

Francesco Petrarch (July 1304 - July 1374)

from *Rime Sparse*, original Italian

1

Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono
di quei sospiri ond'io nudriva 'l core
in sul mio primo giovenile errore
quand'era in parte altr'uom da quel ch'ì sono,

del vario stile in ch'io piango et ragiono
fra le vane speranze e 'l van dolore,
ove sia chi per prova intenda amore,
spero trovar pietà, nonché perdono.

Ma ben veggio or sí come al popol tutto
favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente
di me mesdesmo meco mi vergogno;

et del mio vaneggiar vergogna è 'l frutto,
e 'l pentersi, e 'l conoscer chiaramente
che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.

taken from:
<http://petrarch.petersadlon.com/canzoniere.html>

English translation

1

You who hear the sound, in scattered rhymes,
of those sighs on which I fed my heart,
in my first vagrant youthfulness,
when I was partly other than I am,

I hope to find pity, and forgiveness,
for all the modes in which I talk and weep,
between vain hope and vain sadness,
in those who understand love through its trials.

Yet I see clearly now I have become
an old tale amongst all these people, so that
it often makes me ashamed of myself;

and shame is the fruit of my vanities,
and remorse, and the clearest knowledge
of how the world's delight is a brief dream.

trans: A.S. Kline

Francesco Petrarch

3

It was on that day when the sun's ray
was darkened in pity for its Maker,
that I was captured, and did not defend myself,
because your lovely eyes had bound me, Lady.

It did not seem to me to be a time to guard myself
against Love's blows: so I went on
confident, unsuspecting; from that, my troubles
started, amongst the public sorrows.

Love discovered me all weaponless,
and opened the way to the heart through the eyes,
which are made the passageways and doors of tears:

so that it seems to me it does him little honour
to wound me with his arrow, in that state,
he not showing his bow at all to you who are armed.

5

When I utter sighs, in calling out to you,
with the name that Love wrote on my heart,
the sound of its first sweet accents begin
to be heard within the word LAUdable.

Your REgal state, that I next encounter,
doubles my power for the high attempt;
but: 'TAcit', the ending cries, 'since to do her honour
is for other men's shoulders, not for yours'.

So, whenever one calls out to you,
the voice itself teaches us to LAUd, REvere,
you, O, lady worthy of all reverence and honour:

except perhaps that Apollo is disdainful
that morTAl tongue can be so presumptuous
as to speak of his eternally green branches.