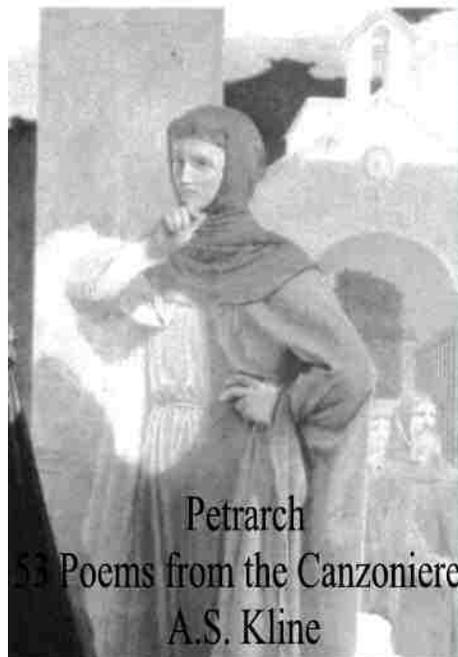


# Petrarch



**Fifty-three Poems from 'The Canzoniere'**

**Translated by A. S. Kline**

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1. 'Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono'

You 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'

To 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'

What 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,'

When 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 morTAl tongue can be so presumptuous  
as to speak of his eternally green branches.

6. 'Sì traviato è 'l folle mi' desio'

My 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'otiose piume'

Greed 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'

At 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'

When 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 columna in cui s'appoggia'

Glorious 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 Lombez in the  
Pyrenees.

11. 'Lassare il velo o per sole o per ombra'

I 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'

If 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'

When 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'

My 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'

I 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'

Grizzled 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'

Bitter 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.

19. 'Son animali al mondo de sí altera'

There 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.

21. 'Mille fiate, o dolce mia guerrera,'

I 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*)

The 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.

35. 'Solo et pensoso i piú deserti campi'

Alone 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.

52. 'Non al suo amante piú Diana piacque,'

Diana 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.

61. 'Benedetto sia 'l giorno, et 'l mese, et l'anno,'

Blessed 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 so adorned as to do me harm,

now may it please you by Your light that I turn  
to the greater life and more beautiful 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 the 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.

90. 'Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi'

She 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.

106. 'Nova angeletta sovra l'ale accorta'

A 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.

122. 'Dicesette anni à già rivolto il cielo'

The 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'

That 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?'

126. 'Chiare, fresche et dolci acque,'

Clear, 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.

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.

132. 'S'amor non è, che dunque è 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 the tears and grief?  
If my state is 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.

134. 'Pace non trovo, et non ò da fa guerra.'

I 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.

141. 'Come talora al caldo tempo sòle'

As 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.

148. 'Non Tesin, Po, Varo, Arno, Adige et Tebro,'

Not 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.

151. 'Non d'atra et tempestosa onda marina'

No 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.

159. 'In qual parte del ciel, in quale idea'

From 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.

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.

169. 'Pien d'un vago penser che me desvia'

Full 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,  
which 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'

Many 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.

176. 'Per mezz'i boschi inhospiti et selvaggi'

Through 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.

190. 'Una candida cerva sopra l'erba'

A 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.

199. 'O bella man, che mi destringi 'l core'

O 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.

234. 'O cameretta che già fosti un porto'

O 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.

248 'Chi vuol veder quantunque pò Natura'

Who 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.

267. 'Oimè il bel viso, oimè il soave sguardo,'

Ah 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.

269. 'Rotta è l'alta colonna e 'l verde lauro'

The 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!

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.

292. 'Gli occhi di ch'io parlai sí caldamente,'

The 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.

298. 'Quand'io mi volgo indietro a miarar gli anni'

When 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'è la fronte, che con picciol cenno'

Where 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!

302. 'Levommi il mio penser in parte ov'era'

My 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.

310. 'Zephiro torna, e'l bel tempo rimena'

Zephyr 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 vermilion.

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 sí soave piagne,'

That 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.

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.

333. 'Ite, rime dolenti, al duro sasso'

My 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 vile, dark place.

Say to her I am 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 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 she  
draw me, and call me, to what she is in heaven.

346. 'Li angeli electi et l'anime beate'

The 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.

353. 'Vago augelletto che cantando vai,'

Little 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.

365. 'I'vo piagendo i miei passati tempi'

I 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.

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