

Canticle I: 'My beloved is mine and I am his'

Francis Quarles

Ev'n like two little bank-divided brooks,
That wash the pebbles with their wanton streams,
And having rang'd and search'd a thousand nooks,
Meet both at length at silver-breasted Thames,
Where in a greater current they conjoin:
So I my best-beloved's am; so he is mine.

Ev'n so we met; and after long pursuit,
Ev'n so we joyn'd; we both became entire;
No need for either to renew a suit,
For I was flax and he was flames of fire:
Our firm-united souls did more than twine;
So I my best-beloved's am; so he is mine.

If all those glitt'ring Monarchs that command
The servile quarters of this earthly ball,
Should tender, in exchange, their shares of land,
I would not change my fortunes for them all:
Their wealth is but a counter to my coin:
The world's but theirs; but my beloved's mine.

Nor Time, nor Place, nor Chance, nor Death can bow
My least desires unto the least remove;
He's firmly mine by oath; I his by vow;
He's mine by faith; and I am his by love;
He's mine by water; I am his by wine,
Thus I my best-beloved's am; thus he is mine.

He is my Altar; I, his Holy Place;
I am his guest; and he, my living food;
I'm his by penitence; he mine by grace;
I'm his by purchase; he is mine, by blood;
He's my supporting elm; and I his vine;
Thus I my best beloved's am; thus he is mine.

He gives me wealth; I give him all my vows:
I give him songs; he gives me length of days;
With wreaths of grace he crowns my longing brows,
And I his temples with a crown of Praise,
Which he accepts: an everlasting sign,
That I my best-beloved's am; that he is mine.

Texts & Translations

La bonne chanson

1. Une Sainte en son auréole,
Une Châtelaine en sa tour,
Tout ce que contient la parole
Humaine de grâce et d'amour.

La note d'or que fait entendre
Le cor dans les lointains des bois,
Mariée à la fierté tendre
Des nobles Dames d'autrefois;

Avec cela le charme insigne
D'un frais sourire triomphant
Éclos dans les candeurs de cygne
Et des rougeurs de femme-enfant;

Des aspects nacrés, blancs et roses,
Un doux accord patricien:
Je vois, j'entends toutes ces choses
Dans son nom Carlovingien.

2. Puisque l'aube grandit, puisque voici l'aurore,
Puisque, après m'avoir fui longtemps, l'espoir veut bien
Revoler devers moi qui l'appelle et l'implore,
Puisque tout ce bonheur veut bien être le mien, [...]

Je veux, guidé par vous, beaux yeux aux flammes douces,
Par toi conduit, ô main où tremblera ma main,
Marcher droit, que ce soit par des sentiers de mousses
Ou que rocs et cailloux encombrant le chemin; [...]

Et comme, pour bercer les lenteurs de la route,
Je chanterai des airs ingénus, je me dis
Qu'elle m'écouterait sans déplaisir sans doute ;
Et vraiment je ne veux pas d'autre Paradis.

3. La lune blanche
Luit dans les bois ;
De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramée...

Ô bien aimée.

L'étang reflète,
Profond miroir,
La silhouette
Du saule noir
Où le vent pleure...

Rêvons, c'est l'heure.

Un vaste et tendre
Apaisement
Semble descendre
Du firmament
Que l'astre irise..

C'est l'heure exquise.

The good song

1. A saint within her halo,
A lady in her tower,
All that human speech contains
Of grace and of love.

The golden note by which one hears
The horn in the depths of the woods,
Married to the tender pride
Of the noble ladies of the past;

With this emblematic charm:
A fresh, triumphant smile,
Revealed with the candor of a swan
And the blush of a woman-child,

Of pearly appearance, white and pink;
A gentle aristocratic harmony.
I see, I hear all these things
In your Carolingian name. © Shawn Thuris

2. Since day is breaking, since dawn is here,
Since, having long eluded me, hope may
Fly back to me, who calls to it and implores it,
Since all this happiness will certainly be mine, [...]

I want, guided by your beautiful eyes lit by gentle flames,
Led by you, in whose hand my trembling hand rests,
To march straight on, whether along trails of moss
Or on tracks strewn with boulders and stones; [...]

And as I'll comfort myself on the tediousness of the journey,
By singing some innocent airs, I'll tell myself
That she will hear me without displeasure or doubt;
And truly I want no other paradise. © Laura Prichard, 2016

3. The white moon
shines in the woods.
From each branch
springs a voice
beneath the arbor.

Oh my beloved...

Like a deep mirror
the pond reflects
the silhouette
of the black willow
where the wind weeps..

Let us dream! It is the hour...

A vast and tender
calm
seems to descend
from a sky
made iridescent by the moon.

It is the exquisite hour! © Grant A. Lewis

4. J'allais par les chemins perfides,
Douloureusement incertain.
Vos chères mains furent mes guides.

Si pâle à l'horizon lointain
Luisait un faible espoir d'aurore ;
Votre regard fut le matin.

Nul bruit, sinon son pas sonore,
N'encourageait le voyageur.
Votre voix me dit: "Marche encore!"

Mon coeur craintif, mon sombre coeur
Pleurait, seul, sur la triste voie ;
L'amour, délicieux vainqueur,
Nous a réunis dans la joie.

5. J'ai presque peur, en vérité
Tant je sens ma vie enlacée
A la radieuse pensée
Qui m'a pris l'âme l'autre été,

Tant votre image, à jamais chère,
Habite en ce coeur tout à vous,
Ce coeur uniquement jaloux
De vous aimer et de vous plaire ;

Et je tremble, pardonnez-moi
D'aussi franchement vous le dire,
À penser qu'un mot, qu'un sourire
De vous est désormais ma loi,

Et qu'il vous suffirait d'un geste,
D'une parole ou d'un clin d'oeil,
Pour mettre tout mon être en deuil
De son illusion céleste.

Mais plutôt je ne veux vous voir,
L'avenir dût-il m'être sombre
Et fécond en peines sans nombre,
Qu'à travers un immense espoir,

Plongé dans ce bonheur suprême
De me dire encore et toujours,
En dépit des mornes retours,
Que je vous aime, que je t'aime !

6. Avant que tu ne t'en ailles,
Pâle étoile du matin
-- Mille cailles
Chantent, chantent dans le thym. --

Tourne devers le poète
Dont les yeux sont pleins d'amour ;
-- L'alouette
Monte au ciel avec le jour. --

Tourne ton regard que noie
L'aurore dans son azur ;
-- Quelle joie
Parmi les champs de blé mûr! --

4. I was walking along treacherous paths,
Painfully uncertain.
Your dear hands were my guides.

So pale on the distant horizon
Shone a faint hope of dawn;
Your eyes were the morning.

No sound other than his ringing footstep
Encouraged the voyager.
Your voice said to me: "Walk on!"

My timid heart, my somber heart,
Cried, alone, on the dreary road;
Love, delightful conqueror,
United us in joy. © Laura L. Nagle, 2007

5. I'm almost afraid, it's true,
when I see how my life is entwined
with the radiant thought
that stole my soul last summer;

when I see how your ever-dear image
lives in this heart that is all yours,
my heart that only wants
to love you and to please you;

and I tremble - forgive me
for speaking so freely –
at the thought that a word or a smile
from you so rules me

and that a gesture,
a word or a wink
from you is enough to set my soul
in mourning for its heavenly illusion.

I really only want to see you,
no matter how dark
and full of pain my future,
through an immense hope,

plunged into this supreme job
of saying over and always to myself,
despite all dismal returns,
that I love you, that I love thee! © Faith J. Cormier, 2000

6. Before you vanish,
pale morning star...
(A thousand quails
are singing in the thyme!)

turn towards the poet,
whose eyes are full of love...
(The lark
is rising to the sky with the daybreak!)

turn your gaze which the dawn
is drowning in its blueness...
(What joy
among the fields of ripe corn!)

Et fais luire ma pensée
Là-bas -- bien loin, oh, bien loin !
-- La rosée
Gaîment brille sur le foin. –

Dans le doux rêve où s'agite
Ma mie endormie encor...
-- Vite, vite,
Car voici le soleil d'or. –

7. Donc, ce sera par un clair jour d'été
Le grand soleil, complice de ma joie,
Fera, parmi le satin et la soie,
Plus belle encor votre chère beauté ;

Le ciel tout bleu, comme une haute tente,
Frissonnera somptueux à longs plis
Sur nos deux fronts [heureux]¹ qu'auront pâlis
L'émotion du bonheur et l'attente;

Et quand le soir viendra, l'air sera doux
Qui se jouera, caressant, dans vos voiles,
Et les regards paisibles des étoiles
Bienveillamment souriront aux époux.

8. [...] N'est-ce pas? nous irons gais et lents, dans la voie
Modeste que nous montre en souriant l'Espoir,
Peu soucieux qu'on nous ignore ou qu'on nous voie.

Isolés dans l'amour ainsi qu'en un bois noir,
Nos deux coeurs, exhalant leur tendresse paisible,
Seront deux rossignols qui chantent dans le soir. [...]

Sans nous préoccuper de ce que nous destine
Le Sort, nous marcherons pourtant du même pas,
Et la main dans la main, avec l'âme enfantine.

De ceux qui s'aiment sans mélange, n'est-ce pas?

9. L'hiver a cessé : la lumière est tiède
Et danse, du sol au firmament clair.
Il faut que le coeur le plus triste cède
À l'immense joie éparse dans l'air. [...]

J'ai depuis un an le printemps dans l'âme
Et le vert retour du doux floréal,
Ainsi qu'une flamme entoure une flamme,
Met de l'idéal sur mon idéal.

Le ciel bleu prolonge, exhausse et couronne
L'immuable azur où rit mon amour
La saison est belle et ma part est bonne
Et tous mes espoirs ont enfin leur tour.

Que vienne l'été ! que viennent encore
L'automne et l'hiver ! Et chaque saison
Me sera charmante, ô Toi que décore
Cette fantaisie et cette raison !

and make my thoughts shine
there, far away, far away...
(The dew
is gleaming brightly on the hay!)

into the sweet dream where my darling
while still asleep is stirring...
(Quickly, quickly,
for here is the golden sun!) © Peter Low, 2000

7. And so, it shall be on a bright summer's day:
The great sun, complicit in my joy,
Shall, amidst the satin and silk,
Make your dear beauty more beautiful still;

The bluest sky, like a tall tent,
Shall ripple in long creases
Upon our two happy foreheads, white
With happiness and anticipation;

And when the evening comes, the caressing breeze
That plays in your veils shall be sweet,
And the peaceful gazes of the stars
Shall smile benevolently upon the lovers. © Laura L. Nagle

8. [...] Isn't it so? We shall go, happy yet slow,
Along the modest path we walk in smiling hope,
Caring little if others notice or ignore us.

Isolated in love as though in a dark wood,
Our two hearts, exhaling their peaceful fondness,
Shall be two nightingales singing in the night. [...]

Without worrying ourselves about what
Fate holds in store, we walk still the same way,
Hand in hand, with the childlike soul

Of those who love completely — isn't it so? © Shawn Thuris

9. Winter has ended: the light is soft
And dances from the sun to the clear heaven.
The saddest heart must give way
To the great joy scattered through the air. [...]

For a year I have held springtime in my soul
And the green return of the sweet blossoming,
Like a flame around a flame,
Sets upon my ideal something ideal.

The blue sky extends, exhales and crowns
The changeless azure where my love laughs.
The season is fine and my share is good
And all my hopes have their turn at last.

Let summer come! And let
Autumn and winter come after! And every season
Will be dear to me, oh You who decorate
This imagining and this thought! © Shawn Thuris

The Holy Sonnets of John Donne

O my blacke Soule! now thou art summoned

Oh my blacke Soule! now thou art summoned
By sicknesse, death's herald, and champion;
Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee is fled,
Or like a thiefe, which till death's doome be read,
Wisheth himselfe deliver'd from prison;
But dam'd and hal'd to execution,
Wisheth that still he might be imprisoned.
Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lacke;
But who shall give thee that grace to beginne?
Oh make thyselfe with holy mourning blacke,
And red with blushing, as thou are with sinne;
Or wash thee in Christ's blood, which hath this might
That being red, it dyes red soules to white.

Batter my heart three person'd God; for, you

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.

I, like an usurpt towne, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend
But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue.

Yet dearely I love you, and would be loved faine,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy:
Divorce mee, untie, or breake that knot againe,

Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee.

O might those sighes and teares returne againe into my breast and eyes

Oh might those sighes and teares return againe
Into my breast and eyes, which I have spent,
That I might in this holy discontent
Mourne with some fruit, as I have mourn'd in vaine;
In mine Idolatry what show'rs of rain
Mine eyes did waste? What griefs my heart did rent?
That sufferance was my sinne; now I repent
'Cause I did suffer, I must suffer paine.
Th'hydroptique drunkard, and night scouting thief,
The itchy lecher and self-tickling proud
Have the remembrance of past joyes, for relief
Of coming ills. To poore me is allow'd
No ease; for long, yet vehement grieffe hath been
Th'effect and cause, the punishment and sinne.

Oh, to vex me, contraryes meet in one

Oh, to vex me, contraryes meet in one:
In constancy unnaturally hath begott
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vowes, and in devotione.
As humorous is my contritione
As my profane Love and as soone forgott:
As ridlingly distemper'd, cold and hott,
As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
I durst not view Heav'n yesterday; and today
In prayers, and flatt'ring speeches I court God:
Tomorrow I quake with true feare of his rod.
So my devout fitts come and go away,
Like a fantastique Ague: save that here
Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare.

What if this present were the world's last night?

What if this present were the world's last night?
Marke in my heart, O Soule, where thou dost dwell,
The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
Whether that countenance can thee affright,
Teares in his eyes quench the amazing light,
Blood fills his frownes, which from his pierc'd head fell.
And can that tongue adjudge thee into hell,
Which pray'd forgiveness for his foes fierce spight?
No, no; but as in my Idolatrie
I said to all my profane mistresses,
Beauty, of pity, foulness onely is
A sign of rigour: so I say to thee,
To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign'd,
This beauteous forme assures a piteous minde.

Since she whom I love hath payd her last debt

Since she whom I lov'd hath pay'd her last debt
To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
And her Soule early into Heaven ravished,
Wholly on heavenly things my mind is sett.
Here the admyring her my mind did whett
To seeke thee God; so streams do shew their head;
But though I have found thee and thou my thirst hast fed,
A holy thirsty dropsy melts mee yett,
But why should I begg more love, when as thou
Dost woove my soul for hers: offering all thine:
And dost not only feare lest I allow
My love to Saints and Angels, things divine,
But in thy tender jealousy dost doubt
Lest the world, Fleshe, yea, Devill putt thee out.

At the round earth's imagined corners, blew

At the round earth's imagined corners, blew
Your trumpets, angels, and arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow
All whom war, death, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance hath slain; and you whose eyes
Shall behold God and never taste death's woe,
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,
For, if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of Thy grace,
When we are there. Here on this lowly ground,
Teach me how to repent, for that's as good
As if Thou hadst seal'd my pardon with Thy blood.

Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?

Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?
Repaire me now, for now mine end doth haste,
I runne to death, and death meets me as fast,
And all my pleasures are like yesterday;
I dare not move my dim eyes anyway,
Despaire behind, and death before doth cast
Such terror, and my feeble flesh doth waste
By sinne in it, which it t'wards Hell doth weigh;
Onely thou art above, and when t'wards thee
By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe;
But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
That not one houre myselfe can I sustaine;
Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art,
And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.

Death be not proud, though some have called thee

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadfull, for thou art not soe,
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill mee.
From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do goe,
Rest of their bones, and souls deliverie.
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings and desperate men,
And dost with poyson, warre, and sickness dwell,
And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well
And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.