

Rime

Dante Alighieri

Translated by

J.G. Nichols

and

Anthony Mortimer



ALMA CLASSICS

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Rime

I

Dante da Maiano a diversi rimatori

Provedi, saggio, ad esta visione, 1
e per mercé ne trai vera sentenza.
Dico: una donna di bella fazone,
di cu' el meo cor gradir molto s'agenzia,
mi fe' d'una ghirlanda donagione,
verde, fronzuta, con bella accoglienza;
appresso mi trovai per vestigione
camicia di suo dosso, a mia parvenza.
Allor di tanto, amico, mi francai
che dolcemente presila abbracciare: 10
non si contese, ma ridea la bella.
Così ridendo, molto la baciai:
del più non dico, ché mi fe' giurare.
E morta, ch'è mia madre, era con ella.

I

Dante da Maiano to other poets*

Wise man, regard this vision with some care, 1
And draw out its true meaning, if you please.
So here it is: a lady who is fair,
A lady whom my heart is keen to please,
Made me a present of a leafy crown
And placed it on my head invitingly;
And then I found myself wearing a gown
Made to her measure, so it seems to me.
And then, my friend, it was that, growing bold,
I took her gently in a fond embrace; 10
She did not struggle, no: she smiled at me.
I kissed her many times, and she just smiled:
I'll say no more – she made me swear to this.
My mother, who is dead, was standing by.

[J.G.N.]

Ia

Dante Alighieri a Dante da Maiano

Savete giudicar vostra ragione, 1
o om che pregio di saver portate;
per che, vitando aver con voi quistione,
com so rispondo a le parole ornate.
Disio verace, u' rado fin si pone,
che mosse di valore o di bieltate,
imagina l'amica oppinione
significasse il don che pria narrate.
Lo vestimento, aggiare vera spene 10
che fia, da lei cui desiare, amore;
e 'n ciò provide vostro spirto bene:
dico, pensando l'ovra sua d'allore.
La figura che già morta sorvene
è la fermezza ch'averà nel core.

Ia

Dante Alighieri to Dante da Maiano

You could work out the meaning on your own, 1
 You who are so renowned for being wise;
 And so I shall reply as best I can,
 Without delay, to your well-fashioned phrase.
 Now true desire, so hard to satisfy,
 Produced by virtue or by beauty, must –
 So I imagine in my friendly way –
 Be shadowed by the gift you mention first.
 And by the gown, you may be sure, is meant
 That she will love you whom you most desire; 10
 Of this you have a clear presentiment:
 I'm thinking of what happened next with her.
 And by the figure of one dead is meant
 The constancy you may expect from her.

[J.G.N.]

II

Dante da Maiano a Dante Alighieri

Per pruova di saper com vale o quanto 1
lo mastro l'oro, adducelo a lo foco;
e, ciò faccendo, chiara e sa se poco,
amico, di pecunia vale o tanto.
Ed eo, per levar prova del meo canto,
l'adduco a voi, cui paragone voco
di ciascun c'ave in canoscenza loco,
o che di pregio porti loda o vanto.
E chero a voi col meo canto più saggio
che mi deggiate il dol maggio d'Amore 10
qual è, per vostra scienza, nominare:
e ciò non movo per quistioneggiare
(ché già inver' voi so non avria valore),
ma per saver ciò ch'eo vaglio e varraggio.

II

Dante da Maiano to Dante Alighieri

To find its value by experiment, 1
The goldsmith puts his gold into the fire
And, by refining it, he can be sure
Whether it's worth a little or a mint.
And I, to put my singing to the test,
Put it to you, the recognized touchstone
Of all who make this serious skill their own,
Or are reputedly among the best.
And I ask this, in my best poetry:
Will you, with your extensive knowledge, deign 10
To say what are Lord Love's most deadly cares?
I have not set my heart on splitting hairs
(Not something that you set your heart upon),
But ask what my worth is, what it will be.

[J.G.N.]

IIa

Dante Alighieri a Dante da Maiano

Qual che voi siate, amico, vostro manto 1
 di scienza parmi tal che non è gioco;
 sì che per non saver, d'ira mi coco,
 non che laudarvi, sodisfarvi tanto.
 Sacciate ben (ch'io mi conosco alquanto)
 che di saver ver' voi ho men d'un moco,
 né per via saggia come voi non voco,
 così parete saggio in ciascun canto.
 Poi piàcevi saver lo meo coraggio,
 e io 'l vi mostro di menzogna fore, 10
 sì come quei ch'a saggio è 'l suo parlare:
 certamente a mia coscienza pare,
 chi non è amato, s'elli è amadore,
 che 'n cor porti dolor senza paragio.

IIa

Dante Alighieri to Dante da Maiano

Whoever you are, it seems to me you wear 1
 A cloak of wisdom, one that is not light;
 So that, because I cannot praise aright,
 Or fairly answer you, I blaze with ire.
 So be assured (I know myself) compared
 With yours my wisdom is a grain of sand;
 Nor do I take wise ways like you, my friend,
 Who seem so wise, looked at from any side.
 But, since my mind is what you would discover,
 I shall without a lie make it quite plain, 10
 And talk like someone talking to a sage;
 So in all conscience here's what I allege:
 Whoever is in love, with no return,
 Bears in his heart a grief that's like no other.

[J.G.N.]

III

Dante da Maiano a Dante Alighieri

Lo vostro fermo dir fino ed orrato 1
 approva ben ciò bon ch'om di voi parla,
 ed ancor più, ch'ogni uom fora gravato
 di vostra loda intera nominarla;
 ché 'l vostro pregio in tal loco è poggiato,
 che propriamente om nol poria contarla:
 però qual vera loda al vostro stato
 crede parlando dar, dico disparla.
 Dite ch'amare e non essere amato 10
 ène lo dol che più d'Amore dole,
 e manti dicon che più v'ha dol maggio:
 onde umil prego non vi sia disgrato
 vostro saver che chiari ancor, se vole,
 se 'l vero, o no, di ciò mi mostra saggio.

III

Dante da Maiano to Dante Alighieri

All you have said, so elegant and certain, 1
Exemplifies what people say of you;
And, what is more, we'd find it a great burden,
Trying to give the praise that is your due.
For you have risen to such high repute
No one can reckon it sufficiently;
And now whoever speaks of your estate
And thinks to praise it, simply speaks awry.
You say: to love when love is unreturned
Is the worst fate that can befall a lover: 10
And many say there's something worse than that.
And so I beg: be not too disinclined
In all your wisdom to again discover:
Is this truth from experience, or not?

[J.G.N.]

IIIa

Dante Alighieri a Dante da Maiano

Non canoscendo, amico, vostro nomo, 1
 donde che mova chi con meco parla,
 conosco ben che scienz' à di gran nomo,
 sì che di quanti saccio nessun par l' à;
 ché si pò ben canoscere d' un omo,
 ragionando, se ha senno, che ben par là;
 conven poi voi laudar senza far nomo,
 è forte a lingua mia di ciò com parla.
 Amico (certo sonde, acciò ch' amato
 per amore aggio), sacci ben, chi ama, 10
 se non è amato, lo maggior dol porta;
 ché tal dolor ten sotto suo camato
 tutti altri, e capo di ciascun si chiama:
 da ciò ven quanta pena Amore porta.

IIIa

Dante Alighieri to Dante da Maiano

Although, my friend, I do not know your name, 1
 Nor even where he's from, whom I hear speak,
 I do know that his wisdom has such fame
 That nobody I know enjoys the like.
 With men it is not hard to recognize
 If wisdom's there – speech makes it obvious.
 Since I'm obliged to send you nameless praise,
 My tongue has much ado to talk of this.
 Friend (I am sure of this, since I have known
 True love), he feels most anguish, be assured, 10
 Who is in love, but not loved in return;
 That pain is worse than any other pain,
 And that is why it is all sorrows' lord:
 And hence comes every grief love can contain.

[J.G.N.]

Acknowledgements

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– J.G. Nichols and Anthony Mortimer

J.G. Nichols was born in Liverpool and lives on the Wirral. He has translated many of the greatest classics of Italian literature, including Dante's *Inferno*, Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Leopardi's *Canti*, and has been awarded the Florio Prize and the Monselice Prize for translation.

Anthony Mortimer is Professor Emeritus at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and has written extensively on Renaissance poetry and Anglo-Italian literary relations. His translations of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and Michelangelo's *Rime* were published by Penguin to great critical acclaim. His new translation of the poems of Guido Cavalcanti is also published by Alma Classics.

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