

Torquato Tasso

Fifty selected Poems, set for Voice

Translated by A. S. Kline © 2022 All Rights Reserved
This work may be freely reproduced, stored, and transmitted, electronically
or otherwise, for any non-commercial purpose.

Contents

Introduction.....	5
The Poems.....	6
In whom should I believe (<i>A chi creder degg'io</i>).....	6
Armed with such weapons, none of them benign (<i>Ah, ma non fia che fra tant' armi e tante</i>)	6
With the loosening of one knot (<i>Al discioglier d'un groppo</i>)	6
In the glittering starlight (<i>Al lume delle stelle</i>)	7
The rose must yield the honours (<i>Al tuo vago pallore</i>)	7
To your sweet azure, O eyes (<i>Al vostro dolce azzurro</i>)	8
Love me, my true beloved (<i>Amatemi, ben mio</i>)	8
Amor has bound tight my spirit (<i>Amor l'alma m'allaccia</i>).....	8
Burn or freeze, as you so desire (<i>Ardi e gela a tua voglia</i>)	9
It burns hotter, my deep desire (<i>Ardi ed alsi mia volgia</i>).....	9
She is not merely lovely (<i>Bella non è costei</i>)	10
You are dark-haired but lovely (<i>Bruna sei tu ma bella</i>).....	10
What a sweet theft of my heart (<i>Che soave rapina</i>).....	10
Like a crystal in the stone (<i>Come cristallo in monte</i>).....	11
How then could I live, Amor, thus torn apart (<i>Come vivrò ne le mie pene, Amore,</i>).....	11
Sweetly, my flame, so sweetly (<i>Dolce, mia fiamma, dolce</i>)	11
My Chloris was asleep there, resting sweetly (<i>Dolcemente dormiva la mia Clori</i>).....	12
With sweetest ties she binds me (<i>Dolcissimi legami</i>)	12
Fair, and courteous, lady (<i>Donna cortese e bella</i>).....	13
Lady, the thoughts within my mind once more (<i>Donna, nel mio ritorno il mio pensiero</i>)	13
Behold, the waves are murmuring (<i>Ecco mormorar l'onde</i>)	13
Sword, in those lovers' wounding (<i>Ferro in ferir pietoso</i>)	14
Perhaps Dawn is the reason (<i>Forse è cagion l'aurora</i>).....	14
Ice at her heart, my lady has, fire in her face (<i>Gelo ha madonna il seno e fiamma il volto</i>).....	15
Ne'er does the sun a sweeter ray (<i>Giamai più dolce raggio</i>).....	15
Without joy I suspire (<i>Io non posso gioire</i>).....	15
Was it composed by Nature? (<i>La Natura compose</i>).....	16

So far from you, love of mine (<i>Lunge da voi, ben mio</i>)	16
As I gazed there, intently (<i>Mentr'io mirava fiso</i>)	17
Mesola, the River beside you (<i>Mesola, il Po da' lati</i>)	17
Dancing, is this not the hand (<i>Non è questa la mano</i>)	17
Upon this bank there's no flower (<i>Non son in queste rive</i>)	18
Sigh no more, shepherd; sigh no more thus, nor weep (<i>Non sospirar,</i> <i>Pastor, non lagrimare</i>)	18
O timid leveret, you race (<i>O timida leprezza</i>)	19
O, whiter and colder the manner (<i>O via più bianca e fredda</i>)	19
Hours, halt now, suspend your flight (<i>Ore fermate il volo</i>)	19
Deeply she wept, and sighed (<i>Piagn'e sospira</i>)	20
Fairer than Diana, more pleasing than that same (<i>Più che Diana è bella e</i> <i>più mi piace</i>)	20
Since my lady, with disdain (<i>Poiché madonna sdegna</i>)	21
Other ladies wear a veil (<i>Portano l'altre il velo</i>)	21
I am as wretched, in truth (<i>Quant'io sono infelice</i>)	21
This life is the dark wood (<i>Questa vita è la selva</i>)	22
These notes are new (<i>Queste note son nove</i>)	22
If my heart is with you, as it wished to be (<i>Se 'l mio core è con voi, come</i> <i>desia</i>)	23
If you forsake me, traitor, then yours the harm: (<i>Se tu mi lassi, perfida tuo</i> <i>danno</i>)	23
Gentlest, sweetest song, if I (<i>Soavissimo canto</i>)	23
Amidst the fresh greenery (<i>Sovra le verdi chiome</i>)	24
You, white and lovely Luna, (<i>Tu, bianca e vaga Luna</i>)	24
The joyous birds, amidst the foliage, ply (<i>Vezzosi augelli infra le verdi</i> <i>fronde</i>)	25
Tis your wish, my good, that, I (<i>Voi bramate, ben mio</i>)	25

Introduction

Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) was born in Sorrento the son of Bernardo Tasso, a poet and courtier, and of Porzia de' Rossi. His father followed the prince of Salerno into exile in 1552, and the family estates were confiscated. Tasso joined his father in Rome in 1554, and in 1556 both were members of the court of the Duke of Urbino, where Torquato was educated with the duke's son. In 1560 he was sent to study law in Padua and there met the humanist and critic Sperone Speroni, under whose guidance he studied Aristotle's *Poetics*. In 1565 Tasso entered the service of Luigi, cardinal d'Este, and frequented the court of Duke Alfonso II d'Este at Ferrara, where he enjoyed the patronage of the duke's sisters, Lucrezia and Leonora, for whom he wrote some of his finest lyrical poems. In 1569 his father died, and the following year Tasso followed the cardinal to Paris, where he met Ronsard. Returning to Ferrara in 1571 as one of the duke's courtiers, he devoted himself to poetic activity, in 1575 completing his epic poem, *Gerusalemme liberata*, on which he had been working since his stay in Ferrara. He succumbed to a form of mental illness and the following years saw sudden departures from Ferrara and violent crises, culminating in his incarceration in the hospital of Santa Anna (1579–86) by order of the Duke of Ferrara. He was released from Santa Anna, due to the intervention of Vincenzo Gonzaga, prince of Mantua, who received him at court. After a revival of creative inspiration, he relapsed and fled from Mantua, wandering mainly between Rome and Naples. On Tasso's return to Rome in November 1594, the pope granted him a pension and promised to crown him poet laureate, but Tasso fell ill in the following March, and died at the convent of San Onofrio, within a few weeks.

The poems selected here, were all, at one time or another, set for voice. The Italian first line, the composer(s), and date of first publication, are shown in parentheses. The Italian first lines are in alphabetical order. The poems are sourced from the *Rime*, unless otherwise indicated.

Here the text is primary, not secondary to the voice, since it was precisely the intelligence, clarity, and sensitivity of Tasso's verse that led so many composers to create vocal settings of the texts.

The Poems

In whom should I believe (*A chi creder degg'io*)

(Madrigal from 'Armida': set by Benedetto Pallavicino, 1593)

In whom should I believe,
If all words are but empty,
And speech ever borne away, upon the breeze?
Not in some voice that may please,
Unaccompanied by true effects, not simply
In such could I trust, Amor;
I fear as deeply, now, as I hoped, before.
Love: to believe, I'd needs
Perceive the other's heart, expressed in loving deeds.

Armed with such weapons, none of them benign (*Ah, ma non fia che fra tant' armi e tante*)

(Madrigal from 'Armida': set by Francesco Eredi, 1629)

Armed with such weapons, none of them benign,
Will not the least of them draw blood this day?
Since all other breasts prove diamantine,
You seek to pierce a woman's breast this way.
In this then, naked before you, that is mine,
Your glory and victory must lie alway.
This breast, so open, Love, to your least blow,
No dart will fail to pierce, as you must know.

With the loosening of one knot (*Al discioglier d'un groppo*)

(Madrigal: set by Filippo di Monti, 1591)

With the loosening of one knot,
A thousand constrained my heart,

Wrought by the white hand which tied it at the start.
But the one revealed my lot,
For the rest were all concealed,
A hidden means to hidden sweetness, sealed,
And yet, she still knows it not,
She who holds my open heart within her snare;
Of these tightening chains of hers, scarce aware.

In the glittering starlight (*Al lume delle stelle*)

(Madrigal: set by Luca Marenzio, 1595, and by Claudio Monteverdi, 1619)

In the glittering starlight,
Thyrsis, neath the laurel tree,
Grieves deeply, and laments, in accents such as these:
'O heavenly fires, so bright,
You recall, to memory,
The bright eyes of one I love, that must ever please.
Dear lights, of serenest night,
I feel trouble, pain, alas, the wounds that maim;
Beneath your clear, peaceful light,
In the midst of your high splendour, I feel the flame.

The rose must yield the honours (*Al tuo vago pallore*)

(Madrigal: set by Ascanio Trombetti, 1583, and many others)

The rose must yield the honours
To your pallor, pure and lovely,
Which, of disdain, is seen to blush more deeply.
Such are Love's true colours,
He paints in such a manner,
Nor do his troops march to a different banner.
And here the Dawn, moreover,
Scorns crimson, decks the sky with your violets,
While the sun would be pale as you, ere it sets.

To your sweet azure, O eyes (*Al vostro dolce azzurro*)

(Madrigal: set by Marco Antonio Pordenon, 1573, and many others)

To your sweet azure, O eyes,
Serene in their majesty,
Must yield those dark eyes prized so in Italy.
Eyes, heavenly orbs of Love,
This heart's twin suns above,
All others next to you are night, infernal.
Azure's the sky eternal,
To which the beauty of all that's lovely's due:
Beautiful only in that it mirrors you.

Love me, my true beloved (*Amatemi, ben mio*)

(Madrigal: set by Benedetto Pallavicino 1585, Luca Marenzio, 1591, and others)

Love me, my true beloved,
For this heart that's mine, I own,
Disdains all other food, lives on but love alone.
I'll love you, if you'll love me,
No less than my life, no less than my every breath;
Love will endure, and will end but with my death.
Yet, if you would deny me,
I must die in deep despair,
Unloved, unable to love you, or to dare.

Amor has bound tight my spirit (*Amor l'alma m'allaccia*)

(Madrigal: set by Leonard Meldert, 1578)

Amor has bound tight my spirit,
With his sweet yet bitter chain.

I grieve not, yet claim, by doing so,
He binds me, and brings me pain,
Tongue-tied whene'er I visit,
Shy and confused before my lady, I know,
Troubled in mind also.
Unbind, pitiless Amor,
My tongue, yet if you would not
See even one tie bound in a looser knot,
Then add more, instead, to my heart, I implore.

Burn or freeze, as you so desire (*Ardi e gela a tua voglia*)

(Madrigal: set by Claudio Monteverdi, 1587, and many others)

Burn or freeze, as you so desire,
Disloyal, and shameless lover,
Now loving, now hating, ever,
Of such an inconstant mind,
Your love is worth little, your hatred less I find.
And if your love proves in vain,
So does your fickle heart's hatred and disdain.

It burns hotter, my deep desire (*Ardi ed alsi mia volgia*)

(Madrigal: set by Claudio Monteverdi, 1587, and many others)

It burns hotter, my deep desire,
Faithful and not disloyal,
Loving, nor held in hatred's toil.
And if, to your careless mind,
It brings scant loving warmth or hatred, you'll find
Tis your proud, yet fickle strain,
That will serve to render both love and hatred vain.

She is not merely lovely (*Bella non è costei*)

(Madrigal: set by Guilio Zenaro, 1589)

She is not merely lovely,
But she is beauty's essence,
For beauty she grants to all in her presence:
And to the degree she shares her sweet glances,
And her speech and smile,
And the other graces, of her face, the while,
(Which the more I see, Love, the more flame dances
Within me) to that degree this bitter place
Seems to me a kindly space.

You are dark-haired but lovely (*Bruna sei tu ma bella*)

(Madrigal: set by Alfonso Ferrabosco, 1587, Curzio Mancini, 1605)

You are dark-haired but lovely,
And every fetching paleness
Love deems the loser, set beside your darkness.
Lovely you are, but dark-haired;
Un-gathered, the white privet
Falls, while the dark flower's chosen; will you forget
Who gathered, and then declared,
Choice words that sing your praises,
He who weaves crowns for you of rhymes, not daisies?

What a sweet theft of my heart (*Che soave rapina*)

(Madrigal: set by Luigi Roinci, 1596, Paolo Bozi, 1599)

What a sweet theft of my heart,
Enraptured, deep in my core,
Was wrought by harmony's art,
Divine; beautiful souls dissolved by Amor!

I said to myself, split from self in that wise:
If this is true Paradise,
The heavenly Sirens prove sweeter, by far,
Than those of the sea-shore are!

Like a crystal in the stone (*Come cristallo in monte*)

(Madrigal: set by Cesare Accelli, 1588, Paolo Bellasio, 1590)

Like a crystal in the stone,
Pride hardens in you, lady,
Past all measure cruel, despite your beauty.
Love in me is purified,
As is gold within the fire.
If your heart freezes, mine burns with desire.
The icy frost, there inside,
Remains un-melted, yet, locked within that vice,
The fire keeps eternal faith, encased in ice.

**How then could I live, Amor, thus torn apart (*Come vivrò
ne le mie pene, Amore,*)**

(Madrigal: set by Benedetto Pallavicino, 1600)

How then could I live, Amor, thus torn apart,
So far removed from my own heart,
If this sweet memory came not, to aid me,
Of one who is my life wholly?
Fondest hope, and sweet memory,
Of her dear self, the doubly imagined sight,
All of my good, all my delight,
All of my life, would seek to be;
And yet I'm still half-alive, still torn apart,
Ever deprived of my own heart.

Sweetly, my flame, so sweetly (*Dolce, mia fiamma, dolce*)

(Madrigal: set by Luzzasco Luzzaschi, 1594, and others)

Sweetly, my flame, so sweetly,
I feel the pain, the torment,
Sweet is the languishing, sweet the suffering sent,
Sweet are the rays from your eyes;
Thousands on thousands, likewise,
Pass into, yet pierce this heart;
And, if from life it must part,
Prize not its death, for, I know,
From sweetness its death will come, and not from woe.

My Chloris was asleep there, resting sweetly (*Dolcemente dormiva la mia Clori*)

(Madrigal: set by Claudio Monteverdi, 1590, Giovanni Gabrieli, 1590, and others)

My Chloris was asleep there, resting sweetly,
And, all about her lovely face,
Love's cherubs circled, fluttering, smilingly.
As I gazed on, lost in Love's embrace.
Watching her, with endless delight,
I heard myself say: 'Fool, see you not a-right?
The moment foregone is lost to endless night.'
Thus, I bent down, gently, gently; soft, my sighs,
And, as I kissed her lovely eyes,
I tasted all the sweetness of Paradise.

With sweetest ties she binds me (*Dolcissimi legami*)

(Madrigal: set by Claudio Monteverdi, 1590)

With sweetest ties she binds me,
By amorous words waylaid,
She who binds in play, and will never free me.
Is this how she plays, how she binds so tightly?

This how true souls are betrayed,
Bound with insidious chains, tied so lightly?
At least those enthralling charms,
Bind me forever, in chains, in her sweet arms.

Fair, and courteous, lady (*Donna cortese e bella*)

(Madrigal: set by Francesco Mazza, 1584, and others)

Fair, and courteous, lady,
Ah! Seek not that I should die;
From annoy and fear, I sigh.
Make but the soul your slave, and free the body.
Yet if such base rule you scorn,
Loose me, leave me here, careworn;
For midst humble shepherds, free of your power,
I might find the sweeter hour.

Lady, the thoughts within my mind once more (*Donna, nel mio ritorno il mio pensiero*)

(Madrigal: set by Claudio Monteverdi, 1590)

Lady, the thoughts within my mind once more,
To which naught applies the rein,
Are soaring where the sky's serene and pure,
So, they may dwell, there, by your side again,
Midst the light, or dark of night,
And with you, thenceforth, remain;
For am I not tired of every other sight?
Such that, by virtue of my thoughts alone,
I am with you, to whose presence they have flown.

Behold, the waves are murmuring (*Ecco mormorar l'onde*)

(Madrigal: set by Claudio Monteverdi, 1590)

Behold, the waves are murmuring,
While the green leaves are trembling,
And the grass and the herbs, in the morning breeze.
As, amongst the boughs, the birds, in the living trees,
Sing sweetly, and sing softly,
The shining East smiles gently.
Already the light is here,
Mirrored in the waters clear,
Brightens all the tranquil sky,
And impearls the ice on high,
Grants the peaks a golden aura.
O fair and sweet Aurora,
The breeze is your herald, ever
You rise before her,
Ever the heart's restorer.

Sword, in those lovers' wounding (*Ferro in ferir pietoso*)

(Madrigal: set by Giovanni Antonio Cirullo, 1598)

Sword, in those lovers' wounding,
You compassionate did prove,
Sword that, in wounding both, emulated Love.
In that glorious meeting,
United, thus, in that strife,
In death, you rendered them, as Love had in life.
Yours the palm; both rendered whole;
Love's unity of the body, yours the soul.

Perhaps Dawn is the reason (*Forse è cagion l'aurora*)

(Madrigal: set by Bartolomeo Spontone, 1585, Stefano Felis, 1591)

Perhaps Dawn is the reason
For these lovely harmonies,
Wrought by the wind and water, branches and leaves?

Or is it Tarquinia
Whom the sky honours this day,
And falls in love with the Earth, in this sweet way?
Tis she, I hear it, ever,
That voice, or, I seem to hear;
Behold Tarquinia comes, and Love draws near!

**Ice at her heart, my lady has, fire in her face (*Gelo ha
madonna il seno e fiamma il volto*)**

(Madrigal: set by Paolo Bellasio, 1578, and many others)

Ice at her heart, my lady has, and flame in her face.
On the outside, I ever freeze
Burn, within, in the deepest place.
Because Amor, if you please,
Makes his dwelling in her brow, and lives here in my breast,
In both is the constant guest,
Ne'er, instead, in her heart, and my eye that sees.

Ne'er does the sun a sweeter ray (*Giamai più dolce raggio*)

(Madrigal: set by Antonio Il Verso, 1600)

Ne'er does the sun a sweeter ray
Reveal to the verdant world, in flowery May,
Than that which forever makes lustrous and bright,
Your hedges of privet and roses, to our sight;
Nor do fierce heat or cold, here, work their evil,
Rather eternal April,
Perpetual Spring, displays its lovely face,
And the sun's sweet smile of grace.

Without joy I suspire (*Io non posso gioire*)

*(Madrigal: set by Giovanni Battista Gabella, 1588, and
others)*

Without joy I suspire,
Distant so far from you, that are my desire.
And yet my wandering mind
Passing mountains and meadows, rivers and seas,
Brings me close to you, I find;
While to languish, in that sweet fire, so doth please,
The flames from your eyes that blind,
Infinite joy-in-suffering lifts me higher.

Was it composed by Nature? (*La Natura compose*)

(Madrigal: set by Rinaldo del Mel, 1584)

Was it composed by Nature?
This sweetly-scented flower?
Or was it, rather, created by Love's power?
Ah! Who placed those thorns around;
Encircling the sweet reward, the pleasure?
Who then, with barbs did surround,
Both leaves and bud, together,
Such that, if an incautious hand should gather
The bloom, pricked in the one place,
Joy and woe would interlace?
Oh, wondrous flower, which must forever feature
The uncertain war between Love and Nature!

So far from you, love of mine (*Lunge da voi, ben mio*)

(Madrigal: set by Benedetto Pallavicino, 1600)

So far from you, love of mine,
I'm alive no more; of heart, or Self, no sign;
I am no more, alas, no more
That which I was; naught but a sorry shadow,
Mournful tears to a sad score;
A sorrowing voice, ever consumed by woe,

Your sole gift; while, as before
The ill remains, and I long to die, heartsore.

As I gazed there, intently (*Mentr'io mirava fiso*)

(Madrigal: set by Claudio Monteverdi, 1590)

As I gazed there, intently,
Upon my lady's ardent and lovely eyes,
Two imps, to my great surprise,
Issued from midst those flames, and quite suddenly.
Graceful, and slender likewise,
They performed a thousand playful loops and gyres,
A thousand circuits, swiftly,
And fired a thousand arrows, into the fires
In my breast; drew, from my heart, a thousand sighs,
Such that, with sweet and amorous voice, wide-eyed,
'Mercy, have mercy!' I cried.

Mesola, the River beside you (*Mesola, il Po da' lati*)

(Madrigal: set by Giaches de Wert, 1588)

Mesola, the River beside you, the sea before you,
And, within the dark woods, all about the walls,
Deep shadowy places, where the cool light falls,
Grant you sweet beauty, proud nobility too,
And these are the works of Alfonso; Nature
And Art ne'er did, nor could, fashion aught better;
And that this vale might resemble Paradise,
Tis graced by the Lady, and her lovely eyes.

Dancing, is this not the hand (*Non è questa la mano*)

(Ballata: set by Benedetto Pallavicino, 1579)

Dancing, is this not the hand

Whose powerful and fatal art
Hurled many a burning shaft, at my poor heart?
And yet, behold, it is here,
Held tightly in mine, and so
Cannot, it seems, through power or art win clear,
Nor has she torch or arrow
As a defence against me,
And so, I should take, rightly,
My true revenge against her;
And, if she grants me wounds, sweet kisses render.

Upon this bank there's no flower (*Non son in queste rive*)

(Madrigal: set by Claudio Monteverdi 1590, Benedetto Pallavicino, 1611)

Upon this bank there's no flower
As bright, in its mysteries,
As are the crimson lips of my fair lady.
Nor does the passing breeze, this hour,
Sing with sweeter harmonies.
As, midst the founts, it sways the rose, the lily.
Song, that inflames and delights,
May only our kisses interrupt your flights.

Sigh no more, shepherd; sigh no more thus, nor weep (*Non sospirar, Pastor, non lagrimare*)

(From Ecloga III: set by Claudio Monteverdi 1590, Benedetto Pallavicino, 1611)

Sigh no more, shepherd; sigh no more thus, nor weep.
All those bitter tears that leap,
That are shed by your sad eyes,
Extinguish not the fire that burns, in the deep,
Consumes you, and never dies:
For tis love, that those sorrows, you ever reap

From out your heart's flames, can draw;
And, from tears, bright sparks the more.

O timid leveret, you race (*O timida leprezza*)

(Madrigal: set by Ruggiero Giovannelli, 1593)

O timid leveret, you race,
In fleeing to save your life, towards a place
Where death is welcome; before my lady's face,
If death displeases you, there,
Where the touch of death is ever my prayer,
Beneath those beautiful eyes,
You know not what rest, and peace, in such death lies.

O, whiter and colder the manner (*O via più bianca e fredda*)

(Madrigal: set by Giovanni Battista Recalchi, 1588)

O, whiter and colder the manner
Of her that the glittering stars oft doth render
Less bright with her splendour;
Pure silver, she doth ordain
The cloud, the wind, and the rain;
Naught, your lovely paleness and beautiful eyes.
If you'd turn to ease my sighs,
My life would be a dream, and free of all pain.

Hours, halt now, suspend your flight (*Ore fermate il volo*)

(Madrigal/ballata: set by Antonio Dueto, 1586)

Hours, halt now, suspend your flight,
From the shining Orient,
Where the bright heavens turn, in their dawn intent.
Dancing, singing, soft and light,

At the breath of dawn, once more,
That issues, so, from the shore,
Prolong all human life and the day.
And you, swift Breezes that sigh,
Bear my murmured sighs away,
To where Laura breathes this day,
And carry her voice again, to me, that I,
Alone, hear those tones aright;
None here but you, our lord Love, and your powers,
Sweet pleasing Breezes and Hours.

Deeply she wept, and sighed (*Piagn'e sospira*)

(From 'Gerusalemme Conquistata': set by Claudio Monteverdi, 1603)

Deeply, she wept and sighed and, when the sun's bright rays
Drove her flock to seek the sweet welcoming shade,
Carved the beloved name, in a thousand ways,
On the bark of a pine, or beech, within the glade.
All the trials and tribulations of her harsh days,
Of bitter fortune, she etched there, and displayed;
And then, re-reading her own grave testament,
Shed tears o'er her crimson cheeks, in sad lament.

Fairer than Diana, more pleasing than that same (*Più che Dìana è bella e più mi piace*)

(Madrigal: set by Giovanni Maria Bacchini, 1588)

Fairer than Diana, more pleasing than that same,
Is this, my lady, rather my living flame.
For she warms no less, I mean,
When, shining and gleaming, she shows the more serene.
She sheds not rays filled with dewdrops from her eyes,
Fire and sparks are e'er her guise;
Every cold heart before her,

Blazes, now alight with amorous ardour.

Since my lady, with disdain (*Poiché madonna sdegna*)

(Madrigal: set by Camillo Cortellini, 1584, and others)

Since my lady, with disdain,
Now, more than ever before,
Denies me the clear light of her lovely eyes,
Then, Amor, some art advance,
Through whose power I may be sure
Of stealing one bright ray that within them lies:
Twould not be right if she turned to you with sighs,
For were she to steal my heart,
Mine would prove the lesser part,
My revenge would have been but to steal one glance.

Other ladies wear a veil (*Portano l'altre il velo*)

(Madrigal: set by Girolamo Belli, 1583)

Other ladies wear a veil;
You show us your golden hair,
Perhaps out of pride, to make the sun despair.
Yet if you show mere disdain
For earthly comparison,
Let the heavens move you, at least; for the Dawn
Wears a pure veil, and again,
She that from Delos doth hail,
And Iris, whose sky-borne colours never fail.

I am as wretched, in truth (*Quant'io sono infelice*)

(Madrigal: set by Alfonso Ferrabosco, 1587)

I am as wretched, in truth,
As you are lovely, ever,

That with those eyes of yours my pain can temper.
No miracle, no wonder
Greater than our Selves proves.
I, a wonder of Fortune's; you of Love's.
Were but one glance however,
Allowed me, and none other,
Should I not hope to be happy forever?

This life is the dark wood (*Questa vita è la selva*)

(Madrigal: set by Cesare Zucca, 1588, Paolo Bellasio, 1590)

This life is the dark wood; the leaves, and the shade
Are these false hopes of ours; while the hidden snares
Are sweet and secret affairs,
And the sharp thorns, raw desires,
The habits that fuel our fires.
The greyhound is my thought, Love is the archer,
My lady the wild creature.
She flees, that swift quarry, whom none can restrain;
Nor does she flee from fear, but from true disdain,
From peace, and not slavery,
And the prouder she is, the quicker to flee.

These notes are new (*Queste note son nove*)

(Madrigal: set by Giulio Zenaro, 1589, Paolo Bozi, 1599)

These notes are new, these madrigals, and this love
Begins in a new manner;
These notes are knots, moreover,
That, binding my heart, my lady doth approve;
Or say rather that she and I,
Weave these sweet snares, that please, I may not deny;
For pleasure, and hope, bind me so tightly,
I am robbed of all of my freedom, and rightly.

If my heart is with you, as it wished to be (*Se 'l mio core è con voi, come desia*)

(Madrigal: set by Marco Antonio Ingegneri, 1606)

If my heart is with you, as it wished to be,
Where then is the soul in me?
With my thought, I believe, and the lovely thought
Is with the image it sought;
And the likeness, fair and true,
Of your image, in the mind,
Living, and present, I find,
And it breathes and speaks of you:
Yet without my heart, my life must ever be
Mere sorrow and misery.

If you forsake me, traitor, then yours the harm: (*Se tu mi lassi, perfida tuo danno*)

(Madrigal: set by Claudio Monteverdi, 1590)

If you forsake me, traitor, then yours the harm:
Think not that my life will be,
Through lack of you, a thing of mere misery.
Wretched I'd be, forever,
If I thought it misfortune, not some vagary,
That one who cares naught for me
I lose, yet what's lost, of my own, recover.
Wretched are you that lose, thus, a faithful heart,
That was more yours, for its part,
Than your own self, to chase after some new lover.
Yet yours I can ne'er resign,
For your heart was never mine.

Gentlest, sweetest song, if I (*Soavissimo canto*)

(Madrigal: set by Paolo Bellasio, 1591)

Gentlest, sweetest song, if I
But a single time heard you,
I could but melt into flowing tears, and sigh!
Happy the ear that hears you!
Happy the one that gazes on
The rose, un-gathered, whence you breathe, sweet and true!
Happy, yes, to look thereon,
And yet tis slow death to me,
Thus enthralled, twixt sweet scent and sweet harmony.

Amidst the fresh greenery (*Sovra le verdi chiome*)

(Madrigal: set by Andrea Rota, 1583, and many others)

Midst the fresh foliage, now,
Of this laurel, hear how the birds play, and how
They make music, in the air,
As, all so sweetly, from branch to branch, they go;
And sing: '*Io t'amo, io t'amo...*'
And it yields an answer true,
For its trembling leaves reply,
With a murmur, and a sigh,
'*Si, si... yes, I love you, too.*'
And others that music share,
While singing: '*Quivi, quivi...*'
As if they would say: 'Midst the streams that flow *there*,
And all that's within your view,
Live the Nymphs, yearning for you.

You, white and lovely Luna, (*Tu, bianca e vaga Luna*)

(Ballata: set by Francesco Vignali, 1540)

You, white and lovely Luna,
Moon, with as many mirrors as there are seas,
Gaze on this matchless pallor, and never cease

To bring her your dances, and for her distil
Dewdrops devoid of all flaw;
Mirror yourself in her with sweet affection,
And you Venus, sparkle with her, at will,
She whom the Sun bows before;
Jupiter and Mars, in benign conjunction,
You, planets, serene and bright,
Be generous with your gifts to her this night.

**The joyous birds, amidst the foliage, ply (*Vezzosi augelli
infra le verdi fronde*)**

(Madrigal: set by Giaches de Wert, before 1596)

The joyous birds, amidst the foliage, ply
Their art and sweetly tune their amorous notes
To the wind that makes the leaves and waves to sigh,
In endless variations. When feathered throats
Fall silent, the breeze murmurs its clear reply,
And when the birds sing, soft, neath their song, it floats,
(Though whether by chance or art, I know not, I)
And, thus, now accompanies, now complements
Their verse as it, pure song to the ear presents.

Tis your wish, my good, that, I (*Voi bramate, ben mio*)

(Madrigal: set by Giovanni Croce, 1588, and many others)

Tis your wish, my good, that, I
Should die of what I suffer,
Though this pain, within my heart, you engender.
And yet, I gain, while I ache,
Strange pleasure, and thus I sigh,
From the pleasure that you, in my sorrows, take.
O, wonder! It almost comes to pass, outright,
That I die, yet not of suffering but delight.

The End of the Selected Poems of Tasso