that he had three concubines, which in three diverse properties diversely excelled: one the merriest, another the wildest, the third the holiest harlot in his realm, as one whom no man could get out of the church lightly to any place but it were to his bed. The other two were somewhat greater personages, and notethes of their humility content to be nameless and to forbear the praise of those properties. But the merriest was this Shore’s wife, in whom the king therefore took special pleasure. For many he had, but her he loved, whose favor, to say the truth (for sin it were to belie the devil), she never abused to any man’s hurt, but to many a man’s comfort and relief. Where the king took displeasure, she would mitigate and appease his mind. Where men were out of favor, she would bring them in his grace. For many that had highly offended, she obtained pardon. Of great forfeitures she got men remission. And finally, in many weighty suits she stood many men in great stead, either for none or very small rewards, and those rather gay than rich, either for that she was content with the deed itself well done, or for that she delighted to be sued unto and to show what she was able to do with the king: or for that wanton women and wealthy be not alway covetous.

I doubt not some shall think this woman too slight a thing to be written of and set among the remembrances of great matters, which they shall specially think that haply shall esteem her only by that they now see her. But meeemeth the chance so much the more worthy to be remembered, in how much she is now in the more beggarly condition, unfriended and worn out of acquaintance, after good substance, after as great favor with the prince, after as great suit and seeking to with all those that those days had business to speed, as many other men were in their times which be now famous only by the infamy of their ill deeds. Her doings were not much less, albeit they be much less remembered because they were not so evil. For men use if they have an evil turn to write it in marble; and whoso doth us a good turn, we write it in dust; which is not worst proved by her; for at this day she beggeth of many at this day living, that at this day had begged if she had not been.

c. 1513–20

1957

5. Easily.
7. Proverbial: it’s wrong to lie even about the devil.
8. Imposed as punishments for crimes.
9. Appeals to the king.
1. That which. “Haply” perhaps.
3. Without friends.
4. Supplication.
5. Who. “Speed” expedite, promote.
6. Are accustomed.
7. Illustrated.

SIR THOMAS WYATT THE ELDER
1503–1542

Thomas Wyatt made his career in the shifting, dangerous currents of Renaissance courts, and court culture, with its power struggles, sexual intrigues, and sophisticated tastes, shaped his remarkable achievements as a poet. Educated at St. John’s College, Cambridge, Wyatt entered the service of Henry VIII, becoming clerk of the king’s jewels, a member of diplomatic missions to France and the Low Countries, and, in 1537–39, ambassador to Spain at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. The years he spent abroad as a diplomat had a significant impact upon his writing,
most obvious in his translations and imitations of poems by the Italian Renaissance writers Serafino, Aretino, Sannazaro, Alamanni, and, above all, Petrarch. Diplomacy, with its veiled threats, subtle indirectness, and cynical role-playing, may have had a more indirect impact as well, reinforcing the lessons in self-display and self-concealment that Wyatt would have received at the English court.

Life in the orbit of the ruthless, unpredictable Henry VIII was competitive and risky. When, in the late 1530s, Wyatt wrote to his son of the "thousand dangers and hazards, enmities, hatreds, prisons, deserts, and indignations" he had faced, he was not exaggerating. He probably came closest to the executioner's axe when in 1536 he was imprisoned in the Tower of London along with several others accused of having committed adultery with the queen, Anne Boleyn. As his poem "Who list his wealth and ease retain" suggests, Wyatt may have watched from his cell the execution of the queen and her alleged lovers; but he himself was spared, as he was spared a few years later, when he was again imprisoned in the Tower on charges of high treason brought by his enemies at court. His death, at the age of thirty-nine, came from a fever.

It is not surprising, given his career, that many of Wyatt's poems, including his satires and his psalm translations, express an intense longing for "steadfastness" and an escape from the corruption, anxiety, and duplicity of the court. The praise, in his verse epistle to John Poiyns, of a quiet retired life in the country and the harsh condemnation of courtly hypocrisy derive from his own experience. But of course the eloquent celebration of simplicity and truthfulness can itself be a cunning strategy. Wyatt was a master of the game of poetic self-display. Again and again he represents himself as a plain-speaking and steadfast man, betrayed by the "doubleness" of a fickle mistress or the instability of fortune. At this distance it is impossible to know how much this account corresponds to reality, but we can admire, as Wyatt's contemporaries did, the rhetorical deftness of the performance.

In a move with momentous consequences for English poetry, Wyatt introduced into English the sonnet, a fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter with a complex, intertwining rhyme scheme. For the most part, he took his subject matter from Petrarch's sonnets, but his rhyme schemes make a significant departure. Petrarch's sonnets consist of an "octave," rhyming abbaabba, followed, after a turn (volta) in the sense, by a "sestet" with various rhyme schemes (such as cd cd cd and cde cde) that have in common their avoidance of a rhyming couplet at the end. Wyatt employs the Petrarchan octave, but his most common sestet scheme is cdec ee: the Petrarchan sonnet was already beginning to change into the characteristic "English" structure for the sonnet, three quatrains and a closing couplet. (For the Italian originals of the Petrarchan sonnets translated in our selection, as well as additional poems by Wyatt, go to Norton Literature Online.)

In his freest translations of Petrarchan sonnets, such as "Whoso list to hunt," Wyatt tends to turn the idealizing of the woman into disillusionment and complaint. For the lover in Petrarch's poems, love is a transcendent experience; for the lover in Wyatt's poems, it is obsessive and embittering. The tone of bitterness carries over to many poems less closely linked to Italian and French models, poems with short stanzas and refrains in the manner of the native English "ballet" (pronounced to rhyme with mallet) or dance-song. Some of the ballets, to be sure, strike a note of jaunty independence, often tinged with misogyny, but melancholy complaint is rarely very distant. Perhaps the poem that most brilliantly captures Wyatt's blend of passion, anger, cynicism, longing, and pain is "They flee from me."

Though Wyatt's representations of women are often cynical, it is clear that aristocratic women played a key role in the reception and preservation of his poetry. Women were not excluded from the courtly game of ballet-making. The Devonshire Manuscript, one of the chief sources for Wyatt's poetry, contains a number of poems that were probably by women, many more transcribed by female hands, and some male-authored poems written in a female voice, as well as any number of misogynist verses, by Wyatt and others.
Wyatt never published a collection of his own poems, and very little of his verse appeared in print during his lifetime. In 1557 (fifteen years after his death), the printer Richard Tottel included 97 poems attributed to Wyatt among the 271 poems in his miscellany, Songs and Sonnets. Wyatt was not primarily concerned with regularity of accent and smoothness of rhythm. By the time Tottel’s collection was published, Wyatt’s deliberately rough, vigorous, and expressive metrical practice was felt to be crude, and Tottel (or perhaps some intermediary) smoothed out the versification. We reprint “They flee from me” both in Tottel’s “improved” version and in the version found in the Egerton Manuscript, a manuscript that contains poems in Wyatt’s own hand and corrections he made to scribal copies of his poems. Unlike the Egerton Manuscript (E. MS.), the Devonshire Manuscript (D. MS.) was not apparently in the poet’s possession, but some of its texts seem earlier than Egerton’s, and it furnishes additional poems, as do the Blag Manuscript (B. MS.) and the Arundel Manuscript (A. MS.).

In the following selections we have indicated the manuscript from which each of the poems derives and divided the poems into three generic groups: sonnets, other lyrics, and finally a satire. Within each of the first two groups, the poems are printed in the order in which they appear in the manuscripts. There is no reason to think that this is a chronological ordering.*

The long love that in my thought doth harbor

The long love that in my thought doth harbor,
And in mine heart doth keep his residence,
Into my face presseth with bold pretense
And therein campeth, spreading his banner.2

She that me learneth9 to love and suffer
And will that my trust and lust’s negligence3
Be rein’d by reason, shame,6 and reverence,
With his hardiness taketh displeasure.

Wherewithal6 unto the heart’s forest he fleeth,
Leaving his enterprise with pain and cry,
And there him hideth, and not appeareth.
What may I do, when my master feareth.
But in the field with him to live and die?
For good is the life ending faithfully.

E. MS.

Petrarch, Rima 140

A MODERN PROSE TRANSLATION

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

* For the Italian originals of the Petrarchan sonnets translated in our selection, as well as additional poems by Wyatt, go to Norton Literature Online.
1. Wyatt’s version of poem 140 of Petrarch’s Rime sparse (Scattered rhymes); his younger friend the earl of Surrey also translated it (p. 608).
2. I.e., the speaker’s blush. The first four lines of this sonnet introduce the “conceit” (elaborately sustained metaphor) of Love as a warrior who, “with bold pretense” (i.e., making bold claim), flaunts his presence by means of the “banner.” Elaborate metaphors of this kind are common in Petrarchan (and Elizabethan) love poetry, and often, as in this instance, an entire sonnet will turn on a single conceit.
3. I.e., my open and careless revelation of my love.
1. This and the prose translations of Rime 190, 134, and 189 are by Robert K. Durling.
She who teaches us to love and to be patient, and wishes my great desire, my kindled hope, to be reined in by reason, shame, and reverence, at our boldness is angry within herself.

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

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

Whoso list to hunt

Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind, cares / female deer
But as for me, alas, I may no more.
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
I am of them that farthest cometh behind.
Yet may I, by no means, my wearied mind
Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore,
Fainting I follow. I leave off, therefore,
Since in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I, may spend his time in vain.
And graven with diamonds in letters plain
There is written, her fair neck round about,
"Noli me tangere, for Caesar’s I am,
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame."

E. MS.

Petrarch, Rima 190

A MODERN PROSE TRANSLATION

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

Her look was so sweet and proud that to follow her I left every task, like the miser who as he seeks treasure sweetens his trouble with delight.

"Let no one touch me," she bore written with diamonds and topazes around her lovely neck. "It has pleased my Caesar to make me free."

And the sun had already turned at midday; my eyes were tired by looking but not sated, when I fell into the water, and she disappeared.

1. An adaptation of Petrarch's Rima 190, perhaps influenced by commentators on Petrarch, who said that Noli me tangere quia Caesaris sum ("Touch me not, for I am Caesar’s") was inscribed on the collars of Caesar’s hinds, which were then set free and were presumably safe from hunters. Wyatt’s sonnet is usually supposed to refer to Anne Boleyn, in whom Henry VIII became interested in 1526.
Farewell, Love

Farewell, Love, and all thy laws forever,
Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more;
Senec and Plato call me from thy lore,
To perfect wealth my wit for to endeavor.¹

In blind error when I did persevere,
Thy sharp repulse, that priceth aye² so sore,
Hath taught me to set in trifles no store,³
And 'scape forth since liberty is lever.⁴
Therefore farewell, go trouble younger hearts,
And in me claim no more authority;
With idle youth go use thy property,²
And thereon spend thy many brittle darts.⁵
For hitherto though I have lost all my time,
Me lusteth⁶ no longer rotten boughs to climb.

I find no peace¹

I find no peace, and all my war is done,
I fear and hope, I burn and freeze like ice,
I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise,
And naught I have, and all the world I seize on.
That⁶ looseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison,
And holdeth me not, yet can I 'scape nowise;
Nor letteth me live nor die at my devise,⁵
And yet of death it giveth me occasion.
Without eyen⁶ I see, and without tongue I plain;²
I desire to perish, and yet I ask health;
I love another, and thus I hate myself;
I feed me in sorrow, and laugh in all my pain.
Likewise displeaseth me both death and life,
And my delight is causer of this strife.

E. MS.

Petarch, Rima 134

A MODERN PROSE TRANSLATION

Peace I do not find, and I have no wish to make war; and I fear and hope, and burn and am of ice; and I fly above the heavens and lie on the ground; and I grasp nothing and embrace all the world.

¹. I.e., "Senec" (Seneca, the Roman moral philosopher and tragedian) and Plato call him to educate his mind ("wit") to perfect well-being ("wealth").
². Do what you characteristically do.
³. Translated from Petrarch's Rima 134.
4. Complain, lament.
One has me in prison who neither opens nor locks, neither keeps me for his own nor unties the bonds; and Love does not kill and does not unchain me, he neither wishes me alive nor frees me from the tangle.

I see without eyes, and I have no tongue and yet cry out; and I wish to perish and I ask for help; and I hate myself and love another.

I feed on pain, weeping I laugh; equally displeasing to me are death and life. In this state am I, Lady, on account of you.

My galley

My galley charged with forgetfulness
Thorough sharp seas, in winter nights doth pass
'Tween rock and rock; and eke mine enemy, alas,
That is my lord, steereth with cruelty;
And every oar a thought in readiness,
As though that death were light in such a case,
An endless wind doth tear the sail apace
Of forced sighs and trusty fearfulness.
A rain of tears, a cloud of dark disdain,
Hath done the wearyed cords great hinderance;
Wreathed with error and eke with ignorance.
The stars be hid that led me to this pain.
Drowned is reason that should me consort,
And I remain despairing of the port.

Petrarch, Rima 189

A MODERN PROSE TRANSLATION

My ship laden with forgetfulness passes through a harsh sea, at midnight, in winter, between Scylla and Charybdis, and at the tiller sits my lord, rather my enemy;

each oar is manned by a ready, cruel thought that seems to scorn the tempest and the end; a wet, changeless wind of sighs, hopes, and desires breaks the sail;

a rain of weeping, a mist of disdain wet and loosen the already weary ropes, made of error twisted up with ignorance.

My two usual sweet stars are hidden; dead among the waves are reason and skill; so that I begin to despair of the port.

1. Translated from Petrarch’s Rima 189. For Edmund Spenser’s adaptation of the same poem, see p. 903.
2. I.e., obliviousness of everything except love.
3. As though my destruction would not matter much.
Divers doth use

Divers doth use,¹ as I have heard and know,
When that to change their ladies do begin,
To mourn and wail, and never for to lin,²
Hoping thereby to cease³ their painful woe.

And some there be, that when it chanceth so
That women change and hate where love hath been,
They call them false and think with words to win
The hearts of them which otherwhere doth grow.
But as for me, though that by chance indeed
Change hath outworn the favor that I had,
I will not wail, lament, nor yet be sad,
Nor call her false that falsely did me feed,
But let it pass, and think it is of kind⁴
That often⁵ change doth please a woman’s mind.

What vaileth truth?¹

What vaileth⁶ truth? or by it to take pain,
To strive by steadfastness for to attain
To be just and true and flee from doubleness;
Sithens all⁷ alike, where ruleth craftiness,
Rewarded is both false and plain?
Soonest he speedeth⁸ that most can feign;
True-meaning heart is had in disdain.
Against deceit and doubleness,
What vaileth truth?

Deceived is he by crafty train⁹
That meaneth no guile and doth remain
Within the trap without redress.
But for⁰ to love, lo, such a mistress,
Whose cruelty nothing can restrain.
What vaileth truth?

¹. Are accustomed. "Divers": the adjective ("various," "sundry"), not the noun; i.e., various other men.
². A rondeau: a difficult French verse form in which the unrhymed refrain "rounds" back to the opening words, and the rest of the poem uses only two rhyme sounds.
Madam, withouten many words

Madam, withouten many words,
Once, I am sure, ye will or no.
And if ye will, then leave your bordes,
And use your wit and show it so.

And with a beck ye shall me call.
And if of one that burneth alway
Ye have any pity at all,
Answer him fair with yea or nay.

If it be yea, I shall be fain.
If it be nay, friends as before.
Ye shall another man obtain,
And I mine own and yours no more.

E. MS

They flee from me

They flee from me, that sometime did me seek
With naked foot stalking in my chamber.
I have seen them gentle, tame, and meek
That now are wild and do not remember

That sometime they put themself in danger
To take bread at my hand; and now they range,
Busily seeking with a continual change.

Thanked be fortune it hath been otherwise
Twenty times better; but once in special,
In thin array, after a pleasant guise,
When her loose gown from her shoulders did fall,
And she me caught in her arms long and small,
Therewithal sweetly did me kiss
And softly said, "Dear heart, how like you this?"

It was no dream, I lay broad waking.
But all is turned, thorough my gentleness,
Into a strange fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go, of her goodness.
And she also to use newfangledness.

But since that I so kindely am served,
I fain would know what she hath deserved.

E. MS

1. For a recitation of this poem, go to Norton Literature Online.
2. Naturally (from kind: "nature," but with an ironic suggestion of the modern meaning of "kindly"). In Watt's spelling, the word should presumably be pronounced as three syllables.
The Lover Showeth How He Is Forsaken of Such as He Sometime Enjoyed

[THEY FLEE FROM ME]

They flee from me, that sometime did me seek
With naked foot stalking within my chamber.
Once have I seen them gentle, tame, and meek
That now are wild and do not once remember

That sometime they have put themselves in danger
To take bread at my hand; and now they range,
Busily seeking in continual change.

Thankèd be fortune, it hath been otherwise
Twenty times better; but once especial,
In thin array, after a pleasant guise,
When her loose gown did from her shoulders fall,
And she me caught in her arms long and small,
And therewithal so sweetly did me kiss
And softly said, “Dear heart, how like you this?”

It was no dream, for I lay broad awaking.
But all is turned now, through my gentleness,
Into a bitter fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go, of her goodness,
And she also to use newfangledness.

But since that I unkindly so am served,
How like you this? What hath she now deserved?

TOTTEL, 1557

My lute, awake!

My lute, awake! Perform the last
Labor that thou and I shall waste,
And end that I have now begun:
For when this song is sung and past,

My lute be still, for I have done.

As to be heard where ear is none,
As lead to grave in marble stone,
My song may pierce her heart as soon.
Should we then sigh or sing or moan?

No, no, my lute, for I have done.

The rocks do not so cruelly
Repulse the waves continually
As she my suit and affection.

1. I.e., when sound may be heard with no ear to hear it or when soft lead is able to carve (“grave”) hard marble.
So that I am past remedy, 
Whereby my lute and I have done.

Proud of the spoil that thou hast got 
Of simple hearts, thorough Love’s shot. 
By whom, unkind, thou hast them won. 
Think not he hath his bow forgot. 

Although my lute and I have done.

Vengeance shall fall on thy disdain 
That makest but game on earnest pain. 
Think not alone under the sun 
Unquit to cause thy lovers plain. 

Although my lute and I have done.

Perchance thee lie withered and old 
The winter nights that are so cold, 
Plaining in vain unto the moon. 
Thy wishes then dare not be told. 

Care then who list, for I have done. 

And then may chance thee to repent 
The time that thou hast lost and spent 
To cause thy lovers sigh and swoon. 
Then shalt thou know beauty but lent, 

And wish and want as I have done.

Now cease, my lute. This is the last 
Labor that thou and I shall waste, 
And ended is that we begun. 
Now is this song both sung and past; 
My lute be still, for I have done.

E. MS.

Forget not yet

Forget not yet the tried intent 
Of such a truth as I have meant, 
My great travail so gladly spent, 
Forget not yet.

Forget not yet when first began 
The weary life ye know since when, 
The suit, the service none tell can, 
Forget not yet.

Forget not yet the great essays, 
The cruel wrong, the scornful ways,

2. Perhaps it may befall you to lie.
1. Actions of a lover, often called the lady’s “servant.”
The painful patience in denays.  
Forget not yet.

Forget not yet, forget not this,  
How long ago hath been and is

The mind that never meant amiss,  
Forget not yet.

Forget not then thine own approved,  
The which so long hath thee so loved,  
Whose steadfast faith yet never moved,  
Forget not this.

Blame not my lute

Blame not my lute, for he must sound  
Of this or that as liketh me:

For lack of wit the lute is bound  
To give such tunes as pleaseth me.

Though my songs be somewhat strange,  
And speaks such words as touch thy change,  
Blame not my lute.

My lute, alas, doth not offend,  
Though that perforce he must agree

To sound such tunes as I intend  
To sing to them that heareth me.

Then though my songs be somewhat plain,  
And toucheth some that use to feign,  
Blame not my lute.

My lute and strings may not deny,  
But as I strike they must obey:

Break not them then so wrongfully,  
But wreak thyself some wiser way.

And though the songs which I indite

Do quit thy change with rightful spite,  
Blame not my lute.

Spite asketh spite, and changing change,  
And falsed faith must needs be known;

The fault so great, the case so strange,  
Of right it must abroad be blown.

Then since that by thine own desert  
My songs do tell how true thou art,  
Blame not my lute.

---

1. And comment on some who are accustomed to dissemble.  
2. Requite your unfaithfulness.
Blame but thyself, that hast misdone
And well deserved to have blame;
Change thou thy way so evil begun.
And then my lute shall sound that same.
But if till then my fingers play
By thy desert their wonted\(^3\) way,
Blame not my lute.

Farewell, unknown, for though thou break
My strings in spite with great disdain,
Yet have I found out for thy sake
Strings for to string my lute again.
And if perchance this foolish rhyme
Do make thee blush at any time,
Blame not my lute.

Stand whoso list\(^1\)

Stand whoso list\(^8\) upon the slipper\(^9\) top
Of court's estates,\(^2\) and let me here rejoice
And use me quiet without let or stop,\(^2\)
Unknown in court, that hath such brackish joys.
In hidden place so let my days forth pass
That when my years be done withouten noise,
I may die aged after the common trace.\(^6\)
For him death grippeth right hard by the crop\(^9\)
That is much known of other, and of himself, alas,
Doth die unknown, dazed, with dreadful\(^8\) face.

Who list his wealth and ease retain\(^1\)

Who list\(^8\) his wealth\(^8\) and ease retain,
Himself let him unknown contain,\(^2\)
Press not too fast in at that gate
Where the return stands by disdain:
For sure, circa regna tonat.\(^3\)

The high mountains are blasted oft
When the low valley is mild and soft.

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1. A translation of Seneca. Thyestes, lines 391-403. For a literal translation of this famous passage, and other verse translations of it, go to Norton Literature Online.
2. Comport myself quietly without hindrance or impediment.
3. This poem was almost certainly written at the time of Wyatt's imprisonment in 1536, during which he witnessed from the Bell Tower the execution of Anne Boleyn.
4. I.e., let him keep himself unknown.
5. "He [i.e., Jupiter] thunders around thrones" (Seneca, Phaedra, line 1140). The first two stanzas of Wyatt's poem paraphrase lines from that play. "The return stands by disdain" i.e., "you will be disdained as you make your (forced) exit."
Fortune with Health stands at debate.\(^4\)
The fall is grievous from aloft.
And sure, \textit{circa regna tonat}.\(^{pleasure}\)

These bloody days have broken my heart.
My lust,\(^6\) my youth did then depart,
And blind desire of estate.\(^5\)
Who hastes to climb seeks to revert.\(^9\)
Of truth, \textit{circa regna tonat}.\(^{status}\)

The Bell Tower showed me such sight
That in my head sticks day and night.
There did I learn out of a grate,\(^6\)
For all favor, glory, or might,\(^5\)
That yet \textit{circa regna tonat}.\(^{pleasure}\)

By proof,\(^6\) I say, there did I learn:
Wit helpeth not defense to yerne,
Of innocence to plead or prate.\(^6\)
Bear low, therefore, give God the stern,\(^7\)
For sure, \textit{circa regna tonat}.\(^{barred window}\)

Mine own John Poins\(^1\)

Mine own John Poins, since ye delight to know
The cause why that homeward I me draw
(And flee the press of courts, whereso they go,
Rather than to live thrall under the awe
Of lordly looks) wrapped within my cloak,
To will and lust\(^5\) learning to set a law;
It is not for because I scorn or mock
The power of them to whom Fortune hath lent
Charge over us, of right to strike the stroke.\(^2\)
But true it is that I have always meant
Less to esteem them than the common sort,
Of outward things that judge in their intent,
Without regard what doth inward resort.
I grant sometime that of glory the fire
Doth touch my heart; me list not to report
Blame by honor, and honor to desire.\(^1\)
But how may I this honor now attain,
That cannot dye the color black a liar?\(^4\)

4. I.e., fortune and well-being are always at odds.
5. I.e., whatever one’s favor, glory, or might.
6. I.e., intelligence does not help one earn (“yerne”) a defense, [nor does it help] to plead or prattle about one’s innocence.
7. Let God do the steering “Bear low”: be humble.
1. Poins was a friend of Wyatt’s. This verse epistle of informal satire is based on the tenth satire of the Italian Luigi Alamanni but is personalized and Anglicized in detail by Wyatt. It was apparently written during Wyatt’s banishment from court in 1536. Lines 1–52 of the poem are missing from the authoritative Egerton Manuscript and are here supplied from the Devonshire Manuscript.
2. I.e., my retirement from court is not because I scorn the powerful, or their prerogatives of rule and punishment. But I esteem them less than do the “common sort” of people, who judge by externals only (lines 10–13).
3. I.e., I do not wish to attack honor or to call dishonorable desire honorable.
4. I.e., cannot pretend that black is not black.
My Poins, I cannot frame my tune to feign,
To cloak the truth for praise, without desert,
Of them that list\(^5\) all vice for to retain.
I cannot honor them that sets their part
With Venus and Bacchus all their life long,\(^5\)
Nor hold my peace of them although I smart.
I cannot crouch nor kneel nor do so great a wrong
To worship them like God on earth alone
That are as wolves these sely\(^6\) lambs among.
I cannot with my words complain and moan
And suffer naught,\(^6\) nor smart without complaint,
Nor turn the word that from my mouth is gone;
I cannot speak and look like a saint,
Use wiles for wit\(^7\) and make deceit a pleasure,
And call craft\(^8\) counsel, for profit still to paint;\(^9\)
I cannot wrest the law to fill the coffers,
With innocent blood to feed myself fat,
And do most hurt where most help I offer.
I am not he that can allow\(^10\) the state\(^9\)
Of high Caesar and damn Cato\(^6\) to die,
That with his death did 'scape out of the gate
From Caesar's hands, if Livy\(^10\) do not lie,
And would not live where liberty was lost,
So did his heart the common weal apply.\(^8\)
I am not he such eloquence to boast
To make the crow singing as the swan,
Nor call the lion of coward beasts the most,
That cannot take a mouse as the cat can;
And he that dieth for hunger of the gold,
Call him Alexander,\(^9\) and say that Pan
Passeth\(^9\) Apollo in music many fold;\(^1\)
Praise Sir Thopas for a noble tale,
And scorn the story that the Knight told;\(^2\)
Praise him for counsel that is drunk of ale;
Grin when he laugheth that beareth all the sway,\(^6\)
Frown when he frowneth, and groan when he is pale;
On other's lust\(^6\) to hang both night and day—
None of these points would ever frame in me;\(^8\)
My wit\(^9\) is naught;\(^9\) I cannot learn the way;
And much the less of things that greater be,
That asken help of colors of device\(^0\)
To join the mean with each extremity:
With the nearest virtue to cloak alway the vice,
And, as to purpose likewise it shall fall.\(^1\)

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5. I.e., I cannot honor those who devote their lives to Venus (goddess of love) and Bacchus (god of drinking).
6. Cato the Younger, the famous Roman patriot who committed suicide rather than submit to Cae-sar.
7. Titius Livius (59 B.C.E.-17 C.E.), the great Roman historian.
8. So much did he devote himself to the common good.
9. Compare him to Alexander the Great with his towering ambition.
10. According to classical mythology, the music of the nature god Pan was far inferior to that of Apollo, patron of music and art.
11. The silly tale of Sir Thopas, in The Canterbury Tales, is told by Chaucer himself, until the Host forces him to stop. The Knight's Tale is the most courtly and dignified of the tales.
12. I.e., as will also be opportune.
To press the virtue that it may not rise;
As drunkenness, good fellowship to call;

The friendly foe, with his double face,
Say he is gentle and courteous therewithal;⁴
And say that favel⁵ hath a goodly grace
In eloquence; and cruelty to name
Zeal of justice, and change in time and place;⁶

And he that suffereth offense① without blame,
Call him pitiful,⁶ and him true and plain
That raiieth recklessly to every man's shame;
Say he is rude⁶ that cannot lie and feign,
The lecher a lover, and tyranny

To be the right of a prince's reign.
I cannot, I: no, no, it will not be.
This is the cause that I could never yet
Hang on their sleeves that weigh, as thou mayst see,
A chip of chance more than a pound of wit.

This maketh me at home to hunt and hawk
And in foul weather at my book to sit;
In frost and snow then with my bow to stalk.
No man doth mark⁶ whereso I ride or go.
In lusty leases⁶ at liberty I walk,

And of these news I feel nor weal nor woe,
Save that a clog doth hang yet at my heel.⁵
No force⁶ for that, for it is ordered so
That I may leap both hedge and dike full well.
I am not now in France, to judge the wine,

With sav'ry sauce the delicates⁶ to feel;
Nor yet in Spain, where one must him incline,
Rather than to be, outwardly to seem.
I meddle not with wits that be so fine;
Nor Flanders' cheer⁶ let them not my sight to deem

Of black and white, nor taketh my wit away
With beastliness they, beasts, do so esteem.
Nor am I not where Christ is given in prey
For money, poison, and treason—at Rome⁷

A common practice, used night and day.

But here I am in Kent and Christendom,
Among the Muses, where I read and rhyme;
Where if thou list, my Pons, for to come,
Thou shalt be judge how I do spend my time.

D. MS., E. MS.

⁴ I.e., to miscall cruelty zeal for justice, and to rationalize it by appeals to altered circumstances.
⁵ "I feel neither happiness nor unhappiness about current political affairs, except that a 'clog' (i.e., his confinement on parole to his estate) keeps me from traveling far." Note that "news" is a plural in Elizabethan English.
⁶ I.e., the drinking for which, in the 16th century, Flemings were notorious.
⁷ In Tottel's Miscellany, published in the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary, these lines were altered as follows: "where truth is given in prey / For money, poison, and treason—of some."
HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY
1517–1547

The axe that decapitated Surrey at the age of thirty had been hanging over his head for much of his life. In the court of Henry VIII, it was dangerous to be a potential claimant to the throne, and Surrey was descended from kings on both sides of his family. He was brought up at Windsor Castle as the close companion of Henry VIII's illegitimate son, the duke of Richmond, who married Surrey's sister. As the eldest son of the duke of Norfolk, the chief bulwark of the old Catholic aristocracy against the rising tide of "new men" and the reformed religion, Surrey was the heir not only to the Howard family's great wealth but also to their immense pride, their sense at once of noble privilege and of obligation. Like his father and grandfather, he was a brave and able soldier, serving in Henry VIII's French wars as "Lieutenant General of the King on Sea and Land." He was also repeatedly imprisoned for rash behavior, on one occasion for striking a courtier, on another for wandering through the streets of London breaking the windows of sleeping townspeople. In 1541 Surrey used his family connections—his first cousin, Catherine Howard, was queen—to secure the release from the Tower of his close friend, the poet Thomas Wyatt, who had been accused of treason. But a year later, Catherine Howard was executed for adultery, like Anne Boleyn before her. Power returned to the rival family of the former queen Jane Seymour, who had died in childbirth giving a son and heir to the aging Henry VIII. Surrey's situation was already precarious, and his vocal opposition to the Seymours, with their strong Protestant leanings, sealed his fate. Convicted of treason, he had the grim distinction of being Henry's last victim.

Poets and critics of the later sixteenth century, fascinated by Surrey's noble rank and his tragic fate, routinely praised him as one of the very greatest English poets. The full title of Tottel's influential miscellany, published in 1557 (ten years after Surrey's death), is Songs and Sonnets written by the Right Honorable Lord Henry Howard Late Earl of Surrey and Other. The principal "other” here is his older friend Wyatt, with whose poetry Surrey's is closely linked. Poets who circulated their verse in manuscript in a courtly milieu, both shared a passion for French and Italian poetry, especially for Petrarch's sonnets. Surrey established a form for these that was used by Shakespeare and that has become known as the English sonnet: three quatrains and a couplet, all in iambic pentameter and rhyming abab cdcd efef gg. Even more significant, he was the first English poet to publish in blank verse—unrhymed iambic pentameter—a verse form so popular in the succeeding centuries that it has come to seem almost indigenous to the language. The work in which he used his "strange meter,” as the publisher called it, was a translation of part of Virgil's Aeneid. Managing the five-stress line with exceptional skill, Surrey initiated the rhythmic fluency that distinguishes so many Elizabethan lyrics. It is striking that his two great literary innovations, the English sonnet and blank verse, should emerge in the same period that saw radical upheavals in traditional religious and social life. It is possible that he was drawn to Virgil's epic because it offered a model of continuity in the face of disaster. Aeneas cannot prevent the fall of Troy, but he goes on to establish a new world without abandoning his old values.

As a conventional love poet Surrey is not very convincing: in 1593 Thomas Nashe wrote sardonically that Surrey "was more in love with his own curious forming fancy" than with this mistress's face. His verse comes alive when he writes about his deep male friendships ("So cruel prison" and the moving epitaph he published on Wyatt), or imagines himself as a woman longing for her absent man ("O happy dames"), or employs his new sonnet form in a savage attack on the "womanish delight" of an unmanly king ("Th'Assyrians' king").
Our selections from Surrey are divided into three groups: sonnets; lyric and reflective poems; classical translations.*

The soote season

The soote\(^5\) season, that bud and bloom forth brings, sweet, fragrant also
With green hath clad the hill and eke\(^9\) the vale.
The nightingale with feathers new she sings; turtle dove to her mate
The turtle to her make\(^6\) hath told her tale.

Summer is come, for every spray now springs. fence, poling thicket
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale;\(^9\) cast-off skin
The buck in brake\(^9\) his winter coat he flings;
The fishes float with new repaired scale;
The adder all her slough\(^5\) away she slings; mingled

The swift swallow pursueth the flies small; harm
The busy bee her honey now she mings.\(^6\)
Winter is worn, that was the flowers' bale.\(^6\)
And thus I see among these pleasant things,
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs.

Petrarch, Rima 310

A MODERN PROSE TRANSLATION\(^1\)

Zephyrus\(^2\) returns and leads back the fine weather and the flowers and the grass, his sweet family, and chattering Procne and weeping Philomena, and Spring, all white and vermilion;

the meadows laugh and the sky becomes clear again, Jupiter is gladdened looking at his daughter, the air and the waters and the earth are full of love, every animal takes counsel again to love.

But to me, alas, come back heavier sighs, which she draws from my deepest heart, she who carried off to Heaven the keys to it;

and the singing of little birds, and the flowering of meadows, and virtuous gentle gestures in beautiful ladies are a wilderness and cruel, savage beasts.

Love, that doth reign and live within my thought\(^1\)

Love, that doth reign and live within my thought,
And built his seat within my captive breast,

* For additional lyrics by Surrey, as well as two other excerpts from his partial translation of Virgil's Aenid and the Italian originals of the Petrarchan sonnets translated here, go to Norton Literature Online.

1. This poem is a free adaptation of Petrarch's Rima 310, one of the sonnets written after the death of the poet's beloved.
2. Zephyrus is the west wind; Procne and Philomena (below) the swallow and the nightingale; Jupiter and his daughter Venus are here the planets, in favorable astrological relation.

1557

by Robert K. Durling.

2. Zephyrus is the west wind; Procne and Philomena (below) the swallow and the nightingale; Jupiter and his daughter Venus are here the planets, in favorable astrological relation.

1. Cf. Surrey's version of Petrarch's Rima 140 with Wyatt's translation of the same original (p. 594; with a modern prose translation).
Clad in the arms wherein with me he fought,
Oft in my face he doth his banner rest.

5 But she that taught me love and suffer pain,
   My doubtful hope and eke⁰ my hot desire
   With shamefast⁰ look to shadow and refrain,
   Her smiling grace converteth straight to ire.
   And coward Love then to the heart apace⁰

10 Taketh his flight, where he doth lurk and plain,
   His purpose lost, and dare not show his face.
   For my lord’s guilt thus faultless bide I pain,
   Yet from my lord shall not my foot remove:
   Sweet is the death that taketh end by love.

Alas! so all things now do hold their peace¹

Alas! so all things now do hold their peace,
   Heaven and earth disturbèd in no thing.
   The beasts, the air, the birds their song do cease;
   The nightes chare² the stars about doth bring;
   Calm is the sea, the waves work less and less.
   So am not I, whom love, alas, doth wring,
   Bringing before my face the great increase
   Of my desires, whereat I weep and sing,
   In joy and woe, as in a doubtful ease:

10 For my sweet thoughts sometime do pleasure bring,
   But by and by⁰ the cause of my disease³
   Gives me a pang that inwardly doth sting,
   When that I think what grief it is, again,
   To live, and lack the thing should rid my pain.

Petrarch, Rima 164
A MODERN PROSE TRANSLATION

Now that the heavens and the earth and the wind are silent, and
sleep reins in the beasts and the birds, Night drives her starry car
about, and in its bed the sea lies without a wave,

I am awake, I think, I burn, I weep; and she who destroys me is
always before me, to my sweet pain: war is my state, full of sorrow
and suffering, and only thinking of her do I have any peace.

Thus from one clear living fountain alone spring the sweet and the
bitter on which I feed; one hand alone heals me and pierces me.

¹ Adapted from Petrarch’s Rima 164.
² From Italian carro (the Great Bear).
³ Dis-ease, i.e., discomfort.
And that my suffering may not reach an end, a thousand times a
day I die and a thousand am born, so distant am I from health.

Th'Assyrians' king, in peace with foul desire

Th'Assyrians' king, in peace with foul desire
And filthy lust that stained his regal heart,
In war, that should set princely hearts afire,
Vanquished did yield for want of martial art.

The dint of swords from kisses seemed strange,
And harder than his lady's side, his targe.
From glutton feasts to soldier's fare, a change,
His helmet, far above a garland's charge.
Who scarce the name of manhood did retain,
Drenched in sloth and womanish delight,
Feeble of sprite, unpatient of pain,
When he had lost his honor and his right
(Proud, time of wealth; in storms, appalled with dread),
Murdered himself, to show some manful deed.

So cruel prison how could betide

So cruel prison how could betide; alas,
As proud Windsor, where I in lust and joy
With a king's son my childish years did pass
In greater feast than Priam's sons of Troy?

Where each sweet place returns a taste full sour:
The large green courts, where we were wont to hove,
With eyes cast up unto the Maidens' Tower,
And easy sights, such as folk draw in love.

The stately sales, the ladies bright of hue,
The dances short, long tales of great delight,
With words and looks that tigers could but rue,
Where each of us did plead the other's right.

The palm play where, dispoil'd for the game,
With dazed eyes oft we by gleams of love
Have missed the ball and got sight of our dame,
To bait her eyes, which kept the leads above.

1. The legendary Sardanapalus was often cited as an example of degenerate kingship. Surrey's poem may allude to Henry VIII.
2. i.e., a far heavier burden than a garland.
3. i.e., he was arrogant in good times but overcome with dread in times of trouble. Sardanapalus committed suicide by casting himself into a fire in which he had first burned up his treasure.
4. In the summer of 1537 Surrey was imprisoned at Windsor Castle for striking a courtier. The poem recalls his boyhood stay there (1530–32) with Henry Fitzroy, illegitimate son of Henry VIII.
5. i.e., how could there happen to be.
6. Priam, king of Troy in the Iliad, had fifty sons.
7. Take pity on, despite tigers' legendary fierceness.
8. Lead-covered balustrades.
The graved ground, with sleeves⁶ tied on the helm,
On foaming horse, with swords and friendly hearts,
With cheer⁴ as though the one should overwhelm,
Where we have fought and chased oft with darts.⁵

With silver drops the meads yet spread⁶ for ruth,⁶
In active games of nimbleness and strength,
Where we did strain, trailèd by swarms of youth,
Our tender limbs that yet shot up in length.

The secret groves which oft we made resound
Of pleasant plaint and of our ladies' praise,
Recording soft what grace⁶ each one had found,
What hope of speed,⁵ what dread of long delays,

The wild forest, the clothèd holts⁹ with green,
With reins availed⁶ and swift ybreathed horse,
With cry of hounds and merry blasts⁶ between,
Where we did chase the fearful hart a force.⁷

The void⁶ walls eke⁶ that harbored us each night,
Wherewith, alas, revive within my breast
The sweet accord, such sleeps as yet delight,
The pleasant dreams, the quiet bed of rest,

The secret thoughts imparted with such trust,
The wanton⁶ talk, the divers change of play,
The friendship sworn, each promise kept so just,
Wherewith we passed the winter nights away.

And with this thought, the blood forsakes my face,
The tears bain my cheeks of deadly hue,
The which as soon as sobbing sighs, alas,
Upsuppèd have, thus I my plaint renew:

"O place of bliss, renewer of my woes,
Give me accempt,⁷ where is my noble fere,⁸
Whom in thy walls thou didst each night enclose,
To other lief,⁹ but unto me most dear."¹⁰

Each stone, alas, that doth my sorrow rue,⁺
Returns thereto a hollow sound of plaint.
Thus I alone, where all my freedom grew,
In prison pine with bondage and restraint.

And with remembrance of the greater grief
To banish the less, I find my chief relief.

6. I.e., when the dew, like tears, was still on the meadows.
7. I.e., to run it down.
8. Companion. Henry Fitzroy had died the year before, aged seventeen.
Wyatt resteth here, that quick could never rest

Wyatt resteth here, that quick could never rest,
Whose heavenly gifts, increased by disdain
And virtue, sank the deeper in his breast:
Such profit he by envy could obtain.

A head where wisdom mysteries did frame,
Whose hammers beat still in that lively brain
As on a stith, where that some work of fame
Was daily wrought to turn to Britain’s gain.

A visage stern and mild, where both did grow
Vice to contemn, in virtue to rejoice;
Amid great storms whom grace assured so
To live upright and smile at fortune’s choice.

A hand that taught what might be said in rhyme,
That ref Chaucer the glory of his wit—
A mark the which, unperfited for time,
Some may approach, but never none shall hit.

A tongue that served in foreign realms his king;
Whose courteous talk to virtue did inflame
Each noble heart: a worthy guide to bring
Our English youth by travail unto fame.

An eye whose judgment none affect could blind,
Friends to allure and foes to reconcile,
Whose piercing look did represent a mind
With virtue fraught, reposèd, void of guile.

A heart where dread yet never so impressed
To hide the thought that might the truth advance;
In neither fortune loft nor yet repressed
To swell in wealth or yield unto mischance.

A valiant corpse where force and beauty met,
Happy—alas, too happy, but for foes;
Lived and ran the race that Nature set,
Of manhood’s shape, where she the mold did lose.

But to the heavens that simple soul is fled,
Which left, with such as covet Christ to know,
Witness of faith that never shall be dead,
Sent for our health, but not received so.

1. Hostility (equivalent to “envy” in line 4). I.e., he could turn hostility toward him to his advantage.
2. Genius. I.e., Wyatt (supposedly) replaced Chaucer as England’s greatest poet.
3. Body (not, as now, a dead one).
4. A conventional praise—that Nature, in creating someone, made a masterpiece and lost the pattern.
5. I.e., which left with Christians ("such as covet Christ to know") a testimony of faith.
Thus for our guilt, this jewel have we lost;
The earth his bones, the heavens possess his ghost.

O happy dames, that may embrace

O happy dames, that may embrace
The fruit of your delight,
Help to bewail the woeful case
And eke the heavy plight
Of me, that wonted to rejoice
The fortune of my pleasant choice:
Good ladies, help to fill my mourning voice.

In ship, freight with rememberance
Of thoughts and pleasures past.
He sails, that hath in governance
My life, while it will last;
With scalding sighs, for lack of gale,
Futhering his hope, that is his sail,
Toward me, the sweet port of his avail.

Alas, how oft in dreams I see
Those eyes, that were my food,
Which sometime so delighted me,
That yet they do me good;
Wherewith I wake with his return,
Whose absent flame did make me burn:
But when I find the lack, Lord how I mourn!

When other lovers in arms across
Rejoice their chief delight,
Drowned in tears to mourn my loss
I stand the bitter night
In my window, where I may see
Before the winds how the clouds flee.
Lo, what a mariner love hath made me!

And in green waves when the salt flood
Doth rise by rage of wind,
A thousand fancies in that mood
Assail my restless mind.
Alas, now drencheth my sweet foe,
That with the spoil of my heart did go
And left me; but, alas, why did he so?

1. The speaker is a woman. The poem was probably written for Surrey's wife, from whom he was separated while on military duty in France in the 1540s.
2. A conventional expression for a loved one, going back to medieval love poetry.
And when the seas wax calm again,
To chase from me annoy,
My doubtful hope doth cause me plain,
So dread cuts off my joy.

Thus is my wealth mingled with woe,
And of each thought a doubt doth grow:
Now he comes! Will he come? Alas, no, no!

Martial, the things for to attain

Martial, the things for to attain
The happy life be these, I find:
The riches left, not got with pain;
The fruitful ground, the quiet mind;

The equal friend; no grudge nor strife;
No charge of rule, nor governance;
Without disease the healthy life;
The household of continuance;

The mean diet, no delicate fare;
Wisdom joined with simplicity;
The night discharged of all care,
Where wine may bear no sovereignty;

The chaste wife, wise, without debate;
Such sleeps as may beguile the night;
Contented with thine own estate;
Neither wish death nor fear his might.

From The Fourth Book of Virgil

[DIDO IN LOVE]

Unhappy Dido burns, and in her rage
Throughout the town she wand’rith up and down,
Like to the stricken hind with shaft in Crete
Throughout the woods, which chasing with his darts
Aloof, the shepherd smiteth at unawares
And leaves unwist in her the thirling head,
That through the groves and launds glides in her flight;

1. A translation of an epigram (10.47) by the Roman poet Martial (ca. 40–104 C.E.). The theme, a glorification of “the mean estate” (the modest, moderate life), is very common in Elizabethan literature.

2. i.e., like a deer shot with an arrow.
Amid whose side the mortal arrow sticks.
Aeneas now about the walls she leads,
The town prepared and Carthage wealth to show.
Offering to speak, amid her voice, she whistles.
And when the day gan fail, new feasts she makes;
The Troys' travails to hear anew she lists,
Enraged all, and stareth in his face.
That tells the tale. And when they were all gone,
And the dim moon doth eft withhold the light,
And sliding stars provoked unto sleep,
Alone she mourns within her palace void,
And sets her down on her forsaken bed;
And absent him she hears, when he is gone,
And seeth eke. Oft in her lap she holds
Ascanius,3 trapped by his father's form,
So to beguile the love cannot be told.

3. Aeneas's son; Dido is captivated ("trapped") by the boy's likeness to his father.