

THE COMPLETE CANZONIERE



PETRARCH

A Translation into English by

A. S. KLINE

POETRY IN TRANSLATION

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Please direct sales or editorial enquiries to:

tonykline@poetryintranslation.com



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Avignon, Histoire des Villes de France (p92, Paris 1844)

Aristide Guilbert

The British Library



Morning Prayer

Charles West Cope (British, 1811 - 1890)

The Yale Centre for British Art



'Laura, famous for her own virtues, and so long celebrated in my verses, was first seen by me in my early youth, in the year of our Lord 1327, on the sixth of April, in the Church of Saint Clare at Avignon, in the morning hour: and that light was taken from daylight in the same city, in the same month, on the same sixth day, in the same first morning hour, but in the year 1348, when I chanced to be in Verona, sadly unaware of my fate.'

Added by Petrarch to his copy of Virgil



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I. 'VOI CH'ASCOLTATE IN RIME SPARSE IL SUONO'



ou who hear the sound, in scattered rhymes,
of those sighs on which I fed my heart,
in my first vagrant youthfulness,
when I was partly other than I am,

I hope to find pity, and forgiveness,
for all the modes in which I talk and weep,
between vain hope and vain sadness,
in those who understand love through its trials.

Yet I see clearly now I have become
an old tale amongst all these people, so that
it often makes me ashamed of myself;

and shame is the fruit of my vanities,
and remorse, and the clearest knowledge
of how the world's delight is a brief dream.

2. 'PER FARE UNA LEGGIADRA SUA VENDETTA'



o make a graceful act of revenge,
and punish a thousand wrongs in a single day,
Love secretly took up his bow again,
like a man who waits the time and place to strike.

My power was constricted in my heart,
making defence there, and in my eyes,
when the mortal blow descended there,
where all other arrows had been blunted.

So, confused by the first assault,
it had no opportunity or strength
to take up arms when they were needed,

or withdraw me shrewdly to the high,
steep hill, out of the torment,
from which it wishes to save me now but cannot.

3. 'ERA IL GIORNO CH'AL SOL SI SCOLORARO'



It was on that day when the sun's ray
was darkened in pity for its Maker,
that I was captured, and did not defend myself,
because your lovely eyes had bound me, Lady.

It did not seem to me to be a time to guard myself
against Love's blows: so I went on
confident, unsuspecting; from that, my troubles
started, amongst the public sorrows.

Love discovered me all weaponless,
and opened the way to the heart through the eyes,
which are made the passageways and doors of tears:

so that it seems to me it does him little honour
to wound me with his arrow, in that state,
he not showing his bow at all to you who are armed.

4 'QUE' CH'INFINITA PROVIDENTIA ET ARTE'



hat infinite providence and art
He showed in his wonderful mastery,
who created this and the other hemisphere,
and Jupiter far gentler than Mars,

descending to earth to illuminate the page
which had for many years concealed the truth,
taking John from the nets, and Peter,
and making them part of heaven's kingdom.

It did not please him to be born in Rome,
but in Judea: to exalt humility
to such a supreme state always pleases him;

and now from a little village a sun is given,
such that the place, and nature, praise themselves,
out of which so lovely a lady is born to the world.

5. 'QUANDO IO MOVO I SOSPIRI A CHIAMAR VOI,'



hen I utter sighs, in calling out to you,
with the name that Love wrote on my heart,
the sound of its first sweet accents begin
to be heard within the word LAUdable.

Your REgal state, that I next encounter,
doubles my power for the high attempt;
but: 'TAcit', the ending cries, 'since to do her honour
is for other men's shoulders, not for yours'.

So, whenever one calls out to you,
the voice itself teaches us to LAud, REvere,
you, O, lady worthy of all reverence and honour:

except perhaps that Apollo is disdainful
that mor'TAl tongue can be so presumptuous
as to speak of his eternally green branches.

6. 'SI TRAVIATO E 'L FOLLE MI' DESIO'



y passion's folly is so led astray
by following what turns and flees,
and flies from Love's light supple noose
in front of my slow pace,

that the more I recall its steps
to the safe road, the less it hears me:
nor does spurring on help me, or turning about,
resisting what Love does by nature.

And then if the bit gathers me to him by force,
I remain in his sovereign power,
so that my state carries me sadly towards death:

only to come to the laurel from which is culled
bitter fruit, whose taste is a worse wound
for others, whom it does not solace.

7. 'LA GOLA E 'L SONNO ET L'OTIÖSE PIUME'



reed and sleep and slothful beds
have banished every virtue from the world,
so that, overcome by habit,
our nature has almost lost its way.

And all the benign lights of heaven,
that inform human life, are so spent,
that he who wishes to bring down a stream
from Helicon is pointed out as a wonder.

Such desire for laurel, and for myrtle?
'Poor and naked goes philosophy',
say the crowd intent on base profit.

You'll have poor company on that other road:
So much the more I beg you, gentle spirit,
not to turn from your great undertaking.

8. 'A PIE' DE' COLLI OVE LA BELLA VESTA'



t the foot of the hill where beauty's garment
first clothed that lady with earthly members,
who has often sent wakefulness to him,
who sends us to you, out of melancholy sleep,

we passed by freely in peace through this
mortal life, that all creatures yearn for,
without suspicion of finding, on the way,
anything that would trouble our going.

But in the miserable state where we are
driven from that other serene life
we have one solace only, that is death:

which is his retribution, who led him to this,
he who, in another's power, near to the end,
remains bound with a heavier chain.

9. 'QUANDO 'L PIANETA CHE DISTINGUE L'ORE'



hen the heavenly body that tells the hours
has returned to the constellation of Taurus,
power from the burning horns descends
that clothes the world with new colours:

and not only in that which lies before us,
banks and hills, adorned with flowers,
but within where already the earthly moisture
pregnant with itself, adds nothing further,

so that fruits and such are gathered:
as she, who is the sun among those ladies,
shining the rays of her lovely eyes on me

creates thoughts of love, actions and words;
but whether she governs them or turns away,
there is no longer any Spring for me.

10. 'GLORIOSA COLUMN IN CUI S'APPOGGIA'



lorious pillar in whom rests
our hope and the great Latin name,
that Jupiter's anger through wind and rain
still does not twist from the true way,

who raise our intellect from earth to heaven,
not in a palace, a theatre, or arcade,
but instead in fir, beech or pine,
on the green grass and the lovely nearby mountain,

from which poetry descends and rests;
and the nightingale that laments and weeps
all night long, sweetly, in the shadows,

fills the heart with thoughts of love:
but you by departing from us my lord,
only cut off such beauty, and make it imperfect.

Note: *Stefano Colonna ('the column') is referred to. His son Cardinal Giovanni was Petrarch's patron, another son Giacomo was Bishop of Lombes in the Pyrenees.*



Study for the Portrait of Stefano Colonna
Agnolo di Cosimo (Italian, 1503 – 1572)
The Rijksmuseum

II. 'LASSARE IL VELO O PER SOLE O PER OMBRA'



have not seen you, lady,
leave off your veil in sun or shadow,
since you knew that great desire in myself
that all other wishes in the heart desert me.

While I held the lovely thoughts concealed,
that make the mind desire death,
I saw your face adorned with pity:
but when Love made you wary of me,

then blonde hair was veiled,
and loving glances gathered to themselves.
That which I most desired in you is taken from me:

the veil so governs me
that to my death, and by heat and cold,
the sweet light of your lovely eyes is shadowed.

12. 'SE LA MIA VITA DA L'ASPRO TORMENTO'



f my life of bitter torment and of tears
could be derided more, and made more troubled,
that I might see, by virtue of your later years,
lady, the light quenched of your beautiful eyes,

and the golden hair spun fine as silver,
and the garland laid aside and the green clothes,
and the delicate face fade, that makes me
fearful and slow to go weeping:

then Love might grant me such confidence
that I'd reveal to you my sufferings
the years lived through, and the days and hours:

and if time is opposed to true desire,
it does not mean no food would nourish my grief:
I might draw some from slow sighs.

13. 'QUANDO FRA L'ALTRE DONNE AD ORA AD ORA'



hen from hour to hour among the other ladies
Love appears in her beautiful face,
by as much as their beauty is less than hers
by so much the desire that en-amours me grows.

I bless the place, the time, and the hour
in which my eyes gazed to such a height,
and I say: My spirit, give thanks enough
that you were then found worthy of such honour.

From her to you comes loving thought,
that leads to highest good, while you pursue it,
counting as little what all men desire:

from her comes that spirit full of grace
that shows you heaven by the true way':
so that in hope I fly, already, to the heights.

14. 'OCCHI MEI LASSI, MENTRE CH'IO VI GIRO'



y weary eyes, there, while I turn you
towards the lovely face of her who slays you,
I pray you guard yourself
since, already, Love challenges you, so that I sigh.

Only Death can close from my thoughts
the loving path that leads them
to the sweet doorway of their blessing;
but your light can hide itself from you
for less reason, since you are formed
as lesser entities, and of less power.
But, grieve, before the hour of tears
is come, that is already near,
take to the end now
brief comfort from such long suffering.

15. 'IO MI RIVOLGO INDIETRO A CIASCUN PASSO'



turn back at every step I take
with weary body that has borne great pain,
and take comfort then from your aspect
that makes me go on, saying: Ah me!

Then thinking of the sweet good I leave,
of the long road, and of my brief life,
I halt my steps, dismayed and pale,
and lower my eyes weeping to the ground.

Sometimes a doubt assails me in the midst
of sad tears: how can these limbs
live separated from their spirit?

But Love replies: Do you not remember
that this is the privilege of lovers,
freed from every other human tie?

16. 'MOVESI IL VECCHIEREL CANUTO ET BIANCHO'



rizzled and white the old man leaves
the sweet place, where he has provided for his life,
and leaves the little family, filled with dismay
that sees its dear father failing it:

then, from there, dragging his aged limbs
through the last days of his life,
aiding himself by what strength of will he can,
broken by years, and wearied by the road:

he reaches Rome, following his desire,
to gaze on the image of Him
whom he hopes to see again in heaven:

so, alas, I sometimes go searching,
lady, as far as is possible, in others
for the true, desired form of you.

17. 'PIOVONMI AMARE LAGRIME DEL VISO'



itter tears pour down my face
with an anguished storm of sighing,
when my eyes chance to turn on you
through whom alone I am lost from the world.

Yet it is true that your soft gentle smile
quietens my ardent desires,
and saves me from the fire of suffering,
while I am intent and fixed on gazing.

But then my spirits are chilled, when I see,
at your departure, my fatal stars
turn their sweet aspect from me.

Released at last by those loving keys,
the spirit leaves the heart to follow you,
and in deep thought, walks on from there.

18. 'QUAN'IO SON TUTTO VÒLTO IN QUELLA PARTE'



hen I have turned my eyes to that place
where my lady's lovely face shines,
and that light leaves me not a thought
while I burn and melt away inside,

I fear lest my heart parts from my self,
and seeing the end of my light nearing,
I go like a blind man, without light,
who knows no way to go, but must depart.

I receive so many deadly blows
I flee: but not so quickly that desire
does not come with me as is his wont.

I go silently, since one deadly word
would make men weep: and I desire
that my tears might be shed alone.

19. 'SON ANIMALI AL MONDO DE SI ALTERA'



here are creatures in the world with such other
vision that it is protected from the full sun:
yet others, because the great light offends them
cannot move around until the evening falls:

and others with mad desire, that hope
perhaps to delight in fire, because it gleams,
prove the other power, that which burns:
alas, and my place is with these last.

I am not strong enough to gaze at the light
of that lady, and do not know how to make a screen
from shadowy places, or the late hour:

yet, with weeping and infirm eyes, my fate
leads me to look on her: and well I know
I wish to go beyond the fire that burns me.

20. 'VERGOGNANDO TALOR CH'ANCOR SI TACCIA,'



shamed sometimes that your beauty,
lady, is still silent in my verses,
I recall that time when I first saw it,
such that nothing else could ever please me.

But I find the weight too great for my shoulder,
a work not to be polished by my skill:
the more my wit exercises its force
the more its whole action grows cold.

Many times my lips have opened to speak,
but my voice is stilled in my chest:
who is he who could climb so high?

Many times I've begun to scribble verses:
but the pen, the hand, and the intellect
fell back defeated at their first attempt.

21. 'MILLE FIATE, O DOLCE MIA GUERRERA,'



have offered you my heart a thousand times
O my sweet warrior, only to make peace
with your lovely eyes: but it does not please you
with your noble mind, to stoop so low.

And if some other lady has hope of it,
she lives in powerless, deceiving hope:
and it can never be what it was to me,
since I too disdain what does not please you.

Now if I banish it, and it does not find in you
any aid in its unhappy exile, nor knows
how to be alone, nor to go where others call to it,

it might stray from its natural course:
which would be a grave crime for both of us,
and more for you, since it loves you more.

22. 'A QUALUNQUE ANIMALE ALBERGA IN TERRA,' (*SESTINA*)



he time to labour, for every animal
that inhabits earth, is when it is still day,
except for those to whom the sun is hateful:
but then when heaven sets fire to its stars,
some turn for home and some nestle in the woods
to find some rest before the dawn.

And I may not cease to sigh with the sun,
from when dawn begins to scatter
the shadows from around the Earth,
waking the animals in every woodland:
yet when I see the flaming of the stars
I go weeping, and desire the day.

When the evening drives out daylight's clarity,
and our shadow makes another's dawn,
I gaze pensively at cruel stars,
that have created me of sentient earth:
and I curse the day I saw the sun,
that makes me in aspect like a wild man of the woods.

I do not think that any creature so harsh
grazed the woods, either by night or day,
as she, through whom I weep in sun or shade:
and I am not wearied by first sleep or dawn:
for though I am mortal body of this earth,
my fixed desire comes from the stars.

Might I see pity in her, for one day,
before I return to you, bright stars,
or turning back into cherished woodland,
leave my body changed to dry earth,
it would restore many years, and before dawn
enrich me at the setting of the sun.

May I be with her when the sun departs,
and seen by no one but the stars,
for one sole night, and may there be no dawn:
and may she not be changed to green woodland,
issuing from my arms, as on the day
when Apollo pursued her down here on earth.

But I will be beneath the wood's dry earth,
and daylight will be full of little stars,
before the sun achieves so sweet a dawn.

Note: *Apollo pursued Daphne who was transformed into a laurel bough, a play on Laura's name.*



Apollo and Daphne

Pieter van Gunst (Dutch, 1659 – 1731)

The Rijksmuseum

23. 'NEL DOLCE TEMPO DE LA PRIMA ETADE'



'll sing of the sweet time of my first youth,
that saw the birth and the first leafing
of fierce desire that blossomed to my hurt,
since grief is rendered less bitter by being sung:

I'll sing of when I lived in liberty,
while Love was disdained in my house.
Then follow it with how I scorned him
too deeply, and say what came of it,
of how I was made an example to many men:
even though my harsh ruin
is written of elsewhere, so that a thousand pens
are not yet weary of it, and almost every valley
echoes again to the sound of my deep sighs
that add credence to my painful life.
And if memory does not aid me
as it once did, blame my sufferings,
and one thought which is anguished
it makes me turn my back on every other,
and by the same light makes me forget myself:
ruling what is inside me, I the shell.

I say that many years had passed
since Love tried his first assault on me,
so that I had lost my juvenile aspect,
and frozen thoughts about my heart
had almost made a covering of enamel,
so that its hardness left nothing lacking.

Still no tears had bathed my cheeks,
my sleep unbroken, and what I could not feel
seemed like a marvel to me in others.

Alas what am I? What was I?

Life is ended, and evening crowns the day.

That savage adversary of whom I speak,
seeing at last that not a single shot
of his had even pierced my clothes,
brought a powerful lady to help him,
against whom intellect, or force,
or asking mercy never were or are of value:
and the two transformed me to what I am,
making green laurel from a living man,
that loses no leaves in the coldest season.

What a state I was in when I first realized
the transfiguration of my person,
and saw my hair formed of those leaves
that I had hoped might yet crown me,
and my feet with which I stand, move, run,
since each member accords with the spirit,
turned into two roots by the water
not of Peneus, but a nobler river,
and both my arms changed to branches!
The memory still chills me,
of being clothed then in white plumage,
when my hope that had tried to climb too high
was lightning-struck and lying dead,
and I, who had no idea where or when
I might retrieve it, went weeping alone
day and night where I had lost it,
searching the banks and beneath the water:

and while I might my tongue was never silent
from that moment about hope's evil fall:
until I took on, with its voice, the colour of a swan.

So I went along the pleasant stream,
and wishing to speak I found I always sang,
calling for mercy in a strange voice,
but never making my loving sorrows echo
in so sweet or in so soft a mode
as to make that harsh and savage heart relent.
What was it to feel so? How the memory burns me:
but I need to say more than this
of my sweet and bitter enemy,
more than ever before,
though she is such as is beyond all telling.
She who maddens men with her gaze,
opened my chest, and took my heart in her hand,
saying to me: 'Speak no word of this.'
Then I saw her alone, in a different dress,
so that I did not know her, oh human senses,
and full of fear told her the truth:
and she turning quickly back
to her usual guise, made me, alas,
semi-living and dumb stone.

She spoke to me, so angered in aspect
that she made me tremble inside the rock,
saying: 'Perhaps I am not what you believe.'
And I said to myself: 'If only she releases me
from the rock, no life will make me troubled or sad:
return, my lord, and let me weep.'
I moved my feet then, I don't know how,

still blaming no-one but my own self,
between living and dying, all that day.
But because the time is short
my pen cannot keep pace with my true will:
I must pass over many more things
inscribed in my mind, and only speak of those
that will seem marvellous to those who hear.
Death circled round about my heart,
which I could not rescue by being silent,
nor could I help my afflicted senses:
a living voice was forbidden me:
so I cried out with paper and ink:
'I am not my own. If I die the loss is yours.'

I truly thought I could turn myself in her eyes
from worthlessness to a thing of worth,
and that hope had made me eager:
but hope at times is quenched by disdain
at times takes fire: and so I found it then,
placed in the shadows for so long,
for at my prayers my true light had left me.
And not finding a shadow of her, her or there,
nor even the print of her foot,
one day I flung myself down on the grass
like a traveller who sleeps on the way.
Accusing the fugitive ray of light, from there,
I loosed the reins of my sad tears,
and let them fall as they wished,
I felt myself melt wholly, as snow
never vanished so in the sun,
becoming a fount at a beech-tree's foot.
I held that moist course for a length of time.

Who ever heard of fountains born of men?
Yet I tell you something manifest and known.

The soul whose gentleness is all from God,
since such grace could come from nowhere else,
holds a virtue like that of its maker:
it grants pardon, and never wearies,
to him of humble face and heart,
whatever sins he comes to mercy with.
And if contrary to its nature it suffers
being prayed to often, it mirrors Him,
and so makes the sin more fearful:
for he does not truly repent
who prepares for one sin with another.
So my lady moved by pity
deigned to look down on me, and seeing
I revealed a punishment matched to the sin,
she kindly returned me to my first state.
But there's nothing a man can trust to in this world:
praying to her still, I felt my bone and nerves
turn to hard flint: and only a voice shaken
from my former being remained,
calling on Death, and calling her by name.

A grieving spirit (I recall) I wandered
through empty and alien caverns,
weeping my errant ardour for many years:
and at least reached its end,
and I returned to my earthly limbs,
I think in order to suffer greater pain.
I followed my desire so closely
that hunting one day as was my custom,

I saw that creature, wild and beautiful,
standing naked
in a pool, when the sun shone most brightly.
I, because no other sight so pleases me,
stood and gazed: she covered in her shame:
and for revenge or to hide herself,
she splashed water in my face, with her hand.
I speak the truth (though I may seem to lie)
that I felt myself altered from my true form,
and swiftly transmuted to a lonely stag,
wandering from wood to wood:
and fleeing from my own pack of hounds.

Song, I was never that golden cloud
that once fell as a precious shower,
so that Jove's flame was quenched a little:
but I have been the fire that a lovely look kindled,
and the bird that rises highest in the air,
exalting her with my words in honour:
nor could I leave the highest laurel
for some new shape, for by its sweet shade
all lesser beauties that please the heart are scattered.

Notes: *Daphne was changed to a laurel on the banks of the Peneus. Petrarch compares it with the Sorgue, Durance, or Rhone. Cynus was changed into a swan mourning for Phaethon. Battus revealed a secret, to Mercury in disguise, and was turned to flint. Byblis was turned into a fountain, after rejecting her brother's love. Echo turned into a voice echoing Narcissus. Actaeon saw Diana bathing and was turned into a stag and hunted to death by his hounds. Jupiter raped Danae in a shower of gold, and as an eagle carried off Ganymede. See Ovid's Metamorphoses for all these references.*



The Rape of Ganymede
Niccolò dell' Abate (Italian, ca. 1509 - 1571)
The National Gallery of Art

24. 'SE L'ONORATA FRONDE CHE PRESCRIVE'



f the honoured branch that wards off
heaven's anger when great Jupiter thunders
had not refused me its laurel crown
which usually wreathes those who write poetry,

I would be a friend of those Muses of yours
that this unworthy age has abandoned:
but that injustice keeps me far from
Minerva who first gave us olive trees:

for the sands of Ethiopia could not burn
hotter under the burning sun than I blaze
at losing a thing so beloved, as my own.

Search out a steadier fount than mine,
which only wells in an impoverished stream,
except for that which distils from my tears.

Note: *A reply to a poem from Andrea Stramazzio da Perugia, asking for verses.*

25. 'AMOR PIANGEVA, ET IO CON LUI TAVOLTA'



ove wept, and sometimes I wept with him,
from whom my steps never strayed far,
gazing, since the effect was bitter and strange,
at your spirit, set loose from all Love's bonds.

Now God has returned you to the true way,
I lift my hands with all my heart to heaven,
thankful to him who in his mercy listens
benignly to honest human prayers.

And if in returning to the loving path,
you found hills and ditches in your way
enough to almost make you turn back,

it was to show how thorny is the road,
and how mountainous and hard the climb,
if a man would find where true worth lies.

26. 'PIU DI ME LIETA NON SI VEDE A TERRA'



o ship, beaten and conquered by the waves,
ever made land more happily than me,
when people who were crying for mercy
kneel down on the shore to give thanks:

he who has the rope already round his neck
is no happier to be freed from his bonds,
than me, seeing all those swords shattered
that made so long a war against my lord.

And all who praise Love in your rhymes,
give honour now to the true writer
of loving songs who once went astray:

for there's more joy, in the realms of the chosen,
in a penitent spirit, and he is more esteemed
than the ninety-nine others who were perfect.

Note: See *Luke XV.7*

27. 'IL SUCCESSOR DI KARLO, CHE LA CHIOMA'



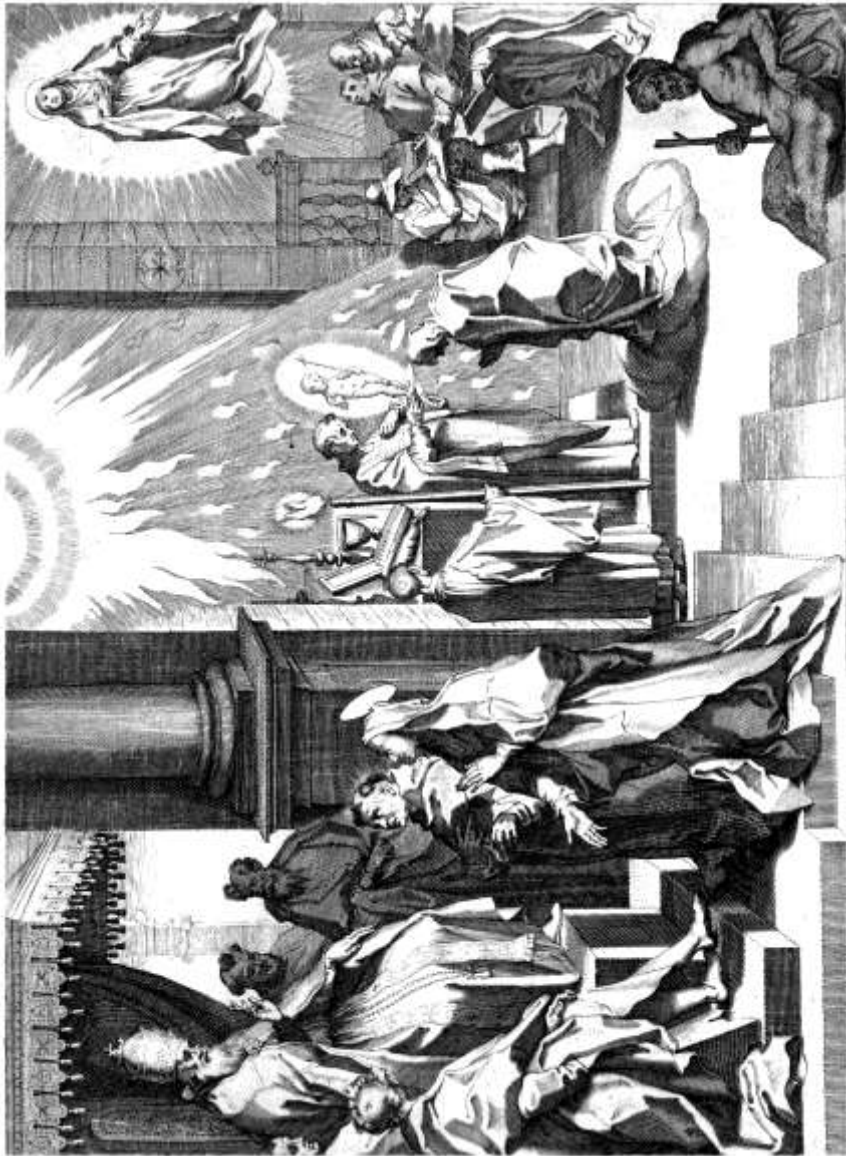
harlemagne's scion, whose head is adorned
with the royal crown of his ancestor,
has taken up arms to bring Babylon down
and all that take their name from her.

and the Vicar of Christ returns to the nest
with the mantle and the burdensome keys,
and if no further accident deters him,
he'll reach Bologna, and then noble Rome.

That mild and gentle lamb of yours
destroys the fierce wolves: and so may it be
with all who shatter lawful alliances.

Console her then, you whom she waits for,
and Rome who still complains of her spouse,
and take up the sword now for Christ.

Notes: *Philip VI of France proclaimed a crusade in 1333 against Islam, symbolised here by Babylon. The Papacy is to return from Avignon to Rome. The poem may be addressed to Orso dell'Anguillara.*



Catherine Asks Pope Gregory XI to Return to Rome
Pieter de Jode (I) (Flemish, 1570 – 1634)
The Rijksmuseum

28. 'O ASPECTATA IN CIEL BEATA ET BELLA'



blessed and lovely spirit expected in Heaven
truly clothed with our humanity,
but not imprisoned in it like others:
oh God's delight, obedient servant,
so that you ever find the gentler road,
by which we cross from here to his kingdom,
see how recently your boat
has turned its back on the blind world
to sail to a better harbour
with the sweet comfort of a western wind:
you'll be conducted through the midst
of this dark valley where we weep for our
and another's sin, from ancient bonds broken,
through the straightest path,
to the true East, towards which you have turned.

Perhaps the devoted and loving prayers
and the sacred tears of mortal beings
have made their way towards the highest pity:
and perhaps they were not great enough nor such
as to merit eternal justice bending
even a little from its course:
but the benign king who governs the heavens
through grace turns his eyes
to the sacred place where one hung on the cross,
breathing vengeance into the heart
of the new Charlemagne, so that delay would hurt us,

since Europe has sighed for it for many years:
so he brings aid to his beloved spouse
so that merely at his voice
Babylon trembles, and stands amazed.

Every place between the Garonne and the mountains,
between Rhone and Rhine and the salt waves
follows the highest ensign of Christ:
and those who ever sought true honour,
from the Pyrenees to the furthest horizon
empty Spain to follow Aragon:
England with the islands Ocean bathes
between the Pillars and the Bear,
as far as where the doctrine resounds
from the most sacred Helicon,
men of varied tongues and arms and dress,
spur to Heaven's high enterprise.
What love, so lawful and worthy,
whether of children or of wife,
was the subject of such a just design?

There is a part of the world frozen,
always beneath the ice and cold snow,
so far is it from the sun's path:
the day there is clouded and brief,
and bears a people that death does not grieve,
the natural enemies of peace.
So that if they became more devout than they are,
and took up swords with German fury,
we would soon find out the worth
of the Turks, and Arabs, and Chaldeans,

with all the gods they place their hopes in,
this side of the sea with blood-red waters:
lazy and fearful, naked peoples,
who never fight with steel,
but commit their weapons to the winds.

Now is the time to throw off the yoke
of ancient slavery, and the thick veil
that has long been draped over our eyes:
and for the noble wit you possess
from heaven by the grace of the immortal Apollo,
and your eloquence, to show its power
now in the spoken, now the written word:
for if you don't marvel at the legends
of Orpheus and Amphion,
less should you at rousing Italy's sons
with the sound of your clear speech,
so they take up the lance for Christ:
for if this ancient motherland seeks truth,
in none of her intentions
was ever so lovely or noble a cause.

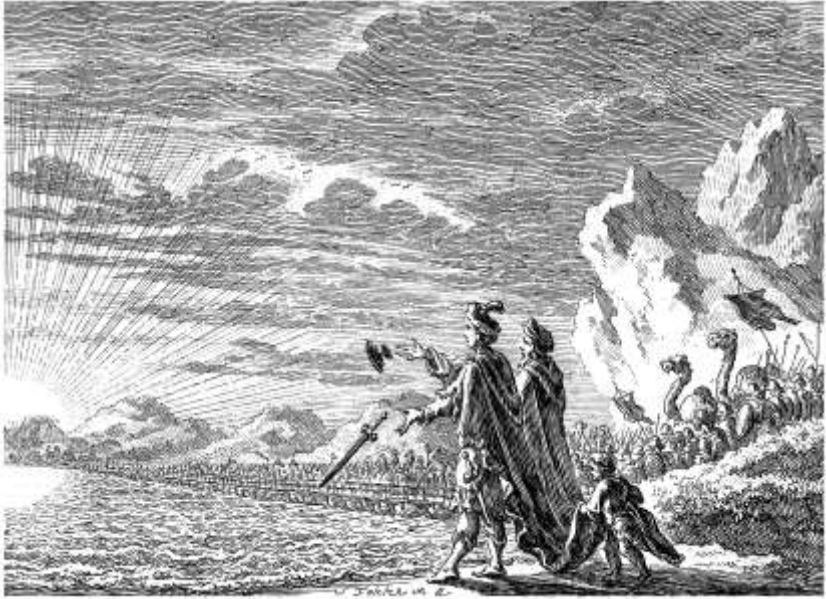
You who've enriched yourself
turning the ancient and modern pages,
flying to heaven in an earthly body,
you know, from the empire of Mars' son
to when great Augustus three times
crowned his head with green laurel,
how many times through injury to others
Rome was generous with her blood:
and should she not be now,

not generous but dutiful and pious
in avenging the impious injury
to the Son of our glorious Mary?
What hope can the enemy have
or human defence
if Christ fights against them?

Remember the rash audacity of Xerxes
who outraged the sea with alien bridges
made in order to land on our shores:
and see how all the Persian women
were dressed in black for their dead husbands:
and the sea at Salamis tinted red.
And not only is victory promised
by that ruinous misery for the sad
Eastern peoples,
but Marathon, and that vital pass
that the Spartan lion defended with the few,
and other battles you have heard of or read:
so we should certainly bow to God,
our knees and spirit,
He who has preserved our age for so much good.

Song, you'll see Italy and the famous river,
not hidden from my eyes, not concealed
by sea, or hill, or stream,
but only by Love that with his other light
binds me closer the more he fires me:
nor is Nature more opposed to habit.
Now go, without losing other friends,
since Love for which we smile and weep
does not live only beneath women's veils.

Notes: *Addressed to Giacomo Colonna. Amphion and Orpheus moved stones and trees with their music. Romulus was the son of Mars. Xerxes famously bridged the Hellespont but was countered at the naval battle of Salamis in 480BC. Darius his father had been defeated at Marathon in 490BC. Leonidas, the Spartan King, stalled the Persians at Thermopylae through his heroic resistance.*



Xerxes Crossing the Hellespont
Simon Fokke (Dutch, 1722 – 1784)
The Rijksmuseum

29. 'VERDI PANNI, SANGUIGNI, OSCURI O PERSI'



reen dresses, crimson, black or purple,
were never worn by ladies,
nor golden hair tied in a fair braid,
as beautifully as she who robs me
of my will, and takes away the path
of my liberty, so I cannot even
tolerate a lighter yoke.

And even if my spirit begins to grieve,
losing its judgement,
when suffering brings doubt,
the loose will is quickly restrained
by the sight of her, who razes from my heart
every mad project, and makes all
disdain sweet through seeing her.

I will have revenge, for all that Love
has made me suffer, all I must still suffer
until she heals the heart she ravaged,
she, alien to pity, but still enticing,
unless Anger and Pride opposing Humility
close off and deny the way
that leads to her.

And the day and the hour that opened my eyes
to the lovely dark and the lovely white
that emptied me of that where Love now lives,
were the new roots of the life that troubles me,
as she does in whom our age is reflected,
for he is made of lead or stone
whom she does not make afraid.

So no tear of those I weep,
because of these arrow-tips
bathing my heart, that first felt them, in blood,
signifies that I un-wish what I wished,
the punishment falls in the right place:
through the eyes my soul sighs, and it's right
that they bathe my wounds.

My own thoughts struggle against me:
so Dido, weary as I am now,
turned her beloved sword against herself:
yet I do not pray for my freedom,
since all other roads to heaven are less true,
and there is no safer ship in which to aspire
to the glorious kingdom.

Benign stars that were friends
to that fortunate womb
when that beauty came to this world!
She is a star on earth, and she keeps
her chastity as laurel stays green,
so no lightning strikes her, no shameful breeze
can ever force her.

I know that to capture her praise in verse
would be to exceed
the most worthy that set hand to writing.
What cell of memory is there in which to hold
so much virtue and so much beauty together
that shine in her eyes, the sign of all value,
the key to unlock my heart.

Lady, beneath the sun's circle, Love has
no greater treasure than you.

30. 'GIOVENE DONNA SOTTO UN VERDE LAURO' (*SESTINA FORM*)



saw a girl under green laurel
colder and whiter than the snow
untouched by the sun for many years:
and her speech, her lovely face, her hair
so please me that she's before my eyes,
and will be always, wherever, on sea or shore.

My thoughts at last will come to shore,
when there are no green leaves on laurel:
when I've quieted my heart, dried my eyes,
we'll see freezing fire and burning snow:
and there's not as many strands in my hair
as the years I'd wait to see that, and years.

But since time flies and they vanish, those years,
so that death comes to us, and so sure
either with dark hair or with white hair
I'll follow the shadow of that sweet laurel,
through the brightest sun and through the snow,
until the last day closes my eyes.

Such lovely eyes were never seen
in our age or in earlier years,
that melt me as sun melts the snow:
from which proceeds a tear-drenched shore
a stream that Love leads under harsh laurel,
that has branches of steel, and golden hair.

I fear I'll be altered in face and hair
before I see real pity in her eyes,
my idol sculptured from living laurel:
if I've not miscounted it's seven years
today that I've sighed from shore to shore,
night and day, in heat and snow.

Fire inside, outside white snow
alone with these thoughts, with altered hair,
I'll walk weeping along every shore
so that pity perhaps will appear in eyes
not to be born for a thousand years,
if such is the span of cultured laurel.

The laurel, topaz in sun on snow,
is exceeded by blonde hair near the eyes
that bring my years so slowly to shore.

31. 'QUESTA ANIMA GENTIL CHE SI DIPARTE'



hat gentle spirit that departs,
called to the other life before its time,
will join the most blessed region of the sky
when it is welcomed as it is sure to be.

If it passed between Venus, the third light, and Mars,
it would lessen the brightness of the sun,
since noble spirits would gather round her
merely to gaze at her infinite beauty.

If it passed below the fourth, the Sun
all the lesser lights would seem less lovely,
and it alone would have the fame and glory:

it could not exist in Mars' fifth sphere:
but if it flies higher, I believe truly
Jupiter will be conquered and every star.

32. 'QUANTO PIÙ M'AVICINO AL GIORNO EXTREMO'



he closer I come to that last day
that puts an end to human misery
the more swiftly and lightly I see time go by,
and my hopes of it deceive and fade.

I say in thought: 'No time is left now
to speak of love, for this hard and heavy
earthly burden has begun to melt
like fresh snow: so we'll find peace:

since with the body hope too will vanish,
that made us rave for so many years,
with laughter and tears, fear and anger:

for so we see how it often happens
that through uncertain things we advance,
and often we sigh to no real purpose.'

33. 'GIÀ FIAMMEGGIAVA L'AMOROSA STELLA'



ready Venus, the star of love, was blazing
in the east, and that other northern constellation
Callisto's Great Bear, that makes Juno jealous,
was wheeling round its bright and lovely rays:

the little old woman had risen to her spinning,
barefoot, dishevelled, and had raked the coals,
and that time had arrived for lovers
that calls them by custom to weep again:

when my hope that was already fading
entered my heart, that sleep kept closed
and grief moistened, but not by her usual way:

alas, how altered from how she used to be!
And she seemed to say: 'Why do you lose courage?
The sight of these eyes is not yet taken from you.'

34. 'APOLLO, S'ANCHOR VIVE IL BEL DISIO'



pollo, if that sweet desire is still alive
that inflamed you by the river of Thessaly,
and if with the passing years you've not already
forgotten that beloved blonde hair:

defend the honoured and sacred leaves now,
where you long ago, and I lately, were caught,
through the slow frost and harsh and cruel time
that is endured while you hide your face:

and by the power of that amorous hope
that sustained you, though life was bitter,
disburden the air of this dark weather:

so we may see by a miracle together
our lady seated on the grass
lifting her arms to make herself a shade.

35. 'SOLO ET PENSOSO I PIU DESERTI CAMPI'



lone and thoughtful, through the most desolate fields,
I go measuring out slow, hesitant paces,
and keep my eyes intent on fleeing
any place where human footsteps mark the sand.

I find no other defence to protect me
from other people's open notice,
since in my aspect, whose joy is quenched,
they see from outside how I flame within.

So now I believe that mountains and river-banks
and rivers and forests know the quality
of my life, hidden from others.

Yet I find there is no path so wild or harsh
that love will not always come there
speaking with me, and I with him.

36. 'S'IO CREDESSE PER MORTE ESSERE SCARCO'



f I believed I could free myself, by dying,
from amorous thoughts that bind me to the earth,
I would already have laid these troubled limbs
and their burden in the earth myself:

but because I fear to find a passage
from tears to tears, and one war to another,
I remain in the midst, alas, of staying and crossing
on this side of the pass that is closed to me.

There has been enough time now
for the merciless bow to fire its final arrow
bathed and dyed already with others' blood:

yet Love does not take me, or that deaf one
who has painted me with his own pallor,
and still forgets to call me to him.

37. 'SI E DEBILE IL FILO A CUI S'ATTENE'



he thread on which my heavy life hangs
is worn so thin,
that if no one supports it
it will soon have arrived at its end:

for after I had suffered the cruel parting
from my sweet good
only one hope
remained that gave reason for living,
saying: 'Since you are deprived
of the beloved sight,
endure, sad spirit:
Who knows if better times will not return
and more joyful days,
and the good you have lost be regained?
This hope sustained me for a time:
but now it fails I spend too much time on it.

Time passes and the hours are so quick
to complete their journey,
that I have no space
even to think how I race towards death.
A ray of sunlight has hardly appeared
in the east before you see it strike a high peak
on the opposite horizon,
by a long curving path.
Life is so short,
the bodies of mortal men

so burdensome and weak,
that when I recall how I am separated
from that lovely face,
unable to move the wings of my desire,
my usual solace is of little help,
and how long can I live in such a state.

All places sadden me where I do not see
those beautiful bright eyes
which carried off the keys
of my thoughts, sweet while it pleased God:
and all to make my harsh exile harder,
if I sleep or walk or sit,
I long for nothing more,
and nothing I see after them can please me.
How many mountains and waters,
how many seas and rivers,
hide me from those two eyes,
that almost made a clear sky at noon
from my shadows,
only for memory to consume me more,
and to show how joyous my life was before
while my present is harsh and troubled.

Ah, if speaking of it so rekindles
that ardent desire
that was born on the day
when I left the better part of me behind,
and if Love fades away with long neglect
why am I drawn to the bait
that makes my sorrow grow?

And why not rather be turned to silent stone?
Surely crystal or glass
never showed colour
hidden within more clearly
than my desolate soul reveals
my thoughts
and the savage sweetness in my heart
through eyes that always wish to weep
day and night so she might give it rest.

How human wit often turns to seek out
new pleasures, and loves
whatever is new
gathering a greater crowd of sighs!
And I am one whom weeping delights:
and as I bend my wits
to fill my eyes with tears,
so my heart fills with grief:
and since it induces passion
to speak of her lovely eyes
and nothing touches me
or makes me feel so deeply,
I often rush to return
to that which fills me with greater pain,
and with my heart both my eyes are punished
that led me along the road of Love.

That golden hair that might make the sun
move far away in envy,
and that lovely serene gaze,
where Love's rays burn so,

that makes me fade before my time,
and the deft speech
rare in this world, alone,
that has already granted me courtesy,
are taken from me: and I could pardon
any other offence more easily
than lose that greeting
like a kind angel's welcome
that lifted my heart to virtue
blazing with one sole desire:
so that I never expect to hear a thing now
that will stir me to anything but deep sighs.

And so I may weep with more delight
her slender white hands
and her gentle arms
and her gestures sweetly noble
and her sweet disdain proudly humble
and her lovely young heart,
a tower of noble feeling,
are hidden from me by wild mountainous places:
and I do not truly hope
to see her before I die:
since hope rises from time
to time, but then does not stand firm,
and recedes, confirming
that I will never see her, whom the heavens honour,
where Honesty and Courtesy reside,
and where I pray my residence might be.

Song, if you see my lady
in that sweet place,
I know well you think
she'll stretch out her lovely hand to you
that I am far away from.
Do not touch it: but do reverence at her feet
and say I shall be there as swiftly as I can,
as naked spirit, or man of flesh and bone.

38. 'ORSO, E' NON FURON MAI FIUMI NE STAGNI,'



Orso, there never was lake or river
or sea, into which all rivers flow,
or shadow of wall, or branch, or hill,
or cloud hiding the sky, bathing the world,

or other obstacle, to make me grieve,
however much it masked human sight,
as the veil that shadows two lovely eyes,
and says by it: 'Now pine away and weep.'

And then the lowering of them from humility
or pride, so all my joy is dimmed,
is the reason I die before my time.

And I grieve for a white hand too
often lifted shrewdly to do me harm,
and rising like a rock before my eyes.

Note: *Addressed to Orso dell'Anguillara.*

39. 'IO TEMO SI DE' BEGLI OCCHI L'ASSALTO'



'm so afraid of those lovely eyes' assault
in which Love and my death exist,
I run from them like a child from the rod,
and it's long since I first took that step.

There is no difficult or high place
from now on, I would not reach
to avoid what scatters my senses
leaving me as if I were cold enamel.

So if I turned towards you only lately
not to be nearer what consumes me,
perhaps I am not without a true excuse.

More, to return to the place I fled from,
and free my heart from such deep fear,
is no light testimony to my loyalty.

Note: *Assumed to be written to a friend in Provence.*

40. 'S'AMORE O MORTE NON DA QUALCHE STROPPIO'



f Love or Death do not bring some flaw
to this new cloth that I now weave,
and if I can keep free of clinging lime,
while I twine the one truth with the other,

perhaps I will create a double work
in modern style but with ancient content,
so that, I'm fearful of saying it too boldly,
you'll hear the noise even as far as Rome.

But since, to finish the labour, I lack
some of those sacred threads revealed
in those works of my beloved teacher,

why do you close your hand to me,
against your custom? I beg you to open it,
and you'll see something beautiful appear.

Note: *Augustine is the beloved teacher. Petrarch is presumably seeking copies of his works.*

41. 'QUANDO DAL PROPRIO SITO SI REMOVE'



hen that tree that Apollo once loved
in its human form moves from its proper place,
Vulcan sighs and sweats at his work,
to refresh Jupiter's sharp lightning-bolts:

who sends now thunder, now snow, or rain,
without regard to July or January:
the earth weeps, and the sun stays far away,
because he sees his dear friend vanish.

Then those fierce planets Saturn and Mars
blaze out again, and armed Orion
shatters the poor sailor's tiller and shrouds:

and stormy Aeolus makes Neptune,
and Juno, and us, feel the departure
of that lovely face the angels wait for.

Notes: *Vulcan the god's smith, Aeolus the god of winds, and the sky, Neptune of the sea, Juno the goddess of earth. Mars signifies war and Saturn grief, while Orion is the constellation of storms.*



Mars Receives Weapons from Venus and Vulcan
Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert (Dutch, 1624 - 1654)
The Rijksmuseum

42. 'MA POI CHE 'L DOLCE RISO HUMILE ET PIANO'



ut now that her clear sweet humble smile
no longer hides the freshness of her beauty,
that Sicilian smith of ancient times
works his arms at the forge in vain,

for Jupiter lets the weapons fall from his hand,
tempered though they were in Etna's fires,
and Juno his sister begins to clear the air
under Apollo's lovely gaze on every side.

A breeze blows from the western shore
that makes it safe to sail without art,
and fills the grass with flowers in every meadow.

Harmful stars vanish from the whole sky,
scattered by that beloved, lovely face,
for which I've already shed so many tears.

Note: *A companion poem to 41. Vulcan is the Sicilian smith. The original says Mongibello rather than the better known Mount Etna where Vulcan had his forge.*

43. 'IL FIGLIUOL DI LATONA AVEA GIÀ NOVE'



pollo, Latona's son, had sent his gaze
down nine times, from his high balcony
looking for one who in former times moved
his sighs in vain, and now moves another's.

So that tired of searching, not knowing where
she might be, whether near or far,
he appeared to us like one maddened by grief,
who cannot find again a much loved thing.

And positioned apart and being so sad
he did not see that face return, that if I live
will be praised in more than a thousand lines:

and suffering had even altered that face,
until the lovely eyes left off weeping:
so the sky remained in its former state.

Note: *Suggests poems 41-43 concern a nine-day period of retreat by Laura due to mourning or perhaps illness.*

44. 'QUE'CHE 'N TESAGLIA EBBE LE MAN' SI PRONTE



Caesar who was all too ready, in Thessaly,
to paint the ground crimson in civil war,
wept for Pompey his dead son-in-law,
recognising his familiar features:

and David the shepherd-boy who shattered
Goliath's skull, wept for Absalom his rebellious son,
and even drowned his eyes for the dead Saul,
so much so he cursed Gilboa's cruel mountain.

But you whom pity never caused to pale,
who always have your veil to protect you
against the bow Love draws in vain,

see me tormented by a thousand deaths:
and yet have never let one tear fall
from your sweet eyes, only disdain and anger.

Notes: *Caesar defeated Pompey at Pharsalia: later, after defeat in Egypt, Pompey's severed head was sent to Caesar. See 2 Samuel i and xviii for David, Goliath and Saul.*



Sextus the Son of Pompey Applying to Erictho,
to Know the Fate of the Battle of Pharsalia
Robert John Dunkarton (English, 1744 - 1811)
The Rijksmuseum

45. 'IL MIO ADVERSARIA IN CUI VEDER SOLETE'



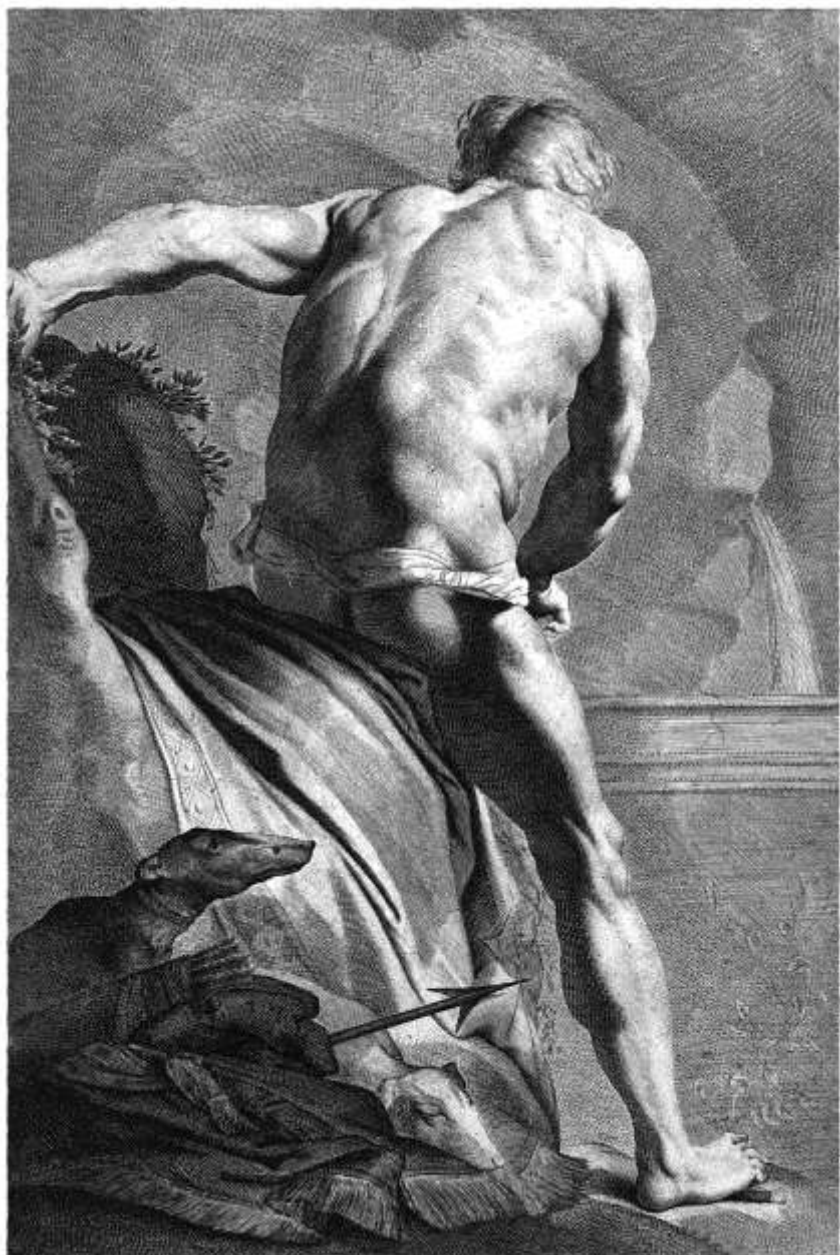
irror, my enemy, in which you are allowed
to see your eyes that Love and Heaven honour,
enamours you of beauties not its own,
sweet and delightful in more than mortal ways.

Through its promptings, Lady, I have been
driven from my sweet resting-place:
wretched exile, though I could not rightly stay
where you alone can have existence.

But if I had been fixed there with firm rivets,
that mirror would not have made you proud
and harsh, pleasing to yourself, to my harm.

Surely you can remember Narcissus:
that course and this runs to the same end,
though the grass is not worthy of such a flower.

Note: *For Narcissus see Ovid's Metamorphoses, falling in love with his own reflection he was changed into the narcissus flower.*



Narcissus at the Fountain

Cornelis van Dalen (II) (Dutch, 1648 – 1664)

The Rijksmuseum

46. 'L'ORO ET LE PERLE E I FIOR' VERMIGLI E I BIANCHI,'



he gold and pearls and flowers, crimson and white,
that winter should have made dry and withered,
are cruel and venomous thorns to me,
that sting me fiercely in the chest and side.

So my life will be tearful and short,
since great grief rarely withers or grows old:
but I blame those fatal mirrors more,
that you have wearied gazing at yourself.

They imposed their silence on my lord,
who prayed to you for me, so he was mute,
seeing you sate your passion with yourself:

they were created beneath the watery
depths, and tinted with eternal oblivion,
where the cause of my death was born.

47. 'IO SENTIA DENTR'AL COR GIÀ VENIR MENO'



felt those spirits weakening in my heart
that receive their life from you:
and since every earthly creature
naturally protects itself from death,

loosed my desire, that now I rein in hard,
and sent it by a road that is almost lost:
so that it draws me there, day and night,
and I lead it, against its will, another way.

And it brought me, slowly and shamefully,
to look on those delightful eyes, that I
guard myself from so they may not grow cold.

Now I'll live a while, since a mere glance of yours
has so much power to bring me to life:
then I'll die, if I don't follow my desire.

48. 'SE MAI FOCO PER FOCO NON SI SPENSE'



ince fire is never quenched with fire,
nor rivers ever dried by the rain,
but a thing's always increased by its like,
and sometimes its opposite makes it blaze higher,

Love, who have power over my thoughts,
and nourish one soul in two bodies,
why do you there obey a different rule,
making desire weaken by desire?

Perhaps like the great falls along the Nile
that deafen those around with their vast roar,
or the sun that dazzles those who gaze too hard,

so desire that is not in tune with itself,
unrestrained in its object, comes to grief,
and by spurring hard its speed is slowed.

49. 'PERCH'IO T'ABIA GUARDATO DI MENZOGNA'



though I've protected you from lying,
and have allowed you honourable speech,
ungrateful tongue you've not returned the honour,
but caused me anger and embarrassment:

and the more I'm in need of your help
to ask for mercy, the more frozen you are
and the words you make sound imperfect
like those made by a man in dreams.

And you, sad tears, you stay with me
all night, when I wish to be alone,
then vanish before the face of my peace:

And you, sighs, so ready to bring me anguish
and grief, issue slowly and brokenly then,
so that only my look's not silent about my heart.

50. 'NE LA STAGIONCHE 'L CIEL RAPIDO INCHINA'



At the moment when the swift sky turns
towards the west, and our day flies
to people beyond, perhaps, who see it there,
the weary old woman on a pilgrimage
finding herself alone in a far country,
redoubles her steps, and hurries more and more:
and then so alone
at the end of her day
is sometimes consoled
with brief repose that lets her forget
the troubles and the evils of the way.
But, alas, every grief the day brings me,
grows when the eternal light
begins to depart from us.

While the sun turns his fiery wheel
to give space to the night,
while darker shadows fall from the highest peaks,
the greedy peasant gathers his tools,
and with the speech and music of the mountains,
frees every heaviness from his heart:
and then sets out the meal
of an impoverished life,
like those acorns in the Golden Age
that all the world rejects but honours.
But let whoever will be happy hour on hour

since I have never yet had rest an hour,
not to speak of happiness,
despite the wheeling of the sky and stars.

When the shepherd sees the rays
of the great star sink to the nest where they hide,
darkening the eastern landscape,
he rises to his feet, and with his usual staff,
leaving the grass, the fountains and the beeches,
gently moves his flock:
far from other men
in cave or hut,
he scatters green leaves,
and without thought lies down to sleep.
Ah cruel Love, instead you drive me on
to follow the sound, the path and the traces,
of a wild creature that consumes me,
one I cannot catch, that hides and flees.

And the sailors in some enclosed bay
as the sun vanishes, throw their limbs
on the hard boards, still in their soiled clothes.
But though he dives into the deep waves,
and leaves Spain behind his back,
Granada, and Morocco and the Pillars,
and men and women,
earth and its creatures,
are free of their ills,
I never put an end to my lasting trouble:
and grieve that every day adds to my harm,
already my passion has been growing

for nearly ten long years,
and I can't imagine who could free me.

And, since speaking comforts me a little,
I see the oxen turn homewards in the evening,
from the fields and the furrows they have ploughed:
why has my sighing not been taken from me
at any time? Why not my heavy yoke?
Why are my eyes wet day and night?
Wretch that I am, what did I wish
when I first gazed
at that lovely face so fixedly
when I carved her image in that part
from which no force or art
can ever move it, till I am given as prey
to him who scatters all!
Nor even then can I say anything about him.

Song, if being with me
from dawn to evening
has made you of my company,
you'll not wish to show yourself everywhere:
and you'll care so little for other's praise,
it's enough for you to take thought, from hill to hill,
of how I'm scorched by fire
from this living stone, on which I lean.

51. 'POCO ERA AD APPRESSARSI AGLI OCCHI MEI'



f the light had neared my eyes a little
that dazzles me even when far away,
then, as she changed her form in Thessaly,
I would have changed my form completely.

And since I could not be transformed to be
more hers than I am already (not that it gains me pity),
I think my aspect today would be
carved from whatever stone is hardest,

from diamond, or from a fine marble, white
perhaps through fear, or from rock-crystal,
praised by the greedy and foolish crowd:

and be free of this savage and heavy yoke,
because of which I even envy that old man,
Atlas, whose shoulders shadow Morocco.

52. 'NON AL SUO AMANTE PIU DĪANA PIACQUE,'



iana was not more pleasing to her lover,
when by chance he saw her all naked
in the midst of icy waters,

than, to me, the fresh mountain shepherdess,
set there to wash a graceful veil,
that ties her vagrant blonde hair from the breeze,

so that she makes me, now that the heavens burn,
tremble, wholly, with the chill of love.

53. 'SPIRTO GENTIL, CHE QUELLE MEMBRA REGGI'



gentle spirit, that rules those members
in which a pilgrim lives,
a brave lord, shrewd and wise,
now you have taken up the ivory sceptre
with which you punish Rome and her wrongdoers,
and recall her to her ancient ways,
I speak to you, because I see no other ray
of virtue that is quenched from the world,
nor do I find men ashamed of doing wrong.
I don't know what Italy expects or hopes for,
she seems not to feel her trouble,
old, lazy, slow,
will she sleep forever, no one to wake her?
I should grasp her by the hair with my hand.

I've no hope she'll ever move her head
in lazy slumber whatever noise men make,
so heavily is she oppressed and by such a sleep:
not without the destiny in your right hand,
that can shake her fiercely and waken her,
now the guide of our Rome.
Set your hand to her venerable locks
and scattered tresses with firmness,
so that this sluggard might escape the mire.
I who weep for her torment day and night,
place the greater part of my hopes in you:
for if the people of Mars

ever come to lift their eyes to true honour,
I think that grace will touch them in your days.

Those ancient walls the world still fears and loves
and trembles at, whenever it recalls
past times and looks around,
and those tombs that enclose the dust
of those who will never lack fame
until the universe itself first dissolves,
and all is involved in one great ruin,
trust in you to heal all their ills.
O famous Scipios, o loyal Brutus,
how pleased you must be, if the rumour has yet
reached you there, of this well-judged appointment!
I think indeed Fabricius
will be delighted to hear the news!
And will say: 'My Rome will once more be beautiful!'

And if Heaven cares for anything down here,
the souls, that up there are citizens,
and have abandoned their bodies to earth,
pray you to put an end to civil hatred,
that means the people have no real safety:
so the way to their temples that once
were so frequented is blocked, and now
they have almost become thieves' dens in this strife,
so that their doors are only closed against virtue,
and amongst the altars and the naked statues
they commit every savage act.
Ah what alien deeds!
And no assault begun without a peal of bells
that were hung on high in thanks to God.

Weeping women, the defenceless children
of tender years, and the wearied old
who hate themselves and their burdened life,
and the black friars, the grey and the white,
with a crowd of others troubled and infirm,
cry: 'O Lord, help us, help us.'
And the poor citizens dismayed
show you their wounds, thousand on thousands,
that Hannibal, no less, would pity them.
And if you gaze at the mansion of God
that is all ablaze today, if you stamped out
a few sparks, the will would become calm,
that shows itself so inflamed,
then your work would be praised to the skies.

Bears, wolves, lions, eagles and serpents
commit atrocities against a great
marble column, and harm themselves by it.
Because this gentle lady grieves at it,
she calls to you that you may root out
those evil plants that will never flower.
For more than a thousand years now
she has lacked those gracious spirits
who had placed her where she was.
Ah, you new people, proud by any measure,
lacking in reverence for such and so great a mother!
You, be husband and father:
all help is looked for from your hands,
for the Holy Father attends to other things.

It rarely happens that injurious fortune
is not opposed to the highest enterprises,
when hostile fate is in tune with ill.
But now clearing the path you take,
she makes me pardon many other offences,
being out of sorts with herself:
so that in all the history of the world
the way was never so open to a mortal man
to achieve, as you can, immortal fame,
by helping a nobler monarchy, if I
am not mistaken, rise to its feet.
What glory will be yours, to hear:
‘Others helped her when she was young and strong:
this one saved her from death in her old age.’

On the Tarpeian Rock, my song, you’ll see
a knight, whom all Italy honours,
thinking of others more than of himself.
Say to him: ‘One who has not seen you close to,
and only loves you from your human fame,
tells you that all of Rome
with eyes wet and bathed with sorrow,
begs mercy of you from all her seven hills.’

Notes: *The unknown addressee has received the senator’s ivory sceptre. Petrarch references the history of the Roman Republic. Brutus is one of the first consuls not Caesar’s assassin. The black, grey and white friars are the Dominicans, Franciscans and Carmelites. The column is a reference to the Colonna family. Petrarch dates Rome’s fall from Constantine’s transfer of the Empire to Byzantium (Constantinople) in AD330. The Holy Father is at Avignon in exile. The Tarpeian Rock is on the Capitoline Hill of Rome.*



Triumph of Heraclius at Constantinople

Cassell's Illustrated Universal History (p77 vol 3, London 1893)

Edmund Ollier

The British Library

54. 'PERCH'AL VISO D'AMOR PORTAVA INSEGNA,'



ecause she bore Love's emblems in her aspect,
a pilgrim, she vainly moved my heart,
so that all others seemed less worthy of honour.

And I followed her over the green grass:
hearing a loud voice from the distance:
'Ah, how many steps you lose in this wood!'

I crouched in the shade of a lovely beech,
pensively: and looking all around me,
I saw many dangers on my road:

and turned back, almost at the point of noon.

55. 'QUEL FOCO CH'I' PENSAI CHE FOSSE SPENTO'



hat fire that I thought had been quenched
by chill time and declining years,
rekindles flame and suffering in the soul.

They were not wholly spent, as I can see,
those last embers, but covered over,
and I fear this second error will be worse.
With all the thousands of tears I weep
sorrow flowing from my heart distils
from my eyes: sparks and tinder are with me:
it is not as it was, but seems to flare higher.

What fire would not by now be spent and dead
on which these sad eyes were always turned?
Love, though I have been so slow to see it,
stretches me between two contraries:
and spreads his nets in such diverse ways,
that when I've most hope my heart will escape,
I can no longer retreat from her lovely face.

56. 'SE COL CIECO DESIR CHE 'L COR DISTRUGGE'



f, through blind desire that destroys the heart,
I do not deceive myself counting the hours,
now, while I speak these words, the time nears
that was promised to pity and myself.

What shade is so cruel as to blight the crop
which was so near to a lovely harvest?
And what wild beast is roaring in my fold?
What wall is set between the hand and grain?

Ah, I do not know: but I see only too well
that in joyous hope love led me on
only to make my life more sorrowful.

And now I remember words that I have read:
before the day of our final parting
we should not call any man blessed.

Note: See Ovid: *Metamorphoses* iii. 136-7 for one possible source of the last lines.

57. 'MIE VENTURE AL VENIR SON TARDE ET PIGRE'



y luck is always late and slow to reach me,
hope is uncertain, desire grows and increases,
so that I grieve with loss or anticipation,
and it is quicker than a tigress to depart.

Alas, snow will be black and hot,
the sea without waves, fish on the hills,
and the sun set where Tigris and Euphrates
issue together from their source,

before I can find peace in my mind,
or Love or my lady alter their ways,
who have joined in wrong against me.

And any sweetness follows such bitterness
that through disdain the taste is lost:
I will never know what's better from them.

58. 'LA GUANCIA CHE FU GIÀ PIANGENDO STANCHA'



y dear lord, rest that cheek of yours
already tired with weeping, on my first gift,
be more careful of yourself with that cruel one
who makes pallid all those who follow him.

With the second, block with your left hand
the path that his messengers pass along,
appear the same in August as January,
so as not to lose your time on the long road.

And drink a herbal mixture from the third,
to purge away all thought that pains the heart,
sweet at the last, though the start is bitter.

Keep me where all your pleasures are stored,
so I will not fear the Stygian ferryman,
if the request I make does not seem proud.

Note: *Sent to Agapito Colonna, Bishop of Luni with the gifts presumably of a pillow, book, and cup. The poem has indeed evaded Charon so far.*



Wealth is Useless After Death
Philips Galle, Hadrianus Junius, 1563
The Rijksmuseum

59. 'PERCHÉ QUEL CHE MI TRASSE AD AMAR PRIMA,'



though another's fault takes me away
from what drew me to my first bitterness,
I am not moved from my fixed desire.

Love hid the noose he caught me with
among that golden hair:
and cold ice came from those lovely eyes
that passed into my heart,
with the power of a sudden splendour,
that, merely remembering it, all other wishes
are driven from my soul.

Alas, since then, the sweet sight of that blonde hair
has been taken from me:
and the vanishing of those two true and lovely eyes
has saddened me with their flight:
but since dying well brings us honour,
despite grief or death,
I do not wish Love to loose me from this knot.

60. 'L'ARBOR GENTIL CHE FORTE AMAI MOLT'ANNI'



he gentle tree that I've loved many years,
while it's lovely branches did not disdain me
made my feeble intellect flower beneath
its shade, and all my anxieties increase.

When, while I suspected no such deceit,
from sweetness it turned itself to pitiless wood,
I turned all my thoughts to one purpose,
to speak endlessly of that sad harm.

What can he say who sighs because of love,
if my new rhymes have given him fresh hope,
hope that now, because of her, he loses?

Let no poet gather it now, nor Jupiter
favour it, and let Apollo's sun blaze in anger,
so that it withers all those green leaves.

61. 'BENEDETTO SIA 'L GIORNO, ET 'L MESE, ET L'ANNO,'



lessed be the day, and the month, and the year,
and the season, and the time, and the hour, and the moment,
and the beautiful country, and the place where I was joined
to the two beautiful eyes that have bound me:

and blessed be the first sweet suffering
that I felt in being conjoined with Love,
and the bow, and the shafts with which I was pierced,
and the wounds that run to the depths of my heart.

Blessed be all those verses I scattered
calling out the name of my lady,
and the sighs, and the tears, and the passion:

and blessed be all the sheets
where I acquire fame, and my thoughts,
that are only of her, that no one else has part of.

62. ‘PADRE DEL CIEL, DOPO I PERDUTI GIORNI,’



Heavenly Father, after the lost days,
after the nights spent wandering,
with that fierce desire that burned in my heart,
gazing on limbs adorned to do me harm,

now may it please you by Your light I turn
to the greater life and the sweeter work,
so that my harsh adversary having cast
his nets in vain, may be discredited.

Now, my Lord, the eleventh year revolves
since I was bowed under that pitiless yoke,
which to those most subject to it is most fierce.

Have pity on my unworthy suffering:
lead back my wandering thoughts to a better place:
remind them how you hung, today, upon the cross.

63. 'VOLGENDO GLI OCCHI AL MIO NOVO COLORE'



urning your eyes on my strange colour
that sets people thinking of death,
pity moved you: so that, greeting me
with kindness, you have kept my heart alive.

That frail life, that still exists in me
was the clear gift of your lovely eyes,
and your voice, angelically sweet.
I recognise my being comes from them:

for like a lazy beast stirred by a stick,
they likewise woke my heavy mind.
Lady, you have both the keys of my heart

in your hand: and I am content,
ready to sail with every breeze:
everything of yours is sweet honour to me.

64. 'SE VOI POTESSE PER TURBATE SEGNI'



f you, with signs of your unease,
lowering your eyes, bowing your head,
or being more ready than anyone to flee,
turning your face from honest worthy prayers,

or by some other ingenuity, seek escape
so from my heart, from which Love grafts
more branches of that first laurel, I'd agree
there was just cause for your disdain:

for a noble plant in arid soil
is embarrassed by it, so naturally
delights in being moved somewhere else:

and though your destiny prevents you
being elsewhere, you can at least provide
that you're not always somewhere you hate.

65. 'LASSO, CHE MAL ACCORTO FUI DA PRIMA'



las, how unprepared I was at first
that day when Love came to wound me,
and step by step made himself the lord
of my life, and took his place at the head.

I did not think that rasping power of his
could ever lessen by a jot the firmness
or the strength of my well-tempered heart:
but so it is when we overestimate the truth.

From now on all defence comes too late,
other than to prove whether Love
listens to mortal prayers much, or little.

I do not pray, since there is no purpose,
that my heart should ever burn less fiercely,
but only that she might share part of the fire.

66. 'L'AERE GRAVATO, ET L'IMPORTUNA NEBBIA' (*SESTINA*)



he heavy air, and the oppressive cloud,
compressed on all sides by the raging winds,
will quickly be converted into rain:
and already part-crystal are the rivers,
and where there was grass in the valleys
there's nothing to be seen but frost and ice.

And on my heart that grows colder than ice
my heavy thoughts form such a cloud,
as sometimes rises from these valleys,
closed off from the more kindly winds,
surrounded by the slow-moving rivers,
when there falls from heaven a gentler rain.

In a little while it passes, all that heavy rain,
and the warmth disperses snow and ice,
giving a swollen surface to the rivers:
never was the sky hidden by such dense cloud
that, meeting with the fury of the winds,
it did not fly from off the hills and valleys.

But, alas, for me there are no flowering valleys,
rather I weep in clear skies or in rain,
and in the chill and in the gentle winds:
when that day comes my lady's without ice
inside, and outside is without the usual cloud,
dry ocean will be seen, and lakes and rivers.

As long as the sea receives the rivers
and the wild creatures love the shady valleys,
her lovely eyes will be concealed by cloud
that makes in mine one continuous rain,
and in her heart the unyielding ice
which draws from mine such sighing winds.

I should be able to excuse the winds,
for love of that one, that between two rivers
confined me among sweet green and lovely ice,
so that I pictured through a thousand valleys
that shade where I was, so that no heat or rain
troubled me there nor any breaking cloud.

But never did cloud fly before the winds
as on that day, nor rivers ever with rain,
nor ice when the sun unlocks the valleys.

67. 'DEL MAR TIRRENO A LA SINISTRA RIVA,'



On the left shore of the Tyrrhenian Sea,
where the waves weep, broken by the wind,
I suddenly glimpsed the noble leaves
that force me to write so many pages.

Love that was seething in my spirit
through remembering that golden hair,
pushed me so I fell, as if no longer living,
into a stream hidden in the grass.

Alone though I was among the woods and hills,
shame was with me, for the gentle heart
is enough in itself, and needs no other spur.

I'm at least glad to have changed my tale
from eyes to feet, since if these are made wet
the others are dried by a more courteous April.

68. 'L'ASPETTO SACRO DE LA TERRA VOSTRA'



he sacred aspect of your native place,
makes me sorrow for the evil that is past,
crying: 'Arise, you wretch, what is it you do?':
and shows me the way to climb to Heaven.

But with this thought another one contends
and says to me: 'Why do you run away?
If you recall, the time now is passing
in which you might turn and see our lady.'

I understand what it says, and I turn
to ice inside, like a man who hears
news which suddenly overwhelms him.

The first thought returns, the other flies:
which will win, who knows: but they've fought
till now, and more than one single time.

69. 'BEN SAPEVA IO CHE NATURAL CONSIGLIO'



ove, I well know our natural defences
are never of any value against you,
you've so many snares, so many false promises,
so many grasps of your fierce claws.

But recently, what was marvellous to me
(I tell it, as someone unaware of it,
and who noted it, on those salt waters
between Elba and Giglio and the Tuscan shore),

I fled your hand, and on the passage,
driven by the wind and sky and waves,
I went unknown and as a stranger: when

behold your ministers, from who knows where,
to show me how wrong is he who hides
from destiny, and how wrong he who fights it.

70. 'LASSO ME, CH'I' NO SO IN QUAL PARTE PIEGHI'



h me, I don't know where to seek for hope
that has been false so many times before:
if there is no one who will listen with pity,
why should I send the same prayers to heaven?

But if it should chance that I'm not prevented
from ending these sad songs
before my ending,
let it not weigh heavy with my lord if I
ask to sing freely among the grass and flowers:
'Dreꝝ et rayson es qu'ieu ciant e 'm demori,
It's right and just I should sing and be happy'.

For it is right that I should sing sometimes,
since I have sighed so very long
that it's never soon enough to begin
to counter so much grief with smiles.
And if I could only grant those sacred eyes
some delight
through sweet speech of mine
Oh I'd be blessed beyond all other lovers!
More so if I could say without a lie:
'Donna mi priegha, per ch'io volgio dire,
My lady asks me, so I desire to speak.'

Wandering thoughts, that step by step
have led me to such high poetry,
see how my lady's heart is cold enamel,

so hardened that I cannot pass inside.
She does not deign to gaze so low
as to care for our words
against heaven's wishes,
so that I'm already tired of the struggle:
and as my heart becomes hard and rough,
'così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro,
so I would wish my speech to be rougher.'

What do I say? Where am I? Do I deceive myself
because my exalted passion runs so high?
Though I traverse the sky from sphere to sphere
there is no planet that forces me to grieve.
If a mortal veil dims my sight
what fault is it of the stars,
or anything of beauty?
With me is what harms me day and night,
what brings me pain from its pleasure,
'la dolce vista e 'l bel guardo soave,
the sweet sight and the lovely gentle look.'

Everything with which the world's adorned
issued pure from the eternal Maker's hand:
but I who cannot discern how to enter in,
am dazzled by beauty shown me all around:
and whenever I turn to the real splendour,
my eyesight cannot see true,
as if it has been weakened,
through its own fault, not by the day
when I first turned towards that beauty
'nel dolce tempo de la prima etade,
in the sweet season of my early youth.'

Petrarch

Notes: *The last lines of the verses are quotations in chronological order from the poetic tradition leading to Petrarch, namely from a poem attributed to Arnaut Daniel, from Guido Cavalcanti, from Dante, Cino da Pistoia, and from Petrarch 23.*



Dante (Study for Dante's Dream)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (English, 1828 - 1882)

71. 'PERCHE LA VITA E BREVE'



Because this life is short,
and thought trembles at the high enterprise,
I place little of my trust in either:
but hope that the sorrow
I cry silently might be accepted
where I long for, and where it ought to be.
Lovely eyes where Love has made his nest,
I direct my weak verse towards you,
of itself slow, but spurred by great delight:
and he who speaks of you
takes a noble subject as his theme,
which lifts him on loving wings
far from all base thought.
Now on these wings I fly to speak
of what I've long carried hidden in my heart.

Not that I'm blind
as to how my praise might harm you:
but my great passion cannot be opposed,
that which was born in me
when I saw that which is beyond all thought
beyond what others have spoken, or myself.
This cause of my sweet bitter state
none can understand as well as you.
When I melt like snow in the hot sun,
your gentle disdain
is perhaps because my unworthiness offends.

Oh, if that fear
did not quench the flame where I burn,
how blessed I'd be! For in your presence
it's sweeter to die than live without you.

While I am not consumed
so frail an object in so fierce a fire,
it's not true worth that prevents my ruin
but a little touch of fear,
that chills the errant blood in my veins,
restoring the heart so that it burns longer.
O hills, O Valleys, O rivers, O woods, O fields,
O witnesses to my hard life,
how many times have you heard me call for death!
Ah wretched fate
staying destroys me, and fleeing is no help.
But if a greater fear
did not restrain me, a short swift way
would bring this harsh bitter pain to an end:
and the blame would be hers who does not care.

Sadness why do you lead me
out of my path, to say what I do not wish.
Allow me to go where it pleases me to go.
I don't complain of you
eyes, bright beyond what is mortal,
nor of him who tied me in this knot.
You see what colours Love often likes to paint
in the midst of my features,
and can imagine what he does inside,
where he stands over me night and day

with the power he gathered from you,
blessed and happy lights,
except that you cannot turn to see yourselves:
though as often as you turn again to me,
you see what you are in another.

If you could only see
the divine, unbelievable beauty
that I speak of, as those who gaze can,
immeasurable happiness
would fill your heart: perhaps its natural power
is kept remote from you to spare you.
Blessed is the soul that sighs for you
heavenly lights, so that I give thanks for life
that otherwise is worthless!
Alas, why do you so rarely
grant me what does not sate me?
Why do you not more often
consider how Love wastes me?
And why do you immediately rob me
of the good that now and then my spirit feels?

I say from time to time
through your pity, I feel
a strange new sweetness in my soul,
that clears my dead weight
of harmful thoughts, so that
of a thousand only one is left:
that is alone enough to live in joy.
And if this good could stay a while
no state would be equal to mine:

though such honour maybe
would make others envious, and me proud.
Alas, that must be why
sorrow attacks laughter in the end,
and why I interrupt that burning rapture
to return to myself, and think of myself again.

The loving thought
that lives within, is revealed to me in you,
such that it draws away all other joy:
then words and deeds
arise in me so that I hope I might
be made immortal, though the flesh dies.
Anguish and pain flee at your appearance,
and meet again in me when you depart.
But since my loving memory
prevents them entering
they do not sink beyond the surface:
so that if good fruit at times
is born of me, the seed's first sown by you:
I'm an almost sterile soil in myself,
but tilled by you, so the praise is all yours.

Song, you do not release me, but stir me
to speak of what tempts me from myself:
therefore be certain not to exist alone.

72. 'GENTIL MIA DONNA, I' VEGGIO'



My gentle lady, I see
a sweet light that streams from your eyes
that shows me the way that leads to Heaven:
and as it is accustomed to,
in there, where I sit alone with Love,
the heart is shining almost visibly.
This is the sight that leads me to do good,
and drives me towards a glorious end,
only by this distinguished from the crowd:
no human tongue could ever
say what those two divine lights
make me feel,
and when winter scatters frost around,
and when after it the year renews
that is the time of my first troubling.

I think: if there are other works
as fine above, where the eternal Mover
of the stars leaned down from to reveal
his labours to the earth,
open the prison where I am confined,
that shuts from me the road to such life.
Then I turn again to my habitual war,
grateful to Nature and the day I was born
for reserving so much good for me,
and she who exalted my heart
with such hopes: for till then I lay

there, a harmful burden to myself,
but from that day was pleasing to myself,
filling with sweet and noble thought
that heart to which lovely eyes hold the key.

There is no joyous state
that Love or fickle Fortune ever granted
to those they loved most in the world,
that I would not exchange
for those eyes' glance, from which there comes
my peace, as a whole tree comes from its root.
Wandering sparks of my life,
angelic, blessed, from which delight takes fire,
that consume me and sweetly destroy me:
as every other light
must flee and vanish before your splendour,
so with my heart,
when such great sweetness descends within,
all other things, all thought must go,
and only Love remains there with you.

Whatever sweetness was ever found
in the hearts of venturesome lovers, gathered
all on one place, is nothing to what I feel,
whenever you turn
the black and white of those lovely eyes,
in which Love so delights, sweetly towards me:
and I believe that from my infant cradle
this was the remedy Heaven sent
for my imperfections, and adverse Fortune.
That veil does me wrong

and that hand which so often comes
between those eyes and my great delight,
so that day and night I pour out
my deep passion to ease my heart,
that takes the form of your varying aspect.

Because I see, and am sad,
that my natural gifts help me little
and make me unworthy of a kindly glance,
I make myself such
as befits my exalted hope,
and the noble fire in which I burn.
If, despising what the world desires,
I can make myself by careful study
swift to good and slow to its contrary,
perhaps benign judgement
will one day bring me fame.
Surely the end of my weeping,
my grieving heart does not hope for from elsewhere,
will come at last from that sweet tremor of lovely eyes
the final hope of courteous lovers.

Song, one sister went a little before you,
and I sense another appearing to me
where I live: so I'll lay out more paper.

73. 'POI CHE PER MIO DESTINO'



ince through destiny
the burning passion that has forced me to sigh
for so long now forces me to speak,
Love, you who create my longing,
be my guide, and show me the road,
and let my verse match my desire:
but not so that the heart may be out of tune
through overwhelming sweetness, as I fear,
because of what I feel where none can see,
since speaking strikes and inflames me:
nor do I find this great fire in my mind lessen,
as it sometimes would,
by use of intellect, at which I tremble and fear,
rather I'm consumed by the sound of words,
as a snow man is in the sun.

At the start I thought
to find some brief repose and a truce
by speaking of my ardent desire.
This hope, setting me on fire
to talk of what I felt,
abandoned me in time, and vanished.
And yet I must follow the high theme
continuing the loving notes,
so powerful the wish that drives me on:
and reason is dead
that held the reins, so nothing can oppose this.

Show me, Love, how to speak
in such a way at least that if it reach
the ears of my sweet enemy,
it might make her the friend of pity, if not of myself.

I say that in those ages
when spirits were on fire with true honour,
some men's efforts turned
to diverse countries,
crossing hills and waves, and searching
for things of honour, and culled its finest flower,
but now that God, and Love, and Nature
wish to set every gentle virtue
in those bright eyes, through which I live in joy,
I have no need to cross
this river or that, or change countries.
I always return to them
as to the fount of all my blessings,
and when in desire I rush towards death,
the sight of them alone brings me salvation.

As the weary steersman
at night, in a rising wind, lifts his eyes
to the stars of those two Bears near the Pole,
so, in the tempest
of Love I endure, your shining eyes
are my sign, and my only comfort.
Alas, what I glimpse of them from time to time,
as Love directs me, is still more
than what is given freely to me,
and I make what little I myself

am from their eternal rule.
I have not moved a step
without them, since I first saw them:
and I hold them as the crown of my being,
taking my own value to be worthless.

I could never imagine,
nor ever tell, the effect
that those sweet eyes have on my heart:
every other delight
of this life is so much less
and every other beauty falls far behind.
Tranquil peace, without any torment,
such as lies in the eternal Heavens
comes from their loving smile.
If I could see close to,
for only one day, how Love
governs them so sweetly,
while the spheres above ceased to move,
and think of nothing else nor of myself,
and not lose them by the blinking of an eye.

Alas, how I go desiring
what can never exist in any way,
and live in desire beyond all hope:
if only that knot
with which Love ties my tongue
whenever excess of light blinds mortal sight,
were untied, I would take courage
to speak words in so new a way
it would make those who heard them weep:

but that deep piercing
turns my wounded heart elsewhere,
so I grow pale,
and the blood vanishes who knows where,
and I am not what I was: and I see
that this is the blow with which love kills me.

Song, my pen is already weary
of this long sweet speech with you,
but not my thoughts of speaking to myself.

74. 'IO SON GIA STANCO DI PENSAR SI COME'



am already wearied with thinking
of how my thoughts are never weary of you,
and how I've not abandoned life itself yet,
to flee so heavy a weight of sighs:

and how my tongue is never lacking sound
to speak of your face and your hair,
and your lovely eyes I always talk of,
calling on your name day and night:

and how my feet are never tired and weary
of following your footsteps everywhere,
spending so many paces uselessly:

and how from it comes all the ink and paper
where I go writing of you: if that is wrong,
it is Love's fault, not a defect of my art.

75. 'I BEGLI OCCI OND'I' FUI PERCOSSO IN GUISA'



those lovely eyes, that struck me in such guise
that only they themselves could heal the wound,
and not the power of herbs, nor magic art,
nor some lodestone from far beyond our seas,

have so closed the road to other love,
that one sweet thought alone fills my mind:
and if my tongue wishes to pursue it,
that guide, and not the tongue is to be blamed.

Those are the lovely eyes that make
my lord's enterprise victorious
on every side, above all my heart's:

those are the lovely eyes that always live
in my heart among the blazing sparks,
so that speaking of them never makes me tired.

76. 'AMOR CON SUE PROMESSE LUSIGNANDO'



Love, with his beguiling promises
led me back to my ancient prison,
and gave the keys to my enemy
who still keeps me in exile from myself.

I did not realise it, alas, until it truly
happened, and now with great toil
(who'd believe it though I speak on oath?)
I regain my liberty with sighs.

And like a truly close-kept prisoner
I carry the marks of chains on my limbs,
and eye and forehead spell what's in my heart.

When you are aware of my pallor,
you'll say: 'If I see and judge correctly,
this man was not far away from death.'

77. 'PER MIRAR POLICLETO A PROVA FISO'



Polyclitus gazing fixedly a thousand years
with the others who were famous in his art,
would not have seen the least part
of the beauty that has vanquished my heart.

But Simone must have been in Paradise
(from where this gentle lady came)
saw her there, and portrayed her in paint,
to give us proof here of such loveliness.

This work is truly one of those that might
be conceived in heaven, not among us here,
where we have bodies that conceal the soul.

Grace made it: he could work on it no further
when he'd descended to our heat and cold,
where his eyes had only mortal seeing.

Note: *Polyclitus was the Greek artist of the fifth century BC. Simone Martini the Sienese painter (1283-1344) was a friend of Petrarch and painted a (lost) portrait of Laura to which this poem refers.*



Saint John the Evangelist

Lippo Memmi, workshop of Simone Martini (Italian, 1284 - 1344)

The Yale University Art Gallery

78. 'QUANDO GIUNSE A SIMON L'ALTO CONCETTO'



hen Simone had matched the high concept
I had in mind with the design beneath his hand,
if he had given to this noble work
intelligence and voice with the form,

he would have eased my heart of many sighs,
that make what's dearer to others vile to me:
since she's revealed to the sight, so humble,
promising peace to me in her aspect.

But when I come to speak with her,
benignly though she seems to listen,
her response to me is still lacking.

Pygmalion, what delight you had
from your creation, since the joy I wish
but once, you possessed a thousand times.

79. 'S'AL PRINCIPIO RISPONDE IL FINE E 'L MEZZO'



f the middle and the end of these fourteen years,
in which I've sighed, should echo the beginning,
I'll still have no more help from breeze or shade,
though I felt my passion's flame increase.

Love, with whose thoughts I am ever one,
under whose yoke I must ever breathe,
so governs me I am only half a man,
turning my eyes too often towards my harm.

So I go wasting from day to day,
so secretly that only I'm aware
that it's her look that destroys my heart.

I don't know how long this final sorrow
I've brought the spirit to can stay with me,
since death is near, and life is fleeting.

80. 'CHI E FERMATO DI MENAR SUA VITA' (*SESTINA*)



e who is set on living out his life
on the treacherous sea and near the rocks,
saved from death by a little vessel,
cannot be far from his own end:

unless he knows how to return to port
while the tiller still directs the sails.

The gentle breeze to which my tiller and sails
were entrusted, entering beloved life
and hoping to reach a better port,
carried me then among a thousand rocks:
and the causes of my sorrowful end
were not just outside but inside the vessel.

Trapped for a long time in this blind vessel
I wandered, not lifting my eyes to the sails
carrying me, before my time, to my end:
then it pleased Him who brought me into life
to call me back, far enough from the rocks
that some way off I could see the port.

As a light at night, burning in port,
is seen on the high seas by any vessel
if it's not hidden by a storm or rocks,
so, from above my swelling sails,
I saw the emblem of that other life,
and then I sighed towards my end.

Not that I am yet certain of my end:
who wishes while day remains, to reach port
make's a long voyage in so short a life:
I'm afraid, sailing so frail a vessel,
mostly I wish the wind not to fill my sails
that wind that drove me on the rocks.

If I escape alive from dangerous rocks,
and my exile comes to a good end,
I'd be content to furl my sails,
and cast anchor in any port!
If only I don't blaze, a burning vessel:
it's so hard for me to leave the old life.

Lord of my end, and of my life,
before my vessel shatters on the rocks,
drive me to port, with storm-tossed sails.

81. 'IO SON SI STANCO SOTTO 'L FASCIO ANTICO'



'm so wearied by the ancient burden,
of these faults of mine, and my sinful ways,
that I've a deep fear of erring on the road,
and falling into my enemy's hands.

A great friend came to rescue me,
with noble and ineffable courtesy:
then flew away, far from my sight,
so that I strive to see him, but in vain.

But his voice still echoes down here:
'Come unto me: all you that labour
behold the path, if no one blocks the way.'

What grace, what love, O what destiny
will grant me the wings of a dove,
to lift from the earth, and be at rest?

Note: *See Matthew xi.28*

82. 'IO NON FU' D'AMAR VOI LASSATO UNQUANCHO'



have never tired of love for you,
my Lady, nor will I while I live:
but hatred of my self has reached its end,
and I am weary of continual weeping:

and I'd rather have a plain stone sepulchre,
than your name be written as author of my hurt,
on some marble: where my body's laid
without my spirit, that might still remain with you.

So, if a heart full of loving loyalty
can satisfy you, without causing harm,
favour me now by granting mercy.

If your disdain wanders some other way
seeking to be sated, and finds nothing worthy:
then Love and I will receive sufficient thanks.

83. 'SE BIANCHE NON SON PRIMA AMBE LE TEMPIE'



f both my temples time it seems is greying
little by little are still not quite white
I'll not be safe: I'll still adventure where
Love sometimes aims his bow and fires.

I no longer fear he'll maim or kill me,
or capture me, even though he traps me,
nor open up my heart because it's pierced
by his venomous and cruel arrows.

No tears can flow now from my eyes,
though they know by now which way to flow,
since sorrow's never closed the way to them.

I can be heated easily by fierce rays
and yet not set ablaze: that sharp, cruel form
can trouble my sleep but cannot wake me.

84. 'OCCHI, PIANGETE: ACCOMPAGNATE IL CORE'



weep, eyes: accompany the heart
that is about to die for your failings.
'So we are, always weeping: we must mourn
for another's fault rather than our own.'

Yet it was through you that Love first entered,
where he still lives as though it were his home.
'We opened the way because of that hope
that came from within that heart that is to die.'

These claims are not, as they may seem, equal:
for it was you, so eager at first sight,
who did harm to yourself, and to that one.

'Now that is what saddens us more than anything,
that perfect judgement is so rare,
and we are blamed for another's fault.'

85. 'IO AMAI SEMPRE, AT AMO FORTE ANCHORA'



've always loved, and I love deeply still,
and love that sweet place more, from day
to day, where I'm often forced to return
weeping, whenever Love deceives me.

And I'm deep in love with that day and hour
when all base cares were swept from round me:
and love her more, whom a lovely face adorns,
loving to do good following her example.

But who'd think to see those sweet enemies
I love so much, combined together to attack
my heart, on this side and on that?

Love, with what forces now you conquer me!
And had not my hope grown with my desire,
I'd drop down dead where I most wish to live.

86. 'IO AVRÒ SEMPRE IN ODIO LA FENESTRA'



always hate that window from which Love
has already shot a thousand arrows at me,
though not a single one of them was mortal:
it's good for death to come while life's still happy.

And surviving in this earthly prison
causes me, infinite pain, alas:
and more because my grief will be immortal,
since the soul's not separated from the heart.

Wretch, it should realise by now,
through long experience, that time
can never be turned back, or be restrained.

I often guide it with such words as these:
'Go, sad one, he does not go before his time
who leaves the happiest of his days behind.

87. 'SÍ TOSTO COME AVEN CHE L'ARCO SCOCCHI,'



As soon as ever he has launched his arrows,
the expert archer can see from afar
which shots have gone astray, and those
he's sure will hit the target he assigned:

so you knew the arrows from your eyes,
lady, had pierced straight to my deepest part,
and I'd be forced to weep eternally
because of the wound my heart received.

And I am certain of what you said then:
'Wretched lover, where will crying lead him?
Behold the arrow by which Love hoped he'd die.'

Now, seeing how grief has bound me,
all that my enemies do with me now,
is not to kill me but increase my pain.

88. 'POI CHE MIA SPEME E LUNGA A VENIR TROPPO'



ecause my hope takes too long to mature,
and what is left of life is so fleeting,
I wish I'd realised it in time
and fled away, faster than at a gallop:

and I do flee, though weak and wracked
from side to side, as desire twists me:
safe now, but bearing in my face
the marks received in love's struggle.

So my advice is: 'You who are on your way,
retrace your steps: and you Love sets alight
don't wait there, among extremes of heat:

though I live, not one in a thousand escapes:
she was strong, that enemy of mine,
and yet I saw her wounded in the heart.'

89. 'FUGGENDO LA PREGIONE OVE AMOR M'EBBE'



leaving the prison where Love for many years
had done with me whatever it was he wished,
it would be a long story to recount
how my newfound freedom troubled me.

My heart told me it did not know how
to live alone a day: and then that traitor Love
appeared in my path, so well disguised
he'd have deceived a wiser man than me.

So that many times, sighing within,
I said: 'Ah me, the yoke, the log, the chains,
were much sweeter than this walking free.

Alas for me, I saw my ills too late:
and how hard it is for me today to turn
away from error, where I entwined myself!

90. 'ERANO I CAPEI D'ORO A L'AURA SPARSI'



he let her gold hair scatter in the breeze
that twined it in a thousand sweet knots,
and wavering light, beyond measure, would burn
in those beautiful eyes, which are now so dim:

and it seemed to me her face wore the colour
of pity, I do not know whether false or true:
I who had the lure of love in my breast,
what wonder if I suddenly caught fire?

Her way of moving was no mortal thing,
but of angelic form: and her speech
rang higher than a mere human voice.

A celestial spirit, a living sun
was what I saw: and if she is not such now,
the wound's not healed, although the bow is slack.

91 'LA BELLA DONNA CHE COTANTO AMAVI'



he lovely lady who you loved so dearly
has suddenly departed from us,
and has climbed to Heaven, I trust,
since every act of hers was sweet and gentle.

It is time to recover both the keys
of your heart, that in life she possessed,
and follow her on the swift true road:
no earthly charge should prevent you.

Now you are free from the greater burden,
the others may be easily laid down,
while you climb like a free pilgrim.

You know truly now how all creatures
run towards death, and how the soul
must be lightened for the perilous gate.

Note: *Possibly addressed to Petrarch's brother Gherardo who became a Carthusian in 1343.*

92. 'PIANGETE, DONNE, ET CON VOI PIANGA AMORE:'



weep, ladies, and let Love weep with you:
Weep, lovers, throughout the world,
for he is dead, who while he lived on earth,
had one intent, that of honouring you.

I only pray, for myself, that bitter grief
should not be such as stifles my tears,
and that it should allow as many sighs
as I may need, to ease my heart.

Weep, poetry, again: weep, my verses,
because our beloved master, Cino,
has just now departed from us.

Weep Pistoia, and her perverse citizens
who have lost so sweet a neighbour:
and Heaven, where he has gone, rejoice.

Note: *The poet Cino da Pistoia (d.1337) is also mentioned in poem 287. He had been exiled from Pistoia.*

93. 'PIÙ VOLTE AMOR M'AVEA GIÀ DETTO: SCRIVI'



ow often Love's already said to me: 'Write,
write what you've seen in letters of gold,
of how I can make my followers turn pale,
and, in the same moment, be alive and dead.

There was a time you felt it yourself,
and were an example to the choir of love:
then other labours snatched you from my hand:
though I still touched you as you fled.

And if the lovely eyes, where I showed myself
to you, and where my sweetness stayed
after I had broken your hard heart,

remake my bow that shatters everything,
perhaps your face won't always be dry:
for I feed myself on tears, as you know.'

94. 'QUANDO GIUGNE PER GLI OCCHI AL COR PROFONDO'



hen through my eyes the image of my lady
enters my heart's depths, she banishes all others,
and the power my spirit radiates
leaves my limbs, leaves them inert weights.

And often a second miracle is born
from the first: what was driven away,
fleeing from itself, arrives in a place
where it takes vengeance and delights in exile.

So a deathly pallor appears in two faces,
since the vigour that showed them as living,
is no longer where it used to be in either.

And I recalled this on the day I saw
two lovers undergo that transformation,
and look as pale as I used to look.

Note: *'in a place': in her heart.*

95. 'COSÍ POTES'IO BEN CHIUDER IN VERSI'



f I could imprison in my verses
the thoughts imprisoned in my heart,
there's no spirit in this world so cruel
it would not be saddened out of pity.

But you, eyes of beauty, from which I felt
the blow, not wearing a helmet or a shield,
you see me naked, inside and out,
though my grief is not poured out in tears.

Since your vision shines in me,
like a ray of sunlight through glass,
my desire is enough, without my speaking.

Alas, faith never harmed Mary or Peter,
faith, that's an enemy to me alone:
as I know none but you could understand.

96 'IO SON DE L'ASPECTAR OMAI SI VINTO,'



'm so defeated now, in appearance,
and with the sighs of this long war,
that I've come to hate hope and desire,
and all the other nets that snare my heart.

But that sweet joyful face whose image I carry
engraved in my breast, and see wherever I gaze,
constrains me: I'm forced back against my will
into those torments that I first knew.

I erred then when the ancient path
of liberty was closed to me, removed:
what ill he follows who's led by the eye,

then free and freely runs towards his ill:
the spirit that sinned a single time
must march now to another's orders.

97. 'AHI BELLA LIBERTA, COME TU M'AI,'



h precious freedom, how you've shown me
in parting from me, the state I was in
before that first arrow made the wound
the one from which I never can be healed!

My eyes were so enamoured of their sorrow,
that reason's rein was of no worth,
since I held all things mortal in disdain:
alas, I so accustomed them, from the start!

I don't allow myself to listen except to those
who speak of her, my death: and only go filling
the air with her name, that sounds so sweet.

Love spurs me on to no other place,
my feet know no other road, nor can the hand
praise anyone but her in my writing.

98. 'ORSO, AL VOSTRO DESTRIER SI PO BEN PORRE'



rso, you can easily bridle your warhorse,
so that you can restrain his course again:
but who can tie your heart, so it can't break free,
if you love honour and loathe its contrary?

Don't sigh: no one can take your worth
from you, even if you're prevented from going:
since as public knowledge is aware,
your heart's there, and no other's before it.

Enough that it will be found in the field
on the appointed day, beneath the armour
that time, love, virtue and blood have given,

calling out: 'I'm filled with noble desire
as is my lord, who could not follow me,
and is sick and languishes, not being here.'

Note: *Addressed to Orso dell' Anguillara on his being unable to attend a tournament.*

99. 'POI CHE VOI ET IO PIU VOLTE ABBIAM PROVATO'



ince you and I have seen how our hope
has, so many times, turned to disappointment,
raise your heart to a happier state,
towards that great good that never cheats us.

This earthly life's like a meadow, where
a snake hides among the grass and flowers:
and if anything is pleasing to the eye,
it leaves the spirit more entangled.

So you, who've always sought a mind
at peace, before the final day,
follow the few, and not the common crowd.

Though you could well say to me: 'Brother
you show the way to others, from which
you've often strayed, and now more than ever.'

100. 'QUELLA FENESTRA OVE L'UN SOL SI VEDE'



hat window where one sun is seen
when she pleases, and the other sun at noon:
window that the cold wind rattles
when days are brief, when winds are northerly:

and the stone, where on long days my lady
sits thinking, and reasoning with herself,
when many places are covered by the shadow
of her lovely self, or trodden by her foot:

and the lovely pass where Love caught me:
and the fresh season that, from year to year,
renews my former wound, on that day:

and the face, and the words that remain
fixed deep in the centre of my heart,
make my eyes dim with tears.

101. 'LASSO, BEN SO CHE DOLOROSE PREDE'



las, I well know that he who pardons
no one, will make us his sad prey,
and that the world abandons us readily,
and keeps faith with us only a little while:

I see small thanks for all my languishing,
already the last day thunders in my heart:
and through all this Love will not release me,
asking the usual tribute from my eyes.

I know how the days, the minutes and the hours,
carry off the years: and there's no trickery,
only forces greater than any magic art.

My passion and my reason have fought
for fourteen years: and the better one will win,
if souls down here can foresee the good.

102. 'CESARE, POI CHE 'L TRADITOR D'EGITTO'



hen Ptolemy the Egyptian traitor
made him a gift of Pompey's honoured head,
Caesar, hiding his obvious delight,
had tears in his eyes, so it is written:

and Hannibal, seeing harsh Fortune
so hostile to his troubled empire,
smiled among his sad and weeping people
to lessen the bitter injury.

And so it is that every mind
veils its passion with its opposite,
cloaked with a bright or a dark look:

therefore if you see me smile or sing,
I do it since that is the only way
to hide the anguish of my weeping.

Note: *See poem 44 for Pompey. Hannibal grieved for Carthage.*



The Continenence of Scipio

Karel van Mander (I) (Flemish, 1548 – 1606)

The Rijksmuseum

103. 'VINSE HANNIBAL, ET NON SEPPE USAR POI'



annibal conquered, and yet did not know
how to make use of his victorious action:
so, my dear lord, I beg you to take care
the same thing doesn't happen to you.

The she-bear raging for her cubs,
who found the fields bitter this May,
gnaws inwardly, and whets her teeth and claws
to revenge her hurt on us.

While she is attacked by this new grief,
don't hang up your honoured sword,
but follow where your fortune calls,

straight by the road that can grant you
honour and fame in this world,
for thousands of years after your death.

Note: *Addressed to Stefano Colonna after his victory in May 1333 over the Orsini (The 'Bears'). The Colonna were Petrarch's patrons. Hannibal was unable to fully exploit his victories in Italy against the Romans, for example after Cannae in 216BC.*

104. 'L'ASPECTA VERTU, CHE 'N VOI FIORIVA'



he visible courage, that flowered in you
when Love too started to war against you,
produces fruit now, equal to the flower,
so that my hopes come to shore.

And so my heart tells me to write something
that regard for your name might increase,
since no other method is so certain
to recreate a living person from the marble.

Do you think that Caesar or Marcellus
or Paulus or Africanus will ever live
by means of the anvil and the hammer?

My dear Pandolfo, in the end those works
are fragile, but my labour's such
as can by fame make a man immortal.

Note: *Addressed to Pandolfo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini. Petrarch names four Roman generals.*



Landing of Scipio Africanus at Carthage
Anonymous (ca. 1555)
The Rijksmuseum

105. 'MAI NON VO' PIÚ CANTAR COM'IO SOLEVA,'



ow I don't wish to sing as I used to do,
since no one understands, and I am mocked:
and one can be annoyed in a pleasant place.
Always sighing provides no relief:

snow's already falling in the Alps all round:

and day is nearly here, so I'm awake.

A sweet honest action is a fine thing:

and it pleases me to see a loving woman

walking nobly and disdainfully,

not stubbornly and proudly:

Love rules his empire without a sword.

Let the man who's lost his way turn back:

the man without a home, sleep on the grass:

the man without gold, or has lost it,

let him quench his thirst with glass.

I trusted in Saint Peter's care: no more now:

let him understand who can, I understand.

An lasting evil is a burdensome thing:

when I can I free myself, and am alone.

Phaethon fell in the River Po, and died:

and the blackbird has already crossed the river:

ah, come and see it. Now I don't wish to:

a rock amongst the waves is no joke,

or birdlime in the branches. It troubles me

when a sovereign pride

hides many virtues in a lovely lady.

There are some who answer when no one calls:
others vanish and flee those who beg them:
some there are who melt in the ice:
others who long for death day and night.

An ancient proverb: 'Love those who love you',
I know well what I'm saying: now let it go,
others must learn from their own hopes.
A humble lady makes a sweet friend suffer.
It's hard to judge a fig. It seems to me
wise not to start too grand an undertaking:
and there are decent places in every land.
Infinite hope always kills:
and I have often been in trouble.
What little's left to me
will not displease the one I give it to.
I put my trust in Him who rules the world,
and gives his followers shelter in the wood,
who with compassionate rod
will let me wander, least among his flock.

Perhaps not all who read this understand:
he often catches nothing who spreads his net:
and he who's over-subtle breaks his neck.
Let not the law be slow for those who wait.
One goes down many miles to be at rest.
Things seem great wonders, and then are scorned.
A hidden loveliness is always sweeter.
Blessed be the key that turned in my heart,
and freed my soul, and cast away
such heavy chains,

and took infinities of sighs from me!
Another sorrows where I sorrowed more,
and makes my sorrow sweet by sorrowing,
so I thank Love
I feel what was no more, and it's no less.

Shrewd and wise words in silence,
the sound that takes away all my cares,
a dark prison where there is much light:
violets at night along the shore,
wild beasts inside the walls,
sweet fear, and lovely custom,
a stream that flows in peace from two springs,
where I yearned, and gathered where I was:
Love and Jealousy have snatched my heart,
and the signs of that sweet face
that lead me on along a smoother path
towards my hope, and an end to trouble.
O my good returned, and all that follows,
now peace, now war, now truce,
but don't abandon me in mortal dress.

I laugh and weep at all my torments past,
since I have so much faith in what I hear.
I like the present, and expect much better,
and go counting the years, and mute and crying.
I nest on a sweet branch, in such a way
that I can thank and praise the great refusal
that conquered the deep feeling at last,
and carved on my soul: 'I would be heard,
and known for speaking', and has erased

Petrarch

(the urge is so strong
I have to speak) 'You weren't bold enough':
I write inside my heart more than on paper
for her who hurt my heart and then healed it:
for her who made me die and live,
who in a moment freezes me and warms me.

Note: *Petrarch uses plain man's proverbs, and speech, to produce a poem less easy to understand than his usual poetic speech, and to convey the paradoxes of his situation.*

106. 'NOVA ANGELETTA SOVRA L'ALE ACCORTA'



new young angel carried by her wings
descended from the sky to the green bank,
there where I passed, alone, to my destiny,

When she saw I was without companion,
or guard, she stretched a noose, woven of silk,
in the grass, with which the way was turfed.

Then I was captured: and later it did not displease me,
so sweet a light issued from her eyes.

107. NON VEGGIO OVE SCAMPAR MI POSSA OMAI:’



see no way now I can free myself:
those lovely eyes have warred with me so long,
that, alas, I fear this burden of care
will destroy my heart that knows no truce.

I want to flee: but those loving beams
that are in my mind day and night,
shine so that, in this fifteenth year,
they daze me more than on the first day:

and their image is so scattered round me
I cannot turn away so as not to see
their light, or one the same lit from it.

Such a forest grows from the one laurel
that my adversary leads me, with marvellous art,
wandering among the branches, as he wishes.

108. 'AVENTUROSA PIU D'ALTRO TERRENO,'



his soil is happier than any other,
on which I saw Love once set her feet,
turning those sacred eyes towards me,
that make the air round her at peace:

a statue made of steel would wear away
with time, before that sweet act of hers,
that fills both my memory and my heart,
could cease to stand before me:

however many times I might recall it
I'd still bow down to look for the print
her lovely foot made, in its courteous passage.

But if Love is not asleep in the worthy heart,
beg him, Sennuccio, when you see him,
for some little tears, or for her sigh.

Note: *Sennuccio del Bene d.1349, see poems 112, 113, 287.*

109. 'LASSO, QUANTE FIATE AMOR M'ASSALE'



las, when Love makes his assaults on me,
more than a thousand times night and day,
I think of where I saw those sparks burning
that make the fire in my heart eternal.

Then I'm calm: and I'm brought to this,
that at the ringing of nones, vespers, dawn,
I find my thoughts of them so serene
that I recall and care for nothing else.

The gentle breeze from her bright face
moves with the sound of wise words
making a sweet harmony where it blows,

as if a gentle spirit from Paradise
seems always to comfort me, in that air,
so that my heart won't let me breathe elsewhere.

110. 'PERSEQUENDOMI AMOR AL LUOGO USATO,'



ove pursuing me to my old haunts,
I armed myself with my former thoughts.
hemmed in like a man in a battle,
who protects himself, and shuts the passes,

I turned and saw a shadow sunlight made
at my side, and recognised, on earth,
her who, if my judgement does not err,
is more worthy of an immortal state.

I said in my heart: 'Why be afraid?
But the thought was hardly formed inside
when the light appeared, by which I am destroyed.

Like thunder and lightning both together,
so I saw her lovely shining eyes
joined as one with her sweet greeting.

III. 'LA DONNA CHE 'L MIO COR NEL VISO PORTA'



he lady whose looks are always in my mind,
appeared to me where I was sitting thinking
deeply of love: and I, to do her honour,
approached her with a pale and reverent face.

As soon as she was aware of my state,
she turned towards me with such fresh colour
as would have disarmed Jove
in all his fury, and quenched his anger.

I gathered myself together: and she walked on,
speaking, so that I could not endure her words,
nor the sweet sparks from her eyes.

Now I find myself full of such varied
pleasures, thinking of that greeting,
I feel no grief, nor have done since then.

112. 'SENNUCCIO, I' VO' CHE SAPI IN QUAL MANERA'



ennuccio, I want you to know in what manner
I am treated, and what my life is like:
I burn, and am consumed, as I used to be:
the breeze whirls me, and I am as I was.

Here I saw her all humility, and its opposite,
now harsh, now soft, now pitiless, now kind:
now clothed in nobility, now in grace,
now tame, now disdainful and wild.

Here she sang sweetly, and here she sat:
here she turned, and here took a step back:
here, with her lovely eyes, she pierced my heart:

here she spoke a word, and here she smiled:
here her face changed. Alas, both night and day,
our lord, Love, holds me, with such thoughts.

Note: *Sennuccio*, see poems 108, 111, 113, 287.

113. 'QUI DOVE MEZZO SON, SENNUCCIO MIO'



ere, where I'm half myself, my Sennuccio,
(if only I were here entire, and pleasing you),
I've come escaping the storms and winds
this cruel weather has suddenly sent us.

Here I'm safe: and want to tell you why
I'm not afraid of the lightning as before,
and why I find my burning passion
not lessened at all, much less quenched.

As soon as I came to the regions of love
and saw where the pure, sweet breeze was born
that clears the air, and banishes the thunder,

Love rekindled the fire in my soul,
where she is mistress, extinguishing the fear:
so what would it be to gaze in her eyes?

Note: *Sennuccio is 'half' of Petrarch himself. Petrarch is near Laura's birthplace.*



Villeneuve lez Avignon

William Callow (British, 1812 – 1908)

The Getty Open Content Program

114. 'DE L'EMPIA BABILONIA, OND'È FUGGITA'



From the impious Babylon, from which
all shame has fled, all good is banished,
the house of grief, the mother of error,
I've also fled, to prolong my life.

Here I'm alone: and as Love invites me,
culling now rhymes and verse, now herbs and flowers,
I muse to myself, and often reflect
on better times: and that alone delights me.

I don't care about the crowd, or Fortune,
or myself any longer, or base things,
nor feel the heat within me or without.

I only miss two people: and wish that one
was humbly reconciled to me in heart,
and the other as firm of foot as ever.

115. 'IN MEZZO DI DUO AMANTI HONESTA ALTERA'



etween two noble lovers on either side,
I saw a true lady, and that lord with her
who reigns among men, and among gods:
the Sun was on one side, I on the other.

Since she found herself excluded from the sphere
of the more beautiful friend, filled with joy
she turned to my eyes, and I truly wish
she'd never be more severe to me than that.

Suddenly the jealousy that, at first sight
of such a noble adversary, had been born
in my heart, turned to happiness.

A little cloud came to wreath itself
around his saddened and tearful face:
so much had his defeat displeased him.

116. 'PIEN DI QUELLA INEFFABILE DOLCEZZA'



ull of that ineffable sweetness
that my eyes drew from her lovely face,
so I'd have closed them willingly
that day, never to see any lesser beauty,

I left what I loved more: and have so set
my mind on contemplating her alone,
that I see no one else, and what is not her
I hate and despise, through constant habit.

Thoughtful and late, I came with Love alone
into a valley that's closed all round,
that leaves me refreshed with sighs.

No ladies there, but fountains and stones,
and I find the image of that day
my thoughts depict, wherever I gaze.

Note: *The closed valley: Valchiusa in Italian, Vaucluse in French.*



Spring of Vaucluse

Hendrik Roosing (Dutch, 1786 - 1826)

The Rijksmuseum

117. 'SE' L SASSO, OND'È PIÙ CHIUSA QUESTA VALLE,'



f the rock by which this valley's closed,
from which its proper name is derived,
had through natural aversion turned
its face to Rome and its back to Babel,

my sighs would have a gentler path
to follow to where their hope's alive:
now they scatter, and yet each arrives
where I commanded, and not one fails.

And once there they are received so sweetly,
as I can tell, that none of them returns:
staying in those regions with delight.

The grief is in my eyes, so that at dawn,
they are taken by such desire for that lovely land,
they grant me tears, and weariness for my feet.

Note: *The valley is Vacluse: Babel, the Papal Court at Avignon.*



Catherine at the Court of the Pope in Avignon

Cornelis Galle (I) (Dutch, 1576 - 1650)

The Rijksmuseum

118. 'RIMANSI A DIETRO IL SESTODECIMO ANNO'



y sixteenth year of sighs is left behind,
and I travel on towards my end:
and yet it seems but yesterday
the beginning of such great distress.

Bitter is sweet to me, and pain is gain,
and life is burdensome: and I pray it overcomes
ill Fortune, and I fear lest Death should close,
before then, those lovely eyes that make me speak.

Alas, I am here now, and would be elsewhere:
and wish to wish for more, and wish no more:
and because I can't do more, do what I can:

and fresh tears from old desire
show that I'm what I have always been,
no different yet despite a thousand changes.

119. 'UNA DONNA PIU BELLA ASSAI CHE 'L SOLE'



lady lovelier than the sun,
and more radiant, and of the same age,
with her famous beauty
drew me, unripe, into her company.

Then in thought, in actions, in speech,
(since she is a rare thing in this world)
in a thousand ways,
she was noble and graceful, to my mind.
For her alone I changed from what I was,
once I had suffered her eyes to touch me:
and for love of her I set myself,
early enough, to weary labour:
such that if I reach the longed-for harbour,
I hope to live, through her,
for many years, when others think me dead.

This lady of mine led me for many years,
filled with the burning ardour of youth,
as I now understand,
only to have more certain proof of my worth,
showing me her shadow or her veil or dress
at times, but hiding her face:
and I, alas, believing
I saw enough, passed all my early life
contentedly, and I recall my joy,
now I have seen more of her within.

I say that recently
she revealed to me
what I had not seen until that time,
so that ice sprang up in my heart,
and is there even now,
and will always be till I am in her arms.

But fear and cold did not prevent me
from feeling so much confidence in my heart
that I threw myself at her feet
to gather more sweetness from her eyes:
and she, who had already removed her veil
before me, said to me: 'Friend, now see
how beautiful I am, and ask
whatever is fitting for your years.'
'My lady,' I said, 'my love has been yours
already for many years, and now I feel
so enamoured, that in this state the power
to wish or not wish has been taken from me.'
Then she replied in a voice
of such marvellous tones, and with that glance
that always makes me fear and hope:

'Few among the great crowd in this world,
hearing tell of my worth
have not felt at least a spark
for a brief moment in their heart:
but my adversary, whom it truly disturbs,
soon quenches it, so that all virtue dies,
and another lord reigns
who promises a more tranquil life.

But Love who first opened your mind
has told me truly of it,
so that I see your great desire
will make you worthy to end in honour:
and since you are already one of my few friends,
I see signs of a lady
who will make a happier road for your eyes.'

I wished to say: 'That is not possible':
but she said: 'Now see, and raise your eyes a little
to a more hidden place,
a lady who is only ever shown to a few.'
I had to lower my head in shame,
feeling a new and greater flame within:
and she took it in jest
saying: 'I see how it is with you, indeed.
Just as the sun with his powerful rays
makes all the other stars suddenly vanish,
so now my lovely face
seems less than a greater light outshines.
Yet you do not leave me still,
since one birth produced
us both together, she first, and then me.'

Meanwhile the knot of shame was broken
that had tied my tongue so tightly
in that first moment of disgrace,
when she had noticed my new passion:
and I began: 'If what I hear is true,
blessed be the Father, and blessed be the day
that the world was graced by you,

and all those hours I ran to find you:
and if I've ever turned from the true way,
I regret it deeply, more than I can show:
but if I might hear more so as to become
worthy of you, I burn with that desire.'
She replied thoughtfully, and so held
her sweet gaze fixed on me
that her look entered my heart with her words:

'As it pleases our eternal Father,
each one of us was born immortal.
Wretch, what is that worth to you?
It would have been better for us if that were lacking.
We were once beloved, lovely,
young and graceful: and now are such
that she beats her wings
to return to her former home:
and I am only a shade. Now I have spoken
all you can understand in this short time.'
Then she moved her feet,
and saying: 'Don't fear that I'll depart'
she culled a garland of green laurel,
which with her own hand
she wound round and round my temples.

Song, if someone calls your speech obscure,
say: 'I don't care, since I soon hope
another messenger
will reveal the truth in a clearer voice.
I only come to wake others,
if he who wrote this
did not deceive me when I left him.'

Note: *The two ladies are Glory and Virtue. The adversary is Pleasure and the new lord Idleness. The messenger is a further poem.*



Idleness (Acedia)

Hendrick Goltzius (Dutch, 1558 - 1617)

The Rijksmuseum

120. 'QUELLE PIETOSE RIME IN CH'IO M'ACCORSI'



these kind verses in which you show me
your wit and your courteous affection,
show such concern, to my mind,
that I am forced to reach for my pen

to make you certain that I haven't felt
the last clutch of him whom I wait for,
as all men do: though without suspecting it
I reached the entrance of his house:

then turned back, since I saw written
above it, that I had not yet reached
the limit prescribed for my life,

though I could not tell you the day or hour.
So now calm your troubled heart,
and find a worthier man to honour so.

Note: *Addressed to Antonio di Ferrara who in 1343 wrote a poem lamenting Petrarch's supposed death.*

121. 'OR VEDI, AMOR, CHE GIOVENETTA DONNA'



ow you see, Love, that this young lady
scorns your rule, and cares nothing for my hurt,
and feels safe between two of her enemies.

You are armed, and she in loose hair and gown
sits barefoot amongst the flowers and grass,
pitiless towards me, and proud towards you.

I'm imprisoned: but if there's mercy still,
raise your bow, and with a few arrows
take vengeance, my lord, for me and you.

122. 'DICESETTE ANNI À GIÀ RIVOLTO IL CIELO'



he heavens have revolved for seventeen years
since I first burned, and I am never quenched:
but when I think again about my state,
I feel a chill in the midst of flame.

The proverb is true, that our hair changes
before our vices, and though the senses slow
the human passions have no less intensity:
making a dark shadow to our heavy veil.

Alas, ah me, when will that day be,
when, gazing at the flight of my years,
I issue from the fire, and such long suffering?

Will the day come, ever, that only as I wish
the sweet air that adorns her lovely face
might please these eyes, and only as is fitting?

123 'QUEL VAGO IMPALLIDIR CHE 'L DOLCE RISO'



hat wandering paleness which conceals
the sweet smile in a loving mist,
offered itself to my heart with such majesty
that it revealed the heart in the face.

Then I knew how one sees another
in paradise, her compassionate thought
showed in such a manner others did not know it:
but I saw it, since I see nothing else.

Every angelic vision, every humble act
of every lady, in whom love had appeared
would be disdained beside her I speak of.

She bent her beautiful gentle gaze to earth,
and said in silence, as it seemed to me:
'Who distances my faithful friend from me?'

124. 'AMORE, FORTUNA ET LA MIA MENTE, SCHIVA'



ove, Fortune and my mind, shy of what
it sees, turned to what is past, afflict me so,
that I am envious now and then
of those who have reached the other shore.

Love torments my heart: Fortune removes
all solace: so that my foolish mind
annoys itself and weeps: and so in deep pain
I often have to struggle with my life.

Nor do I hope to return to sweeter days,
but only to progress from bad to worse,
and already half my life is done.

I have seen all my hopes, not diamond,
alas, but glass, fall from my hand,
and all my thoughts shattered in two.

125. 'SE 'L PENSIER CHE MI STRUGGE,'



f the thought that torments me,
so sharp and fierce,
could be dressed in a fitting colour,
perhaps the one who burns me and flees,
would share the heat,
and Love would wake where he sleeps:
the footprints left by my feet
on the hills and fields,
would perhaps be less lonely
my eyes would be less moist,
if she burned who remains like ice,
and leaves not an ounce in me
that it not fire and flame.

Because love weakens me
and robs me of my skill,
I speak in harsh rhymes, devoid of sweetness:
and yet the branches
do not always show their natural worth
in bark, or flower, or leaf.
Let Love, where he sits in the shade
and those lovely eyes
see what the heart conceals.
If the grief that's freed
should overflow in tears and laments,
the one hurts me the other
her, in that I have no art.

Sweet graceful verses,
I used in Love's
first assault, when I had no other weapons,
which of you will come and square
my heart of stone
so I can at least give tongue as before?
For I seem to have him within
who always depicts my lady
and speaks about her:
wishing to portray her,
is not enough for me, and it seems I only waste away.
Alas, what help there was
for my sweetness has fled.

Like a child who has trouble
moving and shaping his tongue,
who cannot speak, but who's pained by any longer
being silent, so desire leads me
to speak, and I hope before I die
my sweet enemy will hear me.
If her only joy perhaps
is in her lovely face,
and she scorns all else,
green river-bank, you can hear,
and make my sighs echo so widely
that how you were my friend
will always be repeated.

I know so lovely a foot
never touched the earth
as the one that has imprinted you:

so that the weary heart returns
with tormented body
to share its hidden thoughts with you.
If you had only kept
some of those lovely traces
among your turf and flowers,
so that my bitter life
in weeping, might find what calms it!
The doubtful wandering soul
must find what peace it can.

Wherever I turn my eyes
I find sweet peace,
thinking: 'Here the wandering light fell.'
Whatever herb or flower I cull
I think that it has its roots
in this earth, where she used to walk
among the fields and streams
and so find a cool seat
flowery and green.
So nothing is lost,
and greater certainty would be worse.
Blessed spirit, what are you
who do this to another?

O my poor verse, how rough you are!
I think you know it:
so stay here in this wood.

126. 'CHIARE, FRESCHE ET DOLCI ACQUE,'



lear, sweet fresh water
where she, the only one who seemed
woman to me, rested her beautiful limbs:
gentle branch where it pleased her
(with sighs, I remember it)
to make a pillar for her lovely flank:
grass and flowers which her dress
lightly covered,
as it did the angelic breast:
serene, and sacred air,
where Love pierced my heart with eyes of beauty:
listen together
to my last sad words.

If it is my destiny
and heaven works towards this,
that Love should close these weeping eyes,
let some grace bury
my poor body amongst you,
and the soul return naked to its place.
Death would be less cruel
if I could bear this hope
to the uncertain crossing:
since the weary spirit
could never in a more gentle harbour,
or in a quieter grave,
leave behind its troubled flesh and bone.

Perhaps another time will come,
when the beautiful, wild, and gentle one
will return to this accustomed place,
and here where she glanced at me
on that blessed day
may turn her face yearning and joyful,
to find me: and, oh pity!,
seeing me already earth
among the stones, Love will inspire her
in a manner such that she will sigh
so sweetly she will obtain mercy for me,
and have power in heaven,
drying her eyes with her lovely veil.

A rain of flowers descended
(sweet in the memory)
from the beautiful branches into her lap,
and she sat there
humble amongst such glory,
covered now by the loving shower.
A flower fell on her hem,
one in her braided blonde hair,
that was seen on that day to be
like chased gold and pearl:
one rested on the ground, and one in the water,
and one, in wandering vagary,
twirling, seemed to say: 'Here Love rules'.

Then, full of apprehension,
how often I said:
'For certain she was born in Paradise.'
Her divine bearing
and her face, her speech, her sweet smile
captured me, and so separated me,
from true thought
that I would say, sighing:
'How did I come here, and when?'
believing I was in heaven, not there where I was.
Since then this grass
has so pleased me, nowhere else do I find peace.

Song, if you had as much beauty as you wished,
you could boldly
leave this wood, and go among people.

127. 'IN QUELLA PARTE DOVE AMOR MI SPRONA'



must turn these sorrowful verses,
the followers of my tormented mind,
towards the place where Love drives me.
Which shall be last, alas, and which first?

He who talks to me of my ills
leaves me in doubt, he speaks so confusedly.
But I will speak as much of the history written
in my heart's core, in his own hand,
about my suffering (which I so often recall)
since by speaking I seek
a truce to sighs and help for sadness.
I say that, though I gaze
at a thousand diverse things attentively and fixedly,
I only see one lady, and one lovely face.

Since my pitiless fate separated me
from my greater good,
fate proud, inexorable and harmful,
Love aids me with the memory alone:
and when I see the earth in youthful guise
begin to clothe itself with grass,
I seem to see in that bitter season
the lovely young girl who is now a woman:
so that when the sun rises warming me,
it seems to me he is solely
that flame of love that claims noble hearts:
but when the day grieves

for him, who descends little by little,
I see her in her days of maturity.

Seeing leaves on the branches, or violets on the ground,
in the season when the cold lessens,
and gentler stars acquire power,
brings the violets and greenness to mind
with which Love, who still rules me,
armed himself at the start of our battle,
and that sweet graceful outer bark
that covered her childish limbs
that a gentle spirit inhabits today
seemed to me to make
all other pleasures base: so deeply I recall
her humble bearing
that flowered then, and increased beyond her years,
sole reason and solace for my torment.

Sometimes I see fresh snow
on distant hills struck by the sun:
as sun does snow, Love rules over me,
thinking of that more than mortal face
that makes my eyes moisten from afar,
but, close to, dazzles, and defeats the heart:
where between the white and the gold,
what has never been seen by human eye
except I think my own, reveals itself:
and that warm passion
which, when she smiles in sighing,
inflames me so that it makes me
forget nothing, but becomes eternal,
nor changes state, nor quenches spring.

I never see the wandering stars
move through the calm air after night rain,
flaming more brightly among the dew and frost,
without seeing her eyes before me,
where the weariness of my life is soothed,
as I've seen them in the shadow of a lovely veil:
and as I saw the sky ablaze that day
with their beauty, so I see them still
sparkling through tears, so that I burn forever.
If I see the sun rising,
I feel the light appear that enamoured me:
if slowly setting,
I seem to see it turning elsewhere
leaving darkness behind as it goes.

If my eyes ever saw pure white
and vermilion roses in a gold vase
freshly picked by a virgin hand,
I thought I saw her face
that exceeded all other marvels
through the three virtues caught up in her:
the blonde hair, loose on a neck
where any milk would lose its power,
and her cheeks that a sweet fire adorns.
But truly when a little breeze
stirs white and yellow flowers in the fields,
my mind turns to that place
and the first time I saw her golden hair
blown by the wind, so that I suddenly burned.

Perhaps it would be more believable if I
counted the stars one by one, or enclosed
the waves in a little glass, as for fresh thought
to be born in me, of telling in so small a space
all places that this flower of noble beauty
remaining still herself, has scattered her light
so that I can never depart from her:
nor will I: and if I flee at times,
she has closed the passes in heaven and earth,
so that to my weary eyes
she is always present, and I am all consumed.
And she stays with me,
so that I see nothing else, nor wish to see,
nor speak another's name in my sighing.

Song, you well know that what I say is nothing
compared to the hidden thought of love,
that I have in my mind night and day,
comforted only by that,
so that I'm still not dead of the long war:
and I should already have died,
weeping for my heart's absence,
but by this I gain my death's delay.

128. 'ITALIA MIA, BENCHÉ 'L PARLAR SIA INDARNO'



y Italy, though words cannot heal
the mortal wounds
so dense, I see on your lovely flesh,
at least I pray that my sighs might bring
some hope to the Tiber and the Arno,
and the Po, that sees me now sad and grave.
Ruler of Heaven, I hope
that the pity that brought You to earth,
will turn you towards your soul-delighting land.
Lord of courtesy, see
such cruel wars for such slight causes:
and hearts, hardened and closed
by proud, fierce Mars,
and open them, Father, soften them, set them free:
and, whatever I may be, let your Truth
be heard in my speech.

You lords to whose hands Fortune entrusts the reins
of the beautiful region
for which you seem to show no pity,
what is the purpose of these foreign swords?
Why is our green land
so stained with barbarous blood?
Vain error flatters you:
you see little, and think you see much,
if you look for love or loyalty in venal hearts.
He who has more troops

has more enemies under his command.
O waters gathered
from desert lands
to inundate our sweet fields!
If our own hands
have done it, who can rescue us now?

Nature provided well for our defence,
setting the Alps as a shield
between us and the German madness:
but blind desire, contrary to its own good,
is so ingenious,
that it brings plague to a healthy body.
Now wild beasts
and gentle flocks sleep in one pen
so the gentler always groan:
and this, to add to our grief,
from that race, that lawless people,
of whom, as we read,
Marius so pierced their flank,
that the memory of the deed can never fade,
how thirsty and weary
he no longer drank river water but blood!

I'll say nothing of Caesar
who painted the grass crimson
with their blood, where he raised the sword.
Now it seems, no one knows by what evil star,
heaven hates us:
mercy, oh you who so beset us.
Your warring wills

waste the better part of the world.
For what fault, by what justice, through what fate,
do you trouble your poor
neighbours, and persecute those afflicted
by fortune, and scattered, and search
out foreign people and accept them,
they who spill blood and sell their souls for money?
I speak to tell the truth,
not in hatred of anyone, nor scorn.

Are you still ignorant of German deceit,
with so many clear examples,
they who lift their fingers in mock surrender?
Their scorn is worse, it seem to me, than their harm:
while your blood flows
more freely, as other's anger flails you.
From matins to tierce
think to yourself, consider how
any can care for others who behave so vilely.
People of Latin blood,
free yourself from this harmful burden:
don't make an idol of a name
empty, and without substance:
that the berserkers from there, that backward race,
defeat our intelligence
is our sin, and not nature's.

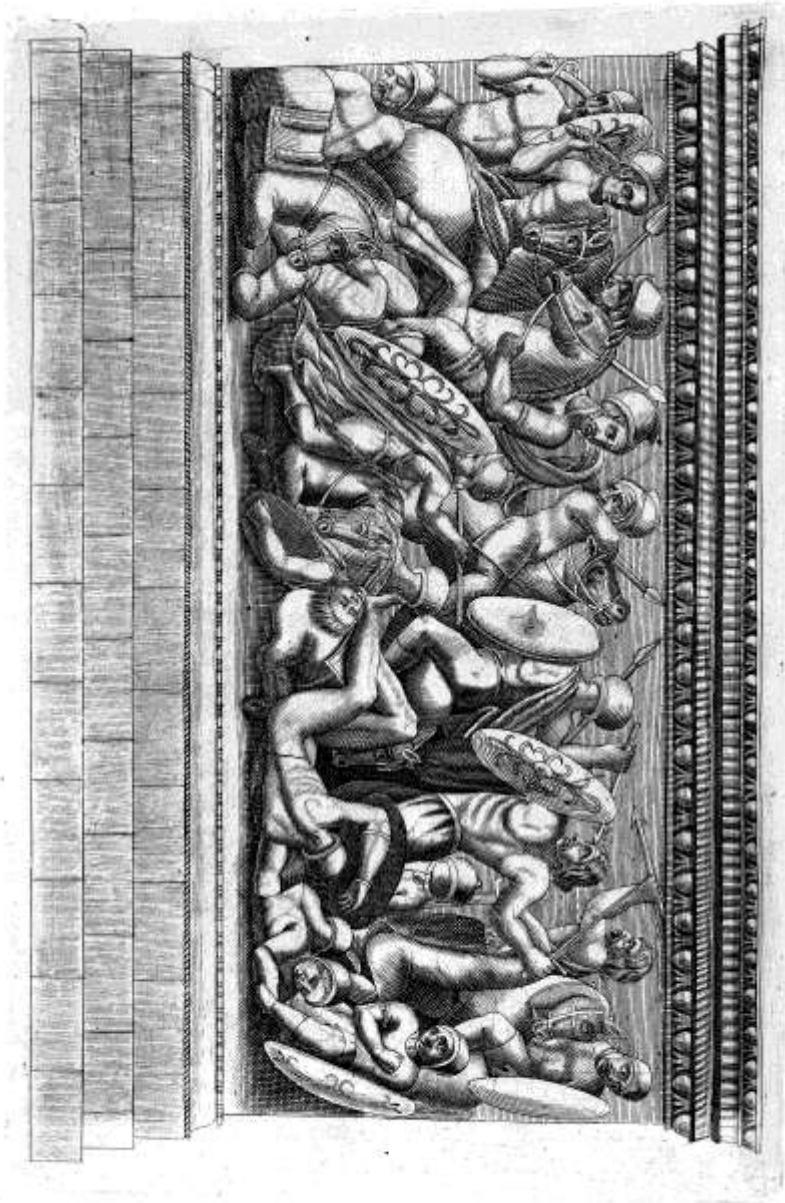
Is this not the earth that I first touched?
Is this not my nest
where I was so sweetly nourished?
Is this not the land I trust,

benign and gentle mother,
that covers both my parents?
By God, let this move you
a little, and gaze with pity
at the tears of your sad people,
who place their hopes in you
next to God: if only you show
signs at least of pity,
virtue will take up arms
against madness, and cut short the warring:
if ancient courage
is not yet dead in Italian hearts.

Lords, see how time flies,
and how life
flies too, and death is at our shoulder.
You are here now: but think of the parting:
how the naked lonely soul
must arrive at the dangerous pass.
As you go through this valley
of tears, lay aside hatred and anger,
running counter to a peaceful life:
and all the time you spend
causing others pain, is more worthy
of actions or thought
in which there is sweet praise,
in which honest study is involved:
so there is joy down here,
and the way to heaven will be open.

Song, I advise you
to speak with courteous words,
since you must go among proud people,
whose will is already
formed by ancient, adverse custom,
always inimical to truth.
Seek your fortune
among those favourable to true peace.
Say to them: 'Who will defend me?
I go calling out: Peace, peace, peace.'

Note: *Addressed to the Italian lords hiring German mercenaries for their internecine wars. Marius defeated the German tribes in 102BC.*



The Battle Won by Gaius Marius Against the Ambrones and Teutones
Relief from the Roman Triumphal Arch in Orange

J. Baugin (French, ca. 1640)

The Rijksmuseum

129. 'DI PENSIER IN PENSIER, DI MONTE IN MONTE'



Love leads me on, from thought to thought,
from mountain to mountain, since every path blazed
proves opposed to the tranquil life.
If there is a stream or a fountain on a solitary slope,
if a shadowed valley lies between two hills,
the distressed soul calms itself there:
and, as Love invites it to,
now smiles, or weeps, or fears, or feels secure:
and my face that follows the soul where she leads
is turbid and then clear,
and remains only a short time in one mode:
so that a man expert in such a life would say
at the sight of me: 'He is on fire, and uncertain of his state.'

I find some repose in high mountains
and in savage woods: each inhabited place
is the mortal enemy of my eyes.
At every step a new thought of my lady
is born, which often turns the suffering
I bear to joy, because of her:
and, as often as I wish
to alter my bitter and sweet life,
I say: 'Perhaps Love is saving you
for a better time:
perhaps you are dear to another, hateful to yourself.'
And with this, sighing, I continue:
'Now can this be true? And how? And when?'

Sometimes I stop where a high pine tree or a hill
provides shade, and on the first stone
I trace in my mind her lovely face.
When I come to myself, I find my chest
wet with pity: and then I say: 'Ah, alas,
what are you come to, and what are you parted from!'
But as long as I can keep
my wandering mind fixed on that first thought,
and gaze at her, and forget myself,
I feel Love so close to me
that my soul is satisfied with its own error:
I see her in many places and so lovely,
that I ask no more than that my error last.

Many times I have seen here vividly
(now, who will believe me?) in clear water
and on green grass, and in a beech trunk,
and in a white cloud, so made that Leda
would surely have said her daughter was eclipsed,
like a star the sun obscures with its rays:
and the wilder the place I find
and the more deserted the shore,
the more beautifully my thoughts depict her.
Then when the truth dispels
that sweet error, I still sit there chilled,
the same, a dead stone on living stone,
in the shape of a man who thinks and weeps and writes.

I feel a sole intense desire draw me
where the shadow of no other mountain falls,
towards the highest and most helpful peak:
from there I begin to measure out my suffering
with my eyes, and, weeping, to release
the sorrowful cloud that condenses in my heart,
when I think and see,
what distance parts me from her lovely face,
which is always so near to me, and so far.
Then softly I weep to myself:
'Alas, what do you know! Perhaps somewhere
now she is sighing for your absence.'
And the soul takes breath at this thought.

Song, beyond the mountain,
there where the sky is more serene and joyful,
you will see me once more by a running stream,
where the breeze is fragrant
with fresh and perfumed laurel.
There is my heart, and she who steals it from me:
here you can only see my ghost.

130. 'POI CHE 'L CAMIN M'E CHIUSO DI MERCEDE,'



ince the path to Mercy's closed to me,
I travel on the road of despair, far
from those eyes where, by what fate who knows,
the reward for all my faith is set.

I feed the heart on sighs, it asks no more,
and, born to weep, I live on tears:
nor lament it, since in such a state
weeping's sweeter than others might believe.

And I adhere to one image alone,
that no Zeuxis, Praxiteles, or Phidias made,
but a greater master, with a nobler art.

What Scythia or Numidia would be safe for me,
since, still dissatisfied with my shameful exile,
Envy finds me again, buried here?

131. 'IO CANTEREI D'AMOR SI NOVAMENTE?



would sing of love in so new a way
I would draw a thousand sighs
from that hard heart, and light a thousand
noble desires in that chill mind:

and I would see her often change expression,
and wet her eyes, and turn more pityingly,
like one who, when it's no use, repents
of other's suffering and her own error:

and the scarlet roses in among the snow
move at her breath, revealing ivory,
changing to marble those who gaze closely:

and all that holds no regret for me
in this brief life, but only glory
at having been born in this late age.

132. 'S'AMOR NON E, CHE DUNQUE E QUEL CH'IO SENTO?



What do I feel if this is not love?

But if it is love, God, what thing is this?

If good, why this effect: bitter, mortal?

If bad, then why is every suffering sweet?

If I desire to burn, why tears and grief?

If my state's evil, what's the use of grieving?

O living death, O delightful evil,

how can you be in me so, if I do not consent?

And if I consent, I am greatly wrong in sorrowing.

Among conflicting winds in a frail boat

I find myself on the deep sea without a helm,

so light in knowledge, so laden with error,

that I do not know what I wish myself,

and tremble in midsummer, burn in winter.

133. 'AMOR M'À POSTO COME SEGNO A STRALE,'



ove placed me as a target for his arrow,
like snow in sunlight, or wax in the fire,
like a cloud in the wind: and I am hoarse already,
Lady, calling for your mercy: and you indifferent.

The mortal blow issued from your eyes,
against which no time or place helps me:
from you alone proceed, and it seems to you
a game, the sun and wind and fire that make me so.

Your thoughts are arrows, and your face the sun,
and desire is fire: with which joint weapons
Love pierces me, dazzles me and melts me:

and your angelic singing and your speech,
with your sweet spirit from which I've no defence,
are the breeze (*l'aura*) before which my life flies.

134. 'PACE NON TROVO, ET NON O DA FA GUERRA:'



find no peace, and yet I make no war:
and fear, and hope: and burn, and I am ice:
and fly above the sky, and fall to earth,
and clutch at nothing, and embrace the world.

One imprisons me, who neither frees nor jails me,
nor keeps me to herself nor slips the noose:
and Love does not destroy me, and does not loose me,
wishes me not to live, but does not remove my bar.

I see without eyes, and have no tongue, but cry:
and long to perish, yet I beg for aid:
and hold myself in hate, and love another.

I feed on sadness, laughing weep:
death and life displease me equally:
and I am in this state, lady, because of you.

135. 'QUAL PIÙ DIVERSA ET NOVA'



Whatever varied and strange thing
may exist in whatever foreign land,
I truly think it most
resembles me: to such I'm come, Love.

There where the day is born,
flies a bird, alone without a mate,
that rises from self-willed
death, and is reborn to life.
So is my desire
found alone, and so it turns to the heights
of noble thought, towards the sun,
and so it is destroyed,
and so returns to its first state:
it burns, and dies, and regains its strength,
able to live again as the phoenix does.

There is a stone so ardent
there in the Indian Ocean, that by nature
it draws iron to itself, steals nails
from wood, so that vessels sink.
I demonstrate this, among waves
of bitter tears, because the lovely reef
with its harsh pride,
has led me where my life must founder:
so my soul is stripped
(stealing the heart that once was whole,
and making me now scattered and divided)

a stone to draw flesh
more than iron. O my cruel fate
that being flesh I see myself dragged to shore
towards a sweet living danger!

In the far west
there is a creature gentler
and sweeter than any other, yet she
bears tears and grief and death in her eyes:
and he must take care
who ever turns his sight towards her:
only if he does not gaze into her eyes,
can he safely look at her.
But I, incautious, grieving,
always run towards my hurt, and I know
how much I suffered and expect to:
but my blind deaf desire
so transports me, that the lovely face
and veiled eyes will be a reason why I perish
of this innocent angelic creature.

In the mid-south a fountain
rises, taking its name from the sun,
that by nature
burns at night, and in the day is cold:
and so it cools
as the sun climbs, and it is nearer.
So it is with me,
who am the fount and place of tears:
when the bright lovely light
that is my sun departs, and my eyes

are sad and lonely, and night obscures them,
I burn: but if I see the gold
and rays of my living sun appear,
I feel myself alter inside and out,
and I freeze, as if turned to ice.

Another fountain is in Epirus,
of which it's written that being cold
it ignites spent torches,
and quenches those that are lit.
My spirit, that had not yet
been attacked by loving fire,
drawing near
to that cold I always sigh for,
blazed up: and suffering
like it was never seen by sun or star:
it might have moved a marble heart to pity:
once it was inflamed,
her beautiful cold power re-quenched it.
So my heart has been many times lit and spent:
I know how I felt, and often it angers me.

Beyond our every shore,
in the famed Fortunate Isles,
there are two founts: he who drinks
of the one dies smiling: if of the other he's saved.
A like fate shapes
my life, since I could die smiling,
with the great delight I derive,
if it were not tempered by sad cries.
Love, who still guides me,

into the shadows, dark and hidden from fame,
let us be silent about that fountain,
always full, but seen
with greater flow when the sun's in Taurus:
so my eyes weep all the time,
but more at the time I first saw my lady.

Song, if they ask
how I am, you can say: 'He lives
under a great rock in a closed valley,
where the Sorgue rises, where no one
sees him, except Love, who never leaves his side,
and that image with him, of one who destroys him,
for whom he flees all other people.

136. 'FIAMMA DAL CIEL SU LE TUE TRECCIE PIOVA.'



icked one, may heaven's fire rain down
on your head, you who grow rich and great
by bringing others down to bread and water,
taking so much joy in evil actions:

nest of treachery, where all the evil,
spread through all the world, hatches,
slave to wine, delicacies and good living,
where Luxury performs her worst.

Through your rooms young girls and old men,
pursue their affairs, Beelzebub among them
with fire and bellows and with mirrors.

You were not born to grace a feather bed,
but go naked in the wind, barefoot on thorns:
now you live so that the stench rises to God.

Note: *Addressed to the Papal Court at Avignon.*

137. 'L'AVARA BABILONIA A COLMO IL SACCO'



reedy Babylon has crammed the bag
with God's anger, wicked fare, and deeds,
almost to bursting, and has made its deities
not Jupiter and Pallas, but Venus and Bacchus.

Waiting for justice wearies and consumes me:
but I foresee a new sultan among them,
who will establish one seat, not soon enough
for me, and that will be in Baghdad.

Babylon's idols will be scattered on the ground,
and her proud towers, threatening heaven,
and her guards burned as they burn within.

Beautiful souls and friends of virtue
will rule the world: and we'll see it turned
all to gold, and filled with ancient works.

Note: *An attack on the Papal Court at Avignon (Babylon) and a vision of a reformed Papacy (the new sultan) with its seat in Rome (Baghdad). Jupiter and Pallas represent Justice and Wisdom, Venus and Bacchus, Sensuality and Wine.*



Pallas

Hendrick Goltzius (Dutch, 1558 - 1617)

The Rijksmuseum

138. 'FONTANA DI DOLORE, ALBERGO D'IRA,'



ountain of sorrows, house of anger,
school of errors, and temple of heresy,
once Rome, now a Babylon of deceit,
from which come so many tears and sighs:

O smithy of deceptions, O prison,
where good dies, and evil is nourished,
a living hell, a miracle indeed if Christ
is not wrathful against you in the end.

Founded in chaste and humble poverty,
impudent whore, you raise your horns
against your founders: where is your hope?

In your adulterers? Or in the evil born
from such riches? Constantine will not return:
but take them to the sad world that creates them.

Note: *The Emperor Constantine the Great (d. 337AD) was wrongly thought in the Middle Ages to have granted the Papacy temporal power in the West, by the document called the Donation of Constantine.*



Constantine Burning Memorials
Pietro da Cortona (Italian, 1596 - 1669)
The Getty Open Content Program

139. 'QUANTO PIÚ DISIÖSE L'ALI SPANDO'



sweet crowd of friends, the more
I spread wings of desire towards you,
the more fate hampers my flight
with bird-lime, or makes me go astray.

The heart that claimed it wrong to return,
is with you always in that broad valley
where the land most hems in our sea:
I wept at parting from my heart that day.

I took the left hand road, my heart the straight:
I was forced to go, my heart was guided by love:
my heart to Jerusalem, I into Egypt.

But patience is a solace to our grief:
by long usage, it's well-known to us both,
that being together is a rare and brief thing.

140. 'AMOR, CHE NEL PENSIER MIO VIVE ET REGNA'



ove that lives and reigns in my thought
and holds the central place in my heart,
sometimes comes to my brow fully armed,
takes his stand there, and sets up his banner.

She who teaches love and suffering,
and wishes great desire and burning hope
to be restrained by reason, reverence, shame,
is angered in herself by our ardour.

Then Love retreats in fear to the heart,
relinquishing his aim, trembles, weeps:
hides himself there, and no more appears.

What can I do, now my lord's afraid,
but stay with him until the final hour?
For he ends well, who dies loving well.

141. 'COME TALORA AL CALDO TEMPO SÒLE'



s at times in hot sunny weather
a guileless butterfly accustomed to the light,
flies in its wanderings into someone's face,
causing it to die, and the other to weep:

so I am always running towards the sunlight of her eyes,
fatal to me, from which so much sweetness comes
that Love takes no heed of the reins of reason:
and he who discerns them is conquered by his desire.

And truly I see how much disdain they have for me,
and I know I am certain to die of them,
since my strength cannot counter the pain:

but Love dazzles me so sweetly,
that I weep for the other's annoyance, not my hurt:
and my soul consents blindly to its death.

142. 'A LA DOLCE OMBRA DE LE BELLE FRONDI' (*SESTINA*)



nto the sweet shade of the lovely leaves
I ran fleeing from the pitiless light,
burning down on me from the third heaven:
and snow was already clearing from the hills
in the loving breeze that brought the new season,
and flowers to the fields, grass, and branches.

The world has never seen such graceful branches,
the wind has never stirred such emerald leaves
as were shown to me in that first season:
such that, trembling with the fierce light,
I did not turn for refuge to shadowed hills,
but to the tree that's noblest in heaven.

A laurel protected me from that heaven,
so that I've often, longing for lovely branches,
made my way through the woods and hills:
but never found a tree or leaves
so honoured by the supreme light,
that they do not alter with the season.

So, more constant, season after season,
I follow where I heard the call from heaven
and guided by a clear and gentle light,
I turn, devoted, to those first branches
when the earth is scattered with leaves
and when the sun brings green to the hills.

Woods, stones, fields, rivers and hills:
whatever is, is altered by the season:
so that I ask a pardon of these leaves,
if in the many circling years of heaven
I thought I could flee the clinging branches
as soon as I began to see the light.

I was so pleased at first by the light
that I passed with delight among vast hills,
so I might be near the beloved branches:
now the brief life, the place, and the season
show me another path to climb to heaven
and bear fruit not only flowers and leaves.

I seek another love, and leaves and light,
another path to heaven from other hills,
since it is the season, and other branches.

143. 'QUAND'IO V'ODO PARLAR SÍ DOLCEMENTE'



hen I hear you speak so sweetly,
as Love instils in all his followers,
my desire burns, all sparkling,
so even dead souls would be inflamed.

Then I find my lovely lady before me,
those times when she was sweet and peaceable,
which wakes me, not like a chiming bell
but often with the sounds of my own sighs.

I see her hair scattered by the breeze,
and she turning: so she returns so lovely
to my heart, like one who holds the key.

But the overwhelming pleasure, that ties
my tongue, has not the boldness to show
more clearly what it is she means inside me.

144. 'NE COSI BELLO IL SOL GIA MAI LEVARSI'



've never seen so beautiful a sunrise
when the sky was wholly free of cloud,
nor seen the heavenly bow after rain
so variously coloured in the air,

as I saw that face, and my words fall short,
with which no mortal thing can be compared,
transformed by so many shades of flame,
on the day that I took up this loving burden.

I saw Love directing her lovely eyes
so sweetly, that, from then, all other sights
began to seem like darkness to me.

Sennuccio, I saw him, and the bow he bends,
so that my life became no longer safe,
and yet I long to see it still, again.

145. 'POMMI OVE 'L SOLE OCCIDE I FIORI ET L'ERBA,'



et me where the sun burns flowers and grass,
or where he's conquered by the ice and snow:
set me beneath his temperate chariot,
where it rises or where it descends:

set me among the humble, or the proud,
in sweet calm air, or in the dark and sombre:
set me in night, in days long or short,
unripe in age, or of maturer years.

set me in heaven, on earth, or in the depths,
on a high hill, or deep in a marshy vale,
a spirit freed, or imprisoned in its limbs:

set me far from fame, or let me be known:
I'll be what I have been, live as I've lived,
continuing my fifteen years of sighs.

146. 'O D'ARDEnte VERTUTE ORNATE ET CALDA'



noble soul decked out with burning virtue,
for whom I fill out so many pages:
O lone house still whole in its chastity,
strong tower founded on the highest worth:

O flame, O rose scattered on sweet layers
of living snow, in which I am reflected:
O delight whose wing lifts to a lovely face,
whose light shines brighter than the sun:

if my verse were understood so far away,
I'd fill farthest Thule, Bactria, Don and Nile,
Mount Atlas, and Gibraltar, with your name.

Since it can't carry there to the four corners
of the world, let that lovely country hear it
the Apennines divide, and Alps and sea surround.

147. 'QUANDO 'L VOLER CHE CON DUO SPRONI ARDENTI'



hen my passion, that leads and rules me,
with two fierce spurs and a harsh rein,
escapes its usual curbs from time to time
and raises my spirits to some degree,

it finds her who reads the fear and daring
of the heart's depths in the face,
and sees Love, who corrects false actions,
flashing from her pained and troubled eyes.

Then, like one afraid of a blow
from angry Jove, it retreats once more:
since great fear restrains a great desire.

But cold fire and fearful hope
in my soul, transparent as glass,
sometimes clear her sweet face again.

148. 'NON TESIN, PO, VARO, ARNO, ADIGE ET TEBRO,'



ot Ticino, Po, Varo, Arno, Adige or Tiber
Euphrates, Tigris, Nile, Erno, Indus, or Ganges,
Don, Danube, Alpheus, Garonne, or the breaking sea,
Rhône, Iber, Rhine, Seine, Elbe, Loire, Ebro:

Not ivy, fir, pine, beech, or juniper
could lessen the fire that vexes my sad heart,
as much as the lovely river that always weeps with me,
and the little tree I adorn and praise in verse.

I find they help against the assaults
of Love, while I must live, well-armed,
the life which passes by in such swift leaps.

Let the beautiful laurel grow so, on the green bank,
and let him who planted it, in the sweet shade,
write lofty and joyful thoughts, to the sound of water.



Landscape

Anonymous (ca. 1675 - 1750)

The Getty Open Content Program

149. 'DI TEMPO IN TEMPO MI SI FA MEN DURA'



rom time to time they are less harsh to me
the angelic figure and the sweet smile,
and the expression on her face
and the charming eyes are less dark.

What have these sighs now to do with me
which were born of grief
and served to show
my anguish and my desperate life?
If I turn my look that way
to quiet my heart,
I see Love with me
arguing my case, and giving aid:
yet I still see no end to my war,
nor any tranquil state in my heart,
since my desire blazes out the more,
the more hope should reassure me.

150. 'CHE FAI ALMA? CHE PENSI? AVREM MAI PACE?'

What do you think, my soul? Will I ever have peace?
Will I ever know truce? Or will I have endless war?
'I don't know what will arise for us: but I think
that seeing our ills will not please her eyes.'

'What help is that, when with those eyes
she makes us ice in summer, fire in winter?'
'It is not her, but the one who rules her.'
'What matter, if she sees, and yet is silent?'

'Sometimes her tongue is silent, and her heart
complains aloud, and with face dry-eyed and happy,
she weeps within where no gaze can see.'

'For all that my mind is not at peace,
aching with grief that gathers there and stays,
an unhappy man's no faith in wild hopes.'

151. 'NON D'ATRA ET TEMPESTOSA ONDA MARINA'



o weary helmsman ever fled for harbour
from the dark and tempestuous ocean waves,
as I do from gloomy and turbid thought,
fleeing where my great passion spurs me on.

Never has divine light overcome mortal vision
as did that sublime beam mine, that
of the beautiful, sweet, gentle, black and white
eyes in which Love gilds and sharpens his arrows.

He is not blind yet, but I see him with his quiver:
naked, except in so much as shame is veiled:
a boy with wings: not painted, but alive.

From this he shows me what he hides from others,
what I read, little by little, in her beautiful eyes,
all that I speak of Love, and all that I write.

152. 'QUESTA HUMIL FERA, UN COR DI TIGRE O D'ORSA'



his humble creature, with bear's or tiger's heart,
that comes with human face and angel's form,
moves me to smiles and tears, in hope and fear,
so that my whole state is changeable.

If she does not receive or free me soon,
but keeps me like a man between two worlds,
by what I feel in my heart pass through my veins
sweet poison, Love, my life will be ended.

My fragile courage and my weariness
cannot withstand such shifting suffering now,
that I burn, freeze, blush and pale in a moment.

I hope to end my misery by fleeing,
like one who bit by bit vanishes:
for truly there's no one who cannot die.

153. 'ITE, CALDI SOSPIRI, AL FREDDO CORE,'



o, warm sighs, to her frozen heart,
shatter the ice that chokes her pity,
and if mortal prayers rise to heaven,
let death or mercy end my sorrow.

Go, sweet thoughts, and speak to her
of what her lovely gaze does not include:
so if her harshness or my stars still hurt me,
I shall be free of hope and free of error.

Through you it can be said, perhaps not fully,
how troubled and gloomy is my state,
as hers is both peaceful and serene.

Go safely now that Love goes with you:
and you may lead fortune smiling here,
if I can read the weather by my sun.

154. 'LE STELE, IL CIELO ET GLI ELEMENTI A PROVA'



he stars, the sky, the elements employed
all their art, and all their deepest care,
to set in place this living light, where Nature
is mirrored, and a Sun without compare.

The work, so noble, graceful and rare
is such that mortal gaze cannot grasp it:
such is the measure of beauty in her eyes
that Love rains down in grace and sweetness.

The air struck by those sweet rays
is inflamed with virtue, and becomes
such as to conquer all our speech and thought.

There no unworthy desire can be felt,
but honour and virtue: now where
was ill will ever so quenched by noble beauty?

155. 'NON FUR MA' GIOVE ET CESARE SI MOSSI,'



upiter and Caesar were never so moved,
the one to thunder, the other to war,
that Pity would not have quenched their anger,
and made them both lay down their weapons.

My lady wept: my lord wished me to go
and look on her, and hear her lament,
filling me with sadness and desire,
searching my very bones to the marrow.

Love painted that sweet weeping for me,
or sculpted it rather, engraved her gentle words
on a diamond at the centre of my heart:

where with his strong and ingenious keys
he often returns still to unlock
rare tears, and long and heavy sighs.

156. 'I' VIDI IN TERRA ANGELICI CONSTUMI'



saw angelic virtue on earth
and heavenly beauty on terrestrial soil,
so I am sad and joyful at the memory,
and what I see seems dream, shadows, smoke:

and I saw two lovely eyes that wept,
that made the sun a thousand times jealous:
and I heard words emerge among sighs
that made the mountains move, and halted rivers.

Love, Judgement, Pity, Worth and Grief,
made a sweeter chorus of weeping
than any other heard beneath the moon:

and heaven so intent upon the harmony
no leaf was seen to move on the boughs,
so filled with sweetness were the wind and air.

157. 'QUEL SEMPRE ACERBO ET HONORATO GIORNO'



hat day, always bitter and always honoured
sent such a living image to my heart
that no skill or art could ever picture,
but often memory returns to it.

Her aspect adorned all with gentle pity,
and the sweet bitter grieving that I heard,
made me doubt if mortal lady or goddess
had made the sky grow clear all around.

Her hair pure gold, and hot snow her face,
her eyebrows ebony, her eyes twin stars,
from which Love never bent his bow in vain:

pearls and crimson roses, where grief received
the form of an ardent lovely voice:
flames her sighs, and her tears were crystal.

158. 'OVE CH'I' POSI GLI OCCHI LASSI O GIRI'



here ever I turn my weary eyes or rest them,
to quiet the longing that excites them,
I find that someone depicts that lovely lady
so my desire might be always fresh.

She seems to breathe with graceful sadness
a noble pity that stirs the gentle heart:
beyond sight, hearing is adorned, enchanted
by her living voice and sacred sighs.

Love and truth with me declared I saw
beauty that was unique on earth,
never seen again beneath the stars.

Such sweet and piteous words were never
heard before, nor were such lovely tears seen
to fall from such lovely eyes beneath the sun.

159. 'IN QUAL PARTE DEL CIEL, IN QUALE IDEA'



rom what part of the heavens, from what idea
came the example, from which Nature took
that beautiful joyful face, in which she chose
to show down here what power she has above?

What nymph of the fountain, what goddess of the wood
loosed hair of such fine gold on the breeze?
How did a heart gather so much virtue to itself,
though the sum of it is guilty of my death?

He looks in vain for divine beauty
who has never yet seen how tenderly
she moves those eyes of hers around:

he does not know how Love heals, and how he kills,
who does not know how sweet her sighs are,
and how sweet her speech, and sweet her smile.

160. 'AMOR ET IO SI PIEN' DI MERAVIGLIA'



ove and I, as full of amazement
as ever anyone who saw a marvellous thing,
gaze at her when she speaks or smiles
who is like herself alone, and no one else.

Under the lovely peace of her tranquil brows
those two faithful stars of mine so sparkle,
that no other light can inflame and guide
him who consigns himself to love nobly.

What a miracle she is, when she sits among
the grasses like a flower, or when she
brushes against a green bush with her breast!

What sweetness in the newborn season
to see her walk alone, her thoughts for company,
weaving a garland for her clear curling gold!

161. 'O PASSI SPARSI, O PENSIER' VAGHI ET PRONTI,'



wandering steps, O swift and errant thoughts,
O fixed memory, O wild ardour,
O powerful desire, O weakened heart,
O eyes of mine, not eyes now, but fountains!

O leaves, that honour famous brows,
O one sole emblem of double worth!
O weary life, O sweet error,
that makes me go searching plains and hills!

O lovely face where Love has set together
the reins and spurs that make me twist and turn,
at pleasure: and no use to kick against them!

O gentle loving spirits, if there are
any in this world, and you, naked dust and shadows,
pause and see the nature of my ills.

162. 'LIETI FIORI ET FELICI, ET BEN NATE HERBE'



appy, fortunate flowers, herbs born in grace,
where my lady, thinking, often walks:
meadows that listen to her sweet words,
where her lovely feet leave their traces:

slender trees and fresh green foliage,
little loving pallid violets:
shadowed woods, where the sun pierces,
who makes you proud and noble with her rays:

O gentle countryside, O pure stream,
that bathes her lovely face and her clear eyes,
you take your nature from her living light:

how I envy you those true and graceful acts!
There cannot be a stone among you now,
unused to burning as my flame burns.

163. 'AMOR, CHE VEDI OGNI PENSERO APERTO'



Love, who sees all my thoughts revealed,
my sole companion on these harsh roads,
send your gaze to the depths of my heart,
what's hidden from all others is clear to you.

Know what I've suffered following you:
and you still climb by paths from hill to hill,
from day to day, and take no notice of me:
that I'm so weary, and the path's too steep.

True I see the sweet light in the distance
towards which you spur and whip me harshly,
but unlike you I have no wings to fly.

You leave my longing almost satisfied,
if it is loving well that consumes me,
and if she's not displeased that for her I sigh.

164. 'OR CHE 'L CIEL ET LA TERRA E 'L VENTO TACE'



Now that the sky and the earth and the wind are silent
and the wild creatures and the birds are reined in sleep,
Night leads its starry chariot in its round,
and the sea without a wave lies in its bed,

I look, think, burn, weep: and she who destroys me
is always before my eyes to my sweet distress:
war is my state, filled with grief and anger,
and only in thinking of her do I find peace.

So from one pure living fountain
flow the sweet and bitter which I drink:
one hand alone heals me and pierces me:

and so that my ordeal may not reach haven,
I am born and die a thousand times a day,
I am so far from my salvation.

165. 'COME 'L CANDIDO PIE' PER L'ERBA FRESCA'



hen her white foot through the fresh grass
takes its sweet way, virtuously,
from her tender steps there seems to issue
a power that opens and renews the flowers.

Love who only hinders the gracious heart
not deigning to try his strength in other ways,
rains such keen pleasure from her lovely eyes
I care for no other good, long for no other bait.

And those sweetest words of hers accord
with her walk and her quiet gaze,
as do her gentle, calm and humble acts.

From those four sparks, but not merely those,
is born the great fire in which I live and burn,
like a bird of night dazzled by the sun.

166. 'S'I' FUSSI STATO FERMO A LA SPELUNCA'



f I had stayed firmly in the cave
where Apollo became a prophet,
Florence perhaps might have her poet today
not just Mantua, and Verona:

But since my ground no longer yields reeds,
with the moisture from that rock, I must follow
another star, and, from my native fields, reap
thorns and thistles with my curved sickle.

The olive-tree is dry, and the water
that springs from Parnassus, through which
at one time it flowered, flows elsewhere.

So fault or misfortune will deprive me
of all the finest fruits, unless eternal Jove
pours his grace on me from above.

Note: *Petrarch would be Florence's poet. Mantua was Virgil's birthplace, and Verona Catullus's. Petrarch, though born in Arezzo, identified himself with Florence.*



Florentine Street Scene with Twelve Figures

Anonymous (ca. 1540 - 1560)

The Rijksmuseum

167. 'QUANDO AMOR I BELLI OCCHI A TERRA INCHINA'



hen Love inclines her lovely eyes to earth
and with his hand gathers her wandering breath
in a sigh, then looses it in a voice,
clear, gentle, angelic and divine,

I feel my heart sweetly stolen away,
and my thoughts and wishes changed within,
so that I say: 'These are the last spoils of me
if heaven intends me for so happy a death.'

But that sound that binds the senses with its sweetness
restrains the spirit from swiftly departing,
through a great desire to hear it, and be blessed.

So I live, and so she winds, unwinds
the thread of life that was granted me,
that sole Siren from heaven who's among us.

168. 'AMOR MI MANDA QUELL DOLCE PENSERO'



Love sends me a sweet thought,
an ancient messenger between us two,
to comfort me, saying he was never
readier than now to grant what I hope and wish.

I, who have found his words sometimes true,
and sometimes false, still not certain
whether to believe him, live between the two,
neither yes nor no sounds wholly in my heart.

In this way time flies, and in the mirror
I see I near the season that opposes
his promise, and my hopes.

Now come what must: I'm not alone in growing old:
only my longing does not alter with the years:
truly I fear the brief life that cannot last.

169. 'PIEN D'UN VAGO PENSER CHE ME DESVIA'



ull of a wandering thought that separates me
from all other men, and makes me go lonely through the world,
hour after hour I am tempted from myself
searching for her, whom I should fly from:

and I see her go by so sweet and deadly
that my soul trembles to rise in flight,
she leads such a troop of armed sighs with her,
this beautiful enemy of Love, and of me.

Truly if I am not wrong I see a ray of pity
shine from that high clouded brow,
that partly brightens my grieving heart:

then I recall my soul, and when I start
to reveal my ill-conceived thoughts to her,
I have so much to say to her, I dare not begin.

170. 'PIÙ VOLTE GIÀ DAL BEL SEMBIANTE HUMANO'



any times now, with my true thought,
I've dared to assail my enemy, quiet and humble
in her actions, her beauty seeming kind,
with my honest well-considered speech.

Then her eyes rendered my thought vain
since all my fortune, all my destiny,
my good, my bad, my death and life, had been
placed in her hands, by him who alone can do so.

So I could not even form true words
that anyone but me could understand:
Love had made me blaze and tremble so.

And I see clearly now that glowing charity
ties a man's tongue, and daunts his spirit:
who utters while he burns is in slight fire.

171. 'GIUNTO M'A AMOR FRA BELLE ET CRUDE BRACCIA,'



ove's caught me in a lovely harsh embrace,
that kills unjustly: and if I complain
he doubles my hurt: then it's better to be
as I used to be, dying of love, and silent.

she'd burn the Rhine however deeply frozen
with her eyes, and shatter all its sharp rocks:
and she has pride equal to her beauty,
so that she regrets pleasing others.

I cannot soften that lovely diamond
with my wit, or that heart so hard:
the rest is marble that moves and breathes:

nor with all her disdain, nor her dark looks,
can she ever take my hope away from me,
nor ever take away my sweet sighs.

172. 'O INVIDIA NIMICA DI VERTUTE,'



Envy enemy to virtue, that willingly
opposes all our best intentions,
by what path have you entered silently
into that lovely breast, by what art the mute?

You have shattered my health at its root:
shown me as too happy a lover, whose humble
and chaste prayers she once valued,
and now seems to deny and hate.

But though with bitter and harsh actions
she weeps at my good fortune, laughs at my tears,
she cannot change a single thought of mine:

nor, though she murder me a thousand times,
make me not love her, or not hope for her:
though she make me afraid, Love gives me hope.

173. 'MIRANDO' L SOL DE' BEGLI OCCHI SERENO,'



azing at the sunlight of those calm lovely eyes,
where he, who darkens and bathes mine, lives,
my weary soul is ready to leave my heart
to travel to its earthly paradise.

Then finding itself full of the bitter and the sweet,
its sees what the world weaves are spiders' webs:
so that it complains to itself, and Love,
that he has such keen spurs, so harsh a rein.

Between these two opposing, mixed extremes,
now with icy, now with hot desire,
it stands between misery and happiness.

not often joyful, and so often sad,
it regrets its eager ventures more deeply:
when such is the fruit born of such a root.

174. 'FERA STELLA (SE 'L CIELO A FORZA IN NOI'



ruel the star (if the heavens have power
in us, as some believe) under which I was born,
and cruel the cradle where I lay once born,
and cruel the earth, where my feet then walked:

and cruel the lady, who with her eyes,
and with her bow favouring me as target,
made a wound: Love, I'm not silent about these things,
since with those weapons you could heal my hurt.

But you take some delight from my sorrow:
she does not because it is not far worse,
being only an arrow-wound, and not a spear's.

I console myself that to pine for her
is better than to joy in another: you swear it
by your golden arrow, and I believe you.

175. 'QUANDO MI VENE INANZI IL TEMPO E 'L LOCO'



hen that time and place come to my thoughts
where I was lost, and that dear knot,
with which Love tied me in such a way
that bitter was sweet, and weeping joy,

I'm all sulphur and tinder, the heart ablaze
with those gentle words of hers I always hear,
so hot within, so glad to be on fire,
living there, and for all else caring little.

That sun, that shines alone to my sight,
still heats me with its wandering rays,
at evening just as in my early days:

and even from far away my light is kindled,
since that memory always fresh and strong
shows me that knot, and the place, and the time.

176. 'PER MEZZ'I BOSCHI INHOSPITI ET SELVAGGI'



hrough the midst of inhospitable, wild woods,
where men at arms go at great risk,
I go safely, since nothing can frighten me
except that sun whose rays are alive with love:

and I go singing (oh, my unwise thoughts!)
of her whom heaven cannot set distant from me,
whom I have in my vision, and seem to see
women and girls with her, and they are beech and fir.

I seem to hear her, hearing the branches and breeze,
and the leaves, and the birds lamenting, and the water
murmuring, running through the green grass.

Rarely did silence, and solitary awesomeness
of shadowy woodland ever please me so:
if only too much of my sunlight were not lost.

177. 'MILLE PIAGE IN UN GIORNO ET MILLE RIVE'



ove has shown me a thousand hills and streams
in the famed Ardennes, in a single day:
he who sends winged feet and hearts
flying, still living, up to the third heaven.

It was sweet to me to be alone and unarmed there
where bold Mars takes up arms without warning,
a ship at sea with barely a mast and rudder,
filled with serious and diffident thought.

Reaching the end of this dark day, remembering
where I have been, and on what wings,
I feel fear born of too great a daring.

But the lovely land and the delightful river,
with their calm welcome, reassure
my heart, turning again to where it's light lives.

178. 'AMOR MI SPRONA IN UN TEMPO ET AFFRENA'



Love spurs me on and reins me back as one,
calms and frightens me, burns and freezes,
receives, disdains, calls to me, and spurns me,
keeping me now in hope and now in pain,

leading my weary heart high and low:
so that wandering desire loses its way
displeased by its own greatest pleasure,
since the mind is full of such strange error.

A friendly thought points out the ford,
not through water poured out by the eyes,
but soon to be crossed, where hopes are realised:

then a stronger force opposes it,
I'm forced to take another way, and steeper,
consenting to its lingering path, and mine.

179. 'GERI, QUANDO TALOR MECO S'ADIRA'



eri, one comfort's granted me sometimes,
when my sweet enemy who is so proud
is angry with me, so I don't wholly perish:
solely by means of which the soul can breathe.

Wherever she turns her disdainful eyes
(hoping by light to rob me of life?)
I show myself so full of humility, truly,
that all the force of her anger fails inside.

If it were not so, the sight of her would be
no different than the sight of Medusa's face,
that made all the people there turn to marble.

So, do the same yourself: I see no other aid,
and our fleeing is no use to us at all,
given the wings that our lord deploys.

Note: *Addressed to Geri dei Gianfigliuzzi, in reply to a sonnet asking how to placate an angry lady.*

180. 'PO, BEN PUO' TU PORTARTENE LA SCORZA'



iver Po, you are quick to carry my body
along with your powerful, swift stream,
but my spirit that is hidden here within
cares neither for your force, nor any other:

without the need to tack from side to side
its desire heads straight towards the breeze,
beating its wings towards her golden hair,
despite the waves, the wind, and sail, and oars.

King of the rivers, proud and noble flood,
meeting the sun when he leads on the dawn,
leaving behind you a much lovelier light,

you bear only my mortal part on your crest:
the other, clothed in lover's plumage,
goes flying on towards its sweet home.

181. 'AMOR FRA L'ERBE UNA LEGGIADRA RETE'



love spread his graceful net of gold and pearls
over the grass, underneath the branches
of an evergreen tree that I love so much,
though its shadow gives more sadness than delight.

His lure was the crop he reaps as well as sows,
sweet and bitter, so I'm in fear and longing:
the birdsong was never so soft and quiet,
since the day that Adam first opened his eyes.

And the clear light that shone all around
quenched the sun: and the cord was wrapped
round a hand that revealed ivory and snow.

So I fell into the net, and what trapped me
was her graceful ways, and angelic words,
and pleasure, and desire, and hope.

182. 'AMORE, CHE 'NCENDE IL COR D'ARDEnte ZELO,'



ove that lights burning eagerness in the heart,
constrains it also with an icy fear,
and leaves the mind unsure which is greater,
the hope or the fear, the flame or the ice.

Shivering with heat, burning with cold weather,
always filled with desires and sighs,
as though a woman in a simple gown
or under a little veil, hid a living man.

The first of these ills is properly mine,
to burn day and night: how sweet the labour
to catch the thought, let alone in verse or rhyme:

the other is not: since my lovely fire is such
she treats all equally: and he who thinks to fly
to that far light unfurls his wings in vain.

183. 'SE 'L DOLCE SGUARDO DO COSTEI M'ANCIDE,'



f that sweet look of hers can kill me,
and the sweet subtlety of her words,
and if Love has such power over me
when she merely speaks, or when she smiles,

then what would happen, alas, if her eyes
were free of Mercy, either through my fault
or evil fate, and if I feared death itself
there where I now feel secure?

So if I tremble, and go with icy heart,
when I see her expression change,
it is a fear born of long experience.

Woman by nature is a changeable thing:
so that I know a loving mood
lasts only a little time in a lady's heart.

Note: *'Woman by nature' is an adaptation of Virgil Aeneid IV 569, 'Varium et mutabile semper Femina'.*



Suicide of Queen Dido

Anonymous, ca. 1800

The Rijksmuseum

184. 'AMOR, NATURA, ET LA BELLA ALMA HUMILE,'



ove, Nature, and the lovely humble soul,
where every virtue lives and reigns,
are my sworn enemies now: Love conspires
to bring about my death as his custom:

Nature holds her by such a slender thread,
there is barely enough strength to sustain her:
she is so diffident, that she no longer deigns
to live on in this vile and wearisome world.

So that the life from hour to hour grows less
in those dear lovely chaste limbs
that are the mirrors of true gracefulness:

and if Mercy does not tighten Death's rein,
alas, I see only too well what state vain hope
will come to, by which I used to live.

185. 'QUESTA FENICE DE L'AURATA PIUME'



his phoenix with golden plumage
round her lovely neck, noble and white,
seems to have formed a dear necklace
by which all hearts are softened, mine consumed,

in the form of a natural diadem that lights
the air all round: and the silent furnace of Love
draws a subtle liquid fire from there
that warms me in the most ungentle weather.

A purple covering with a sky-blue hem
scattered with roses covers the lovely creature:
a novel dress, a rare and singular beauty.

Report places her, and hides her, in the rich
and scented vales of Arabian hills,
who flies in truth so nobly through our skies.

186. 'SE VIRGILIO ET HOMERO AVESSIN VISTO'



f Virgil and Homer had seen that sun
that I can see with my eyes,
all their power would have been given
to praising her, blending both styles in one:

making Aeneas troubled and sad,
Achilles, Ulysses and the other demi-gods,
and him who ruled the Empire so well
for fifty years, and him whom Aegisthus killed.

That ancient flower of arms and virtue, Scipio,
suffered a similar fate to this new flower
of chastity and of every beauty!

Ennius sang of him in rough metres
as I do her: and oh may my art
not annoy her, and she not scorn my praise!

Notes: *Augustus ruled for fifty years: Agamemnon was murdered by Aegisthus: Scipio Africanus Major (ca. 236 – ca. 183BC) was eulogised by Ennius in his Annals.*



The Funeral Procession of Agamemnon
Louis-Jean Desprez (French, 1743 - 1804)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art

187. 'GIUNTO ALEXANDRO A LA FAMOSA TOMBA'



ighing before the famous tomb
of fierce Achilles, Alexander said:
'O fortunate one, who found so clear
a voice to write of you so nobly!'

But this pure white dove of mine
whose equal the world will never know,
gains little enough glory from my frail style:
so is his fate fixed for every man.

She most worthy of Homer or Orpheus,
or the shepherd that Mantua still honours,
that they would have sung of her alone,

is cruelly entrusted by unfortunate stars
to him who adores her lovely name,
but perhaps diminishes her praise by speaking.

188. 'ALMO SOL, QUELLA FRONDE CH'IO SOLA AMO'



indly Sun, that only branch I love,
that you loved once, alone retains
its lovely green, and is unequalled
since Adam first saw his ill and ours.

'Let's stop to gaze': O, Sun, I call on you
in prayer: yet you still go, and make the hills
turn to shadow, and carry off the day,
taking from me what I most long for.

The shadow, falling on that humble hill
where my gentle fire is still sparkling
where the great laurel was a tiny shoot,

deepening while I speak, takes the sweet sight
of that blessed place from my eyes,
where its lady lives, and this heart of mine.

189. 'PASSA LA NAVE MIA COLMA D'OBLIO'



y ship, full of oblivion, sails
on a bitter sea, at winter's midnight,
between Scylla and Charybdis: at the helm
sits that Lord, or rather my enemy.

At each oar there's a cruel eager thought,
that scorns the tempest and its end:
the sail's torn by an eternal moist wind
of sighs, of hopes, and of desire.

A rain of tears, a mist of disdain
drench and slacken the already tired shrouds,
woven from error and ignorance.

My two usual guiding lights are so hidden:
reason and art so drowned by the waves,
that I begin to despair of finding harbour.

190. 'UNA CANDIDA CERVA SOPRA L'ERBA'



pure white hind appeared to me
with two gold horns, on green grass,
between two streams, in a laurel's shade,
at sunrise, in the unripe season.

Her aspect was so sweet and proud
I left all my labour to follow her:
as a miser, in search of treasure,
makes his toil lose its bitterness in delight.

'Touch me not,' in diamonds and topaz,
was written round about her lovely neck:
'it pleased my Lord to set me free.'

The sun had already mounted to mid-day,
my eyes were tired with gazing, but not sated,
when I fell into water, and she vanished.

191. 'SI COME ETERNA VITA E VEDER DIO,'



ust as eternal life is seeing God,
longing for nothing greater, no longer longing,
so I'm made happy, my lady, by seeing you
in this brief and fragile life of mine.

I never saw you as lovely as today,
if my eyes truly reflect my heart:
sweet in my thought the hour, and blessed,
overcoming every other hope and wish.

And if it's flight were not so fast,
I'd ask no more: if there are creatures
that live only on air, and such things believed,

others on water or fire, their taste and touch
sated by things deprived of sweetness,
then why not I on the dear sight of you?

192. 'STIAMO, AMOR, A VEDER LA GLORIA NOSTRA,'



et us stop, Love, to see our glory,
things noble and novel beyond nature:
see how sweetness rains down on her,
see the light that heaven shows on earth,

see how our lady's choicest dress is gilded
and pearled with so much art, and like no other,
how sweetly she moves her eyes and feet
among the shaded cloister of lovely hills.

The green grass and flowers of a thousand hues,
scattered beneath that ancient dark oak-tree,
pray that her lovely foot will touch or bend them:

and heaven with its clear and wandering sparks
blazes around, visibly delighting
at being made calm by such lovely eyes.

193. 'PASCO LA MENTE D'UN SI NOBIL CIBO,'



feed my mind on such noble food,
I don't envy Jove ambrosia and nectar,
only by gazing, in that kind rain, I forget
all other sweets, and drink deep of Lethe.

At times I hear things to say, spoken in my heart,
so that I always find things to sigh for:
snatched up by Love's hand, I don't know where,
from one face I drink a double sweetness:

so that a voice, pleasing even in heaven,
sounds in such dear and graceful words,
that he who did not hear could never dream them.

Then together, in less than a span, appears
whatever art, wit, Nature, and Heaven
can visibly create in this life of ours.

194. 'L'AURA GENTIL, CHE RASSERENA I PIOGGI'



know the gentle breeze that clears the hills,
waking the flowers in that shadowy wood,
by its soft breath, through which my pain
and my fame must both increase together.

I flee from my sweet native Tuscan air
to find where my weary heart can rest:
I seek my sun that I hope to see today,
to light my dark and troubled thoughts.

It grants such sweetness that Love
brings me back to it with force:
till it so dazes me I'm slow to flee.

I'd ask for wings not weapons to escape:
but heaven consumes me with this light,
so I suffer at a distance, near to I burn.

195. 'DI DÍ IN DÍ VO CANGIANDO IL VISO E 'L PELO,'



My hair and looks are altering day by day,
but I'm not free of sweetly baited hooks,
nor tear myself from the green limed branches
of that tree that ignores both sun and cold.

The sea will have no water, the sky no stars
before I ever cease to fear and long for
its lovely shade, or cease to love and hate
the noble wound of love I cannot hide.

I have no hope my troubles will ever end,
until I'm boneless, nerveless and fleshless,
or my sweet enemy takes pity on me.

Every impossible thing will happen first,
since only she or death can heal the wound
that Love, with her lovely eyes, made in my heart.

196. 'L'AURA SERENA CHE FRA VERDI FRONDE'



he calm breeze that comes murmuring
through green leaves to strike my face,
makes me recall how Love dealt me
the first wound, so deep but sweet:

and I see the lovely looks, else hidden from me,
that disdain or diffidence keep concealed,
and the hair fastened now with gems and pearls,
once loosened, pale blonde surpassing gold:

she scattered it so sweetly and then
gathered it in such a graceful way,
that remembering I still tremble inwardly:

time twisted it in a still tighter knot,
and tied my heart with so strong a cord,
that Death alone can free me from it.

197. 'L'AURA CELESTE CH 'N QUELL VERDE LAURO'



he heavenly breeze that breathes through
that green laurel where Love wounded Apollo's
heart, and set the sweet yoke on my neck,
so that freedom's slow to be restored to me,

had the same power on me as Medusa had
when she turned the old Moroccan giant to flint:
nor can I now be free of that lovely knot,
that exceeds the sun, not just amber or gold:

I mean the blonde hair, and the noose of curls,
that binds the soul, armed with humility
not weapons, so gently and so tightly.

Her shadow alone turns my heart to ice,
and paints my face a fearful white:
her eyes have the power to turn me to marble.

Note: *Medusa created the Atlas Mountains.*



Perseus Kills Medusa

Bernard Picart (French, 1673 – 1733)

The Rijksmuseum

198. 'L'AURA SOAVE AL SOLE SPIEGA ET VIBRA'



he gentle breeze loosens, and stirs in the sun,
the gold Love spins and weaves with his own hand
near the lovely eyes, and binds my weary heart
with those very tresses, and lightens my spirits.

There's no marrow in my bones, nor blood
in my veins that doesn't feel the tremor,
when I'm near one who too often sets death
and life together in the balance,

seeing the fire blazing where I'm burned,
the knots glistening where I'm held,
now at her left shoulder, now her right.

I can't explain what I don't understand:
my mind's troubled by those double lights,
and oppressed and wearied by such sweetness.

199. 'O BELLA MAN, CHE MI DESTRINGI 'L CORE'



beautiful hand that clutches my heart
shutting my life in so small a space,
hand on which Nature and Heaven lavished
all art, and all care, to do it honour,

with five pearls of orient colour,
and only to wound me bitterly and cruelly,
those long gentle fingers, that Love consents
to show me naked, now, for my enrichment.

White, graceful glove dear to me,
that hides polished ivory and fresh rose,
who ever saw such sweet spoils on earth?

If only I had as much of her lovely veil!
O the fickleness of human things!
But this is theft, and she comes whom I must not plunder.

200. 'NON PUR QUELL'UNA BELLA IGNUDA MANO,'



Not just that one lovely naked hand,
that hides itself again to my great hurt,
but the other and the two arms, are quick
and ready to tighten on the soft timid heart.

Love sets a thousand snares, and none in vain,
wandering among that chaste new form
adorning her in high and heavenly ways,
to which our mind and art could add nothing:

calm eyes and starry brows,
that lovely angelic mouth, filled
with pearl and rose and sweet words,

that make others tremble in amazement,
her brow, and hair that seen
in summer, at mid-day, outdoes the sun.

201. 'MIA VENTURA ET AMOR M'AVEAN SI ADORNO'



Love and good fortune so blessed me
with lovely gold and silk embroidery,
that almost at the height of bliss I thought
'Whose hand was it that this surrounded?'

Nor does that day that made me rich
and poor, in an instant, ever return to mind,
without my being filled with grief and anger,
filled with shame and love's disgrace,

because the noble prize I sought was not
more tightly grasped, and I was not
more firm against an angel's mere request:

or, fleeing, without wings on my feet,
did not at least take vengeance on that hand
that drew so many tears from my eyes.

Note: *The embroidered object is her glove.*

202. 'D'UN BEL CHIARO POLITO ET VIVO GHIACCIO'



he flame that burns me and destroys me
flows from lovely clear smooth living ice,
and so drains and dries the veins and heart
that I melt away almost invisibly.

Death, his arm already lifted for the blow,
like an angry thundering sky, or a roaring lion,
comes following my life that flies,
and I am mute, and tremble, filled with fear.

Mercy and Love combined might still stand
as a double column, to protect me
between the weary heart, and the mortal wound:

but I don't believe so, nor see it in her face,
that sweet lady and enemy of mine:
nor do I blame her in this, but my ill fate.

203. 'LASSO, CH' I' ARDO, ET ALTRI NON ME 'L CREDE:'



las, I burn, and others will not believe me:
if all believed she who's above all others
still does not, she who alone I wish to do so:
she does not seem to believe, and yet she sees.

Infinite beauty, yet of such little faith,
do you not see my heart in my eyes?
If my fate were not otherwise, I surely must
find mercy at the fountain of pity?

My passion, for which you care so little,
and your praises that pervade my verses,
may yet perhaps set thousands on fire:

since, my sweet flame, in my thoughts, I see,
long after us, this tongue, grown cold, yet your
two lovely closed eyes, there, glowing still.

204. 'ANIMA, CHE DIVERSE COSE TANTE'



pirit that sees, hears, reads, speaks,
writes, and thinks, so many diverse things:
my eyes of longing, and you, among the senses
that guide sacred noble words to the heart:

how much later, or earlier, do you wish
you had taken the road, that's so hard to follow,
so as not to have met those two bright eyes
or the steps of those beloved feet?

Now with such clear light, and so many signs,
there should be no error on this brief way,
that makes us worthy of an eternal home.

Strive towards heaven, O my weary heart,
through the mist of her sweet disdain,
following true footsteps and divine light.

205. 'DOLCI IRE, DOLCI SDEGNI ET DOLCI PACI,'



sweet anger, sweet disdain and sweet peace,
sweet ills, sweet troubles, and sweet burdens,
sweet speech, and sweetly understood,
now with sweet fire, now filled with sweet airs:

soul, don't complain, but suffer in silence,
and temper the sweet bitterness that hurt you
with the sweet honour loving her has brought you
to whom I say: 'You alone please me.'

Perhaps someone will one day say sighing,
blushing with sweet envy: 'In his time
this man suffered for the greatest of loves.'

Another: 'O fortune, inimical to my eyes,
why did I not see her? Why was she
not born later, or I, much earlier, in her time?'

206. 'S'I' L DISSI MAI, CH'I' VEGNA IN ODIO A QUELLA'



f I ever said so, may I be held to scorn by her
by whom love lives, and without whom I'd die:
if I said so, let my days be few and harsh,
and my poor soul bound in vile slavery:

if I said so, let ever star oppose me,
and Fear and Jealousy
be always at my side
and my enemy
always fiercer towards me and more lovely.

If I said so, may Love spend all his golden
arrows on me, and his lead ones on her:
if I said so, let heaven and earth, men and gods
oppose me, and she become more cruel:
if I said so, let her with her blind torch
who sends me straight to death,
be as she always was,
nor ever show me more
sweetness or pity, in actions or speech.

If I ever said so, let me find this short
bitter path full of what I least desire:
if I said so, let the fierce ardour that delays me
grow in me just as much as hard ice in her:
if I said so, may my eyes never see
the bright sun, or his sister,
nor girl or woman,

but a dreadful storm
like Pharaoh pursuing the Hebrews.

If I said so, however much I sigh,
let Pity and Courtesy be dead to me:
if I said so, let her speech be harsh, that once
was sweetly heard when she conquered me:
if I said so, let her hate me who I would
alone, shut in a cell,
from the days of childhood
to the freeing of my soul
adore: if I could do so.

But if I did not say so, let her who opened
my heart so sweetly to hope in my young days,
still steer my weary little boat
at the helm of her in-born pity,
nor alter, but be as she was
when I could do nothing
but lose myself
(nor could be more lost).
He does wrong who soon forgets such faith.

I have never said so, nor could say it
for gold or cities or for towers.
Let truth conquer, then, and stay in the saddle
and let falsehood be beaten to the earth.
You know all about me, Love: if she
doesn't know, say what you must.
I'll call him blessed,
three, four, six times blessed,
who, called to languish, died first.

I've served for Rachel and not for Leah:
and could not endure
to live with any other,
but when the heavens call me could suffer
to ascend with her in Elijah's chariot.

207. 'BEN MI CREDEA PASSAR MIO TEMPO OMAI'



truly thought I would always spend my time
as all the years before now have been spent,
with no other studies, no new thoughts:
but now that my lady does not grant me
her former help, as she once did,
you see, Love, with what arts you honour me.
I don't know what there is for me
but disdain, if I make myself a thief at my age
of that lovely graceful light
without which I'd not live in such pain.
I wish I'd acted in my youth
in the way I have to do now,
since youthful error is less shameful.

Those gentle eyes that used to give me life,
with their divine and noble beauty
were so courteous to me in the beginning,
that like a man without wealth of his own,
but secretly helped from outside,
I lived without offending anyone.
Now, though it troubles me,
I've become harmful and importunate:
since a poor starving man
does things that in a happier state
he blames in others.
If envy closes Pity's hand against me,
being in love, and helpless, must excuse me.

I've already tried a thousand ways or more
to see if any mortal thing but her
could keep me alive a single day.

The spirit, since it has no rest elsewhere,
runs towards the angelic flames:
and I, who am made of wax, turn to fire:
and I turn my thoughts about
to where I might gaze on her I desire:
and as a bird on a branch
is soonest caught when least afraid,
so from her lovely face
I steal another and another glance:
nourish myself on that food and burn.

I feed on my own death, and live in flame.
Strange food, and marvellous salamander:
yet no miracle, since Love so wishes.

I was a happy lamb once
lying among the flock of lovers: now Love
and Fortune make an end of me, as usual:
like roses and violets
in the spring, and snow and ice in the winter.
So, if I do gain nourishment
here and there for my brief life,
she may well call it theft,
but so rich a lady should be content,
if another gains life from her, and she not feel it.

Who does not know how I've lived, and always lived,
from that day I first saw her lovely eyes,
which made me change my life and habits?

By searching earth and sea and every shore
who can discover all of human nature?
See, one lives on perfumes by the great river:
I, living here supply
fire and light and feed my spirit.
Love, I say to you truly,
it's unworthy of a lord to be so mean.
You have your arrows and bow:
send death by your hand, and not because I yearn,
since dying well honours a life complete.

A flame enclosed burns hottest: and if it grows
it cannot be concealed in any way:
Love, I know this, I proved it at your hands.
You saw truly, how silently I burned:
now I annoy myself with my own cries,
that irritate those distant and near by.
O world, O idle thought:
what my harsh fate has led me to!
O from what wandering light
was that firm hope born in my heart,
with which she takes and binds me,
she who leads me through your power to my end!
Yours is the fault, and mine the hurt and pain.

So I bear the torment of loving truly,
and I beg pardon for another's sin:
rather my own, who should have turned my eyes
from such great light, and closed my ears
to the siren sounds: and yet I don't regret
that the heart overflows with such sweet poison.

I wait for him to shoot
the last shaft who hit me with the first:
and if I'm right it would be
a kind of pity to kill me soon,
since he is not disposed
to do other with me than he has already:
it's good to die if by dying we escape from pain.

My song, I'll remain
in the field, it's dishonour to die while fleeing:
and I blame myself
for such woes: so sweet my fate,
weeping, sighing, and death.
Servant of Love, who reads this verse,
there's no good in the world to match my ill.

208. 'RAPIDO FIUME CHE D'ALPESTRA VENA'



apid river flowing from the mountains,
rushing on from where you take your name,
carrying me downwards, night and day,
to where Love leads me, and you Nature alone,

run on ahead: neither sleep nor tiredness
can restrain your course: and before
you meet the sea, directly, look clearly
where the grass is greener, air more serene.

There you'll see our sweet living sun
that adorns and flowers your eastern bank;
perhaps (why hope?) lingering in grief for me.

Kiss her feet, or her lovely white hands:
say, and by kissing explain these words:
'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

209. 'I DOLCI COLLI OV'IO LASCIAI ME STESSO,'



he sweet hills where I left myself,
parting from what I can never part from,
go with me, within me, I always carry
that dear burden Love entrusted to me.

In myself I wonder at myself sometimes,
always going, and yet never moving
from the lovely yoke I often strain at in vain,
and the further I move away, the more it nears.

And like a deer struck by an arrow,
with the poisoned tip in its side,
I run, more painfully the faster I flee,

so, with that shaft buried in my flank,
that destroys me and yet delights me,
I'm consumed with grief, tired with flight.

210. 'NON DA L'HISPANO HIBERO A L'INDO YDASPE'



ot from Spain's Ebro to India's Hydaspes,
searching every cliff above the seas,
not from the Red-Sea coast to the Caspian's waves,
is there another phoenix in earth or heaven.

What benign raven or ill-omened ox
spells my destiny, what Fate preserves me?
I've only found Pity deaf, wretchedly,
where I had hoped to be happy.

Who would not speak of her: he who sees her,
his whole heart's filled with love and sweetness,
she has so much, and grants it to so many:

and she makes my sweetness harsh and bitter,
or feigns she does not care or does not see
how my temples whiten before their time.

211. 'VOGLIA MI SPRONA, AMOR MI GUIDA ET SCORGE,'



Desire drives me: Love sees and guides me,
Pleasure draws me: Habit carries me on,
Hope beguiles me, and he comforts me,
and holds his hand out to my weary heart:

and the wretch takes it, and does not see
how blind and disloyal is our guide:
the senses reign, and reason is dead:
from one errant desire another rises.

Virtue, Honour, Beauty, her gentle ways,
and sweet words brought me among the branches
where the heart's so gently caught.

Thirteen twenty-seven, at the beginning
of the first hour, on the sixth day of April,
I entered the labyrinth, and see no escape.

212. 'BEATO IN SOGNO ET DI LANGUIR CONTENTO,'



lessed with sleep, and content with languor,
embracing shadows, and chasing the summer breeze,
I swim the sea without floor or shores,
plough waves, build on sand, write in air:

and I gaze after the sun, until, with its splendour,
it extinguishes all my powers of sight,
and I hunt a wandering and fugitive deer,
on a slow, rickety and infirm ox.

Weary and blind to all harm except my own
that I search after, trembling, day and night,
I call to Love, my Lady, and Death alone.

So, for twenty years long and heavy trouble,
I'm paid with tears and sighs and grief:
under that star I swallowed bait and hook.

213. 'GRAZIE CH'A POCHI IL CIEL LARGO DESTINA:'



races that heaven hardly bestows widely:
rare virtue, not of our human race,
a wise head under a mass of blonde hair,
high divine beauty in a humble girl:

a singular and foreign gracefulness,
a singing voice that the heart can feel,
heavenly action, and a clear ardent spirit,
to defeat all harshness, and make pride bow down:

and those lovely eyes that dazzle the heart,
able to lighten the abyss and the night,
tear soul from body, and grant it to another:

with speech full of sweet and noble intellect,
with sighs that are so sweetly broken:
I was transformed by magic such as this.

214. 'ANZI TRE DÍ CREATA ERA ALAMA IN PARTE' (*SESTINA*)



Three days created, my soul was in a place
that made it care for what is noble and new,
and made it scorn what many prize.
Then still unsure of its fated path,
thoughtful, in solitude, young and free,
it came in springtime to a lovely wood.

There was a tender flower born in that wood
a day before, and rooted in such a place
that no spirit could approach it and be free:
for there were snares, in a manner new,
and pleasure driving me along my path,
so loss of freedom there would win the prize.

Dear, sweet, noble and hard-won prize,
that drew me swiftly into the green wood
that makes us stray from the middle path!
And I've searched the world from place to place
for verses, stones, juice of herbs, strange and new,
that one day might set my mind free.

But, alas, I see the body will be free
of that knot, that is the greater prize,
before medicine, ancient or new,
heals the wounds received in that wood,
so full of thorns I issued from that place
limping, who entered happily on my path.

Full of snares and brambles, a hard path
for me to follow, where nimble, free
sound feet were needed in every place.
But you, Lord, with that mercy we prize,
stretch your hand towards me in this wood:
let your sun dispel the shadows strange and new.

Care for my being: guard it from these new
wanderings that, interrupting my life's path,
have made me a dweller in the shadowy wood:
render, if you can, my errant soul, free
and unfettered, and let yours be the prize
if I find it, at last, with You, in a better place.

Now hear in this place, my questions ever new:
is there anything in me to prize, is this the path,
is my soul free, or imprisoned in the wood?

215. 'IN NOBIL SANGUE VITA HUMILE ET QUETA'



oble blood, a calm and humble life,
high intellect, and a heart that's pure,
the fruit of wisdom in her youth's flower,
a joyful spirit in a thoughtful face,

her planets have brought together in this lady,
or rather the ruler of the stars: with true honour,
worthy praise, high esteem, and great value,
to exhaust all the crowd of divine poets.

Love finds himself met with Chastity in her,
adorned with natural beauty's dress,
and an aspect that speaks with its silences,

and most of all her eyes, that together
light the nights, and dim the daylight,
make honey bitter, and wormwood sweet.

216. 'TUTTO 'L DI PIANGO: ET POI LA NOTTE, QUANDO'



ll day I weep: and then in the night
when wretched mortals take their rest,
I find myself weeping, redoubling my ills:
so I spend the time that's mine in tears.

My eyes are drowned in sad moisture,
the heart with pain: and I am the worst
of creatures, the arrows of love pierce me
so all over, now that peace is exiled.

Alas, with one sun following on another,
one shadow after another, I've already passed
the greater part of this death, that they call life.

Another's failing grieves me more than my own:
that living Pity, and solace of my faith,
sees the fire burning, and will not help me.

217. 'GIA DESĪAI CON SI GIUSTA QUERELA'



nce I hoped, lamenting so justly
making such fervent verses heard,
that pity's warmth might be felt
in that hard heart that freezes in mid-summer:

and that the cruel cloud, that chills
and veils it, might disperse with the breeze
of my ardent voice, or others might hate her
for hiding those eyes that destroy me.

Yet I seek no pity for myself, nor hatred
for her: I do not wish it, nor is it possible
(such are my stars, and my cruel fate):

but I sing her heavenly beauty, so
that, when I'm free of this flesh, the world
will know the sweetness of my death.

218. 'TRA QUANTUNQUE LEGGIADRE DONNE ET BELLE'



hen she's among graceful and lovely ladies
she who has no equal in the world,
her face has the same effect on others,
as the daylight has on the lesser stars.

Love seems to whisper in my ear,
saying: 'Life will be beautiful while she
is visible in this world: then I'll see it troubled,
virtue and my kingdom will die with her.

As if Nature were to take the sun and moon
from the sky, winds from the air, leaves
and grass from the earth, intellect and speech

from man, and fish and waves from the seas:
so much and more would things be dark and lonely,
if Death closed her eyes and hid her away.'

219. 'IL CANTAR NOVO E 'L PIANGER DELLI AUGELLI'



t break of day the valley re-echoes
with the birds' fresh singing and lament,
and the murmuring of liquid crystal
down the fresh, clear swift rivers.

She, with her snowy face and golden hair,
whose love has never failed or deceived,
wakes me with the sound of dancing,
combing her ancient lover's white fleece.

So I rouse myself to greet the Dawn,
and the sun with her, and that other more so
who dazzled my early years, and still does so.

I have seen both rise together in other days,
in the same moment, at the same hour,
he making the stars vanish, and she him.

Note: *Aurora, the Dawn, loved the mortal Tithonus, obtaining immortality for him, but not eternal youth.*



Aurora Taking Leave of Tithonus
Francesco Solimena (Italian, 1657 - 1747)
The Getty Open Content Program

220. 'ONDE TOLSE AMOR L'ORO, ET DI QUAL VENA,'



here, and from what vein, did Love derive
the gold for her blonde hair? From what thorn
did he pluck the rose, from what fields the fresh
and tender frost, and give them force and power?

From where, those pearls to part and restrain
her sweet words in their chaste wandering?
And so much heavenly beauty on her brow,
more so than in the calmest skies?

From what angels, and with what hopes,
came that celestial singing that disarmed me,
so that I've never been anything but disarmed?

From what sun was that high kindly light born
of lovely eyes, from which came war and peace,
that seared my heart with ice and fire?

221. 'QUAL MIO DESTÌN, QUAL FORZA O QUAL INGANNO,'




How did my fate, or force or deceit
bring me unarmed to the field again,
where I am always beaten? If I escape
it's a miracle: if I die, it's no loss.

No loss at all, but profit: so sweetly stands
the sparkle and clear light in my heart
that dazzles and consumes me, so I blaze,
and have already burned for twenty years.

I fear Death's messengers, when I see
her lovely eyes appear, and shine from afar:
then when they have neared me,

Love blesses and pierces me so sweetly
I can hardly recall it, far less repeat:
that no tongue or wit could express its truth.

222. ‘- LIETE ET PENSOSE, ACCOMPAGNATE ET SOLE,’

“adies who go talking along the way,
happy and pensive, together or alone,
where is my life, where is my death?
Why is she not with you as she once was?’

‘We are happy with her memory alone:
grieving for her sweet company,
taken from us by Envy and Jealousy,
who mourns another’s good as his own ill.’

‘What can restrain a lover, or bind him?’
‘Nothing, the soul: Anger and Harshness, the body:
so it proves now with her, at other times with us.

But often the heart may be read in the face:
so we saw her noble beauty clouded,
and her eyes all bathed in tears.’

223. 'QUANDO 'L SOL BAGNA IN MAR L'AURATO CARRO,'



hen the sun dips his golden chariot in the sea,
darkening the air and my mind,
together with the sky, and stars, and moon
I endure a harsh and painful night.

Then, alas, I relate all my troubles
one by one, so that no one hears me,
and quarrel with blind fate, and the world,
with Love, and my lady, and myself.

Sleep's banished: there is no chance of rest:
but sighs and complaints till the dawn,
and tears, the soul sends to the eyes.

Then daybreak comes, and brightens the dark air,
but not me: the sun, that burns the heart
and blesses, alone can ease my pain.

224. 'S'UNA FEDE AMOROSA, UN COR NON FINTO,'



f loving faith, an undeceiving heart,
sweet yearning, and courteous desire:
if chaste wishes burning in a noble fire,
long wandering in the blind labyrinth:

if a brow that pictures every thought,
or a voice broken by the pain within,
or troubled by fear or by shame:
if a loving pallor tinged with purple:

if holding something dearer than oneself:
if sighing and weeping every day,
fed by grief, by anger and distress:

if burning from afar, and freezing near,
are the reasons why love makes me ill,
mine is the hurt lady, and yours the guilt.

225. 'DODICI DONNE HONESTAMENTE LASSE,'



saw twelve ladies virtuously sailing,
or twelve stars rather, one sun in their midst,
happy and alone, in a little boat
I think there was never another like it.

Not I believe the one that carried Jason
to the golden fleece, now all would like to wear,
nor the shepherd's whom Troy still grieves for:
those two who made such a noise in the world.

Then I saw the ladies in a triumphal car,
my Laura, with her shy sacred look,
sitting apart, and singing sweetly.

Not a human sight, nor mortal vision:
happy the Tiphys, or Automedon,
who steered such a gracious crew!

Note: *Paris was the shepherd prince who caused the Trojan War. Tiphys was the helmsman of Jason's Argo, Automedon was Achilles' charioteer.*



Paris and Oenone
Jacob de Wit (Dutch, 1695 – 1754)
The Rijksmuseum

226. 'PASSER MAI SOLITARIO IN ALCUN TETTO'



o sparrow on a roof, or beast in a wood
was ever as lonely, since I cannot see
her lovely face, and recognise no other sun,
nor do my eyes seek any other object.

The height of my delight is always to weep,
laughter is grief, wormwood and gall my food,
my nights troubled, the clear sky dark for me,
and my bed a harsh battlefield.

Sleep, as men say, is truly allied to death,
and the heart derives from it sweet thought
that keeps it still alive.

In all the world only you happy, kindly land,
green flowering river-banks, cool shadows,
possess the good I weep for.

227. 'AURA QUE CHELLE CHIOME BLONDE ET CRESPE'



reeze, blowing that blonde curling hair,
stirring it, and being softly stirred in turn,
scattering that sweet gold about, then
gathering it, in a lovely knot of curls again,

you linger around bright eyes whose loving sting
pierces me so, till I feel it and weep,
and I wander searching for my treasure,
like a creature that often shies and kicks:

now I seem to find her, now I realise
she's far away, now I'm comforted, now despair,
now longing for her, now truly seeing her.

Happy air, remain here with your
living rays: and you, clear running stream,
why can't I exchange my path for yours?

228. 'AMOR CO LA MAN DEXTRA IL LATO MANCO'



Love opened my left side with his right hand,
and set, in the centre of my heart,
a green laurel, so its colour truly
outshone every emerald and made it pale.

The pen's furrow, the sighs from my side,
and the sweet moisture raining from my eyes,
so adorn it, that a fragrance rises to the skies,
that could never come from any other foliage.

Fame, Honour, Virtue, Grace,
chaste beauty in a heavenly dress,
are the roots of this noble plant.

So I carry it in my heart, wherever I am,
a happy burden: and with true prayer
I adore it, bowing as if to something holy.

229. 'CANTAI, OR PIANGO, ET NON MEN DI DOLCEZZA'



sang, and now I weep, and I take no less
delight in weeping than I took in singing,
for the cause and not the effect, is in
my senses, longing for my noble one.

So I bear mildness and severity,
cruel or humble or courteous actions,
equally, no weight burdens me,
no weapon tipped with disdain touches me.

Let Love, my lady, world and fortune
treat me as they have always done,
and I will never think myself unhappy.

Alive, or dead, or languishing, there's no
state better than mine beneath the moon,
so sweet is the root of my bitterness.

230. 'I' PIANSI, OR CANTO, CHÉ 'L CELESTE LUME'



wept, now I sing, that the celestial light
no longer hides the living sun from my eyes,
where chaste clear Love reveals
his sweet strength and his sacred custom:

from them he drew such floods of tears,
in shortening the thread of my life,
not only bridges, fords, oars, sails,
failed to rescue me, but feathered wings.

My tears were so deep and wide,
and the shore was so far away,
I could not reach it, even in fancy.

Now Pity brings me not the palm, or laurel,
but the peaceful olive and clear weather,
dries my tears, and wishes me still to live.

231. 'I' MI VIVEA DI MIA SORTE CONTENTE'



had lived contented with my fate,
without tears, not envying anyone,
since if any lover had better fortune,
his thousand joys were not worth my torment.

Now, the lovely eyes of which I never will
regret the pain, and wish not one pain less,
are misted over, so heavily, so darkly,
that my life's sun is almost quenched.

O Nature, merciful and savage mother,
how can you will such contrary things
to create and then un-create so lightly?

All power flows from one living fountain:
and how can You consent, O heavenly Father,
to another spoiling your beloved gift?

232. 'VINCITORE ALEXANDRO L'IRA VINSE,'



nger conquered Alexander the conqueror,
and made him less than Philip his father:
what matter if Pyrgoteles and Lysippus
alone could sculpt him, or Apelles paint him?

Anger had Tydeus in such a rage
that dying he gnawed at Menalippus:
anger made Sulla's eyes not only dull,
but blind: and in the end destroyed him.

Anger led Valentinianus to the same pain:
and brought mighty Ajax to kill
many others, and at last himself.

Anger's a brief madness, he who does not
curb it's a long time mad, and it often leads
those who possess it to shame, and sometimes death.

Notes: *Alexander the Great's father was Philip II of Macedon. Lysippus, Pyrgoteles and Apelles were artists at Alexander's court (4th century BC). Tydeus was one of the seven against Thebes. Sulla the Roman dictator (c138-78BC). Valentinianus was Roman Emperor. Ajax the Greater committed suicide after failing to win the arms of Achilles.*



Ajax Commits Suicide

Crispijn van de Passe (I) (Dutch, 1589 – 1637)

The Rijksmuseum

233. 'QUAL VENTURA MI FU, QUANDO DA L'UNO'



hat good fortune came to me, when a force
that made my eyes weak and dim, beamed
from one of the two loveliest eyes there ever were,
as I gazed on it in dark and troubled grief!

As I turned back to satisfy my hunger
to see her whom alone in this world I care for,
Heaven and Love were never kinder to me,
even if all other times of grace were counted:

since from my lady's right eye, rather
the right hand sun, delightful sickness
entered into mine, and did not grieve me:

and something with intelligence and wings,
passed, like a star shooting through the sky:
and Nature and Pity guided its course.

Note: *Laura's eye infection of 231 is cleared by a piece of sympathetic magic, as Petrarch receives the infection.*

234. 'O CAMERETTA CHE GIA FOSTI UN PORTO'



little room that was once a refuge
from those grave diurnal storms of mine,
you are a fountain now of nocturnal tears
which I carry hidden by day from shame.

O little couch that was rest and comfort
in so many torments, from what sad urns
does Love bathe you, with those ivory hands
so wrongly cruel to me alone!

I do not flee from privacy and rest
as much as from my self and from my thoughts,
which lifted me in flight when I followed them:

and I yearn for the hostile and odious crowd
(who would ever have thought it?) as a refuge:
I have such fear of finding myself alone again.

235. 'LASSO, AMOR MI TRASPORTA OV'IO NON VOGLIO,'



las, Love carries me where I do not wish,
and I know my journey is towards her
so that I'm more annoying than before
to her who is the queen of my heart:

no skilful sailor ever guided his boat
through reefs, with thanks for his precious cargo,
as often as I have done my frail craft,
through the battering received from her harsh pride.

But tearful rain and fierce storms
of endless sighs now drive my vessel on,
through my sea vile with wintry darkness,

bringing harm to her, grief and torment
to itself, nothing else, beaten by the waves,
stripped of its sails and its rudder.

236. 'AMOR, IO FALLO, ET VEGGIO IL MIO FALLIRE,'



ove, I have sinned, and I know my sin,
but I was a man burning, with fire in his breast,
whose grief increased as his reason grew less,
and is almost overcome now by pain.

I once could rein in my hot desire,
so as not to trouble that calm lovely face:
I can no more: from my hand you take the reins,
and the desperate soul has gathered courage.

So if it ventures beyond your limits,
it is your doing, who stir me so and spur me,
I try every harsh path to my salvation:

and the rare celestial gifts my lady shows
are more to blame: now at least let her feel
she has to pardon my crime in herself.

237. 'NON A TANTI ANIMALI IL MAR FRA L'ONDE,' (*SESTINA*)



he sea's not so many creatures in its waves,
nor there, beyond the circuit of the moon,
were so many stars ever seen at night,
nor do so many birds live in the woods,
nor so many grasses on the field or bank,
as I have thoughts in my heart each evening.

From day to day I wish my final evening
would sever my living earth from the waves,
and let me fall asleep on some green bank,
for no man has ever suffered under the moon,
such troubles as I have: and the woods
know, that I go searching day and night.

I have never had one tranquil night,
but go along sighing morning and evening,
since Love made me a citizen of the woods.
Before I rest, the sea will be free of waves,
and the sun illuminated by the moon,
and flowers will die in April on every bank.

Consumed with grief I go from bank to bank
thoughtful all day, then weep through the night:
and may have no more rest than has the moon.
As soon as I see the darkness of evening,
my breast sighs, and from my eyes come waves
to drench the grass, and bow down the woods.

Cities are hostile to my thoughts, the woods
are friendly: thoughts that along this high bank
I pour out to the murmuring of the waves,
through the sweet silence of the night:
so that I wait through the day for evening,
when the sun departs and makes way for the moon.

Ah if, like Endymion, lover of the moon,
I was asleep somewhere in the green woods,
and she, who before vespers brings me evening,
came with the moon and Love to that bank,
to remain alone there through a single night:
and daylight and sun stayed beneath the waves!

Over harsh waves, by the light of the moon,
song, born at night among the deepest woods,
you'll see the greenest bank tomorrow evening.

238. 'REAL NATURA, ANGELICO INTELLETO,'



royal nature, angelic intellect,
clear soul, ready vision, a keen eye,
swift foresight, noble thought,
and truly worthy of his breast:

his judgement quickly chose from among
that choice number of ladies, so lovely,
brought to adorn the festive and noblest day,
the most perfect face of them all.

Others greater in years or fortune
drew aside commanded by his hand,
as he warmly welcomed that one.

The eyes and the brow with mortal semblance
he kissed so as to make them all content:
me envious, of that sweet strange action.

Note: *The visit of some prince.*

239. 'LA VER' L'AURORA, CHE SI DOLCE L'AURA' (*SESTINA*)



owards the dawn when the sweet breeze
over the fresh spring earth stirs the flowers,
and the little birds begin their song,
I feel my thoughts stirred within my soul,
so sweetly by her who has them in her power,
that I must turn again to my own music.

If I could tune my sighs to such gentle music
as Laura makes with the sweetening breeze,
showing her the reason why I'm in her power!
But sooner will winter be the season of flowers,
than love will flourish in that noble soul,
that never cared for my rhymes or song.

How many tears, alas, and how much song
have I scattered in my time, and with what music
have I tried again and again to soften her soul!
She remains a harsh mountain in the breeze,
a sweet one that stirs the grass and flowers,
but has no strength against her greater power.

Men and gods were overcome by the power
of Love, as we read in prose and song:
and I proved at the first opening of the flowers.
Now neither my Lord nor his music
nor my tears or prayers can make this breeze
carry off, from life or torment, this my soul.

In time of greatest need, O wretched soul,
gather all your wits about you, and your power,
while among us there is still this living breeze
Nothing on earth's impossible for song,
and it can charm the serpent with its music,
besides adorning ice with fresh flowers.

Now the meadows smile with grass and flowers,
it cannot be that her angelic soul
does not hear the sound of loving music.
But if my cruel fate has the greater power,
sing and weep together will be our song,
and with a lame ox go to catch the breeze.

I catch the breeze with a net, seed ice with flowers,
and hold with song a deaf unyielding soul,
indifferent to Love's power and my music.

240. 'I' Ò PREGATO AMOR, E 'L NE RIPREGO,'



have prayed to Love, and I pray again
that he'll make you pardon me, my sweet hurt,
my bitter joy, if in perfect loyalty
I stray at all from the straight way.

I cannot deny, lady, and don't deny
that reason, that restrains all good souls,
is overcome by passion: so he leads me
at times to places where I unwillingly follow.

You, with that heart that heaven illumines
with such clear wit, and such noble virtue,
as ever rained down from a fortunate star,

should say, with pity and without disdain:
'What else can he do? My looks consume him:
why does he long so, why am I so beautiful?'

241. 'L'ALTO SIGNOR DINANZI A CUI NON VALE'



hat noble lord before whom there's no use
in hiding or in fleeing, or making a defence,
has kindled lovely pleasure in my mind
with one burning and loving arrow:

and even though his first bitter blow
was mortal, to further his attack,
he took a shaft formed from pity,
and pierced my heart again and again.

One wound burns and sends out smoke and flame:
the other sends out tears that grief distils,
through my eyes, because of your sad state:

not a single spark of the fire that inflames me
is quenched by this double fountain,
rather desire increases with the pity.

Note: *Presumably pity for some illness of Laura's.*

242. ' - MIRA QUELL COLLE, O STANCO MIO COR VAGO: '



Look at that hill, O weary loving heart:
we left her there yesterday, who once
had some care for us, and even pitied us,
who now from our eyes would draw a flood.

Return there, where I only wish to be:
see if the time perhaps has come as yet
to end our grief, that has so increased,
you of my ills companion and prophet.'

'Now you are truly lost in forgetfulness
and talk as though your heart were with you still,
wretch, full of idle thoughts and foolish!

For in departing from your great desire,
you went away, and it remained with her,
and hid itself within her lovely eyes.'

243. 'FRESCO, OMBROSO, FIORITO ET VERDE COLLE,'



resh, shaded, flower-filled and verdant hill,
where she sits pensively or singing,
as one with faith in the celestial spirits,
and bearing fame away from all the world:

my heart that wished to leave me for her
(and with great sense no longer seeks return)
now goes searching out where her lovely feet
have pressed the grass, and these eyes have wet.

He walks with her, and says at every step:
'Ah if that poor man could be here a while,
who's tired already of weeping and of life!'

She smiles at this, and fate is unequal:
O advantaged sweet and sacred place,
you are paradise, I a heartless stone.

244. 'IL MAL MI PREME, ET MI SPAVENTA IL PEGGIO,'



y ills press on me and I fear the worst,
to which I see a broad and open road,
since I'm in a like frenzy within,
and rage as you do with harsh thoughts:

I don't know whether to ask God for war or peace,
since the harm is great, or the shame is cruel.
But why worry more? What will become of us
is ordained already in the highest place.

Though I'm not worthy of the great honour
you show me, since Love deceives you,
who often makes clear eyes see awry,

raise your soul to those celestial regions:
that's my counsel, spur your heart above:
since the road is long and time is short.

Note: *A reply to a sonnet by the Paduan poet Giovanni Dondi asking for advice in love.*

245. 'DUE ROSE FRESCHE, ET COLTE IN PARADISO'



wo fresh roses, gathered in paradise,
just now, that opened on the first of May,
a lovely gift, divided, by an older, wiser lover
between two young lovers, equally,

with such sweet speech and with a smile
that would make even a savage being love,
made each of them change their aspect
with its sparkling and amorous rays.

'The sun has never seen such lovers'
he said, smiling then and sighing:
and, embracing both, he turned away.

So the roses and the words depart,
the heart is left still joyful and in fear:
O happy eloquence, O glad day!

246. 'L'AURA CHE 'L VERDE LAURO ET L'AUREO CRINE'



he breeze that with its gentle sighing moves
the green laurel and the curling gold,
makes the spirit wander from the body
at seeing her fresh and pretty looks.

This white rose born among sharp thorns,
when shall we see its equal in this world,
this glory of our age? O living Jove,
command that I die before her, I pray:

so I may not see that great earthly harm,
the world left here without its sun,
and my eyes, that have no other light:

and my soul without thought of any other,
and my ears that cannot hear any other,
lacking her sweet virtuous words.

247. 'PARRÀ FORSE AD ALCUN CHE 'N LODAR QUELLA'



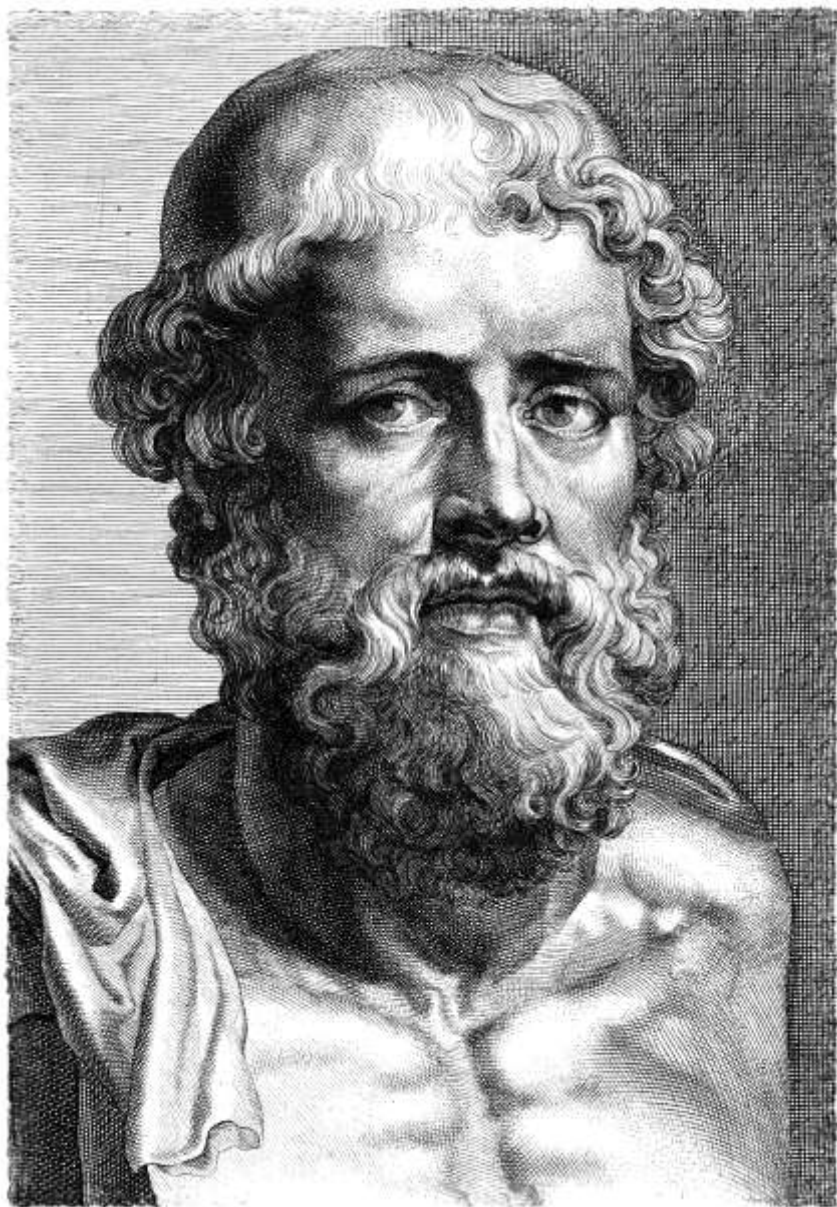
Perhaps it might seem to some that in praising
her whom I love on earth, my style's too high,
setting her above all other nobleness,
sacred, wise, graceful, chaste and beautiful.

To me it seems otherwise: and I fear
she's offended that my speech is over humble,
worthy of something nobler and more subtle:
and whoever doubts that let him come and see:

he'll truly say: 'This man here must aspire
to things that exhausted Athens and Arpinum,
Mantua and Smyrna, the Greek and Roman lyre.

Mortal tongue cannot express her divinity:
Love drives him and draws him on,
not by his choice, but by his destiny.'

Note: *Athens, Arpinum, Mantua, and Smyrna, the birthplaces respectively of Demosthenes, Cicero, Virgil, and according to one tradition Homer.*



Bust of Demosthenes
Hans Witdoeck (Dutch, 1638)
The Rijksmuseum

248 'CHI VUOL VEDER QUANTUNQUE PÒ NATURA'



ho wishes to see what Nature can achieve
among us, and Heaven, come and gaze at her,
who is the only sun, not only to my eyes,
but to the blind world, that cares nothing about virtue.

And come quickly, since Death takes away
the best ones first, and leaves the worst:
she who is awaited in the kingdom of the gods,
this beautiful mortal thing will not last, but pass away.

He will see, if he arrives in time, every virtue,
every beauty, every royal manner
joined in one body with miraculous blending:

then he will say that all my rhymes are mute,
my skill conquered by excess of light:
but if he comes too late, he will grieve forever.

249. 'QUAL PAURA Ò, QUNADO MI TORNE A MENTE'



hat fear I have, when I turn my mind
to that day I left my lady, grave and pensive,
and my heart with her! And there's nothing
I think of so willingly and so often.

I see her again standing humbly
among lovely ladies, like a rose
among lesser flowers, not joyous or sad,
like one who's afraid, feeling no other ill.

She had laid aside her customary grace,
the pearls, the garland and the bright dress,
the smile, the song, the sweet human speech.

So I was left living in uncertainty:
sad omens now, dark thoughts and dreams
assail me, and, please God, they are in vain.

250. 'SOLEA LONTANA IN SONNO CONSOLARME'



y lady used to console me, far-away
in sleep, with that sweet angelic face of hers,
now she saddens me, makes me afraid,
nor can I free myself from grief and fear:

for often I seem to see, in her face,
true pity mingled with a heavy pain,
and hear things that make my heart believe
I must disarm myself of hope and joy.

'Don't you remember that final evening,'
she said, 'I left your weeping eyes
and, forced to by the hour, went away?'

'I did not wish to say it then nor could I:
now I say it as a true and certain thing:
do not hope to see me more on earth.'

251. 'O MISERA ET HORRIBIL VISIÖNE!'



wretched and terrible imagining!
Is it true that the kindly light is quenched,
before its time, that made my life
content in painful and hopeful times?

How is it then such dark news is not echoed,
by other messengers, and felt by her alone?
Now God, and Nature, do not consent,
and let my sad intelligence be false.

Let me still hope for my sweet sight
to be adorned with her lovely face,
that supports me, and honours our age.

If she has left her lovely dwelling-house
to leap to her eternal place of rest,
I pray my final day will not be long.

252. 'IN DUBBIO DI MIO STATO, OR PIANGO OR CANTO,'



ncertain of my state, now I weep, now sing,
and fear and hope: and in sighs and verses
pour out my cares: Love uses his weapons
against my heart, that's so afflicted.

Now will that lovely sacred face ever
restore its first light to these eyes
(alas, I do not know if I deserve it)
or condemn them to eternal weeping:

and in going to heaven, as is her due,
has she no care for those on earth,
to whom she is the sun, there is no other?

In such fear, in such perpetual war
I live, and no longer know what I once was,
like he who fears and errs on a winding road.

253. 'O DOLCE SGUARDI, O PAROLETTE ACCORTE,'



sweet glances, O subtle speech,
now may I never see or hear you more?
O blonde hair with which Love snared
my heart, and, so caught, led it to its death:

O lovely face granted me by harsh fate,
that made me always sad, and never joyful:
O concealed deception, loving fraud,
to give a pleasure that only brought me pain!

And if sometimes those lovely gentle eyes
where my life and thoughts have their dwelling,
brought me perhaps some chaste sweetness,

suddenly, Fortune sent horsemen or ships
always ready to do me a disservice,
dispelling all my good, carrying me far away.

254. 'I'PUR ASCOLTO, ET NON ODO NOVELLA'



listen closely, and I hear no news
of my sweet beloved enemy,
I do not know what to think or say
my heart's so torn between hope and fear.

Others have been harmed by being beautiful:
she is more noble, lovely, chaste than others:
perhaps God wishes to take so virtuous a friend
away from earth, and make her a star in heaven:

or a sun rather: and, if it is so, my life,
my brief repose and long trouble
have reached their end. O harsh departure,

why have you worked me harm from afar?
My brief tale is almost complete,
and, half-way through my years, my time is done.

255. 'LA SERA DESIARE, ODIAR L'AURORA'



desire the evening, and hate the dawn:
that's what calm and happy lovers do:
evening for me is doubly grief and tears,
the morning is for me the happier hour:

when sometimes we see them in one moment,
the one sun and the other like two Orients,
so alike in beauty and in radiance
even that heaven is in love with earth,

as it was once when the boughs were green
that have rooted so in my heart, always,
so that I love another more than myself.

This is what two contrary hours achieve:
what calms me gives me reason to desire it:
and what brings me pain to fear and hate it.

256. 'FAR POTESSE'IO VENDETTA DI COLEI'



f I could take my vengeance on her
whose glances and words consume me,
and who then, to increase my pain, flees,
hiding those eyes so sweet and painful to me.

So my weary and afflicted spirits
little by little are exhausted,
and she roars like a lioness in my heart,
through the night when I need to sleep.

The soul, that Death drives from its place,
parts from me, and free of that net,
goes towards her who menaces.

I wonder if there are times indeed,
in my calls to it, my tears, embraces,
when her sleep is troubled, if she hears me.

257. 'IN QUELL BEL VISO CH'I' SOSPIRO ET BRAMO,'



y eyes were fixed, with intense desire,
on that lovely face I sigh and long for,
when Love as if saying: 'What are you thinking of?',
interposed her proud hand, my second love.

My heart, caught like a fish on a hook,
and so made a living example,
or like a fledgling limed on a branch,
with senses occupied, did not engage it.

But sight, deprived of its object,
still made its way, as in a dream,
to that face without which all's imperfect.

My soul between one and the other glory,
felt a new heavenly joy beyond knowing,
and such unheard of sweetness.

258. 'VIVE FAVILLE USCIAN DE' DUO BEI LUMI'



iving sparks issued towards me,
sweetly glowing, from two lovely eyes,
and sighing from her wise heart there came
such gentle rivers of noble eloquence,

I seem to be consumed by that memory
whenever I turn to it, recalling
how I felt my spirits fainting
at that variance to her harsh custom.

My soul, always nourished on grief and pain,
(how great the power of a settled habit!)
was so weakened by this double pleasure,

that merely tasting the unaccustomed joy,
trembling now with fear, now with hope,
between the two, it often sought to leave me.

259. 'CERCATO Ò SEMPRE SOLITARIA VITA'



've often sought the solitary life
(river-banks know it, and fields and woods)
to escape these dull and clouded minds,
who have lost the road to heaven:

and if my wish in this were granted,
beyond the sweet air of Tuscan country,
I'd still be among those misted hills
where the Sorgue aids my tears and song.

But my fortune, always my enemy,
returns me to this place where I hate
to see my lovely treasure in the dust.

Fate was a friend to the hand that wrote,
at that time, and perhaps not unworthily:
Love saw it, and I know, and my lady.

260. 'IN TALE STELLA DUO BELLI OCCHI VIDI,'



saw two eyes beneath such stars,
all filled with chastity and sweetness,
that near those gracious nests of Love,
my heart scorns every other sight.

There is none more appreciated, or equal
to her, in any age, on any foreign shore:
not Helen who with her errant beauty brought
trouble to Greece, the last despair to Troy:

nor Lucretia, the lovely Roman, who pierced
her chaste and disdainful breast with steel:
not Polyxena, Hypsipyle, or Argia.

Her excellence, if I do not err, is Nature's
great glory, and is my supreme delight,
except she came so late, and swiftly passes.

261. 'QUAL DONNA ATTENDE A GLORIOSA FAMA'



hat lady who hopes for glorious fame
for her wisdom, virtue, courtesy,
should fix her eyes on my enemy,
that the world knows as my lady.

There, how to acquire honour, and be loved
by God, how chastity and grace conjoin,
is learned, and the truest way to climb
to heaven, that waits and hopes for her,

there, the speech no style can capture,
the lovely silences, her dear ways,
no human wit can unfold in words:

but the infinite beauty that dazzles others,
is not learned there: since those sweet eyes
are achieved by destiny and not by art.

262. ‘- CARA LA VITA, ET DOPO LEI MI PARE’



Life is dearest, and next it seems to me
true chaste behaviour in a lovely woman.’
‘Reverse that: there was never anything
dear or lovely without chaste actions :

and she who lives deprived of her honour,
is no lady and no longer living: and if she
seems so, yet her life is harsh, her path
is worse than death, with more bitter pain.

I only wondered at Lucretia in this,
that she must kill herself with a dagger,
that her grief alone was not enough.’

However many philosophers came to speak
of it: all their wisdom would fall to earth:
and we would see hers soar above them.

263. 'ARBOR VICTORIÖSA TRUMPHALE'



ictorious, triumphant laurel-branch,
the honour of emperors and poets,
how many sad and happy days you brought me
in this brief mortal life of mine!

True lady, you who care for nothing
if not honour, which you receive beyond all others,
who do not fear Love's traps, or nets or snares,
or other's deceit, worthless against your wisdom.

Nobility of blood, other things dear to us,
pearls, rubies, or gold, you despise
all, equally, as vile burdens to us.

That noble beauty, which has no compare
in this world, annoys you, except as it adorns,
and decks the lovely treasure of your chastity.



POEMS WRITTEN
AFTER LAURA'S DEATH



264. 'I'VO PENSANDO, ET NEL PENSER M'ASSALE'



go thinking, and so strong a pity
for myself assails me in thought,
that I'm forced sometimes
to weep with other tears than once I did:
for seeing my end nearer every day,
I've asked God a thousand times for those wings
with which our intellect
can rise from this mortal prison to heaven.
But till now nothing has eased me,
no prayers, or sighs, or tears I produce:
and that is what has to be,
since he who had strength to stand, but fell on the way,
deserves to lie on the ground and find his level.
I see those merciful arms,
I which I believe, still open wide,
but fear grips me
at other's example, and I tremble at my state,
that spurs me higher, and perhaps I near the end.

One thought speaks within me, and says:
'What do you hope for? Where do you seek help?
Wretch, are you not aware
how much to your dishonour the time passes?
Take the wise decision: take it:
and tear from your heart
each root of pleasure,
that brings no joy, and allows no breath.

If you've long been weary and disgusted
with that false fugitive sweetness
that the traitorous world grants more to others,
why place your hopes any longer
in what is free of peace and certainty?
While your body is alive,
you have your thoughts in your control:
grasp them while you may,
since it's dangerous to delay as you know,
and beginning now is not soon enough.

You know well what sweetness came
to your eyes at the sight of her
who I might still wish,
for our peace, had never been born.
Remember clearly, as you must,
how her image ran to your heart,
there where perhaps
the flame of no other torch could enter:
she kindled you: and if the deceiving fire
has lasted many years awaiting that day
that will never come, of our salvation,
lift your thoughts to a more blessed hope,
gaze at the heavens as they turn about,
immortal and adorned:
for if your longing, so happy at its ills,
can be eased down here
by the glance of an eye, by speech, or song,
what is that joy above, if this is such?

From another side a sweet and bitter thought,

with its wearying and delightful burden,
seated in my soul,
oppresses the heart with desire, feeds it with hope:
that solely for glorious kindly fame,
feels nothing when I freeze or when I burn,
or if I'm pale and thin:
and if I kill it, it's reborn more fiercely.
From when I first slept in my cradle
it came to me, increasing day by day,
and I fear the tomb will enclose us both.
Yet when my soul is stripped of these limbs,
that desire cannot travel with it:
and if Latin or Greek
speak of me after death, it is mere air:
and so, because I fear
to always gather what an hour will scatter,
I wish to leave the shadows, grasp the true.

But that other desire with which I'm filled
seems to destroy the other as it is born:
and time is flying,
so that writing of her does not calm me:
and the light of lovely eyes that melts me
gently in their serene warmth,
controls me with a rein
against which no wit or force avails.
What joy then if my boat has all sails spread
if it's still dragged on the rocks by those two cables?
You who free me from all other ties,
that bind me to the world in diverse ways,
my Lord, why will you not free

my face ever of this blush of shame?
Like a man who dreams,
death seems to be before my eyes:
and I would make defence, yet have no weapons.

I see what I have done, truth badly understood
does not deceive me, rather Love compels me,
he who never lets those who believe
in him too much follow the path of honour:
and I feel a gracious disdain, bitter and severe,
from time to time, in my heart,
that reveals every hidden thought
on my forehead, where others see:
to love a mortal being with such faith
as is owed to God alone, is the more
denied to those who seek more merit.
And it cries out still in a loud voice
to reason, lead astray by the senses:
but though mind hears, and thought
attends, habit spurs it on,
and pictures to the eyes
her who was born only to make me perish,
by pleasing me too much, and herself.

I do not know what span heaven allotted me
when I was newly come to this earth
to suffer the bitter war
that I contrive to wage against myself:
nor through the corporeal veil can I
anticipate the day that ends my life:
but I see my hair alter

and my desires change within me.
Now that I think the time for death
is near, or at least not far,
I'm like one that loss makes shrewd and wise,
thinking of how it was he left the path
of right, that brings us to our true harbour:
and I feel the goad
of shame and grief turning me about:
yet the other does not free me,
that pleasure so strong in me by custom
that it dares to bargain with death.

Song, you know I grow colder
with fear than frozen snow,
knowing I must truly die:
and that by indecision I've always turned
to ashes the best part of my life's brief thread:
nor was there ever a heavier burden
that that which I sustain in this state:
for with death at my side
I search for new help in living,
and see the better, and cling to the worst.

Note: *re: the last line, Seneca's 'Inferna tetigit possit ut supera assequi.'* ('I touched the depths, to reach the heights.')



Dante and Virgil Visiting Hell (Inferno Canto 22)

Otto Greiner (German, 1869 – 1916)

The Yale University Art Gallery

265. 'ASPRO CORE ET SELVAGGIO, ET CRUDA VOGLIA'



er savage bitter heart, and cruel will,
beneath a sweet, humble, angelic form,
however much they retain their severity,
gain slight honour from me as their prize:

when the flowers, the grasses and the leaves
are new born, and when they die again,
in broad day and darkest night, I weep on,
since fate, Love, and my lady bring me grief.

I only live on hope, remembering
I've seen a little water's constant flow
wear away marble and the solid stone.

No heart's so hard that tears, prayers,
love, can't sometimes move it,
no will so cold that it can't be warmed.

266. 'SIGNOR MIO CARO, OGNI PENSIER MI TIRA'



y dear lord, every thought in me,
as always, with devotion, turns to seeing you,
but fate holds me (what more could she do to me?)
reined in, and twists me round and round.

Then sweet desire that Love breathes into me
leads me to death, so that I barely feel it:
and between my two guiding lights I cry out,
wherever I am, day and night, sighing so.

Fondness for my lord, love of my lady,
are the two chains I'm bound with,
in much distress, so that I torment myself.

I've carried in my breast, a green laurel,
a noble column, one for fifteen, one for eighteen
years, and may not sever myself from them.

Note: *Laura is the green laurel, Cardinal Giovanni Colonna the noble column.*



Three Nymphs Surrounding the Daphne Laurel
Raphael de la Planche (French, ca. 1627 - 1690)
The Getty Open Content Program

267. 'OIMÈ IL BEL VISO, OIMÈ IL SOAVE SGUARDO,'



h me, the beautiful face, ah me, the gentle look,
ah me, the graceful noble manner of her:
ah me, the speech that made every harsh
and bitter mind humble, and every coward brave!

And, ah me, the sweet smile, from which the arrow
of death, the only good I hope for now, issued:
regal soul, worthiest to reign,
if only you had not descended so late among us!

It is fitting that I burn for you, and breathe for you,
since I am yours: and if I am parted from you,
I suffer less from all my other grief.

You filled me with hope and with desire,
when I departed, living, from the highest delight:
but the wind did not carry my words to you.

268. 'CHE DEBB'IO FAR? CHE MI CONSIGLI, AMORE?'



What must I do? What do you counsel, Love?
The time has truly come to die,
and I have lingered longer than I wish.
My lady is dead, and my heart with her:
and if I wish to follow,
I must interrupt this cruel life,
since I have no more hope
of seeing her here, and waiting galls me.
Now all my joy
has turned to weeping at her going,
all sweetness has been taken from my life.

Love, you feel how deep and bitter
is this loss, where I grieve with you:
and know the weight and pain of my ill,
or rather ours, because a reef
has shattered the vessel,
and in a moment our sun is darkened.
What ingenuity with words
could express my grievous state?
Ah, blind, thankless world,
you've good reason to weep with me,
since what was beautiful in you is lost with her.

Fallen is your glory, and you do not see it,
nor were you worthy, while she
lived here, to have known her,
nor even to have been touched by her sacred feet,
because so lovely a thing
had to adorn heaven with her presence.
But I, alas, who without her
cannot love mortal life or myself,
weep cruelly for her:
this is all I have of all my hopes,
and this alone is what still keeps me here.

Ah me, that lovely face is turned to dust,
that used to be the pledge to us,
down here, of heaven and its good:
her form, invisible in paradise,
freed from that veil,
that shadowed the flower of her years,
later to be worn once more,
and never more relinquished.
when we shall see her again
dear and lovely, more, by as much
as eternal beauty exceeds mortal.

She returns, more lovely and more graceful
a lady, within me, where
she feels the sight of herself is more exalted.
This is one pillar of my life,
the other her bright name
that sounds so sweetly in my heart.
But recalling in my mind

that my hope is truly dead, living
while she flowered,
Love knows what I become, and she (I hope)
can see it now who is so near to Truth.

Ladies, you who have seen her beauty
and the angelic life
that heavenly one lived on earth,
show me your grief, and be overcome
by pity, not for here who leapt
into such peace, but for me left in this war:
so that if the way
to follow her is barred to me for long
only Love, speaking with me,
stops me from severing the knot.
For he reasons like this inside me:

‘Rein in the great grief that transports you,
lest your over-riding desire
loses you heaven, to which your heart aspires,
where she lives who seems dead to others,
and smiles to herself at her
own lovely leavings, and only sighs for you:
and prays that her fame, that breathes
still in many places, through your words,
is not extinguished,
rather that, if her eyes were ever dear
and sweet to you, your voice illuminate her name.’

Petrarch

Flee the fresh and blithe,
don't go near laughter or song,
my song, but weep:
don't take your place among happy people,
widow, disconsolate, in your black dress.

269. 'ROTTA E L'ALTA COLONNA E 'L VERDE LAURO'



he high column and the green laurel are broken
that cast a shade for my weary thoughts:
I have lost what I do not hope to find again
in north or south wind, from ocean to ocean.

You have taken my double treasure from me, Death,
which made me live joyfully, and go nobly,
and the earth cannot restore it, nor empire,
nor oriental gem, nor power of gold.

But if destiny consents to this,
what can I do, except display my sad soul,
wet eyes forever, and my bowed head?

O this life of ours, which is so fair, outwardly,
how easily it loses in a morning
what many years with great pain have acquired!

Note: *Giovanni Colonna died on the 3rd July 1348, three months after Laura.*



View of the Forum in Rome
Hugh William (British, 1773 – 1829)
The Yale Centre for British Art

270. 'AMOR, SE VUO' CH'I'TORNI AL GIOGO ANTICHO'



ove, if you wish me under your former yoke,
as you seem to, you first need
to make another attempt
new and marvellous, to tame me.

Find my beloved treasure under ground,
hidden from me, so I'm impoverished,
and that wise chaste heart
which use to house my life:
and if it's true you're as powerful
in heaven as they say,
and in the abyss (since I believe
all noble people among us feel
you have that worth and power),
snatch back from death what it has snatched
and restore your banner once more to that lovely face.

Restore that living flame that was my guide
to her lovely aspect, and the gentle flame
that still, alas, inflames me,
being spent: what then did it do, burning?
No stag or hart was ever seen seeking
a stream or fountain with such desire,
as I that sweet source
from which such bitterness came: and more
to come if I know myself, and my longing, truly,
that makes me maddened merely by thinking,
and makes me wander where the way is lacking,

and in my weary mind,
chase things I cannot hope to gain.
Now I scorn to come to your call,
you who've no command beyond your kingdom.

Make me feel that gentle breeze
without, as I feel it still within:
that had the power,
singing, to quieten scorn and anger,
to calm the tempestuous mind,
and clear every dark and vile mist,
elevate my style
above itself, where now it has no being.
Match my hopes to my desire:
and as the soul's made stronger in reasoning,
render to the eyes and ears their proper object,
without which their work's
imperfect, and my life is death.
You exercise power over me in vain,
while the earth itself holds my first love.

Make me see the lovely glance again,
that was sunlight on the ice that burdened me:
let me find you again on that path
where my heart passed without wandering:
take your golden arrows, and your bow,
and let me hear, as I used to do,
with the sound of her words,
that by which I learnt what thing love is:
move her tongue, where at every hour
the hooks were cast that took me, and the bait

I always long for: and hide your snare
among her blonde and curling hair,
for my will can be trapped no other way:
scatter her tresses in the breeze with your hand,
and fasten me there, and I will be content.

No one will ever free me from that gold net,
artfully neglected, carelessly wild,
nor from the burning spirit
of her sweet bitter gaze,
that kept my amorous desire green
day and night, more than laurel or myrtle,
whether the woods were clothed
or naked of leaves, the fields of grass.
But since Death's is so proud a state
it cuts the knot I feared to escape from,
nor can you find throughout the world
one who might tie a second,
what joy to you, Love, to repeat your tricks?
The season's past, the weapons lost,
at which I trembled: what can you do, now?

Your weapons were those eyes, where burning
arrows issued from invisible fire,
with little fear of reason,
that gives no human defence against heaven:
and her thoughts, her silence, smiles and jests,
her virtuous dress and courteous speech,
those words that understood
make the base soul noble,
the angelic form, humble and gentle,

so often praised on every side:
her pose, sitting or standing, that often
put others in doubt
as to which should be more praised.
With these weapons you won every hard heart:
now you are disarmed: I am secure.

You bind, now one way, now another,
those spirits heaven assigns to your rule:
but you could only bind me
with one knot, heaven wished no more.
That one is broken: freedom does not delight me,
I weep and moan instead: 'Ah noble pilgrim
what divine judgment
created me before, dissolved you first?
God, who snatched you from the world so soon,
showed me such high and noble virtue
solely to inflame my desire.'
Now, Love, I do not fear
at all, any new savagery from your hand:
you bend the bow in vain, you shoot wide:
your power fell with the closing of her eyes.

Death has released me, Love, from all your laws:
she who was my lady has climbed the sky,
leaving my life free and saddened.

271. 'L'ARDENTE NODO OV'IO FUI D'ORA IN HORA,'



he burning knot that held me constantly
from hour to hour, for twenty years,
Death loosened, and I never felt such grief,
and know now man cannot die of tears.

Love, not wishing to lose me yet,
hid another snare in the grass,
and kindled a fresh fire with new tinder,
so I escaped but only with great pain.

And if I'd not had long experience
of trouble, I'd have been caught, and burned,
more so since the wood's no longer green.

Death has freed me again, and broken
the knot, the fire is quenched and scattered:
against it neither force nor wit has power.

272. 'LA VITA FUGGE, ET NON S'ARRESTA UNA HORA,'



Life flies, and never stays an hour,
and death comes on behind with its dark day,
and present things and past things
embattle me, and future things as well:

and remembrance and expectation grip my heart,
now on this side, now on that, so that in truth,
if I did not take pity on myself,
I would have freed myself already from all thought.

A sweetness that the sad heart knew
returns to me: yet from another quarter
I see the storm-winds rattling my sails:

I see no chance of harbour, and my helmsman
is weary now, and my masts and ropes are broken,
and the beautiful stars, I used to gaze on, quenched.

273. 'CHE FAI? CHE PENSI? CHE PUR DIETRO GUARDI'



disconsolate spirit what can you think or do?
Why do you look behind at those times
that cannot come again? Why do you go
adding wood to the fire where you burn?

The gentle words and the sweet glances
that you described and painted one by one,
have gone from earth: and you know
it's too late, untimely, to search for them.

Ah do not renew what only kills, don't follow
longing thoughts in error, but those sure
and solid ones that lead to a good end.

Look to the heavens, since nothing here pleases:
that beauty that we saw was fatal for us,
if living or dead it did not bring us peace.

274. 'DATEMI PACE, O DURI MIEI PENSIERI:



harsh thoughts of mine, grant me peace:
is it not enough that Love, Fate and Death
make war on me around, and at, the gates,
without me finding other battles within?

And you, my heart, are you still what you were,
disloyal only to me, receiving wild company,
and forging alliances, so quickly
and so readily with my enemies?

In you Love hides his secret messages,
in you Fate reveals all his triumph,
and Death the memory of that blow

that must shatter all my advances:
in you wrong thought arms itself with error:
so I charge you alone with all my ills.

275. 'OCCHI MEI, OSCURATO È 'L NOSTRO SOLE:'



y eyes, that sun of ours is darkened:
or rather climbed to heaven, and shines there:
there I'll see her again, there she waits,
and grieves perhaps that we're so late.

My ears, her angelic words resound there,
where there are those who understand them better.
My feet, your power does not extend there,
where she is who set you in motion.

Then why do you fight this war with me?
Already every reason's lost to you,
for seeing, hearing, walking the earth:

Blame Death: or rather give praise to Him
who binds and frees, opens and shuts again,
and, after the tears, makes known another joy.

276. 'POI CHE LA VISTA ANGELICA, SERENA,'



ow the calm, angelic presence of her,
departing so swiftly, has left the soul
in great sadness, and gloomy horror,
I search for words to ease my pain.

Justly, grief leads me to lament:
since she, the cause, and Love know
I have no other remedy in my heart
against the troubles with which life is filled.

Death, you have taken this from me:
and you, blessed earth, that cover, and guard,
and hide that lovely human face,

where do you leave me, blind, disconsolate,
now that the sweet, loving, gentle light
of my eyes is no more with me?

277. 'S'AMOR NOVO CONSIGLIO NON N'APPORTA,'



f Love does not bring me new counsel,
my life must change, unwillingly:
the sad heart's anguished so with grief and fear,
now desire still lives, but hope is dead:

so my life's confused, discomforted,
completely, and I weep night and day,
weary, rudderless in a stormy sea,
on an uncertain course with no true pilot.

An imaginary guide leads me, since my true
one is under the earth, or rather in heaven,
from where she shines brighter than ever in the heart:

but not to my eyes, because a sad veil
conceals that longed-for light from them,
and makes my hair white before my time.

278. 'NE L'ETA SUA PIU BELLA ET PIU FIORITA,'



In the lovely flowering season of her life,
when Love has the greatest power in us,
she left her earthly veil behind on earth
and my breath of life departed from me,

living, lovely and naked she leapt to heaven:
from where she reigns over me, and controls me.
Ah, why can't I reach my last mortal day,
that is the first day of a nobler life?

So that, as I my thought runs after her,
my soul might follow, quick, light and joyful,
and I might be far from all this trouble.

All that delays me is truly harm to me,
making a greater burden for the self.
Oh how sweet to have died three years ago today!

279. 'SE LAMENTAR AUGELLI, O VERDI FRONDE'



f the birds lament, or the green leaves
move gently in the summer breeze,
or soft murmurs of the clear waves
are heard from a fresh flowering river-bank,

where I sit thinking of love and writing,
then I see her whom heaven shows, earth hides,
and I hear and understand that she still lives,
though far away, responding to my sighs.

'Ah, why are you so aged before your time?'
she asks with pity, 'why does a sad stream
always flow from your grieving eyes?'

Don't weep for me, my days, in dying,
became eternal ones, and when the light
within seemed to darken, my eyes opened.'

280. 'MAI NON FUI IN PARTE OVE SI CHIAR VEDESSI'



here is nowhere where I see so clearly
her whom I wish to see now, and cannot,
nor where I have such freedom for myself,
or can fill the sky with so much grieving:

nor did I ever see a valley so blessed
with places to sigh in and so secret:
nor do I think Love had so sweet a nest
in Cyprus or any other country.

The waters speak of love, the air, the branches,
the little birds, the fish, the flowers, the grass,
all begging me together to love for ever.

But you, true born, that call me from the sky,
with the memory of your bitter death,
pray that I scorn the world, and its sweet bait.

281. 'QUANTE FIATE, AL MIO DOLCE RICETTO'



ow often I come to my sweet retreat,
fleeing from others, and, if I could, myself,
bathing the grass and my breast with tears,
troubling the air I touch with sighs!

How often, alone and anxious I've gone
through dark and shadowy places,
seeking my noble joy, whom Death has taken,
in thought, so that I often call out to her!

Now in the shape of a nymph or other goddess
rising from the Sorgue's crystal depths,
she comes to sit on the river-bank:

now I have seen her on the fresh grass,
treading the flowers like a living woman,
showing she pities me by her look.

282. 'ALMA FELICE CHE SOVENTE TORNI'



happy spirit that so often turns
to console me in the grieving night
with eyes that Death has not dimmed,
but has adorned beyond all mortal things:

how pleased I am that you consent
to lighten my sad days with sight of you!
Now I begin to find your beauty present,
once more, as it used to be,

where I have sung of you so many years,
now, as you see, where I go weeping:
not weeping for you, but for my loss.

I only find one solace in my trouble:
when you return, I know and understand you,
by your gestures, voice, your face, your dress.

283. 'DISCOLORATO AI, MORTE, IL PIU BEL VOLTO'



eath, you've made the loveliest face I've seen
turn pale, and dimmed the loveliest eyes:
freed the spirit brightest with blazing virtues,
from the most graceful and the loveliest knot.

You've taken all my good in a moment,
sealed the gentlest voice ever heard
with your silence, filled me with sorrow:
so whatever I see and hear annoys me.

My lady does return to console such grief,
here where Pity once more leads her:
and I find no other help in this life.

And if I could describe how she speaks,
and shines, I'd make not just men's hearts
I say, but bears' and tigers' burn with love.

284. 'SI BREVE E 'L TEMPO E 'L PENSER SI VELOCE'



he time's so brief, the thought so swift
that brings my dead lady back to me,
the medicine is so transient for my grief:
still, while I see her, nothing hurts me.

Love, that holds and binds me to this cross,
trembles when he sees her within the threshold
of my soul, where she kills me, still so noble,
so sweet in looks, and with a voice so gentle.

I see her, the lady of the highest house,
with her calm brow driving sad thoughts
away from my dark and heavy heart.

The soul, that cannot endure such light,
sighs and says: 'O blessed be the hour
you opened up this path with your eyes!'

285. 'NE MAI PIETOSA MADRE AL CARO FIGLIO'



ever did mother caring for her dear son
nor lady burning for her beloved husband
give such faithful counsel to an anxious mind
with such sighing, and with such concern,

as she, gazing on my heavy exile
from her eternal refuge in the sky,
offers me, with her usual affection,
her brow shining with two-fold pity:

now a mother's, now a lover's: anxious
or burning with virtuous fire: showing me
in her speech what path to flee or follow,

in all the changes of this life of ours,
begging me to ennoble my soul quickly:
and only while she speaks, do I rest.

286. 'SE QUELL'AURA SOAVE DE' SOSPIRI'



f I could tell the fragrance of her gentle
sighing breath, she who used to be my lady,
now in heaven, and seeming still here,
living, feeling, walking, loving, breathing,

what warm passion I would rouse
by speaking! So pityingly and anxiously
she returns to me, fearing lest I weary
on the way, turn back, or go astray.

She points me higher, to what is right: and I,
who understand her chaste attentions
and just prayers, sweet murmurs soft and low,

must follow her commands and submit
to the sweetness I draw from her words,
that have the power to wring tears from stone.

287. 'SENNUCCIO MIO, BENCHE DOGLIOSO ET SOLO'



y Sennuccio, though you've left me
grieving and alone, I'm still comforted,
since you have taken flight on high,
from the dead flesh that held you.

Now you see both poles together,
the wandering planets on their circling path,
and see how limited our view of things,
so that I ease my grief with your joy.

And I truly pray that in the third sphere
you'll meet Guittone, Messer Cino, and Dante,
our Franceschino, and all the choir of love.

You can tell my lady truly how much sorrow
I live in: and have become like a wild creature,
remembering her lovely face and sacred ways.

Note: *Sennuccio del Bene died in 1349. The poets of love are in the third sphere of Venus, Cino da Pistoia (d.1337), Dante (d. 1321), Guittone d'Arezzo (d. 1294) and Franceschino degli Albizzi (d. 1348) Petrarch's relative.*



Abundance of The Days of the Week
Elihu Vedder (American, 1836 – 1923)
The Yale University Art Gallery

288. 'I' Ò PIEN DI SOSPIR' QUEST'AERE TUTTO,'



fill all this air with sighs, seeing
the sweet plain from the bitter hills
where she was born, who held my heart
in her hand, in youth and in maturity,

who's gone to heaven, and with that sudden
parting, brought me to this, my eyes weary
with searching far off for her in vain,
and leaving no place free of tears around me.

There's no bush or stone on these mountains,
no branch or green leaf in these fields,
no flower in this valley or blade of grass,

no drop of moisture comes from these springs,
nor have these woods so wild a creature
it does not know how bitter is my pain.

289. 'L'ALMA MIA FIAMMA OLTRA LE BELLE BELLA,'



y soul, my flame, loveliest of the lovely,
who was so courteous a friend of heaven,
has returned to her country, too soon
for me, and entered her own sphere.

Now I am beginning to wake and see,
that she resisted my desire for the better,
and tempered that young burning passion
with a sweet and fierce aspect.

I'm not ungrateful to her, and her high counsel,
who with her lovely face and soft disdain
made me, burning, think of my salvation.

O gracious arts, and their effects are true,
one works his tongue, the other her eyes,
I for her glory, and she for my good!

290. 'COME VA 'L MONDO! OR MI DILETTA ET PIACE'



ow this world alters! What once displeased
me most delights me, now, and pleases:
now I see my pain was my salvation,
I warred a while for my eternal rest.

O hope, O desire, always deceiving,
a hundred times more so for lovers!
O how much worse if she'd yielded to me,
who now lies in earth, but sits in heaven!

But blind love and my dull mind
led me astray so, that my living journey
forced me to go towards her death,

Blessed is she who turned my course
towards the better path, and carefully reined in
the burning impious will, so I did not perish.

291. 'QUAND'IO VEGGIO DAL CIEL SCENDER L'AURORA'



hen I see the Dawn go down the sky
with rosy forehead and her golden hair,
Love assails me, so I grow pale,
and sighing say: "There is Laura now.

O happy Tithonus, you know the hour
when you'll regain your dear treasure:
but when will I who lack my sweet?
To see her once again I have to die.

Your partings cannot be so very harsh,
since every night she returns to you,
and does not scorn your whitened hair:

while she who carried off my thoughts
makes my nights sad, and darkens my days,
and leaves me nothing of her but her name.

Note: *For Aurora, the Dawn, and Tithonus see poem 219.*

292. 'GLI OCCHI DI CH'IO PARLAI SI CALDAMENTE,'



he eyes I spoke about so warmly,
and the arms, the hands, the ankles, and the face
that left me so divided from myself,
and made me different from other men:

the crisp hair of pure shining gold
and the brightness of the angelic smile,
which used to make a paradise on earth,
are now a little dust, that feels no thing.

And I still live, which I grieve over and disdain,
left without the light I loved so much,
in great ill-fortune, in a shattered boat.

Now make an end of my loving songs:
the vein of my accustomed wit is dry,
and my lyre is turned again to weeping.

293. 'S'IO AVESSE PENSATO CHE SI CARE'



f I had thought the voice of my sighs
in verse would have been held so dear,
I'd have made them, from my first breath,
greater in number, purer in style.

She who made me write them is dead,
she who was the summit of my thoughts,
and I'm unable, and no longer have the skill,
to make harsh gloomy verses sweet and clear.

And in truth my efforts at that time
were to ease the saddened heart
in that manner, not to acquire fame.

I sought to weep, not gain honour from tears:
now would like to please: but that noble one
calls me, silent and weary, after her.

294. 'SOLEASI NEL MIO COR STAR BELLA ET VIVA'



he used to be lovely and living in my heart,
like a noble lady in a humble, lowly place:
now by her ultimate passing I am
not only mortal, but dead, and she divine.

My soul despoiled, deprived of all its good,
Love stripped and denuded of her light,
are pitiful enough to shatter stone,
but there's no one can tell or write the pain:

they weep inside, where all ears are deaf,
but mine, who so much grief encumbers,
that I have nothing left but sighs.

Truly we are ashes and a shadow,
truly the blind will's full of greed,
truly all our hopes deceive us.

295. 'SOLEANO I MIEI PENSER' SOAVEMENTE'



y thoughts used to talk sweetly
together about their concern:
'Pity is here, and repents of being late:
perhaps she speaks of us, with hope, or fear.'

Now the last day and the final hour
have taken this present life from her,
she sees, hears, feels my state, in heaven:
I can have no other hope of her.

O gentle miracle, O happy soul,
O peerless beauty, noble and rare,
returned too soon where it came from!

There she's crowned in honour for her goodness
who was so famous, shining, in the world
through her great virtues, and my passion.

296. 'I' MI SOGLIO ACCUSARE, ET OR MI SCUSO,'



used to accuse myself, and now I excuse:
more, I esteem myself: hold myself dearer,
because of the true prison, and the sweet bitter
blow that I kept concealed so many years.

Envious Fates, you shattered the spindle
suddenly, that wound a clear and gentle
thread around my bonds, and that rare gold arrow,
so that death itself pleases beyond belief!

There's no man who was ever so in love
with happiness, with liberty, with kindly life,
that he would not have altered his natural ways,

and chosen rather to be in grief for ever
than sing another, and from that wound
die happy, and live in so sweet a knot.

297. 'DUE GRAN NEMICHE INSEME ERANO AGIUNTE,'



Two great enemies were brought together,
Beauty and Chastity, in such peace
that her sacred spirit never knew rebellion,
from the moment they were joined in her:

and now they are split and parted by Death:
one is in heaven, that glories and praises it:
the other in earth, that veils those eyes,
from which such loving arrows issued.

The gentle ways, and the wise humble speech
that came from a noble place, the sweet glance
that pierced my heart (it still shows the mark),

have vanished: and if I'm slow
to follow, perhaps it's that her name
may be hallowed by my weary pen.

298. 'QUAND'IO MI VOLGO INDIETRO A MIARAR GLI ANNI'



hen I turn again to gaze on the years
that have scattered all my thoughts in passing,
and doused the fire where I, freezing, burned,
and ended my repose full of torments,

broke my faith in loving illusions,
and made two separate parts of all my good,
one in heaven, the other left in earth,
and lost all the profits of my wealth,

I rouse myself, and find myself so naked,
that I envy every extreme fate:
I have such grief and fear for myself.

O my star, O Fortune, O Fate, O Death,
O day always sweet and cruel to me,
to what an evil state you have brought me!

299. 'OV'E LA FRONTE, CHE CON PICCIOL CENNO'



here is the forehead, that could make my heart turn
this way and that, with the slightest gesture?

Where are the beautiful lashes and the two stars
that gave their light to my life's path?

Where is the worth, the knowledge and the wit,
the modest, honest, humble, sweet speech?
Where are the beauties focused in her,
that had their way with me so long?

Where is the gentle shadow of a human face
that gave its hour of rest for my weary soul,
and where my every thought was written?

Where is she who held my life in her hand?
How this wretched world and how my eyes
miss her, that have no hope of ever being dry!

300. 'QUANTA INVIDIA IO TI PORTO, AVARA TERRA,'



ow much envy I bear you, greedy earth,
who embrace her, the sight of whom I've lost,
and deny me the look of that lovely face,
where I found peace from all my warfare!

How much I bear towards heaven that shut in,
imprisoned, and gathered so eagerly to itself,
the spirit from those lovely loosened limbs,
and so rarely frees it again for others!

How much envy towards those spirits
that have her sweet sacred company now,
which I always sought for with such longing!

How much towards pitiless harsh Death,
who, extinguishing my life with hers,
stays in her lovely eyes, and does not call me!

301. 'VALLE CHE DE' LAMENTI MIEI SE' PIENA,'



alley so filled with all my laments,
river so often swollen with my tears,
wild beasts, wandering birds and fish,
reined in by these two green river-banks,

air warmed and calmed by my sighs,
sweet path that ends in such bitterness,
hill that pleased me, that now saddens,
where by habit Love still leads me:

I recognise familiar forms in you,
not, alas, in me, whose happy life,
has become the house of endless grief.

I saw my good from here: and with these steps
turn to see where she went naked to the sky,
leaving what's left of her beauty in the earth.

302. 'LEVOMMI IL MIO PENSER IN PARTE OV'ERA'



y thought raised me to a place in which
she was whom I seek, and cannot find on earth:
there, among those who are in the third circle,
I saw her once more, more beautiful and less proud.

She took my hand, and said: 'If my desire
is not in error, you will be with me again in this sphere:
I am she who made such war on you,
and finished my day before the evening.

My good is not comprehended by human intellect:
I wait only for you, and what you so loved,
my lovely veil, is joined to earth and stays there.'

Oh why did she fall silent, opening her hands?
Since at the sound of such pure, compassionate speech
little was needed for me to remain in heaven.

303. 'AMOR, CHE MECO AL BUON TEMPO TI STAVI'



ove who stayed with me when times were good
among these banks, friendly to our thoughts,
and to settle our old arguments
went talking with the river and with me:

flowers, leaves, turf, shade, cave, wave, gentle breeze,
closed valley, high hills and sunlit slopes,
a refuge from my lovers' troubles,
from my overwhelming, heavy fate:

O wandering dwellers in the green wood,
O nymphs, and you whom the fresh weed-filled depths
of liquid crystal feed and grant a home:

my day was so clear, and now's so dark,
like Death that made it so: in this world
each has his destiny from the day he's born.

304. 'MENTRE CHE 'L COR DAGLI AMOROSI VERMI'



While my heart was being consumed
by loving worms, burned in loving fire,
I searched for traces of a wandering creature
through the solitary enclosing hills:

and was so ardent singing of the grief
of Love, of her who seemed so cruel:
but wit and verse came meagrely,
in those days, to my young and feeble mind.

That fire is dead, and a little marble hides it:
a fire that if it had increased with time
(as it has in others) as far as my old age,

armed with verses, where everything disarms me,
I would, with that mature style, have made stones
shatter with my speaking, and weep with sweetness.

305. 'ANIMA BELLA DA QUELL NODO SCIOLTA'



lovely spirit freed from that knot
than which Nature made none lovelier,
turn your mind from heaven to my dark life,
whose happy thoughts have turned to weeping.

The false opinion of my heart that made
your glance bitter and harsh to me sometimes,
has vanished: now in utter safety turn
your eyes towards me, and hear my sighs.

Gaze at the great rock, where the Sorgue is born,
and see one there among the grass and streams,
who's fed on memory of you, and grief, alone.

Abandon and ignore where your home lies,
and the place where our love was born,
so you do not see what would displease you.

Note: *He wishes her not to see Avignon's corruption.*

306. 'QUEL SOL CHE MI MOSTRAVA IL CAMIN DESTRO'



hat sun that showed me the right road
to climb to heaven with glorious steps,
turning to the highest Sun, has shut my light
and her terrestrial prison beneath a little stone:

so I have become a wild creature, lonely
and weary, with wandering feet,
carrying a heavy heart and wet downcast eyes
through the world, a mountainous desert to me.

So I go searching again for every place
I saw her: and only you, who afflict me,
Love, come with me, and show me the way.

I do not find her: yet I always see
her sacred footsteps on the heavenly path,
far from Lake Avernus and the Styx.

307. 'I' PENSAVA ASSAI DESTRO ESSER SU L'ALE,'



thought I had wings enough to take flight,
not through their power, but he who unfurled them,
equal to turning, singing, towards that lovely knot
from which Death freed me, to which Love tied me.

I found myself slow for that path, and weak
as a little branch that a great load bends,
and said: 'He who flies too high will fall:
what heaven denies us is not good for man.'

But no wings of wit can fly, much less
a heavy style or tongue, where Nature flew
weaving that sweet knot of mine.

Love followed with so much care
in adorning her, I was not worthy
to see it even: yet it was my good fortune.

308. 'QUELLA PER CUI CON SORGA Ò CANGIATO ARNO,'



or her I changed the Arno for the Sorgue,
servile wealth for honest poverty,
turned into bitterness her sacred sweetness,
on which I lived, now it consumes and wastes me.

Since then I've many times tried in vain
to depict her in song for centuries that would see
her noble beauty, for those who'd prize her soul:
but her lovely face is beyond my pen.

Those things to praise in her that are none
but hers alone, scattered in her like stars in the sky
I even dare to outline, now, one or two:

but when I come to the divine part of her,
that was a clear, brief sun to the world,
there I lack the courage, wit and art.

309. 'L'ALTRO ET NOVO MIRACOL CH'A' DI NOSTRI'



he new and noble miracle that in our day
appeared in the world, and did not wish to stay,
which heaven merely showed then took away,
in order to adorn its heavenly cloister,

Love wishes me to paint and reveal for those
who have not seen it, first freeing my tongue,
then bringing a thousand times in vain
to the work, wit, time, pen, paper, and ink.

Verse has not yet reached its highest point:
I know that myself: or anyone who has tried,
before now, to speak or write of love.

He who can think, should silently value truth,
that exceeds all styles, and then sigh:
'Blessed are those eyes that saw her living.'

310. 'ZEPHIRO TORNA, E' L BEL TEMPO RIMENA'



ephyr returns and brings fair weather,
and the flowers and herbs, his sweet family,
and Procne singing and Philomela weeping,
and the white springtime, and the vermillion.

The meadows smile, and the skies grow clear:
Jupiter is joyful, gazing at his daughter:
the air and earth and water are filled with love:
every animal is reconciled to loving.

But to me, alas, there return the heaviest
sighs that she draws from the deepest heart,
who took the keys of it away to heaven:

and the song of little birds, and the flowering fields,
and the sweet, virtuous actions of women
are a wasteland to me, of bitter and savage creatures.

311. 'QUEL ROSIGNOL, CHE SI SOAVE PIAGNE,'



hat nightingale who weeps so sweetly,
perhaps for his brood, or his dear companion,
fills the sky and country round with sweetness
with so many piteous, bright notes,

and it seems all night he stays beside me,
and reminds me of my harsh fate:
for I have no one to grieve for but myself,
who believed that Death could not take a goddess.

Oh how easy it is to cheat one who feels safe!
Who would have ever thought to see two lights,
clearer than the sun, make earth darken?

Now I know that my fierce fate
wishes me to learn, as I live and weep:
nothing that delights us here is lasting.

312. 'NÉ PER SERENO CIEL IR VAGHE STELLE,'



ot the stars that wander the calm sky,
nor ships scattered over the peaceful sea,
nor armoured knights crossing the field,
nor bright slender creatures among the trees:

nor fresh news of some hoped-for good
nor words of love in high and ornate style,
nor among clear fountains and green grass
the sweet singing of lovely virtuous women:

nor anything at all can touch the heart,
she buried with her in that sepulchre,
who was sole light and mirror to my eyes.

It pains me to live so heavily and long
who call for death, in my great desire, again,
to see one it were better never to have seen.

313. 'PASSATO E 'L TEMPO OMAI, LASSO, CHE TANTO'



he time is past, alas, now, when I found
coolness in the very midst of fire:
she is past, for whom I wrote and wept,
but leaves me still with pen and weeping.

The face is past, so gracious and so holy,
but as she passed her sweet eyes pierced my heart:
the heart once mine, that followed her in passing
that she had wrapped in her lovely mantle.

She took it beneath the earth, into the sky
where she triumphs now, wreathed in the laurel,
that her pure chastity was worthy of.

If only I too could be with her, set free from this,
the mortal veil that holds me here by force, be
without a sigh, there, among spirits that are blessed!

314. 'MENTE MIA, CHE PRESAGA DE' TUOI DAMNI,'



y mind, you foresaw the harm to come,
already pensive, sad, in happy times,
intently seeking in that beloved sight,
continually, for your future trouble:

by her actions, words, face, dress,
her fresh pity mingled with sadness,
warned by all this, could you not have said:
'This is the last day of the sweet years.'

O wretched soul, what sweetness it was!
How we burned at the moment when I saw
those eyes that I might never see again,

when, in parting, to guard that noblest body,
like two most faithful friends, I left with them
my dearest thoughts, and my heart!

315. 'TUTTA LA MIA FIORITA ET VERDE ETADE'



ll my green and flowering time was past,
and I felt the fire that burned my heart
already cooling, since I had reached
the place where life descends its final slope.

Already little by little my dear enemy
was beginning to feel more free
of all suspicion, and her sweet virtue
had turned my bitter pain to joy.

The time was near when Love meets
Chastity, and to lovers it is given
to sit together, and talk face to face.

Death was envious of my happy state,
or rather my hopes: and rode midway
to the encounter, like a well-armed enemy.

316. 'TEMPO ERA OMAI DA TROVAR PACE O TRIEGUA'



It was time now after such a war, to make
a peace or truce: perhaps it was in the making,
if he, who renders equal all that's unequal,
had not turned back my happy footsteps:

as a mist is scattered by the wind,
so her life suddenly was past,
she who'd guided me with her lovely eyes,
whom I must follow now in thought alone.

Peace would have happened soon, I, altering
my manner with the years and my hair: and then
no suspicion for her when I spoke of my pain.

I'd have talked with true sighs of my
long trouble, that I'm certain now she
sees from heaven, grieving with me still!

317. 'TRANQUILLO PORTO AVEA MOSTRATO AMORE'



ove had shown me a tranquil harbour
after my long dark storm, among the years
of the age of true maturity, that banish vice,
and dress themselves in virtue and honour.

Already my heart shone clear to her lovely eyes,
and my deep loyalty no longer vexed her.
Ah, cruel Death, how quick you were to spoil
the fruit of so many years in a few short hours!

If she were only living I'd have laid down
the ancient burden of my sweet thoughts,
speaking them to those chaste ears:

and she perhaps would have replied to me
with some sacred words, in sighing,
both of our faces altered, and our hair.

318. 'AL CADER D'UNA PIANTA CHE SI SVELSE'



t the fall of a tree that was levelled
like one that steel or storm uproots,
scattering its highest leaves on the ground,
showing its wretched roots to the sun,

I saw another that Love chose for object,
a subject in me for Calliope and Euterpe:
that wound around my heart, as its true home,
as ivy twines around a trunk, or wall.

That living laurel, where my highest thoughts
made their nest, though my burning sighs,
never moved a leaf of those branches,

translated to the sky, has left its roots
in its faithful home, where one still calls
in heavy metres, with no one to reply.

Note: *The first tree is Laura, the second her image in his verse. Calliope was the muse of epic, and Euterpe of lyric, poetry: Petrarch implying that his love was both lyrical and epic in the context of his life.*



The Nine Muses: Calliope
Hendrick Goltzius (Dutch, 1558 – 1617)
The Yale University Art Gallery

319. 'I DÍ MIEI PIÚ LEGGIER' CHE NESUN CERVO,'



these days of mine, faster than a hind,
fly like shadows, and I have seen no more good
than an eye-wink, and few are the calm hours,
whose bitterness and sweetness I keep in mind.

Wretched world, violent and changeable,
wholly blind is he who sets his hopes on you:
my heart was stolen away from you, and now is taken
by one who is already earth, and looses sinew from bone.

But the better form of her that lives, still,
and lives forever, in the high heavens,
makes me more in love now with all her beauties:

and I see, only in thought, as my hair whitens,
what she is today, and in what place she is,
and what it was to see her graceful veil.

320. 'SENTO L'AURA MIA ENTICHA, E I DOLCI COLLI'



feel the ancient breeze, and see sweet hills
appear, where the lovely light was born
that held these eyes of mine while heaven pleased,
with longing and delight, now tears and sadness.

O fallen hopes: O foolish thoughts!
The grass is widowed and the water clouded,
cold and void the nest she dwelt in,
where I wished to live, and once dead rest,

hoping, after the sweet weeping
and the lovely eyes, that torched my heart,
for some repose after such toil.

I served a mean and cruel lord:
and burned when my fire was before me,
now I go weeping for her scattered dust.

321. 'É QUESTO 'L NIDO IN CHE LA MIA FENICE'



s this the nest in which my phoenix
spread her gold and purple plumage,
she who held my heart beneath her wing,
and from it still elicits words and sighs?

O the first root of my sweet ills,
where is the lovely face, living and joyful
from which that light came that set me burning?
You, unique on earth, are happy in heaven.

And you have left me wretched and alone,
so that grief-filled I always turn to honour
and adorn that place that you made sacred:

seeing night darkening round the hills
from which you took your final flight,
where those eyes of yours once made it day.

322. 'MAI NON VEDRANNO LE MIE LUCI ASCIUTTE'



'll never see those verses where Love
seems to blaze, those Pity has created
with her own hand, with dry eyes,
or with the slightest peace of mind.

Spirit, unconquered on the grieving earth,
who now distil such sweetness from heaven,
who re-conduct my erring verses
to that style that Death interrupted:

I thought to show you further labours
from my tender leaves: but what cruel planet
envied us being together, O my noble treasure?

Who hides you from me, too soon, and denies you
you whom I see in my heart, honour with my tongue,
you in whom, sighing sweetly, the soul finds rest?

323. 'STANDOMI UN GIORNO SOLO A LA FENESTRA,'



One day, standing alone at my window,
from which I saw so many novel things,
I was almost weary merely from gazing,
I saw a wild creature appear from my right,
with human features enough to make Jove burn,
hunted by two hounds, one white, one black:
that gnawed the two flanks
of that gentle creature so fiercely
that in no time at all it led to such a pass,
that she was enclosed by stone,
bitter death had conquered great beauty:
and I was left sighing at her harsh fate.

Then I saw a ship in the deep ocean,
with silken ropes, and golden sails,
the rest equal to ivory and ebony:
the sea was calm, and the breeze was gentle,
and the sky as when no cloud veils it,
and she carried a rich cargo of virtue:
then a sudden tempest
from the east churned air and waves,
so that the ship foundered on a reef.
Oh what a heavy sadness!
A brief hour conquered, a small space hid,
that noble treasure without a peer.

In a fresh grove, the sacred branches
of a laurel flowered, young and slender,
it seemed a tree of paradise:
and such sweet singing of varied birds
issued from its shade, such noble joy,
that I was lifted above this world:
and gazing intently,
the sky altered all round, and darkened,
lightning struck, and suddenly
that happy plant
was torn up by its roots: so my life is saddened,
since I cannot ask for such another shade.

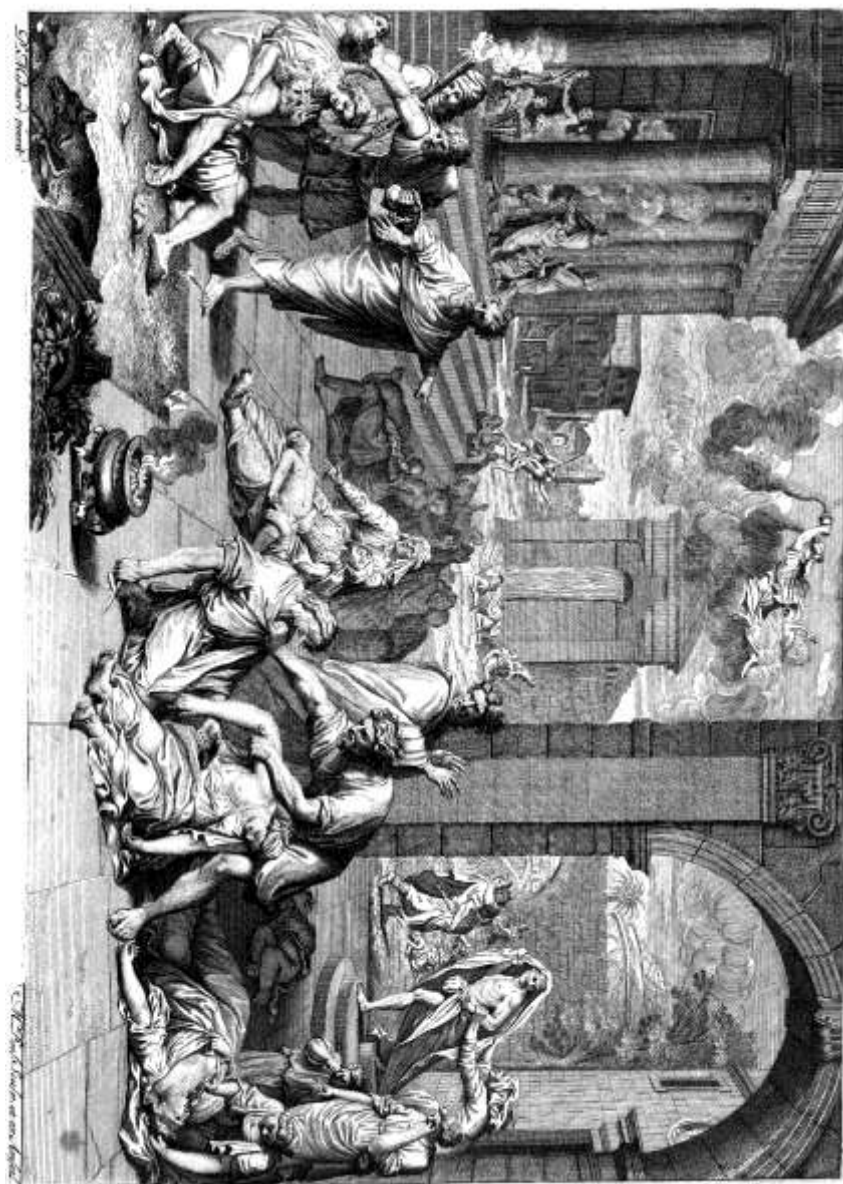
In that same grove a crystal fountain sprang
from beneath a stone, and sprinkled
sweet fresh water, murmuring gently:
no shepherd or flocks ever approached
that lovely place, secret, shadowy and dark,
but nymphs and Muses singing to its tones:
there I sat: and while
I absorbed the sweetness of that harmony,
and of the sight, I saw a cave yawn wide,
and carry with it
the fountain and its site: so I feel the grief,
and the memory alone dismays me.
I saw a strange phoenix, both its wings
clothed in crimson, and its head with gold,
solitary and alone in the wood,
I first thought its form heavenly and immortal
to the sight, till it reached the uprooted laurel,
and the fountain that the earth had swallowed:

all things fly towards their end:
seeing the leaves scattered on the ground,
and the broken trunk, and that dry spring,
it turned its beak on itself,
almost disdainfully, and in a moment vanished:
so that my heart burns with pity and love.

Lastly I saw a lovely graceful lady
go pensive among the flowers and grass,
so I can't think of her without burning, trembling:
humble in herself, she was proud before Love:
and she had on so white a gown,
so woven it seemed gold mixed with snow:
but the crown of her head
was hidden by a dark mist:
then, stung by a little snake in the heel,
she bowed like a flower when picked,
glad and confident to depart.
Ah, nothing but weeping lasts in this world!

Song, you might well say:
'These visions have given
my lord a sweet desire to die.'

Note: *Laura reputedly died of the Black Death, in 1348, the plague being the 'storm from the East.'*



The Plague on the Island of Aegina
Matthijs Pool (German, 1696 – 1727)
The Rijksmuseum

324. 'AMOR, QUANDO FIORIA'



ove, when my hope
was flowering, the reward for great loyalty,
she, whose mercy I waited for, was taken from me.

Ah, pitiless death, ah cruel life!
One plunged me in grief,
and bitterly quenched my hopes:
the other holds me here against my will,
and she who has gone
I cannot follow: she will not let me.
But, in every moment, my lady
is seated in the centre of my heart,
and what my life is now, she sees.

325. 'TACER NON POSSO, ET TEMO NON ADOPRE'



can't be silent, yet I fear to use
my tongue lest it contradicts my heart,
though it wishes to do honour
to its lady listening from heaven.

How can I, unless you teach me, Love,
how to match mortal words to things
divine, that high humility
conceals, and gathers to itself?
Her gentle soul had only been, a little while
within that prison she's now freed from,
at that time when I first saw her:
so that I suddenly ran,
since it was spring of the year and my life,
to gather flowers in the fields around,
hoping, so adorned, to please her eyes.

The walls were alabaster, the roof of gold,
the entrance ivory, the windows sapphires,
from which the first sigh
came to my heart, and the last shall come:
from there Love's armed messengers issued
with fire and arrows, so that I,
crowned with laurel,
tremble to recall it, as if it were today.
Made from cut diamond, never flawed,
a noble throne was seen within,
where the lovely lady sat alone:

in front a crystal
column, and all her thoughts there
written, and shining from it so clearly,
it made me joyful, and often full of sighs.

I found myself met with piercing, eager, bright
weapons, with the victorious green banner,
against which in the field
Jove, Apollo, Polyphemus, Mars, were lost,
whose tears are always fresh and green,
and no hope of aid for me, and taken,
I let myself be led
where I know no way or art to free myself.
But like a man who sometimes weeps, and yet
sees something that delights his eyes and heart,
so I began to gaze with like desire
at her, for whom I am in prison,
she standing on a balcony,
and the sole perfect creature of her age,
so that I and my ills were lost in oblivion.

I was on earth, and my heart in paradise,
sweetly forgetting every other care,
and felt my living form
become a statue petrified by wonder,
when a lady, swift and confident,
of mature years, and youthful face,
seeing me so intent,
by the action of my brow and eyes, said:
“Take counsel from me, I say, take counsel,
for I have greater powers than you know:

and create joy or sadness in a moment,
more swiftly than the wind,
and rule and watch while the world turns.
Hold your eyes steady like an eagle on the sun:
while you listen to my words.

The day that she was born, the planets
that produce happy effects among you
were in a special and noble array,
turned to each other in love:
Venus, and Jupiter of benign aspect,
took a lovely and auspicious place,
and the evil, harmful lights
were scattered over almost all the sky.
The sun had never shone on so fair a day:
the air and earth rejoiced, and the waves
in the seas and rivers were at rest.
Among so many friendly stars,
one distant cloud displeased me:
which I fear will melt away in tears
if Pity does not nobly change heaven's course.

When she entered this low earthly life,
which, to tell the truth, was not worthy of her,
a new sight to see,
already saintly, and sweet yet bitter,
she seemed a fine white pearl enclosed in gold:
then as she crawled, then took faltering steps,
wood, water, earth, and stone
grew green, clear, soft, and the grass
proud and new under her hands and feet,

and made the fields flower with her lovely eyes,
and quietened the winds and the storm
with a voice still not formed,
with a tongue still wet with her mother's milk:
showing clearly to the deaf, blind world
how much of heaven's light was already in her.

When she grew in age and virtue,
in her youth's later flowering,
such grace and beauty
was never seen, I think, under the sun:
her eyes filled with joy and virtue,
her speech with sweetness and welcome.
All tongues are mute,
to say of her what you alone know.
So bright is her face with celestial rays,
your gaze cannot stay fixed on her:
and your heart is so full of fire
with her lovely earthly prison,
that no one ever burned so sweetly:
but it seems to me her swift departing
will soon be a cause of bitter days for you.'

This said, she turned to her fickle wheel
with which she spins the thread of our life,
the sad and certain prophetess of my doom:
for, my Song, after not many years,
she through whom I hunger so for death,
cruel and bitter Death extinguished,
who could not find a lovelier one to kill.

326. 'OR ÀI FATTO L'EXTREMO DI TUA POSSA,'



ow you have done the worst that you can,
O cruel Death: now you've impoverished
Love's kingdom: now the flower and light
of beauty is quenched, and shut in a little earth:

now you've despoiled our life, and stripped it
of all adornment, and the sovereign of his virtue:
but her fame and worth that can never die
are not in your power: dwell in her bones:

since the nobler part's in heaven, and her brightness
like a lovelier sun, makes joyful and glorifies,
and by the good on earth is always remembered.

May your heart, there, be conquered,
new angel, in victory, by pity for me,
as your beauty here conquered me.

327. 'L'AURA ET L'ODORE E 'L REFRIGERIO ET L'OMBRA'



he breeze, the scent, the coolness and the shade
of the sweet laurel and its flowering aspect,
a lamp, and resting place for my weary life,
he who empties the world has wholly taken.

As the sun whom his sister eclipses for us,
so my noble light has vanished,
I beg Death to aid me against Death,
love has so overwhelmed me with dark thought.

Lovely lady, you have slept a brief sleep:
now you have woken among blessed spirits,
where the soul enters into its Maker:

and if my verses have any power,
your name, sacred among noble minds,
will become an eternal memory down here.

328. 'L'ULTIMO, LASSO, DE' MIEI GIORNO ALLEGRI,'



las, the last of my happy days,
I've seen so few of in this brief life,
was done, and made my heart wet snow,
an omen perhaps of sad, dark days.

I felt like someone sick in vein and pulse
and thoughts, attacked by local fever,
not knowing then how swiftly the end
of my imperfect happiness would come.

The lovely eyes, joyful and bright in heaven
in that light from which life and salvation flow,
leaving me in sadness and poverty,

said to mine, with a new lovely glimmer:
'O dear friends, be at peace. There,
no more, but elsewhere we shall meet.'

329. 'O GIORNO, O HORA, O ULTIMO MOMENTO,'



day, O hour, O ultimate moment,
O stars conspiring to impoverish me!
O loyal gaze, what did you wish to tell me,
as I departed, never to be content?

Now I know my hurt, now I feel it:
who hoped (ah, hope weak and vain)
to lose a part, not all, in departing:
what hopes are blown away by the wind!

Already heaven had willed the opposite,
to quench the kindly light that gave me life,
and it was written in her sweet bitter look:

but a veil was placed before my eyes,
that made me fail to see what I had seen,
so that my life was suddenly made sad.

330. 'QUEL VAGO, DOLCE, CARO, HONESTO SGUARDO'



hat loving, sweet, dear, virtuous gaze
seemed to say: 'Take of me what you can,
since you'll never see me here again,
when you've once moved those feet, slow to go.'

Intellect, swifter than the leopard,
yet slow to anticipate your grief, why
did you not see in her eyes what you
see now, that burns and consumes me?

Silently gleaming beyond their custom,
they said: 'O friendly eyes that for so long
and with such sweetness made us your mirror,

heaven waits for us: to you it seems too early:
but he who tied the knot, here, dissolves it,
and wills that you, to grieve you, grow older.'

331. 'SOLEA DE LA FONTANA DI MIA VITA'



used to wander far from the fountain
of my life, and search land and sea,
not as I wished, but following my star:
and always as I went, Love aided me,
in those exiles where bitterness is seen,
feeding my heart on hope and memory.
Now alas, I lift my hands in surrender
to my evil and violent destiny
that deprives me of that sweet hope.
Only memory is left,
and I feed desire on that alone:
so the soul might be less weak and lean.

As a runner on the way, if he lacks food,
is forced to slow his course,
losing the strength that gave him speed,
so, lacking dear nourishment
in my weary life, and bitten by death
that denuded the world and saddened my heart,
sweet bitterness, and lovely painful pleasure
so alter me from hour to hour, that I hope
and fear I will not complete the brief road.
I escape being a cloud or dust in the wind,
in order to no longer be a wanderer:
and so be it, if death is my fate.

But this mortal life never pleased me
(as Love knows with whom I often speak)
except through her who was his light and mine:
and since that spirit through whom I lived,
dying on earth, was reborn in heaven, the height
of my longing is (and let it be!) to follow her.
But it always grieved me deeply, since
I was unable to foresee my state,
that Love showed it me in those lovely eyes
to give me noble counsel:
for some have died disconsolate and sad,
who earlier might have died in blessedness.

In those eyes where my heart used to live
till my harsh fate became invidious,
and banished it from so rich a dwelling,
Love had described, with his own hand
in words of pity, what would happen
soon to my desire, so long on its journey.
It would have been a sweet and lovely death
if in dying my life had not died wholly,
rather I'd gone on living as my better part:
now my hopes are scattered
by Death, and a little earth weighs down my good:
and I live on: and never think of it without fear.

If my little intellect had stayed with me,
when needed, and other desires had not
sent it straying on another road,
I might have read in my lady's look:
'You've reached the end of all your sweetness

and the beginning of your great bitterness.’
Understanding that, sweetly freed
in her lifetime from my mortal veil
and this harmful burden of the flesh,
I might have gone before her,
to see her throne prepared in heaven:
now I follow after, with whitened hair.

Song, if you find a man at peace with love,
say: ‘Die while you’re happy,
since early death is no grief, but a refuge:
and he who can die well, should not delay.’

332. 'MIA BENIGNA FORTUNA E 'L VIVER LIETO,' (*DOUBLE
SESTINA*)



y kindly fate, and a life made happy,
the clear days, and the tranquil nights,
the gentle sighs, and the sweet style
that alone sounded in my verse and rhyme,
suddenly changed to grief and weeping,
making me hate my life, and long for death.

Cruel, bitter, and inexorable Death,
you give me reason never to be happy,
but to live my life instead with weeping,
darkened days, and the saddened nights.
My heavy sighs will not go into rhyme,
and my harsh pain defeats every style.

What has become of my loving style?
It speaks of anger, it reasons about death.
Where are the verses, where is the rhyme,
the gentle thoughtful heart heard, and was happy:
where are the tales of love these many nights?
Now I talk and think of nothing but weeping.

Once my desire so sweetened my weeping,
it touched with sweetness all my sour style,
and kept me awake through the long nights:
now the weeping's more bitter to me than death,
hoping no more for that glance, chaste and happy,
the noble subject of my lowly rhyme.

Love set a clear theme for my rhyme:
those lovely eyes, but now my weeping,
remembering with grief times that were happy:
so that I change my thoughts and my style,
and pray to you again, pallid Death,
to rescue me from such painful nights.

He has fled from me these cruel nights,
so have the usual sounds from my hoarse rhyme,
that knows no other theme than death,
so that my singing changes to weeping.
Love's kingdom has no more varied style
that is as sad now as ever it was happy.

No one alive has ever been so happy,
no one lives more sadly these days and nights:
and he doubles the grief, in a double style
who draws from the heart such sad rhyme.
I lived on hope, now I live by weeping,
and have no hope against Death, but Death.

Death has killed me, and only Death
can make me see that face again, so happy
that the sighs pleased me and the weeping,
the sweet breeze, and the rain of nights,
while I wove choice thoughts in rhyme,
Love elevating my weak style.

Now if I had so pity-inducing a style
that I could bring my Laura back from Death,
as Orpheus did Eurydice, without rhyme,

then I would live, and be still more happy!
If it cannot be, one of these nights
will close for ever my two founts of weeping.

Love, I've had many years, and much weeping
about my grave ills in the saddest style,
nor from you do I ever hope for kinder nights:
and so I'm moved to pray to Death
to take me from here, and make me happy,
to where she is, whom I sing and weep in rhyme.

If it can rise so high, in weary rhyme,
to reach her who's beyond pain and weeping,
and with her beauty makes heaven happy,
she'll understand my altered style,
which pleased her perhaps before Death
brightened her day, and brought me dark night.

Oh you who sigh for easier nights,
who hear of Love or speak of him in rhyme,
pray he'll no longer be deaf to me, sweet Death,
refuge from misery and end of weeping:
that he'll change for once his ancient style,
that makes men sad, and could make me happy.

He could make me happy in a single night:
and, in harsh style and in anguished rhyme,
I pray my weeping will end in death.

333. 'ITE, RIME DOLENTI, AL DURO SASSO'



y sad verse, go to the harsh stone
that hides my precious treasure in the earth,
call to her there, she will reply from heaven,
though her mortal part is in a low, dark place.

Say to her I'm already tired of living,
of navigating through these foul waves:
but gathering up the scattered leaves,
step by step, like this, I follow her,

only I go speaking of her, living and dead,
yet alive, and made immortal now,
so that the world can know of her, and love her.

Let it please her to watch for my passing,
that is near now: let us meet together, and her
draw me, and call me, to what she is in heaven.

334. 'S'OMESTO AMOR PÒ MERITAR MERCEDE,'



f honest love can merit a reward,
and Mercy still can do as she used to do,
I'll be rewarded, since my loyalty,
to my lady and the world, is clear as the sun.

She was afraid of me, now she knows
(not merely believes) that what I wish now
is what I always wished: then she heard words
or saw my look, now she sees my heart and mind.

And I hope at last she grieves in heaven,
at my endless sighs, and so it seems,
turning towards me so full of pity:

and I hope that when my remains are buried
she'll come for me, with those of our people,
she, the true friend of Christ and Virtue.

335. 'VIDE FRA MILLE DONNE UNA GIA TALE,'



mong a thousand ladies I saw one,
such that a loving fear assailed my heart,
as I gazed, with no false imagining,
at one equal in looks to a heavenly spirit.

Nothing about her was earthly or mortal,
as though she cared only for heavenly things.
My soul so often burning for her and freezing,
longing to fly to her, opened both its wings.

But she flew too high for my earthly weight,
and in a little while was nowhere to be seen:
thinking of it still makes me frozen, numb.

Oh lovely, noble, and gleaming windows,
through which he who saddens many people
found a way to enter so lovely a form!

336. 'TORNAMI A LA MENTE, ANZI V'E DENTRO, QUELLA'



he comes to mind, rather is already there,
she who cannot even be banished by Lethe,
such as I saw here in the flower of her years,
all burning with the rays of her planet.

I see her, lovely and chaste, as if at our first
meeting, gathered in herself, and so distant,
that I cry: 'It is truly her: she is still alive.'
and beg the gift of her of her sweet tongue.

Sometimes she answers, sometimes not a word.
Like a man who errs, and then sees clearly,
I say in my mind: 'You are deceived about her.

Know that in thirteen hundred and forty eight,
on the sixth day of April, in the first hour,
that soul, so blessed, issued from its body.'

337. 'QUEL, CHE D'ODORE ET DI COLOR VINCEA'



hat which in scent and colour overcame
the fragrant and the shining Orient,
fruit, flowers, grass, and leaves (in which
the West has the prize for all rare excellence),

my sweet laurel, where every beauty
used to live, every burning virtue,
saw my lord, and my goddess,
seated in its virtuous shade.

More, I placed the nest of choicest thought
in that kindly tree: and in fire and ice
I trembled, burning, I was so happy.

This world was filled with her perfect worth,
when God reclaimed her to adorn the heavens:
and she was a being sent from Him.

338. 'LASCIATO AI, MORTE, SENZA SOLE IL MONDO'



Death, you have left the world without a sun
dark and cold, Love blind and unarmed,
Graciousness naked, and Beauty ill,
me disconsolate, with my heavy burden,

Courtesy banned, and Honesty in the deep.
I alone grieve, but not only I have cause,
that the brightest seed of virtue's gone:
with the first value quenched, where is there another?

The air, and earth, and sea should weep
for the human race, that without her
is a field without flowers, a ring with no gem.

The world did not know her while she lived:
I knew, I who am left to my weeping,
and Heaven, so beautified by her I weep for.

339. 'CONOBBI, QUANTO IL CIEL LI OCCHI M'APERSE,'



knew, when Heaven opened my eyes,
when I learnt and Love unfurled my wings,
new gracious things, but mortal,
that the stars showered on one alone:

the rest of her was so other, so various
in form, noble, heavenly and immortal,
that my intellect was all unequal to it,
my weak sight could not endure it.

And whatever I have said of her or written,
so that now for that praise she prays to God
for me, was a little drop in an infinite ocean:

because our style cannot rise beyond our wit:
and when a man fixes his eyes on the sun,
the brighter it shines the less that he can see.

340. 'DOLCE MIO CARO ET PRECIOSO PEGNO,'



y sweet, dear and precious pledge
that nature took from me, and Heaven guards,
ah why is your mercy so slow to reach me,
that used to sustain my very life?

Once my sleep at least was worthy
of seeing you, but now you let me burn
without cool relief: and who delays you?
Surely no anger or disdain exists up there:

though here, in truth, a deeply pitying heart
sometimes feeds on others torments,
so that Love's defeated in his own kingdom.

You who see within me, and feel my ills,
and who alone can end such sadness,
ease my sorrows with your shade.

341. 'DEH QUAL PIETÀ, QUAL ANGEL FU SÍ PRESTO'



h what mercy, what angel was so swift
to carry my grief to the heavens? I feel
my lady turn to me still, as before,
in that sweet chaste way of hers,

so filled with humility, empty of pride,
to ease my wretched and gloomy heart,
so that in short I turn away from death,
and live, and living no longer hurts me.

Blessed be her who can bless others
with sight of her, more so with words,
understood by the two of us alone:

'My faithful friend, I grieve with you,
but I was harsh only for our own good.'
this she said, and other things to halt the sun.

342. 'DEL CIBO ONDE 'L SIGNOR MIO SEMPRE ABONDA,'



feed my weary heart on that food,
sorrow and grief, in which my lord abounds,
and often I tremble, and often turn pale,
thinking of my deep and bitter wound.

But she, who in her life had no rival,
comes to the bed where I languish,
so that it's pain to me to dare to look,
and with pity she sits on the edge.

She dries my eyes, with that hand that roused
such desire in me, and with her words
brings sweetness never felt by mortal man:

'What point in knowledge, I say, that brings distress?
No more weeping: have you not wept enough?
Now you might live, since I am not dead!'

343. 'RIPENSANDO A QUELL, CH'OGGI IL CIELO HONORA,'



thinking of her, who now honours Heaven,
the gentle glance, the bowing head of gold,
the face, the voice of angelic modesty
that sweetened my life, and now grieves me,

I find it a great wonder that I still live:
nor would I be living if she who made us doubt
whether she was more lovely or more virtuous,
was not quick to rescue me, towards dawn.

O how sweet, and chaste, and kind her greeting:
and how intently she listens and takes note
of the long story of my pain!

Then when the clear daylight seems to strike her,
she returns to Heaven, knowing every path,
and her eyes and both her cheeks are wet.

344. 'FU FORSE UN TEMPO DOLCE COSA AMORE,'



Love was once a sweet thing perhaps,
I don't know when: now it's so bitter,
nothing more so: he knows it well who knows
how heavy it has made me with my grief.

She who was the glory of our age, and now
of Heaven, that she all adorns and brightens,
made rest brief and rare for me, in her life:
and now has taken all repose from me.

Cruel Death has stolen all my good:
nor can the great bliss of her freed
lovely spirit comfort me in my dark state.

I wept and sang: not knowing how to change
my verse, but day and night I welcomed grief
to my soul, pouring it from my tongue and eyes.

345. 'SPINSE AMOR ET DOLOR OVE IR NON DEBBE'



ove and grief drove my tongue astray
where it should not go, in its lamenting,
to say of her, for whom I sang and burned,
that which, even if true, would be wrong:

her blessedness should calm my sad state,
and console my heart, seeing her
so at home with Him who was
always in her heart when she was living.

And I do calm and comfort myself:
not wishing to see her in this inferno,
wishing rather to die or live alone:

whom I have seen in the mind's eye lovelier
than ever, flying, on high with the angels,
to the feet of her, and my, eternal Lord.

346. 'LI ANGELI ELECTI ET L'ANIME BEATE'



he angels elect and the blessed spirits,
citizens of heaven, surrounded my lady,
filled with wonderment and reverence,
on that first day she passed beyond us.

'What light is this, and what new beauty?'
they said amongst themselves, 'since in all this age
no dress so adorned has ever risen
to this high place, out of the sinful world.'

She is a paragon to those most perfect spirits,
happy to have changed her residence,
and then from time to time she turns,

looking to see if I am following her, and seems to wait:
so that all my thoughts and desires yearn towards heaven
since I hear her praying for me to hasten there.

347. 'DONNA CHE LIETA COL PRINCIPIO NOSTRO'



ady, who dwell now, with our Creator,
happily, as your virtuous life deserved,
seated on a noble, glorious throne, adorned
with more than purple robes and pearls,

O high and rare prodigy among women,
you see my love, before the face of Him
who sees all things, and that pure faith
for which such tears and ink were shed:

and know that my heart was yours on earth
as much as now, in heaven, and I never wished
for anything from you but your eyes' sun:

so as to make amends for the long war
in which I turned to you only, from the world,
pray that I soon may come to dwell with you.

348. 'DA' PIU BELLI OCCHI, ET DAL PIU CHIARO VISO'



rom lovelier eyes, and from a brighter glance,
than ever shone, and from lovelier hair,
that made gold and the sun seem less lovely,
from a sweeter speech, and sweeter smile,

from hands, from arms that conquered,
without moving, those who were ever most
rebellious in Love, from lovelier slender feet,
from the whole form made in Paradise,

my spirit took its life: now Heaven's King
and his winged messengers take delight:
and I who remain am naked and blind.

I have only one comfort in my bitter pain:
that she, who sees my every thought,
may win me grace, so I may be with her.

349. 'E' MI PAR D'OR IN HORA UDIRE IL MESSO'



From time to time I seem to hear that messenger
that my lady sends, calling me to her:
so I alter inside and outside myself,
and in not so many years am so humbled,

that I almost fail to recognise myself:
all my old ways of living are banished.
I'd be content if I knew the moment when
I must go, but certainly the time is near.

O happy the day, when, issuing from this
earthly prison, leaving my weak, and heavy,
and mortal dress broken and scattered,

departing from such dense shadows,
flying so far into the blue serene,
I'll see my Lord, and that lady of mine.

350. 'QUESTO NOSTRO CADUCO ET FRAGIL BENE,'



his fragile and fallen good of ours,
this wind and shadow, Beauty by name,
was never, at least not in our age, complete
except in one body, and that was to my pain:

since Nature does not wish, nor is it fitting,
to make one rich, by impoverishing others:
yet all its wealth was everywhere in her
(pardon me you who are lovely, or think so).

There was never such beauty, ancient or modern,
nor will be, I believe: but so concealed
the world in error hardly noticed it.

She left us soon: and I am glad to lose
that little glimpse of her that heaven gave me,
only to take more pleasure in her sacred light.

351. 'DOLCI DUREZZE, ET PLACIDE REPULSE,'



weet harshness, and quiet rejection,
full of chaste love and sympathy:
gracious disdain, that (now I realise)
tempered my foolish and inflamed desire,

gentle speech, in which the height of courtesy
and the height of honesty shone together:
flower of virtue, fountain of beauty,
that uprooted all base thoughts from my heart:

a divine glance to make a man happy,
now fiercely reigning-in the eager mind
from what is rightly disapproved of,

now quick to comfort my frail life:
that lovely variety was the root
of my salvation, which else was far away.

352. 'SPIRTO FELICE CHE SÍ DOLCEMENTE'



appy spirit that glanced so sweetly
from those eyes, brighter than the sun,
and formed the sighs and speech,
so alive they still echo in my mind:

I once saw you, burning with virtue's fire,
moving your feet among the grass and flowers,
not like a woman, but as the angels do,
a form that is more vivid to me than ever:

which you then left on earth, the sweet veil
that came to you at birth by high destiny,
in order to return to your Maker.

At your parting, Love and Courtesy departed
from the world, the sun fell from the sky
and death itself began to seem so sweet.

353. 'VAGO AUGELLETO CHE CANTANDO VAI,'



ittle wandering bird that goes singing
your time gone by, with weeping notes,
seeing the night and the winter near,
and the day and all the joyful months behind,

if, knowing your own heavy sorrows,
you could know of my state like your own,
you would fly to this disconsolate breast
to share your grievous sadness with me.

I cannot say our measures would be equal,
since perhaps the one you cry for still has life,
which in my case Death and heaven have denied:

but the fading season and the hour,
with the memory of sweet years and bitter,
invite me to speak to you, of pity.

354. 'DEH PORGI MANO A L'AFFANNATO INGEGNO,'



ove, give your help to my troubled mind,
and my labouring and feeble pen,
to speak of her who is made immortal,
a citizen of the heavenly kingdom:

grant me, my lord, with my speech to hit
the target in praising her, as it could not alone,
since there's no virtue or beauty in the world
that she is not worthy of possessing.

He replies: 'Whatever heaven and I can give,
and good counsel and honest converse,
was all in her, whom death deprived us of.

No form was equal to hers since the day Adam
first opened his eyes: and now let this be enough:
I say it weeping, and weeping you must write.'

355. 'O TEMPO, O CIEL VOLUBIL, CHE FUGGENDO'



time, O fickle sky, that flickers by,
deceiving blind and miserable mortals,
O days swifter than arrows or the wind,
now from experience I know your guile:

but I excuse you, and blame myself,
since Nature unfurled your wings for flight,
gave eyes to me, and I held them fixed
on my ills, from which came grief and shame.

And I know the hour: it's already past,
for turning towards a more secure place,
and putting an end to infinite pain:

the soul does not leave your yoke, Love,
but its own ills: with what labour you know:
virtue comes not by chance, but by true art.

356. 'L'AURA MIA SACRA AL MIO STANCO RIPOSO'



y sacred breeze so often breathes
on my weary rest, that I take courage
to tell her of the ills I felt and feel, as,
had she lived, I would not have dared to do.

I begin with that loving glance,
which was the start of this long torment,
then follow with how love gnaws me,
wretched or content, day by day, hour by hour.

She is silent, and gazes at me intently,
the picture of pity: sighing at times,
her face adorned by virtuous tears:

so that my mind overcome with grief,
angered with itself, because of her weeping,
returns to itself, shaken from sleep.

357. 'OGNI GIORNO MI PAR PIU DI MILL'ANNI'



very day seems a thousand years to me
following my dear and faithful guide,
who led me, in the world, and now leads me,
a better way, to the life without trouble:

and I cannot be detained by the deceits
of this world, that I know: and such light
shines into my heart at last from heaven,
I begin to count my losses and the days.

Nor do I need to fear the threat of death,
since the King suffered much greater pain
to make me follow firmly and with courage:

and now it has newly entered every vein
of her who was granted me by fate,
yet did not trouble her serene brow.

358. 'NON PO FAR MORTE IL DOLCE VISO AMARO,'



Death cannot make that sweet face bitter,
but her sweet face can make Death sweet.
What better guide do I need to dying?
She shows me that from which I learn all good:

and He who was not sparing of His blood,
who with his foot shattered the gates of Hell,
seems by His dying to comfort me.
So come, Death: your coming is dear to me.

And don't delay, now is the right time:
unless it had come at that point in time
when my lady passed from this life.

I've not been alive one day since then:
I was hers in life, and hers to the end,
and, with her footsteps, my days are gone.

359. 'QUANDO IL SOAVE MIO FIDO CONFORTO'



hen my gentle faithful comforter
to grant some peace to my weary life,
settles herself on the left edge of my bed,
with her sweet wise reasoning,

I grow pale at her pity and my fear,
saying: 'O happy soul, where have you come from?'
She takes a little branch of palm
and one of laurel from her lovely breast,
and says: 'From the serene
heavenly empyrean and those sacred places
I moved, and came alone, to bring solace.'

I thank her humbly in words and manner,
and then ask: 'How did you know my state?'
And she replies: 'The sad waves of weeping
with which you never seem to be sated,
and the breeze of sighs, reach heaven
through all of space, and trouble my peace:
it displeases you so greatly
that I have left this misery,
and reached a better life:
it should please you, if you loved me,
as much as you professed in words and looks.'

I reply: 'I don't weep other than for myself
who am left behind in darkness and torment,
certain always that you have leapt to heaven,
as if it were something I had seen nearby.

Why would God and Nature have set
so much virtue in a youthful heart,
if the eternal welcome
were not destined for your good deeds,
O rare spirit,
who lived nobly amongst us here,
and then suddenly flew to heaven?

But what can I do other than weep for ever,
wretched and alone, who am nothing without you?

I wish I had died at the breast or in my cradle
in order not to prove the temper of love!
And she: 'Why always weep and grieve yourself?
How much better to lift your wings from earth,
and weigh mortal things
more justly, and those sweet deceptive
words of yours,
and follow me, if you truly love me so,
pluck one of these branches today!'

Then I responded: 'I wish to ask,
what do those two branches signify?'
And she: 'You can answer that yourself,
you whose pen honours one more than others' do:
the palm is victory, and I, still young,
conquered myself and the world: the laurel
signifies triumph, of which I'm worthy,

by grace of that Lord who gave me strength.
Now you, if other things weary you,
turn to Him, pray to him for help,
so we may be with Him at the end of your path.'

I say: 'Is this the blonde hair, and the golden knot
that still ties me, and those lovely eyes
that were my sun?' She says: 'Don't err
like a fool, nor speak or think that way.
I am a naked spirit, and delight myself in heaven:
what you look for is dust, and for many years,
but it is given to me to seem such
as will draw you from your trouble: and still
will be so, lovelier than ever,
dearer to you, as cruel and kind,
gaining together your salvation and mine.'

I weep: and she dries my face
with her hand, and then she sighs
sweetly, and speaks
words that might shatter stone:
and afterwards departs, along with sleep.

360 'QUEL' ANTIQUO MIO DOLCE EMPIO SIGNORE'



That ancient sweet cruel lord of mine
being summoned before the queen
who holds the divine place
in our being, seated in the head,
there, I present myself blind with grief,
and fear and horror, like gold
being refined in the fire,
like a man who fears death and begs for justice:
and I begin: 'My lady, I set foot
when young in this kingdom,
in which I received only
anger and disdain: and the torments I suffered
here were such and so varied
that at last my infinite patience
was overcome, and I held life in contempt.

So that my life till now has been passed
in flame and pain: and how many worthy
honest roads I've scorned,
how many feasts, to serve this cruel flatterer!
And what wit has speech ready enough
to express my unhappy state,
and, since he is ungrateful to me,
so many grave and just complaints?
O little sweetness, much gall with him!
How much bitterness he added to my life
with his false sweetness

that drew me to the crowd of lovers!
So if I'm not mistaken, he was disposed
to raise me high above the earth:
and snatched away my peace and brought me war.

He has made me love God less
than I should, and care less for myself:
for a lady's sake equally
he has made me careless of every thought.
In this he is my only counsellor
always sharpening my youthful desire
with a wicked edge, so that
I long for rest from his cruel and bitter yoke.
Wretch, why did heaven give me
this bright high wit, and my other gifts?
So that my hair is altering,
but I can't alter my obstinate will:
so that this cruel one
I accuse robs me of my freedom,
and turns my bitter life to a sweet habit.

He has made me search out desert places,
fierce rapacious thieves, bristling thorns,
harsh peoples and customs,
and every error that traps the traveller,
hills, valleys, marshes, seas and rivers,
a thousand nets stretched out in every place:
winter in a strange month,
with present danger and fatigue:
neither he nor my other enemy
whom I fled, left me alone a single moment:

so if I've not yet met
a harsh and bitter death,
heavenly mercy has cared
for my salvation and not that tyrant
who feeds on my grief and my hurt.

So I have never had a peaceful hour from him,
nor hope to have, and sleep is banished
from my nights, and can't be won
by herbs or magic incantations.
By force and deception he has been made lord
over my spirit: and no hourly bell has sounded
wherever I've been, in whatever town,
that I've not heard. He knows I speak the truth:
and no woodworm's ever gnawed old wood
as he my heart, in which he nests,
and threatens me with death.
So the tears and suffering were born,
the words and sighs,
that weary me, and others too perhaps.
You judge, who know both me and him.'

My adversary speaks with bitterness,
saying; 'O lady, hear the other side,
so that the truth, this ungrateful one
deviates from, is heard complete.
In his youth this man was given to the art
of selling words, or rather lies:
nor seemed to feel any shame,
snatched from that harm to my delight,
complaining of me, who kept him pure and clean,

against his will that often wished him ill,
now he grieves,
in this sweet life that he calls misery:
he leapt to fame of sorts
purely through me, who inspired his intellect
which he could never have inspired himself.

He knows that Agamemnon and noble Achilles
and Hannibal, bitter foe to your country,
and Scipio, the brightest star of all
in valour and destiny,
like men of ordinary fortune,
allowed themselves to love lowly servants:
while from a thousand
choice women, of excellence, I selected one,
whose like will not be seen beneath the moon,
though Lucretia were to return to Rome:
and I gave her such
sweet speech, so soft a singing voice,
that base or heavy thought
could not last long before her.
These were all my tricks against him.

This was the wormwood, the anger and disdain,
sweeter yet than any other's all.
I gather evil fruit from good seed:
so are those who serve ingratitude rewarded.
I took him under my wing,
that ladies and knights were pleased with his words:
and made him rise
so high, that among keen and fervent wits

I made his name and his verses
celebrated, with delight, in every place:
who might have been a hoarse
mutterer now in this court, a common man:
I exalted him and made him known
for the things he learnt from her, and those I taught,
from her who was unique in this world.

And to explain my great service to him, complete,
I drew him back from a thousand dishonest actions,
he who could never now
be pleased with anything vile:
a reticent young man, modest in action
and thought, now he's made a man ruled
by her so that her noble
traits stamp his heart, and make him like her.
What he has of the pilgrim and the nobleman
came from her, and me, whom he blames.
No nocturnal phantom
was ever to us as full of error as him:
who ever since he's known us
has been blessed by God and man.
Of this the proud man laments and complains.

Yet, and this says it all, I gave him wings
to fly towards the heavens, by means
of those mortal things,
that are steps to the Maker, for he who values them:
and if he'd gazed intently at the number
and quality of virtues in that hope of his,
he could have been lifted by one

in another's guise to the high Primal Cause.
and that he has often said in his rhymes.
Now he's forgotten me, and that lady
who I gave him as a column
to support his fragile life.' – At this I raise
a tearful cry, and shouted:
'He gave me her, true, but took her back too soon.'
He replies: 'Not I, but He took her to Himself.'

At last both speak to the Judge's chair,
I with trembling, he with high cruel voice,
each concluding, for his part, with:
'Noble Lady, I await your judgement.'
Then smilingly she says:
'I am pleased to have heard your pleas,
but need more time for such a verdict.'

361. 'DICEMI SPESSO IL MIO FIDATO SPECGLIO,'



ften my faithful mirror shows me
my weary spirit, and my altered skin,
and my weakened skill and strength, saying:
'Don't fool yourself any more: you are old.

Obedience to Nature in everything is better
than to contest time and power with her.'
Suddenly then, as water quenches fire,
I wake from a long and heavy sleep:

and see how truly our life flies
and we cannot be here more than once:
and her words echo deeply in my heart,

she who is freed now from the lovely knot,
but was unique in her age of the world,
and stole, if I do not err, all others' fame.

362. 'VOLO CON L'ALI DE' PENSIERI AL CIELO'



fly to heaven on wings of thought
so often that I seem to be one of those
whose whole treasure is there,
leaving its torn veil behind on earth.

My heart trembles sometimes with a sweet chill
hearing her, for whom I grow pale, say to me:
'Friend, I can love you now and honour you,
because your life has altered with your hair.'

She leads me to her Lord: then I bow,
begging humbly that He consent
for me to stay and see both these faces.

He replies: 'Your fate is already settled:
and to delay there still for twenty years or thirty,
might seem long to you, yet is but a moment.'

363. 'MORTE A SPENTO QUEL SOL CH'ABAGLIAR SUOLMI,'



Death has quenched the sun that dazzled me,
and those eyes are in the darkness, fixed, entire:
she is earth, who made me hot and cold:
my laurels are bare, like the oaks and elms:

in all this I see my good: and yet I grieve.
There's no one now to make my thoughts
bold or timid, to make them burn or freeze,
to make them fill with hope, or brim with pain.

Out of the hand of him who hurt and healed me,
who once granted me so long a torment,
I find myself in sweet and bitter freedom:

and turn to the Lord I adore and thank,
who governs the world with a blink of his eye:
I'm weary of living, and sated with it too.

364. 'TENEMMI AMOR ANNI VENTUNO ARDENDO,'



ove held me burning, twenty-one years,
happy in the fire, and in grief full of hope:
then, when my lady leapt to heaven with
my heart, another ten years, weeping.

Now I'm weary, and reclaim my life
from that error that almost crushed
the seeds of virtue: and, God on high,
I grant my final years devotedly to you:

penitent and sad at my years ill spent,
that should have been put to better use,
in fleeing trouble and finding peace.

Lord, who first imprisoned me in this cell,
release me, save me from eternal harm,
who know my fault, and do not excuse it.

365. 'I'VO PIAGENDO I MIEI PASSATI TEMPI'



go weeping for my time past,
that I spent in loving something mortal,
without lifting myself in flight, for I had wings
that might have freed me for spaces not so low.

You who see my shameful and impious sins,
King of Heaven, invisible, immortal,
help this frail and straying soul,
and mend its defects through your grace:

So that, if I have lived in war and tempest,
I may die in peaceful harbour: and if my stay
was vain, let my vanishing, at least, be virtuous.

Deign that your hand might rest on that little life
that is left to me, and on my death:
You truly know I have no other hope.

366. 'VERGIN BELLA, CHE DI SOL VESTITA,' (*HIS PRAYER TO
THE VIRGIN*)



lovely Virgin, who, clothed in glory,
crowned with stars, so pleased
the high Sun, that he hid his light in you,
love urges me to speak of you:
but I cannot begin without your help,
and His, who lovingly was set in you.
I call on her who always replies truly
to those who call to her with faith:
Virgin, if the final
misery of human life can forever
turn to you for mercy, bow down to hear my prayer,
and help me in this, my war,
though I am earth, and you the queen of heaven.

Wisest Virgin, and of that lovely number
one of the virgins blessed with prudence,
rather the first of them, and with the brightest lamp:
O solid shield for the oppressed peoples
against the blows of Death and Fortune,
under whom we triumph, not just escape:
O coolness for blind heat that flares
among foolish mortals here:
Virgin, turn those lovely eyes,
that saw in sadness the pitiless wounds
in the sweet limbs of your dear Son,
on my uncertain state,
who, without counsel, come to you for counsel.

Virgin, pure, perfect in every way,
daughter and mother to your noble Son,
you who illuminate this life, adorn the other,
through you that Son of the highest Father,
O highest shining window of heaven,
came to save us in these latter days:
and from all the other earthly wombs
you alone were chosen,
Virgin, so blessed,
that Eve's weeping turned to happiness.
Make me, as you can, worthy of His grace,
O forever blessed,
already crowned in the highest kingdom.

Sacred Virgin, filled with every grace,
that through true and noblest humility
leapt to heaven, where you hear my prayers,
you gave birth to pity's fountain,
and the sun of justice, you who shine through
this age filled with darkness, thick with error:
three sweet, beloved, names combine in you,
mother, daughter, spouse:
Glorious Virgin,
queen to that King who has loosed our bonds,
and made the world free and happy,
I pray you satisfy my heart
with his sacred wounds, true blessed one.

Virgin sole on earth without a peer,
who enamoured heaven of your beauty,
whom no other equalled or came near,

holy thoughts, chaste and merciful actions
made you sacred to the one true God,
a living temple, fruitful in virginity.
You have the power to render my life joyful,
since with your prayers, O Maria,
sweet, virtuous Virgin,
grace abounds where sin abounded.
I bow to you on my knees, in thought,
I beg you to be my guide
and direct my crooked path to a good end.

Bright Virgin, established in eternity,
star of this tempestuous sea,
faithful guide to every faithful sailor,
consider in what fearful danger
I find myself alone, without a helm,
and already near the final shout.
But my soul trusts in you completely,
sinful, I don't deny it,
Virgin: but I pray to you
that your enemy derive no mockery from my evils:
you know that our sin made God,
take on human flesh,
in your virgin cloister, to save us.

Virgin, what tears I have already scattered,
what pleadings and what prayers in vain,
solely for my pain and my grave hurt!
From the time I was born on the banks of the Arno,
searching in this place or in that,
my life has been nothing but trouble.

Mortal beauty, actions and speech
have all hampered my soul.
Sacred, kindly Virgin,
do not delay, since perhaps this is my last year.
And my days have flown, swifter
than an arrow
in misery and sin, and I only wait for Death.

Virgin, she is so much earth, and has sunk
my heart in sadness, that living she held weeping,
who never knew even one of my thousand ills:
and for her to know them, what was would
have had to not be: for any other will than hers
would have been death to me, ill fame to her.
Now lady of heaven, our goddess
(if it is right to call you so)
Virgin of noble feelings,
you see all: and what no other can do
is as nothing to your great power,
making an end to sorrow:
that honours you, and is my salvation.

Virgin, in whom is all my hope,
who can and will aid me in my great need,
do not abandon me in this last strait.
No one protects me but he who deigned to make me:
not for my worth, but because His noble image,
that is in me, moves you to care for a man so vile.
Medusa and my error turned me to stone,
dripping with vain moisture:
Virgin, you with holy tears

and mercy fill my weary heart,
so that at least my final tears will be pious,
free of earthly mire,
just as the first were unmarked by its sickness.

Kindly Virgin, and enemy of pride,
may love of our common origin guide you:
to take pity on a humble contrite heart.
Since I used to love a little fallen mortal dust
with such marvellous faith, what
must I do towards your noble person?
If by your hand I rise from this
wretched and vile state,
Virgin, I'll consecrate my purified
thoughts, intellect and style, to your name,
tongue and heart, tears and sighs.
Urge me to better ways,
and be pleased to accept my altered passions.

The day is coming, and cannot be long,
time runs so fast, and flies,
Virgin, unique, alone,
remorse and death sting my heart.
Commend me to your Son, truly
Man, and truly God,
that he might receive my last breath, in peace.

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340. 'Dolce mio caro et precioso pegno,'	477
341. 'Deh qual pietà, qual angel fu sí presto'	478
342. 'Del cibo onde 'l signor mio sempre abonda,'	479
343. 'Ripensando a quell, ch'oggi il cielo honora,'	480
344. 'Fu forse un tempo dolce cosa amore,'	481
345. 'Spinse amor et dolor ove ir non debbe'	482
346. 'Li angeli electi et l'anime beate'	483
347. 'Donna che lieta col Principio nostro'	484
348. 'Da' piú belli occhi, et dal piú chiaro viso'	485
349. 'E' mi par d'or in hora udire il messo'	486
350. 'Questo nostro caduco et fragil bene,'	487
351. 'Dolci durezza, et placide repulse,'	488
352. 'Spirto felice che sí dolcemente'	489
353. 'Vago augelletto che cantando vai,'	490
354. 'Deh porgi mano a l'affannato ingegno,'	491
355. 'O tempo, o ciel volubil, che fuggendo'	492
356. 'L'aura mia sacra al mio stanco riposo'	493
357. 'Ogni giorno mi par piú di mill'anni'	494
358. 'Non pò far Morte il dolce viso amaro,'	495
359. 'Quando il soave mio fido conforto'	496
360 'Quel'antiquo mio dolce empio signore'	499
361. 'Dicemi spesso il mio fidato specchio,'	505
362. 'Volo con l'ali de' pensieri al cielo'	506
363. 'Morte à spento quel sol ch'abagiar suolmi,'	507
364. 'Tenemmi Amor anni ventuno ardendo,'	508
365. 'T'vo piagendo i miei passati tempi'	509
366. 'Vergin bella, che di sol vestita,' (His Prayer to the Virgin).....	510

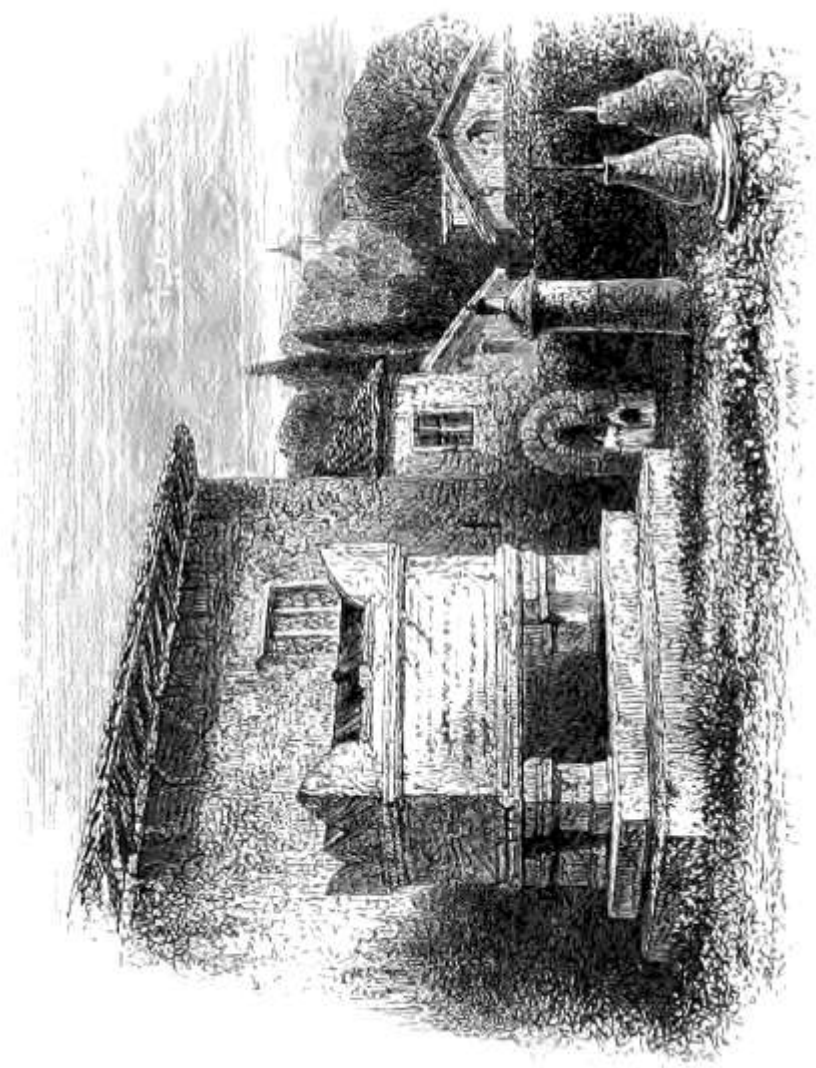
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Francesco Petrarca, or Petrarch, was born in Arezzo, Italy in 1304. A scholar, poet, diplomat, and early humanist, his rediscovery of the ancient Roman writers did much to fuel the 14th century Renaissance. His use of the sonnet form, particularly in the lyrics dedicated to his ideal love, Laura, was imitated throughout Europe, and became a mark of the civilised literary culture of his own and later periods. Initially trained as a lawyer in the universities of Montpellier and Bologna, his first extensive literary work, an epic in Latin, celebrated the Roman general Scipio Africanus. It was well received and in 1341 he was crowned in Rome as the first poet laureate since antiquity. He is particularly associated with Avignon, where he lived for many years, later travelling widely in Northern Italy, and living for a time in Venice. A friend of Boccaccio, Petrarch died at his home in Arquà, among the Euganean hills near Padua, in 1374.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Anthony Kline lives in England. He graduated in Mathematics from the University of Manchester, and was Chief Information Officer (Systems Director) of a large UK Company, before dedicating himself to his literary work and interests. He was born in 1947. His work consists of translations of poetry; critical works, biographical history with poetry as a central theme; and his own original poetry. He has translated into English from Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Chinese and the European languages. He also maintains a deep interest in developments in Mathematics and the Sciences.

He continues to write predominantly for the Internet, making all works available in download format, with an added focus on the rapidly developing area of electronic books. His most extensive works are complete translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.



Petrarch's Tomb

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. A Romaunt (p230, London 1869)

George Gordon Byron

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