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INTERSECTION

Poems and Permutations

Susan Gillis

A Thesis in the Department of English

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for the Degree of Master of Arts
at Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Intersection

Poems and Permutations

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Intersection examines the notion of home through a speaker whose gaze shifts between outward and inward aspects, and whose engagement with home is ultimately a quest for self-definition through relation: in the public, external world of community and place, and in the more private contexts of love and belonging. Poems ostensibly located in rooms or adjunct spaces of a house are venues for consideration of relationships through memory, association and observation. Permutations of the sonnets of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey provide context for discussion of social and personal relationships and values; these themes recur as echoes, reconsiderations and replies, in poems examining relationships as they develop across time and space, playing with dislocation, disembodiment and misconstruction in contexts of friendship and intimacy, culminating in poems which inscribe the failure of intimacy to establish a stable home across a wide cultural gap.

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*calm; smoke rises
vertically
direction of wind shown
by smoke but not by
wind vanes
wind felt on face; leaves
rustle; wind vane
moves
leaves and small twigs
in constant motion;
wind extends light flag
wind raises dust and
loose paper; small
branches move
small-leaved trees begin
to sway; crested
wavelets form on
inland waters
large branches move;
overhead wires whistle;
umbrellas difficult to
control
whole trees sway;
walking against wind
is difficult
twigs break off trees;
moving cars veer
slight structural damage
occurs; shingles may
blow away
trees uprooted;
considerable structural
damage occurs
widespread damage
occurs
widespread damage
occurs*

(Beaufort Scale, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate
Dictionary, 10th Edition)

The House

Before I met you I saw you.
In the way drowned Ceyx was shown to Alcyone
by a Juno tired of hearing petitions for his safety
I too was given a dream:

of the home I would shortly enter. My mistake
was not one of action but of interpretation;
a woman I took to be your first wife
appeared in the doorway holding a spatula.
Backlit by the sun, underslept, wearing a pink bathrobe,
she offered to make us breakfast.
I hid my face in the crook of your knee
though I knew it had long been over between you.
How small of me to have thought her pathetic.
You were leonine, leaning back on your elbows
on the stone bed. And there was more...

I fed halvah to your children, and they clattered out to the garden.
The whole house – stuccoed half-wall, slate terrace,
herb-beshrubbed hills – I thought I could find it
by following the dream's luscious air.
Because the dream was beautiful
I thought it was true.
I thought I could say "I know"
this and this...

Alcyone's dream showed her the truth about Ceyx.
The dream was sent to shut her up,
and it did, and she grew wings.

Basement Stairs

Sunday mornings my father would raise the bottom tread
like the lid of a piano, my mother humming

a Mozart sonata upstairs, wetting my brother's cowlick,
my sisters and I in our dresses lined up on the stairs, our father

on his knees with the shoe polish tins. When he buffed my toe
my whole leg shook. I liked the cloth

but I liked the brushes best, that baffling sense
of being not quite touched, as though my shoes were feeling

for me, the echo of feeling.
Then he would grip my toe.

I thought God lived in that stair, and leaked out
whenever my father lifted the tread, I thought

he followed our car to church
and waited, mute and holy, while my father parked,

and hurried with us across the Grand Parade, the bells
ringing *it's-time-now*, their falling arpeggio. After

the service I'd scuff my toes in gravel,
or dry leaves, or grass, without thinking. Come to that,

I'm not sure now
he didn't have a little bench he'd perch on.

Kitchen Floor

These past six days have been equatorial, transplendent.
We eat outside. Tonight it seemed the sun
bugled across the sky, draping Crow Hill
and the Blomidons in satin, rimming the inlets and coves
of Humber Arm with brass and scarlet, gold
at the day's last call and the sly falling in
of the humdrum. Creatures slide away to their night
hide-outs and watchtowers; we come in reluctantly
dragging plates and cutlery and leftover potatoes
to the fridge grinding on, and on the floor a dark
shock where a wind has come in and blown over
the vase of peonies, the wet petals wine-dark
in the gloam before you turn on the light; weather
gathering over the hills where we'd hoped for stars.

Mallow

In the drugstore parking lot a small frog hunkered,
its skin too dark for health. I stopped
mid-step, both of us
frozen there like first cousins to the geckos,
broke-down country yelping from a truck radio,
a kid's face in the window, bored as plaster —

I'd been supposed to run in to buy bottled water.

The frog turned out to belong to a family
of plastic amphibians recently evicted
from their one-room carrying-case
by this idle little landlord in his idling palanquin
for some inscrutable offence.

When I finally returned you were standing by the car a-whirr.
"Thought you were just going in for one thing."
They were busy? I got your lip balm? Couldn't find the — ?

You took the corners a bit too fast.
Nothing looked beautiful yet.
I didn't mention the frog.

Little by little we talked it up, nice woods,
hills to climb, the coves of Humber Arm,
til you reached across the gear shift the other side of Curling
and twined my fingers briefly. The cloud dissolved
and all at once we noticed

mallows in the ditch, *look*, we said,
their pale cups open
like satellite dishes on radio tower stems, catching
signals and signalling.

Backyard Light

We're in the backyard again. This time
we have brought out the gas lantern and lit candles
around our talk. Scott tells of the field behind

a house he stayed in in France, the day he was walking
and missed a step, stumbled over what turned out to be
a Stone Age axe head. For a moment a candle flickered

and dark gathered around the back of my hand
as I cupped the flame. Someone returned from inside,
letting the screen door wheeze. The breeze went down,

and with it the dark, winging the yards, and stars appeared
as small fires across a plain, then flipped
back into place as stars. Our talk

turned to family and how we fly – and how a kid
can't – and somebody's heard – d'you think there'll be –
or will it turn – If hell is repetition....

When we finally fell silent the bats radared out
exactly as if they'd been waiting. Across the yards,
faint sounds of people arguing,

making supper, making love, music,
children playing, and animals.
Did you keep it, I asked him

and he opened the gas, just a notch,
and said yes,
of course.

The Marriage Bed

I won't say I didn't watch her leave.
Boots all the way to her knees.
Hair to her waist.
Striding between the tables
and the dim sum carts.
In her dark lips and
insouciance she looked
like your best friend's daughter.
That is, not yours but anyone's.
After she left the washroom, I went in.
Your best friend's daughter,
and here I do mean yours,
has a gravelly voice, albeit musical,
the voice of a much older woman
that erupts from her as though
the woman of the future
exists inside her, impatient
for knowledge and form.
That girl was like that.

Later at home I thought of the mark
on the tissue on top of the pile in the bin,
black almost, under the halogen light.
How light deepens the darkness of dark.
The twinning rode with me all night.

Study Window

The scent of lawngrass is filtering through the screen.
Noon is drawing up with its urge toward lunch.
I would like to dip my hands into a well of wet clay
and pull up as it spins, fashion a lithe goblet
and drink your health, and why not
while I'm at it conjure you too, our two mouths
chasing the rim on opposite sides, remembering.
Now the mower has stopped. I hear it cough
and think of the papers pinned to your walls
fluttering on the draught as your lover came in,
and you leaning past me to pour for him. Old friend,
when I left that day I did not know I was leaving.

Midnight Shift, Snow Removal

The moon is high and white and I am full
of complaint. Machines are pushing snow
off the roadway and into the gutter
in the flare of nightworks and the moon's hard
glitter. Gasoline fumes
on the minus-20 chill curl my tongue. This
is a relief, for my tongue is swollen
from having spoken my secret longings—
an hour ago I would have said 'my secret pain',
but it isn't; pain is this moonlight, sharp
as God hearing evasions.
Inside the cabs, men pull levers
and press on pedals, but I can't see them.
What do they make of the moon's light?
What do they make of a red-faced middle-aged woman
standing beside the road, her gaze
more reverent when it fixes on
the next truck in the line
than on the shining snow?
The long arms shovel the snow
as if were weightless, nestle it
onto the truckbeds, sending it
down to the river and in.

The Porch

A small breeze shakes the tips of the cedars.
They sway so lightly they skip across sight
to ruffle a place deeper than seeing.
Everything else is very still, day
follows night follows day without moving.
How long now have you and I been apart?
To count with these units seems fruitless.
Sitting with my father on the porch in the dark
watching moths fly up against the screen I said,
Let me put it this way, don't give him any heirlooms,
and the shadow scudded over his face
and out beyond the trees.

Inscrutable

the post box in autumn, attendant
on the corner looking north
or east or south or
but always
away, its smart red peaked cap
salute to hosts and hostesses of the air –
and now the drum roll –
the envelope slips
across the palate of steel
down the dark gorge, it's
dusk

the hour that swallows
our most secret longings –
tax remittances and cheerless
bills thrown in alongside
for cover. On the walk home
the windows of the houses
lit from inside ask you to see
shapes shifting behind them.
And if you are thrice blessed
past the third hedge from the corner
a soft missive arrives and purrs around your ankles.

Promethean Door in West London

In some parts of the world, doors are painted boldly. This occurs, for example, in the City of London and Westminster, along elegant grey crescent roads.

Where the houses side by side are elegant as bones.

Perhaps you have seen the ashwood door with the small square window centred horizontally two thirds of the way up, framed with one-eighth-inch strips of ashwood and set behind with a pale panel of doorskin instead of glass, a blue wooden egg balanced in the lower right quadrant?

On a clear day you can see René Magritte standing in front of this door, his back to the road.

His left index finger presses on the bell.

The bell has not been functional for some years now, ever since the butler married the maid and moved to a three-room apartment on the outskirts of the city near the smelters.

Magritte's nose – René's nose – is pressed up close to the egg.

Or so we can imagine, from our vantage point somewhere well back from the door.

But perhaps not so far as the camellia that separates the garden from the road.

Which makes, as this is a Nashian terrace house, for quite a small distance really.

Front gardens here being no larger than handkerchiefs.

The camellia is studded with red blossoms that anticipate their fall even before they have fully bloomed, no sooner open than they brown at the edges and begin their shrivelling.

The door, excuse me, I said ashwood where actually it is painted ashwood. A trick of the brush, strokes become woodgrain, tra-la.

The neighbouring doors are painted oxblood, vermilion, azure, tangerine, aubergine....

They do not have eggs where windows should be.

Then, nor does René Magritte stand before them, perpetually ringing the silent bell.

Nor does a taxi lurch up and spill René Magritte into the pocket garden.

Some of the neighbours are a little annoyed that crowds have begun to gather before the (painted) ashwood door.

One young woman watching the door developed stigmata: a bleeding ear, a pricked band around her forehead, ruptures in her palms. Burning ribs.

It was proposed that the egg be destroyed.

The residents began to protest in whispers among themselves.

A dark wing settled over the spectators' heads, the owl.

Of neighbourly wisdom.

Steam swam around the (ashwood) door, caressing the ankles of René Magritte.

Who stood very still.

You had to admire how still he stood, nose pressed up to that blind little window.

The stigmata healed, but a small, faintly blue, bump remained at each site.

Others in the audience noticed curious marks on their wrists, hands, chests.

The neighbourly wisdom pressed from above like a fleet of helicopters.

Journalists began to arrive.

Someone asked what was behind the door.

No one remembered.

All anyone knew was that René Magritte was before the door and if anything was behind anything else, it was the door.

The gardens are full of lilies and the heavy perfume of lilies.

"The Hanging Gardens of Babylon Recreated in a Corner of West London" exclaims the brochure.

A group of Japanese tourists surveys the garden. Tea and cakes are served in the shade. Pictures are taken.

Have you noticed how closely each one holds her camera? Notice how she presses the shutter with grave consideration, then laughing flutters open her face like a handkerchief.

People are wiping their foreheads as they pass.

The owl retreats into the green heart of a horse-chestnut tree.

Summer Holiday

I'd heard chanterelles could be found
near the creekbed on the opposite shore
after a rain so when the air cleared
and the lake was calm we paddled out,

me in the stern for a change, steering.
We crossed under a high circling osprey,
slid up to the bank through reeds
and lily pads; Marilyn stepped out,

hailed the canoe onto sand
bruising the wild mint that spread
in all directions, fur-leaved, stems
nearly purple with vigour. On the lake

the sun had been warm; here
redwood and Douglas fir rose a cool
fifty feet before branching. We started in
through the shade, picking our way

between mud-bound roots toward
the sound of the creek, the ground
sucking at our weight. Marilyn
walked ahead, til the mud

took my foot. Swallowed
my leg up to the knee, pitching me forward,
hands scrabbling at roots,
and I shouted, and Marilyn turned,

but the shout continued on past both Marilyn
and the creek, visible now through the trees,
to a pile of white bones, big ones,
a large animal picked clean,

their light clarifying the murk the way
creekwater sharpens the sound of mud,
the way osprey dive after rain.
Pulling out was a rehearsal for death—

Marilyn offered her arms,
I held on, we
pulled. We did,

though she may have forgotten that now.
As I have forgotten
whose arm, mine or hers, sank back
to retrieve my sandal, my

physical memory – strength
of a superhero wresting the hapless
from certain doom – may be invention.
We washed in the creek,

then we examined the bones. We took
three back: a single vertebra
and two longish paddles
with spatulate ends. We held them up

to our necks and ears as though
getting decked out for a trip to town
and someone took a picture.
Marilyn kept two; the third

stayed on the porch and became
the spine of a wasp's nest.
We did find the chanterelles,
picked some for supper, cooked them

with garlic and mint. I would like sometime
to have another look at those bones.
When I gave her the picture the winter I left,
Marilyn held it by a corner and said "Oh"

and gave a short laugh.
There's nothing mysterious after all;
mud fills a space between roots,
a cow wanders out from the farm over the hill.

coda

Thou art not, Marilyn, built to envious show –
though I, for one, have envied, and I know
of others who, stirred by thee, do find
their greenest hearts aglow: the fault,
if fault there be, be ours, not thine.

Intersection

Leaves were falling, and rain
in strings, nearly straight
down, gravity
doing its jig again, like the
irrepressible men in
the old fishers' home, mated
to the wheeling earth.
Dips in the street collected the rain.
The wet leaves fell
onto the street, wet,
onto the resonant lakes.
The leaves were slow
as duck feathers. I can say
"slow as duck feathers"
whether I've seen
duck feathers falling
or not, because
we are in a blind. Watch now:
a man is about to walk by with a creel
and a woman will cross holding a black umbrella.
They are not related and will not meet,
except in the rain and the leaves.

Quick grow the Hedge and loud the Bee

Happy sun, breathing down on the plastic philodendrons.
On the polyester roses. On the flamingoes and model owls

nailed to the trees, on rubber-faced Richard Nixon,
sombroeroed and Elvis-jacketed, posed with a ukulele.

On several plaster Bambis, on Snow White gamboling
with the four remaining dwarves among

the red and white spotted toadstools and the tires,
the spinning ducks, their useless wings outspread;

on Raggedy Ann in Farmer John's straw lap, she's
definitely not his daughter; it's

spring, and the Transfer Engineers at the Hartland Dump
are tending their garden next to the tip, dibbing the odd

still-breathing rubber plant and wounded fern
into their first-aid mixed border, perennial, mock-

mock-heroic – I am driving
over the barrens that stretch past to the north and east.

In the distance a blue flame burns on a high pole.
Somewhere out here is the chipper.

I have flung my winter coat to the ground,
cleared the yard and pruned trees, dragged ramage here

for industrial-scale composting, a transformation
too big to manage at home, and when I climb

back into the truck and shut the door it is true I drive away lighter,
yet I am as heavy with longing as the jasmine is with nectar.

The Sufficiency of Love

For you, I stood on a Cretan hillside in the afternoon heat
 chatting idly with the others while the bus was repaired;
For you, I walked gladly across the frozen rivers of Manitoba;
For you, failed compliantly to comprehend the ancient ways of life in modern
 Asia;
I crossed boundaries I did not know were boundaries;

I watched the sun cross from this to that edge of the Mediterranean
 on the longest day,
And from this to that end of the northern plain on the shortest,
And saw how its course fails to describe the course of a human life,
 which is not a trajectory;
I have changed my place in the world more than once for you,

Living now monkish, now high, now in torment –
In the steep ravines of Agia Galini, on the low fluvial plain,
Winding coastward down the hills of Argolis under the stars,
Even there I was bound; even free. Wherever, however I go,

The one constant is my love for you, which is refused. Therefore I say
 life teaches me not
To love you not, but through you to love.

Love as impending Disaster

Contrary to allegation, love
does not strike from a distance
on diamond arrows, heavens'
multitudes resounding. No, it is
built in: the chambered heart
is a small apartment complex.
It was obvious
when the elevator doors opened
and you stepped out
you were meant to be
my next husband. I'm sure
it registered on my face,
spangling hot and trembling,
though you didn't see it
quite that way, holding up
your briefcase like a shield –
I could have used
a few arrows then.
I paced – below your windows,
as often as possible – for many weeks,
though I knew this was unseemly.
The neighbours began to wonder
and re-sensitize their alarm systems;
the more experienced among them
started packing up.
I could say I saw reason,
slunk home – but even there
was no peace, that building
is condemned. What can I do
but stand in the lobby
til the final hour?

Love as Stone

That silver thread in the dark cleft in the hill?
Falling water, like a weighted line.
Crashes down the rock face into the stream.
Up ahead we'll cross it and I'll show you
something of my heart.
At the top, before it falls, the water pools
in a kind of stone bowl
worn by its own swirling constancy,
a pool so tranquil you would hardly believe
it's the same water. After the climb
I rested there, chin deep in its chill,
looking out over the caribou meadows
above the cloud line, the miniscule road
half a mile below, and the stream
like a toy trickling into the sea...
I became aware of a steady pounding
heard as though from great distance:
the cascade below, and my blood.
I felt a warmth kindle in me then;
I couldn't help but breathe into it.
It's as well I remembered the lull at the edge
becomes a punishing force on its descent –
though it was years before I recognised
the shimmering, etched behind the falls.

The Condition of Love

If love stand behind falling water.

If love were lodged in rock at the world's birth, quivering.

If my hands shook as I neared you in the café, sloshing my hot desire.

If to see, to be seen, my first mistake.

The conjugation was not simple.

If to speak, spoken.

What I knew, in my heart.

If silence be a useful lie.

If a useful lie be a knife in the heart.

The heart, divided.

If I live in one chamber, you in another.

If a recess in rock be a chamber.

Love shows itself at Night, taunting

After dusk's rideout, small birds
turn in, the doe grazing on alder at the shore
turns back to the forest, night begins
its bristling. I come out to the porch
as the earth tilts northward, revealing
you up there, gossiping with Cassiopeia.
I pace under the stars, shaking my fist
and shouting to high heaven, while you tip back
the flask of celestial liquor, not spilling
a drop, not even a drop, onto my lips
though you know I thirst – And I seek this.

Love's Caution

"Cheek like the tulip, form like the cypress,"
I'll admit you have been fitted out to attract
susurrations of longing offered up
in crowded rooms with hopeful smiles,
and there is no shortage of hopeful smiles;
and certain it is that among your gifts
is the resilience of evergreens in snow –
do not bend too far under its insulating weight
from one who asks nothing more than this.

Love as pure Desire

His skills:

1. whets the knife whipping the blade toward his belt
2. while watching something else
3. usually the people coming and going on the other side of the counter
4. who are coming and going to and from their tables in his restaurant
5. where they hover hushed and reverent over his food

His person:

quick thin and sharp his long torso
dark his eyes which look long at the produce
wide-tipped his fingers which press at cuts of meat
ready his mouth lips poised to taste
in general, all appetite

he feeds from one spring, looking,
looking.

It chanced one day while he was weighing
a small yellow tomato in his hand, his look
landed on me, rippled through and opened my mouth.
"Taste this," he whispered, and eased it in.
My husband one step behind me.
One yellow tomato.
That was all.
But I can say to you, happy is she
who may dine nightly at his table.

Love as an unclear Set of Responsibilities

This building appeared to me from the road. Dark green, it was nearly indistinguishable from the firs. I parked

though I was in no motor car

and walked toward it down a thin path bony with roots

between which I stepped by angling, louvering my arms for balance. I reached the foundation

and found a wall that rose without windows two stories to a pitched shingle roof. Halfway up was a door but no steps.

I walked to the left and then to the right; branchtips were brushing the walls.

Then I walked around.

Here the forest gave way to a field, charred along the sides, of sweet-clover in flower pale and swaying, the earth's epaulettes, rolling down the incline out of sight

and I remembered then that this was the house I lived in. I recognised the screened porch,

the snapping door with its metal catch and spring, the hinge that shrieked when it opened and closed,

and the people inside, who were waiting for me to start the barbecue. They called out eagerly from their webbed folding chairs when they saw me through the screen.

I went to the hearth at the far corner of the concrete patio and laid kindling and charcoal from the bucket, crumpled paper and pushed it underneath.

My friends and family oohed and ahed at what I had built.

I could tell they were hungry, and recalled that the food was in my car.

The evening air was warm, and a cool current flowed through it. The sweet-clover beckoned in the slanting light.

I struck a match and held it under my little pyre until it caught, three times, and walked back around the building and out through the trees.

Love as noble Sufferance

The frost bit-bright, streets
dry as hell's horses' breath, buses
lancing the throughway carrying

everyone, the city
not fit for walking, absurd
trees stopped mid-bud. Inside

my dust-thickened hothouse one-room
I fidget. So what
if every phone call is a telemarketer,

I've long since quit anticipating
the cheer of your voice. Whatever I did
that is so unspeakable

at least the hot and cold of it ran together.
Love brooks all, even
rancour; the quick current

rubbing against ice breaks it up. From this
double lock-up of silence and weather
no word will spring me, nor will spring.

Ideal Love

It's easier to love once a person is dead.
Many people prefer the dead to the living in general.
I know of people who love only the never-living;
snowmen, for example;
but these are the exception.
For myself, there are relatives
I have only lately come to being able to love.
Death is such a liberating thing.
Think of the famous dead you revere,
could you love them so if they were alive?
Admit it, are you not yourself more alive,
do you not love your life the more,
because you can love them wholly, freely?
Why then, living, do you long to be so loved?

Love poses a Question

Once there were answers: things corresponded,
the planets in motion struck
heavenly chords, all was
as it should be. If the humours
got out of sorts, the gods laughed
and fetched healing elements
from the four corners; if Pan, sprung,
made pandemonium, still
it was answered. The world
is noisier now, and depleted
of explanations. Who can say
how we are nourished
by land-mines or car-bombs?
What is a bomb? Tell me,
because my heart trembles.
Brothers and sisters, the earth is a question
that swallows sense. Walking with you
in the Alberta hoodoos, laying a hand
on the bark of a lodgepole pine, letting
the long flowering grasses wash clean
the crowded mind; world-as-it-is.
You asked, I listened;
this much was given.
Mornings, the sun rises
and traffic intensifies for a time;
oceans flood, then recede;
modulations without end. The world
with you in it for a time; then
geese at the edge of the plain, deafening.

Love's Dare

Tsvetaeyva wasn't ashamed to write her ugliness
you said. For my part, I lack courage
and though I touched the covers of that book
it did not reveal itself to me
until much later, nearly too late.
On the shelf it was a reproach.
When the time came
I packed up my belongings,
sold a few things, moved away.
Her eyes burn through dark circles
in my mirror. This
your gift to me.

Love poses as Betrayal

The note said he was sorry about the babysitter.
She was young, he was weak, the usual turns.
Actually, as in most of these stories,
the babysitter is a digression.
There is the wrecking yard behind the house,
there the rope; there the woman,
unable since birth to clean herself.
There the knot of their marriage.
Who can say how it came undone?

Love's Bewilderment

Maybe I was rash.
You walked in.

This is the end?
This little puff?

Dürer in the New World: Projection of West Elevation of Di Castri House with Tree

Suppose Dürer had propped behind his perspective window not a woman but a drawing; suppose he had rendered faithfully the image of a beloved house, post for post, gable for gable, tree for tree, and set that behind the grid. Watch now—Dürer sections the page, prepares to draw in the lines. The horizon expands. The house, foreshortened, begins to bulge at its foundation. Dürer steps back. Toward the roof the second story narrows, why, this is not what he meant at all, the upper windows are nothing but slits! Vexed, he erases, widens the angles, opens the vertical axis. Adds a low eave over now-picture windows. Way in the distance, the vanishing point. Inside the house, a woman sits up, shrugs into her robe. The white birch leans off the page.

Declination

Twigs and scraps of yellow leaf in the eaves.
Outside the window stretching away rooftops and windows.
When the temperature reaches a certain degree.
The dun pigeon ruffles its breast as.
I read aloud the blind sheep from *One Fish Two Fish*.
Marching "from there to here, from here to there."
Sam sleeps.

I slide the jacket from my shoulders and fold it over my arm.
When the air reaches a certain temperature where I am.
Now is walking the slope of Ste. Antoine.
The path is a transverse angle that crosses so.
As I move downward the hill to my left rises.
To my right the houses fall away glittering.
Through them far below the silver river vein.

Clouds moving in from the north dun-grey and bulging.
Above the hill scrappy with storm-wreck and leaf-fall.

Sam sleeping. Sheep walking.

Look it up

Mind the gloved hand that turns the pages of Bescherelle's
L'Art du conjuguer on the metro,
the drag of verb a flannel sleeve dragged
across sheets.

Everyone on the metro resembles the usual:
pre-dawn lobelia. At Place St. Henri the responsible man
steps onto the track. Static
translates *attention*,
attention, the garden is
closed, the reverb go back
to bed. Maybe I've misunderstood
something...

Driveway

Walking home, the wind not
around but under my feet, ground
level, the evening spent
thriftlessly chit-
chattering with people
I barely know, the cool blowing
snow after the budding-out
spring day instead
of conversation with you,
love, the street wind-
latticed, hung
with tendrils of wind, the moon
nowhere in the frost-
ventricled night, dark with stars
whose long glimmers frequent
our long-distance telephone
calls, at the entry
to my building the sloped
driveway slick with snow, one
foot then hip shoulder knee skimming
concrete, the wind in sharp
v's like geese veering
over continents below
the racing clouds I used to watch
while I swam on my back,
in a levity that made gravity proud, I

fell, spilling
grocery receipts for
milk and grapes, these
things themselves
already upstairs
cooling in the fridge.

Dürer in the New World: Venetian Outpost

(with text and erasures from Martin Bailey, *Dürer*)

The Italian city of Arco nestles below a hilltop castle near the northern shore of Lake Garda miles west of the main route over the Alps north from Verona over the Brenner Pass to Innsbruck

The Canadian city of Corner Brook nestles in a mountain bowl on the southern shore of Humber Arm spilling out below the main route across the island, which runs east from Port aux Basques across the island of Newfoundland to St. John's

This watercolour done on Dürer's return journey in 1495 at the expense of a certain degree of truth the sandy foreground an olive grove Beyond

the smooth new highway, a river. Across the river, a cliff

The narrow sheer rock could not have been seen where the view was painted. Dürer omitted the mountains

of limestone, bucked and hove up out of the seabed in the cataclysm before

The hidden scowling man in the centre pointed chin prominent. The rocks face

animal time; the image of a man, eyes shaded by a cap, in the centre of the cliff, looking

Although initially

down; just beside the river

difficult to spot once seen

a helpful diagram

Portrait of the Poet as Tree

Just before I stepped into the tree
Marilyn set up the camera. It was a light day
in the rainforest, light, that is, on a grey scale,
meaning everything shone. All the way up the cedars
to the furrowed sky: emerald, and wet black boughs.
Stand over here, Marilyn said, pointing toward the stump.
She made the tripod stable, and I stepped up.
She frowned toward the light meter.
It's not going to work, she said,
but smile, don't move,
and I obeyed,
and she pressed down.

She shot a roll, then packed up and went home.
She knew better than to raise an alarm.
She has shown the photos all over the world.
Me, now, I host ravens through the light and the dark
and owls come home to my hair.

Dürer in the New World: Corner Brook

The "grand Druid" paces beside the stream, scheming
boulders into the foreground where I want rock,
plain river rock, that's all. I draw
boulders. The Druid, no bigger than a vole,
capers backward into the shrubs, arms
whirring. Puts a white froth on the breakers
– breakers? This is a creek! I'd been planning
ripples, not whitecaps, though I would concede
a daub or two of foam. He's churning up the elements,
it's his fault the creek is pitching
like some Hokusai. Look, I just want
a brook, okay? A burbling mill stream?
(I can talk to The Great like this because I will be dead
long before them.) Well, there's no arguing
with a Druid; this creek floods every spring
and I walk down to it on pine needles
wet from the melt, harking to bird calls and
sap blisters, and when I reach the dip in the path
where it curls up to the bridge, I'll admit
I can catch through the trees
a glimpse of what he means.
It's a matter of perspective
and, of course, approach.
After all, he's not a troll;
I could cross the bridge.

Thanks Mme Blavatsky

My left leg and my right arm in the back seat.
What symmetry! We drive along imagining
the cop who might stop you for speeding
or running a red, what he would say when he leaned in
to check us out. Whoa! he'd probably say, and,
Step outta the car mister, and get on his radio,
Gotta weirdo here, he'd buzz into the handset
crackling at the end of its coil. You would step out
calmly, placing your left foot on the pavement,
ease your shoulders toward him, you'd stand
and tell him you're just going to take out your sunglasses,
and he would loom, and you would take out your sunglasses
and lower your hands palms forward.
He would check your papers then and say,
So. How about those items in the back seat,
meaning my left thigh and right breast
which you had been thinking about as you drove,
in the context of our last embrace.
Items, you would reply, I don't know as I know
exactly what you mean Sir, since context
had led you to remember
the other parts of my body, that last time,
bringing it all together.
The cop would lean in then, see the usual mess
of newspapers and dog toys
and a pair of rubber boots.
He might have felt then
the strange sense of being watched
but would put it down to some
essential weird vibe of yours, and accuse you
of having tricked him somehow.
When you call me back to you like this
it's hard to let go of a certain lightness.

The At-Home Spider

Once a spider made regular tracks
to my one-room-with-balcony
just spacious enough
to spread four legs
to the sun in the afternoons
and sinking evenings. He was
a jovial fellow as far as
I could tell, never
complained, though he drank up
all my juice if I was careless
about leaving it around on counters
— well, counter, since there was
just the one. At times
and there was no predicting when
he'd push with all seven of his legs
— he'd lost one in a tussle I'm sorry to say,
I didn't know my own strength —
til his firm tiny body lifted off the floor
or carpet, or cushion,
and cast a black shadow the size of two sous
in the figure of an eight
where I least expected it.
To the Black Death, I'd toast him
with a glass of scotch
when I could afford it.
I suppose it was August, before the rainy season.
There was a brutish mutt in the yard next door
whose nightly barking dragged me out
with the heaviest garbage I could throw.
Who do I miss more
now that I'm without even a carpet?

Typhoon

Plum branches. All of it—cloud,
rain from the mountains, rivers
overrunning their beds. Video cameras
trained on critical intersections. The city,
ensilvered. Merchants close up their shops,
tighten their collars and head home,
stepping quickly through a scatology of rain,
rivulets in the streets crossed and diverging.
The virile youths in cafés grow still, our hearts warm.
Their faces are obelisks through the streaked panes.
All of us, keyed to the gathering flood,
alert to the first of the fallen blossoms.
Someone reaches for a broom, an arm
leaps in the darkness—the old story-teller
beating the trees again.

Song for the Imperfect

When the moon is a few degrees from full he walks to the river
in his purple robe, carrying his flute.
She is already there on the terrace with her guitar.
He stops in the shadows.
The face of the moon in the river is very nearly the face of the moon.
He lifts his flute, she bows her head, a leaf falls onto the path.

Three hundred and fifty nine times the same song
played before the shy moon.
Over the years he has tuned his playing
to the small constellation of moles behind her left ear.
*Never mind, his song begins,
never mind, my cousin, you were too young wed.*

Crane, 1

The robe is purple.
The purple robe covers white
trousers, the trousers are white.

The shoes are black, they are not
shoes but black slippers.

Under the robe is soft skin.
Under the robe: no hair!

O he is so young.
He holds the flute
level with the ground.

She is strumming her guitar.
She is facing her mother's house.
Cloud

falls away from the moon.
Her bench scrapes on the terrace.
He sees neither moon

nor reflection; tonight
they are still so young.

So young, he draws his right foot
out of the slipper,
lifts it to his thigh.

Below the white hems
two black slippers

rest on the ground,
one full, one empty.
Should she turn now, she would see

a confusion of feet! He
is ready for flight.

Accounting

Knees folded beneath her on the mat
she is as compact as her son's new car,
her spine as supple as the willow she cut
for her own mother's baskets
the spring she turned fifteen.
Then the whole village knew her name
and her beauty was a white bird that travelled
five valleys ahead of her.
So the poets said. Her mother
spoke of her recalcitrance
and her aunts despaired
as though her traits were nestlings
reluctant for flight. Today
she has crossed Guangdong Province;
tomorrow she will bow before the magistrate
to give her account of her son.
That is something: this son a business man,
her spine limber as a girl's.

Crane, 2

A single feather
on slate beside the river.
The sky, soaked with stars.

She taps her stick on the bank.
A young crane has lately passed.

One Gingko

I sat down with you beside the river.
In those days we fancied
– but who could imagine what would come?
I sat down with you.
We would walk to the river, you in the lead
holding my hand past the azaleas and across the lawn,
down stone tile to the terrace.
There were always two chairs.
You pulled yours down the step and set it close
to the shrubs at the bank

and I would tuck in my feet and strum my guitar.
You played your flute—I mean to say you breathed into it
but I think you preferred to watch my bowed head, the moonlight
blueing my hair. You played as though wafting your notes
through it. Why do I think this?
I am drinking a cup of green tea.
I find it revives me in the middle of a hectic day.
I want to tell you about the view across rooftops from my high window.
Though it is not spectacular, there is a tree.

Cat Speaks, Midnight

Old bowl, you are hard to wash.
Yesterday's porridge encrusts your dark glaze.
Stars prick my tongue, and my paw does not reach
deeper than the Milky Way.

Whistle

The frothing surface of coffee heat-lifted you watch for,
rise to, as to occasion; the mallow leaf as it falls

onto a wooden plate in Fez, air-pillowed, the suras
half-unearthed I hear you sometimes singing

while I brush my hair, the hair I brush
falling back, the train at the harbour, its whistle's

slow pass through fade to away,
a woodthrush, a window, coincident;

the cup you put down beside me, the ordinariness
of putting a cup down beside me before you leave

9 Beaufort

The neighbour's artichokes beat against
the next neighbour's bamboo. I have battened down:
tethered bougainvillea, fastened shutters

but the island finds its way in regardless,
its fine sand, its donkey-brays, dogs and cats, roosters
crying the alarm through cracks around windows

and slats in the door. There will be no more walking
up and down lanes greeting strangers, no more
sobbing lying half-wrecked in the tub, the stumbling

sigh as water settles around me
the way cloud received the plane on its ascent
frail cousin of a sound you used to draw from me
– I hardly remember –

It slides away, the earth;
its plowed forests, orchards, gardens, lanes,
quarries, rock, sand, highrises, caves,
fault lines, iron, molten rock, veins;
rivers, arms, bays, gulfs, weather –

The Shell

I've heard tell of a creature
thin as a dragonfly wing
said to enter our bodies while we sleep
though through which orifice or pore
none can say, only
"like a violin motif" "my mother's perfume"
and it's only after, on a long car trip
or spreading the picnic blanket out on sand
we fall with a start

into the garden. A kind of grace
perhaps we'd only read about, like that
after great pain or the first startled breath,
spirals through us then, swift,
yet having once entered, leaves
lodged there a faint beating.

Oh edge of my ear,
what could I have meant, *only*?

Muezzin

After the wedding
musicians packing up
dawn clouds gather

around minarets
the moment of their bursting

This too is widely known

Khalid's wife wears the hejab "not for him, for Allah!"
She is a scholar of the Koran and a feminist.
You say I look "cute" in a headscarf. Well, I wear it
to keep the wind from blowing hair into my teeth
while I chew. I'm tired
of listening to your fantasies. Yet your voice
spools out on the silky afternoons—
There was nothing wrong in that suburban backyard.
Not with the meal, not with the guests, not with the view.
Rosemary twigs smouldering under the lamb.
A good party, despite sadnesses. A kind family.
Amal poured glasses of apricot juice. Did I tell you,
in the village a woman gave me a bag of apricots,
shook my hand, looked into my eyes.
No one asks me in the mosque, Why
do your eyes fill with tears, why do you suffer?
They know my answer is insufficient.
You say the world is quick to condemn; even so
I say *to embrace* is equally *to risk*.

This is not a loss exactly

I buried the cat in the hill I look at every morning over coffee.
Dug the hole, laid it in, tamped the clod over.

It used to purr when you played your tapes of Oum Kalthoum,
Empress, Nightingale, Star of the Nile. You sang along

swirling the offbeats and drones I never could
wrap my tongue around. I spoke like the cat

you said. I couldn't look as I buried it
but now most days I can look at the hill

without thinking of it, and this is not a loss exactly.

But something spins when I look away;
at the edge of hearing, a voice warms up.

I had never tasted such light and fleeting breath

Despola: the name I later learned in Crete
for the smooth-skinned fruit shaped and colored like an apricot

but so other the Turks call it *yeni dunya*, new worlds,
the words hanging in the afternoon air filaments

of the old chase after spices and immortality,
Columbus, Vespucci, the others, venturing out, returning

such riches some are, even yet, not fully known. Such as
this fruit: cool, a dozen in a plastic bag held out to me

by a woman smiling in a restaurant, if you could call it that,
a few picnic tables and a brick fireplace on the beach,

and a board where the bread is rolled out. She and some friends
were having lunch, as I was. They saw me alone,

as I was, despite company. Strange fruit, new worlds: when I bit
the essence passed over my tongue and evanesced.

()

The true story of a piece of fruit:
four pairs of seeds divided by membrane at its core.

It rolls to one side on the table as you name it.
Its bare scent does not linger, even at the peak of ripeness.

It turns up when you least expect it.
Its greeting slips from your tongue before you've understood it.

It disrobes in a market in Montreal on a flat beside
the best dates in the world just in on a freighter from Brazil.

The Best Dates in the World, the vendor calls.
Not those, you say. Beside them. He frowns.

Malta plums? You wouldn't like them. Here, a date,
my gift to you.... His hand too close to your mouth.

The moment of my arrival all my belongings were lost

Of all towns, that I should lose everything in this
minor hub en route to the coast, place

to set out from, not to settle, Seljuk.
Night approaching, the cold stars suspended.
Rumours of chill northern air coming down.
Histories you wrote for me while I slept –
raiders moving west through the hills above Balkh, your hand
labouring over the jewelled cursive.
Over your hometown the sky phosphoresced.
You knew it was time to leave.
In the dream you woke me, we embarked.
Restless wanderer, if at morning the sea...
You shook open your mat and sang the prayers,
then you vanished from my life.

To sit for hours declining tea in the police station, then finally
accepting. The wheels beginning to roll.

The sea has drawn inward

After you left I went looking
as a tourist would, entering your culture
through its city-gates, skirting the popular
destinations, making my way
to the village. I was thirsting
to know what you knew, to say aloud
My love hurts me
to someone of yours,
to claw out of the hillsides
a place to withdraw to. To leave
only those words, *love* and *hurt*.

I found shoes in rows outside the Seljuk mosque.
I found dogs, and marble toys in the marketplace.
I found women being driven as carpet slaves,
their quick hands attractions sold to tourists: all day
the man's refrain, Sit, weave with her! I take picture!
To me he whispered You do not need hejab
to make carpet.

You spoke of fishers;
I saw bank machines in their place. Suleyman,
eyes leaned out from dark backrooms in pharmacies,
whose? That American man, could I trust
his warning?

I moved on to the coast to rest.
For weeks, only the sun, the silver hills, heaps of net.
Pleasure-seekers in the harbour, their teak deck chairs,
their young cook-companions. The air

told of preparations: jets rehearsing manoeuvres,
ships nudging the islands, what we make
with what we are given. I went for a walk one day
and had to sit down, digging a place among roots.
The heat had taken away my sense; I saw swimming
butterflies, and swarming men through cloud,
the sea in violet clusters, gilded and humming,
flood. All this in an instant

and then it passed. Believe me, I was grateful then
for water, and have not ceased to be.

One thing I should have kept

That small book of Marina's poems
with the pale green cover, her combustible eyes

peering as though from a hospital ward;
it vibrated on my bookshelf

in a way that humiliated me;
I should have closed it up

in a tin or a shoebox, wrapped it in old silk
until I understood why

you insisted I need it;
why should I be thinking of this now

only Henry Surrey's evasions have made me
ready to admit, I have made some mistakes –

I keep a copy of the I Ching in a velvet sleeve
and I do not desire any man, woman or thing

beyond this: a bright window with a long view.
Tell me it isn't impossible.

Notes to the poems

p. 16 The coda is a variation on lines from Ben Jonson.

p. 18 The fifteen poems on love that follow here are radical translations or permutations of the fifteen sonnets written by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey in the early- to mid-1500s. My source for the Surrey texts was Emrys Jones's *Henry Howard Earl of Surrey: Poems*, and when it was important to turn to Surrey's sources in Petrarch, I referred to Robert M. Durling's brilliant and moving translations of the *Rime Sparse* in *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*.

When set the exercise of translating an early modern English poem into present-day English, I sought a meaningful context in which to recast the events, situations, and conditions presented in a sonnet by the Earl of Surrey.

If the connotations of a word or phrase can be imagined as filaments extending outward in various directions, then embedded in their multiple intersections are fruitful nuances. For this reason, among others, translation is never completely reliable. My aim has not been to reproduce Surrey's language or form, but instead to extract the issues compressed in the matrix of each sonnet and find corresponding grounds on which to present them. I began by developing an interpretation of the sonnet through research and paraphrase; I then transposed my interpretation into a context that would make the concerns of Surrey's poem recognizable and relevant to a present-day reader, searching out the common ground, or intersection, between Surrey's world, as presented in the sonnet, and mine.

In the Preface to his translation of the *Rime Sparse*, Durling lays out his grounds for setting the sonnets as prose: "For the translator the question is not whether Petrarch's play with form is meaningful or trivial but whether there is any point in trying to reproduce it in sonnet or canzone or ballata form. What is the point of a mere approximation? The gyrations of one's sonnet would have to be different from Petrarch's gyrations, and they would have the added factitiousness of having only—or primarily—an external justification, not whatever inner justification the ingenuities of the original may have." (ix)

Durling's notion of external versus inner justification refers precisely to that quality I was interested in rendering. The sonnet builds a linguistic world in which a narrative plays out or an argument develops; the translator's task is, in part, to create an equivalent world in which to place the concerns of the original. This means, at least when translating across time within a language, that fidelity to formal structures has value only as far as these conventions serve the complexity of invention within the sonnet. Denotative, connotative and phonemic values also have to be considered in terms of what Durling calls gyration: the motion of the sonnet's ideas. In "From Tuscan cam," for example, a

sonnet praising the beauty and honour of a young woman the speaker claims to love, the poet quickly and easily gives space to other suitors, backing the speaker away from any claim on the beloved almost as soon as the initial declaration is made—bowing out, as it were, immediately after bowing. This sonnet makes a compliment, not a serious claim of love: through ease of movement, in narrative and form—the lines are smooth, the syntax straightforward—Surrey reveals the compliment to be light and easy, a social gesture. The primary material for translation, in this example, is that gesture. As translator, I find subtext of this kind to be the most compelling aspect of the poem—and, as I understand Durling's categories, the "inner" material that wants translating.

Many thanks to Eve Sanders for the initiating this project and raising useful and provocative questions.

p. 18 "Quick grow the Hedge and loud the Bee" recasts "The soote season," a variation on Petrarch's "Zefiro torno;" Jones suggests that Surrey's use of medieval devices and phrases in this poem is playfully intended.

In "The soote season," Surrey catalogues rejuvenated things: the whole of the poem is animated, including sorrow, which itself sports new shoots. He twice refers to this rejuvenation as its inverse, once as "decay of care," resulting in peace, and once as wear or exhaustion: "winter is worn." These are organic processes; the world's physical stresses fade in the cycle of decay and regeneration. There is a harmony in Petrarch's material world of which the Petrarchan speaker is a part, but in Surrey's catalogue, the speaker stands by, entirely separate, commenting on its cycle. The Surrey sonnet's claim is that sorrow does not fade, that time does not in fact heal, and that this difference reveals a profound separation between man and nature.

The animated world of the mixed-materials garden at the dump is largely artificial, human-made, as are all gardens, whereas the world Surrey observes seems to be natural. But the English pastoral landscape is very much a human construct; the plastic garden is less an inversion of the natural/artificial binary than a foregrounding of this subtext. Surrey's landscape is fanciful, unnaturally mixing together birds and beasts of various symbolic significance and taking them through a range of suggested events: nightingale, turtledove, adder, and bee offer themselves as beauty, love, temptation, and production/reproduction in a straightforward reading. The new poem removes the speaker from the sidelines and, co-incidentally changing gender, gives her activities in the garden which are somewhat restorative, though not finally healing.

p. 19 "The Sufficiency of Love" takes as its source "Set me wheras the sonne dothe perche the grene," Surrey's translation of Petrarch's "Pommi ove 'l sole" which is in turn, notes Jones, sourced in Horace. Jones asserts a departure from Petrarch on line 4 and refers to this as a disruption in the development; I disagree with Jones on this point, reading "prowde" as a characteristic opposite in kind to

"sad and wyse," the rather prettily described humility, that follows, maintaining correct balance in both the line and quatrain. In line 8, however, Surrey does abandon the paired opposite in favour of double description ("In loste yowthe, or when my heares be grey"). This has the worthwhile effect of uniting the formally opposed youth and age at a single point in time, expanding the sonnet's range of reference from place alone to include time. Time is acknowledged in line 6's night and day, another example of double description (the "long night" is the "shortest day" at winter solstice); the consolidation earns the speaker the claim of constancy as solace in the face of hopelessness in the couplet. Constancy, and singlemindedness—for it is on the "only" modifying "thought" that attention falls, echoed by "hope" in the corresponding position on the line below, in the couplet.

As much as the sonnet is an assertion of hope in the face of apparent hopelessness, in its focus on extremes it has something of the character of a boast or dare. This double edge is what I have come to think of as typical of Surrey's sonnet speakers. For the translation, I sought a context in which my speaker could reasonably declare loyalty to the point of what I would call obsession and that would include the sense of futility; I also wanted to make that futility explicit in line 4, the line of (Jones's) contention, as a willingness to fail. To facilitate that aim, my choice here was to maintain the fourteen line form and pattern of oppositions, substituting such free-verse conventions as repetition and cadence for sonnet conventions of regular measure and end rhyme.

p. 20 "Love as impending Disaster" is a permutation of "Love that doth raine and live within my thought," itself a translation of Petrarch's "Amor, che nel penser mio vive e regna," also translated by Wyatt as "The longe love, that in my thought doeth harbar." With the conceit of allegiance on the part of the speaker to personified love as liege lord, Surrey sets up dual loyalties with conflicting allegiances in a layered sequence that enables the speaker to distance himself from the felt emotion. Military allegiances obviously still exist, but the various senses of that kind of service (value, propriety, boundaries, expression) have shifted considerably; what interested me as I explored possibilities for translation was the slippery way the speaker manages, through the conceit of allegiance, to evade responsibility for action. The burden of action is shifted from the speaker himself to an inner state, ruled by the Other, of chaotic, unreasonable possession/passion; the speaker is then able to claim to be in conflict while actually avoiding it. In bringing this evasion to the foreground, I chose to set the entire drama within the psyche of the speaker. I also chose to retain the unifying device of the conceit, though here the particular conceit is domestic rather than military, as a conventional correspondence between the poem and its source.

p. 21 "Love as Stone" translates "In Cypres springes." Jones cites the passage from Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, beginning "E questo hanno causato due fontane"

as Surrey's probable source. If that is so, it is interesting to note that, inasmuch as the act of choosing to translate a passage constitutes interest in or identification with key figures in that passage, Surrey chose Rinaldo, described in the *Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (in reference to Ariosto's probable source in Boiardo—the permutations are without end) as an "attractively headstrong youth" (238) and antagonist of Charlemagne.

The two fountains of the Surrey text become two results of the effect of water on stone in the new poem—a smooth, comforting bowl worn by gentle waves, and deeply etched grooves formed by crashing falls.

p. 22 "The Condition of Love," a companion to "Love as Stone," is sourced in "I never saw youe, madam, laye aparte" which is remarkable for its use of middle voice, neither active nor passive, in its declaration of its subject. The code of love at the outset of the poem is silence; once silence is broken and love declared, it becomes impossible for both lover and beloved to entertain its existence. But it is not declared directly, nor is a third party implicated in the revelation: instead, we have the indeterminate indirection of the middle voice in "since ye knew of;" again the Surrey speaker evades having to claim responsibility for pain, whether the initial pain of silence or the later rejection. Tresses are clad, looks are hid; it is difficult to ascertain whether this is the true passive voice, the hidden actor being the beloved, or that more middle ground described by the verb /to be/ indicating that a condition is extant. A lot of intrigue is enacted in this ambiguous construction. The speaker may have revealed his love publicly (for it is clear that it had been tolerated, even enjoyed, by its object so long as it remained secret) by accident or miscalculation, or error in judgement, but the poet is in full control of this speaker, and in full control of his own disclosure about the nature of intrigue. By the time we arrive at line 11, "all that withdrawne," we are prepared to read both complaint and accusation, since identification of the actor is uncertain. The double bind of this sonnet is a convenient means for Surrey to comment on oppression and repression of expression: it is the veil, not the woman, Surrey invests with the power to oppress. The loss of apparent innocence is being mourned by the woman who dons the black veil for possibly pragmatic reasons, but the poem is not about her, nor about that loss. It is about the value of the lie.

p. 23 "Love shows itself at Night, taunting." The source for this poem, "Alas, so all thinges nowe doe holde their peace," is an adaptation of Petrarch's "Or che 'l ciel e la terra." The Surrey poem describes a hypothetical moment in nature rather than a real one, lending a slight untrustworthiness to the speaker's claim of identification with that moment on line 6. The unnatural stillness of nature suggests the pre-lapsarian world, which the poem contrasts with the clearly post-lapsarian world occupied by the speaker, in which desire begets transitory pleasures that underscore the longing and grief for the loss of paradisaical love,

perpetuating desire. The sonnet's elegiac nuances yield several readings: the poem treats pre- and post-lapsarian conditions as it imagines unattainable love in a perpetual present. Stillness of the kind described in the first five lines is a dwindling of breath nearly to cessation; whatever 'death' is taking place is a monumentally important loss: not only does the inability to engage with the beloved (person or Paradise) occasion suffering, but it is also not possible for the speaker to find consolation in images of the beloved. The poem rides the first line's "now" as a wave rides the water of the sea. All the verbs are in the simple present tense (the participle "bringing" [l.7] functions as an adjective introducing an adjectival clause), reflecting the condition's constancy.

For the translation, I chose to make use of tropes of separation from nature, spiritual abandonment, urban isolation and an ironic stance toward desire, and to set a restless speaker against a suspended moment, the kind of moment in which any human intervention seems almost violent. The absent beloved (the object of Surrey's longing, here personified as "you") appears in the constellation of Cassiopeia, the Ethiopian queen whose conflict with the sea-nymphs, according to classical myth, resulted in her banishment to the heavens where she would be forced both to observe and to be on display. The attribute said to have got Cassiopeia in trouble is bold vanity, a quality Petrarch often assigns to Laura.

p. 24 "Love's Caution" takes its first line from the *Ruba'iyat* of Omar Khayyam in its adaptation of "The golden gift that Nature did thee geve." The somewhat censorious tone of the sonnet makes it difficult to pin down just what is at stake in the lover's stance toward the beloved. In some ways this sonnet is a companion to "I never sawe you, madam;" here the beloved is in a double bind, put there by the speaker, in which any deviation from absolutely correct behaviour is not only a rejection of her suitor but a defilement of her own beauty and grace, and therefore, since her beauty is a divine gift, a blasphemy against God.

p. 25 "Love as pure Desire" transposes the gallant compliment made by "From Tuscan cam," in which the speaker's rapid transition from self-proclaimed ardent suitor to gracious also-ran reveals an essential insincerity in the former position and relief, if not active role, in attaining the latter. The transition is so rapid as to provide a frisson on which the translation rides.

p. 26 "Love as an unclear Set of Responsibilities" takes as its point of departure "The fansy which that I have served long," a sonnet closed as tightly around its subject as the shell around an oyster. Apparently set in Boulogne, Surrey's sonnet seems to talk about a period of flirtation with the idea of abandoning the military and courtly life, resolved in favour of fidelity for pragmatic reasons, ending in a renewed, though still doubting, commitment to service. There is in the sonnet's

obliqueness a powerful suggestion of unpleasant event, a difficult decision taken because the alternatives were at least as difficult, something exciting and mysterious not unlike the constraint revealed in the Windsor sonnet.

p. 28 "Love as noble Sufferance" treats some of the subtext of "When Windsor walles." Surrey's poem is a subtly-nuanced self-justification, concerned underneath its expression of longing and lament with the nature of honour, both personal and public. Jones and others generally agree that this sonnet was written in 1537 during the time Surrey was imprisoned at Windsor for having struck Sir Edward Seymour within court precincts; Seymour had accused Surrey and his father of being secretly in sympathy with rebellious interests acting against King Henry. What interests me in the sonnet is the notion that the speaker is sustained, first by the building itself, through the chain of support moving from wall to arm to hand to chin to head, and next through the double meaning of "arme" as anatomical appendage and weaponry, as though to suggest that the walls themselves uphold his right to fight, in contradiction to the law that put him in prison (albeit an apparently gentle prison). The range of connotations of "sustain" includes support for efforts or conduct. Embedded in the notion of "arme" as weaponry is its heraldic connotation. If Windsor supports the speaker's coat of arms, then action like Surrey's in protection of his name against such an accusation as Seymour's would certainly be justifiable. But the palace precincts are a dangerous place to claim even what is reasonable.

At stake in the subtext are family and personal honour. Surrey is eventually beheaded on what are generally regarded as, according to Sessions and others, trumped-up charges of treasonous claims made on the throne through unauthorized alterations to his coat of arms. Does the sonnet foretell, or perhaps set the stage for, his eventual fall?

The long-standing critical view that the sonnet is primarily a lament for Surrey's dead friend Richmond is borne out by the elegiac qualities of the pastoral scene as it evokes memories of friendship and provokes "heavy charge of care;" in this aspect the sonnet does honour the old friendship. Nothing in the sonnet declares explicitly that the speaker is imprisoned in anything other than grief or self-pity; nowhere is there admission of fault, or remorse, or any other stance vis-à-vis the poet's own situation than that of a high-spirited speaker who regrets only that the opportunity to engage in high-spiritedness in congenial company (another penchant that gets that him in trouble) is not open to him.

p. 29 "Ideal Love" translates "Dyverse thy death" – what I've come to think of as the jazz sonnet for its syncopated first line and its extravagant, perhaps (as Jones and others claim) badly-judged, closing lines. Composed as an elegy to Wyatt, it seems to eulogize Surrey himself more than Wyatt; in its critique of the hypocrisy of others and claims for his own superior feeling, Surrey displays entertaining levels of bombastic grandiosity. In the translation I turned the focus

toward the dilemma of the living who wish to be eulogized, those of the "envyous teares."

p. 30 "Love poses a Question" translates another eulogy to Wyatt, "In the rude age," a complicated construction that manages to use Wyatt's death to ask a rhetorical question, and to poke gleefully at Wyatt's envious enemies. My challenge in this translation was to unravel the "tangle," as Jones calls it. The envious enemies of the sonnet have faded to the background as unidentified sources of threat.

p. 31 "Love's Dare" plays with yet another tribute to Wyatt, "The great Macedon," punning on enemy Darius's name and literalizing the capacity of art to reveal, perhaps unwelcomely, truth. Surrey in this sonnet again both eulogizes Wyatt and aggrandizes himself through his criticisms of unnamed others.

p. 32 "Love poses as Betrayal" writes a parallel to "Th'Assyrians king," calling into question the suicide as "manfull deed." The comment on manliness tilts in two directions, toward honour and chivalric definitions of masculine virtue. Strength and war are manly; the only manly thing about lustful, gluttonous Sardanapalus was his anatomy, drenched as he was in "womanishe" indulgence, weak-minded and intolerant of discomfort. His only way to honour was to kill his enemy, which, in killing himself, he did. Considered beside the King David sonnet, the poem offers a way of enacting honour that may be less virtuous than it seems: while Sardanapalus committed suicide, David did penance.

This poem is dedicated to Colleen Farrell.

p. 33 "Love's Bewilderment" recasts "Norfolk sprang thee" as an admission of doubt. According to the historical accounts of his life, Surrey was not as close to death when Clere risked (and lost) his life to assist him at Montreuil as he claims in this elegiac sonnet. The recasting offers a gesture toward self-examination that Surrey offers only obliquely, in elegy and in claiming Clere for the house of Howard—benefit only to be realised after death. The closing couplet's gracious tone and melodious resonance lift the sonnet from historio-biography to reflection; unfortunately, the reflection seems as easily dropped as it is sighed into being, serving to neatly wrap up the catalogue.

p. 36 With thanks to Melissa Weinstein.

p. 38 This poem makes liberal use of line fragments from Bailey's discussion of Dürer's painting Venetian Outpost. (46)

p. 40 Panofsky reports that the sixteenth-century theorist Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo referred to Dürer as "the 'grand Druid' of art." (11)

p. 52 The line "after great pain or the first startled breath" is a conflation of parts of lines from Emily Dickinson and Jan Zwicky.

This poem is for Steve Noyes.

p. 57 This poems contains variations on lines from Steve Noyes.

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(Note: Many texts have informed my reading of Surrey and my understanding of the social and cultural history of the period; these are the books and essays I delved into during the composition of these poems.)

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