

**“A commyn wele of true nobylyte”: Thomas Starkey
and Italian Renaissance Republican Thought in
Sixteenth-Century England**

Author: Cameron Wood B.A.

**Macquarie University, Department of Modern History, Politics and
International Relations**

**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Masters of Research, on 4 April, 2016**

Student Number: 41079477

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgments	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter One:	14
A rhetorical Latinist: Thomas Starkey's liberal arts education in Oxford	
Chapter Two:	27
"To lyue in a polytyke lyfe": Thomas Starkey's civic humanist education in Padua and Venice	
Chapter Three:	42
"To dow servyce to my prynce & cuntrey": The transmission of Italian republican thought in Thomas Starkey's <i>Dialogue between Pole and Lupset</i>	
Conclusion	69
Works Cited	73

Abstract

This thesis examines how Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* serves as the first attempt by an Englishman to transmit Italian republican political structure and civic humanist education to England during the Henrician Reformation. After analysing Starkey's Latin grammar and liberal arts education in Oxford, followed by his civic humanist education at the University of Padua, I argue that Starkey wrote his dialogue with the ambition of presenting reforms to Henry VIII that would transmit Venetian mixed government and civic educational reforms to England. Through a close reading of Starkey's dialogue, this thesis will demonstrate how republican and civic humanist thought was transmitted from Venice to England a century before the English Civil War. I argue that by examining Thomas Starkey's civic humanist education and his writing of the *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, the transmission of Italian republicanism and new political and educational thought was ushered into Tudor England.

Acknowledgments

I want to start by thanking my loving and gracious parents, Coral and Andrew Wood. A special thank you to mum, who gave me Tolstoy and the classics when I felt like I was little more than a dropout.

To my dear wife Claire, it is done. Thank you for hanging in there when the dark clouds loomed.

Thank you to the modern history staff at Macquarie University. I was most fortunate to find my way into your lectures and tutorials during my BA and MRes. Thank you for inspiring me.

Thank you most of all to my supervisor, Dr. Nicholas Baker. Without your patience and guidance over the last five years, I would not have been able to envision (let alone complete!) this thesis.

A special thank you to all the *good eggs* who have supported me.

Job 1:21.

Introduction

Between 1537 and 1538, Henry VIII's chaplain, Thomas Starkey, sent a dedicatory letter to the English monarch, explaining that he had written a dialogue that he wished to send to the king. In this letter, Starkey explained that he had split his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* into three sections: first, Starkey's protagonists discussed and established what the "veray and true commyn wele" would look like in England; second, he presented the "most commyn and notbull abusus" in England, and finally, Starkey argued for the political, legal, religious and educational reforms that he believed would restore England to glory.¹ In the letter, Starkey acknowledged the boldness it took someone of his standing to send a reform-focused dialogue to the king. However, Starkey explained that he felt it was his civic duty, after studying Aristotelian and Ciceronian natural and moral philosophy at the University of Padua, "the place most famyd both with grete lerning and gud and just pollyci," to write to the king and explain the issues that had led England to decay and the reforms needed in order to repair matters.² Starkey further explained that when he returned to England from studying in Padua, in 1529, he used his Venetian political and philosophical education to examine and compare the state of England to that of the Venetian republic, which led him to write the dialogue that would act as his reform commentary.³

¹ Thomas Starkey, "Letter to Henry VIII," in *England In The Reign Of King Henry The Eighth: Starkey's Life And Letters*, ed. Sidney J. Herrtage (London: The Early English Text Society, 1878), lxxiv-lxxv

² Starkey, "Letter to Henry VIII," lxxiv

³ Ibid., lxxiv-lxxv

Starkey's *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* serves as the first attempt by an Englishman to transmit Italian republican political structure and civic humanist education to England during the sixteenth century. Since John Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment* was published in 1975, historians have argued that Italian, specifically Florentine and "Machiavellian," republican political thought was transmitted to England around the English Civil War in the seventeenth century through treatises written by English reformers.⁴ Pocock argued that after early sixteenth-century humanists began transmitting and developing civic awareness in England, the conservative nature of Elizabethan England slowed civic consciousness, humanism and the *vita activa* (active, political life) in England until the outbreak of civil war in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, Pocock identified James Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), which argued for the ideal republican political constitution in England, as the most significant treatise written by an Englishman in English and for an English audience, which translated and transmitted Italian republican political thought to England.⁵

This thesis aims to challenge these claims by arguing that Thomas Starkey's dialogue, written between 1530 and 1534, transmitted idealised republican mixed government ruling structure and civic humanist education to England a century before Harrington's treatise was written. By examining Starkey's Latin grammar and liberal arts education in Oxford, followed by his medical and

⁴ See Markku Peltonen, "Introduction: classical humanism and republicanism in England before the Civil War," in *Classical humanism and republicanism in English political thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-14

⁵ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 333-360

civic humanist education at the University of Padua, as well as the political tutelage he received from Venetian statesmen in Padua and Venice, I argue that Starkey wrote his dialogue with the ambition of presenting reforms to Henry VIII that would transmit Venetian mixed government and civic educational reforms to England. These reforms would force the English nobility to adopt the *vita activa* and acquire a civic humanist education that would prepare them for future work in a new republican government.

Until Thomas Mayer's *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal: Humanist politics and religion in the reign of Henry VIII* was published in 1989, past historical research by Tudor and political historians on Starkey's *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* had failed to acknowledge and properly contextualise and examine the political and educational reforms that Starkey sought to implement in England during the Henrician Reformation. This failure was in large part due to Franklin Le Van Baumer's 1936 journal article, "Thomas Starkey and Marsilius of Padua," which argued that Starkey was a revolutionary thinker and that his political reforms in the dialogue did not match those proposed by Englishmen at the time because Starkey based his political and legal ideas and reforms on Marsilius of Padua's fourteenth-century treatise, *Defensor Pacis*.⁶ Baumer argued that Starkey's promotion of elective monarchy, civil and common law, the limited role of the papacy and Latin Church in England and the establishment of a constitutional government came via Starkey's reading of the *Defensor Pacis* during his

⁶ F.L. Baumer, "Thomas Starkey and Marsilius of Padua," *Politica* II (1936), 193-194

doctoral studies in Padua.⁷ Tudor and political historians throughout the twentieth century accepted Baumer's Marsilian reading of Starkey's dialogue.⁸

After researching, editing and publishing the most recent edition of Starkey's *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* (1989), Thomas Mayer became the first historian to comprehensively refute the Marsilian thesis and argue against what he described as anachronistic reading and the incorrect assertion that Starkey was a revolutionary reformer.⁹ Instead, Mayer argued that Starkey based the literary style and reforms in his dialogue on fifteenth and sixteenth century English, Italian and French political, legal and religious thought. In *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*, which he described as the "first thorough intellectual and biographical study of Thomas Starkey," Mayer examined and contextualised Starkey's university education in England, Italy and France, and argued that Starkey assisted in importing Italian and French concepts to England.¹⁰

This thesis will build on Mayer's argument that Starkey was the "most Italianate Englishman of his generation and among the most eager importers

⁷ Baumer, "Thomas Starkey and Marsilius of Padua," 196

⁸ See Kathleen Burton, "The Ideas of the *Dialogue*," in *A Dialogue Between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), 6-16, Fritz Caspari, *Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1954), G.R. Elton, 'Reform by statute: Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue* and Thomas Cromwell's policy,' *Proceedings of the British Academy*, LIV (1968), 165-188, Alistair Fox and John Guy, *Reassessing the Henrician age: humanism, politics and reform 1500-1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), Harry S. Stout, 'Marsilius of Padua and the Henrician reformation,' *Church history*, XLII (1973), 308-318, W. Gordon Zeeveld, *Foundations of Tudor policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948)

⁹ T.F. Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal: Humanist politics and religion in the reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3, 139-143

¹⁰ Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*, 1

of Italian concepts” and argue that Starkey modeled his proposed political and educational reforms on humanist ideas he acquired in Oxford and Padua, particularly his reading of the first two books of Gasparo Contarini’s propagandistic treatise, *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum* (*On the Magistracies and Government of Venice*).¹¹ By contextualising and examining Starkey’s civic humanist university and political education in Italy and the similarities between, and influence of, Contarini’s first two books of *De magistratibus* and Starkey’s *Dialogue*, this thesis will affirm Mayer’s argument that Starkey “shared much of Contarini’s educational and political milieu,” and also correct Mayer’s argument that Starkey did not meet Contarini, nor base his civic humanist ideas and reforms on Contarini’s writing.¹² By applying Felix Gilbert’s and Elizabeth Gleason’s research on Contarini’s composition of the first two books of *De magistratibus*, while serving as Venetian ambassador to Charles V from 1520 to 1525, and his return to Padua and the university during Starkey’s doctoral studies (1525 to 1528), I will argue that Starkey read and was influenced by Contarini’s civic humanist, political and educational ideas expressed in his panegyric treatise.

Paul Oskar Kristeller argued in his seminal essay, “Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance” (1979), that the humanist movement was focused on education and teaching eloquence and rhetoric through the study of classical literature from antiquity.¹³ Kristeller and Paul Grendler further argued that Italian teachers of grammar and rhetoric during the

¹¹ Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*, 3

¹² Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*, 43, 58-60

¹³ Paul Oskar Kristeller, “Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance,” in *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, ed. by Michael Mooney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 92-119

fifteenth century (who were called “*umanista*” by university students) supported a new liberal arts teaching curriculum that Cicero had presented and argued for in *Pro Archia*. By using Cicero’s *studia humanitatis*, a curriculum that emphasised the study of rhetoric, eloquence, grammar, poetry, history and moral philosophy, humanist teachers adopted Cicero’s civic outlook and prepared students for participation in government service. Throughout the *quattrocento*, Italian grammar schools and universities established the *studia humanitatis* as the preferred teaching curriculum. Grendler argued in *Schooling in Renaissance Italy* (1989) and *Universities in the Italian Renaissance* (2001) that this marked a distinct break from scholastic education curriculums and teaching styles.¹⁴ While Anthony Grafton, Lisa Jardine, Ronald Witt and Robert Black have challenged this break from scholastic education, the civic nature of the humanist education and the shift away from the *vita contemplativa*, Starkey’s dialogue and letters to Cromwell and Henry VIII’s cousin, Reginald Pole, which were written after Starkey returned to England in 1529, demonstrate that Starkey experienced a political awakening and adopted the *vita activa* during his years living and studying in Padua and Venice.¹⁵ Therefore, Starkey’s civic humanist education

¹⁴ See Kristeller, “The Philosophy of Man in the Italian Renaissance,” in *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, ed. by Michael Mooney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 120, Paul Grendler, *Schooling in the Renaissance: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), Grendler *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), Margaret King, *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986)

¹⁵ Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Duckworth, 1986). See also Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Ronald Witt, “Medieval ‘Ars Dictaminis’ and the Beginnings of Humanism: A New Construction of the Problem,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 35 (1985), 1-35

in Padua and his dialogue fits Kristeller and Grendler's *studia humanitatis* and civic education thesis.

Since Hans Baron's thesis on the rise of what he termed republican "civic humanism" in Florence during the city's war against the Visconti of Milan in 1401-2 was published in *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* in 1955, historians have examined and debated whether a civic form of humanism emerged solely in Florence at the beginning of the fifteenth century, or whether civic humanist thought also developed in republican city-states such as Venice. Charles Nauert has argued that while many historians have rejected Baron's Florentine civic humanism argument, a clear relationship existed between republican politics and humanist education that started in Florence during the *quattrocento*.¹⁶ However, historians of Venice and the Venetian Republic have argued that scholastic writings in Padua during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had produced and taught republican and civic thought.¹⁷ For example, Margaret King argued in *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance* (1986) that civic humanism and the training of political values, through schools and universities, did not solely exist in Florence as Venetian teachers, such as Marcantonio Sabellico (1436-1506), had taught patrician youths in Venice that they must gain knowledge of moral and natural philosophy in order to become effective members of the Venetian

¹⁶ See Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: civic humanism and republican liberty in an age of classicism and tyranny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 7-24, Charles Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 14

¹⁷ For surveys covering historians' arguments against Baron's thesis see Ronald Witt, "The Crisis After Forty Years," *The American Historical Review* 101.1 (1996), 110-118, James Hankins, "The Baron Thesis after Forty Years and Some Recent Students of Leonardo Bruni," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56.2 (1995), 309-338

mixed government. Sabellico demonstrated this in *Opera*, where he urged Venetian students to study natural and moral philosophy, “so that you can as best as possible benefit the republic in the Senate, and the citizens in the marketplace, by advising and acting, in order that you not appear to be born for yourselves alone, but for your country... and your friends.”¹⁸ Just as Ronald Witt successfully traced the development of humanism back to the city of Padua in the thirteenth century through the writing of Lovato dei Lovati (1240-1309) and Albertino Mussato (1261-1329), King, Grendler, Felix Gilbert and William Bouwsma have demonstrated through their research in Padua and Venice that republican civic humanism can be traced back to the Venetian Republic through grammar school textbooks, letters and university documents from Padua and Venice.¹⁹ I argue that Thomas Starkey was immersed in and was taught Venetian republicanism and civic humanist thought during his years studying in Padua and that he translated these Venetian ideas into his English dialogue. Starkey’s dialogue, therefore, started the process of transmitting Italian republican political thought and reform to England during the reign of Henry VIII.

The scholarly discussion surrounding the transmission of humanist education and republican political thought to England started with Roberto Weiss’ study *Humanism in England during the fifteenth century* (1957). In his influential text, Weiss argued that humanist culture and education had initially been

¹⁸ Marcantonio Sabellico, *Opera*, in Margaret King, *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 23

¹⁹ See Witt, “Medieval ‘Ars Dictaminis’ and the Beginnings of Humanism”. For Venetian civic humanist teaching see Grendler, *Schooling in the Renaissance, The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, and William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

taken to northern Europe through trade and papal service. However, Weiss also examined the travels of Italian humanist teachers, such as Poggio Braccolini and Piero del Monte, to England during the fifteenth century and argued, for the first time, that these Italian humanist teachers taught wealthy English noblemen the *studia humanitatis* and liberal arts education that the grammar schools and universities in England did not provide.²⁰ The introduction of humanist education in England was initially considered a failure, according to Weiss, as these travelling Italian teachers repeatedly complained in their correspondence about the lack of ability among Englishmen to read and comprehend classical literature and their failure to learn rhetoric and eloquence through classical literature. Despite the initial failure to introduce humanist education to English noblemen and universities, I argue that these Italian teachers played a key role in influencing Englishmen to travel to Italy and study at Italian universities in the second half of the fifteenth century. This, in turn, impressed upon the next generation of English university students (including Thomas Starkey) the importance of reading, imitating and understanding classical literature from antiquity. Therefore, the transmission of humanist educational thought from Italy started what Charles Nauert and Quentin Skinner have called the subtle and slow shift towards the *studia humanitatis* and civic humanist ideals and practices at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. This new humanist pursuit also allowed English students to immerse themselves in the new learning at its source and acquire degrees in law and medicine, which would give postgraduate students an

²⁰ Roberto Weiss, *Humanism in England during the fifteenth century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 13-53

advantage in acquiring legal, clerical, medical and political work in Tudor England.²¹

In his influential text on the transmission of Florentine political thought to England and America in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries, John Pocock argued that “Machiavellian” and Florentine republican political thought was transmitted and became naturalised in England for the first time during the English Civil War of 1642-1646, as this marked the first point in early modern English history when “territorial and jurisdictional monarchy” was widely criticised and examined. The growing desire for change from within the noble, gentry and common classes in England, Pocock argued, gave rise to English movements of the *vita activa* and *vivere civile* in the seventeenth century.²² While Pocock was correct in arguing that the context surrounding the English Civil War gave reason and circumstance for the growth of what he called civic consciousness, he failed to identify that some of the Italian republican vocabulary and ideas that he argued were translated and transmitted to England in the seventeenth century, such as “good ruler,” “civic,” “citizen” and “commonwealth,” had actually been translated and transmitted by Thomas Starkey in the sixteenth century.²³ Starkey’s study in the Venetian republic following the end of the War of the League of Cambrai, when Venetian humanists and statesmen were producing panegyric treatises and dialogues that reassured the Venetian patrician class of its republican political stability, demonstrated to Starkey how he could argue for similar

²¹ Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* 102-105, Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume One: The Renaissance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 193-201

²² Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 333-337

²³ Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 339-340

political and educational reforms in England. If successful, Starkey argued that England would establish similar political stability and maintain a fair and just republican government that he believed existed in Venice.

The method I have used to argue how and why Starkey's *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* acts as the first English dialogue that translated and transmitted Venetian republican political and civic humanist educational ideas and practices to England is inspired by the linguistic method that Pocock established in, *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), and his essays, "The history of political thought: a methodological inquiry" (1962), "Time, institutions and action: an essay on traditions and their understanding" (1968) and "Texts as events: reflections on the history of political thought" (1987). In *The Machiavellian Moment*, Pocock applied his linguistic method and argued that language, specifically vocabulary concentrating on "liberty" and republicanism in Florence during the *quattrocento* and *cinquecento*, was translated and transmitted to England during the English Civil War, and then to America during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Pocock argued that the meaning of Renaissance Italian terms, which were transmitted to England and across the Atlantic, remained the same and that by examining the educational and political contexts, these "Machiavellian moments," when republican rhetoric and discourse was transmitted to England and America, are revealed.

Pocock's fellow Cambridge historian, Quentin Skinner, in his *Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Volume I* (1978), adopted a similar linguistic method when he examined how republican and civic humanist political

thought was transmitted to northern Europe during the sixteenth century. Skinner argued that by studying the history of political thought and ideologies, the power of the State, rather than a ruler, was transmitted to England and France, and translated into the vernacular European languages, by the end of the sixteenth century.²⁴

Therefore, I will also focus on examining the language Starkey employs and how he translated the meaning of political and educational ideas from contemporary Venetian republican thought, such as dialogues and treatises produced by Pietro Bembo and Gasparo Contarini, during his studies in Padua.²⁵ I will also follow Skinner's advice and examine the English and Italian ideological contexts surrounding Starkey's writing of the dialogue, so that I may examine Starkey's republican political thinking and Venetian-inspired reforms. While I agree with Pocock and Skinner's belief that vocabulary and language is important and if examined correctly reveals meaning, ideology, understanding and transmission of thought, I argue that Starkey's motives should also be taken into account by examining Starkey's vocabulary and the political events that led him to put these words and ideas into writing.²⁶

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will examine Starkey's education at Magdalen College School and the University of Oxford and argue that

²⁴ Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume I*, ix-xi, 215-221

²⁵ I will also apply a similar contextual method that T.F. Mayer applied in *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*. See Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal: Humanist politics and religion in the reign of Henry VIII*, 9-12

²⁶ See Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* Vol. 8, No. 1 (1969), 3-53

Starkey's education in Oxford gave him a sound humanist education and basis in classical languages, Ciceronian rhetoric and traditional dialectical and disputational techniques, which assisted him in his civic humanist and political education in Padua and Venice. Correspondingly, in the second chapter, I will argue that Starkey's postgraduate education in medicine, natural and moral philosophy and Aristotelian political theory at the University of Padua, mixed with his political tutelage under leading Venetian humanists and politicians, inspired Starkey and gave him the ability to be the first English author to transmit Venetian educational and political ideas and structure to England in the *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*. After analysing Starkey's liberal arts education – the study of Latin, grammar, rhetoric, natural and moral philosophy and history – and his humanist education – the study of Greek and Roman letters, treatises, dialogues and medical texts – as well as his political and philosophical tutelage in Padua and Venice, in Chapter Three, I will analyse how and why Starkey translated and transmitted Venetian republican political and educational vocabulary and ideas to England in his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*.

Chapter One

A rhetorical Latinist: Thomas Starkey's liberal arts education in Oxford

In 1534 Thomas Starkey returned home to England after finishing post-graduate degrees in medicine and civil law at the University of Padua. In a letter to Henry VIII's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, late that year, Starkey sought to "schow to you my mynd & purpos," which ultimately was that the chief minister would "know wyth what hart & mynd I wold serue the kyng." As Starkey further explains, it was unusual for men "so vnknownen as I am" to request employment from the king's chief minister.¹ However, Starkey believed that his "studys" set him apart from other potential candidates wishing to work under Cromwell. Similar to a cover letter written today, Starkey argued that his philosophical, medical, legal and political education in England and Italy put him in a strong position to serve his "kynge and cuntrey." Starkey explained that he learnt "bothe latyn and greke" during his liberal arts education at the University of Oxford and that during his doctoral studies at the University of Padua he was persuaded to take on a new purpose: "to lyue in a polytyke lyfe."² Through his dialogue – in which Starkey sought to list the issues that had led England to decay, before attempting to argue and convince Henry VIII as to what educational, political and legal reforms needed to be adopted to fix England – Starkey defined his new "polytyke lyfe" as the pursuit to establish correct "polytyke ordur & rule" in England via the creation

¹ Thomas Starkey, "Letter to Thomas Cromwell," in *England In The Reign Of King Henry The Eighth: Starkey's Life And Letters*, ed. Sidney J. Herrtage (London: The Early English Text Society, 1878), ix.

² Starkey, "Letter to Thomas Cromwell," x.

of a new, civic-humanist education system and a new constitution that would match the idealised mixed government structure Gasparo Contarini mapped out in *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum* (*On the Magistracies and Government of Venice*). This new political conviction came via Starkey's study of Aristotelian and Venetian political theory and the *vita activa* (the public and civic life of learned men) at the University of Padua. By the time Starkey finished his doctorate in medicine and returned to England in 1529, the learned Englishman desired to act upon his new civic conviction and take on work in Henry VIII's court as a political advisor.

Starkey also wanted to stress in his 1534 letter to Cromwell that his study of Latin and Greek letters, medicine, treatises and dialogues in Padua gave him a stronger understanding of natural and moral philosophy and political theory than those Englishmen who had only studied at English universities. Therefore, this thesis argues that we need to understand the context behind Starkey's education and the development of his political thinking in order to understand how and why he would write a dialogue that would transmit radical Venetian republican reforms to Tudor England in the sixteenth-century.

Born into a gentry farming family in Cheshire, England, around the turn of the sixteenth century, Starkey's father and namesake spared no expense in educating his son. From Starkey's will, dated 25 August 1538, we gain insight into the grammar and university education he received at Magdalen College, Oxford. He begins the will by thanking his father for his efforts in educating him. "Item I geue to my father Thomas Starkey, in parte of recompense of his

greate coste and charges vppon my bringing vpp, furthring me in good lernyng.”³ Starkey would leave his father forty pounds for the education that he received at Magdalen College School and Oxford University.⁴

While it was considered rare for gentry farming families to send sons to study in Oxford, the gentry in Cheshire was in a unique position as the area lacked noble families at the start of the sixteenth-century. English grammar schools had been established in the fifteenth-century so that noble families could send sons to be educated in reading, writing and speaking Latin in preparation for university and religious study. Many members of the gentry, however, saw no need for these grammar schools. Tudor diplomat, Richard Pace, recorded one gentry father’s thoughts on sending his son to study at a grammar school: “I swear by God’s body I’d rather that my son should hang than study letters.”⁵ However, the first historian to publish on the Starkey family lineage, J.S. Herrtage, concluded that the Starkey family was of high standing in Cheshire and possessed the desire and wealth to be able to send Starkey to a grammar school in Oxford.⁶ The Starkey family sought to follow the path set by Andrew Holes, a Cheshire gentry man who studied at Oxford and then went on to complete a doctorate at the university in Padua before serving as the keeper of the privy seal under Henry VI. Therefore, the Starkey family saw to it that Thomas Starkey and his older brother, John, attained a similar grammar

³ Thomas Starkey, *England In The Reign Of King Henry*, viii.

⁴ Beatrice White, introduction to *The Vulgaria of John Stanbridge and the Vulgaria of Robert Whittington* (London: The Early English Text Society, 1932), xi.

⁵ Richard Pace, *De Fructu qui ex Doctrina Percipitur*, ed. and trans. Frank Manley and Richard S. Sylvester (New York: Renaissance Society of America, 1967), xix.

⁶ Herrtage, *England In The Reign Of King Henry*, iv.

school and liberal arts university education as Andrew Holes had, so that they could climb the social ladder and acquire work in London.

Starkey was enrolled by the age of ten at one of the most prestigious grammar schools in England, Magdalen College School.⁷ Dating Starkey's birth around 1499 means that Thomas Bynknell and Robert Whittington would have taught him during his time there. Bynknell and Whittington both taught according to the new style that John Anwykyll had brought to the school in the fifteenth century. This consisted of a humanist-style curriculum, rather than the traditional scholastic method of English grammar schooling. Anwykyll had students follow the tradition of copying and reciting from Latin grammar books, some of which Anwykyll wrote himself. However, the English teacher also introduced students to the work of the most prominent Italian Latinist of the fifteenth-century, Lorenzo Valla. Grammar schools in Italy had been teaching students to write Latin in the elegant style Valla argued for in his textbook, *De elegantiae linguae Latinae (The Glory of the Latin Language)*. Anwykyll taught from Valla's textbook and the students studied how Valla used Latin vocabulary and style from antiquity.

In the six books of *Elegantiae*, Valla examined how the Latin style of Roman authors from antiquity differed from the Latin of the medieval age. He condemned the lack of eloquence in medieval thinking, writing and language, commenting, "For what lover of letters and the public good can restrain his tears when he sees eloquence now in that state in which it was long ago when

⁷ Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 109.

Rome was captured. ... Indeed, for many centuries not only has no one spoken in the Latin manner, but no one who has read Latin has understood it.”⁸ Valla further argued that fifteenth-century Latin lacked the elegance of the language first perfected by Cicero. Therefore, for students to become capable Latinists, Valla argued that teachers and the Church “should not condemn the language of the pagans, nor grammar, nor rhetoric, nor dialectic, nor any of the other arts.”⁹ This encouragement to study “pagan” writing and aspire to learn Greek and Latin from a wide range of sources would prove to have a profound effect on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English students, as Starkey acquired translation, rhetorical writing and disputational skills at school and university that would prepare him for future study in Padua and work in Henry VIII’s court.

Building on Anwykyll’s teaching of Latin and eloquence through Valla’s textbook, Whittington placed strict importance on students reading the orations and letters of Cicero. Whittington’s translation of Cicero’s *De officiis* was only published in 1534, but we can assume that this edition reflected his teaching in earlier years. Starkey, therefore, would have learnt from Whittington the belief that those who attain a classical liberal arts education, along the lines of Cicero’s *studia humanitatis*, should seek to “obtainne offyces... [and] helpe to governe... [the] commen welthe.”¹⁰ As a young

⁸ Lorenzo Valla, “The Glory of the Latin Language,” in *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, ed. James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin McLaughlin (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1968), 134.

⁹ Valla, “The Glory of the Latin Language,” 133.

¹⁰ Robert Whittington, “The thre bokes of Tullius offyce, bothe in latyn tongue and englysh, / late translated and dylige[n]tly corrected by Robart Whytynton laureat poete,” Early English Books Online, accessed November 12, 2015 http://eebo.chadwyck.com.simsrad.net.ocs.mq.edu.au/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pg

grammar student Starkey may not have acted on Whittington's civic teaching, however, Starkey would later frame his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* around a conversation in which his two protagonists, Thomas Lupset and Reginald Pole, discuss, as Whittington had with grammar students, whether the active political life or the withdrawn contemplative life is the superior condition for learned men. Starkey's closing remarks, during which Pole and Lupset articulate their support for the active political life, a position not widely supported by contemporary English scholars (Thomas More, for example, favoured the contemplative life), demonstrates the impact that Whittington's early civic teaching and support for the active political life had on Starkey.

By studying and working through Whittington's *Vulgaria*, a translation textbook that employed the genre of dialogue, Starkey was shown how he could translate Latin phrases and ideas into the English language and an English context. The *Vulgaria* would also serve as the first text that taught Starkey how he could use a dialogue, based on classical Greek and Roman examples, to convince others to accept and adopt his points of view and beliefs. One of the points of view that Whittington would introduce Starkey to, and which Starkey would later accept and argue for in his own dialogue, was the belief that learned Englishmen should seek an education that would assist them in future political work in England. For example, in Whittington's *Vulgaria*, the 'discipulus' asks the 'preceptor' during their discussion on the

issues facing England, “Ohy good syr? suche is the course of the world. alas for mysery? worse was it neuer. o merciful god? wyll it neuer amende? alas for synne & wyckednes?”¹¹ Eager to convince his students to think more about how they could be involved in improving the state of the English commonwealth, Whittington, through the preceptor, suggests that the discipulus “refourme our maners... [so that] the olde wealth maye renewe.”¹² A student’s manners were considered to be of utmost importance, as Whittington argued that to become a “good scholer,” one’s manners must be beyond reproach. According to Whittington, manners included being disciplined in study, imitating the style and rhetoric of authors from antiquity, and contemplating what England should look like.¹³ Therefore, grammar students reading and considering Whittington’s thoughts in the *Vulgaria* were, for the first time, being taught to consider how they might use their education to reform the commonwealth.

This need for civic education would be taken on in Starkey’s dialogue, where the protagonist, Reginald Pole, adopted a similar position to Whittington’s preceptor and attempted to convince Lupset that “the hole educatyon of [the] nobylte,” the natural political rulers of England, had to be transformed so that they would be able to “lerne how they myght be abul... to dow & put in exercyse that thyng wych perteynyth to theyr offyce & authoryte.”¹⁴ Therefore,

¹¹ Robert Whittington, “Uulgaria Roberti Whitintoni Lichfeldiensis/ et de institutione grammaticulorum Opusculum: libello suo de concinnitate Grammatices accommodatum: et in quatuor partes digestum,” in *The Vulgaria of John Stanbridge and the Vulgaria of Robert Whittington*, ed. Beatrice White (London: The Early English Text Society, 1932), 127.

¹² Whittington, “Uulgaria Roberti Whitintoni,” 127-128.

¹³ Ibid., 125-126.

¹⁴ Ibid.

as Whittington attempted to persuade his students to study to become “good scholars,” so that they might live active political lives in England, Starkey adopted similar views and attempted to persuade the English nobility to adopt a Venetian-styled civic education that would teach them of their civic duty and how they could best reform England. Whittington’s *Vulgaria*, therefore, served as Starkey’s first example of a dialogue that called for learned men in England to pursue a public and political life. However, it was only when Starkey began studying in Padua and learning from Venetian statesmen, such as Pietro Bembo and Gasparo Contarini, that he would take Whittington’s idea and call for widespread civic humanist educational reform in England.

By studying under Whittington and learning to translate Latin and Greek ideas, phrases and sentences through Whittington’s textbook, Starkey was taught how he could translate political ideas from Latin and Greek essays, treatises and dialogues into English. This translation practice would show Starkey how foreign ideas could be transmitted into an English context. This is a practice that Starkey would continue throughout his liberal arts and civic humanist education in Oxford and in Padua, before applying translation and transmission techniques to his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*. Starkey’s expertise in Latin, Greek and translation would also be crucial in allowing him to translate and introduce Venetian educational and political phrases into the evolving English language.

In the fifteenth century, the predominantly conservative character of Oxford University began to show signs of change.¹⁵ Oxford's humanities studies had begun to shift towards humanistic studies after learned foreigners and wealthy English patrons, such as Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, endowed the university with new lectureships, manuscripts and other gifts. For example, in 1444 the duke gifted the university 134 manuscripts of classical literature.¹⁶ This collection increased later in the fifteenth century, when scholars sent to study in Italy began sending manuscripts back to Oxford. By the end of the century, Oxford and Cambridge were employing this first generation of Englishmen educated in Italy: William Grocyn, Thomas Linacre and William Latimer. At the urging of the latter two, Oxford colleges also hired lecturers in Greek (including Latimer himself).

Around the time Starkey started studying for his Bachelor of Arts at Magdalen College, in 1512, conservative directors at the university began protesting against and criticising the study of non-Christian literature and rhetoric. In response to this humanist learning and teaching, anti-Greek and anti-humanities societies were formed at Oxford, the most famous group of the period calling themselves the Trojans.¹⁷ In 1518, Thomas More wrote a letter to the directors of Oxford University criticizing these "stupid factions" and highlighting the usefulness of Greek to liberal arts, law and theological education. More asked the directors to "not allow anyone in... [the] university to be frightened away from the study of Greek, ... since Greek is a subject

¹⁵ V. H. H. Green, *A History of Oxford University* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1974), 32.

¹⁶ Roberto Weiss, *Humanism in England during the fifteenth century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 37.

¹⁷ Green, *A History of Oxford University*, 39-41.

required in every place of learning.”¹⁸ In further arguing for the place of Greek in the curriculum, More comments, “To whom is it not obvious that to the Greeks we owe all our precision in the liberal arts generally and in theology particularly; for the Greeks either made the great discoveries themselves or pass the on as part of their heritage.”¹⁹

Humanists and reformers would also find a significant supporter in Magdalen graduate and chief minister to Henry VIII, Thomas Wolsey, who frequently recruited Magdalen alumni to work for him and the crown. Henry VIII eventually ensured change when he ordered a public lectureship in Greek at Oxford University, and shared his view, “I judge no land in England better bestowed than that which is given to our Universities, for by their maintenance our Realm shall be governed when we be dead and rotten.”²⁰ Whereas universities in England had long been connected to the Church, Henry VIII’s desire to create a Renaissance court led universities to concentrate on educating courtiers who could serve the king and establish themselves as lawyers, notaries, diplomats and political advisers. This shift in preparing university students for work in the capital, rather than solely in the church, would impact Starkey as he did not hail from the nobility and would need to find work for himself once his studies at Oxford were completed.

¹⁸ Thomas More, “Thomas More to the Reverend Fathers, the Commissory, Proctors, and Others of the Guild of Masters of Oxford University,” in *A Thomas More Source Book*, ed. Gerard B. Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 211.

¹⁹ More, “Thomas More to the Reverend Fathers,” 209.

²⁰ Henry VIII in Green, *A History of Oxford University*, 41.

To complete his Bachelor of Arts, Starkey would study the medieval Arts course of *trivium* and *quadrivium*. These areas of study were split between trivium's grammar, rhetoric and dialectic, and quadrivium's arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and music. For rhetoric, Starkey would return to Cicero, as Greek and Roman dialogues were used for the study of rhetoric and eloquence.²¹ This meant that Starkey would study Cicero's dialogues, most importantly *De oratore*, during his undergraduate studies at Oxford. In his own dialogue, Starkey would imitate the style of debate in the first book of *De oratore*, in which Cicero chose to use two real protagonists (Crassus and Scaevola) to create individual and separate points of view on the topics discussed in the text. By choosing to follow Cicero and argue for reform through a conversational and educational dialogue, Starkey aimed to demonstrate his ability to argue and reason for political, educational, religious and social changes in England.

Like Cicero's debate between Crassus and Scaevola, Starkey also attempted to persuade his intended readers (initially Reginald Pole, then Henry VIII after Pole's *Pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione* was published in 1536) of the superiority of his reforms and ideas through a back-and-forth debate between the protagonist, Reginald Pole, and a foil used to portray the opposition and anti-reform views in England, Thomas Lupset. Yet a key difference in Starkey's dialogue is that Lupset, unlike Scaevola, is eventually persuaded by Pole's reforms and Pole is likewise persuaded by Lupset's argument for the *vita activa* and the need for him to return to England and take up political

²¹ K.J. Wilson, *Incomplete Fictions: The Formation of English Renaissance Dialogue* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985), 53.

work under Henry VIII. By adopting Cicero's rhetorical structure; "first secure the goodwill of our audience; ... next... state our case; afterwards define the dispute; then establish our own allegations... [and] disprove those of the other side," Starkey was able to use Ciceronian rhetoric in attempting to convince Henry VIII of the need for educational and political reforms in England.²²

Starkey would also apply Ciceronian rhetoric and style during disputation exercises at Oxford University to assist his reform arguments in the dialogue. Disputation exercises at the University of Oxford saw an opponent propose a subject to debate, which would then be answered by a respondent. The position of opponent was assigned to a senior member of the college and would often be assumed by teachers of rhetoric, dialectic and natural and moral philosophy. Respondents would have to convince the audience and moderators of their line of argument. To do this students relied heavily on the prescribed texts from their classes and we know from the Edwardian statutes of 1549 that dialectic and rhetoric relied heavily on the writings of Aristotle and Cicero.²³ These mandatory disputation exercises would have forced Starkey to think through his beliefs in political, legal and social topics and issues, as well as consult classical authors such as Aristotle and Cicero from whom Starkey would partly base his understanding of political constitutions and the need for civic education and the *vita activa* in England. The similarities between the way disputation exercises were performed at Oxford and the two-character, question-and-answer format of debate in his *Dialogue*

²² Cicero, *De Oratore*, vol I, book I, trans. E.W. Sutton (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), 99.

²³ J.M. Fletcher, "The Faculty of Arts," in *History of the University of Oxford: Volume III The Collegiate University*, ed. James McConica (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 168-172.

between Pole and Lupset demonstrates the influence and ability of Starkey to debate and persuade readers in a Ciceronian oratory style.

Starkey's grammar school and liberal arts university education in Oxford gave him a thorough understanding of Latin and Greek, which allowed him to begin the process of translating Greek and Italian philosophical and political ideas into English during his later study in Padua. Whittington's educational and civic encouragement would also have influenced Starkey's decision to continue his education at the University of Oxford. However, it would not be until Starkey travelled to study in Padua that he would be convinced of the *vita activa* and of England's need to adopt a civic education system. Yet, while Starkey lacked the conviction of what he would later call a "polytyke lyfe," his liberal arts and humanist education in England assisted in developing the young scholar into the reformer he would become. Without his humanist education and introduction to Ciceronian rhetoric and Aristotelian political theory at Oxford, it is unlikely that Starkey would have studied in Padua, where he would be transformed into a civic humanist, political theorist and Tudor reformer.

Chapter Two

“To lyue in a polytyke lyfe”: Thomas Starkey’s civic humanist education in Padua and Venice

In May 1509, the French army under Louis XII claimed and occupied the city of Milan, before moving southeast and across the Adda River. On 14 May, the victorious French army routed the Venetian army near Agnadello, causing consternation across the Venetian empire. The diarist Marino Sanudo recorded that when news of the defeat reached the Council of Ten, “there began a great weeping and lamentation and, to put it better, a sense of panic.”¹ The battle of Agnadello was the first significant loss the Venetian republic suffered in the War of the League of Cambrai (1508-1517). However, the aftermath of the loss at Agnadello was felt across the *terraferma* as the local elite in towns and cities began rebelling against Venetian rule.

In his *History of Venice*, first published in 1551, Pietro Bembo recorded that “the people of Padua, for their part, some of whose citizens were set on revolution, held their own private meetings among themselves and decided to surrender to the king.”² Paduan aristocrats and the learned elite, who had been refused citizenship and equality of law by Venice since the 1405 conquest of the city, embraced the princely rule of Louis XII over the republicanism of Venice. What the Paduan rebellion revealed, therefore, was the imperial rule

¹ Marino Sanudo, “May 15, 1509,” in *Venice Cita Excelentissima: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, trans. Linda L. Carroll, ed. Patricia H. Labalme and Laura Sanguineti White (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 174.

² Pietro Bembo, *The History of Venice*, Vol 2, Book VIII, trans. and ed. Robert W. Ulery, Jr (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 321.

of the Venetian ruling class over the *terraferma*. Venice's belief in aristocratic republican rule and *res publica*, relating to Cicero's belief in elective government that recognises the public interest over private interest of a *commune*, did not include the interest of the Paduan elite or the *terraferma*.³

The heavy defeat at Agnadello and across the *terraferma* in 1509-10 signalled what appeared to be the eventual downfall of the republic. However, aided by peasants and merchants who had profited from Venetian trade and rule, Venetian forces were able to recapture Padua and much of the *terraferma* by the end of the war in 1518. The city of Venice was never invaded during the war and the Venetian ruling class responded to the recapture of the *terraferma* by reaffirming the myth that their *serenissima* was still the perfect republic, heir and successor of the Roman Republic, and anointed by God. Thomas Starkey's arrival in Padua in 1522, therefore, coincided with this important moment in Venetian history when educated patricians reaffirmed the republic's political stability and perfect mixed government identity. This important moment was crucial in the development of Starkey's idealistic republican views and political beliefs, as the English doctoral student was undoubtedly influenced by the Venetian nobility's reaffirmation of the myth of Venice.

Starkey would adopt the Venetian propagandistic view that the perfect commonwealth could only be constructed and maintained through civic

³ Edward Muir, "Was There Republicanism in the Renaissance Republics? Venice after Agnadello," in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, ed. John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000), 142-145

education of the natural rulers, the nobility, who needed to study classical political, medical and philosophical texts, which argued that rule by a mixed government was superior to the other political constitutions that Plato and Aristotle examined in *The Republic* and *Politics*. This crucial moment in Venetian history also led Starkey to interact with, and be influenced by, Venetian statesmen and propagandists, such as Pietro Bembo and Gasparo Contarini, who would write panegyric treatises, dialogues and historical texts that reaffirmed the political stability and divine providence that Venice possessed through its apparent perfection of Aristotelian natural order, hierarchical structure, selfless and civic noble leaders and a mixed republican government. Therefore, what I argue in this chapter is that Starkey's ideas for the political re-education and re-structuring of the English nobility and the English body politic were based on his medical and philosophical teachings at the University of Padua and from these Venetian propagandists, who I argue Starkey met, read the work of and learnt from during his doctoral studies in Padua.

When Starkey and Lupset arrived at the University of Padua in 1522, the city of Padua revolved around its prestigious university, as there was no princely court, state government, garrison or embassy.⁴ After the 1405 conquest of the city, the university of Padua became the Venetian republic's university and the Venetian government became its principal patron. To promote its new institution, the Senate ordered the closure of competing universities in Treviso and Vicenza. Further to ensure the university's growth, on 31 March, 1407, the

⁴ Jonathan Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors: English Students in Italy, 1485-1603* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 6

Senate ruled that university-bound students in the republic had to study in Padua or pay a fine of 500 ducats.⁵ By providing 4,000 ducats annually and appointing three Venetian officials to rule over the leading liberal arts university, the Venetian government ensured that when Starkey enrolled at Padua he would engage in study with future leaders of the Venetian Republic.⁶

By enrolling as a doctoral student in medicine at the University of Padua, Starkey would receive an education in medical humanism, natural philosophy and politics that he could not have obtained in Oxford. As historian Paul Grendler has demonstrated, medical and philosophy professors in Padua went beyond explaining the grammatical and rhetorical meaning of classical texts, they also explained the moral, historical and civic meaning of these works.⁷ Medical humanism, therefore, was the scholarly attempt to retrieve medical sources from ancient Greek writers, especially those written by Hippocrates, Galen and Aristotle. Medical humanists of the fifteenth-century would also seek to make these sources available to students by translating them into Latin. For example, Demetrius Chalcondylas translated Galen's *De anatomicis administrationibus*, a text that emphasised the educational value of dissection, into Latin in Florence. Medical students in Italian universities would study these sources and further challenge the medieval translations and understanding of Greek medical tradition. By studying Galen's writing and placing importance on botany and anatomical studies, students in Padua began to adopt a rhetoric that placed value in experience, observation and

⁵ Paul F. Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 22

⁶ *Ibid.*, 23

⁷ *Ibid.*, 243-248

travel, rather than adhering to the medieval practice of received wisdom.⁸ And with the hiring of two ordinary professors and three extraordinary professors to teach natural philosophy and Aristotle, medical students in Padua soon acknowledged that a physician was also to be a philosopher and political theorist.⁹

In his 1534 letter to Cromwell, Starkey explains that he “so delytyd in the contemplayon of natural knolege,” and this can be seen in the new medical language and Aristotelian body politic metaphor Starkey used to highlight the issues affecting the “polytyke body” in England.¹⁰ Starkey would use Aristotelian corporeal metaphors and naturalist language, acquired through his study of Galen and Aristotle in Padua, in his dialogue to argue that England required political thinkers who would correct the “ignorance” and “blindnyss” that had led the realm to be filled with “dyseasys.”¹¹ Starkey argued that political physicians did not exist in sixteenth-century England and that without them England would not be able to correct the ignorance, blindness and illnesses that plagued each part of the body politic. Starkey, therefore, used his medical education to produce rhetorical arguments that would call for educational and civic changes in England, as well as for the need for a distinctly improved political constitution to be implemented in England.

⁸ Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors*, 75-76

⁹ Grendler, *Universities*, 33

¹⁰ Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, ed. T.F. Mayer (London: Royal Historical Society, 1989), 39

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 56

Starkey's new body politic would match much of the Venetian mixed government system that he studied in the first two books of Contarini's *De magistratibus*. This new body would be made up of a restricted heart (monarch), a new head (new aristocratic councils and parliament), hands (merchants and warriors) and feet (farmers and tillers of the ground).¹² Starkey then employed his Venetian understanding of natural philosophy to argue that a flourishing state must possess "strength" (a large population), "helth" (properly educated noble rulers) and "beuty of body" (balance in the body's parts).¹³ Finally, Starkey argued that only when political physicians observed "nature" – the Venetian Republic – could proper "glory" be restored to England.¹⁴ Starkey demonstrates in the second section of his dialogue, in which Pole and Lupset discuss what the perfect commonwealth looks like and the illnesses that plague the English body, how his medical and civic humanist education in Padua assisted him in arguing for a radical new political structure in England that matched the Venetian Republic.

Outside of the classroom, Starkey was strongly influenced by the Venetian and Florentine noblemen who frequented the Paduan home of fellow Englishman, Reginald Pole. It is unclear whether Pole, a cousin of Henry VIII, and Starkey were close during their years studying at Magdalen College in Oxford. Pole had lived separate to other Oxford students, residing in the house of the college president, John Claymond.¹⁵ Pole's lineage ensured that he also did

¹² Starkey, *Dialogue*, 30

¹³ *Ibid.*, 38

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 96-141

¹⁵ T.F. Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal: Humanist politics and religion in the reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 26

not attend the same grammar school as Starkey. However, when Starkey and Lupset arrived in Padua, Pole offered them housing and the three Englishmen would travel and study together until Lupset's death in 1530. Yet it is unclear what role Starkey served in Pole's Paduan household. Without any definitive primary evidence, historians have suggested that Starkey either served as Pole's secretary, citing his thorough grammar and liberal arts education, or more recently T.F. Mayer and Robert Barrington have argued that he would have likely served as a chaplain; Starkey would have taken his religious orders while studying at Oxford University and he would become Margaret Pole's chaplain after he took up residence in the Pole family home in Sheen in 1530.¹⁶

What is certain about Pole's household in Padua is that it was funded by his cousin, Henry VIII, who supplied a sum of one hundred pounds a year.¹⁷ Pole's social standing, learning and nobility meant that the doge and government of Venice were pleased to welcome him to the republic. From the letters of Niccolò Leonico Tomeo and Pietro Bembo we also know he was invited to public gatherings and state events in Venice.¹⁸ In setting up an official household in Padua, Pole took after two of his tutors at Oxford, Thomas Linacre and William Latimer. Following further in their footsteps, Pole also hired a Greek scholar, Niccolò Leonico Tomeo, to be his household's

¹⁶ T.F. Mayer, "Faction and Ideology: Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue*," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 28, 1 (1985): 22-24, Robert Barrington, "Two Houses Both Alike In Dignity: Reginald Pole and Edmund Harvell," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 39, 4 (1996): 896-899

¹⁷ Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors*, 110

¹⁸ Barrington, "Two Houses Both Alike," 897

tutor.¹⁹ A letter from Leonico to Starkey, following the Englishman's departure from Padua in 1529, demonstrates that the two men enjoyed a close friendship and that the former had tutored the latter during his studies in Padua.²⁰ Leonico's appointment also had a significant impact on Starkey's understanding of natural philosophy, more specifically Aristotle's natural order of man, or what Starkey would term "polytyke ordur" in his dialogue.²¹

Born to Epirote Greek parents, Leonico studied under the Greek scholar and medical humanist, Demetrius Chalcondylas, in Florence and Milan, before graduating from the University of Padua in 1485. In 1497, Leonico was appointed the first public lecturer in the Greek texts of Aristotle at Padua. After finishing his work at the university in 1504, Leonico taught Greek and Aristotelian philosophy in Venice and Padua, before becoming Starkey's tutor in 1524. Leonico taught Starkey how he could employ medical language and ideas to his writing. Starkey likely studied Leonico's *Dialogo* (1524), which focused on the need for students to study and imitate Greek and Latin style in medical and philosophical writing. Leonico also introduced Starkey to another humanist teacher and influential dialogist in Padua, Pietro Bembo. Through Bembo, Starkey was taught how to employ rhetoric and classical style in his writing, which would most effectively persuade his desired English audience.

Pietro Bembo hailed from a wealthy, Venetian noble family that held political offices in Venice and around Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Bembo's father, Bernardo, had served as ambassador to Austria,

¹⁹ Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors*, 105

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 113

²¹ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 4

France, Florence, Rome, and had served Pope Innocent VIII and King Louis XII of France.²² Bernardo also had the opportunity to study Cicero's dialogues and letters during his two missions to Florence. This influenced the Venetian statesmen to have his son educated in the *studia humanitatis* in Florence. When the family settled back in Venice, Venetian humanists and noblemen, such as Pietro Barozzi and Francesco Contarini, dedicated works to Bernardo in the hope that he would critique and improve their thinking and writing.²³

Despite his father's diplomatic and political success, Bembo's own appreciation for classical literature and letters led him to desire a significantly different life. Instead of pursuing the traditional Venetian *cursus honorum*, after failing in two elections to public office in Venice, Bembo decided to become a poet and learn to imitate the poetry of Petrarch and the rhetorical style and writing of Cicero. In 1506, however, at the age of thirty-six, pressure from his family led Bembo to leave Venice and serve in the courts of Urbino and Rome.²⁴ Baldassare Castiglione would memorialize Bembo's service in Urbino by casting him as the defender of liberty in *The Book of the Courtier*, set in the Duke of Urbino's court in 1507. This raises the question as to whether Bembo was a supporter of the contemplative life, as he would retire to live on his family's land in Padua in 1525, or whether he was a firm supporter of the republican and the civic ideals attributed to the protagonist bearing his name in Castiglione's *Courtier*.

²² Margaret L. King, *Venetian Humanism In An Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 336

²³ Ibid., 338

²⁴ William Wiethoff, "Rhetoric and Law in Pietro Bembo's *Opere*," *A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, vol. 5, 3 (1987): 267

Following his return to Padua in 1525, Bembo had an ambition to teach those “who can accomplish something with concentration and hard work... [and those] whose genius, if cultivated, will bear rich and great fruits.”²⁵ Bembo took Starkey and Marco Mantova Benavides on as students during the third decade of the sixteenth century. Similar to Starkey, Benavides would write dialogues that employed two real life protagonists who discussed political theory and reform. Like Pole and Lupset in Starkey’s dialogue, Benavides’ interlocutors engaged each other in a didactic question-and-answer style in order to determine truth and convince readers of the author’s thought. Teaching Benavides through Cicero’s *De oratore* and his own *Gli asolani*, Bembo showed his pupil how to employ a two-character dialogue format persuasively for his first dialogue, *L’heremita*.²⁶ Bembo had also taught Benavides via his *De imitatione (On Imitation)*, written in 1512, to imitate the rhetoric used in Cicero’s dialogues in order to create his own dialogic style based on the Roman statesman’s writing. Mayer called this the “Bembonian model” and points out that Starkey likely learnt dialogue writing from Benavides and Bembo in Padua.²⁷

The similarities between Starkey and Benavides’ dialogues could also link the former to Bembo during his doctoral studies in Padua. Bembo’s teaching in *Prose della volgar lingua (On The Vernacular Tongue)*, published in Venice during Starkey’s doctoral studies in 1525, in which Bembo argued for authors to write in their vernacular tongues and using language which vernacular

²⁵ Pietro Bembo, *De Imitatione*, ed. Giorgio Santangelo (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1954), 43-44, in Wiethoff, “Rhetoric and Law in Pietro Bembo’s *Opere*,” 273

²⁶ Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the commonweal*, 66

²⁷ Ibid

readers could comprehend, could also have prompted Starkey (along with Whittington's earlier argument in *Vulgaria* for English students to write in and translate into the English language) to choose to write his *Dialogue* in English. During the first half of the sixteenth century, it would have been considered unusual for an English writer to choose to publish a dialogue in English. Thomas More, for example, published his dialogue and discourse in *Utopia* in Latin in 1516, with an English translation first published in 1551. However, whereas Bembo likely influenced Starkey's writing in English, as well as his didactic question-and-answer dialogue style and Ciceronian rhetorical argumentation, another Venetian statesman and close friend of Bembo's, Gasparo Contarini, would influence the educational and political content and reform ideas in Starkey's dialogue through his own propagandistic treatise, *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum* (*On the Magistracies and Government of Venice*).

Gasparo Contarini was the eldest of seven sons and four daughters of Alvise Contarini and Polissena Malipiero. Since Contarini's great-grandfather had served as a captain in the war against Genoa in 1380, men from the noble Venetian family were expected to acquire a liberal arts and civic education in Venice and Padua so that they could then stand for political offices in the republic. Therefore, after receiving a grammar education at the schools of San Marco and Rialto, where the Venetian historian Marcantonio Sabellico taught, Contarini enrolled at the University of Padua in 1501.²⁸ However, Contarini's education was disrupted when the university closed due to the outbreak of the

²⁸ Elisabeth G. Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini: Venice, Rome and Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 8

War of the League of Cambrai and Louis XII's takeover of Padua in 1509. Without having finished his degree, Contarini returned to Venice to contemplate his future. From 1509 to 1511, Contarini, together with two companions from his days at Padua, Tommaso Giustiniani and Vincenzo Quirini, struggled to work out whether he should withdraw to the Sacro Eremo di Camaldoli monastery or pursue political work in Venice during the war. By 1512, Giustiniani and Quirini had retired from public life in favour of a religious life at the monastery. However, Contarini did not follow his companions, whom he regarded as his "guides to life" and the two people he "loved above all others."²⁹ Instead he continued to study as the war raged in the *terraferma*. Contarini's letters during this period demonstrate the personal conflict and impact that Paduan teaching of the *vita activa* and the civic duty of Venetian noblemen had on Contarini's learning and the development of his philosophical, political and theological views.³⁰

By 1511, Contarini's passion for theological and philosophical study had led him to expound, in a letter written to Guistiniani, his new belief in justification through faith and the saving act of Christ. Contarini wrote to his friend that Christ's "passion is enough and more than enough" assurance for the salvation of Christian souls. This new belief led Contarini to make a firm decision not to follow his companions and instead to seek what he called "a middle way," between a spiritual life and a public life in service of the republic. This is further observed in a letter Contarini wrote to Quirini in 1512, in which he attempted to convince his friend of the Aristotelian and Venetian belief that

²⁹ Gasparo Contarini, "Letter no. I, to Guistiniani, I Feb. 1511," in J.B. Ross, "Gasparo Contarini and his Friends," *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 17 (1970): 206

³⁰ Ross, "Gasparo Contarini and his Friends," 194

“the solitary life is not natural to man whom nature has made a social animal.”³¹ Having failed to persuade his companions, Contarini turned his attention to composing treatises, *De officio episcopi libri II* (1516) and *De immortalitate animae* (1517), that would call for the Venetian nobility to consider its duty and place in governing the republic, argue for the *vita activa* in the midst of the War of the League of Cambrai and stress the importance of the Church and the *Studium* in educating the youth of Venice. However, the treatise that would most clearly demonstrate Contarini’s new conviction for the *vita activa* and political work in the *serenissima* would be drafted after the war, when Contarini started writing *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum* (*On the Magistracies and Government of Venice*).

In the first book of *De magistratibus*, the Venetian statesman referred to the War of the League of Cambrai as having begun fifteen years earlier, which led historians Felix Gilbert and William Bouwsma to argue that Contarini drafted the first two books of his five book treatise (which would not be published until five years after Starkey’s death in 1543) during his service as Venetian ambassador to Charles V from 1520 to 1525.³² In the fifth book of the treatise, Contarini also referred to a law instituted in 1531 that forbade appeals to Venice against decisions of the podestà in the *terraferma*.³³ Therefore, it is most likely that Contarini drafted the first two books of his treatise, which focused on the development of Venice’s perfect mixed government political structure and the selfless and restricted rule of the doge, during his

³¹ Ross, “Gasparo Contarini and his Friends,” 217

³² Felix Gilbert, “The Date of the Composition of Contarini’s and Gianotti’s Books on Venice,” *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 14 (1967): 174

³³ *Ibid.*, 176

ambassadorship to Charles V, and then finished the treatise during the fourth decade of the sixteenth century. After Contarini finished his ambassadorship in Worms, the Venetian statesman returned to Padua to continue studying at the republic's university. During his years living in Padua, between 1525 and 1528, Contarini would have moved in the same social circles as Pole, Lupset and Starkey, as the Venetian nobleman had studied Greek under Leonico Tomeo and corresponded with Bembo. Therefore, it is probable that Starkey would have met Contarini through either Tomeo or Bembo.

Despite Mayer's claims to the contrary, Starkey's reading of the first two books of *De magistratibus* during his doctoral study in Padua seems likely as in his dialogue, Starkey employed and translated direct phrases from *De magistratibus*, such as "cytyzyns" of England, a term Starkey translated from Contarini's first book to argue for the natural citizens in England, the nobility, to rule.³⁴ As I will argue in Chapter Three, Starkey also translated and transmitted Contarini's ideas surrounding the Venetian government's perfect "mixture of all estates, ... that is of princely soueraigntie, a gouernment of the nobilitie & a popular authority" into Starkey's new "myxte state" of England that would be ruled by a similarly restricted monarch, two aristocratic councils and a new English parliament that would be made up of noblemen like Contarini's "Great councell" in Venice.³⁵

³⁴ See Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*, 58-59

³⁵ Gasparo Contarini, *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum libri quinque*, trans. Lewes Lewkenor (London, 1599. Reprinted Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, De Capo Press, 1969), 33

Starkey received rhetorical and dialectical learning in Aristotelian and Ciceronian dialogues and treatises from his grammar school and liberal arts university education in England. Through his study in Oxford, Starkey became a capable Latinist, able to write in and translate from Latin and Greek. However, when Starkey travelled with Thomas Lupset to study for his doctorate in medicine in 1522, he received a complete civic humanist education, unattainable at Oxford. At the University of Padua, Starkey was educated with the future noble rulers of Venice in medicine and natural and moral philosophy, with professors, tutors and Venetian statesmen explaining the moral, historical and civic meaning of texts from antiquity. Starkey used his new political teaching and civic understanding to adopt the *vita activa* and a “polytyke lyfe” in England, and through the study of Aristotle’s body politic and the Venetian rule of the nobility through a mixed government constitution, would write his reform manifesto for England.

Having finished his medical studies in Padua in 1529, Starkey began to plan a return to England and attempted to secure a position that other learned Englishmen had acquired under two of Henry VIII’s chief ministers, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey and then Thomas Cromwell. Starkey also began to organise his political thoughts and map out how he could write a persuasive dialogue, like those he had studied in Venice, which would employ the two character, didactic question-and-answer format that Starkey deployed in his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*.

Chapter Three

“To dow servyce to my prynce & cuntrey”: The transmission of Italian republican thought in Thomas Starkey’s *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*

By October 1529, Reginald Pole, Thomas Starkey and Thomas Lupset had completed their doctoral studies in Padua and returned to England. We know this because that month Henry VIII sent the three men to Paris to secure support for the king’s desired divorce from Catherine of Aragon.¹ It is unclear what role Starkey played in this mission. However, Herrtage points out that in July 1530, after the three scholars had returned to England and taken up residence in the Pole family’s house in Sheen, the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham, presented Starkey “the living of Great Mongeham” in Kent. Furthermore, Starkey was gifted a benefice worth £20 per year from the crown.² Having completed his medical studies in Padua and feeling bolstered by his return to England, the success of the Paris mission and the royal favour it entailed, Starkey began writing his dialogue in 1530. The dialogue was to act as Starkey’s manifesto, in it he would explain to Henry VIII what the ideal commonwealth in England would look like, the issues that have led England to decay and the reforms that need to be implemented to restore England to prominence.³

¹ T.F. Mayer, “A mission worse than death: Reginald Pole and the Parisian theologian,” *English historical review*, CIII (1988), 870-891

² Sidney J. Herrtage, *England In The Reign Of King Henry The Eighth: Starkey’s Life And Letters* (London: The Early English Text Society, 1878), viii

³ Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, ed. T.F. Mayer (London: Royal Historical Society, 1989), 20

Through examining Starkey's extant letters to Reginald Pole, Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII, and analysing the structure and Venetian-inspired reforms in his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, I will argue that Starkey sought to transform England into a "myxte state," modelled after what Starkey believed to be the rule of the doge, Senate and patrician councils in Venice.⁴ Therefore, Starkey was the first Englishman educated in Italian civic humanism at the University of Padua who actively attempted to transmit Italian republican ideas to England. Secondly, I examine Starkey's monarchical reforms in the dialogue and argue that what historians last century called radical reforms were actually inspired by the Venetian mixed government structure Gasparo Contarini outlined in the first two books of *De magistratibus*. Therefore, I argue that Starkey sought to use his dialogue to transmit and replicate the idealised and restricted rule of the doge in the Venetian Republic to England. Lastly, I argue that Starkey's political reforms to the English parliament and his creation of two aristocratic councils is based on the Council of Ten and Senate in the republican mixed government of Venice.

In *The Articulate Citizens and the English Renaissance*, A.B. Ferguson argued that Starkey's reforms in the dialogue went "beyond the limits acceptable in Henrician England" and that Starkey did not intend to implement his reforms, but simply wanted to demonstrate his political understanding and his rhetorical and dialectical training, writing and debating abilities.⁵ However, Richard Lanham has argued in *The Motives of Eloquence* that rhetorical

⁴ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 120

⁵ A.B. Ferguson, *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance* (Durham: 1965), 171

writers during the Renaissance played freely with language and saw rhetoric, knowledge and truth as possessing a “symbiotic relationship.”⁶ Building on Lanham’s thought, I argue that while Starkey’s reforms would have been considered extreme in Henrician England, he believed that he was capable of engaging in what Mayer called “the humanist practice of inventing reality through language.”⁷ By employing this practice, Starkey sought to invent an idealised English commonwealth based on Venetian civic humanist education and Contarini’s idealised republican mixed government political structure, while also constructing a serious and practical reform manual that would instruct readers on the reforms that needed to be adopted in England. I believe that Starkey danced between the real and the ideal throughout his dialogue, as his civic humanist education in Padua convinced him of the need for widespread educational and political reform in England.

The question of whether Starkey’s *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* was actually intended to be read as a serious reform manual, or whether the learned Englishman simply wrote the dialogue in order to demonstrate his rhetorical ability and his understanding of Aristotelian natural and moral philosophy, so that he could climb the political ladder and acquire a position within Henry VIII’s court, has been debated by historians for over a century. Against what Ferguson, Zeeveld and Caspari have previously argued, I believe that Starkey intended his dialogue to serve the dual purpose of demonstrating his writing, translation and political abilities to Cromwell and Henry VIII, as

⁶ Richard Lanham, *The motives of eloquence: literary rhetoric in the renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 34

⁷ T.F. Mayer, “The Central Argument of the ‘Dialogue’”, in *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1989), xiii

well as seriously attempting to transmit what he believed to be the ideal Venetian-inspired mixed government to England.⁸ Through language and persuasion, Starkey instructed the king as to how this idealised Venetian mixed government could be created in England and could benefit the king and his realm. This dual intention also explains why Starkey repeatedly referred back to the structure and purpose of Pole and Lupset's discussions in the dialogue. Starkey explains at the outset that Pole and Lupset, "wyl serche out... what ys the veray true Commyn wele, ... second, we wyl serch out therby the dekey of our commyn wele, ... thrydly, we wyl devyse of the cause of thys same dekey, & of the remedy & mean to restore the commyn wele agayne."⁹ At the end of the dialogue, Starkey assured the king that he now possessed the knowledge of "how a true commyn welth looks & what... lakkys & fautys be in our cuntrey, & how & by what mean wyth gud prudence & pollycy they myght be correctyd & amendyd" by his majesty and a re-educated noble ruling class that was based on the patrician government in Venice.¹⁰ Starkey continued to refer back to this structure and purpose, which he argued was based on the perfect "processe" and "ordur" that Aristotle used in his *Politics*, so that the king would be able to follow his progression of thought, comprehend his arguments and see exactly how England could be transformed into a more prosperous commonwealth.¹¹

⁸ Historians Zeeveld, Caspari and Ferguson argued that Starkey's intention with the dialogue was only to demonstrate his rhetorical and political abilities following the successful mission to Paris in 1530.

⁹ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 18. Starkey restated the structure and purpose of his dialogue again on page 139.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 142

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18-19

In the first section of his dialogue, Starkey demonstrated his intention to present realistically the issues facing England and the reforms that would fix the commonwealth. Therefore, Starkey used Lupset to remind Pole (and the reader) of his intention not to “follow the exampul of plato, of whose ordur <of commyn wele> no pepul apon erth to thys days could ever yet attain, wherfor hyt ys reputyd of many men but as a dreme, & vayne imygynatyon wych never can be brought to effect.”¹² This statement underlines how Starkey danced between the ideal and reality, as Starkey clearly relied on the idealistic writings and political ideas of philosophers from antiquity, yet also sought to create a realistic reform manual that would persuade and assist Henry VIII in reforming the state.

Another argument in favour of the seriousness of Starkey’s proposed reforms comes via an examination of his letters to Reginald Pole, Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII. The first extant letter was written after he had attained a position under Cromwell and had further been rewarded with the position of chaplain to Henry VIII in 1535. This letter was addressed to Reginald Pole, who had returned to Padua to study civil law after serving Henry VIII during the successful Paris mission in 1529. Pole’s decision to leave England had frustrated the king as Pole had proven himself to be a capable negotiator and politician. I believe that Pole’s success in the Paris mission, coupled with Henry VIII’s support of Pole’s education, led Starkey to choose Pole as the protagonist of his dialogue, which he had begun writing the year after the Paris mission. Starkey also believed that Pole was capable of presenting and

¹² Ibid., 18. ‘< >’ represent textual insertions made above the line as identified by Mayer.

arguing for the Venetian-inspired political reforms in the dialogue to Henry VIII.

Starkey's belief in Pole's capability of serving in Henry VIII's court as a leader and spokesman for Venetian-inspired political reforms appears in this first letter, in which he urged Pole to "staisfye hys [Henry VIII's] nobul desyre" by writing to the king to express approval of the king's divorce and a desire to return to England and take on a "polytyke lyfe."¹³ Starkey tried to convince Pole that Henry VIII had not broken from the Latin Church in matters of doctrine, only that the king did not approve of the "abusyd authoryte of the pope" and that nothing Henry VIII had done was "wythout due ordur & resonabul means." Starkey concluded by pleading with his former patron to remember his learning in Padua, adopt the *vita activa* and return to England to serve "hys most nobul & catholyke prynce."¹⁴ In a brief response, Pole acknowledged Starkey's letter and wrote that he would "in few wordys, clerly & plainly, without coloure or cloke of dyssymulacyon" explain his opinion and his future plans.¹⁵ Feeling assured that this meant that Pole would follow in his footsteps and seek out a political life in England, as well as hoping to see Pole take on the reformist role he planned for him in the dialogue, Starkey replied, commenting that he had "boldly... affyrmyd, both to the kyngys hyghnes & also to Maystur Secretory, that hyt [Pole's response to the king]

¹³ Thomas Starkey, "Letter to Reginald Pole," in *England In The Reign Of King Henry The Eighth: Starkey's Life And Letters*, ed. Sidney J. Herrtage, xv

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xv-xvii

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii

schalbe unfaynyd & pure, wythout cloke of dyssymulacyon,” and that Pole would soon return to England.¹⁶

Before finishing this second letter to Pole, Starkey employed some of the same phrases he had used in his dialogue, such as, “your nobul duty” and “profyt your cuntrey,” to remind Pole again of the Venetian idea of civic duty.¹⁷ Pole’s close friend, Gasparo Contarini, had explained this civic duty in the first book of *De magistratibus*. Contarini wrote that Venetian “citizens,” that is “the nobilitie of Venice,” had always possessed a civic duty and that their desire to lead and govern was the reason for over a thousand years of stable government in the Venetian Republic.¹⁸ This civic duty and belief in Venetian political stability had a profound effect on Starkey’s thinking and he translated much of Contarini’s language and argued for similar reforms to England’s body politic in his dialogue.¹⁹ This was also why Starkey asked Pole in the letter to “dyrecte your knolege... by mastur gaspero, ... [who is] of hye lernyng & jugement” before writing to Henry VIII.²⁰ Starkey was confident that if Pole consulted Contarini (whom Starkey thought would “restore in chrystys church the old unyte” and end the “intolerabull tyranny of rome”) that he would recognise the obligation of his noble birth and the duty he owed to reforming and governing England.²¹

¹⁶ Ibid., xviii-xix

¹⁷ Ibid., xv, xvii

¹⁸ Gasparo Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, translated by Lewes Lewkenor (London: John Windet, 1599), reprinted by Da Capo Press, Amsterdam, 1969, 6, 15

¹⁹ I argue against T.F. Mayer’s claim that Starkey was not directly influenced by Contarini’s *De magistratibus*. See Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*, 54-61

²⁰ Thomas Starkey, “Letter to Reginald Pole,” in *England In The Reign Of King Henry The Eighth: Starkey’s Life And Letters*, ed. Sidney J. Herrtage, xxxi

²¹ Ibid., xxv, lxxv

In Pole's 1536 letter to Henry VIII, which acted as a forward for his book, *Pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione (In Defence of Ecclesiastical Unity)*, he cited "Master Sterkeys letters" as the reason for writing his views on why he had chosen to stay in Italy and his "sentence concernyng the superiorite of the pope in the church."²² Pole's defence of papal authority and the Latin Church in England, his criticism of Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon and the king's subsequent marriage to Anne Boleyn came as a shock to Starkey. As a result, Starkey quickly wrote of Pole's "blynd & corrupt judgement," as well as his "ingratitutde" towards his "prynce & cuntre."²³ Worse yet, Pole rejected Starkey's pleas for him to apologise, retract his writing and immediately return to England. Starkey's failure to secure Pole's support for Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon and marriage to Anne Boleyn together with Pole's rejection of Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy (1534) left Starkey in a dangerous position.²⁴ Within a year of Pole's damning response to the king, Starkey had to defend himself against Cromwell's accusations of heresy and conspiring against the king. In a letter addressed to Cromwell, Starkey pled "innocency in such thyngys wyche you touchyd so scharpely," explaining that he "never thought hym [Pole] to be of so corrupt a jugement & sentence."²⁵ Starkey's innocence is mirrored in his 1536 and 1537 letters to Pole and his continual requests for Henry VIII's cousin to lead the political life that Starkey had outlined for the English nobility in his dialogue. Finally, in a letter written

²² Ibid., xxxi

²³ Ibid., xxxvii

²⁴ Henry VIII, "Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy," in *A Reformation Reader*, edited by Denis R. Janz (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 332

²⁵ Starkey, "Letter to Thomas Cromwell," in *England In The Reign Of King Henry The Eighth: Starkey's Life And Letters*, ed. Sidney J. Herrtage, xxxix-xli

to Henry VIII in December 1536, Starkey defended himself against Cromwell's suspicions and explained to the king that he, "laments the corrupt sentence herin of maystur Pole, ... by whome I trustyd surely to have seen such a lernyd jugement schowyd to the world, that bothe your grace schold have taken pleyasure therof, ... & hys cuntrey profytt the same."²⁶ Starkey assured the king that he had believed Pole to be a "faythful frend, wyth whome I have byn so many yerys brought up in company & contynual study, not wythout gret hope, that as we had spent togyddur our youthe in study of letturys, so the rest of our lyfys we schold have consumyd lyke maner in the servyce of your grace & of our cuntrey."²⁷

Wilhelm Schenk and T.F. Mayer have both argued that after Pole published *De unitate* in 1536, Starkey realised that he could no longer draw Pole, who was made a cardinal by Pope Paul III and moved from Venice to Rome in 1536, into politics and have Pole lead his reforms in England. Therefore, Starkey set out to redirect the dialogue to Henry VIII, hoping that as the king's chaplain he would be able to convince the king to read the text and reform England into a Venetian-styled mixed government state that would restore England to glory.²⁸ Thus, between 1537 and 1538, Starkey wrote a dedicatory letter for the dialogue to the king, explaining at the outset that while studying in Italy, he had learnt of the "gud and just pollyci" and political stability in the Venetian Republic and that when he compared it with "the policy vsid here in our natyon," he found much "abuse in law and pollyci" in England. Starkey

²⁶ Starkey, "Letter to Henry VIII," in *England In The Reign Of King Henry The Eighth: Starkey's Life And Letters*, ed. Sidney J. Herrtage, xlix

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Wilhelm Schenk, *Reginald Pole: Cardinal of England* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1950), 36-43, Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*, 104-105.

further explained that in order to create this “true commyn wele” in England, he wrote his dialogue, which would offer a way to transform England into a flourishing commonwealth. Starkey called his dialogue a commentary and further explained that in the “theryd parte, ... I have touchid the maner and mean of how thes abusys may be reformyd and the true commyn wele a mong vs restoryd.”²⁹ By explaining his purpose and structure of his dialogue and how and why he came to his reforms, Starkey further demonstrated his intent for the dialogue to be read as a serious reform manual by the king. To assure the king of the seriousness of his reforms in the dialogue, Starkey explained that he had chosen to cast Pole as one of the two protagonists because when he first wrote the dialogue he still trusted that Pole would see “by his [Venetian civic] lernyng” that “your heyne schold have” his support and service.³⁰

Mayer has convincingly demonstrated that between 1536 and 1538, Starkey edited his dialogue, changing the forcefulness of his language and directing many of his criticisms at the nobility in England.³¹ Starkey attempted this editing of the dialogue to make the reformist ideas more acceptable to the king. Mayer examined the only remaining manuscript of the dialogue in London and argued that it was a draft that Starkey had been in the process of editing.³² While examining the manuscript, Mayer noted the presence of

²⁹ Thomas Starkey, “Letter to Henry VIII,” in *England In The Reign Of King Henry The Eighth*, lxxiv-lxxv

³⁰ Ibid., lxxv

³¹ Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*, 105

³² The only remaining manuscript of Starkey’s dialogue is preserved in the Public Record Office, London, in the State Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII (SP 1), volume 90. See Mayer, “Introduction to the dialogue,” in *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, x-xvi

insertions made above lines of writing and that Starkey crossed out words, sentences and entire passages of speech throughout the one hundred and twenty eight folios. In the margins of the text, Starkey wrote reference notes and new content that Mayer attempted to include in his edition of the dialogue. However, because the manuscript was a draft, Mayer went on to argue that it was not the manuscript that Starkey would have sent with his dedication letter to Henry VIII before his death in 1538. In his published edition of the *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* (1989), Mayer used symbols and abbreviations to include Starkey's notes, reworking, additions and deletions. He also reproduced Starkey's exact spelling and layout, and he applied symbols to demonstrate Starkey's editing process and the incomplete nature of the manuscript.³³ The two previous editions of the dialogue, published by Herrtage and Burton in 1878 and 1948, included paragraph and chapter breaks, layout and formatting changes (and Burton also modernised Starkey's language), all of which led historians to claim incorrectly that what remained of Starkey's dialogue was the final product that was sent to the king.³⁴

Accepting Mayer's argument, it is likely that the extant manuscript of the dialogue was a draft that came into the possession of Cromwell following Starkey's death in 1538. David Loades notes in his biography of Cromwell that the chief minister often seized the writings and belongings of enemies

³³ Ibid., xi

³⁴ See Kathleen Burton, "Introduction to *A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*," in Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue Between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*, ed. by Kathleen M. Burton (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), 1-3, Caspari, *Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England*, 210-213, Baumer, "Thomas Starkey and Marsilius of Padua," 188-191

following their deaths.³⁵ Mayer has argued that Starkey's death in 1538 came "just ahead of the executioner," as Cromwell had been preparing to bring official charges of treason against Starkey.³⁶ Two years later, in 1540, after Cromwell was executed for treason, Henry VIII's Privy Council ordered the seizure of the chief minister's belongings. Starkey's manuscript was likely among the papers taken and placed in the Treasury of the Receipt and discovered in the nineteenth century.³⁷ The final copy of Starkey's *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, which accompanied his dedication letter to Henry VIII, has not been found. It is likely that since Starkey sent the letter and dialogue to the king in 1537, or just before his death in 1538, either the king did not read the dialogue or it was dismissed after Starkey was marginalised by Cromwell and died in 1538.

The first issue Starkey sought to reform in his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* concerned the withdrawn and idle lives of the English nobility. Immediately, Starkey demonstrated his Venetian civic education and conviction as he argued that without the nobility adopting Contarini's idea of civic duty, via the same civic humanist education he received at the University of Padua, lasting political reform could not take hold in England. Therefore, drawing on his idealised view of the Venetian nobility, Starkey argued that the English nobility had to adopt the Aristotelian and Venetian belief that they were "borne & of nature brought forth to... lyve in polytyke ordur" as the

³⁵ David Loades, *Thomas Cromwell: Servant to Henry VIII* (London: Amberely Publishing, 2013), 147-165, 256-257

³⁶ Mayer, *Thomas Cromwell and the Commonweal*, 247

³⁷ Mayer, "The Date," in *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, x

“hedys & rulayrs” of England.³⁸ However, in order to convince Henry VIII of the need for the nobility to adopt the *vita activa* and become the heads and rulers of England (under the king who would serve as England’s heart), Starkey believed he needed to debate, at the outset of his dialogue, against what Englishmen such as Thomas More taught and argued for in their rhetorical dialogues and treatises.

In the first book of *Utopia*, More constructed a dialogue, similar to the mis-en-scène style Starkey would employ, in which the protagonists debated whether learned men should pursue an active political life and serve the state (*vita activa*), or whether they should withdraw and live a contemplative and private life (*vita contemplativa*). After employing his rhetorical skill, arguing for reform to what he believed to be the key problems in England – greed, poverty, idleness, unjust law and private property – More used his educated and experienced foreigner, Raphael Hythlodæus, to explain why “a sensible person is right to steer clear of politics.”³⁹ With the use of Platonic language and thought, More then argued that the well-educated and experienced man who enters politics, “Sees everyone else rushing into the street and getting soaked in the pouring rain. He can’t persuade them to go indoors and keep dry. He knows if he went out too, he’d merely get equally wet. So he just stays indoors himself, and, as he can’t do anything about other people’s stupidity, comforts himself with the thought: ‘Well, I’m all alright, anyway.’”⁴⁰ And when the protagonist of Thomas More took the other side and argued that the learned and politically insightful Hythlodæus should fulfil his “duty” and take

³⁸ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 6

³⁹ Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. by Paul Turner (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 44

⁴⁰ More, *Utopia*, 44

up a position in Henry VIII's court, Hythlodæus convinced More that no such duty existed and that if he were to tell the king "to make sensible laws," he would "be promptly thrown out, or merely treated as a figure of fun."⁴¹ Hythlodæus argued that the decadent state of English politics and rule meant that "there's no room at court for philosophy [or learned thought]."⁴² Therefore, More argued in *Utopia* that learned men are better off following in the footsteps of Plato and other ancient philosophers and withdrawing from public life altogether. It was this prevalent thought that Starkey opposed in the first section of his dialogue and argued to have led England to decay.

There is little doubt that Starkey would have read *Utopia*, given its popularity in England following its publication in 1516, and given that Starkey's close friend and pupil, Thomas Lupset, assisted More in reading over and printing the Paris edition of *Utopia*.⁴³ Starkey was also likely convinced by many of More's social, legal and economic views, most notably those concerning the inheritance of land and property, wealth inequality and English law regarding capital punishment and excessive punishments for petty crimes. However, Starkey clearly disagreed with More on the question of the active or contemplative life for learned men. In his dialogue, Starkey also chose to open with a debate between two protagonists about whether Reginald Pole (representing the English nobility) should return to England, move to London and seek to serve his king and country. Lupset began by commenting how he had "much & many tymys marvelyd... why <you mastur pole> aftur so many yerys spent in quyet studys of letturys <& lernyng>, ... have not ... applyd your

⁴¹ Ibid., 36

⁴² Ibid., 41

⁴³ Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal*, 36

mynd to the handelyng of the matterys of the commyn wele <here in our owne nation>.”⁴⁴ Reginald Pole is urged by Lupset to fulfil his duty and pursue an active political life in England.

After Lupset asserted his civic view and expectation of Pole, the respondent, much like More before him, countered with the popular view that the private life is the superior and favourable life. Pole argued that these “old & antique philosophars forsoke the medelyng wyth materys of commyn welys & applyd themselfys to the secrety studys & serchyng of nature as to the chefe <thyng wherein semyd to rest the> perfectyon of man.”⁴⁵ Rather than following *Utopia* and allowing Pole’s position to stand and conclude the discussion, Starkey responds to the popular Platonic view and introduces his Aristotelian and Venetian belief that nature dictates that leading “cytyzys” (a term Starkey took from Contarini, who used it to refer to the nobility of Venice), such as Pole, have a duty to serve their country and apply their thinking to how the “common gud” (another term Starkey translated from Contarini’s *De magistratibus*) could be established and preserved.⁴⁶ Therefore, the best kind of life for the nobility was the political life. Lupset argued further by using the Aristotelian language that Contarini had applied in the first book of *De magistratibus* to claim that certain men “by nature excellyth al other in dygnyte” and are to serve as selfless rulers, “accordyng to the dygnyte of hys <nature>.”⁴⁷ By applying his new (Venetian) civic and (Aristotelian) natural order of thinking to the debate, Starkey demonstrated the difference between

⁴⁴ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 1

⁴⁵ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 3

⁴⁶ Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 6, Starkey, *Dialogue*, 3-4

⁴⁷ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 9

More's pessimistic outlook and support of the *vita contemplativa* and his own preference for the *vita activa* and belief that the nobility of England should be re-educated and transformed into the "hedys & rulayrs" of England so that the commonwealth could replicate the "most nobul cyte of venyce" and attain political stability and prosperity.⁴⁸ Therefore, Starkey argued at the end of his opening debate that England's corrupt education system had given "consent" to a "contrary ordur" and this corruption had resulted in the natural leaders of England, the nobility, pursuing individual wealth and the *vita contemplativa*.⁴⁹

Once Lupset convinced Pole of his thinking, Starkey had Pole confess to the error in his understanding of the best life for learned noblemen and declare that he would "indever [to work for]... the mayntenuance & setting forward of the true commyn wele" in England.⁵⁰ By beginning with this counter argument to More's promotion of the *vita contemplativa* in *Utopia* and using Lupset to cast blame for England's decay on the idle and selfish nobility, Starkey would have hoped to appeal to Henry VIII and win his favour, so that he could use his Aristotelian and Ciceronian rhetoric to argue for the re-education of the nobility and explain exactly what this new civic education would look like for the nobility.

At the start of the second section of his dialogue, Starkey argued that if the nobility in England knew "what ys the true commyn wele, they wold not so

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11, 101

⁴⁹ Ibid., 17

⁵⁰ Ibid

lytyl regard hyt as the dew, they wold not so neclecte hyt & despise hyt.”⁵¹ To explain what England would look like if the nobility were properly educated and pursued political work, Starkey adopted Contarini’s argument in the first book of *De magistratibus* and explained that the Venetian Republic had experienced over one thousand years of stable government and peaceful rule because its patrician rulers learnt at a young age to serve the republic in government and put the common good first.⁵² Therefore, Starkey followed Contarini and argued that the English nobility needed to be re-educated so that noblemen would possess “perfayte eloquence & hye phylosphy” and “persuade the rest of the pepul to for sake that rudnes & uncomly lyfe & so to follow ordur & cyvylyte.” To be able to do this, noblemen would have to study “lettyrs,” “phylosphy” and “polytyke rule.”⁵³ Starkey argued that England needed to establish the same natural and moral philosophical education that he had obtained in Padua. In this way, noblemen could study past republics from antiquity (Athens and Rome) and comprehend Contarini’s argument that the Venetian Republic had maintained political stability for longer than the celebrated Athenian and Roman republics due to its system of mixed government. Therefore, for England to attain similar political stability, a properly educated noble class needed to govern virtuously in a mixed government, with the king and the noble rulers putting the health of the whole body first.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 19

⁵² Contarini, *Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 5, Starkey, *Dialogue*, 119

⁵³ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 35

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 119

Starkey further argued that if teachers in grammar schools and universities in England followed the Venetian example and prepared young nobles, through the study of Greek and Roman treatises and dialogues, especially Aristotelian political theory and moral philosophy, then the English nobility would understand its role in the politic body and England would flourish under virtuous and selfless leadership. Therefore, English universities needed to follow the example Starkey saw at the University of Padua, which wrote in a sixteenth century appointment notice: “Since moral philosophy is so useful to the civic life, our ancestors acted prudently in establishing in our University of Padua a professor who could teach this very fruitful part of philosophy to our young men.”⁵⁵ This meant that universities in England would need to adopt the same civic philosophical focus and teach future members of English government the political and moral meaning of texts, such as Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Politics*, rather than solely focusing on students being able to read the Greek and copy Aristotelian style and rhetoric. For English students to study Aristotle’s civic thought properly, as he did in Padua, Starkey argued that fathers in England needed to have their sons “redyng lettyurs” and studying Greek and Latin from the age of seven, so that they would be able to study Aristotelian and Ciceronian natural and moral philosophy at university.⁵⁶

Starkey also argued that noble families needed to have their children “brought up togyddur” in grammar schools, so that future noble leaders would see themselves as those selected by God, nature and the state to govern England. Starkey observed that in England, “every man pryvatly [educates his children]

⁵⁵ Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, 404

⁵⁶ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 124-125

in hys owne house,” and that this was leading to young men living what Starkey called ignorant and withdrawn lives.⁵⁷ By stressing this need for more public grammar schools in England (following the example of the San Marco and Rialto public schools in Venice), and the need for young noblemen to attend English universities, Starkey sought to create a new education system that would train noblemen to see themselves as politicians and those capable of governing England like he believed the patrician class in Venice did in their republic.⁵⁸

After proposing this civic humanist educational reform, Starkey attempted to use Venetian mixed government political thinking to convince Henry VIII of the need to reform monarchical rule in England so that it emulated the rule of the doge in Venice. When Henry Tudor defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth in 1487, the first Tudor king moved to establish absolute rule over rival noble families, political factions and the parliament. Henry VII did this by seizing land and wealth from the nobility, reducing the size of his household and court, pursuing peace with France and promoting English trade. These measures would ensure that revenue was raised, costs were cut and decisions were made without parliament being consulted.⁵⁹ Between 1495 and Henry VII’s death in 1509, parliament sat on average for only eight days a

⁵⁷ Ibid., 125

⁵⁸ Merry Weisnar-Hanks highlights that around 400 Latin grammar schools opened in England between 1500 and 1700 in England. Merry E. Weisner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe 1450-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 132

⁵⁹ In the year 1500, there were 300 members of the House of Commons in England and only males who owned land worth more than two pounds could vote for the county’s two MPs. This meant that around three per cent of English and Welsh males had a vote. See Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England 1485-1714* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 49-50

year.⁶⁰ This meant that the noblemen who Starkey wanted to re-educate, so that they could assist in governing England after assuming positions within parliament and Venetian-inspired aristocratic councils, had little practical political experience in parliamentary government.

Unlike his father, however, Henry VIII desired war with France and he also wished to expand the size of the court so that he might create his desired Renaissance court. Therefore, in only his fourth year as king of England, in 1513, Henry VIII spent £650,000 in his campaign against France.⁶¹ Considering this vast expense, coupled with the expensive cost of the young king's expanded household and court, his expenditure in 1513 far outweighed the £90,000 that the monarch was given annually to run his government. Given the devastating financial and political situation England faced in 1530, along with Henry VIII's desire to divorce Catherine of Aragon, his issues with the papacy and the threat of financial ruin, Starkey believed that the time was right to write his dialogue and try and persuade the king to reform monarchical power in England by replicating that which existed in Venice under the doge.

Starkey sought to translate and transmit the role that the doge played in the Venetian Republic, as presented in the second book of Contarini's *De magistratibus*, in his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*. Contarini affirmed the myth that there was no competition to be elected as doge in Venice because the patricians serving as members of the Great Council, the Senate

⁶⁰ Ibid., 50

⁶¹ Ibid., 62

and in other councils, focused only on serving the “entire body” of the Venetian Republic and understood that serving as the head (governors) of the body politic meant that the doge should care only for the common good of the body.⁶² Starkey translated Contarini’s idea and vocabulary, explaining that the body politic in England should be determined by this order of nature, which dictated that every part of the body politic should “do hys offyce & duty.”⁶³ This meant that the heart of England, the monarch, should “serve the rest of thys polytyke body,” so that the English people would see that everyone makes up a part of the body and serves selflessly.⁶⁴ By explaining what this ideal body politic looked like in Venice, Starkey introduced Contarini’s vision of the doge as selected from within the citizen (patrician) class of Venice and restrained from absolute rule.⁶⁵ Therefore, in his dialogue Starkey had Pole use the example of the wise selection of a selfless and politically capable doge in Venice to explain that “yf [the monarch]... were restraynyd as I have sayd befor, ther wold not be so grete ambycyon therof as ther ys now, for as in venyce ther ys no grete ambycyouse desyre to be ther duke, bycause hye ys restreynyd to gud ordur & polytyke.”⁶⁶

In reality, those who were considered the *primi* (the first) and *ricchi* (rich ones) of Venice often occupied the twenty-eight positions in the executive councils of the *Signoria* that made up the “governing circle” in the Venetian Republic. These men hoped to be elected as procurators of San Marco, from

⁶² Contarini, *Commonwealth and Government*, 38-41

⁶³ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 31-33

⁶⁴ Ibid., 33-34

⁶⁵ See Contarini, *Commonwealth and Government*, 42

⁶⁶ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 123

which the doge was usually elected.⁶⁷ Electioneering and lobbying for candidates was also common practice within the government halls and palaces in Venice when the doge was considered to be ill or had passed away. Wealthy members of the patrician class would attempt to reward voters with government positions that ensured financial security and tax benefits.⁶⁸ For example, when Andrea Gritti was elected as doge in 1523, patricians living in Venice protested in the streets, claiming that the Gritti family had used their immense wealth to buy votes. Two diarists from within the patrician class at the time, Marino Sanuto and Alvise di Giovanni Priuli, wrote that, “All complained about his [Gritti’s] election,” and Priuli recounted that after the new doge criticised him for opposing his election, he told the new doge, “It is true what I have said, that I never supported you and I never will, because I don’t want to make the doge a tyrant.”⁶⁹ Regardless of whether Sanuto and Priuli’s accounts are accurate, they demonstrate that there were issues within the political system that Contarini had described as perfect and that Starkey was unable to witness. Therefore, the selfless and virtuous rule of the nobility and doge in Venice appeared to be a myth that reinforced the ideal and propagandistic nature of Contarini’s *De magistratibus*.

Before Starkey began editing the dialogue, following Pole’s publication of *De unitate* in 1536, he had argued in favour of the Venetian process of electing a doge from within the Great Council to England. Initially, Starkey argued that English history, dating back to “the fyrst... tyranne,” William the Conqueror,

⁶⁷ Robert Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 26-27

⁶⁸ Marino Sanuto in Robert Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, 151-152

⁶⁹ Marino Sanuto and Alvise di Giovanni Priuli in *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, 160

proved that English monarchs ruled by their own “pryncely powar & fantasye, ... wych... ys wythout dowte & ever hath byn the gretyst destructyon to thys reame.”⁷⁰ By following the meaning of Contarini’s use of the term “tyranny,” Starkey presented hereditary monarchical rule as an evil that went against the perfect order of nature and the body politic.⁷¹ To stop this evil from once again taking hold in England, Starkey argued that elective monarchy should take the place of hereditary monarchy and that the “grete parlyament schold never be callyd but only at the electyon of our prynce.” Following these measures, the monarch would be restrained by the creation of two aristocratic councils that could not be dismissed by the monarch and which would rule alongside the monarch as the head (and rulers) of England.

However, after Henry VIII, Cromwell and Starkey had read Pole’s damning treatise, Starkey began the process of revising his view on the best form of monarchical rule in England. Starkey altered his language and explained that in a perfect commonwealth a monarch should be elected from within a properly educated and reformed noble class. Since the nobility of England was incapable of governing selflessly, though, hereditary monarchy was acceptable. Therefore, Starkey substantially changed the discussion between his protagonists from the original draft.⁷² Starkey altered Pole’s views and had the king’s cousin pander to Henry VIII’s ego. Pole explained that since the current king was wise, selfless and virtuous in rule, there was no need to elect a monarch. Pole also argued that elective monarchy would only be a superior

⁷⁰ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 67-68, 77

⁷¹ Ibid., 68- 70

⁷² Ibid., 70-71

choice if a future king were not capable of ruling by virtue and wisdom.⁷³ In responding to Pole, Lupset also defended hereditary succession and commented that “warre sedycyon & dyscordys” would erupt in England if an elective system were implemented. Lupset further argued that since England lacked the wise and selfless noblemen that existed in Venice, “cyvyle warre” would once again break out in England, as noble families and factions would declare war on each other to become the elected king and bring about “theyr owne destructyon.”⁷⁴

Therefore, unlike in other debates in the dialogue, where Pole convinced Lupset of his views and reforms, Pole does not refute Lupset’s claim for maintaining hereditary succession, but rather shifts the discussion to focus on the issues surrounding the English nobility and its lack of ability to govern and elect a wise and virtuous king.⁷⁵

In the third and final section of his dialogue, Starkey presents to Henry VIII the mixed government political reforms that he believed England needed. It is clear at this point that Starkey’s previous arguments for the teaching and adoption of the *vita activa* and civic humanist university education, as well as restraining the absolute rule of the English monarch, had led him to transmit and argue for what Contarini described as the mixed “government of the nobilitie” through the creation of aristocratic councils.⁷⁶ After altering the dialogue to favour hereditary monarchy, Starkey introduced his first major

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 71

⁷⁵ Ibid., 71-72

⁷⁶ See Contarini, *Commonwealth and Government*, 19

reform to the English body politic and government structure by arguing that, “yf we wyl yt [that]... heyrys of the prynce schal ever succede, what so ever he be, then to hym must be joynyed a counsele.”⁷⁷ Starkey returned to his argument that the “hedys & rularys” of the ideal body politic should be made up of re-educated noblemen who would advise and govern alongside the monarch.⁷⁸ While Starkey’s transmission and presentation of a new mixed government ruling structure is convoluted and difficult to comprehend in this draft manuscript, Starkey clearly based his political reforms on the republican mixed government detailed by Contarini in the first two books of *De magistratibus*.

On the creation of a council that would be joined to the king, Starkey argued that such a body should follow the Council of Ten in Venice by maintaining national security and ensuring that the monarch obeyed the law and did not act without his council.⁷⁹ Based on Contarini’s presentation of the Council of Ten in Venice, Starkey explained that this new “propur counseyl” would be made up of ten “polytyke men” selected by a second aristocratic council. Starkey further translated and used the terms “liberty” and “tyranny” in the same manner as Contarini to argue that England’s council of ten importantly would, “delyvur us from al tyranny... [and] set us in true lyberty” by restraining the monarch and ensuring that every Englishman, starting with the monarch, obeyed the common and civil law of England.⁸⁰ Therefore, this new council gave Starkey the opportunity to move national security outside of

⁷⁷ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 112

⁷⁸ Ibid., 34

⁷⁹ Ibid., 113

⁸⁰ Contarini, *Commonwealth and Government*, 77-81, Starkey, *Dialogue*, 113

the king's jurisdiction, giving the ten noblemen in the council the power to appoint "oversearys" who, in turn, would create a police network across England.⁸¹

The second council that Starkey created in his dialogue would be in charge of selecting this English Council of Ten, as well as providing the legislative role of parliament. Starkey's primary aim in creating this second council was to transfer decision-making and political power from the parliament to a smaller body that could not be dismissed by the monarch. Starkey gave this council the name "lytyl parlyament" because it would be based in London, made up of fourteen noblemen ("iiij of the gretyst & ancyent lordys, ij byschoppys as of london & canterbury, iiij of the chefe jugys & iiij of the most wyse cytyzyns of london") and receive the power the parliament had previously possessed.⁸² Since Henry VII had taken strict measures to silence English nobles, Starkey believed he had to either stop the monarch from dismissing parliament or create a new council that could not be dismissed.⁸³ Furthermore, after reading Contarini's explanation of the Senate's power in Venice (that "the whole manner of the commonwealth government belongeth to the Senate" and "that which the Senate determineth is held for ratified and inviolable"), Starkey was determined to create a similar aristocratic council in England.⁸⁴

To achieve this, Starkey argued that the purpose of this council should be to "see that the kyng & hys <propur> counsele schold do no thyng agayne the

⁸¹ Starkey, *Dialogue*, 136

⁸² Ibid., 112

⁸³ Ibid., 121

⁸⁴ Ibid., 68

ordynance of hys lawys & gud pollycy>.” Once this purpose was clearly stated, Starkey argued that the council should also possess the “powar to cal the <grete parlyament> when so ever to them hyt schold seme necessary for the reformatyon of the hole state, ... [and] passe al actys of <leegys> confederatyon peace & warre.”⁸⁵ In essence, Starkey transmitted Contarini’s idealised vision of Venice’s mixed government republic and fitted it into an English context, attempting to persuade the king of its ideal, just and stable structure.

By the end of his dialogue, Starkey had achieved his goal of transmitting and arguing for Venetian civic humanist education and the republican mixed government structure to England. Through engaging in the Renaissance and humanist practice of rhetorical disputation and dancing between the ideal and reality, Starkey found a way to take his Italian civic conviction and republican political theory and translate it into English without losing the Venetian heart of his message. Unlike Mayer, I argue that by using Contarini’s *De magistratibus* as a rhetorical, historical and propagandistic guide, Starkey constructed a reform manual that he hoped would convince Henry VIII to further reform and improve the state of England.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 113

Conclusion

Until the discovery of Thomas Starkey's letters and his draft manuscript of the *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* in the nineteenth century, little was known about his life and work. While his liberal arts and civic humanist education at the University of Oxford and the University of Padua allowed the reformer to climb the social and political ladder in England, culminating in his appointments as a political advisor to Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII's chaplain, the failure of his unpublished dialogue to bring about political change before his death in 1538 meant that Thomas Starkey has remained in relative obscurity.

In this thesis I have argued and demonstrated that Starkey's dialogue serves as the first English Renaissance dialogue that attempted to transmit Italian republican political structure and thought, as well as civic humanist education and the *vita activa*, to England in the sixteenth century. By rejecting and moving beyond Baumer and twentieth century historians' Marsilian reading of the dialogue, and applying a contextual method and a linguistic method similar to that T.F. Mayer used in *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal* and John Pocock used in *The Machiavellian Moment*, to Starkey's life and writing of the dialogue, I argue that his studies in Padua led Starkey to adopt and promote Venice's mixed government rule of the nobility, following Gasparo Contarini's *De magistratibus*, in his dialogue and in Henry VIII's England.

In Chapter One, I examined how Starkey's study of Latin and Greek translation and his liberal arts education in Oxford prepared him for the new

civic humanist education he received at the University of Padua. In Chapter Two, I argued that it was during his doctoral studies in Padua that Starkey was transformed from a medical and philosophy student into a civic humanist, eager to transmit the *vita activa* back to England and pursue what he called a “polytyke lyfe” in Henry VIII’s court. By closely examining the state of Venetian civic humanism and republicanism following the crushing defeats in the War of the League of Cambrai, I argue that the re-affirmation of the myth of Venetian political stability and republican liberty convinced Starkey, upon his return to England in 1529, to create a reform-focused dialogue, in which he sought to explain to Henry VIII the issues that had led England to decay and the Venetian-inspired political, legal and educational reforms that would return England to prosperity.

In Chapter Three, I examined the educational and political reforms Starkey argues in favour of in his dialogue and, unlike Mayer, demonstrated that these radical reforms were inspired by his reading and understanding of Gasparo Contarini’s first two books of *De magistratibus*. Having examined the educational and political contexts that Starkey was immersed in before joining Henry VIII’s court in 1534, I was able to argue that Starkey’s *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* serves as the first attempt by an Englishman to translate and transmit Venetian republican political language and ideas into English.

Furthermore, I believe that by placing Starkey and his dialogue within its proper educational and political context, I am able to begin the process of tracing English civic humanism and the transmission of Venetian republican

language and ideas back to the Henrician Reformation. If proven correct, this would further question Pocock's claim that Italian republican thought and language was translated and transmitted to England after the conservative Elizabethan era, during the English Civil War in the seventeenth century. Therefore, I argue that Starkey's dialogue should not be regarded as a failure as it was not published and his reforms were not adopted following his death in 1538. Instead, Starkey's dialogue serves as the first attempt to transmit the republican rule of mixed government – what Starkey called the rule of a restrained monarch, aristocratic councils and a parliament that serves as the English equivalent of Venice's Great Council – and civic humanist education to England in the sixteenth century.

Going forward, I believe that Markku Peltonen's 2007 revision of Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment* and the state of civic consciousness and "political sophistication" amongst politically educated Englishmen within Elizabeth I's court and England demonstrates that classical humanist vocabulary and civic humanist thought did not slow during the sixteenth century.¹ Instead, the transmission and naturalisation process that members of Starkey's generation of civic humanists argued for in England continued throughout the sixteenth century, leading to the revolutionary thought that Pocock argued underpinned the English Civil War in the seventeenth century. Therefore, it is my argument that Peltonen's revision of classical humanist vocabulary and civic humanist thought from 1570 to 1640 could be extended further back to 1520, when Starkey travelled to Padua and was transformed into a civic humanist who was

¹ See Peltonen, *Classical humanism and republicanism in English political thought*, 4-11, 54-118

able to translate and transmit the *vita activa* to England through his reform focused dialogue writing.

Works Cited

Aristotle, *The Politics*. Translated by T.A. Sinclair. London: Penguin Books, 1992.

Baron, Hans. *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: civic humanism and republican liberty in an age of classicism and tyranny*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955.

Barrington, Robert. "Two Houses Both Alike In Dignity: Reginald Pole and Edmund Harvell." *The Historical Journal*. Volume 39, 4 (1996): 895-913.

Baumer, F.L. "Thomas Starkey and Marsilius of Padua." *Politica*. II (1936): 188-205.

Bembo, Pietro *The History of Venice*. Volume 2. Translated and Edited by Robert W. Ulery, Jr. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Black, Robert. *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Bouwsma, William J. *Venice and the Defence of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.

Bucholz, Robert and Newton Key. *Early Modern England 1485-1714*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Caspari, Fritz. *Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1954.

Cicero, *De Oratore*. Translated by E.W. Sutton. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942.

Contarini, Gasparo. *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*. Translated by Lewes Lewkenor. London: 1599. Reprinted in Amsterdam: De Capo Press, 1969.

Elton, G.R. 'Reform by statute: Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue* and Thomas Cromwell's policy.' *Proceedings of the British Academy*, LIV (1968): 165-188.

Ferguson, A.B. *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance*. Durham: 1965.

Fletcher, J.M. "The Faculty of Arts." In *The History of the University of Oxford: Volume III The Collegiate University*. Edited by James McConica, 157-200. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

Fox, Alistair and John Guy. *Reassessing the Henrician age: humanism, politics and reform 1500-1550*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Gilbert, Felix. "The Date of the Composition of Contarini's and Gianotti's Books on Venice." *Studies in the Renaissance*. Volume 14 (1967): 172-184.

Gleason, Elisabeth G. *Gasparo Contarini: Venice, Rome and Reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Grafton, Anthony and Lisa Jardine. *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Europe*. London: Duckworth, 1986.

Green, V.H.H. *A History of Oxford University*. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1974.

Grendler, Paul. *Schooling in the Renaissance: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989.

---. *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Hankins, James. "The Baron Thesis after Forty Years and Some Recent Students of Leonardo Bruni." *Journal of the History of Ideas*. 56.2 (1995): 309-338.

Herrtage, Sidney J. *England In The Reign Of King Henry The Eighth: Starkey's Life And Letters*. London: The Early English Text Society, 1878.

Henry VIII. "Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy." In *A Reformation Reader*. Edited by Denis R. Janz, 332. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

King, Margaret L. *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Kristeller, Paul Oskar. "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance." *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*. Edited by Michael Mooney. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961: 92-119.

---. "The Philosophy of Man in the Italian Renaissance." in *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*. Edited by Michael Mooney. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.

Lanham, Richard. *The motives of eloquence: literary rhetoric in the renaissance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

Loades, David. *Thomas Cromwell: Servant to Henry VIII*. London: Amberely Publishing, 2013.

Mayer, T.F. "A mission worse than death: Reginald Pole and the Parisian theologian." *English historical review*. CIII (1988): 870-891.

---. *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal: Humanist Politics and religion in the reign of Henry VIII*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

---. "Faction and Ideology: Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue*." *The Historical Journal*. Volume. 28, 1 (1985): 1-25.

Muir, Edward. *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

---. "Was There Republicanism in the Renaissance Republics? Venice after Agnadello." In *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State 1297-1797*. Edited by John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano: 137-168. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

More, Thomas. "Thomas More to the Reverend Fathers, the Commissory, Proctors, and Others of the Guild of Masters of Oxford University." In *A Thomas More Source Book*. Edited by Gerard B. Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith, 204-211. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008.

---. *Utopia*. Translated by Paul Turner. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

Nauert, Charles. *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Orme, Nicholas. *English Schools in the Middle Ages*. London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Pace, Richard. *De Fructu qui ex Doctrina Percipitur*. Edited and Translated by Frank Manley and Richard S. Sylvester. New York: Renaissance Society of America, 1967.

Peltonen, Markku. *Classical humanism and republicanism in English political thought, 1570-1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Pocock, J.G.A. *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

---. *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Ross, J.B. "Gasparo Contarini and His Friends." *Studies in The Renaissance*. Volume 17 (1970): 192-232.

Sanudo, Marino. *Venice Cita Excelentissima: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*. Translated by Linda L. Carroll and edited by Patricia H. Labalme and Laura Sanguineti White. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Schenk, Wilhelm. *Reginald Pole: Cardinal of England*. London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1950.

Skinner, Quentin. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Volume I. The Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

---. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas." *History and Theory*. Volume 8, 1 (1969): 3-53.

Starkey, Thomas. *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*. Edited by T.F. Mayer. London: Royal Historical Society, 1989.

---. *Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*. Edited by Kathleen Burton. London: Chatto & Windus, 1948.

---. *England In The Reign Of King Henry the Eighth: Starkey's Life And Letters*. Edited by Sidney J. Herrtage. London: The Early English Text Society, 1878.

Stout, Harry S. 'Marsilius of Padua and the Henrician reformation.' *Church history*, XLII (1973): 308-318.

Valla, Lorenzo. "The Glory of the Latin Language." In *The Portable Renaissance Reader*. Edited by James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin McLaughlin, 131-135. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1968.

Weisner-Hanks, Merry E. *Early Modern Europe 1450-1789*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Weiss, Roberto. *Humanism in England during the fifteenth century*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1957.

Whittington, Robert. "Ulgaria Roberti Whitintoni Lichfeldiensis/ et de institutione grammaticulorum Opusculum: libello suo de concinnitate Grammatices accommodatum: et in quatuor partes digestum." In *The Vulgaria of John Stanbridge and the Vulgaria of Robert Whittington*. Edited by Beatrice White, 31-128. London: The Early English Text Society, 1932.

---. "The thre bokes of Tullius offyce, both in latyn tongue and englysh, / late translated and diligently correct by Robart Whytynton laureat poete." Accessed on Early English Books Online November 19, 2015. http://eebo.chadwyck.com/simsrad.net.ocs.mq.edu.au/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pgimages.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=603868894&FILE=../session/1449554696_2656&SEARCHSCREEN=CITATIONS&VID=210678&PAGENO=98&ZOOM=&VIEWPORT=&SEARCHCONFIG=var_spell.cfg&DISPLAY=AUTHOR&HIGHLIGHT_KEYWORD=.

Wiethoff, William E. "Rhetoric and Law in Pietro Bembo's *Opere*." *A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*. Volume 5, 3 (1987): 265-278.

Wilson, K.J. *Incomplete Fictions: The Formation of English Renaissance Dialogue*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985.

Witt, Ronald. "Medieval 'Ars Dictaminis' and the Beginnings of Humanism: A New Construction of the Problem." *Renaissance Quarterly* 35 (1985): 1-35.

---. "The Crisis After Forty Years." *The American Historical Review*. 101.1 (1996): 110-118.

Woolfson, Jonathan. *Padua and the Tudors: English Students in Italy, 1485-1603*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.

Zeeveld, W. Gordon. *Foundations of Tudor Policy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948.