PETRARCH'S LYRIC POEMS

The Rime sparse and Other Lyrics

Translated and Edited by ROBERT M. DURLING

The beginning of "Vergine Bella," as it appears in Petrarch's hand in Vat. Lat. 3195 (Courtesy of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)
Petrarch’s achievement as a lyric poet is particularly complex. He combines matchlessly rich expressiveness with a sometimes empty formalism, critical self-awareness with sentimentality and narcissism, daring originality with conservative respect for tradition. The mannerisms are readily available for vacuous imitation, and Petrarch’s first imitator, his fervent admirer Boccaccio, was guilty of it, like many later ones (bad imitations are often an indication that the greatness is genuinely appreciated). The history of Petrarch’s influence is obviously beyond my scope here, but it may be well to point out that to identify Petrarch’s influence with Petrarchism narrowly conceived—the sonnet-eering vogue, the cult of conceits, the fashion of wordplay—is an error. In England, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and elsewhere Petrarch’s influence meant the abandonment of outmoded medieval forms, the introduction of the sonnet and other Italian forms, of the ten-syllable (or eleven-syllable) line as normative. It meant a new conception of the music possible in verse; it brought new ways of reading Virgil and Ovid. Petrarch’s example aroused in poets all over Europe the hope of achieving classic expressiveness in the mother tongue. The deepest tributes to Petrarch’s influence are in poets great enough to make his lessons their own, poets like Ariosto, Michelangelo, Ronsard, Garcilaso de la Vega, Góngora, Camoëns, Sidney, Donne. He stood for a new sensibility that could combine aristocratic reserve and elegance, wit, allusiveness, Virgilian evocativeness and emotional depth, symbolic complexity—in classically balanced, perfected form. All over Europe the very emergence of Renaissance style was inseparable from the influence of the Rime sparse and the Trionfi. Virgil and Ovid are
perhaps the only other poets whose influence on European poetry has been so all-pervasive.

Ezra Pound once remarked that there are two kinds of translations, "interpretative translation," which he claimed to be attempting in his first translation of Cavalcanti's "Donna mi prega," and "the other sort," "where the 'translator' is definitely making a new poem." Pound apparently used the term "interpretative translation" to mean one without poetic pretensions, meant to accompany and point to the original text. I suppose the "other sort" of translations from the Rime sparse have tended to come into being through the translator's having been particularly struck by an individual poem or groups of poems; there exist many admirable verse translations of individual poems, by Thomas G. Bergin, Morris Bishop, Dwight L. Durling, to mention only Americans. When one translates the entire Rime sparse, however, one can no longer pick and choose.

And there are special problems with Petrarch. One symbol of them could be the animus Pound expresses. "The Italian of Petrarch and his successors," he wrote, "is of no interest to the practising writer or to the student of comparative dynamics in language. the collectors of bric-a-brac are outside our domain." When one considers some of the affinities between Pound and Petrarch—their fascination with Propertius, Ovid, and the Provençal poets, with the broodings of memory, with the fragmentation of experience and of poetic form—Pound's animus may seem the more surprising. It seems clear that he never accurately gauged Petrarch's greatness. His hostility toward Petrarch is part of his general hostility toward the genteel rhetorical tradition, and he was certainly accurate in identifying the sonnet as a form preeminent compromised in the crisis of traditional literary culture. Reacting against his own bric-a-brackish Pre-Raphaelitism, Pound moved entirely away from rhyme. And certainly today there is hardly a single aspect of poetic form that is more difficult to manage in English, more likely to reveal falsity, than rhyme, especially in traditional forms like the sonnet or canzone. And there is truth in Pound's irritated strictures against Petrarch: he is formal, rhetorical, decorative, cerebral, artificial; his cult of form is deeply problematic. That he is also, at his best, precise, difficult, even profound, has escaped readers who have depended on the rhymed verbosities of the Bohn Library.

It is the interrelation of these various qualities that makes Petrarch interesting today, and for the translator the question is not whether Petrarch's play with form is meaningful or trivial but whether there is any point in trying to reproduce it in sonnet or canzone or ballata form. What is the point of a mere approximation? The gyrations of one's sonnet would have to be different from Petrarch's gyrations, and they would have the added factitiousness of having only—or primarily—an external justification, not whatever inner justification the ingenuities of the original may have.

Therefore I have chosen to translate Petrarch's poems into prose. In translating all of the Rime sparse I have needed a medium that would accommodate all the poems, not only the greatest. And of the greatest a literal prose translation can at least convey the sense straightforwardly and show that much of Petrarch's interest as a poet does reside in the sense. In short, it is because the formal elaboration of the Rime sparse is both so integral to their greatness and so problematic that I have chosen prose. I hope the absence of rhyme will continually remind the reader to look across at the Italian. My translation is meant to be a guide to the original, not an equivalent.

Having said "literal prose translation," of course I am immediately in difficulties. Can there be any such thing? Granted that one omits the expressiveness of rhyme and the play of forms, granted that one often has to disentangle periodic, subordinating syntax into simpler, coordinating structures, there are three other principal difficulties. Petrarch is obscure, he is ambiguous, and he is refined and even precious in his diction. There are many passages where the meaning is doubtful (no one has satisfactorily explained the last line of poem 138) or disputed (in poem 43, to whose eyes does line 13 refer?). The translator must make up his mind, choose a meaning, and perhaps discuss the passage in a footnote. Petrarch's diction is a more basic problem. In his brilliant essay on Petrarch's language, Gianfranco Contini has stressed the extreme narrowness of Petrarch's vocabulary in comparison with Dante's; in comparison with the literary vocabulary of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it is even narrower. At the same time, however, many of Petrarch's words bring with them a wealth of associations—and often a technical precision—derived from their earlier use. These associations can almost never be conveyed in English, and
sometimes there is no English word with even a reasonably similar denotation. For words like leggiadro, vago, fera, vaneggiare, and favola there are no English equivalents.

Not only do Petrarch’s words enter the Rime sparse laden with associations, they occur again and again, forming a sharply delimited, intensely reflexive system. The whole range of their meanings is exploited, now one aspect, now another, with elusive overtones. This quality of the book is particularly hard to convey, for the translator may have to use five different words to indicate the meaning of the same Italian term in different contexts (for instance, fine, legno, porto, and vela in poem 85). And, finally, what to do with words like dolce or bello? Bello occurs in almost every poem, often several times; it glides urbanely by, without attracting much attention, as in ‘i be’ vos’ occhi, Madonna.” Not so beautiful or lovely—they splash and call out and embarrass. There is no help: the English is only an approximation. It is printed on the left to leave the place of honor to Petrarch’s own words.

The Italian text of the Rime sparse is edited from Ettore Modigliani’s flawless diplomatic edition (Rome, 1904) of Petrarch’s definitive copy of the Rime sparse, the Vatican Library’s codex Vat. Lat. 3195. Vat. Lat. 3195 is partly in Petrarch’s hand and incorporates his last revisions of individual poems and of their order. The principles of editing this text have been established by Carducci, Chiòboli, and Contini, and I have followed in their footsteps.

Ordinarily there is no question about the readings of the manuscript, since Vat. Lat. 3195 was prepared with extraordinary care. At times, however, Petrarch’s spelling or punctuation is ambiguous. For instance, in poem 285 one must decide whether the punctuation of the last line indicates that the last o is to be understood as or (o) or as I have (ò). One must frequently decide whether che means that (either pronoun or conjunction) or because (ché). One might follow the manuscript in not distinguishing between the two Italian words; indeed, the ambiguity is to some extent unavoidable in fourteenth-century Italian. But in English the ambiguity is not possible, and in translating I have been forced to choose.

Most editions of the Rime sparse have modernized spelling, some of them inconsistently. At the other extreme is Gianfranco Contini’s superb edition, which meticulously reproduces the

spelling of Vat. Lat. 3195; every student of Petrarch should own it. I have closely followed the text of Vat. Lat. 3195, but I have slightly modernized it with a view to the needs of American readers. Thus I have not kept many of the Latinisms of orthography; I have followed the spelling of the manuscript when it is for the ear rather than for the eye only. Thus for intellecto I print intelletto, for objecto, oggetto; but for obieto, I print obietto. I have followed Petrarch when he spells with a single consonant words that in modern Italian have doubled consonants, and I have retained his various spellings of and (e, ed, et), regularly expanding the Tironian symbol τ to et, his usual spelling, even when that might—it is debatable—produce a hypermetric line. I have not introduced diæreses, and I have made no attempt to normalize the text; Petrarch clearly wished the same word to be pronounced differently in different contexts.

The punctuation of Vat. Lat. 3195 is heavy and inconsistent, and it follows principles and uses symbols that have only limited correlation with modern ones. I have to a large extent followed American principles of punctuation, keeping in mind the difficulties American readers are likely to have with Petrarch’s elaborate syntax. I have been sparing of punctuation, but when meaning is involved I have been guided by the manuscript. I have freely added quotation marks and parentheses.

Ballata and canzone stanzas are printed in a format that indicates their parts. In ballata, the ritornello is indented. In canzone, fronte and simma are indented when the stanza follows the Italian pattern with concatenatio, whether or not the rhymes of fronte and simma overlap (as they do in poems 135 and 366); identical piedi are indented; there is no indentation in stanzas that follow Provençal models (29, 70, 206)—the sestinas of course also belong to this last category.

This is the first complete translation into English prose of all of the Rime sparse, and of Petrarch’s uncollected lyrics, not to mention the poems addressed to him. I have not attempted to include all of the poems that have been attributed to Petrarch, but only those whose attribution is beyond doubt, and I have omitted fragments. “Donna mi ven” is edited from Vat. Chigi L. V. 176. The poems of Vat. Lat. 3196 are from the diplomatic edition by M. Pelaez, “Abbozzi autografi di Francesco Petrarcha,” Bulletino dell’archivio paleografico italiano, no. II (Perugia, 1910), pp. 163–216. The poems of Casanatense 924 are
from the facsimile in the Archivio paleografico italiano, III (Rome, 1892–1910).

Other poems are reprinted from modern editions with the generous permission of the publishers. "Ingegno usato a le ques
tione profonde," "Antonio, cosa a fatto la tua terra," "La santa fama, de la qual son prive," "O novella Tarpea, in cui s’asconde," "Io non so ben s’io vedo quel ch’io veggo," and "L’arco che in voi nova sita disserra" are from E. Chiòrbi’s edi
tion of the Rime sparse e i Trionfi (Bari: Laterza, 1930); Dante’s poems from Dante Alighieri, Rime, edited by Gianfranco

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many errors and infelicities.
1

You who hear in scattered rhymes the sound of those sighs with which I nourished my heart during my first youthful error, when I was in part another man from what I am now:

for the varied style in which I weep and speak between vain hopes and vain sorrow, where there is anyone who understands love through experience, I hope to find pity, not only pardon.

But now I see well how for a long time I was the talk of the crowd, for which often I am ashamed of myself within;

and of my raving, shame is the fruit, and repentance, and the clear knowledge that whatever pleases in the world is a brief dream.

2

To take a graceful revenge and to punish in one day a thousand offenses, Love took up his bow again secretly, like a maq who waits for the time and place to hurt.

My vital power was concentrated in my heart, to make there and in my eyes his defense, when the fatal blow fell where every previous arrow had been blunted;

therefore, confused in the first assault, he lacked both strength and time to take up arms in this need,

or to lead me up the weary high mountain away from the slaughter, out of which now he would wish to help me, but cannot.

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mountain: traditional for Reason.
3
It was the day when the sun's rays turned pale with grief for his Maker when I was taken, and I did not defend myself against it, for your lovely eyes, Lady, bound me.

It did not seem to me a time for being on guard against Love's blows; therefore I went confident and without fear, and so my misfortunes began in the midst of the universal woe.

Love found me altogether disarmed, and the way open through my eyes to my heart, my eyes which are now the portal and passageway of tears.

Therefore, as it seems to me, it got him no honor to strike me with an arrow in that state, and not even to show his bow to you, who were armed.

day... Maker: the anniversary of Christ's crucifixion. According to poem 211 and a note in his copy of the works of Virgil, Petrarch first saw Laura on April 6, 1327.

4
He who showed infinite providence and art in His marvelous workmanship, who created this and the other hemispheres, and Jove more mild than Mars,

who, coming to earth to illuminate the pages that for many years had hidden the truth, took John from the nets and Peter, and gave them a portion of the Kingdom of Heaven;

He, when He was born, did not bestow Himself on Rome, but rather on Judea, so beyond all other states it pleased Him always to exalt humility.

And now from a small village He has given us a sun, such that Nature is thanked and the place where so beautiful a lady was born to the world.

village: Laura's birthplace is unknown. Other poems seem to indicate that it was on a low hill in the plain between Vaucluse and Avignon, visible from the cliff above the fountain of Vaucluse.

3
Era il giorno ch' al sol si scoloraro
per la pietà del suo fattore i rai
quando i' fui preso, et non me ne guardai,
ché i' be' vostr' occhi, Donna, mi legaro.

Tempo non mi parea da far riparo
contr' a' colpi d'Amor; però m'andai
secur, senza sospetto, onde i miei guai
nel commune dolor s'incominciaro.

Trovommi Amor del tutto disarmato,
et aperta la via per gli occhi al core
che di lagrime son fatti uscio et varco.

Però al mio parer non li fu onore
fèrìr me de saetta in quello stato,
a voi armata non mostrar pur l'arco.

4
Que' ch' infinita providenzia et arte
mostrò nel suo mirabil magistero,
che ciò questo et quell' altro emispero,
et mansueto più Giove che Marte,
vegnendo in terra a 'luminar le carte
ch' avean molt' anni già celato il vero,
tolse Giovanni da la rete et Piero
et nel regno del ciel fece lor parte;

di sè nascendo a Roma non fe' grazia,
a Giuadea si, tanto sovr' ogni stato
umilità esaltare sempre gli piacque.

Ed or di picciol borgo un sol n' à dato,
tal che natura o 'l luogo si ringrazia
onde si bella donna al mondo nacque.
5

When I move my sighs to call you and the name that Love wrote on my heart, the sound of its first sweet accents is heard without in LAU-ds.

Your re-gal state, which I meet next, redoubles my strength for the high enterprise; but "TA-lk no more!" cries the ending, "for to do her honor is a burden for other shoulders than yours."

Thus the word itself teaches LAU-d and re-verence, whenever anyone calls you, O Lady worthy of all reverence and honor;

except that perhaps Apollo is incensed that any mor-TA-l tongue should come presumptuous to speak of his eternally green boughs.

The poem plays on the syllables of Laura's name, in a Latinized version, Lauretta, of the French Laurette.

eternally green boughs: the evergreen laurel, with an allusion to the myth of Apollo and Daphne. Daphne, daughter of the god of the river Peneus in Thessaly, was pursued by Apollo. She prayed to her father to preserve her virginity, and when Apollo caught up with her she was transformed into a laurel. Apollo adopted the tree as his own and crowned himself with a wreath from it. (Ovid, Metamorphoses 1.452–567.) The laurel was supposedly immune from lightning. Its Latin name, laurus, was thought to derive from the verb laudare (to praise). Petrarch considered it the crown both of poets and of triumphing emperors.

6

So far astray is my mad desire, in pursuing her who has turned in flight and, light and free of the snares of Love, flies ahead of my slow running,

that when, calling him back, I most send him by the safe path, then he least obeys me, nor does it help to spur him or turn him, for Love makes him restive by nature;

and when he takes the bit forcefully to himself, I remain in his power, as against my will he carries me off to death;

only to come to the laurel, whence one gathers bitter fruit that, being tasted, afflicts one's wounds more than it comforts them.
15
I turn back at each step with my weary body which with great
effort I carry forward, and I take then some comfort from your
sky, which enables my body to go onward, saying: “Alas, woe's
me!”

Then, thinking back on the sweet good I leave behind, on the
length of the road and the shortness of my life, I stand in my
tracks dismayed and pale and lower my eyes weeping to the
ground.

At times in the midst of my sad laments a doubt assails me: How
can these members live far from their spirit?

But Love replies to me: “Do you not remember that this is a
privilege of lovers, released from all human qualities?”

16
The little white-haired pale old man leaves the sweet place where
he has filled out his age and his fear-stricken little family, who
watch their dear father disappear;

thence dragging his ancient flanks through the last days of his
life, as much as he can he helps himself with good will, broken
by the years and tired by the road;

and he comes to Rome, following his desire, to gaze on the
likeness of Him whom he hopes to see again up there in Heaven.

Thus, alas, at times I go searching in others, Lady, as much as is
possible, for your longed-for true form.

15
Io mi rivolgo indietro a ciascun passo
col corpo stanco ch’ha gran pena porto,
et prendo allor del vostri’ aere conforto
che l’ha gir oltra, dicendo: “Oimè, lasso.”

Poi ripensando al dolce ben ch’io lasso,
al camin lungo, et al mio viver corto,
fermo le piante sbigottito et smorto,
et gli occhi in terra lagrimando abbasso.

Talor m’assale in mezzo a’ tristi pianti
un dubbio: come posson queste membra
da lo spirito lor viver lontane?

Ma rispondemi Amor: “Non ti rimemba
che questo è privilegio degli amanti,
sciolti da tutte qualitati umane?”

16
Movesi il vecchierel canuto et bianco
del dolce loco ov’ à sua età fornita
et da la famigliuola sbigottita
che vede il caro padre venir manco;

indir trando poi l’antico fianco
per l’estreme giornate di sua vita,
quanto più po col buon voler s’aiuta,
rotto dagli anni, et dal cammino stanco;

et viene a Roma, seguendo l’desio,
per mirar la semblanza di colui
ch’ancor lassù nel ciel vedere spera.

Così, lasso, talor vo cercand’ io,
Donna, quanto è possibile in altrui
la disiata vostra forma vera.
76
Alluring me with his promises, Love led me back to my former prison and gave the keys to that enemy of mine who still keeps me banished from myself.
I did not become aware of it, alas, until I was in their power, and now, with great distress—who will believe, though I swear it?—I return to freedom sighing:
and like a true suffering prisoner I carry a large part of my chains, and my heart is inscribed in my eyes and on my brow.
When you notice my color, you will say: "If I see and judge aright, this man was not far from death."

77
Even though Polyclitus should for a thousand years compete in looking with all the others who were famous in that art; they would never see the smallest part of the beauty that has conquered my heart.
But certainly my Simon was in Paradise, whence comes this noble lady; there he saw her and portrayed her on paper, to attest down here to her lovely face.
The work is one of those which can be imagined only in Heaven, not here among us, where the body is a veil to the soul;
it was a gracious act, nor could he have done it after he came down to feel heat and cold and his eyes took on mortality.

Polyclitus: Greek sculptor (fifth century B.C.). Simon: Sienese painter Simone Martini (active 1315–1344), who lived in Avignon during the last years of his life. In addition to the portrait of Laura referred to here (lost), he painted for Petrarch a frontispiece to the works of Virgil (now in Milan).
78

When Simon received the high idea which, for my sake, put his hand to his stylus, if he had given to his noble work voice and intellect along with form

he would have lightened my breast of many sighs that make what others prize most vile to me. For in appearance she seems humble, and her expression promises peace;

then, when I come to speak to her, she seems to listen most kindly: if she could only reply to my words!

Pygmalion, how glad you should be of your statue, since you received a thousand times what I yearn to have just once!

Pygmalion: the mythological sculptor who carved an ivory statue of a woman so beautiful that he fell in love with it. At his prayer Venus turned the statue into a living woman. (Ovid, Metamorphoses 10.243-297.)

79

If the middle and end answer to the beginning of this fourteenth year of sighs, no wind or chill can save me, I feel my burning desire so increase!

Love, with whom I cut no care short, under whose yoke I can never breathe easily, governs me so that I am not half myself, because of my eyes which to my own hurt I so often turn.

Thus I go failing from day to day, so secretly that I alone am aware of it and she who by looking melts my heart;

I have hardly kept my soul with me until now, nor do I know how long its stay with me will be, for death approaches and life flees.
126

Clear, fresh, sweet waters, where she who alone seems lady
to me rested her lovely body,
gentle branch where it pleased her (with sighing I remember)
to make a column for her lovely side,
grass and flowers that her rich garment covered along with
her angelic breast, sacred bright air where Love opened my heart
with her lovely eyes: listen all together to my sorrowful dying
words.

If it is indeed my destiny and Heaven exerts itself that Love
close these eyes while they are still weeping,
let some grace bury my poor body among you and let my soul
return naked to this its own dwelling;
death will be less harsh if I bear this hope to the fearful pass,
for my weary spirit could never in a more restful port or a more
tranquil grave flee my laboring flesh and my bones.

There will come a time perhaps when to her accustomed
sojourn the lovely, gentle wild one will return
and, seeking me, turn her desirous and happy eyes toward
where she saw me on that blessed day,
and oh the pity! seeing me already dust amid the stones,
Love will inspire her to sigh so sweetly that she will win mercy
for me and force Heaven, drying her eyes with her lovely veil.

waters: those of the river Sorgue.

126

Chiare fresche et dolci acque
ove le belle membra
pose colei che sola a me par donna,
gentil ramo ove piacque
(con sospir mi rimembra)
a lei di fare al bel fianco colonna,
erba et fior che la gonna
leggiadra ricoverse
co l'angelico seno,
aere sacro sereno
ove Amor co' begli occhi il cor m'aperse:
date udienza insieme
a le dolenti mie parole estreme.

S' egli è pur mio destino,
e' l cielo in ciò s'adopra,
ch' Amor quest'occhi lagrимando chiuda,
qualche grazia il meschino
corpo fra voi ricopra,
e torni l'alma al proprio albergo ignuda;
la morte fia men cruda
se questa spene Porto
a quel dubbiioso passo,
ché lo spirito lasso
non poria mai in più riposato porto
né in più tranquilla fossa
fuggir la carne travagliata et l'ossa.

Tempo verrà ancor forse
ch' a l'uso soffiorno
torni la fera bella et mansueta
et là 'v' ella mi scorre
nel benedetto giorno
volga la vista disiosa et lieta,
cercandomi, et—o pieta—
già terra infrà le pietre
vedendo, Amor l'inspiri
in guisa che sospiri
si dolcemente che mercé m'imprete
et faccia forza al cielo,
asciugandosi gli occhi col bel velo.
From the lovely branches was descending (sweet in
memory) a rain of flowers over her bosom,
and she was sitting humble in such a glory, already covered
with the loving cloud;
this flower was falling on her skirt, this one on her blond
braids, which were burnished gold and pearls to see that day;
this one was coming to rest on the ground, this one on the water,
this one, with a lovely wandering, turning about seemed to say:
"Here reigns Love."

How many times did I say to myself then, full of awe: "She
was surely born in Paradise!"
Her divine bearing and her face and her words and her sweet
smile had so laden me with forgetfulness
and so divided me from the true image, that I was sighing:
"How did I come here and when?" thinking I was in Heaven, not
there where I was. From then on this grass has pleased me so that
elsewhere I have no peace.

If you had as many beauties as you have desire, you could
boldly leave the wood and go among people.

If you had... desire: this is addressed to the poem.

Da' be' rami scendea
dolce ne la memoria
una pioggia di fior sovra 'l suo grembo,
et ella si sedea
umile in tanta gloria,
coverta gia de l'amoroso nembo;
qual fior cadea sul lembo,
qual su le trecce bionde
ch' or lo forbito et perle
eran quel di a vederle,
qual si posava in terra et qual su l'onde,
qual con un vago errore
girando parea dir: "Qui regna Amore."

Quante volte diss' io
allor, pien di spavento:
"Cóstei per fermo nacque in paradiso!"
Così carco d' oblio
il divin portamento
e 'l volto e le parole e 'l dolce riso
m'aveano, et si diviso
da l' imagine vera,
ch' i' dicea sospirando:
"Qui come venn' io o quando?"
credendo esser in ciel, non là dov' era.
Da indi in qua mi piace
quest'erba si ch' altrove non è pace.

Se tu avessi ornamenti quant' ài voglia,
poresti arditamente
uscir del bosco et gir infra la gente.
204
Soul, who see so many different things, and hear and read and speak and write and think, my wandering eyes, and you among the other senses who guide to my heart her high holy words:
for how much would you ever wish to have come either later or earlier to the road that we follow so ill, if you were not to find there those lovely bright lights or the prints of her beautiful feet?
Now with so clear a light and such signs, we must not lose our way in that brief journey which can make us worthy of an eternal dwelling:
push on toward Heaven, O my tired heart, through the clouds of her sweet disdain following her virtuous steps and divine light.

205
Sweet angers, sweet disdains and sweet returns to peace, sweet harm, sweet suffering and sweet weight of it, sweet speech and sweetly understood, now a soothing breeze, now full of sweet flame!
Soul, do not complain, but be patient and still, and temper the sweet bitterness that has harmed us with the sweet honor that you have in loving her to whom I said: "You alone please me."
Perhaps once someone will say, sighing, colored with sweet envy: "This man endured much in his time for a most noble love."
Another: "O Fortune the enemy of my eyes! Why did I not see her? Why did she not come later or else I earlier?"
206

If I ever said it, let her hate me by whose love I live, without which I would die; if I said it, let my days be few and miserable, and my soul the minion of some low power; if I said it, let every star be armed against me and at my side be tear and jealousy and my enemy more cruel toward me always and more beautiful!

If I said it, let Love use all his golden arrows on me and the leaden ones on her; if I said it, let Heaven and earth, men and gods be against me, and she ever more pitiless; if I said it, let her who with her blind torch sends me straight to death still stay as she is wont and let her never show herself kinder or more merciful to me either in act or speech!

If I ever said it, let me find this short and harsh road full of what I least desire; if I said it, let the fierce ardor that makes me go astray grow equally with the fierce ice in her; if I said it, let my eyes never see the sun clear nor his sister, nor lady nor damsel, but only a terrible whirlwind such as Pharaoh saw when he pursued the Jews!

If I said it, let pity be dead for me and courtesy, with as many sighs as I ever breathed; if I said it, let her speech become harsh, which was so gentle the day when I gave myself up as vanquished; if I said it, let me be hateful to her whom I would be willing, alone, closed in a dark cell from the day when I left the breast until my soul is uprooted from me, to adore—and perhaps I would do it!

Like poem 29, a tour de force of Provençal stanza construction (the stanzas rhyme in pairs), intentionally obscure.

golden arrows... leaden ones: in Ovid's account of Apollo and Daphne.
Cupid's golden arrows instill love, his leaden ones aversion. See note to poem 5.
his sister: the moon.
Pharaoh... Jews: when the Red Sea closed over Pharaoh's army (Exodus 14:23-28); the whirlwind was suggested by Exodus 15:10.
But if I did not say it, may she who in my young age opened my heart to hope still steer this weary little bark of mine with the tiller of her native mercifulness; nor let her change but be still as she was wont when I could do no more (when I lost myself, nor should I lose more): he does ill who so soon forgets such faithfulness.

I never said it, nor could I say it for gold or for cities or for castles; let the truth conquer, therefore, and remain in the saddle, and let falsehood fall vanquished to earth! Love, you know all that is in me; if she inquires about us, tell her what you must about me; I would say that he who has to languish is three or four or six times more blessed if he dies first.

For Rachel I have served and not for Leah, nor could I live with another; and I would endure, if Heaven called us, going off with her on the chariot of Elijah.

Rachel ... Leah: Jacob served Laban for seven years in order to marry his daughter Rachel; on the wedding night Laban substituted Rachel's older sister Leah, and Jacob agreed to serve another seven years for Rachel (Genesis 29:13-30). Petrarch's line presumably explains the occasion of the poem: he has been accused of saying that Laura is a screen for his love of another woman. Elijah: the prophet, who was carried off to Heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11).
260

Under such a star I saw two lovely eyes, all full of virtue and sweetness, that beside those charming nests of Love my weary heart scorns all other sights.

She who is most praised in any age, on any foreign shores, cannot equal her: not she who with her beauty brought labors to Greece and to Troy the last shrieks,

not the lovely Roman who with the steel opened her chaste and angry breast, not Polyxena, Hypsipyle, or Argia.

This excellence of hers is a great glory, if I do not err, of Nature’s; to me most high delight, but one that comes slowly and swiftly goes away.

she who... shrieks: Helen of Troy. lovely Roman: Lucretia, a Roman matron raped by the tyrant Tarquiniius. She killed herself after telling her husband and his friends of the deed; the incident led to the expulsion of the king and the establishment of the Roman republic. Polyxena, Hypsipyle, or Argia; daughter of Priam of Troy, beloved by Achilles; daughter of Thoas, king of Lemnos, seduced by Jason during the voyage of the Argo; daughter of Adrastus of Argos, wife of Oedipus' son Polynices.

261

Whatever lady hopes to have glorious fame for wisdom, virtue, courtesy, let her look fixedly into the eyes of that enemy of mine, whom the world calls my lady.

There she may learn how honor is won, how God is loved, how chastity is joined with gaiety, and what is the straight way to go to Heaven, which awaits and desires her,

there the speech that no style can equal, and the lovely silences, and those dear manners which human wit cannot set forth on any page.

She cannot learn there the infinite beauty that dazzles us, for that sweet light is acquired by luck and not by art.
262

"Life is most dear, it seems to me, and after that, true virtue in a beautiful woman." "You reverse the order! There never were, mother, things lovely or dear without virtue, "and whoever lets herself be deprived of honor is no longer a lady and no longer alive; and if she appears the same to sight, her life is much more harsh and cruel than death, and more bitter with sorrow.

"Nor did I ever marvel at Lucretia, except that she needed the steel to die and that her sorrow alone did not suffice."

Let all philosophers of all times come and speak about this: all their ways will be low, and her alone we shall see mount up in flight!

A dialogue between Laura(?) and her mother.
Lucretia: see note on "lovely Roman," poem 260.

263

Victorious triumphal tree, the honor of emperors and of poets, how many days you have made sorrowful and glad for me in this my brief mortal life!

True Lady, concerned for naught but honor, which above all others you harvest, you do not fear the birdlime or the snares or nets of Love, nor does any deception avail against your wisdom!

Nobility of blood and the other things prized among us—pearls and rubies and gold—like a vile burden, you equally despise;
your high beauty, which has no equal in the world, is painful to you except insofar as it seems to adorn and set off your lovely treasure of chastity.

After this poem, Vat. Lat. 3195 has seven blank pages.
tree: the laurel.

262

"Cara la vita, et dopo lei mi pare vera onestà che 'n bella donna sia."
"L'ordine volgi; e' non fur, madre mia, senza onestà mai cose belle o care, "et qual si lascia di suo onor privare né donna è più, né viva; e se qual pria appare in vista, è tal vita aspra et ria via più che morte et di più pene amare.

"Nè di Lucrezia mi meravigliai, se non come a morir le bisognasse ferro et non le bastasse il dolor solo."

Vengan quanti filosofi fur mai a dir di ciò, tutte lor vie fien basse, et quest'una vedremo alzarsi a volo!

263

Arbor vittoriosa triumfale,
onor d'imperadori et di poeti:
quantì m'ài fatto di dogliosi et lieti
in questa breve mia vita mortale!

Vera Donna, et a cui di nulla cale
se non d'onor che sovr' ogni altra mieti,
né d'Amor visco temi o lacci o reti,
né 'nganno altrui contra l tuo senso vale:
gentilezza di sangue et l' altre care
cose tra noi, perle et robini et oro,
quasi vil soma egualmente dispregi;
l' alta beltà ch' al mondo non à pare
noia t'è se non quanto il bel tesoro
di castità par ch' ella adorni et fregi.
I go thinking and in thought pity for myself assails me, so strong that it often leads me to a weeping different from my accustomed one: for, seeing every day the end coming near, a thousand times I have asked God for those wings with which our intellect raises itself from this mortal prison to Heaven.

But until now no prayer or sigh or weeping of mine has helped me; and that is just, for he who, able to stand, has fallen along the way deserves to lie on the ground against his will. Those merciful arms in which I trust I see still open; but fear grasps my heart at the examples of others, and I tremble for my state; another spurrs me and I am perhaps at the end.

One thought speaks to my mind and says: "What are you yearning for still? whence do you expect help? Wretch, do you not understand with how much dishonor for you time is passing? Decide wisely, decide, and from your heart pluck up every root of the pleasure that can never make one happy and does not let one breathe.

"If you have already long been tired and disgusted by that false fleeting sweetness which the treacherous world gives, why do you place your hopes in it any longer? for it lacks any peace or stability. As long as your body is alive, you have in your own keeping the rein of your thoughts. Ah, grasp it now while you can, for delay is perilous, as you know, and to begin now will not be early.

merciful arms: the outstretched arms of the crucified Christ.
“You know very well how much sweetness your eyes have
taken from the sight of her who I wish were still to be born so we
might have peace. You remember well, and you must remember,
her image, when it ran to your heart, where perhaps a flame
from any other torch could not have entered.
“She set it afire, and if the deceiving flame has lasted many
years, awaiting a day that, luckily for our salvation, will
never come, now raise yourself to a more blessed hope by gazing
at the heavens that revolve about you, immortal and adorned;
for if down here your desire, so happy in its ills, is satisfied by a
glance, a talk, a song, what will that pleasure be, if this is so
great?”

On the other side a sweet sharp thought, enthroned within my
soul in difficult and delightful weight, oppresses my heart with
desire and feeds it with hope; for the sake of kindly glorious
fame, it does not feel when I freeze or when I flame, or if I am
pale or thin; and if I kill it, it is reborn stronger than before.
This thought has been growing with me day by day since I
slept in swaddling clothes, and I fear that one tomb will enclose
us both; for when my soul is naked of my members, this desire
will not be able to come with it. But if the Latins and the Greeks
talk of me after my death, that is a wind; therefore, since I fear
to be always gathering what one hour will scatter, I wish to
embrace the truth, to abandon shadows.

“Già sai tu ben quanta dolcezza porse
agli occhi tuoi la vista di Colei,
la qual anco vorrei
ch’ a nascer fosse, per più nostra pace.
Ben ti ricordi e ricordar ten de
de l’immagine sua, quand’ ella corse
al cor, là dove forse
non potea fiamma intrar per altrui face.
“Ella l’accese, et se l’ardor fallace
durò molt’ anni in aspettando un giorno
che per nostra salute unqua non vene,
or ti solleva a più beata spene
mirando ’l ciel che ti sì volve intorno
immortal et adorno;
ché dove del mal suo qua giù si lieta
vostra vaghezza acqueta
un mover d’occhi, un ragionar, un canto,
quanto fia quel piacer, se questo è tanto?”

Da l’altra parte un pensier dolce et agro,
con faticosa e dilettobevol salma
sedendosi entro l’alma,
preme ’l cor di desio, di speme il pasce;
che sol per fama gloriosa et alma
non sente quand’io agghiaccio o quand’io flagro,
s’i’ son pallido o magro;
et s’io l’occido più forte rinasce.
Questo d’allor ch’i’ m’addormiva in fasce
venuto è di di in crescendo meco,
et temo ch’i un sepolcro ambedu chiudia;
poi che fia l’alma de le membra ignuda
non po questo desio più venir seco.
Ma se l’latino e l’greco
parlan di me dopo la morte, è un vento;
on’io, perché pavento
adunar sempre quel ch’i’ un’ora sgombre,
vorre’ i’ ver abbracciar, lassando l’ombre.
But that other desire of which I am full seems to overshadow all others born beside it, and time flies while I write of another, not caring about myself; and the light of those lovely eyes, which gently melts me with its clear heat, holds me in with a rein against which no wit or force avails me.

What does it profit me therefore to oil my little bark, since it is held among the rocks by two such knots? You who entirely free me from all the other knots which in different ways bind the world, my Lord, why do you not finally take from my brow this shame? For like a dreamer I seem to have Death before my eyes, and I wish to defend myself but have no weapons.

I see what I am doing, and I am not deceived by an imperfect knowledge of the truth: rather Love forces me, who never lets anyone who too much believes him follow the path of honor; and from time to time I feel in my heart a noble disdain, harsh and severe, which brings all my hidden thoughts to my brow, where others can see them.

For the more one desires honor, the more one is forbidden to love a mortal thing with the faith that belongs to God alone. And this with a loud voice calls back my reason, which wanders after my senses; but although it hears and thinks to come back, its bad habit drives it further and depicts for my eyes her who was born to make me die, since she pleased me and herself too much.

Ma quell'altro voler di ch' i' son pieno quanti press' a lui nascon par ch' adugge, et parte il tempo fugge che scrivendo d'altrui di me non calme; e l'lu me de' begli occhi che mi strugge soavemente al suo caldo sereno mi ritien con un freno contra cui nullo ingegno o forza valme.

Che giova dunque perché tutta spalme la mia barchetta, poi che 'nfra li scogli è ritenuta ancor da ta' duo nodi?
Tu che dagli altri che 'n diversi modi legano 'l mondo in tutto mi disciogli,
Signor mio, ché non togli omai dal volto mio questa vergogna?
Ché 'n guisa d' uom che sognò aver la morte inanzi gli occhi parme,
et vorrei far difesa et non o l' arme.

Quel ch' i' fo veggiog, et non m'inganna il vero mal conosciuto, anzi mi sforza Amore che la strada d'onore
mai nol lassa seguir chi troppo il crede;
et sento ad ora ad or venirmi al core
un leggiadro disdegno aspro et severo
ch' ogni occulto pensero
tira in mezzo la fronte, ov' altri 'l vedo.

Ché mortal cosa amar con tanta fede
quanto a Dio sol per debito convenisi
più si disdice a chi più pregio brama.
Et questo ad alta voce anco richiama
la ragione svita dietro ai sensi;
ma perch' ell' oda et pensi
tornare, il mal costume oltre la spinge
et agli occhi depigne
quella che sol per farmi morir nacque,
perch' a me troppo et a se stessa piacque.
Nor do I know what space was ordained for me by the heavens when I came newly down to earth to suffer the bitter war that I have managed to combine against myself; nor, because of my bodily veil, can I foresee the day that closes life; but I see my hair changing and every desire within. Now that I believe I am near or not very far from the time of my departure, like one whom losing has made wary and wise, I go thinking back where I left the journey to the right, which reaches a good port: and on one side I am pierced by shame and sorrow, which turn me back; on the other I am not freed from a pleasure so strong in me by habit that it dares to bargain with Death.

Song, here I am, and my heart is much colder with fear than frozen snow, since I feel myself perishing beyond all doubt, for still deliberating I have wound on the spool a great part now of my short thread; nor was weight ever so heavy as what I now sustain in this state, for with Death at my side I seek new counsel for my life, and I see the better but I lay hold on the worse.

Né so che spazio mi si desse il cielo quando novellamente io venni in terra a soffir l’aspra guerra che ‘ncontra me medesmo seppi ordire, né posso il giorno che la vita serra antiveder per lo corporeo velo; ma variarsi il pelo veggio, et dentro cangiarsi ogni desìre.

Or ch’i’ mi credo al tempo del partire esser vicino o non molto da lunge, come chi ’l perder face accorto et saggio vo ripensando ov’io lassai ’l viaggio da la man destra ch’ a buon porto aggiunge; et da l’un lato punge vergogna et duol che ’ndietro mi rivolve, dall’altro non m’assolve un’piacer per usanza in me si forte ch’ a patteggiar n’ardisce co la Morte.

Canzon, qui sono ed ò l’or via più freddo de la paura che gelata neve, sentendomi perir senz’alcun dubbio, ché pur deliberando ò vólto al subbio gran parte omai de la mia tela breve; né mai peso fu greve quanto quel ch’i’ sostengo in tale stato che co la Morte a lato cerco del viver mio novo consiglio, et veggio ’l meglio et al peggior m’appiglio.
265

A harsh heart and wild cruel desire in a sweet, humble, angelic form, if this rigor she has taken up continues long, will have spoils of me that bring little honor:

for when the flowers, grass, and leaves are born or die, when it is bright day and when it is dark night, I weep at all times. From fate, from my lady, and from Love I have much to grieve me.

I live only on hope, remembering that I have seen a little water, by always trying, finally wear away marble and solid rock:
	here is no heart so hard that by weeping, praying, loving, it may not sometime be moved, no will so cold that it cannot be warmed.

266

My dear Lord, every thought draws me devotedly to see you whom I always see, but my fortune (what can it do to me that is worse?) keeps me reined in and wheels me and turns me about.

And then the sweet desire that Love inspires in me leads me to death so gradually that I am not aware of it, and while I call out in vain for my two lights, wherever I am there is sighing day and night.

Devotion to my lord, love of my lady are the chains where with much labor I am bound, and I myself took them on!

A green Laurel, a noble Column, the latter for fifteen, the former for eighteen years, I have carried in my breast and have never put from me.

Addressed to Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, Petrarch's friend and patron.
Sennuccio del Bene wrote a sonnet in reply (Appendix One, p. 607). Column: a pun on the name Colonna. fifteen: Petrarch fell in love with Laura in 1327, he met Giovanni Colonna in 1330. The poem thus dates itself 1345. See note to poem 221.

265

Aspro core et selvaggio et cruda voglia
in dolce umile angelica figura,
se l'impresso rigor gran tempo dura,
avran di me poco onorata spoglia;
ché quando nasce et mor fior erba et foglia,
quando è 'l di chiaro et quando è notte oscura,
piano ad ogni or. Ben ò di mia ventura,
di Madonna, et d'Amore onde mi doglia.

Vivo sol di speranza, rimembrando
che poco umor già per continua prova
consumar vidi marmi et pietre salde:
non è si duro cor che lagrmando,
pregando, amando talor non si smova,
nè si freddo voler che non si scalde.

266

Signor mio caro, ogni pensier mi tira devoto a veder voi cui sempre veggio;
al mia fortuna (or che mi po far peggio?)
mi tene a freno et mi travolve et gira;
poi quel dolce desio ch'Amor mi spira
menami a morte ch'ì non me n'aveggio;
et mentre i miei duo lumi indarno cheggio,
dovunque io son dì et notte si sospira.
Carità di signore, amor di donna
son le catene ove con molti affanni
legato son, perché'io stesso mi strinsi;
un lauro verde, una gentil colonna
quindici l'una et l'altro diciotto anni
portato ò in seno, et giamaî non mi scinsi.
267

Alas the lovely face, alas the gentle glance, alas the proud, carefree bearing! Alas the speech that made every harsh or savage mind humble and every base man valiant!

And alas the sweet smile whence came forth the dart from which now I expect death, no other good! Regal soul, worthy of empire if you had not come down among us so late:

for you I must burn, in you breathe, for I have been only yours; and if I am deprived of you, it pains me more than any other misfortune;

with hope you filled me and with desire, when I left still alive that highest pleasure, but the wind carried off the words.

According to Petrarch’s note in his copy of the works of Virgil, Laura died in Avignon on April 6, 1348, and he received word of her death on May 19 of that year. See note to poem 3.

268

What shall I do? What do you counsel me, Love? It is surely time to die, and I have delayed more than I would wish.

My lady is dead and has my heart with her, and if I wish to follow it I must break off these cruel years,

for I never hope to see her on this side, and waiting is painful to me, since by her departure my every joy is turned to weeping, every sweetness of my life is taken away.

Love, you feel how great is the bitter heavy loss, and therefore I complain to you; and I know that you are pained by my grief—
or rather ours, for we have wrecked our ship on the same rock and in the same instant the sun is darkened for us both.

267

Oimè il bel viso, oimè il soave sguardo,
oimè il leggiadro portamento altero!
Oimè il parlar ch’ogni aspro ingegno et fero
facevi umile ed ogni uom vil, gagliardo!

Et oimè il dolce riso onde uscio ’l dardo
di che morte, altro bene omai non spero!
Alma real dignissima d’impero
se non fossi fra noi scesa si tardo:

per voi conuen ch’io arda e ’n voi respiro,
ch’i’ pur fui vostro; et se di voi son privo
via men d’ogni sventura altra mi dole;

di speranza m’empieste et di desire
quand’io parti’ dal sommo placere vivo,
ma ’l vento ne portava le parole.

268

Che debb’io far? ché mi consigli, Amore?
Tempo è ben di morire,
ed ò tardato più ch’i’ non vorrei.

Madonna è morta et à seco il mio core,
et volendol seguire,
interromper conven quest’anni rei,
perché mai veder lei
di qua non spero, e l’aspettar m’è noia
poscia ch’ogni mia gioia
per lo suo dipartire in pianto è volta,
ogni dolcezza de mia vita è tolta.

Amore, tu ’l senti, ond’io teco mi doglio,
quant’è ’l danno aspro et grave;
et so che del mio mal ti pesa et dole,
anzi del nostro, perch’ad uno scoglio
avem rotto la nave,
et in un punto n’è scurato il sole.
What skill could ever match in words my sorrowful state?
Ah bereaved, ungrateful world! you have great reason to weep
with me, for with her you have lost all the good that was in you.

Your glory is fallen, and you do not see it; nor were you
worthy, while she lived down here, to know her
or to be touched by her holy feet, for a thing so beautiful
ought to adorn Heaven with its presence.

But I, alas, who without her love neither mortal life nor
myself, I weep, call out for her. This is left to me of all that hope,
and this alone maintains me here.

Alas, her beautiful face has become clay, which was wont
to give testimony among us of Heaven and the happiness up
there!

Her invisible form is in Paradise, set free from the veil that
here shadowed the flower of her years,
to be clothed with it again another time, and never to lose
it, when so much the more kindly and beautiful we shall see her
become as eternal beauty is higher than mortal.

More beautiful than ever and more queenly she comes to
my mind, as to a place where she knows the sight of her is most
pleasing:
this is one column of my life; the other is her bright name,
which sounds so sweetly in my heart.

Qual ingegno a parole
poria aguagliare il mio doglioso stato?
Ahi orbo mondo, ingrato,
gran cagion aì di dover piangere meco,
che quel bel ch’era in te perduto aì seco.

Caduta è la tua gloria, et tu nol vedi,
ne degno eri, mentr’ella
visse qua più, di aver sua conoscenza
né d’esser tocco da’ suoi santi piedi,
perché cosa si bella
devea ’l Ciel adornar di sua presenza.

Ma io, lasso, che senza
lei né la vita mortal né me stesso amo,
piangendo la richiamo:
questo m’avanza di cotanta spene,
et questo solo ancor qui mi mantene.

Oimè, terra è fatto il suo bel viso
che soleva far del Cielo
et del ben di lassù fede fra noi!

L’invisibila forma è in Paradiso,
disciolta di quel velo
che qui fece ombra al fior degli anni suoi,
per rivestirsi poi
un’altra volta et mai più non spogliarsi,
quando alma et bella farsi
tanto più la vedrem quanto più vale
sempiternamente che mortale.

Più che mai bella et più leggiadra donna
tornami inanzi come
là dove più gradir sua vista sente;
questa è del viver mio l’una colonna,
l’altra è l’uo chiaro nome,
che sona nel mio cor si dolcemente.
But, remembering that my hope is dead, which was alive while she was in flower, Love knows what I become, and, I hope, she sees it who is now so close to the truth.

Ladies, you who wondered at her beauty and her angelic life and her bearing so heavenly on earth:
grieve for me, and let pity for me vanquish you, not for her, who has risen to such peace and has left me in sad war,
so that, if the way to follow her is long closed to me, only what Love says to me holds me back from cutting the knot. But he speaks within, thus:

"Rein in the great sorrow that transports you; for excessive desire will lose the Heaven where your heart aspires,
where she is alive who seems dead, and she smiles to herself at her beautiful remains and sighs only for you;
"and she begs you not to extinguish her fame, which sounds in many places still by your tongue, but rather to make bright your voice with her name, if her eyes were ever sweet or dear to you."

Flee the clear sky and greenery, do not approach where there is laughter and singing, my song, no, but where there is weeping; it is not fitting for you to be among cheerful people, disconsolate widow in black garments.

Ma tornandomi a mente
che pur morta è la mia speranza viva
allor ch' ella fioriva,
sa ben Amor qual io divento, et (spero)
vede 'l colei ch' è or si presso al vero.

Donne, voi che miraste sua beltate
et l'angelica vita
con quel celeste portamento in terra:
di me vi doglia, et vincavi pietate;
non di lei, ch' è salita
a tanta pace, et m' à lassato in guerra
tal che s' altri mi serra
lungo tempo il cammin da seguitarla,
quel ch' Amor meco parla
sol mi riten ch' io non recida il nodo.
Ma e' ragiona dentro in cotal modo:

"Pon freno al gran dolor che ti trasporta,
ché per soverchie voglie
si perde 'I Cielo ove 'I tuo core aspira,
"dove è viva colei ch' altrui par morta
et di sue belle spoglie
seco sorride et sol di te sospira,
"et sua fama, che spira
in molte parti ancor per la tua lingua,
prega che non estingua,
anzi la voce al suo nome rischiari,
se gli occhi suoi ti fur dolci né cari."

Fuggi 'I sereno e 'I verde,
non t'appressare ove sia riso o canto,
canzon mia, no, ma pianto;
non fa per te di star fra gente allegra,
vedova sconsolata in veste negra.
269

Broken are the high Column and the green Laurel that gave shade to my weary cares; I have lost what I do not hope to find again, from Boreas to Auster or from the Indian to the Moorish Sea.

You have taken from me, O Death, my double treasure that made me live glad and walk proudly; neither land nor empire can restore it, nor orient gem, nor the power of gold.

But, since this is the intent of destiny, what can I do except have my soul sad, my eyes always wet, and my face bent down?

Oh our life that is so beautiful to see, how easily it loses in one morning what has been acquired with great difficulty over many years!

---

270

Love, if you wish me to return to the old yoke, as you seem to show, in order to subdue me you will have to pass another test, marvelous and new. Find my beloved treasure in the earth where it is hidden from me, for which I go so poor, and the wise chaste heart where my life used to dwell;

and, if it is true that your power is as great in Heaven and in the Abyss as it is said to be (for here among us I believe every noble person feels your worth and power), take back from Death what she has taken from us, and set up your standard again in that beautiful face.

---

269

Rotta è l'alta colonna e 'l verde lauro che facean ombra al mio stanco pensiero;
perduto è quel che ritrovar non spero
dal borea a l'austrio o dal mar indo al mauro.

Tolto m'ai, Morte, il mio doppio tesaur
che mi fea viver lieto e gire altero,
et ristorar nol po terra né impero,
ne gemma oriental né forza d'aur.

Ma se consentimento è di destino,
che posso io piú se no aver l'alma trista,
umidi gli occhi sempre, e 'l viso chino?

O nostra vita ch'è si bella in vista,
com' perde agevolmente in un matino
quel che 'n molti anni a gran pena s'acquista.

---

270

Amor, se vuoi ch'io torni al giogo antico,
come par che tu mostri, un'altra prova
meravigliosa et nova
per domar me conveni vincer pria.
Il mio amato tesoro in terra trova,
che m'è nascosto, ond'io son si mendico,
e 'l cor saggio pudico
ove suol albergar la vita mia:

et s'egli è ver che tua potenzia sia
nel Ciel si grande come si ragiona
et ne l'abisso (perché qui fra noi
quel che tu val'et puoi
credendo che 'l sente ogni gentil persona),
ritogli a Morte quel ch'ella n'è tolto
et ripon le tue insegne nel bel volto.
Put back in her lovely eyes the living light that was my guide
and the gentle flame that still, alas! inflames me though it is ex-
tinguished—oh, what did it do when still burning? Never was
hart or doe seen to seek spring or river with so much desire as I
seek the sweet manner whence I have already received much that
is bitter; and I expect more,
if I well understand myself and my yearning, which makes me
rave from merely thinking, and go where the road fails, and
with my weary mind follow something that I never hope to
reach. Now I do not deign to come at your summons, for you
have no power outside of your own kingdom.

Make me feel that gentle breeze without as I feel it still within;
it had power, singing, to quiet scorn and anger, to make clear
the tempestuous mind and lighten it of all dark, base clouds, and
it lifted my style up above itself to heights that now it cannot
reach.

Make my hope equal to my desire; and, since the soul is
stronger in its rights, give back to my eyes and ears their proper
object, without which their operation is imperfect and my life is
death. In vain now you exert your force on me, when the earth
covers my first love.

Riponi entro 'l bel viso il vivo lume
ch’era mia scorta, et la soave fiamma
ch’ancor, lasso, m’inflamma
essendo spenta. Or che fea dunque ardendo?
E’ non si vide mai cervo né damma
con tal desio cercar fonte né fiume
qual io il dolce costume
onde è già molto amaro; et più n’attendo,
se ben me stesso et mia vaghezza intendo,
che mi fa vaneggiar sol del pensiero
et gire in parte ove la strada manca,
et co la mente stanca
cosa seguir che mai giugner non spero.
Or al tuo richiamar venir non degno,
che segnoria non aì fuor del tuo regno.

Fammi sentir de quell’aura gentile
di for, si come dentro ancor si sente,
la qual era possente,
cantando, d’acquetar li sdegni et l’ire,
di serenar la tempestosa mente
et sgombrar d’ogni nebbia oscura et vile,
ed alzava il mio stile
sovra di sé dove or non poria gire.

Aguaglia la speranza col desire,
et poi che l’alma è in sua ragion più forte,
rendi agli occhi, agli orecchi il proprio oggetto
senza qual imperfetto
è lor oprare e ‘l mio vivere è morte.
Indarno or sovra me tua forza adopre
mentre ‘l mio primo amor terra ricopre.
Make me see again the lovely glance that was sunlight on the ice that used to weigh me down: let me find you at that pass where my heart passed over, never to return; take your golden arrows and take your bow, and let her speak to me as she was wont, with the sound of those words in which I learned what love is.

Move that tongue where were ever set the hooks that caught me and the bait that I ever desire, and hide your snares among her curling blond hair, for my desire is enlimed nowhere else; with your own hand spread her locks to the wind, there bind me, and you can content me.

No one shall ever set me free from that golden snare, artfully neglected and thick with ringlets, nor from the burning spirit of her sight, sweetly cruel, which day and night kept my amorous desire more green than any laurel or myrtle when the wood clothes or divests itself of leaves and the meadow of grass.

But, since Death has been so proud as to shatter the knot from which I feared to escape, and since you cannot find one to tie a second knot, however you wander through the world, what does it profit, Love, to keep trying your stratagems? The season is past, you have lost the arms at which I trembled: what can you do to me now?

Fa' ch'io riveggia il bel guardo ch' un sole fu sopra l'ghiaccio ond' io solea gir carco; fa' ch' i' ti trovi al varco onde senza tornar passò l' mio core; prendi i dorati strali et prendi l' arco, et facciamisi udir si come sole col suon de le parole ne le quali io imparai che cosa è amore.

Movi la lingua ov' erano a tutt' ore disposti gli ami ov' io fui preso et l' esca ch' i' bramo sempre; et i tuoi lacci nascondi fra i capei crespi et biondi, ché l' mio volere altrove non s' invesca; spargi co le tue man le chiome al vento, ivi mi lega, et puo' mi far contento.

Dal laccio d' or non sia mai chi me scioglia negletto ad arte, e 'nnanellato et irto, né de l' ardente spirito
de la sua vista dolcemente acerba,
là qual di et notte più che lauro o mirto tenea in me verde l' amorosa voglia quando si veste et spoglia
di fronde il bosco et la campagna d' erba.

Ma poi che Morte è stata si superba
che spezzò il nodo ond' io temea scampare, né trovar poi quantunque gira il mondo di che ordisch' i secondo,
ché giova, Amor, tuoi ingegni ritentare?
Passata è la stagion, perduto aì l' arme
di ch' io tremava: ormai che puoi tu farme?
Your weapons were those eyes from which came forth arrows lit with invisible fire, and they feared reason but little, for no human defense avails against Heaven: sensiveness and silence, laughter and gaiety, virtuous habit and courteous speech, and words that if understood would make a base soul noble, the angelic, humble, mild appearance that was praised so much now on this side, now on that, and her sitting and her standing, which often left one in doubt which to praise more—with these arms you vanquished every hard heart; now you are disarmed and I am safe.

Those souls that the heavens incline to your rule you bind now in one manner, now in another; but me you have been able to bind only in one knot, for the heavens ordained no more. That one is broken and in liberty I do not rejoice but I weep and cry: "Ah, noble pilgrim, what divine judgment bound me first and loosed you first?"

"God, who so soon took you away from the world, showed us so much high virtue only to inflame our desire." Certainly now I do not fear any new wounds from your hand. Love: in vain you bend your bow, your shots go wild; its power fell with the closing of her lovely eyes.

Death has freed me, Love, from all your laws; she who was my lady has gone to Heaven, leaving my life sorrowful and free.

L'arme tue furon gli occhi onde l'accese saette uscivan d'invisibil foco, et ragion temean poco ch'è nostro l Ciel non val difesa umana, il pensar e 'l tacer, il riso e 'l gioco, l'abito onesto e 'l ragionar cortese, le parole che 'ntese avrian fatto gentil d'alma villana, l'angelica sembianza umile et piana ch'or quinci or quindi udia tanto lodarsi, e 'l sedere et lo star che spesso altrui poser in dubbio a cui devesse il pregio di più laude darsi: con quest'armi vincevi ogni cor duro; or se 't tu disarmato, i' son secco.

Gli animi ch' al tuo regno il cielo inchina leghi ora in uno et ora in altro modo, ma me sol ad un nodo legar potei, ch'è ciel di più non volse. Quell'uno è rotto e 'n libertà non godo ma pianto et grido: "Ah, nobil pellegrina, qual sentenza divina me legò innanzi et te prima disciolse?"

"Dio, che si tosto al mondo ti ritolse, ne mostrò tanta et si alta virtute solo per inflamar nostro desio."

Certo omai non tem'io, Amor, de la tua man nove ferute; indarno tendi l'arco, a voito scocchi: sua virtù cadde al chiuder de' begli occhi.

Morte m'â sciolto, Amor, d'ogni tua legge; quella che fu mia donna al Ciel è gita, lasciando trista et libera mia vita.
271

That burning knot in which I was hour by hour caught for twenty-one whole years, Death has untied; I had never experienced such sorrow, nor do I now believe that one can die of grief.

Love, not wishing to lose me yet, had set another snare among the grass and kindled another fire with new tinder, so that only with great difficulty could I have escaped from it.

And if it had not been for much experience of my first labors, I would have been captured and all the more burned for being drier wood.

Death has freed me another time, and has broken the knot and has put out and scattered the fire: Death, against whom no power or wit avails.

272

Life flees and does not stop an hour, and Death comes after by great stages; and present and past things make war on me, and future things also,

and remembering and expecting both weigh down my heart now on this side, now on that, so that in truth, except that I take pity on myself, I would already be beyond these thoughts.

If my sad heart ever experienced any sweetness, it comes before me; and then on the other hand I see the winds turbulent for my voyaging,

I see storm in the port, and my helmsman wearied now, and the masts and lines broken, and the beautiful stars extinguished that I used to gaze at.
273

What are you doing? What are you thinking? Why do you still look back to a time that can never return anymore? My comfortless soul, why do you still add fuel to the fire where you are burning?

The gentle words and the sweet glances that you have described and depicted one by one, have been taken from the earth; and it is, you well know, unseasonable and too late to seek them here.

Ah, do not renew what kills us; do not follow any longer a deceptive yearning thought, but a firm and certain one that may guide us to a good end.

Let us seek Heaven, if nothing pleases us here; for we ill saw that beauty if living and dead it was to rob us of peace.

274

Give me peace, O my cruel thoughts! Is it not enough that Love, Fortune, and Death besiege me around and at the very gates, without having to find other enemies within?

And you, my heart, are you still what you used to be? Disloyal only to me, you keep sheltering fierce spies and you have become an ally of my enemies, who are so alert and swift.

In you Love sets out his secret messages, in you Fortune sets out her every pomp, and Death the memory of that blow which must break what is left of me, in you my wandering thoughts arm themselves with error: therefore I blame you alone for my every ill.

273

Che fai? che pensi? ché pur dietro guardi nel tempo che tornar non pote o mai?
Anima sconsolata, ché pur vai giungendo legno al foco ove tu ardi?
Le soavi parole e i dolci sguardi
ch'ad un ad un descritti et depinti ài son levati de terra, et è, ben sai,
qui ricercarli intempestivo et tardi.

Deh, non rinovellar quel che n'ancide,
non seguir più penser vago fallace ma saldo et certo ch' a buon fin ne guide;
cerchiamo 'l Ciel se qui nulla ne piace,
ché mal per noi quella beltà si vide se viva et morta ne devea tor pace.

274

Datemi pace, o duri miei pensieri!
non basta ben ch'Amor, Fortuna et Morte mi fanno guerra intorno e 'n su le porte,
senza trovarmi dentro altri guerrieri?

Et tu, mio cor, ancor se' pur qual eri
disleal a me sol, che fere scorte vai ricettando et se' fatto consorte
de' miei nemici si pronti et leggieri.

In te i secreti suoi messaggi Amore,
in te spiega Fortuna ogni sua pompa, e Morte la memoria di quel colpo che l'avanzo di me conven che rompa,
in te i vaghi pensier s'arman d'errore: per che d'ogni mio mal te solo incolpo.
361
My faithful mirror, my weary spirit, and my changing skin and
diminished agility and strength often say to me: "Do not pretend
anymore, you are old;
"to obey Nature in all is best, for time takes from us the power to
oppose her." Quickly then, as water puts out fire, I awake from
a long and heavy sleep,
and I see well that our life flies and that one cannot be alive more
than once; and in the midst of my heart there sounds a word
of her who is now freed from her beautiful knot but in her day
was so unique in the world that, if I do not err, she has deprived
all others of fame.

362
I fly with the wings of thought to Heaven so often that it seems
to me I am almost one of those who there possess their treasure,
leaving on earth their rent veils.
Sometimes my heart trembles with a sweet chill, hearing her for
whom I grow pale say to me: "Friend, now I love you and now I
honor you, because you have changed your habits and your
hair."
She leads me to her Lord; then I incline myself, humbly begging
that He permit me to stay to see their two faces.
He replies: "Your destiny is certain, and a delay of twenty or
thirty years will seem much to you, but it will be little."

361
Dicemi spesso il mio fidato speglio,
l’animo stanco, et la cangiata scorza
et la scenata mia destrezza et forza:
"Non ti nasconder più, tu se' pur veglio;
"obedi a Natura in tutto è il meglio,
ch' a contender con lei 'l tempo ne sforza."
Subito allor, com' acqua 'l foco amorza,
d'un lungo et grave sonno mi risveglio;
et veggio ben che 'l nostro viver vola
et ch' esser non si po più d'una volta;
e 'n mezzo 'l cor mi sona una parola
di lei ch' è or dal suo bel nodo sciolta
ma ne' suoi giorni al mondo fu si sola
ch' a tutte, s' i non erro, fama à tolta.

362
Volo con l'ali de' pensieri al Cielo
si spesse volte che quasi un di loro
esser mi par ch' àn ivi il suo tesoro,
lasciando in terra lo squarciato velo.
Talor mi trema 'l cor d'un dolce gelo,
uendolo lei per ch' io mi discoloro
dirmi: "Amico, or t'am' io et or t'onoro
perch' à i costumi variati e 'l pelo."
Menami al suo Signor; allor m'inchino,
pregando umilmente che consenta
ch' i stia a veder et l'uno et l'altro volto.
Responde: "Egli è ben fermo il tuo destino,
et per tardar ancor vent'anni o trenta
parrà a te troppo, et non fia però molto."
363

Death has extinguished the sun that used to dazzle me, and my eyes though whole and sound are in darkness; she is dust from whom I took chills and heat; my laurels are faded, are oaks and elms,
in which I see my gain but am still pained. There is no one to make my thoughts fearful and bold, nor to freeze and scorch them, no one to fill them with hope and overflow them with sorrow.

Out of the hands of him who pierces and heals, who once made of me such a long torture, I find myself in bitter and sweet liberty;

and to the Lord whom I adore and whom I thank, who governs and sustains the heavens with His brow, I return, weary of life, not merely satiated.

oaks and elms: deciduous rather than evergreen trees.

364

Love held me twenty-one years gladly burning in the fire and full of hope amid sorrow; since my lady, and my heart with her, rose to Heaven, ten more years of weeping.

Now I am weary and I reproach my life for so much error, which has almost extinguished the seed of virtue; and I devoutly render my last parts, high God, to You,

repentant and sorrowing for my years spent thus, which ought to have been better used, in seeking peace and fleeing troubles.

Lord who have enclosed me in this prison: draw me from it safe from eternal harm, for I recognize my fault and I do not excuse it.

363

Morte à spento quel sol ch’abagliar suolmi, e ’n tenebre son li occhi interi et saldi; terra è quella ond’io ebbi et freddi et caldi, spenti son i miei lauri, or querce et olmi, di ch’io veggio ’l mio ben et parte duolmi. Non è chi faccia et paventosi et baldi i miei penser, né chi li agghiacci et scaldi, né chi gl’empia di speme et di duol colmi.

Fuor di man di colui che punge et molce, che già fece di me si lungo strazio, mi trovo in libertate amara et dolce;
et al Signor ch’io adoro et ch’i’ ringrazio, che pur col ciglio il ciel governa et folce, tornò stanco di viver, non che sazio.

364

Tennemi Amor anni ventuno ardendo lieto nel foco et nel duol pien di speme; poi che Madonna e ’l mio cor seco insieme saliro al Ciel, dieci altri anni piangendo.

Omai son stanco, et mia vita reprendo di tanto error che di vertute il seme à quasi spento; et le mie parti estreme, alto Dio, a te devotamente rendo

pentito et tristo de’ miei si spesi anni, che spender si deveano in miglior uso, in cercar pace et in fuggir affanni.

Signor che ’n questo carcer m’ai rinchiuso: tramene salvo da li eterni danni, ch’i’ conosco ’l mio fallo et non lo scuso.
365

I go weeping for my past time, which I spent in loving a mortal thing without lifting myself in flight, though I had wings to make of myself perhaps not a base example.

You who see all my unworthy and wicked sufferings, invisible, immortal King of Heaven: help my strayed frail soul and fill out with your grace all that she lacks,

so that, though I have lived in war and in storm, I may die in peace and in port, and if my sojourn has been vain, my departure at least may be virtuous.

To what little life remains to me and to my dying deign to be present: You know well that I have no hope in anyone else.

---

366

Beautiful Virgin who, clothed with the sun and crowned with stars, so pleased the highest Sun that in you He hid His light, love drives me to speak words of you, but I do not know how to begin without your help and His who loving placed Himself in you.

I invoke her who has always replied to whoever called on her with faith. Virgin, if extreme misery of human things ever turned you to mercy, bend to my prayer; give succor to my war, though I am earth and you are queen of Heaven.

---

"mulier amicta sole, et luna sub pedibus eius, et in capite eius corona stellarum duodecim" (a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars). The entire poem is a tissue of traditional epithets and phrases in praise of the Virgin.

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365

I' vo piangendo i miei passati tempi
i quai posi in amar cosa mortale
senza levarmi a volo, abbiendi' io l'ale
per dar forse di me non bassi esempi.

Tu che vedi i miei mali indegni et empi,
Re del Cielo, invisibile, immortale:
soccorri a l'alma disviata et frale
e l'suo defetto di tua grazia adempi,

si che, s' io vissi in guerra et in tempesta,
mora in pace et in porto; et se la stanza
fu vana, almen sia la partita onesta.

A quel poco di viver che m'avanza
et al morir degni esser tua man presta:

tu sai ben che 'n altrui non à speranza.

---

366

Vergine bella, che di sol vestita,
coronata di stelle, al sommo Sole
piacesti si che 'n te sua luce ascose:
amor mi spinge a dir di te parole,
ma non so 'ncominciar senza tu' aita
et di colui ch' amando in te si pose.

Invoco lei che ben sempre rispose
chi la chiamò con fede.
Vergine, s' a mercede
miseria estrema de l'umane cose
giamai ti volse, al mio prego t'inchina,
soccorri a la mia guerra

ben ch' i' sia terra et tu del Ciel regina.
Wise Virgin, one of the number of the blessed wise virgins, rather the first, and with the brightest lamp, O solid shield of afflicted people against the blows of Death and Fortune, under which they triumph, not merely escape,

O relief from the blind ardor that flames here among foolish mortals: Virgin, turn those beautiful eyes that sorrowing saw the pitiless wounds in your dear Son’s sweet limbs, to my perilous state, who come dismayed to you for counsel.

Pure Virgin, whole in every part, noble daughter and mother of your offspring, who lighten this life and adorn the other: through you your Son, Son of the highest Father (O shining, noble window of Heaven), came down to save us in the latter days,

and among all earthly dwellings only you were chosen. Blessed Virgin, who turn the tears of Eve to rejoicing again: make me, for you can, worthy of His grace, O blessed without end, already crowned in the kingdom above.

Vergine saggia et del bel numero una
de le beate vergini prudenti,
anzi la prima et con più chiara lampa,
o saldo scudo de le afflitte genti
contr’ a’ colpi di Morte et di Fortuna,
sotto ’l qual si triunfa, non pur scampa,
o refrigerio al cieco ardor ch’ avampa
qui fra i mortali sciocchi:
Vergine, que’ belli occhi
che vider tristi la spietata stampa
ne’ dolci membri del tuo caro figlio
volgi al mio dubio stato
che sconsigliato a te ven per consiglio.

Vergine pura, d’ogni parte intera,
del tuo parto gentil figliuola et madre,
ch’ allumi questa vita et l’altra adorni:
per te il tuo Figlio et quel del sommo Padre
(o fenestra del Ciel lucente altera)
venne a salvarne in su li estremi giorni,
et fra tutt’ i terreni altri soggiorni
sola tu fosti eletta.
Vergine benedetta
che l pianto d’Eva in allegrezza torni:
fammi, che puoi, de la sua grazia degno,
senza fine o beata,
già coronata nel supremo regno.
Holy Virgin, full of every grace, who through true and highest humility mounted to Heaven whence you hear my prayers: you bore the Fountain of pity and the Sun of justice, who makes bright the world though it is full of dark and thick errors.

You have gathered into yourself three sweet names: mother, daughter, and bride, O glorious Virgin, Lady of that King who has loosed our bonds and made the world free and happy, in whose holy wounds I pray you to quiet my heart, O true bringer of happiness.

Virgin unique in the world, unexampled, who made Heaven in love with your beauties, whom none ever surpassed or even approached: holy thoughts, merciful and chaste actions made a consecrated living temple of the true God in your fruitful virginity.

Through you my life can be joyous, if at your prayers, O Mary, sweet and merciful Virgin, where sin abounded grace abounds. With the knees of my mind bent, I beg you to be my guide and to direct my twisted path to a good end.

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Vergine santa, d’ogni grazia piena,
che per vera et altissima umiltà
salisti al ciel ond’è’ miei preghi ascolti:
tu partoristi il Fonte di pietà
et di giustizia il Sol che rasseren
il secol pien d’errori oscuri et folti.

Tre dolci et cari nomi ài in te raccolti,
madre, figliuola et sposa,
Vergine gloriosa,
donna del Re che’ nostri lacci à sciolti
et fatto ’l mondo libero et felice,
ze le cui sante piaghe
prego ch’ appaghe il cor, vera beatrice.

Vergine sola al mondo, senza esempio,
che ’l Ciel di tue bellezze innamorasti,
cui né prima fu simil né seconda:
santi penseri, atti pietosi et casti
al vero Dio sacrito et vivo tempio
tecero in tua verginità seconda.

Per te po la mia vita esser ioconda
s’ a’ tuoi preghi, o Maria,
Vergine dolce et pia,
ove ’l fallo abondò la grazia abonda.
Con le ginocchia de la mente inchine
prego che sia mia scorta
et la mia torta via drizzi a buon fine.

---

blessed wise virgins: the parable of the wise virgins, who provided themselves with oil for their lamps, and the foolish ones, who had no oil when the bridegroom arrived, is told in Matthew 25:1-13.
Bright Virgin, stable for eternity, star of this tempestuous sea, 
guide on whom every faithful helmsman relies: see in what a 
terrible storm I am, alone, without a tiller, and I am close to the 
last screams.

But still my soul relies on you, sinful though it be, I do not 
deny it, Virgin, but I beg you that your enemy may not laugh at 
my harm. Remember that our sins made God take on, to save 
us, human flesh in your virginal cloister.

Virgin, how many tears have I already scattered, how many 
pleadings, and how many prayers in vain, only for my pain and 
my heavy loss! Since I was born on the bank of Arno, searching 
in this and now this other direction, my life has been nothing but 
troubles: 

mortal beauty, acts, and words have burdened all my soul. 
Holy and life-giving Virgin, do not delay, for I am perhaps in 
my last year; my days, more swift than an arrow, have gone 
away amid wretchedness and sin, and only Death awaits me.

Virgin, one is now dust and makes my soul grieve who kept it, 
while alive, in weeping and of my thousand sufferings did not 
know one; and though she had known them, what happened 
would still have happened, for any other desire in her would 
have been death to me and dishonor to her.

Now you, Lady of Heaven, you our goddess (if it is permitted 
and fitting to say it), Virgin of deep wisdom: you see all, and 
what another could not do is nothing to your great power, to 
put an end to my sorrow, which to you would be honor and to 
me salvation.

your enemy: Satan; see Genesis 3: 14-15. 
bank of Arno: Petrarch’s birth-
place is Arezzo.

Vergine chiara et stabile in eterno, 
di questo tempestoso mare stella, 
d’ogni fedel nocchier fidata guida: 
pon mente in che terribile procella 
i’ mi ritrovo sol, senza governo, 
et ò già da vicin l’ultime strida.

Ma pur in te l’anima mia si fida, 
peccatrice, i’nol nego, 
Vergine, ma ti prego 
che ’l tuo nemico del mio mal non rida. 
Ricorditi che fece il peccar nostro 
prender Dio per scamparne 
umana carne al tuo virginal chiostro.

Vergine, quante lagrime ò già sparte, 
quante lusinghe et quanti preghè indarno, 
pur per mia pena et per mio grave danno! 
Da poi chi’i nacquè in su la riva d’Arno, 
cercando or questa et or quell’altra parte, 
non è stata mia vita altro ch’affanno: 
mortal bellezza, atti et parole m’anno 
tutta ingombrata l’alma. 
Vergine sacra et alma, 
non tardar, ch’i son forse a l’ultimo anno; 
i di miei più correnti che saetta 
frà miserie et peccati 
sen’andati et sol Morte n’aspetta.

Vergine, tale è terra et posto à in doglia 
lo mio cor, che vivendo in pianto il tenne 
et de mille miei mali un non sapea; 
et per saperlo pur quel che n’avenne 
fora avvenuto, ch’ogni altra sua voglia 
era a me morte et a lei fama rea.

Or tu, Donna del ciel, tu nostra Dea 
(se dir lice et convenisi), 
Vergine d’alti sensi: 
tu vedi il tutto, et quel che non potea 
far altrì è nulla a la tua gran vertute: 
por fine al mio dolore 
ch’a te onore et a me fia salute.
Virgin in whom I have put all my hopes that you will be able
and will wish to help me in my great need; do not leave me at the
last pass, do not consider me, but Him who deigned to create
me; let not my worth but His high likeness that is in me move
you to help one so low.

Medusa and my error have made me a stone dripping vain
moisture. Virgin, fill my weary heart with holy repentant tears,
let at least my last weeping be devout and without earthly mud,
as was my first vow, before my insanity.

Kindly Virgin, enemy of pride, let love of our common origin
move you, have mercy on a contrite and humble heart; for if I
am wont to love with such marvelous faith a bit of deciduous
mortal dust, how will I love you, a noble thing?

If from my wretched and vile state I rise again at your hands,
Virgin, I consecrate and cleanse in your name my thought and
wit and style, my tongue and heart, my tears and my sighs. Lead
me to the better crossing and accept my changed desires.

The day draws near and cannot be far, time so runs and flies,
single, sole Virgin; and now conscience, now death pierces my
heart: commend me to your Son, true man and true God, that
He may receive my last breath in peace.

Vergine in cui ò tutta mia speranza,
che possi et vogli al gran bisogno altarne:
non mi lasciare in su l’estremo passo;
non guardar me, ma chi degnò crearne,
no ‘l mio valor, ma l’alta sua sembianza
ch’è in me ti mova a curar d’uom si basso.

Medusa et l’error mio m’àn fatto un sasso
d’umor vano stillante.
Vergine, tu di sante
lagrime et pie adempi ‘l meo cor lasso,
ch’almen l’ultimo pianto sia devoto,
senza terrestro limo,
come fu ‘l primo non d’insania voto.

Vergine umana et nemica d’orgoglio:
del comune principio amor t’induca
miserere d’un cor contrito umile;
ché se poca mortal terra caduca
amar con si mirabil fede soglio,
che devrò far di te, cosa gentile?

Se dal mio stato assai misero et vile
per le tuo man resurgo,
Vergine, i’ sacro et purgo
al tuo nome et pensieri e ’ngegno et stile,
la lingua e ‘l cor, le lagrime et i sospiri.
Scorgimi al miglior guado
et prendi in grado i cangiati desiri.

Il di s’appressa et non pote esser lunge,
si corre il tempo et vola,
Vergine unica et sola,
e ‘l cor et conscienza et morte purge:
raccomandami al tuo Figliuol, verace
omo et verace Dio,
ch’ accolga ‘l mio spirto ultimo in pace.