culpepper at trial provide as much commentary on their performances of masculinity as do those actions for which they were put on trial. Dereham consistently romanticized his interactions with Katherine Howard. Though emphasizing that everything between them took place well before the King's interest, Dereham consistently referred to the idea that he and Katherine had exchanged promises to marry before consummating their relationship: an arrangement standing quite close to marriage under the contemporary laws. Further, Dereham registered renditions of their partings which were markedly more romantic than Katherine's own recollections. While admittedly, it would hardly have been wise to have risked any further reflected dishonor on Henry through insult to Katherine, Dereham's story, in full, reflected on several levels an internalization of the courtly, chivalric construction of masculinity that Henry himself had intentionally created.

In direct contrast to this performance of chivalric masculinity stands the behavior of Thomas Culpepper. Smith returns several times in her history to the less-than-gentlemanly behavior demonstrated by Culpepper, both before and during the accusations of an illicit relationship with his queen. Indeed, even his relationship with Katherine seems more corrupt than the one she shared with Dereham. Where Dereham and Katherine publicly embraced, calling each other husband and wife, Culpepper furtively snuck up back stairs, picked locks, and arranged clandestine meetings through secret messages. Culpepper further abandoned chivalry in his testimony, wherein he painted Katherine as a demanding and lustful queen whose will he dared not disobey. Culpepper did not deny sexual interaction with the Queen, but he did deny any agency in the affair. Frankly, his past interactions with women make this particular excuse

difficult to accept, but the point is not the veracity of falsity of his claims. Rather, the importance here lies in the clear indication that, for Culpepper, masculinity was not about chivalry.

Culpepper defined his masculine self in terms of power and self-preservation. His fatal error, however, was in forgetting how his sovereign defined his own masculinity, and lay not least in this last affront of suggesting to Henry that he had failed to satisfy his own wife.

Katherine's infidelity, of course, resulted in the execution of every courtier implicated. Smith offers the helpful insight that "most denizens of the Tudor world were sufficiently close to their medieval heritage to view crime as a sign of sin" (Smith 81). For her contemporaries, then, Katherine's crime was not just infidelity; her infidelity was itself a sign of a corrupted nature, a soul unfit to be an English queen. Though this may be a fair assessment of Katherine, Smith is equally accurate in claiming that her

light hearted idiocy was fatal only when fostered and distorted by family greed, royal absolutism, social callousness and violence, and a political theory that stripped the individual of all defence and left him alone and unprotected to face the truth that 'the king's wrath is death.' (10)

Added to this was the immense pressure to perform masculinity created by the unstable social situation, and felt not only by every courtier, but also by the King himself. In stripping away many of the elements of performance that Henry held dear to his self-identification. Katherine stripped away, if only for a moment, Henry's masculinity and the infallibility that, as King, he saw as central to that masculinity. Even as the instability of the political climate influence the men of the court to seek desperately a more secure definition of their masculinity, it virtually guaranteed that a girl like Katherine Howard would fail as a safe space for the projection of that masculinity.

The Perils of Pride: The Chivalric Ambitions of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey

The elements that contributed to Katherine Howard's execution were equally in play in the fate of her rather more acclaimed cousin Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. Succinctly, Surrey was almost as provokingly destructive to Henry's masculine performance and much more deliberate and willful in that destruction. Surrey's personal pride and trenchant concepts of honor, both deeply linked to his own masculine performance, consistently impeded his progress and performance as a courtier. Surrey was himself attracted to the romantic and the chivalric, and Henry's actions no longer matched such ambitions, given how far he had come from the Arthurian utopia he envisioned as new-crowned king. In the thirty short years of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, six different queens occupied the English throne. Henry VIII became progressively more tyrannical as he succeeded in creating an ever more centralized state. The chivalric ideals to which Henry originally held his court were in steep decline by the time Surrey came into adulthood in the English court, particularly as seen through the somewhat one-dimensional perspective with which Surrey viewed hypocrisy in others. Indeed, Surrey was quite close to one of the clearest physical embodiments of the failure of these ideals: the son of Bessie Blount, fathered while Henry still paid public court to his first wife, Katherine of Aragon.

Surrey's relationship with this son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, was the inspiration for some of his first elegiac poems, just as Wyatt would be the subject of several of Surrey's later verses. In "So Crewell Prison Hoew Could Betyde," some of the characteristics of Surrey's elegiac work can be accessed, and, through those characteristics, some of Surrey's tensions with Henry VIII's court become clear. As Candace Lines observes, the poem "incorporates grief, nostalgia, and eroticism into Surrey's larger project of self-fashioning and self-assertion as an honorable yet semi-dispossessed nobleman and knight, as a member of a threatened, perhaps dying chivalric order" (1). The poem functions to highlight Surrey's

relationship to Henry's son and Surrey's own nobility, while simultaneously critiquing the implied absence of true chivalry at Henry's court.

The first stanza, as Lines also examines, compares both Surrey and Fitzroy to "Priams sonnes of Troye." (Surrey "So Crewell Prison" Line 4) As Lines convincingly outlines, this simile marks the poem as fraught with political meaning from its very opening. In making such a connection,

Surrey writes himself into the royal family, as Richmond's brother and a king's son himself. In a bold gesture, the poem treats alliance and affinity as equivalent to blood. It...also...reminds the reader that Surrey, a descendent of Edward I (paternally) and Edward III (maternally), had royal blood in plenty. (Lines 4)⁸

In addition to privileging and elevating Surrey's blood and position, though, the connection to Troy implies immediate peril, as well. If Priam's sons spent their early years in "lust...joye...and feast" (Surrey "So Crewell Prison" Lines 2-4), Surrey's audience is also eminently aware of how those same sons ended their years. As Richmond is the subject of this elegy, and Surrey is now imprisoned, the simile implies, in a complex fashion, that Troy is falling – that the ideals represented by these royal sons have failed or, more specifically, have been rejected.

Lines quite convincingly outlines the ways in which Surrey critiques the fall of chivalry in the Henrician court, largely through a comparison of "So Crewell Prison" to Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*. She argues that Surrey intentionally invokes sections of the tale and then reverses their effect, making his relationship with Fitzroy, rather than an amorous love triangle, the focus of the chivalric tradition at work. In so doing, Surrey reverses the effect of much of the Chaucerian tale. "Surrey displaces the tragedy from the structures of chivalry itself to the

⁸ Lines goes on to make the connection that Surrey's maternal grandfather, the Duke of Buckingham, was among that unlucky group of early Tudor nobles with better genealogical claims to the throne than the Tudor monarchs themselves. Buckingham was executed in 1521 for showing dangerous interest in that claim, as Surrey himself would be in 1547. (4)

political failures that have allowed chivalry to decline” (Lines 11). Further, the poem “conspicuously lacks a Theseus figure” which “impl[ies] a critique of the Henrician court as a place where chivalry meets with rejection and imprisonment” (Lines 15). Lines’s analysis of the ways in which Surrey uses the chivalric tradition to critique the Henrician court while focusing on the loss of his close friend usefully underlines the tensions Surrey brought to his role as courtier, underscoring that “The elegy implicitly places ritualized Henrician chivalry, with its quality of absolutist display, in opposition to a true chivalry based upon complete love and loyalty between the king (or at least the king’s son) and the highest of the blood nobility” (Lines 16-17).

Surrey also repeatedly uses, as an element in his critique of others and of the Henrician court, accusations of insincerity. Such an accusation is implied in his critique of the failure of chivalry in Henry VIII’s court in general; a more specific, though veiled, attack occurs in the conclusion of “So Crewell Prison.” The last two stanzas read:

Eache stone, alas, that dothe my sorowe rewe
Retournes thereto a hollowe sound of playnt
Thus I alone, where all my fredome grew,
In pryson pyne with bondage and restraynt,

And with remembraunce of the greater greif
To banishe the lesse I fynde my chief releif. (Surrey “So Crewell” Lines 49-54)

The first function of this conclusion is to compare other mourners to “stone[s]...retourn[ing]...a hollowe sound of playnt:” fundamentally immovable, inhuman objects who can only echo Surrey’s true grief (Lines 49-50). Particularly, given the absence of a merciful king figure in the poem, one subject of this accusation can be assumed to be Henry VIII himself. The more sweeping critique, however, may actually occur in the last two lines of the poem. While Lines, and most critics, view this ending as a return to the central theme of Surrey’s grief at Richmond’s

death, I would argue that the intention ambiguity of “greater greif” allows Surrey again to mourn the loss of the truly chivalric court. The greater loss is not, after all, of Surrey’s boyhood friend, but rather of the kind of nobility and chivalry which Surrey uses his relationship with Richmond to figure.

Surrey’s rejection of the Henrician court and, more dangerously, of Henry, is most clearly communicated in “Th’ Assyrians King, in Peas with Fowle Desyre.” An interesting contrast can be made with Surrey’s implicit critique of the king as compared to Wyatt’s “Who List His Wealth and Ease Retain.” In Wyatt’s poem, the repetition of “*circa regna tonat*” implies that the speaker’s unease results largely from the abuse of power – but that power is nonetheless treated as real and threatening (Wyatt Lines 5, 10, 15, 20, 25). Surrey’s sonnet, in contrast, undermines the masculinity of the subject of the critique; the problem is one of corruption and failed masculinity, and the abuse of power results from the unworthiness of the one who wields it. The portrait of a king, here, focuses on the “filthy lust that staynd his regall harte,” (Surrey “Th’ Assyrians King” Line 2) with the implication that this lust leads to the king being “vanquyshd...for want of martyall arte” (Line 4). The emphasis throughout the poem is on masculinity yielding to lust; if femininity in Wyatt figures as an incomprehensible threat to masculinity, Surrey’s poem implies that masculinity has failed in yielding to the feminine – or, more specifically, to the sins of the flesh inspired in the masculine figure of the king by his desire for the feminine.

This charge comes clearly in the accusation that the king figure “scace the name of manhode dyd retayne / Drenched in slouthe and womanishe delight” (Surrey “Th’ Assyrians King” Lines 9-10). The image of a king refusing his martial duty to focus on more amorous pursuits would necessarily have struck a cord within the Henrician court, as the king married and

remarried, upsetting the balance of court power with each new set of marital negotiations. In addition to the general thrust of Surrey's poem in this depiction of a kingly figure, the last line before the sonnet's concluding couplet reads "When he hadd lost his honor and hys right" (Line 12). Placed in another context, this line might not so clearly reference Henry VIII's motto, "God and my right," but within the discussion of a once-powerful king led astray "luste...kysses...hys ladyes...and womanishe delight," the connection is impossible to avoid (Surrey "Th' Assyryans King" Lines 2, 5, 6, 10).

Surrey's disquiet where the Henrician court likely owed much to Wyatt's similar concern, but it is striking how differently the two poets dealt with these complications. In Wyatt's poetry, courtly love and courtly power are often analogous, both representative of external, controlling forces. Surrey sees a very different court; to him, Henry's power is directly opposed to the ideals of chivalric love, as well as to chivalric ideals of masculinity. The difference in the struggles of the two poets can be accessed in an analysis of their two translations of poem 140 of Petrarch's *Rima Sparse*. The different approaches of the two are apparent from the first lines of each work. Wyatt's poem begins "The long love that in my thought doth harbor / And in mine heart doth keep his residence" (Lines 1-2), while Surrey's sonnet opens "Love that doth raine and live within my thought, / And buylt his seat within my captive brest" (Lines 1-2). When compared to Wyatt's opening, the sovereign nature of love in Surrey's work is emphasized. Love, in Surrey's sonnet, is a ruling force – one that both controls the speaker and demands his allegiance. Further, in contrast to "Th' Assyryans King," this love is not lust that weakens its subject, but rather a clearly martial force that is "Clad in the armes wherin with me he fowght" (Line 3). Though ultimately this "cowarde love...taketh his flight" (Lines 9-10), the speaker is, intriguingly, not made a coward by this result. Rather, he insists that

he “from my lorde shall shall not my foote remove” (Line 13). The chivalric imagery which permeates Surrey’s sonnet, with its emphasis on discretion and honor in love, creates a version of love representative of higher ideals than those which rule the court.

The last line of Surrey’s translation emphasizes this central agenda, with the strong conclusion that “Sweet is the death that taketh end by love” (Surrey “Love That Doth Raine” Line 14). The final stress, here, is on love; indeed, Surrey’s final stress is often on love. However, in direct contrast to Wyatt’s conclusion for the same translated sonnet, this is not necessarily the same as “the life ending faithfully” (Wyatt “The Long Love” Line 14). Surrey conceives of love as a kind of self-fulfillment that exists outside of the hierarchies to which the true courtier must be faithful. Indeed, one could argue that his own cousin, meeting her unfortunate end, nonetheless fulfilled the requirements for this sort of “sweet” death. Possibly, this is because Surrey’s untimely death cut him off from the possibility of a full maturity that might reconcile self-fulfillment with submission to a higher, earthly authority, even allowing for the tensions and inconsistencies so apparent in Wyatt. However, the greater implication of this view is not in how it influences Surrey’s self-conception, but in what it reflects of his perception of Henry’s court. If there is the chance that faithfulness to these ideals of love will result in death, the larger implication of Surrey’s work in that faithfulness to chivalric ideals in general cannot be reconciled with the world of the Henrician courtier.

Surrey’s strongest condemnation of the court, however, came in the form of his elegies on Wyatt. It is in these poems, notably “Dyvers Thy Death Doo Dyverslye Bemone,” that Surrey presents himself most clearly as the honest, chivalric contrast to a court concerned entirely with appearance and self-interest. While Wyatt and Surrey both speak of the court and, glancingly, of the king, in embittered terms, there is a self-awareness and acceptance in Wyatt that Surrey never

achieves. If Wyatt struggles with his own hypocrisy, Surrey's poetic voice seems genuinely to set itself against this world- to feel quite wrongfully put upon by the demands made against his honor. As James Simpson analyzes, in "Dyvers Thy Death," Surrey "[j]ealously guard[s] his exclusive passion for Wyatt as alone authentic[;] Surrey arouses a public only to embarrass and antagonize it" (326). Surrey characterizes those who publicly mourn Wyatt as poseurs who "Yeld Cesars teres upon Pompeuis hedd" ("Dyvers Thy Death Line 4), while his own tears are compared to those which "Pyramus did on Thisbes brest bewayle" (Line 14). In addition to the general charge of hypocrisy, the parallel of Cesar and Pompey as compared to the simile concerning Pyramus and Thisbe creates a clear contrast between political performance and the grief of true love and the loss a life-altering connection. Surrey is invested in pointing out the hypocrisy of the courtly world, but refuses, generally, to acknowledge any personal affection or infection from the influence of that world.

Indeed, there is a certain naiveté in Surrey's apparent belief in his own impeachability. Whether or not this is a genuine naiveté in the actual poet is immaterial; the point is instead that this is the poetic voice- one which denies any taint of courtly duplicity. While the other courtiers "Weape envious teares to here thy fame so good" (Surrey "Dyvers Thy Death" Line 8), Surrey quite clearly delineates the value of his own mourning. He "knowe[s] what harbourd in that hedd, / What vertues rare were tempred in that brest" (Lines 9-10) and so "Honour[s] the place that such a jewell bredd, / And kysses[s] the ground where as thy corse doth rest" (Lines 11-12). As Simpson analyzes, "The ferocity of Surrey's publicly displayed privacy is an index of a fragile and dangerous social world, where professions of authenticity are immediately and plausibly subject to alternative, suspicious readings" (Simpson 326). Surrey may recognize himself as open to charges of hypocrisy, but he not only does not admit, but cannot conceive of,

a basis for such charges. Further, it is only the “I” of the poem that is free of these charges. All other mourners are implicitly included in one of the other categories of those “dyvers” mourners whose grief cannot be genuine because they cannot have truly known the worth of that which is lost. “The whole enterprise of this sonnet distinguishes the duplicituous multiplicity of masks used by Wyatt’s enemies from Surrey’s own singular and integrated experience of grief” (Simpson 328). Surrey was capable of such embittered indictment of the hypocrisy of the court because he was capable, at least in the voice of his poems, of complete investment in the conception of himself as free of the taints of corruption, baseness, and lust that he saw as so destructive in others.

Surrey embodied many of the energies Henry had first brought to the throne: aggression, entitlement, and investment in romantic ideals. Surrey added to this a certain contempt for the hypocrisy of others, combined with a stubborn espousal of his own complete integration of self and fulfillment of ideals, that also mirrored Henry VIII’s own masculine performance. If Katherine Howard dangerously reminded Henry of his increasing age through her youth, so too did her cousin. While Surrey’s critiques of court do share a basic bitter note with those of Wyatt, they also contain a dangerous edge of self-importance that would not have been insignificant to Henry. Essentially, Wyatt’s masculinity, no matter how ideal, could not compete with Henry on the basic issue of regality, whereas Surrey’s bloodlines made him a more seriously considerable threat. Additionally, Henry’s increasing insecurity almost undoubtedly partially determined Surrey’s fate. If Surrey presented himself as a truly masculine threat to Henry, Henry would not have hesitated to neutralize any such threat, particularly as his bitterness and distrust increased. In reminding Henry of his own former glory, Surrey may have picked the most dangerous possible persona, given the contemporary state of the court.

D. The Lady Who Lived: Katharine Parr as Queen and Author under Henry VIII

“The repentant, unlettered, pious reader and obedient wife, Parr constructs her identity in feminine terms to signify her distance from ‘man’s traditions,’ from misguided authority, from polemical intent, and from political guile. This simplicity is authoritative, at least in part, because of her status as a queen, wife of a former king, and compatriot of high-placed members of court.”

- Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern Reading*

Katharine Parr was the last wife of Henry VIII, the most-married English queen (she had three husbands besides the king), a staunch Protestant, and an author. An examination of her life lends particularly striking commentary to an exploration of gender roles at Henry’s court, both because of her careful management of an increasingly unmanageable figure and because of her highly unusual role as a female author. An understanding of court value judgments allows for an understanding of those ways in which women, particularly women who wrote, might endorse, subvert, or alter the idealistic standards to which all women of the court were held, as well as an understanding of the ways in which the extant patriarchal powers endorsed, assimilated, or punished different femininities and different outlets of female education and expression. Comparing Katharine to other women at court, other authors, and other courtiers embroiled in the contemporary religious debate enables a close analysis of the implications of her roles as author and queen. This analysis reveals Katharine’s own knowledge of the immense complications which faced her. Further, analyzing Katharine’s own text indicates the ways in which she manages these complications through her management of her texts.

When Katharine became Queen, she stepped into the intricacies of the court traditions already surrounding Henry VIII. These traditions were necessarily important and formative for Katharine: they had, after all, been forming and building throughout her entire life. Henry VIII loved show and extravagance, and much of this show and extravagance centered on stabilizing and celebrating gender roles as Henry envisioned them. Henry’s increasing ailments and

irritability may well have decreased the actual court entertainments manifesting his ideas.

However, those around him at the time of his marriage to Katharine Parr would have remembered, as much as Parr herself, court masques like the *Chateau Vert*, mentioned in earlier chapters.

Though produced in 1522, when Katharine Parr was only about ten years old and her namesake (Henry's first wife) still sat on the throne at Henry's side, the masque nonetheless serves as a neat microcosm of many aspects of the ideal positive and, in the case of the feminine, the contrariant negative for each gender as they were conceptualized in the court. However, these ideas had also undergone important changes as the instability of the court and the king increased. The real difference that Katharine would have encountered two decades later was that those feminine anti-virtues had become more seriously threatening to Henry. Not least significant in the masque is the illustration that the ideal feminine always yields to the ideal masculine; only the negative feminine attributes oppose the men. This particular illustration was becoming ever more central to court perceptions and performances of gender, as the space of the ideal feminine became progressively smaller, more difficult to navigate, and less secure.. As it became clearer to Henry that these attributes actually could resist and oppose the ideal masculine, necessarily politically embodied by the King, Henry's responses to any hint of their presence became more extreme, more violent, and much more easily excited.

An acknowledgement of a common area of scholarly inquiry is appropriate here; several studies have examined, at least in part, the significance of a poem supposed to have been created by Henry VIII in a prayer book owned by Katharine. The poem, likely written following the accusations of heresy made against her by Stephen Gardiner, was intended to encourage and hearten the embattled Queen. Had the poem indeed been written by Henry, the lines would be

useful in characterizing the King's specific conception of Katharine's femininity and her role in their union. However, a compelling, if brief, argument is made by Peter C. Herman against Henry's authorship of this short verse. Further, the most often cited argument, by R.G. Siemens, is qualified by an acknowledgement that the handwriting does not match existing documents to which Henry set his hand. Thus, although poetry written by the king would be particularly relevant and rewarding in this context, I have not considered these verses further and as such have largely limited my analysis of the implications of the royal relationship to the views reflected in Katharine's, rather than Henry's, works.

If we do not have a text written by Henry on the matter, however, his and the court's investments in gender roles still have significant implications, reflections, and refractions within each of his marriages. For Katharine, these definitions of gender hierarchy become most fascinating when we began to consider this queen for what she truly was: "[excluding]...the compilation and the familiar letter...the first certain instance in English of a woman writer"⁹(Mueller 139). In the midst of extreme anxieties about the danger women posed, occupying the most visible position in a demonstrably dangerous court, and in union with a man whose fear of the feminine had developed into a bitter paranoia, Katharine nonetheless managed to create for herself a real authorial purpose and voice. As Andrew Hiscock has also investigated, Katharine's success leads us to question, in midst of constructions

of women as cultural inferior and commodifiable 'body'...nurturing and domestic...how was the [female] early modern reader and writer to confront the cultural obstacles placed

⁹ This assertion is made in Mueller's article "Complications of Intertextuality: John Fisher, Katharine Parr, and 'The Book of the Crucifix'". It is supported by Mueller's arguments that, based on textual evidence, Katharine's original piece, *Lamentacion of a Synner*, must have been written before Anne Askew's *First Examination* and *Latter Examination*, despite its later publishing date, and by Mueller's belief that Julian of Norwich's *Showings of Divine Love* actually represents a transcription of Julian's life, not a female authored text.

before her in a society which...valued the pious, chaste, obedient, and silent woman above all others? (188).

Though she would, theoretically, have been the most confined of Henry's wives, as Henry's instability verged ever nearer to madness and as she followed in the footsteps of a particularly duplicitous queen who had quite dangerously disillusioned Henry, and though she would have been quite possibly the woman in England most constrained by Henry's definition of the feminine, Katharine became the second of Henry's wives to rule as regent, the first of his wives to publish a written work, and quite probably the first woman to write a complete, original text in English, at all.

Because of this, the most interesting analysis of Katharine's role and reign as Queen begins with her own work, and the context under which that work was published. The first of her two published works, *Prayers and Meditations*, was published in 1545, and as such may well have been written after her marriage to Henry VIII in July 1543. Placing the text in such a timeframe provides a satisfying, if perhaps overly neat, explanation for the emphasis on troubles and tribulations in the text, an emphasis that seems slightly odd coming from the presumably pampered Queen of England. This is more understandable, though, if we imagine Katharine adjusting from the relative independence of widowhood and infatuation with the dashing Thomas Seymour¹⁰ to a marriage that forced her safety to become predicated upon accommodating Henry's rapidly shifting and increasingly unpredictable moods. Katharine would, at least on some level, have been in an unenviable position, quite open to possible persecution. This would further explain the extreme emphasis in the text on releasing worldly affections and carnal desires; if Katharine had any affections beyond ambition, they would have immediately been

¹⁰ Contemporary evidence, as well as her almost scandalously quick marriage to Seymour following Henry's death, indicates that Katharine was indeed quite clearly interested in and being courted by Seymour before she caught Henry's eye.

superseded by her legal dedication to the king, a dedication she seems to have quite seriously internalized. These tropes are all, of course, conventional to Renaissance religious texts, but the fact that Katharine felt compelled to write at all demands that we pay particular attention to why she chose to follow these particular conventions.

The first of these tropes, that of portraying the author as a sinner oft but justly punished, adds a darker tone to the work than the reader might expect on first encountering a book simply labeled as the prayers or meditations “collected out of certain holy woorkes by the moste vertuous and gracious princes Catharine, Quene of Englande, France, and Irelande.”¹¹ The book begins with an admonishment to “set...affection on thynges that are above, and nat on thynges, whyche are on the earthe,”¹² and the first few pages seem to place more emphasis on the joys of heaven than on the evils of the world. The speaker’s own weakness and ignorance are indeed made much of, but not in a way that indicates current trouble or tribulation so much as in a way that emphasizes the wisdom and rightness of God’s will. Indeed, at first the troubles that face the speaker are referred to as “a litle adversitie” and “a veraie litle thyng.” However, a significant shift occurs as the speaker questions “what a lyfe mai this be called, where noo trouble nor mysery lacketh? Where every place is full of snares [of] mortall enemies.” From this point in the text following, considerable space is spent bemoaning the problems of the physical world, not just anticipating the joys of the spiritual. Rather, now, than a weak soul who is easily troubled, the speaker seems to be one who justifiably “mourne[s] and complayne[s] of the m[i]seryes of

¹¹ Katherine, incidentally, was the first Queen to be labeled “Queen of Ireland,” so her use here, rather early in her reign, is particularly striking. As will be acknowledged, Katharine is largely reliant on other sources for this work, but analyzing the materials to which she chooses to affix her name is nonetheless worthwhile.

¹² The admonishment, in other words, is simply a reminder to look to heaven for both contemplation and fulfillment, rather than to men.

this life, and with sorrow, and great heavynesse suffer[s] them.”¹³ The world has become one which presents real peril to even the faithful soul, and this peril is not escapable through the speaker’s own will, only God’s.

This expression of distress may initially seem disingenuous, given Katharine’s position, but in fact gains a real pathos when consideration is granted to her particular situation. Katharine’s position as queen is, indeed, one that is theoretically above the position of the general populace of the court, not to mention that of England. However, Henry’s reign has effectively revealed the spindly legs on which that position truly stands, and the repeated successful removal of queens has made Katharine’s position, at this point, actually one of the most vulnerable in the kingdom. She is as open to accusations as even as the most common of Henry’s subjects; there is considerably greater motivation to accuse her for political gain than exists for most of those subjects; and her personal proximity to Henry makes her more, not less likely to have evidence gathered, and successfully dispatched, against her, as Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, and Katherine Howard’s trials had all rather pointedly proved.¹⁴ Presumably, as the last of Henry’s wives, Katharine had an acute appreciation for the tenuous and dangerous nature of her role. As such, the distress of the speaker on the pages of *Prayers and Lamentations* can be read as a genuine and personal part of the process through which the author, Queen Katharine, expresses, catharsizes, and soothes her own fears. The troubles and miseries the speaker bemoans are those of earthly care, and this particular speaker’s care is largely a result of her high, and highly precarious, status.

¹³ The “i” or “y” of misery is obscured by a blot in the type of the page, making other readings possible, but “mystery” seems an unlikely word choice in context.

¹⁴ And, indeed, as Katharine’s own persecution by Stephen Gardiner’s faction would later prove, again.

This awareness of peril and position permeates the text, and specific consideration of Katharine as an author explains some of the text's more striking anomalies. Parts of the text, for example, seem specifically designed to pay tribute and compliment to the irascible King. To begin, Katharine touches several of her passages with an odd self-evidence. A series of compliments are paid to God which seem to move beyond praise into reminders to the reader of his omnipotence. The most striking example occurs when the speaker says, "Thou knowest all things, and nothing is hid from the that is in mans conscience." Though repeated references are made to God's goodness and wisdom, these generally follow some acknowledgement of the imperfect world that makes for a reminder that humans cannot understand, and should not question, God's will necessary. In other words, the speaker generally reminds the reader of God's goodness when circumstances have been cited which make that goodness seem most questionable. In this case, however, there has been no questioning of God's omniscience, nor has the text as a whole given the reader any reason to believe that the speaker holds any doubts on the subject. The oddity of this compliment, then, draws attention and raises questions best answered by a further consideration of what Katharine would have been attempting with her text.

When considered with much of the surrounding language of the tract, this tribute begins to emerge as a possible compliment to Henry himself. Henry, after all, had declared himself subject to no earthly authority but only to God, with the creation of the Church of England. He was also highly invested in a politics of surveillance and, as his daughter would later reinforce with her famous Rainbow Portrait, encouraged the illusion that the monarch was, whether by worldly or otherworldly means, always aware of his subjects' doings, thoughts, and intentions.¹⁵

¹⁵ Indeed, the unfortunate Katherine Howard had been, rather strangely, quite concerned that her lovers not pray about their activities with her, as she felt assured that Henry would then know; as Smith argues, Katherine believed in "a direct pipeline between God's lieutenant on earth and the

This interpretation is reinforced by the language of fidelity and even marriage that Katharine often uses when speaking to or about God in this work. Renaissance women were, of course, often encouraged to think of God and Christ in such marital terms. However, for a queen specifically to reference her lord is necessarily, simultaneously, for her to reference her husband and king. Thus, when Katharine writes, “[Give] me, lorde, therefore heavenly wisdom, that I maie lerne to seke and fynde the, and above all thynges to love the,” she simultaneously asks of the King, and of the head of England’s church, that she be granted the ability to learn to love him above all things. This claim contrasts somewhat with many of the speaker’s earlier statements, wherein complete devotion to, and love of, God are already achieved; here, there is specifically a learning process to be undergone, not just a divorce from worldly objects to make that which has already been learned more perfect. A parallel may be drawn, then, with the process by which Katharine learned to be wife to Henry, gradually ceding the independence and autonomy she had exercised previously, while learning to accept and wield a new and different kind of power. This process of learning and elevation is referenced in quite clear terms of marriage to the divine when the speaker addresses Christ, naming him as “O lorde Jesu, most loving spouse, who shall gyve me wynges of perfect love, that I maye flye up frome these worldly myseries, and reste in the”.¹⁶ The soul’s union with Christ as spouse elevates it above the problems of the common world, just as Katharine’s union with her present earthly spouse had also elevated her above the common order of things. Whether this was her initial desire had little to do with her gratefulness; the assumption is that the greater power has the greater knowledge of what ought to be.

hidden secrets of a subject’s sinful soul” (141). Why this did not preclude the possibility of an affair all together, in her mind, is quite another question, though an answer may lay in Katherine’s remarkable ability to deny her own agency in her affairs.

¹⁶ The original printing includes a question mark, but Katharine is clearly not asking this as a question; rather, she is presenting this as a sort of invocation.

The most striking example of this language, though, is that which links the marital ideas to an almost carnal language, evoking ideas that are renounced elsewhere in the prose: “Quicken my soule, and all the powers therof, that it maie cleave fast and be joined to the in joyful gladness of gostly ravishynges.” Here, the language of marriage has moved beyond legal binding or spousal devotion, into the specificities of marital union. Indeed, the language itself itself is strikingly similar to that of the marriage ceremony, particularly in the expression of a desire to “cleave fast and be joined.” This use of the soul as the feminine in a union with Christ is not, of course, limited to female authors, but the use of the feminine form nonetheless gains particular weight and significance when used by a female author. As Janel Mueller points out in her comparison of Katharine’s work and Stephen Gardiner’s texts, this use of a gendered voice in speaking of the souls can operate to “confound... gender difference because this determinant operates meaningfully only in human social relations, not in the relations between humans and the divine” (“Complications” 152). However, when used by an early modern male author, this use does not, really, abrogate gender difference; indeed, the practice may emphasize feminine inferiority by implying that the human soul is as far divided from divine perfection as women are from male superiority. Katharine’s use, though, as a female author, emphasizes the equality of all human souls, for she intentionally and often reminds the reader that her use of feminine personal pronouns refers not only to the author’s soul, but to the author’s physical body, as well. Her use of the gendered pronoun then encompasses both the physical and the spiritual, making it difficult, if not impossible, to separate references between the two within Katharine’s text. Within the context of Katharine’s writing, the “she” of the soul is also the “she” speaking and writing, and all souls are equally referenced by this one personal pronoun. In presenting a queen as a model, this self-referentiality both encourages the common people to consider themselves

capable of following her noble example and empowers the feminine speaker by making “her,” and so the other “her’s” of England, equal spiritually to their male counterparts.

These reminders of the femininity of the author work in one other particularly significant way in Katharine’s work: in her privileging of simplicity and direct connection to God over learning and tradition. This tendency is examined widely by critics, and is most clearly and succinctly expressed by Edith Snook, characterizing Katharine’s authorial voice in *Lamentacion*:

Parr ties this portrait of herself as one of the unlearned to her advocacy for the position that the Bible is the sole source of doctrinal authority. She dismisses alternative traditions as ‘man’s doctrine’ and because of her claims to simple, feminine piety, she need not even contend with that tradition... Although Parr is claiming that the unlettered need grace..., she is also locating theological authority elsewhere than in learned men... Parr’s representation of herself as one of the simple is... a rhetorical deployment of gender. (48)

Katharine intentionally evokes the feminine as a defensive position against the learned men who might disagree with her. This defensive position draws direct parallels to her quick thinking deferral to Henry’s authority when Gardiner’s faction accused her of treasonous dissent, when she claimed to argue with the king only so that she might be instructed by him. Katharine masterfully evokes the feminine when she can use the apparent weaknesses to her advantage, manipulating the ideas of the feminine as uninstructed or simple to match them to the emerging Protestant ideals for the soul. She effectively claims the old, negative femininity and recasts those traits as the new, positive Christianity.

This use of feminized, marital language for the soul provides a rather marked contrast to the speaker’s repeated rejection of, specifically, “worldly affections” and that which the speaker labels as “carnall.” Throughout the work, the speaker emphasizes sins of the flesh as being a particular trouble and hindrance to her spiritual growth. Though these sins are often conflated with other worldly guilt, such as pride of position or love of praise, there are many instances where the condemnation is clearly and specifically of sexual desire. That the desire for “gostly

ravishynges,” or spiritual ecstasy, is then so clearly endorsed, points to the endorsement of chastity over virginity. In expressing desire for union with God, or with her husband the King, the queenly speaker expresses no shame, or even hesitance. However, the condemnation of similar desires elsewhere in the text makes it clear that such emotions are only allowable within certain, accepted, circumscribed arenas. The “bodily necessities” and “voluptuous pleasures” of this world are to be condemned and persistently avoided. Eagerness at the idea of union is only permissible in the speaker’s anticipation of God’s “visit[ing her] in such wise, as those doest visite thy moste faithfull lovers,” or, as extension would imply, within the faithful bonds of marriage, as those extant between Katharine and Henry – a rather speaking delineation, given the fate of her predecessor and the fact that Katharine had only recently been pursued by one of Henry’s courtiers.

Mueller has similarly interrogated this apparent conflation in Katharine’s work of King and God, though her argument primarily examines the ways in which Parr would have conceived of both as equally irresistible wills, rather than exploring ways in which Katharine may have empowered herself through identification and alliance with such wills. We must, necessarily, acknowledge the limitations which Katharine’s own conceptions of self and subordination to Henry would have placed on her work and voice, though never allowing these limitations to shade her agency or accomplishments. Katharine’s work is both given authority and limited by her position as Queen, which always makes her work, by implication, reflective of those positions which are allowed by the “official position.” Kimberly Anne Coles, particularly, uses this position to identify the fundamental difference between the condemned Protestant martyr

Anne Askew¹⁷ and the condoned Queen, a difference also examined by Mueller. As Mueller states,

a differentiation... cuts across gender to distinguish Anne from Katherine, the defiant from the compliant female, the silenced woman from the one who somehow sustained voice... As the *Lamentation* gains momentum... Parr undertakes by degrees... to feminize her voice in keeping with her position as Henry's queen... [Katharine will not] arrogate final authority to herself under her new faith, as Anne had done. ("Tudor Queen" 94)

In short, Katharine successfully creates a feminine, authorial voice by acknowledging masculine power and intentionally tying her voice to the official endorsement represented by her husband. Though perhaps frustrating for the modern feminist, Katharine's skillful negotiation of true self-revelation and careful consideration of political climate are ultimately the tools that allow her to create this work, in her own voice, without punishment and without being silenced, as Askew so thoroughly was.

However, this acknowledgement of authority should not be taken as an indication that Katharine created a masculine text or that she was forced to write in a masculine voice. In fact, the most striking element of Katharine's success in her texts is her individualization of voice. Indeed, Mueller identifies this individualization as strongly in line with modern feminist values, arguing that "[i]f certain twentieth-century feminist theorists are correct, the best achievements of women writers will assume the form of "antiphonal, many-voiced works," a form that resists the demure silence or the male-dominated norms of expression to which female gender and authorship have...been assimilated" ("Tudor Queen" 87). However, as Mueller further acknowledges, the majority of the voices that Katharine uses to inform her own are male, though

¹⁷ Anne Askew also wrote, and had published, a work, in which she detailed her maintenance of personal faith in the face of an excruciating interrogation by the King's and Church's agents. Askew was likely originally caught up in a web intended to condemn Katharine, but she refused to implicate the Queen in her testimony. Askew also, though, refused to repudiate her reformist ideals and was ultimately burned for heresy.

her “polyphony...seems fostered rather than hindered” by her association with these male voices (“Tudor Queen” 87). This reflects an important ability of Katharine’s in her negotiation of her feminine performance; she was consistently able to coerce an individualized, feminine performance of self from masculine models and within the constraints of the masculine forces at work around and on her. As Mueller further describes: “Katharine reveals both the force and the limits of [authorial enablement] in how she, as author, handles her compositional models” (“Tudor Queen” 78). Katharine is able to use masculine conventions, even to the point of texts quite clearly written by, and to some extent for, men, and create a text that speaks in an identifiably feminine voice, one that speaks to an audience of all genders. The complexities of the authorial construction centrally identify the struggle that Katharine herself would have embodied: movement forward in the form of feminine involvement and Protestant, personalized religious thought, simultaneously circumscribed by masculine authority and a very real social investment in tradition, traditional structures, and, in many ways, traditional or at least conservative religion.

Katharine’s mediation of her male models into her female authored texts manifests itself in many ways, as other critics have examined: in her use of Erasmian conventions, her use of Pauline language, and her Tynsdalian understanding of the relation of the soul to God.¹⁸ A particular element of this, which can also be tied to Katharine’s mediation of courtly traditions, is her repeated use of attributive lists, characteristic of her writing in both *Prayers* and *Lamentacions*. These attributive lists are, generally, of considerable length; the initial praise is built upon, elaborated into an ornate and exemplary sample of the value the period placed on artifice as a display of talent. To cite one such long list:

¹⁸ The examinations of these parallels by Mueller and Coles are most helpful, as is C.F. Hoffman’s original article identifying the source material for Parr’s *Prayers*.

[give] me the grace to rest in the above all thynges, and to quiete me in the above all creatures: above all glory and honoure, above all dignitie [and] power, above all cunning and policie: above al healthe and beautie, above all [riches] and treasure: above all joye and pleasure: above al fame [and praise]: above all myrthe and consolacion that mans hert maie take or feele besides the. For thou lorde god, arte beste, moste wise, moste high, most mightie, most sufficient, and most full of al goodness, moste swete and moste comfortable, moste faire, moste loving, moste noble, moste glorious, in whom all goodnesse moste perfectly is.

This list is a parallel of the lists used in Katharine's primary source for the *Prayers*, a translation by Richard Whitford of the *Imitation of Christ*. However, since Katharine's most obvious edits to the text are those of careful selection, omission, and cutting, her decision to keep so many of these long lists, and then to incorporate the convention into her original work in *Lamentacion*, is particularly striking. Tying this to the idea that Katharine often intentionally referenced God and Henry simultaneously in her work provides a likely explanation.

Katharine's attributive lists represent, essentially, the same kind of exaggerated praise that was conventionally given to the King. Although Henry had already died by the time Katharine published her *Lamentacion*, evidence suggests that both of her works were authored during her time as Queen. Thus, and as previously discussed, it is not surprising that Katharine would conceptualize, and praise, God in similar terms to those she uses for the man who was not only head of her country, but, according to general Renaissance religious thought, her direct spiritual head, as well. Thus, Katharine's tendency to create elaborate layers of artful praise creates another tie to her own processes of thought on gender. In subordinating herself, both to God and to Henry, Katharine genuinely interrogates her reasoning and her motivations for submission. Though this is, on some level, also authorial play, the Renaissance English court writers could also genuinely justify their day to day submissions and power plays by investing in the power structure itself. In some ways, Katharine's real theological submission to God reflects her way of working towards the submission that she would have genuinely felt she owed the

King. She subjugates the growing authority of her authorial voice to both of these; she justifies her subjection to herself by investing real power in the conventions of courtly praise by elevating those conventions to religious use.

Katharine thus invests real meaning into the artifice of courtly praise, complicating her identity as a woman susceptible to accusations of artifice by intentionally using art and intentionally elaborate language in the creation of her authorial voice. Where the male courtier may find that highly artful language creates an uncomfortable space of femininity, a difficult space to navigate successfully, the assumption of the artificial, even ambiguous nature of the feminine voice frees the female author. Once such artifice is assumed as the dominant position, the writer no longer needs to avoid or abridge the art of her language; instead, she can consciously work from that position, claiming such language as her own and using that claim to create her own voice in the face of patriarchal power. Though the dominant masculine may assign these attributes to the feminine, in claiming such attributes the female writer can claim her own agency. By intentionally invoking such conventions, the feminine moves from object to subject, choosing how the self will be performed and represented rather than being represented by other voices. In claiming the conventionally feminine voice of artifice, Katharine creates a space defined by the elements she incorporates into her own voice, rather than allowing that voice to be created or claimed by others.

In speaking in the voice of a publicly female author, Katharine moved into a position that was unique among the women of her time, particularly as a Henrician queen. In so doing, she not only articulated a feminine perspective on king, county, and religion, but also made visible, through her negotiation, the silencing authority of which she was always aware and with which she had to engage to publish her work. Mueller comments specifically on a striking marginal

note made by a female reader, one Anne Dyson, made near one of Katharine's passages in *Prayers*. The note reads: "ye faithful dooe servisse to god wth thyr soul." As Mueller articulates "[i]t is poignant to find this appreciative jotting from a sixteenth-century woman reader, responding to emphasis laid by a woman writer, her contemporary, on the expressive capacities in the soul's silence – a condition widely identified today as a historically feminine one" ("Devotion" 118). This note speaks quite clearly to the ways in which Katharine's work as an author legitimized the feminine experience for her contemporary female compatriots, even as that same work reached beyond lines of gender to embody the emerging ideals of a newly Protestant nation. Though her position as officially endorsed often limited her authorial voice even as it licensed her work, Katharine's unique position as author and queen created an entirely new outlet for expressions of gender in England. Katharine moved simultaneously beyond and within the idea of the feminine voice to create works that reflected the larger Protestant projects in which she was involved. However, in so doing, the Queen also created speaking commentaries on the gender roles through, and with which, she had to work to conceptualize herself as woman, Queen, and author.

III. CONCLUSION

The writing that occurred within the context of Henry VIII's court was particularly evocative of the gendered constructions and perceptions central to Renaissance thought, because gender played such an important role in this particular king's court. However, that role was ever-shifting, as were conceptions of gender, both because of and in contribution to the internal instabilities of the court. Henry VIII began his reign in an investment in very particularized performances of the feminine and the masculine, aligning with a courtly, romantic tradition. His own inability to fulfill his original masculine ideal, and his inability to find or create a queen who fulfilled his original feminine ideal, contributed to an instability in the court's conception of gender and so to instability within the performed identities of the courtiers who tried to construct their public "selves" around these gendered ideals. Furthermore, Henry's central role as *always* the ideal male created tension as his ideally constructed masculine models grew ever more distant from his courtly performance of power and from his physical capacity for performance.

At the beginning of his reign, Henry constructed his romantic court around the feminine center of Katherine of Aragon, using her power and self-assurance to bolster his own. His poetry during this period reflects the project he undertook, rewriting youth and devoted love as central elements of the chivalric masculine. During his twenty-four year marriage to Katherine, however, Henry became increasingly suspicious of female power, and the court's construct of femininity shifted as the male gaze became progressively more suspicious. Additionally, youth and devoted love became less central to the construction of masculinity as Henry himself left these ideals behind; the masculine became more unabashedly concerned with power, while simultaneously gaining more connotations of virtue as it the masculine became ever more opposed to the duplicitous feminine. The tensions caused for male courtiers by the disconnect

between the supposed inherent integrity of the masculine and the experience of duplicity in the performance necessary at court are clearly accessible in the poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt, just as his work also reflects the increased unease surrounding the feminine subject.

The acknowledgement of similar tensions regarding performance, duplicity, and the courtier are accessible in the work of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. However, where Wyatt is concerned with reflections of this inconsistency within himself, Surrey focuses on this issue as an external problem, and his construction of a self concerned with honor and chivalry indicates the decline of Henry's embodiment of these particular elements of the masculine. However, part of the danger which surrounded Surrey resulted from his insistence on implying gaps in Henry's performance and construction, much as his cousin Katherine Howard made her greatest error in causing damage to Henry's masculine performance by implying the existence of inadequacies. Henry's investment in his masculinity became greater as his secure performance of that masculinity declined, and the influence of this investment on the last years of his reign was striking, not least because it seems to reflect a trend within the court conception of the king, as well. As Katherine Parr's text reflects, particularly in her unquestioningly loyalty and submission, the court had begun to conceive of the king's power and reach in almost god-like terms, even as Henry's physical body clearly deteriorated before their eyes. However, Parr's work simultaneously demonstrates the spaces that the feminine could occupy and through which women could create more authoritative constructions of self. Even as Henry's increasing suspicion multiplied the difficulties of gendered positions, but particularly of feminine gendered positions, selves could be constructed in opposition to this monarchical construction, even while appearing to exist in submission to it.

The hierarchies of power and gender constructed in the court of Henry VIII reflect the ability of social constructions to determine the performance of each individual, while simultaneously suggesting the instability of gender itself as a construct. These hierarchies also suggest the ways in which each individual within a society, in this case the somewhat insular court society, contributes to gender constructions and ideas of ideal performance. Further, the works produced in the context of the court reflect the value of self- and social-awareness when operating within and creating socially constructed performances of self. While reflecting the investments and influences of the individual courtiers, though, Henry's court most clearly reflects the power of influential individuals to shape their social worlds, both through their conscious decisions and through interplay of such decisions with the realities and social influences of their worlds. Henry's personal decisions had important ramifications for the particular social world of his court, and the performances his courtiers, his queens, and he himself created to adjust to and attempt to control those ramifications filtered throughout the social systems of Renaissance England.

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