

Rime

Guido Cavalcanti (1255-1300)

Donna me prega

Cavalcanti was an important member of the famous poetic movement known as *Dolce Stil Novo*. Inspired by the medieval troubadour tradition, his *canzone* anatomizes love using a metaphysical vocabulary of grief and transfiguration. Cavalcanti believed that the individual soul is mortal and that poetry can resurrect our deadened *sensorium*. Sight is an important poetic faculty, which fuels the passion and takes possession of the two lovers.

XXVII - Donna me prega, - per ch'eo voglio dire

Donna me prega, - per ch'eo voglio dire d'un accidente - che sovente - è fero ed è sì altero - ch'è chiamato amore: sì chi lo nega - possa 'l ver sentire!	
Ed a presente - conoscente - chero,	05
perch'io no sper - ch'om di basso core a tal ragione porti canoscenza: ché senza - natural dimostramemto non ho talento - di voler provare	
là dove posa, e chi lo fa creare,	10
e qual sia sua vertute e sua potenza, l'essenza - poi e ciascun suo movimento, e 'l piacimento - che 'l fa dire amare, e s'omo per veder lo pò mostrare.	
 In quella parte - dove sta memora	15
prende suo stato, - sì formato, - come diaffan da lume, - d'una scuritate la qual da Marte - vène, e fa demora; elli è creato - ed ha sensato - nome, d'alma costume - e di cor voluntate.	20
Vèn da veduta forma che s'intende, che prende - nel possibile intelletto, come in subietto, - loco e dimoranza. In quella parte mai non ha pesanza perché da qualitate non descende:	25
resplende - in sé perpetual effetto; non ha diletto - ma consideranza; sì che non pote largir simiglianza. Non è vertute, - ma da quella vène ch'è perfezione - (ché si pone - tale),	30
non razionale, - ma che sente, dico; for di salute - giudicar mantene, ch la 'ntenzione - per ragione - vale: discerne male - in cui è vizio amico.	

Translation:

A lady asks me – I speak for such reason

A lady asks me – I speak for such reason
Of an effect – that so often – is daring
And so haughty – he's called Amore:
He who denies him – now realise the truth!
I speak – to those present – with knowledge, 5
Owning no expectation – that the base-hearted
Can gain understanding through explanation:
Nor that – without practical demonstration
I have the talent – to prove at will
Where he lives, or who gave him creation, 10
Or what his power is, or what his virtue,
His essence too – and his every movement,
Nor the delight – so that we say 'to love',
Nor whether a man can show him to gazing.

In the place – that memory inhabits 15
He has his station – and takes on form
Like a veil of light – born of that shadow
Which is of Mars – that arrives and remains;
He is created – has sensation – name,
From the soul, manner – from the heart, will. 20
And comes from visible form that takes on,
And embraces – in possible intellect,
As in the subject – location and dwelling.
And yet he has no weight in that state
Since he is not as a quality descending: 25
Shines out – of himself perpetual impression;
Takes no delight – except in awareness;
Nor can scatter his likenesses around.
He is not virtue – but out of that comes
Which is perfection – (so self-established), 30
And through feeling – not rationally, I say;
Beyond balance – yet proclaiming judgement,
That will itself – 'stead of reason – is valid:
Poor in discernment – so vice is his friend.
Oft from his power then death will follow, 35
He's strong – and, virtue opposing him,
Thus runs counter to what brings succour:
Not that he is by nature in conflict;
But twisted awry from true perfection
By fate – no man possessor of life can say 40
That once established – he has no lordship.
Likewise he has power though men forget.

He comes into being – when will is such
That a further measure – of nature's – at play;

Then he will never adorn himself – with rest. 45
 Moving – changing colour, laughing through tears,
 Contorting – the features – with signatures of fear;
 Scarce pausing; – yet you will note of him
 He's most often found with people of worth.
 His strange quality gives rise to sighing, 50
 And makes a man gaze – into formless places
 Arousing the passion that stirs a flame,
 (No man can imagine him who's not known him)
 Unmoving – yet he draws all towards him,
 Not turning about – to discover joy: 55
 Nor minded to know whether great or small.
 From his like he elicits – the complex glance
 That makes – the pleasure – appear more certain:
 Nor can stay hidden – when he is met with.
 Not savage indeed – yet beauty his arrow, 60
 So that desire – for fear is – made skilful:
 Following all merit – in the piercing spirit.
 Nor can be comprehended from the face:
 Seen – as blankness fallen among objects;
 Listening deep – yet seeing not form itself: 65
 But led by what emanates from it.
 Far from colour, of separate being,
 Seated – in midst of darkness, skirting the light,
 Yet far from all deceit – I say, worthy of trust,
 So that compassion is born from him alone. 70

Canzone, confidently, now you may go
 Wherever you please, I've adorned you so
 Your reasoning – will be praised by everyone
 Who makes the effort to comprehend you: though
 You will reveal no art to other than them. 75

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Aeneid

Virgil (70 B.C. - 19 B.C.)
Book I, *Aeneid*

Combining themes from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Virgil's epic poem depicts the story of Aeneas, the mythical prince who escaped the burning city of Troy and embarked on a long and perilous journey culminating with the founding of Rome. Book I begins *in media res*, with the Trojan fleet on a voyage to discover a second home. Juno, angry because Paris had chosen Venus over her as the most beautiful woman on earth, bribes Aeolus to unleash storm winds. Aeneas' fleet seems doomed and only seven ships manage to reach the coast of Libya. A weary Aeneas reminds his companions of the impending adversities and dangers.

Liber Primus, *Aeneid*

Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris Italiam, fato profugus, Laviniaque venit litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto vi superum saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram; multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem, inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum, Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae.	5
Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso, quidve dolens, regina deum tot volvere casus insignem pietate virum, tot adire labores impulerit. Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?	10
Urbs antiqua fuit, Tyrii tenuere coloni, Karthago, Italiam contra Tiberinaque longe ostia, dives opum studiisque asperrima belli; quam Iuno fertur terris magis omnibus unam posthabita coluisse Samo; hic illius arma, hic currus fuit; hoc regnum dea gentibus esse, si qua fata sinant, iam tum tenditque fovetque. Progeniem sed enim Troiano a sanguine duci audierat, Tyrias olim quae verteret arces; hinc populum late regem belloque superbum venturum excidio Libyae: sic volvere Parcas. Id metuens, veterisque memor Saturnia belli, prima quod ad Troiam pro caris gesserat Argis— necdum etiam causae irarum saevique dolores exciderant animo: manet alta mente repostum iudicium Paridis spretaeque iniuria formae, et genus invisum, et rapti Ganymedis honores. His accensa super, iactatos aequore toto	15 20 25

<p>Aeolus haec contra: 'Tuus, O regina, quid optes explorare labor; mihi iussa capessere fas est. Tu mihi, quodcumque hoc regni, tu scepra lovemque concilias, tu das epulis accumbere divom, nimborumque facis tempestatumque potentem.'</p>	80
<p>Haec ubi dicta, cavum conversa cuspide montem impulit in latus: ac venti, velut agmine facto, qua data porta, ruunt et terras turbine perflant. Incubuere mari, totumque a sedibus imis una Eurusque Notusque ruunt creberque procellis Africus, et vastos volvunt ad litora fluctus. Insequitur clamorque virum stridorque rudentum. Eripiunt subito nubes caelumque diemque Teucrorum ex oculis; ponto nox incubat atra. Intonuere poli, et crebris micat ignibus aether, praesentemque viris intentant omnia mortem.</p>	85
<p>Extemplo Aeneae solvuntur frigore membra: ingemit, et duplicis tendens ad sidera palmas talìa voce refert: 'O terque quaterque beati, quis ante ora patrum Troiae sub moenibus altis contigit oppetere! O Danaum fortissime gentis Tydide! Mene Iliacis occumbere campis non potuisse, tuaque animam hanc effundere dextra, saevus ubi Aeacidae telo iacet Hector, ubi ingens Sarpedon, ubi tot Simois correpta sub undis scuta virum galeasque et fortia corpora volvit?'</p>	95
<p>Talia iactanti stridens Aquilone procella velum adversa ferit, fluctusque ad sidera tollit. Franguntur remi; tum prora avertit, et undis dat latus; insequitur cumulo praeeruptus aquae mons. Hi summo in fluctu pendent; his unda dehiscens terram inter fluctus aperit; furit aestus harenis. Tris Notus abreptas in saxa latentia torquet— saxa vocant Itali mediis quae in fluctibus aras— dorsum immane mari summo; tris Eurus ab alto in brevia et Syrtis urget, miserabile visu, inluditque vadis atque aggere cingit harenae. Unam, quae Lycios fidumque vehebat Oronten, ipsius ante oculos ingens a vertice pontus in puppim ferit: excutitur pronusque magister volvitur in caput; ast illam ter fluctus ibidem torquet agens circum, et rapidus vorat aequore vortex. Adparent rari nantes in gurgite vasto, arma virum, tabulaeque, et Troia gaza per undas. Iam validam Ilionei navem, iam fortis Achatì, et qua vectus Abas, et qua grandaevus Aletes,</p>	100
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vicit hiems; laxis laterum compagibus omnes
accipiunt inimicum imbrem, rimisque fatiscunt.

Interea magno misceri murmure pontum,
emissamque hiemem sensit Neptunus, et imis 125
stagna refusa vadis, graviter commotus; et alto
prospiciens, summa placidum caput extulit unda.
Disiectam Aeneae, toto videt aequore classem,
fluctibus oppressos Troas caelique ruina,
nec latuere doli fratrem Iunonis et irae. 130
Eurum ad se Zephyrumque vocat, dehinc talia fatur:

'Tantane vos generis tenuit fiducia vestri?
Iam caelum terramque meo sine numine, venti,
miscere, et tantas audetis tollere moles?
Quos ego—sed motos praestat componere fluctus. 135
Post mihi non simili poena commissa luetis.
Maturate fugam, regique haec dicite vestro:
non illi imperium pelagi saevumque tridentem,
sed mihi sorte datum. Tenet ille immania saxa,
vestras, Eure, domos; illa se iactet in aula 140
Aeolus, et clauso ventorum carcere regnet.'

Sic ait, et dicto citius tumida aequora placat,
collectasque fugat nubes, solemque reducit.
Cymothoe simul et Triton adnixus acuto
detrudunt navis scopulo; levat ipse tridenti; 145
et vastas aperit syrtis, et temperat aequor,
atque rotis summas levibus perlabitur undas.
Ac veluti magno in populo cum saepe coorta est
seditio, saevitque animis ignobile vulgus,
iamque faces et saxa volant—furor arma ministrat; 150
tum, pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem
conspexere, silent, arrectisque auribus adstant;
ille regit dictis animos, et pectora mulcet,—
sic cunctus pelagi cecidit fragor, aequora postquam
prospiciens genitor caeloque invectus aperto 155
flectit equos, curruque volans dat lora secundo.

Defessi Aeneadae, quae proxima litora, cursu
contendunt petere, et Libyae vertuntur ad oras.

Book I, *Aeneid*

Arms, and the man I sing, who, forc'd by fate,
And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate,
Expell'd and exil'd, left the Trojan shore.
Long labors, both by sea and land, he bore,
And in the doubtful war, before he won
The Latian realm, and built the destin'd town;
His banish'd gods restor'd to rites divine,
And settled sure succession in his line,
From whence the race of Alban fathers come,
And the long glories of majestic Rome.
O Muse! the causes and the crimes relate;
What goddess was provok'd, and whence her hate;
For what offense the Queen of Heav'n began
To persecute so brave, so just a man;
Involv'd his anxious life in endless cares,
Expos'd to wants, and hurried into wars!
Can heav'nly minds such high resentment show,
Or exercise their spite in human woe?
Against the Tiber's mouth, but far away,
An ancient town was seated on the sea;
A Tyrian colony; the people made
Stout for the war, and studious of their trade:
Carthage the name; belov'd by Juno more
Than her own Argos, or the Samian shore.
Here stood her chariot; here, if Heav'n were kind,
The seat of awful empire she design'd.
Yet she had heard an ancient rumor fly,
(Long cited by the people of the sky,)
That times to come should see the Trojan race
Her Carthage ruin, and her tow'rs deface;
Nor thus confin'd, the yoke of sov'reign sway
Should on the necks of all the nations lay.
She ponder'd this, and fear'd it was in fate;
Nor could forget the war she wag'd of late
For conqu'ring Greece against the Trojan state.
Besides, long causes working in her mind,
And secret seeds of envy, lay behind;
Deep graven in her heart the doom remain'd
Of partial Paris, and her form disdain'd;
The grace bestow'd on ravish'd Ganymed,
Electra's glories, and her injur'd bed.
Each was a cause alone; and all combin'd
To kindle vengeance in her haughty mind.
For this, far distant from the Latian coast
She drove the remnants of the Trojan host;

And sev'n long years th' unhappy wand'ring train
 Were toss'd by storms, and scatter'd thro' the main.
 Such time, such toil, requir'd the Roman name,
 Such length of labor for so vast a frame.
 Now scarce the Trojan fleet, with sails and oars,
 Had left behind the fair Sicilian shores,
 Ent'ring with cheerful shouts the wat'ry reign,
 And plowing frothy furrows in the main;
 When, lab'ring still with endless discontent,
 The Queen of Heav'n did thus her fury vent:
 "Then am I vanquish'd? must I yield?" said she,
 "And must the Trojans reign in Italy?
 So Fate will have it, and Jove adds his force;
 Nor can my pow'r divert their happy course.
 Could angry Pallas, with revengeful spleen,
 The Grecian navy burn, and drown the men?
 She, for the fault of one offending foe,
 The bolts of Jove himself presum'd to throw:
 With whirlwinds from beneath she toss'd the ship,
 And bare expos'd the bosom of the deep;
 Then, as an eagle gripes the trembling game,
 The wretch, yet hissing with her father's flame,
 She strongly seiz'd, and with a burning wound
 Transfix'd, and naked, on a rock she bound.
 But I, who walk in awful state above,
 The majesty of heav'n, the sister wife of Jove,
 For length of years my fruitless force employ
 Against the thin remains of ruin'd Troy!
 What nations now to Juno's pow'r will pray,
 Or offerings on my slighted altars lay?"
 Thus rag'd the goddess; and, with fury fraught.
 The restless regions of the storms she sought,
 Where, in a spacious cave of living stone,
 The tyrant Aeolus, from his airy throne,
 With pow'r imperial curbs the struggling winds,
 And sounding tempests in dark prisons binds.
 This way and that th' impatient captives tend,
 And, pressing for release, the mountains rend.
 High in his hall th' undaunted monarch stands,
 And shakes his scepter, and their rage commands;
 Which did he not, their unresisted sway
 Would sweep the world before them in their way;
 Earth, air, and seas thro' empty space would roll,
 And heav'n would fly before the driving soul.
 In fear of this, the Father of the Gods
 Confin'd their fury to those dark abodes,
 And lock'd 'em safe within, oppress'd with mountain loads;
 Impos'd a king, with arbitrary sway,
 To loose their fetters, or their force allay.
 To whom the suppliant queen her pray'rs address'd,
 And thus the tenor of her suit express'd:

"O Aeolus! for to thee the King of Heav'n
 The pow'r of tempests and of winds has giv'n;
 Thy force alone their fury can restrain,
 And smooth the waves, or swell the troubled main-
 A race of wand'ring slaves, abhorr'd by me,
 With prosp'rous passage cut the Tuscan sea;
 To fruitful Italy their course they steer,
 And for their vanquish'd gods design new temples there.
 Raise all thy winds; with night involve the skies;
 Sink or disperse my fatal enemies.
 Twice sev'n, the charming daughters of the main,
 Around my person wait, and bear my train:
 Succeed my wish, and second my design;
 The fairest, Deiopeia, shall be thine,
 And make thee father of a happy line."
 To this the god: "'T is yours, O queen, to will
 The work which duty binds me to fulfil.
 These airy kingdoms, and this wide command,
 Are all the presents of your bounteous hand:
 Yours is my sov'reign's grace; and, as your guest,
 I sit with gods at their celestial feast;
 Raise tempests at your pleasure, or subdue;
 Dispose of empire, which I hold from you."
 He said, and hurl'd against the mountain side
 His quiv'ring spear, and all the god applied.
 The raging winds rush thro' the hollow wound,
 And dance aloft in air, and skim along the ground;
 Then, settling on the sea, the surges sweep,
 Raise liquid mountains, and disclose the deep.
 South, East, and West with mix'd confusion roar,
 And roll the foaming billows to the shore.
 The cables crack; the sailors' fearful cries
 Ascend; and sable night involves the skies;
 And heav'n itself is ravish'd from their eyes.
 Loud peals of thunder from the poles ensue;
 Then flashing fires the transient light renew;
 The face of things a frightful image bears,
 And present death in various forms appears.
 Struck with unusual fright, the Trojan chief,
 With lifted hands and eyes, invokes relief;
 And, "Thrice and four times happy those," he cried,
 "That under Ilian walls before their parents died!
 Tydides, bravest of the Grecian train!
 Why could not I by that strong arm be slain,
 And lie by noble Hector on the plain,
 Or great Sarpedon, in those bloody fields
 Where Simois rolls the bodies and the shields
 Of heroes, whose dismember'd hands yet bear
 The dart aloft, and clench the pointed spear!"
 Thus while the pious prince his fate bewails,
 Fierce Boreas drove against his flying sails,

And rent the sheets; the raging billows rise,
 And mount the tossing vessels to the skies:
 Nor can the shiv'ring oars sustain the blow;
 The galley gives her side, and turns her prow;
 While those astern, descending down the steep,
 Thro' gaping waves behold the boiling deep.
 Three ships were hurried by the southern blast,
 And on the secret shelves with fury cast.
 Those hidden rocks th' Ausonian sailors knew:
 They call'd them Altars, when they rose in view,
 And show'd their spacious backs above the flood.
 Three more fierce Eurys, in his angry mood,
 Dash'd on the shallows of the moving sand,
 And in mid ocean left them moor'd aland.
 Orontes' bark, that bore the Lycian crew,
 (A horrid sight!) ev'n in the hero's view,
 From stem to stern by waves was overborne:
 The trembling pilot, from his rudder torn,
 Was headlong hurl'd; thrice round the ship was toss'd,
 Then bulg'd at once, and in the deep was lost;
 And here and there above the waves were seen
 Arms, pictures, precious goods, and floating men.
 The stoutest vessel to the storm gave way,
 And suck'd thro' loosen'd planks the rushing sea.
 Ilioneus was her chief: Alethes old,
 Achates faithful, Abas young and bold,
 Endur'd not less; their ships, with gaping seams,
 Admit the deluge of the briny streams.
 Meantime imperial Neptune heard the sound
 Of raging billows breaking on the ground.
 Displeas'd, and fearing for his wat'ry reign,
 He rear'd his awful head above the main,
 Serene in majesty; then roll'd his eyes
 Around the space of earth, and seas, and skies.
 He saw the Trojan fleet dispers'd, distress'd,
 By stormy winds and wintry heav'n oppress'd.
 Full well the god his sister's envy knew,
 And what her aims and what her arts pursue.
 He summon'd Eurys and the western blast,
 And first an angry glance on both he cast;
 Then thus rebuk'd: "Audacious winds! from whence
 This bold attempt, this rebel insolence?
 Is it for you to ravage seas and land,
 Unauthoriz'd by my supreme command?
 To raise such mountains on the troubled main?
 Whom I- but first 't is fit the billows to restrain;
 And then you shall be taught obedience to my reign.
 Hence! to your lord my royal mandate bear-
 The realms of ocean and the fields of air
 Are mine, not his. By fatal lot to me
 The liquid empire fell, and trident of the sea.

His pow'r to hollow caverns is confin'd:
There let him reign, the jailer of the wind,
With hoarse commands his breathing subjects call,
And boast and bluster in his empty hall."
He spoke; and, while he spoke, he smooth'd the sea,
Dispell'd the darkness, and restor'd the day.
Cymothoe, Triton, and the sea-green train
Of beauteous nymphs, the daughters of the main,
Clear from the rocks the vessels with their hands:
The god himself with ready trident stands,
And opes the deep, and spreads the moving sands;
Then heaves them off the shoals. Where'er he guides
His finny coursers and in triumph rides,
The waves unruffle and the sea subsides.
As, when in tumults rise th' ignoble crowd,
Mad are their motions, and their tongues are loud;
And stones and brands in rattling volleys fly,
And all the rustic arms that fury can supply:
If then some grave and pious man appear,
They hush their noise, and lend a list'ning ear;
He soothes with sober words their angry mood,
And quenches their innate desire of blood:
So, when the Father of the Flood appears,
And o'er the seas his sov'reign trident rears,
Their fury falls: he skims the liquid plains,
High on his chariot, and, with loosen'd reins,
Majestic moves along, and awful peace maintains.
The weary Trojans ply their shatter'd oars
To nearest land, and make the Libyan shores.

(Translation by John Dryden)