

PETRARCH (1304-1374)

Italian humanist and poet. At Avignon in 1327 Petrarch first saw Laura, who was to inspire his love lyrics, among the earliest works written in vernacular Italian. He developed what became known as the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet form, 14 lines divided into two sections, the octave (8 lines, a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a) and the sestet (6 lines, c-d-e-c-d-e or c-d-c-d-c-d or c-d-e-d-c-e).

Sonnet CXXXII

S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?
Ma s'egli è amor, perdio, che cosa et quale?
Se bona, onde l'effecto aspro mortale?
Se ria, onde sí dolce ogni tormento?
S'a mia voglia ardo, onde 'l pianto e lamento?
S'a mal mio grado, il lamentar che vale?
O viva morte, o dilectoso male,
come puoi tanto in me, s'io no 'l consento?

Et s'io 'l consento, a gran torto mi doglio.
Fra sí contrari vènti in frale barca
mi trovo in alto mar senza governo,
sí lieve di saver, d'error sí carca
ch'i' medesimo non so quel ch'io mi voglio,
et tremo a mezza state, ardendo il verno.

If no love is, O God, what fele I so?
And if love is, what thing and which is he?
If love be good, from whennes cometh my woo?
If it be wikke, a wonder thynketh me,
When every torment and adversite
That cometh of hym may to me savory thinke,
For ay thurst I, the more that ich it drynke.

And if that at myn owen lust I brenne,
From whennes cometh my waillynge and my pleynte?
If harm agree me, wherto pleyne I thenne?
I noot, ne whi unwery that I feynte.
O quike deth, O swete harm so queynte,
How may of the in me swich quantite,
But if that I consente that it be?

And if that I consente, I wrongfully
Compleyne, iwis. Thus possed to and fro,
Al sterelees withinne a boot am I
Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndes two,
That in contrarie stonden evere mo.
Allas, what is this wondre maladie?
For hote of cold, for cold of hote, I dye.

Trans. Geoffrey Chaucer
from *Troilus and Creysede*

Sonnet CCXIX

Il cantar novo e 'l pianger delli augelli
In sul di fanno retentir le valli
E 'l mormorar de' liquidi cristalli
Giú per lucidi, freschi rivi, e snelli.
Quella c'ha neve il vólto, oro i capelli
Nel cui amor non fur mai inganni ne falli,
Destami al suon delli amorosi balli,
Pettinando al suo vecchio i bianchi velli.
Cosi mi sveglio a salutar l'Aurora
E 'l Sol ch'è seco, e piú l'altro ond'io fui
Ne' primi anni abagliato, e son ancóra.
I' gli ho veduti alcun giorno ambedui
Levarsi in seme, e 'n un punto e 'n un'ora
Quel far le stelle, e questo sparir lui.

The early singing and the weeping birds
In the valleys at dawn resound so tender,
And the murmur of crystal water-words
On brooks lucid and liquid, fresh and slender.
She, whose face is of snow, whose hair of gold,
In whose love never were deceits or chances,
Awakes me with the sound of loving dances
Combing the white fleece of her lover old.
Then I wake up and I salute the Dawn
And her Sun, and the other I love more,
Who dazzled me and does it as before.
I saw them both sometime shine on the lawn
In the same moment, the same point and hour;
One extinguished the stars, one the sun's power.

TWO COURTLY SONGS

PRENDES I GARDE, S'ON MI REGARDE

Guillaume d'Amiens (13th c.)

Recording of two versions, discantus chant and motet

S'on mi regarde, dites le moi
C'est tout la jus en cel boschiage;
Prendés i garde s'on mi regarde.
La pastourcle i gardoit vaches:

Plaisans brunete a vous m'otroi!
Prendés i garde, s'on mi regarde!
S'on mi regarde, dites le moi.

If I should be spied, tell me.
Down there by that little wood
Watch lest I should be spied.
The shepherdess there was keeping her
cows.
Lovely brunette, I take you for mine!
Watch lest I should be spied!
If I should be spied, tell me.

DOULZ VIAIRE GRACIEUX

Guillaume de Machaut (d. 1377)

Alla francesca

Doulz viaire gracieux,
De fin cuer vous ay servi
Weillies moy estre piteus
Doulz viaire gracieus
Se je sui un po honteus,
Ne me mettes en oubli.
Doulz viaire gracieus,
De fin cuer vous ay servi

Rondeau

Sweet gracious face,
I have served you with a true lover's heart
Please have pity on me.
Sweet gracious face,
If modesty holds me back a bit
Forget me not,
Sweet gracious face,
I have served you with a true lover's heart

Online sources:

<http://www.darsie.net/library/petrarch.html>

<http://www.translations-ink.com/Canzon5.html>

Sur la terre comme au ciel, Ensemble de voix de femmes Discantus, Directed by Brigitte Lesne, 2002 Éditions Jade.