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Sonnets

I

“Accorri accorri accorri, uom, a la strada!”

“Che ha’, fi’ de la putta?” – “I’ son rubato.”

“Chi t’ha rubato?” – “Una che par che rada
come rasoio, si m’ha netto lasciato.”

“Or come non le davi de la spada?”

“I’ dare’ anz’a me.” – “Or se’ ’mpazzato?”

“Non so che ’l dà, così mi par che vada.”

“Or t’avess’ella cieco, sciagurato!”

“E vedi che ne pare a que’ che ’l sanno?”

“Di’ quel che tu mi rubi.” – “Or va’ con Dio,
ma anda pian, ch’i’ vo’ pianger lo danno,
ché ti diparti.” – “Con animo rio!”

“Tu abbi ’l danno con tutto ’l malanno!”

“Or chi m’ha morto?” – “E che diavol sacc’io?”

I

“Help, help! For God’s sake, help! Hi, here in the street!”
“What’s up, you whoreson?” – “I’ve been robbed, I swear.”
“Who’s robbed you then?” – “A wench who does it neat,
And cleaner than a razor shaves your hair.”
“But where’s your sword? To kill her would be sweet.”
“I’d rather kill myself.” – “You’re mad, then.” – “Yea,
I’m mad, but don’t know why” – “So, I repeat,
That wretched girl would take your sight away!”
“A madman, yes, we see you know that part!”
“What have you plundered from me?” – “Go in peace,
But slowly, give me time to mourn this woe
And see you leaving.” – “With a bitter heart!”
“Now may your loss with every curse increase!”
“Who killed me?” – “How the devil should I know?”*

II

Or non è gran pistolenza la mia,
ch'i' non mi posso partir dad amare
quella che m'odia e niente degnare
vuol pur vedere ond'i' passo la via?
E dammi tanta pena, notte e dia,
che de l'angoscia mi fa sì sudare,
che m'arde l'anima, e niente non pare;
certo non credo ch'altro 'nferno sia.
Assa' potrebb'uom dirm': "A nulla giova!"
Ch'ell'è di tale schiatta nata, 'ntendo,
che tutte son di così mala pruova.
Ma per ch'i' la trasamo, pur attendo
ch'Amor alcuna cosa la rimova:
ch'è sì possente che 'l può far correndo.

II

Now is not mine a sorry plight, I say,
Because I've lost the power to refrain
From loving one whose hatred will not deign
To see me when I pass upon my way?
She brings me such great torment night and day
That many a time I even sweat with pain,
My heart is set on fire, and all in vain:
Hell can't be worse, I fancy, come what may.
In truth, it might be said that I'm ill-fated.
Surely she comes of an accursèd breed,
Whose daughters all are pitiless and cunning.
Alas, by now, I'm so infatuated,
I think that Love will change her, for indeed,
He's surely strong enough to do it running.

III

I' ho sì poco di grazia 'n Becchina,
in fé di Di', ch'anche non tèn a frodo,
che in le' non posso trovar via né modo,
né medico mi val né medicina;
ch'ella m'è peggio ch'una saracina
o che non fu a' pargoli il re Rodò;
ma certo tanto di le' me ne lodo,
ch'esser con meco non vorrìe reina.
Ecco 'l bell'erro c'ha da me a lei:
ch'i' non cherre' a Di' altro paradiso
che di basciar la terr' u' pon li piei;
ed i' fossi sicur d'un fiordaliso,
ch'ella dicesse: "Con vertà 'l ti diei" –
e no ch'i' fosse dal mondo diviso!

III

So little favour is in Becchina's mien,
I swear by God whose words no man can shake,
I know not where to turn or what to take;
Doctor and pills won't work, the pain's too keen.
More barbarous than a Saracen she's been,
Ay, worse than Herod was to baby Jews;
And yet I love her so much I'd refuse
To swap her if they offered me a queen.
Here lies my damning error to this hour,
To have asked no gift of Heaven but just to kiss
The dusty ground her feet have deigned to tread.
Now if she offered me a lily flower,
With: "Pray you, gentle sir, accept of this" –
Instead of which she says she wants me dead.

IV

Oimè d'Amor, che m'è duce sì reo,
oimè, che non potrebbe peggiorare;
oimè, perché m'avvene, signor Deo?
Oimè, ch'i' amo quanto si pò amare,
oimè, colei che strugge lo cor meo!
Oimè, che non mi val mercé chiamare!
oimè, il su' cor com'è tanto giudeo,
oimè, che udir non mi vòl ricordare?
Oimè, quel punto maledetto sia,
oimè, ch'eo vidi lei cotanto bella,
oimè, ch'eo n'ho pure malinconia!
Oimè, che pare una rosa novella,
oimè, il su' viso: dunque villania,
oimè, cotanto come corre 'n ella?

IV

Alas, that Love's so bad a lord to obey;
Alas, no worse could any tyrant be!
Alas, my God, why does it happen to me?
Alas, to love as much as mortal may,
Alas, a wench who wears my heart away!
Alas, in vain I beg for clemency!
Alas, as fell as any Jew is she,
Alas, why won't she hear me named today?
Alas, a curse upon the time and place,
Alas, when I beheld her first so fair;
Alas, since then all joy has gone amiss!
Alas, a blushing rose was in her face:
Alas, who could have guessed she harboured there,
Alas indeed! barbarity like this?

V

Egli è sì agro il disamorare
a chi è 'nnamorato daddivero
che potrebb'anzi far del bianco nero
parer a quanti n'ha di qua da mare.
Ond'i', perciò, non vi vo' più pensare;
anzi, s'i' ebbi mai volere intero
in trasamar, or vi sarò più fèro:
portila Dio come la vuol portare!
Ma non l'abbia, perciò, in grad'Amore;
s'i' potesse, disamorar vorrìa
più volontier, che farmi 'mperadore:
ché tutto 'l tempo de la vita mia
so stato de' suo' servi servidore:
ed e' fammi pur mal, che Dio li dia!

V

To one who greatly cares, be it confessed,
So bitter is renouncing love that quite
As easy it would be to make all white
Men black throughout the countries of the West.
So I don't think of it with too much zest;
Even a love that gave me all my will
Would make me more intent on loving still:
Let God decide it then as suits him best.
But this confession Love shall not enjoy:
If well I could, the rogue I'd disavow,
Ay, rather than I'd wear the Imperial Crown.
Indeed, my lot, since I was just a boy,
Has been to wait upon his servants: now
If he would harm me more, God strike him down!

VI

Quanto un granel di panico è minore
del maggior monte che abbia veduto;
e quanto è 'l bon fiorin de l'or migliore
di qualunca denaro più minuto;
e quanto m'è più pessimo el dolore
ad averlo, e l'ho, ch'a averlo perduto:
cotant'è maggio la pena d'amore
ched io non avrei mai creduto.
Ed or la credo, però ch'io la provo
en tal guisa che, per l'anima mia,
di questo amor vorrìa ancor esser novo.
Ed ho en disamar quella bailia
c'ha 'l pulcinello ch'è dentro da l'ovo,
d'uscir 'nnanzi ched el su' tempo sia.

VI

By how much is a seed of millet less
Than is the highest mountain I behold,
By how much is a florin of fine gold
Worth more than some poor farthing's paltriness,
Even by how much is today's distress,
Felt more than any sorrow passed away;
By so much greater are the pangs, I say,
Of love than anything I once could guess.
But I believe it now: I've proved it true
To such extent that, for my very soul,
I wish my love were callow still and new.
To free myself today I've no more power
Than has the chick within its egg control
To hatch or not before the appointed hour.

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