



The Petrarch Project

Cantos 34-66

**David Bromige &
Rychard Denner**

dPress
◀ 2004 ▶
Sebastopol

The Petrarch Project: An Introduction

by Douglas James Martin

The thirty three Cantos included here form the second book of a three part work, the *100 Cantos*, jointly written by Rychard Denner and David Bromige. The first part of this work is called *Spade*, the third part, *Garden Plots*; the current volume is *The Petrarch Project*. The epic scale of the poem as a whole, the use of the canto form, the tripartite structure, the playfulness, the mad allusiveness, the interweaving of multiple voices and snatches of narrative, suggest obvious antecedents in both Dante and Pound, and indeed these models are useful towards our understanding and appreciation of the current work. But, as the title suggests, the most obvious literary predecessor is Petrarch himself, and the work he is most famous for, *The Canzoniere*,

a collection of 366 poems focusing on the trials, joys and broader significance of romantic love.

Dante himself, as *La Vita Nuova's* celebration of Beatrice attests, was strongly influenced by the courtly love tradition, and by his personal experience of romantic passion. But Dante was still primarily a medieval thinker; in the *Divine Comedy* his Beatrice finally appears in Paradise, embedded in a floral and cosmic web symbolic of religious order, a heavenly transubstantiation of human love. Petrarch, in contrast, was one of the first true Renaissance humanists, and he had a humanist interest in the details of individual psychology. There is a certain objective distance, to be sure, in the urbanity and realism of the classical writers Petrarch far preferred to his medieval contemporaries. But this very realism also suggested a way to talk about love as something more universal, and something fundamentally more important, than a courtly, aristocratic game. Undoubtedly Petrarch could never fully escape the shadow of Dante's influence, and indeed leaned on his master's confidence in the anagogic transformation of erotic energy. But Petrarch's explorations of romantic love were firmly rooted in, and celebrated, the vagaries and paradoxes of the individual human heart, with its foolish enthusiasm, its insistent carnality, and its stumbling attempts at transcendence.

Today it is Dante, and not Petrarch, that maintains, and quite rightly overall, the highest reputation. This is abundantly evident in a comparison of the number of translations devoted to each poet. Nevertheless, Petrarch's point of view remains much closer to our own, and it is Petrarch who has had far greater influence in the subsequent history of poetry. Indeed, we would not be wrong to see Denner's and Bromige's *The Petrarch Project* as a direct continuation, rather than an ironic echo, of Petrarch's original intentions: as a serious exploration of the centrality of romantic love to human experience, and of the various ways in which we attempt to justify this centrality. Both the *Canzoniere*, and *The Petrarch Project*, furthermore, can be seen as attempts to challenge the spirit of their times. Petrarch's humanism was an affront to the prevailing medieval orthodoxies; *The Petrarch Project* wittily tweaks our modern and post-modern embarrassments before the insistent reality of romantic emotion.

Nevertheless, just as Petrarch's erotic seriousness benefits from Dante's suggestions of the transcendent significance of human love, our interpretation of the *Project* can benefit from its structural analogies to the *Divine Comedy*. The first book of the *100 Cantos, Spade*, is in the *Inferno* position, the third book, *Garden Plots*, clearly aligns to the *Paradiso*; the current volume, naturally enough, can be seen as a kind of *Purgatorio*. The "Laura" of Canto 59, (a canto which, incidentally, functions as a

useful key to the work as a whole), makes clear this thematic shift from the first volume's preoccupation with physical mortality. While the characters in *Spade*, she tells the author/protagonists, "bewail injuries to their physical bodies," in "this second set of cantos, you seem to be suffering on the level of the romantic heart, and the wounds are inflicted on your psyche rather than your body."

Purgatory, indeed, can be seen as a kind of quest, a midpoint between the finalities of hell and heaven, the natural abode of figures who are neither damned nor saved, and for that reason it may well be an appropriate figure for the actual trials of everyday life. Placing the drama of romantic love in that position only underscores the continuing and universal, centrality of that drama. Love is, on the one hand, the ordinary theater where we may express all aspects of being human, from the most bestial, to the most abstract, from the most selfish to the selfless. On the other hand, erotic love is a natural symbol for the force that holds together any number of restless oppositions, a path that mediates, like purgatory itself, between all extremes.

Petrarch's *Canzoniere* explored, for his own time, the multiple ways that erotic love could find meaning, as a locus of symbolic energy, and as an insistent biological and social fact that demands justification. *The Petrarch Project* exhibits much the same range, in a contemporary context that may well be closer to Petrarch's than recent fashion would admit. We find *eros* here as a simple biological fact, an aspect of physical pleasure that can be desired, appreciated, scorned and regretted, a consequence of the reality of the body, which as Canto 34 suggests inevitably imposes a "whole handful" of its own rules on the mortal lover. We find physical beauty as well, poised in the imagination somewhere between desire and aesthetic order, and expressed everywhere in the *Project* using the same type of highly figured speech that Petrarch mastered at the beginning of the modern era. Denner and Bromige, like all poets of love hereafter, find their own way to remake this speech, through their unique invention, and through particular strategies of theft and subterfuge. *The Petrarch Project* also explores throughout the functioning of love in its social context. Love sickness disturbs, as it always has, our comfortable independence, thrusting us towards adventures we may or may not regret. Love is still played out like an elaborate game, even if its various moves today are played out more commonly online, with rather fewer exchanges of perfumed letters. And marriage is still a fact, in our enlightened times, as are temptation, betrayal, happiness and frustration. The cantos present all these scenes, both tragic and comic.

Significantly, *The Petrarch Project* does not refrain from exploring, as Petrarch himself explores, the potential relationship of romantic love to what still might be called the transcendent. This might be seen as a simple "aesthetic" transcendence. Alternatively, there may be a kind of "moral" transcendence possible through an

ideal of married love. But Petrarch also celebrates, without obvious irony, the power of the beloved and the faithfulness of the lover as figures of the force of the divine, and of the moral purity possible through this devotion. To him this relationship is not simply symbolic; love often seems to serve as a sphere where one might legitimately “practice” one’s devotional discipline. And romantic love may also have its uses as a direct path towards the spirit; perhaps it can even become a direct expression of the divine. Similarly, *The Petrarch Project*, particularly in its flirtations with the forms and rituals of Tantric Buddhism, celebrates the potent analogies between erotic and spiritual force. Significantly, these allusions to Tantric practice here are also ambiguous; is the erotic symbology of the Tantra merely a co-opting of profane power for spiritual purposes, or are erotic rituals meant to celebrate the infusion of the divine directly into the world? The connections developed, towards the end of the volume, between the marriage of Albert Einstein and Mileva Maric, and the marriage of energy and matter in relativity, are a witty exploration of this latter possibility. This potential holy marriage of opposites also echoes the ecstatic Neoplatonism that is as important to Renaissance thought as the urbane humanism most often associated with it. If modernity demands a focus on the dignity of man in the world, rather than on the unapproachable majesty of God, where else can spirit express itself but in the matter all around us? Nevertheless, regardless of any preference for symbol or incarnation, the desperate hunger for meaning is clear. Erotic power must have an explanation somewhere, and an explanation adequate to our intellectual and imaginative curiosities; otherwise, what could possibly justify the attention we end up giving it, whether we wish to or not?

The seemingly archaic dignity implicit in a focus on romantic love is all the more surprising, and indeed all the more powerful, in a work whose style is joyfully jagged, and playfully avant-garde. In form and style *The Petrarch Project*, like *Spade* before it, owes much more to Pound’s *Cantos* than to the architecture of *The Divine Comedy* or to the intricacies of the *Canzoniere*. There is above all an abrupt juxtaposition, and an enfolded interweaving, of multiple voices, including multiple Petrarchs, and multiple Laura’s, with no Virgil to guide us from circle through bolgia. The contemporary reader, of course, has grown accustomed to the “negative capability” of these structures. Nor are the poets without pity. As mentioned above, Canto 59 provides a very useful key, and perhaps not a moment too soon, to the design of both *Spade* and the *Project*. As the Laura of this canto puts it:

You and Bromige have several voices, a voice as each of yourselves in the first person and a third person omnipotent voice, which I take to be the narrator. . . On top of this you both have a voice in the persona of Petrarch. . . Also, Laura is given a voice, and this is where the story seems to get distorted, as there

seem to be a wide variety of Lauras.

The play of voices in the *Project*, in fact, is less complex and oblique than in *Spade*, and the focus, as mentioned above, has shifted from physical suffering to psychic struggle. But there is a similar multiplicity of tone; the comic, the pathetic, the sacred, and the profane, are all tossing in the same bed. Somehow, an authorial spirit that might best be described as Chaucerian allows all these voices to coexist in good humor.

Similarly, in keeping with its understated epic ambition, and perhaps its Chaucerian spirit as well, *The Petrarch Project* can be seen as a cheerful compendium of genres. We will find here all manner of free verse lyric, several approximations of sonnets, a canzonni, even a sestina. We will find several letters, a transcription of an online chat, a prose fable in the Renaissance style, even a purloined table of contents. And in its evocations of Petrarch himself we will find every conceivable approach to allusion and translation. Not surprisingly, there are countless references to the *Canzoniere* throughout. There are snatches of lines directly translated, and there are several sonnet-like structures that pick up on Petrarchan themes and images. There are even some delightfully anarchic exercises that owe something at once to Pound's quirky translations, to the playfulness of poetry exercises, and to the serious zaniness of the language poets. Thus Canto 62 boldly renders Petrarch's "rodendo intorno, onde 'l tuo nome prendi" (rushing on from where you take your name), from *Canzoniere* 208, as "rodents of introspection fight over my name." And yet the transubstantiated sonnet still makes a kind of perfect sense!

The emotional center of *The Petrarch Project* may well be found in Canto 54, which consists of a free verse sestina addressed by David Bromige to his wife, Cecilia. There is a refreshing directness and a poignant emotional realism to this lyric, a power to move us that is strengthened both by the playful variety that surrounds it, and by the serious attention to romantic love throughout that this playfulness never completely undercuts. This power suggests something that contemporary serious poetry has all too easily given up. Modern literature has countless examples of "realistic" dissections of sex, love and marriage, as doomed or absurd institutions, as products of archaic social structures and linguistic habits, or as distorted displacements of an internal psycho-sexual drama. And it may well be that the twentieth century purgation of romantic expansiveness was a necessary correction to the sentimental enthusiasms and convenient social assumptions of the previous century. But has not another century turned over once again?

Indeed, recent investigations in cognitive science and evolutionary psychology have

begun to question in turn our *modernist* assumptions of mental plasticity and the social construction of personality. But if there is a human nature after all, it may be a nature that at its core contains all the contradictions and paradoxes that one could ever wish for. Desire itself, the apparent pursuit of a purely selfish pleasure, may yet be the unknowing instrument of a genetic imperative that cares nothing for the individual carrier of those genes, as long as these genes are themselves reproduced. Is this a battle of our judgment against our passion, which would otherwise drive us into personal destruction? Or is this a revelation of how desire itself can be the vehicle of self-sacrifice, an expression of a wish to transcend one's own body and time?

Whatever the answer we are somehow compelled to keep asking the question. In our private lives we go on lusting with artistic flair, loving with absurd expansiveness, marrying into uxoriousness, or slipping into pain and betrayal. We may still feel too embarrassed to reveal all this in our serious literature, without plentiful doses of a knowing irony. But our pop songs betray us. And why should pop songs have all the fun?

CANTO 34

I dip my bread in blood,
persist into obscurity
 as any voyager
upon the path of liberty
moon or tropic Venus
 lays upon the seas
the restless seas.

Worship this woman
 flesh & spirit
(the easiest portion unless one is
ungifted, then impossible)
 prepared to suffer each surprise
she finds herself

called to inflict.

One loves limits
& adores by rules. The body
imposes of those a whole handful.

Look around—

Di quanto per amor giamai sofferesi
Di mi quando tu verrai
et aggio a foffrir anco

for pride & anger must surrender
while one remains a man.

But the ear that I sketched—a black
& white endeavor of a day,
that day my being first drew
in her aura.

I would bend
me-wards speaking as a male
upon whom Love walked,
stepped
in out
bent on Its purposes
that are never our affair
For she in whom our age delights
to marvel at itself or ought
as a plant, its root & flower
triumphs incompletely
till she descends to the caress
arena for the path to spirit
requires a nervous system
held in meat.

Any who looks on her w/o awe
dips his slice of Dante's wood
into a lake of lukewarm lead.

Pink cotton candy in the pine trees
my assemblage looking fine
hanging on my wall.

Dried grass embedded in paper
& dried grass laid on photograph
of dried grass under my sketch
on a transparency and tinted
engraving of dried grass titled
*Even this alchemy converting
each moment into the next
forges locks on your heart*
had seemed trite & a trifle
in the gloom last night.

Green, crimson, black, or purple
The garment that displays her
Hair twisted in blonde braids
Or tumbled, loose, or drawn
Back from its widow's peak
Light as morning's wing.

Sometimes her hair is braided
And I am upbraided
calling my assemblage
Woman. Not so,
I see specifics. But alike
In that her chest is unlike mine
While between the legs, the way
Leads in, while mine juts out.

The gender differences multiply
so that woman
 is an honorable name
& to address one
 & just this one
 Cecelia,
 and for him, Laura
speaks to more.

When, we
Poor mutts, hear her breathe.
As one more day goes by
Headed for the hoarded years
 he keeps apart,
 & counts
As Vesuvius, I hear,
Believing, never does.

Drawing w/my finger in the air,
does any of this exist?

There's a lot going on,
sitting in a chair in the sun
 and the volcano, risky, a steep drive, manageable, but
 it's hard to walk just on the toes
of this foot w/o making it bleed.

Oh, boy—who knows,
 it may be good for it to bleed,
though not if you're shot in the heart

Or in the gut
 and you're lying there
for five days.

This is the Petrarch Project,
and no one is lying around or lying about their sexuality.

What started this?

“It was the semester that I was teaching one day each week in San
Francisco,
and perhaps it was reading
graduate students’ poems

It was fall, and the thing was
I was getting sicker, my heart
was failing, getting clogged up,
and by the end of that semester,
I couldn’t walk up an incline, short of breath, it was just too much for me.”

You who scuttle into sound sparse verse suspire
ill of your nude heart
juvenile error altr’uom attend

Various styles raging on this piano
vain hopes, vain sparrows
piango

To prove her ovaries the prime intent of Love pardons us, amigo
perdono mio perdu.”

CANTO 35

Medusa
Muse

Tröma

Mother Universe in yabyum
w/ Omnipotent Narcissus

Name: Ol' Dog

Grow

YOUR PENIS

Our PGF-3 PenjNis EnplarggeQmen;t Pills Will Expan2d,
Lengtlnhen And EnylarDfg]e Your Peni"s 3O+ Inches!
100% S|ati]sfacti>on Gu/arantepeS0d! email addressed to mr. full size

As one who is awake in mutual marvel, Love and I confess,
 an ancient tale,
A river falling in love w/ a maiden—I stretch myself as a river—her
face's
perception, penetrates deeply, quietly.

When my thought is lost,
I flood in despair.

Enough for now to consider
grief in this scale

arises only from wasted life
the life one hasn't lived

in the shadow of death
that fills each life.

Nothing
A cruel magic trick
brought down the house
& the curtain
would be sleep

Child, sleep
So we can wake at noon
w/ dream of transposed genitalia.
By 3:30 the transposed genitalia
just another dream being
counted by ants by the minute.
Learning trust.

To decline to climb
symbolically.

But falling ill
there appeared the staircase down
to the snug.
What a place to put in 40 years!
In short, there was a shadow,
considerable. It parted
& my love stepped out, so her gait
arrived with her smile, her smile
with her voice. Which sd
everything that there had been
a shadow. To begin with.

She respected herself.
She would be courteous
unless provoked. She adored

despite a lifetime w/ the evidence.

'Ol Dog stood before her quaking.

That she didn't destroy him.

That she would. Coldness

Had within her condiment of feeling. She stoned him. They

Blent. She showed him

Herself, the scars.

He sat, she spun.

They talked for hours.

Love weft through love.

Easy to be turned to stone,
thinking there's something he could do.

Laura in white shorts
sitting in her white *Pinto*
on red upholstery, him wanting
to kiss her but standing back
awkward.

He sees her hand outstretched
returning some money,
wind blowing through
as he bends to take what she owes.

He doesn't know who is served
by his going broke in devotion,
yet it's a wonder she hasn't
told him to shove off.

Hard to have it like you like it
when nothing's real until it's real
and then it's real forever.

CANTO 36

Goes through Northumberland

What's an umber?
maybe dark red
f/hydrated oxide of iron
w/some oxide of manganese

umbrian earth, umbra, shade
where the direct light from the source of illumination is wholly cut off

and then, Cumberland

Land of Cumbers
hinderers, hamperers
of redheaded hamstringers

maybe mountains, the Cumberland
Gap, different f/ the GAP

and then, "Englangd"
w/ the sound of language in it
straight England

physical being
bodily nature, corporeal
I think it's in the phrase
Corporal Punishment

“Fuck,” sd the corporal,
not for the first time.

“How I feel when Venus is in Scorpio,
and
Rare beauty instantly all nature dowers.”

In detriment.
Steep descent. Vesuvian,
she cranks up the temp.

Even this alchemy, converting
each instant into the next,
fashions locks on my heart.

Everything now happens very fast.
Laura speaks, “My first choice is

to move to Ellensburg and go to
grad school at Central and work
w/ Fouts in the new chimp facility.

Stay with Francesco, fuck him in
his bookstore, my own room
w/ Gustav Klimt prints, plant trees
in the spring, but I’m not sure.

He’s older and wise,
has penetrating blue eyes.
I’m young & expectant,
and I feel I’m on the brink
of a precipice at the top of the world.

Now, I’m in Tempe, near Phoenix,
afraid of stagnation,

covered in
my own ashes.

Francesco says, this is what it is
to experience samsara, inward turning
to dig that vibe.

There's something breathing,
a breathing which wants waters of life freely and gifts of the spirit.

I must walk on the basilisk
and wrestle the dragon,
go where I want
do what I want
and send this sprig of pungent
artemesia to him.

I would also give a sun dog
and the moon, low & round,
the green shade of these cliffs
w/ the almost voice of this creek,
I send sage
from my desert to his.”

shifting ground
Blood world
I thus endure a cast She only can
radiate.

Bless cursor Time from hour to hour
love ticked away.
She stepped toward me
from the shadows to change
my life irreparably
yet

insufficiently
for I fail her who is so far above
yet
that I, made recipient of such amity,
am led to th

CANTO 37

And his death, quaint.

I like quaint. I like to cultivate quaint, to have quaint hanging round my ardent gate, there is nothing like quaint. I look at her, and I think “quaint,” and when this happens, I am attracted. Metaphorically speaking. Eating quaint for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Intellectually, penetrating quaint.

I want to know quaint back to front and upside down and inside out, and I have the equipment for the task, I’m told.

Quaint is a spring day in the rain
in England’s Cotswold Hills,

by the bait-house, beside the marsh, at eleven standing beside
her sister who is sixteen

inches taller, and thinking you’d better not go to bed with her. Quaint is not merely decorative—it fills with meaning & some of it sticks. If I get up in the morning, it’s thanks to quaint. I can’t recommend quaint highly enough.

I stay up late for quaint.
I keep solemn watch for quaint

I abide its coming,
as things do to me. When people tell me, 'Quaint is catching on too
fast & becoming common,'
I always agree.

Because I think it's a quaint idea.

I'm glad there's quaint enough
to go around.
Speaking, as I am, of quaint, I double over, as though in pain.

I look through my legs and have
a great view of quaint. One never gets over it entirely. My very existence is
riddled w/ quaint."

Talking about how she deprives him
of choice, and if at times he arms
himself w/ complaint, his
torment
subsides at his first
sight of her.

Cecelia.

For all that he has ever suffered
for love
rumpled & bruised
how his presence took. For by his
portrait
all may judge his deficiencies,
the too-soft face, mouth
a twist of doubt
the laurel crown
ridiculous as any reputation
that precedes

acquaintance.

The eyes
yes, soft as a woman's, can be
 estimated
handsome, but a darkness, doubting,
also mars them, dark breeze ruffling
calm lake, ruining reflection.

The nose
less said the better.

 Only love
can work for him. The voice
 trusting what karma prompts
& memory devises.

Then time stops
 to remark his body, long since
registered: not proportionate, but
virile.

Kirlian flickers
 unseen by the naked eye
together w/ their perfume,
 say what's left

Laura—
praise begins with the first syllable
of your name.

Two things I want to say:
I dreamed of kissing you,
and my heart opened to you
 the first day we met

CANTO 38

Entangled music
is what I've been feeling.

What good is it being good, if inside
there's no music?

I describe the state of two lovers,
and I return
to my suffering.

I complain, 'To me, Fate is hurtful.'
Having surrendered myself
I'm compelled to endure love's pain.
I deplore my lost freedom. But

I am happy.
My poems are about one soul needing another, although it's best to
Turn away f/ life's pleasures.

Ah, dear reader, turn away.

CANTO 39

“Change my view of life & love
& become a transcendent person

My brother, Gherardo
retired to a monastery
afflicted by his memory
of a woman, known to be
more liberal in her affections
than my Laura

And the death of Robert, 1343 C.E.
King of Naples, my benefactor

And my mission for the Pope to tally
the value of His Holiness's property
in a claim of regency over Giovanna's,
who is Bob's 16 yr old daughter.

I'm a brown-noser,
sucking up to these Overlords—
but my commissions allow me time to write, garden, meditate
Yet, how desolate the State,
the Hungarian faction in control,
a vile and deceitful monk in charge,
Roberto and the Queen Dowager,
a cypher.

A mournful silence reigns in the public assemblies, and in private they
converse in whispers...the least gesture, punished, and *to think* is denounced as
a crime.

Rome grows old; but not its hero."

CANTO 40

That Petrarch never seems to see her
the same way twice

In precisely the same way twice
is what
constitutes her
Her great & unusual beauty.
Saggio critico sul Petrarca

The joke is consciousness

Re verses

Moves

Frost of the world in my hair
del dolce loco ov'a sua eta fornita
e da la famigliuola sbigottita
at my having moved
in my imagination...

Us both alone in bed,
talking of this and that. We are
the only reality. It's winter,
and it's warm
with our hopes upside down
like chickadees in a tree.

This is a sure sign Spring has come in December.

Dear Reader, May I disturb you
w/ these versions of old pet rock?
Know that these are his sentiments,

as near as I can make them.

And the mirror curves toward my dread,
and I start fading because I can't face her radiance.

O flame, O roses, O pleasure,
without her there is no there there,
but there is a here here, even
if I feel like I'm nowhere.

Nowhere, and
now her.

Dear Reader, We should ask ourselves why he didn't fall in love w/ a woman more attainable, but I am not here to rewrite history, so much as to make an artifact to sell to the highest bidder, as if it were but bling bling. And now, forget all that.

CANTO 41

To at what...
At her whose...
To whom her...
To her, at whose cunt I worship

Bamboozled, not myself
 brains, nerves
Spiraling thru muddy water
lost...

I return to my life

whether young or dead
out of control in my devotion

Shifting ground blood world

Innamorta Selected
Thus endure a cast She only can
radiate

Bless cursor Time from hour to hour
Ahhh...Love licked its way
She stepped toward me
from the shadows

To change my life irreparably
Ah...yet
Insufficiently
Yet thus I was made recipient of such
Amity
And urged to the highest good!

“Be blithe,” she says, “Be grateful”
—the will to scourge, expunge...
Heaven is sous erature unless

Here here
Here
Here
...Her footprints in this
sand
happened.

CANTO 42

Petrarch & Laura meet online
using instant messenger.

Petrarch says:

Am I available?

Petrarch says:

I am a solitary poet

Petrarch says:

who lives with his mother

Laura says:

are you?>??

Petrarch says:

so, as far as a love relationship

I dont have one

Petrarch says:

I have intense friends

Petrarch says:

and I mean Intense

Laura says:

me too

Petrarch says:

I love them dearly

Petrarch says:

truly

Laura says:

meeetoo

Petrarch says:

& with a steadfast conviction

Petrarch says:

That Friendship Does Exist

Petrarch says:

but I am not as convinced

Laura says:

about Romantic Love

Petrarch says:

as I was even 10 years ago

Laura says:

me neither

Petrarch says:

let alone 50

Petrarch says:

but I will die a Romantic Poet

Petrarch says:

it is my 5th Great Karma

Petrarch says:

and so, I will love you
carnally, spiritually, or astrally

Petrarch says:

because it is my way

Laura says:

I want u and you want me
(I think)

Laura says:

So what is the problem?

Petrarch says:

We need to meet

Laura says:

is that a Problem?

Petrarch says:

maybe it is, maybe not
not thinking that

Laura says:

I wantto

Laura says:

envelope my limbs

Laura says:

around yu

Petrarch says:

am aroused

Laura says:

tis is true

Petrarch says:

believe me

Laura says:

I want yu

Laura says:

as many may

Petrarch says:

can feel your sensuous energy thru the monitor

Laura says:

I hope so!

Laura says:

I am real and I think about you

Petrarch says:

I realize this and I am turned on but I want to know if this is just something happening right now

Petrarch says:

I always get discombobulated at this point

Laura says:

Yes I hear you

Petrarch says:

because I'm basically paranoid

Petrarch says:

I wear a lot of armor

Laura says:

but I think we are in the same page

Petrarch says:

I will trust again

Laura says:

ha trust

Petrarch says:

loaded word

Petrarch says:

trusting my heart

Petrarch says:

know we are on the same page

Laura says:

on the same dance floor

Petrarch says:

I dont want to foolishly mess up

Laura says:

Speak to me your true thoughts

Petrarch says:

many things are so uncertain

Laura says:

Francesco

Petrarch says:

yes

Petrarch says:

when my mind gets blown, I am really flaky. I keep
a precarious hold on things

Laura says:

flakey?

Petrarch says:

u are an artist, u know what I mean

Petrarch says:

how the usual priorities

Petrarch says:

dont have much sway

Petrarch says:

I follow the poem

Laura says:

well.U ot sure what you are saying

Laura says:

but I know that

Laura says:

you are Francesco
and I am Laura
and we are here dancing

Petrarch says:

there is that vibrato again

Petrarch says:

nightingales are whispering.

I am sure they're nightingales.

Petrarch says:

could use a cigarette

Laura says:

I did try to call you

Petrarch says:

I feel like I'm stoned

Petrarch says:

but I was online, no doubt

Petrarch says:

haha

Laura says:

but your line was busy

Petrarch says:

Yes

Petrarch says:

would you like to talk
on the phone?

Laura says:

I wanted to speak to you

Petrarch says:

we'll run up horrific phone bills but so be it

Laura says:

but of course that would only evoke trouble

Petrarch says:

where do you stand with this guy you live with?

Laura says:

I seem to have these desires
for you

Laura says:

that means I want you

Petrarch says:

I know. but it complicates things with three people in
a relationship

Laura says:

somehow

Petrarch says:

have been there, believe me

Laura says:

I am not sure of where I am;
it is unfinished at best

Petrarch says:

so. will be support for you

Petrarch says:

can be this

Laura says:

But I long for you
despite my push against it

Petrarch says:

And I will no doubt frustrate the hell out of you

Petrarch says:

dry your longing out

Laura says:

well ., ok. if that is best[

Petrarch says:

don't want to keep you on a hook

Petrarch says:

want to be a real friend

Laura says:

I did not want to entertain

Laura says:

such expectations

Petrarch says:

well, then if there is real love

Petrarch says:

it will become realer

Laura says:

ha! real love

Petrarch says:

real love

Laura says:

does it exist?

Petrarch says:

meaning something that unifies all the loose ends

Laura says:

I will meet you one day... we will talk all about it

Petrarch says:

you know the poem I posted in poetry.com?

Laura says:

yes

Petrarch says:

do you know what is there today?

Laura says:

what?

Petrarch says:

another sonnet by Francesco Petrarch

Laura says:

you're prolific

Petrarch says:

you want to know what is weird?

Laura says:

what?

Petrarch says:

I didn't post this poem,
but I wrote it

Laura says:

come on

Petrarch says:

I'm serious

Petrarch says:

I sent it to a contest a year ago,
then i retracted it

Petrarch says:

and instructed them to delete it
from their anthology

Laura says:

hmmm

Petrarch says:

It's posted there with the other poem that I didnt write but has my
name on it, Bubblewrap. I wrote back to this author

Petrarch says:

here it is
Poem to Francesco Petrarch
Strange to meet a stranger
who shares the same name.
Stranger, you are a poet
with a fine "Bubble-Rap" poem.
Wonder if you'll write me?
Wonderful to receive
a poem appearing to be sent
from myself—Francesco Petrarch, who are you?

Petrarch says:

so, now someone is posting poems I have written and poems I
havent written, what do you make of this?

Petrarch says:

as well as me posting poems
to this person

Petrarch says:

ifeel abitscizoid

Laura says:

kindof spectral

Petrarch says:

you see why I have a precarious hold on things now?

Laura says:

but I know your feeling

Petrarch says:

Lol

Petrarch says:

a world of ghosts. it is

Petrarch says:

love it

Laura says:

it us the life of a poet I suppose

Petrarch says:

this is my publishing delirium,
and we are celebrating your
entrance into print as a poet

Petrarch says:

wonderful, you deserve laurels

Petrarch says:

so grand. let me spin you some across the floor

Petrarch says:

let me swoop you up and swirl you down

Laura says:

I would trade my moments in time

Laura says:

for one spin across the floor

Petrarch says:

oh. the heaven's generous

Laura says:

ha!

Petrarch says:

I'm allowed a whole
houseful of spirals

Laura says:

I wish that I were there

Petrarch says:

can hear us being called to a
higher plane

Petrarch says:

the heaven of attainment of
accomplishments

Laura says:

with you somehow
just for a moment

Petrarch says:

you are in a tender and very dear way

Petrarch says:

dreaming you are
a dream

Petrarch says:

your heartrays pierce my armor

Laura says:

I a telling you

Laura says:

tht I wil cme
and race ny dreans

Laura says:

across your heart

Laura says:

if for nothing more

Laura says:

thqan aday

Petrarch says:

a day can be forever
and a day

Laura says:

oops typos

Petrarch says:

I have adayortwo in memory like that

Laura says:

YOU.. are in trouble my friend

Petrarch says:

because of YOU?

Laura says:

and I bcan feel you tremble

Laura says:

in myquake

Petrarch says:

showering brilliance

Laura says:

Let us dance while we can

Petrarch says:

dance through the marble pillars

Petrarch says:

to the balcony

Laura says:

O take me to the corridor

Petrarch says:

you are very light

Laura says:

whilst I faint

Petrarch says:

I have a bottle of ether

Laura says:

lol

Petrarch says:

I mean ammonia

Laura says:

to the garden then, quickl~

Petrarch says:

whhhheeeeee

Petrarch says:

I whiffed it a bit to be sure

Laura says:

I want to hide you in my chair

Petrarch says:

I'm small

Laura says:

Inbited many but YOU so rare

Petrarch says:

dont inbite me too deep

Laura says:

chair is there

Laura says:

but never

Laura says:

occupied

Laura says:

say keep?

Laura says:

the chair

Petrarch says:

keep the chair

Laura says:

mmmmmmmm

Petrarch says:

not sure what youre thinking

Laura says:

ha

Laura says:

I want you in the chair

Petrarch says:

the dance leads to this chair?

Laura says:

o yes

Laura says:

sit

Petrarch says:

ok, I'm in the chair

Laura says:

Sit

Petrarch says:

yes, i am seated

Laura says:

in this chair

Laura says:

I bend to you

in this chair

Laura says:

I bend over to you across from this chair

Laura says:

we twist around this chair

Petrarch says:

our hair entangles

Laura says:

around this chair

Laura says:

I see our bodies
surrounding this chair

Laura says:

In my mind

Laura says:

I tell myself we are
not supposed to BE around

Laura says:

this chair

Laura says:

But we are

Laura says:

Inmymind

Laura says:

and whio

Laura says:

can sayv what?

Laura says:

about

Laura says:

this chair inymind?

Petrarch says:

we sit together in this chair

Petrarch says:

you facing me

Petrarch says:

I hold your weight

Petrarch says:

your gown is stretched

Petrarch says:

there is a awkward movement to find space
draw you closer to me in this freedom

Petrarch says:

what color are your eyes?

I cantsee in thislight?

Petrarch says:

take your hand

Petrarch says:

shake your shoulder a bit
to get you to look

Laura says:

0000

Petrarch says:

look at me> Laura

Laura says:

uh huh'

Petrarch says:

can this make you happy?

Laura says:

Sharing you is happiness
undeveloped

Laura says:

and a moment in time ripe with sweet being of truth

Laura says:

Happiness

Laura says:

is a fleeting moment

Petrarch says:

and I tremble the closeness

Laura says:

sure

Laura says:

I want you to toss me

Laura says:

hard

Laura says:

on your bed

Laura says:

Over and over

Laura says:

can you hear me? I NEED

thisd

Laura says:

i~m not confusing things

Laura says:

BUTt am agreat slut

Petrarch says:

am listening

Laura says:

Hahaha

Petrarch says:

I know you are after

my own heart

Laura says:

I have myb own heart

Petrarch says:

right, just checking for body parts

Petrarch says:

two hearts in tact

Laura says:

you think I want to claim ownership somewhwere upon you>?

Petrarch says:

when I am at this level, I have these odd feelings

Petrarch says:

get thru this

Laura says:

yes me too

Laura says:

but I overcome the wants the neglects

Laura says:

of expectations

Laura says:

There are no guarantees

Laura says:

EVER

Petrarch says:

dontwant there to be

Laura says:

In want

there is only possible suffice

Laura says:

I wantyou

Petrarch says:

can feet you close to me

Laura says:

I want your body

Laura says:

in true naked surprise

Petrarch says:

yes

Laura says:

000000000

Laura says:

I want

Laura says:

the ecstacy of physical

Laura says:

and am wiling tio meet its demiuse

Laura says:

oops

Petrarch says:

want you to be intimate but not to the point of demise

Laura says:

haha

Laura says:

Itv always ends up

Laura says:

on a plate of demise somehow

Petrarch says:

crispy fried, classic style

Laura says:

well done

Laura says:

at best

Petrarch says:

with tartar

Laura says:

I want you to toss me all over your bed

Laura says:

like a salad

Can you do that?

Petrarch says:

yes. I can, until you are diced

Laura says:

ok

Laura says:

then

Laura says:

we are on

Laura says:

for a hot one

Laura says:

you and I

Laura says:

We will have a water ritual

Laura says:

You and I

Laura says:

Do you see it?

Petrarch says:

oh yes, my imagination is

working overtime

Laura says:

There IS no one that wil do it
for you as...

Petrarch says:

am back to TRUST again, my love

Laura says:

I wan you Franscesco

Laura says:

I wantyu.

Laura says:

Trust?

Petrarch says:

damn. puters are difficult

Petrarch says:

Do the flowers change as I touch your skin?

Petrarch says:

I trust

Laura says:

You are afraid? of what?

Petrarch says:

I will be better once I see you for real

Petrarch says:

the erotic writing makes nervous

Petrarch says:

you there?

Laura says:

Francesco

Laura says:

reach

Laura says:

for me

Laura says:

please

Laura says:

please?

Petrarch says:

gamble it all on love, Laura

Laura says:

gamble?

Petrarch says:

even if this is absurd, do you believe me

Petrarch says:

helpless in the arms of Love

Laura says:

ys

Petrarch says:

no escape

Laura says:

true

Petrarch says:

our existence becomes like
a valuable pearl

Petrarch says:

we become like children

Laura says:

furnishihng

Petrarch says:

promising you anything

Petrarch says:

devine aggitation

Laura says:

Francesco

Laura says:

whisper me

Petrarch says:

Oui

Petrarch says:

 dont look at me

Laura says:

 aww

Petrarch says:

 fall into the safety of my words

Laura says:

 come mnnnn

Petrarch says:

 am drowning with you

 I cant remember who I was a few hours ago

Laura says:

 Francesco

Petrarch says:

 what is it Laura

Laura says:

 whisper me

 Please

Petrarch says:

 these words are for your ears only, my dream

Laura says:

 assume nothing

Petrarch says:

 You are a mirror

Petrarch says:

 You are a drum

Petrarch says:

 You are the ocean

Laura says:

 Yes

CANTO 43

“Who’s that dancing w/ Boss Cupid in a body harness?”

“Well, I’m not sure, but I’ve seen her a couple of times
very drunk in public.”

Sitting in the Hog’s Breath, I listened. I knew, but I kept my counsel.

The Triumph *of* Marriage, or The Trials *of* Laura as a Calendar *of* the Moon

Laura is the youngest, most beautiful daughter of a noble family in Provence. Her beauty rivals that of Venus, and Venus, feeling dissed, orders her son, Cupid, to wound Laura with one of his arrows. “Make Laura fall in love with the vilest of men or the most pitiful of beasts,” she commands.

Cupid spies on Laura, but as he attempts to shoot her, he cuts himself with the tip of his arrow and so falls in love with this mortal himself. Laura’s suitors mysteriously disappear. Venus puts a curse on the kingdom because no one is worshiping at her altar. The parents consult Apollo’s oracle, with the result that Laura is to be sacrificed to Apollo. Apollo owes one to Cupid and sets up the escape. Laura is left on a cliff to await being devoured by a python. She is whisked away by the wind god, Zephyrus.

She wanders, and with the aid of Pan, she discovers Castle Wonderful. Once she occupies the castle, spirits assist her. Draw her bath. Do her nails. Brew tea. She’s disoriented and expects the worse, but she’s told by the spirits to relax and to expect her host after dark. Cupid arrives, and although she can’t see him, she can feel his downy body and strong wings. She’s not sure what he is, but she enjoys him and their lovemaking. He comes to her night after night.

But after a time, she complains that she is bored during the day. There is only so much to see and only so much primping she can do. She misses her two sisters. Cupid reluctantly complies with her wish for them to visit. They have been married off, and although they are comfortable, there is something missing in their lives. They look around Laura’s digs, not fully comprehending where they are, but blown away at how their sister has lucked out. They are jealous and tell Laura she is married to a monster and that she should hide a dagger and a candle under their bed, and when her husband is asleep to light the candle and plunge the dagger into his heart.

Laura is naive. She has doubts, and that night, after her sisters have gone, and after her husband is satisfied and asleep, she lights the candle and holds it over her husband’s reclining body. Here’s an embellishment by Bulfinch that I like. The candle is so excited by Cupid’s beauty that the wax splatters on his skin. He awakes, and as he flies off he says, “Love cannot live with Suspicion!”

Laura wanders on a barren plain in search of Cupid. She comes upon Ceres’s temple, which she finds in disorder. She puts the hoes and rakes in nice, neat stacks, and she is rolling the hoses into loops, when

she is stopped by the goddess and told to cease and desist. She is instructed to take her problem directly to Venus, and with trepidation, Laura does as she is told.

She is received by Venus and given an interrogation definitely prohibited by the Geneva Convention. After nearly drowning on a water board and then fouling her gown after being given a hefty dose of Castor Oil, she is assigned a set of impossible tasks. Number one. She has to separate a pile of mixed seeds for Venus's parrot because this bird likes his pistachios neat. Laura knows the task is absurd. She sits down and has a good cry.

The elementals take pity on her. Fire, air, earth and water all come into play in the four tasks. While Laura mopes, the ants sort the different seeds into piles. When Venus returns and sees the fine work of the ants, she can't believe her eyes, and she gives Laura a thrashing and feeds her some moldy pizza.

Task number two. Get some Golden Fleece. Laura despairs when she sees the ferocious rams in the field across a raging river. So, she cries and thinks that maybe she'll drown herself. The river hears her, and the reeds tell her to go downstream where there are some rocks she can cross on, and for her to pick the fleece she needs from the thorn bushes. Laura does so, and when she returns with an armload of fleece, Venus is angry and gives her a good Dutch rubbing.

Task number three. Get water from the source of the River Styx, the river of death. The river issues forth from a cliff face and is protected by multi-headed serpents protruding from the cliff walls, their necks capable of covering all directions of approach. Laura is aided by an eagle, which flies between the serpents and returns with a small jar of the river water. Bamboo splinters under the fingernails, this time.

Fourth and final task. Venus demands, "Get me a drop of beauty, enough to last a day." Laura is given a box and sent to Proserpine, Goddess of the Underworld. Laura freaks and decides to commit suicide, an even better solution than crying. She climbs up a tower and is about to jump off, when the tower speaks to her. Laura discovers a hidden staircase, which she descends, and is given a vial of the potion she requires.

However, and this is where Laura shines, before she returns the box to Venus, she considers her haggard condition, and knows that if Cupid were to see her in her present state, he wouldn't love her. So, she opens the vial, and a deep sleep overcomes her.

Cupid helps her recover with a kiss, and she completes her task. Cupid intercedes with Jupiter, reminding the dude of the many times he has been helped to score. Laura is received into heaven. Drinks ambrosia. Is given a nice apartment. And Venus dances at the wedding.

And just to round things out, Laura gives birth to a baby girl named Bliss.

An occult outline of the story of Cupid & Laura follows, utilizing the Major Trumps of the Tarot & the following numerological system: 1=beginning, 2=balance, 3=expansion, 4=realization, 5=change, 6=harmony, 7=uncertainty, 8=activity, 9=wisdom.

0 – The Fool – New Moon through Crescent Moon

PHASES – New beginnings, move forward on faith

1 – Magus – Access to power – The eclipse of Venus by a mortal, Venus calls Cupid – beginning

- 2 – Priestess – Hidden issues – Parents consult Apollo’s oracle, Apollo & Cupid confer — balance
- 3 – Empress – Potential birth – Laura left on rock, aided by Zephyrus – expansion
- 4 – Emperor – Exertion of will – Laura wanders & finds Ceres’s castle, aided by Pan – realization
- 5 – High Priest – Traditional search for meaning – Occupies castle, attended by spirits – change
- 6 – The Lovers – Testing, choice – Cupid charges her not to look upon his features – harmony
- 7 – The Chariot – Initiation & mastery of opposites – Laura begs to see her sisters – uncertainty
- 8 – Justice – Karmic retribution, an unfinished lesson – Sisters instill suspicion – activity
- 9 – The Hermit – Separation from others – Laura beholds her lover & wounds him – wisdom
- 10 – The Wheel – All things must pass – Laura tells the sisters her tale, sisters fall – Gibbous Moon Phase
- 11 – Strength – Lower nature brought into harmony w/ higher – Laura searches for Cupid – beginning
- 12 – The Hanged Man – Enlightenment through limitation, listening to inner voices – Laura attempts to put Ceres’s temple in order – balance
- 13 – Death – Transformation & regeneration, prepare for rebirth – Punished by Venus – expansion
- 14 – Temperance – Moderation, compromise, integration – Ants sort grains into piles – realization
- 15 – The Devil – A challenge to weakness – Venus angry, throws Laura in dungeon – change
- 16 – The Tower – Breakup of crystallized patterns – Laura despairs of getting the Golden Fleece – harmony
- 17 – The Star – Clarity, insight – Laura aided by the river – uncertainty
- 18 – The Moon – Venus angry, gives Laura a new task – activity
- 19 – The Sun – Laura gets water from River Styx, aided by eagle – wisdom
- 20 – Judgement – A new moon phase f/ Disseminating to the Last Quarter
- 21 – The World – Laura returns to an angry Venus – beginning
- 0 – The Fool, the process of transformation – to get a vial of beauty
- 23 – Laura goes to the tower to commit suicide – balance
- 24 – Descent into Underground – expansion
- 25 – Returns, opens box, falls into deep sleep – realization
- 26 – Kissed by Cupid, completes task – change
- 27 – Cupid intercedes with Jupiter - harmony
- 28 – Laura received into Olympus, drinks Ambrosia - uncertainty
- 29 – Birth of Bliss, Pleasure, Joy - activity
- 0 – A new cycle with, hopefully, the gods wiser

While the outer narrative reveals an arch-typical conflict between the gods and a mortal, Laura’s inner story moves from initial innocence to wisdom. Laura’s adventure concerns her evolution from the earth plane to the plane of heaven, the transmutation of a mortal into a goddess. This is reflected in the Journey of the Fool & in the Zodiac.

The Kore. This maiden’s journey begins once her beauty becomes a challenge to Venus and the

involvement of Cupid. In terms of a calendar of the moon this is the New Moon phase, a beginning ripe with uncertainty. The triple goddess is made up of the Maiden, the Mother and the Crone. The Mother. The body of the story details Laura's gaining experience, her tests and achievements. As for the part of the Crone, Laura completes her tasks and is immortalized.

The story of The Marriage of Cupid & Laura illustrates that success comes from realizing your unique achievements, that you can make do with what you've got (Aries). First thing you learn is the need to make concrete sense of your individuality and to seek supports, even if it means pulling yourself up by your bootstraps (Taurus). Evaluation and assimilation of ideas, then, and the ability to communicate these ideas to others (Gemini). Stability is a must. Happiness requires a feeling for home and roots (Cancer). Emotional energies overflow into the environment (Leo). "I love you, but I kill you, but I'll love you forever." That sort of thing. The cycle reaches its apex when Laura tries to put Ceres's temple into order. Her original impulse is toward self-improvement and hard work (Virgo), but she gets knocked about.

The four tasks are opportunities to figure out what works and what doesn't. Here, she learns to rely on others (Libra). This is the point of the Full Moon. Then, the yoga of managing her energy in order to accomplish the tasks at hand (Scorpio). This is the beginning of the Disseminating Moon phase. In the Disseminating Moon phase, happiness is sought by deep study and by crisis and reorientation (Sagittarius), and in the Last Quarter phase, Laura shows she's got the grit and might just get her man (Capricorn). After missing her opportunity for an extreme makeover, she gets a clue that there are larger issues (Aquarius). Finally, in the Balsamic Moon phase, all fruits and final products are realized. This is where karma dissolves. This is where Laura attains the rainbow body (Pices).

(Sources: *The Lunation Cycle* by Dane Rudhyar, *The Metaphysical Handbook* by David & Lucy Pond, and *The Golden Ass* by Lucius Apuleius.)

CANTO 44

The street is slippery and wet, and so
East West is refuge from the teaming rain.
I have damp feet and, damn it, a cold brain,
And there's a big hole in my shadow.
Clarity and charity are fleeting,
And no matter whatever I might wish,
The air belongs to invisible fish.
Always warmed by your welcome greeting,
A special touch is what I need today.
You prepare the perfect cup of chai,
And while making change for me you spy
A tarnished coin and say, softly, quickly,
"Oh yes, it's worn, but it's not all that old."
Suddenly, I'm all composed of gold.

CANTO 45

April *was* a cruel month.

Laura died on the 6th in Avignon, 1348

Dead. Gone and took his heart.
And him feeling dead & gone
complained of love to Love.

My Laura's alive,
living in Halifax. April was cruel.
And May.
June, now,
O pleasure, O torment.

"I have," She writes, "been thinking about you a great deal since I last saw you. It just is not often that I have such a strong attraction and immediate feeling for someone who, as you said, is also good company.

I walk out to look at the stars
and hope to run
into you, fantasize that you will
sneak into my room late night.
Of course much is now fantasy
and projection—who knows what it would really be like to be together.

Every time I have seen you
it has stirred me and disturbed me
and left me with thoughts of you for
days afterward, but I was also more able to keep myself in check by knowing
that we agreed it was not right for us to have a relationship and knowing that
it is not something you are even looking for. And likely it still is not right for
us, but what you said when I saw you made it seem more possible (even
though I tell myself that it is probably the fact that I am leaving that let us
feel free to say what we did). I hope I am not telling you too much here."

Dear Reader,
 my Laura's words
 Era Day
 soft sun thru clouds
Guard down. Taken up
 & shaken vostr'occhi
vost' voice

(What is the Italian for this?)
gait great grace
mi legaro Donna

(four lines of bad road omitted here)
4 years of bad luck, chance ?

The chance of She
My eye an open highway to the heart
my ear our auras
tears

Eros penetrated
ferir me de saetta she
in mind of someone on her arm
& so spoken for,
cloud cover yielding but
one single ray,
yet spoke.

the Petrarchian yoyo

I love her, I hate her
Will she be ready when the time is ripe?

When she wants me,
will I want to see her?

What IS my intent?

What the hand that made this mess?

“Thanks for coming to see me.
Obviously I was having a hard
time speaking because I was nervous. Scared of my having such a strong
attraction to you and admitting it,

afraid that once I admit it I make
things more real, and that I have to
be sure that what I say is true, scared of kissing with you and not having told
Jeff (because I have never been deceitful that way to anyone I have been
romantically

involved with and I wonder what that
means). And I felt nervous about our age difference. And it makes me
nervous that it is easier to write what I feel than say it, so I write more than I
would say. But mostly right now
I want not to talk or write to you
but rather to kiss you
and be kissed.”

CANTO 46

“I’m doing my prostrations,
visualizing
all the lineage masters,

and She arises as a yidam
in the Refuge Tree,
me in yabyum as her consort.

I want to kiss her lotus toes.

O wonderful that there was a man
that could awaken!
O wonderful that the awakened man
could teach the way to enlightenment!

O wonderful that the enlightened man
did not stay in this world as an immortal!
O lucky to be alive!
O lucky to be able to send flowers
to my love one more time!
O lucky to frolic in a big bed!
To lay side by side
& let our mindstreams mingle!
“I’ve dreamed of kissing you
f/ the day we first met, & yesterday
we talked of kissing,
& everywhere I looked
people were kissing, on a bench
along the trail, in a car
in front of your apartment &
I couldn’t let you leave w/out a kiss,
that kiss still on my lips.”

*My angel came and sang,
The church is cold
but the ale house is warm.*

“Kissing you & being kissed
is what I want, & maybe
there is time before you leave,
& we could meet and kiss
until our heart’s are full,
though a million kisses
could not satiate my desire.

You didn’t have much room
to squirm out of kissing me,

when I cornered you in the restaurant,
so you are not at fault for being

deceitful there, it was kiss or create
a scene,

but, now, like you realize
the kissing and the desire
for more kisses is real.”

No more words,
only more kisses.

CANTO 47

“I am nourished by a food so noble
True
that I do not envy Love
ch’ambrosia et netter
False.

Language is rotten.
People forget links.

All I know is, Cecelia,
when you are at work
as we potter about our lives
I misses you.

Were there a critical intelligence
you well-educated dufusses
we’d pour litter in its box.

Never delay vengeance!

Its exaction teaches a good lesson.”

The woman he loves
sits on the right hand of God
but raises her knees for him.
(Or would if he could get her
for just one minute
to himself, and the time was ripe
for him as well as her.

Time = God
w/ minutes for angels
and words at the mercy of any
angelologist who can afford a course.

God doesn't care how fast you go.

Blood pouring f/ a wound or two.

“They carried me into a house
from the street. I'd lost a lot of blood.

No longer can I roam from hill to hill.
The doctor says I'll heal, but I doubt it.”

And Perdita played transvestite.

“If this feels blurry or vague
it is no doubt my sense of inadequacy,
never your perspicacity
never your selfishness,
never
yourselves who are at fault,
my middle-class readers,

never having come under the scrutiny of Her who sits to the right of
God,

to the left, thus, of the audience

al sacro loco ove fu posto in croce

to be understood in atheist terms,

of course,

as habit stumbling upon a necessity

that is purely personal,

to die for

or worse,

to live.”

The mind passes. It is a noble crib

milk & honey within easy reach

Honesty & it passes

on from its objects those exquisites

Those persons whom it picked

picks

has picked had

as its

personages

te ador.

“Cecelia is his only Laura,

and for me,

my Laura

in Halifax.

She has gone, but I do not fully
feel her absence, although I spent

a sleepless night trying to imagine
her installed somewhere unfamiliar,
without anchor, perhaps desperate.

I couldn't eat.
I couldn't sleep.

Then, I saw her at rest,
 blissfully quiet, sun pouring thru her window.

I saw her in an upscale neighborhood
not far from a small downtown, friendly
& fun w/ places like the \$1 Store
& a funky public library w/ tattered books.

It's green and wet and
on the community bulletin board
 are announcements of free concerts
& cheap yoga.

 Now is autumn
the leaves give way to the sky. I
loved, therefore love even today, each bough my poor heart lit up on.
That's why the bough breaks
 & we drink Lethe to the dregs.

O, let me live in a cave
where my hair can grow
& my sex be neuter!"

CANTO 48

My printer's devils are in html hell

“The sun shines for you, he said,” sd Molly Bloom, “How he kissed me
under the Moorish wall.”

Citralis—

“When the moment is ripe, my man is ready.”

Anyway you add it,
it's a rug in a jug,
it's a Dzog Chen garage sale

Stretchings & prayers

“Chain them to their looms!
I hear that across the ages.”

The tree of life in the nook, “a stack” of the levels if the tree of life is
looked at from the top
the light changes, and I SEE the myth
as I
have the faculty

goes beyond my capacity
humbling, blessed, an artist is not responsible
for every element in the art

no wrong notes
unless they're in the wrong place

this note exists on your block
as a representative of
around the corner

a dented skepticism
is better
than a staid skepticism

human condition
rivaling
stars

have developed my capacities
into a poem w/ a pattern

spend my time studying a pattern

exists in silence
out of the middle of nowhere
we come into this house
of many rooms

“Do you want a light on?”

Mozart messes w/ my heartstrings, raises his baton and conducts an orchestra of Dakinis in *Fuga allegro moderato e maestoso a tre soggetti ed a 4 voci*.

“My heart is a pin ball machine.”

And what happened next was to defy anything I had ever expected, and as usual, I was completely unprepared. Fat chance I was going to spend the evening cuddling with Laura and watching *Kill Bill Vol. 2*. The kitchen was buzzing with flies, and there was a stench.

A touch of awareness kicked in as I entered the room. This was not the kitchen as I remembered it. What are these flies doing here? How did they get in? The door to the back porch was open, and it was dark there. Louder fly noise from that direction.

I walked over and flipped on the light. Nada. Flies. Lots of them, coming through a tear in the screen door. Maybe something dead under the porch.

Flashlight. One in the car. Better get that before I go any further. Laura called from the front room, “Francesco, what are you doing?”

“I going out to the garage.”

“Bring in a bottle of wine, if you’re going out there,” she said.

“Right-O,” I signaled back, but the wine would have to wait.

My curiosity was working overtime. Even my tabby’s curiosity had peaked. He rubbed his body against my leg, my trusty sidekick. I got my torch, and we followed our noses and the buzzing. It’s a big house, built over a hundred years ago, built of brick. Most of the houses in this town are built of brick, the clay mined from the quarry where the rodeo & fairgrounds now sit, fairground built to celebrate the resurrection of the town after the 1896 fire. The town grew out of its ashes like a Phoenix. Mythical bird. Didn’t expect to find one rotting under my porch.

I spoke to the tabby, “Scratch, is that the rotting corpse of a mythical bird or not?” Scratch looked and sniffed. “It’s not a peacock or an ostrich or a dodo—those are real birds, although the dodo is now extinct—no, this is not a real bird, this is a Phoenix, and a Phoenix is a mythical bird. A bird of the imagination. A bird of pure qualities. It’s a bird that arises once in an eon, and it’s supposed to rise from its own ashes. Only, this bird is rotting.”

Scratch looked at me and back at the Phoenix, seeming to say, “Tell me about it.”

I went on. “It’s fouling up my house. What goes here?”

There was a wooden chair by the step, and I used that to prop open the screen door. Then, I turned on the ceiling fan in the kitchen and waved my arms at the flies. “Out, out,” I said, excitedly. I had been looking for my fourth mystical beast in the game *Five Great Karmas*. I had Laura’s Anthill in the garden, and I had a Griffin in the garage. Laura had slain all but my last Basilisk, the last still her role to realize. And now, a Phoenix! Rare. Not easily encountered. Harder to contain, but possible—there were ways. High-test asbestos-steel lining a porcelain sarcophagus. Three months in the making once ordered from McHammermil. I’d always expected to get a sighting before I would order. This is different. A body in this summer heat turns to

compost fast. So, now what? And how did a Phoenix become mortal?

The flies seemed to understand my gesticulations. Only a couple remained, buzzing by the sink. I was totally buzzed myself, projecting my next move. Thrown off balance. Expecting new activity ahead.

“Francesco,” Laura called, “the bottle of wine.”

CANTO 49

You, who by cluttering, assemble sparse rime,
Those who are superb, & I who dive naked,
Heart a cartoon colored with juvenile errors,
Fit for scorn once our era sinks into its future.

A skein of clashing styles in praise of weeping,
Aye, & of raging, catches my leaden eye,
Which watches as though with amorous interest
The fate of one as miserable for love as I am.
True, this man’s diet of fresh vegetables, popular
Today in the extreme, & with astounding speed,
The servants say, inspires genial, sly copulation.

But as for my deal with marriage: forgone forever,
& the fifth floor, with its charming concierge,
Split into four pieces, words are not, alas! enough.

This early Canto, hitherto unfound, has none of the easy elegance or moving simplicity of this poet’s mature writing. I only include it here to show what a difference Laura made to his poetry and indeed to his life. Those who have so cheaply pitied him for loving a woman married to another man, should give more thought to the misery of his situation and to the happiness which it brought him.

CANTO 50

If only I had your cuntscent on my fingers,
taste on my lips of yours that sucked my fingers,
your fingers phantoms fondling my cock,
breasts in my hands, likewise, your kisses—

Ah, your kisses—our kisses
that would draw the rest from us
still on my mouth. But when
will Heaven's gate admit

That part of me carved for the task,
carved, curved, craved by your sweet self?
Go, anguished sighs, tell her I can

No longer bear to dream of pelvic thrusts
to complete my happiness,
and so, I growl my woe.

A rare item in these translations, the above is a far older order of the English sonnet. It is as though, having to show us he could do it, he thenceforth elected to follow forms that focus, mindful of their meaning, on what Petrarch means to be saying.

CANTO 51

Love who lives in the heart

as fallow lives in the meadow
as kittycat purrs on the pillow
as spouses rock in one boat

breaks out upon such instigation
as She leaves in her wake:
unclad and clad at once, slaked
& unslaked, Magus of intuition,

Odalisque of sexual adventure,
whose promptings bend the bars
so the Love within escapes—
in terror to crawl back to its indenture
or in ecstasy to romp among the stars.
Either way, the heart is built for breaks.

D.B. in a rhetorical mode. Petrarch himself is unmitigatedly rhetorical, so it's hard to avoid the infection.

CANTO 52

In black, green, orange, near white
they lived in November.
These proud lovers repeatedly drove
inside hillside orchards wearing hats.

Francesco painted Hawaiians
with a great deal of complicated
interrelationships, their natural color
included much from Arabia.

Laura rolled her hips and climbed
through cold forests
with ten thousand bells glistening
in the exact center.

In spring, a priest buried a dust devil
who had confessed only one word.
Somewhere between his lips
a scream at the sun upstairs.

Life was exciting for Laura.
She grew up in a part of Italy
where they used clam shells for money.
Her mother told her not to spend

More than 100 clam shell on anything.
She went barefoot to the mouth of the sea
while he sat in the corner telling himself
not to be spiteful.

I look at them, and there's no question
about it, since they still remember their
childhood. Streams of rain shoot off.
She would never hurt her teddy bear.

I am often sullen, and when I am still
I sense them behind a velvet curtain
as the moments pass
making love.

By all accounts a real estate agent
has found a buyer for this flat.
Coyotes cry in the vacant lot out back.
“When do we eat?” they ask.

Paranoia breathes among myriad beings.
Orange blossoms in Laura’s mouth
make the occasional flight to the theater
Francesco rented.

Laura’s teeth scamper after God.
The doctor tells her to laugh
and decipher the hieroglyphics
on the gibbous moon in Tuscany.

A hunk of meat on a stick is a pleasure.
I gesture to the priest, “Relax, the wheel
is a way of linking suffering existence.”
Coyote says, “Yum, sausage links.”

Francesco has a developmental scheme
for what comes in and what goes out.
The mouth and the anus and so forth.
Laura prefers to take the bus to the zoo.

Her underwear was familiar. Last night’s
storm clutched my hand, but I survived.
A street light dips way inside.
A hammer would help.

So steep, the prophesy that chose
a hillside constructed of flames.
Too great for leaping into their minds,
fog horns keep them apart.

Dog tracks soil a limp flag.
A tooth in his ear
looks close at the other name.
He doesn't mind getting lost.

Now, see Love's pitying words
written over his afflicted heart
where beauty and the cops came
not to kill but to take him shopping.

He weeps because she lies in rubble.
His pride is what keeps him afloat.
Her disembodied spirit calculates
by all accounts he's a hardworking man.

From a few points, he tells himself
a city has inexplicable depths
filling the eternal with a well of magic.
He begins at once a song of day.

The next area is swollen with
everything she needed to do,
including each person
from beyond the barrier.

Francesco feeds his mind on thunder.
His curved voice draws Laura near.
He has fish to fry, and his gargoyle's
lips forget the space between things.

CANTO 55

Einstein's first wife,
giving her colossal kisses
and tender kisses, a special
relativity, a corpusculence
of kisses

Einstein was a tertion, discoverer of mind treasures
& Mileva Maric was his consort
or vise versa

E=MC squared is a mind *ter*
planted
 by great bliss queen, Yeshe Tsogyel
 while in her Wrathful Samantabhadri
aspect

Why does a drop of water rise in the
channel of an inserted straw?

Where is gravity?

Nestled in a rose in the middle
of midnight,
 breathing, how constant
my love, and tracing your form
 in the window's fog.
Moonlight gleamed thru, & though
the living wears down, he finds

a luminous, stubborn joy.

Her favorite things—flowers, fountains
flags & fireworks, but
when he's near her
another *f* word comes to mind,
the ground begins to sway, his clock
grows horns,
& the whole world is a heavenly display.

Fire is water falling upward.

An old man stutters when he talks.
A girl in pink flutters when she walks.
What is the limit she'll permit?

Fire is water falling upward.

We're playing w/ out a game board.
Both feet off the ground
flying sideways.

A few more tosses, Laura,
& our lives will be salad.

Drank to the dregs their mindhearts
bitches & bastards
as the mind moves on
leaving them behind who meant
dappled sweetness & tar apple
upon apple
to their voracious
errantnesses! Let the hateful causes
step into the limelight.
They are monstrously
unable
in this riptide
where we only live once

where we are only
so much scar tissue.

“Scars & stripes forever”

“Scars make your body more interesting,”
Laura sd, “I have a lot of scars,” and I noted
that in fact, she did.

I was not sure, whether or not she was
using the tone of the sarcastic imperative or the heretical imperative.

Absent thee,
from the real brimstone awhile.
Neither serious
nor lyrical be.

—Carl Rakosi

Laura is an historical babe, dude.

If I were suddenly to write her a sonnet, would she listen or would she
object? Is she an objectivist? The best bet would be to call the jail
reception area and ask if anyone there would like a few pet rock poems?

In this story, a man needs a woman, a man needs to fall in love with her,
and he needs her not to be committed to someone else.

Probably won't write much poetry.

Have a shrew for a wife. Lots of little Petrarchs running about. And he
would resent her, and she would turn on him, turn away from him, and
he would feel guilty as hell about it because he still loves her. All this is
clear. What else is
he going to do?

All day her name was Mylover, and it was Bloomsday June 14, 1904 when
her poem, “My Special Relativity”, appeared, the day she and Francesco

went on their first date. Their conversation turned
decidedly philosophic. Near the Moorish Wall, she confided,
“With Platoe in Aquinashole, the same extension
which constitutes the nature of a body constitutes the nature of space.”

And Francesco replied,
“5foot2/eyes blue/35-22-35
5foot6/legs amour/36-24-37,
6foot3/relativity/42-30-44.”

Differential equations that are part
of the ordinary eternal machinery where space is regarded neither as
substance, as Newton maintains, nor as Descartes would have it, as an
adjectival state of extended bodies.

Instead, it's a system of relations, which, as a matter of logic, is the void,
a place where words melt into number and where time is space is matter
is energy, timespacematterenergy, a metaphorical meta-place, that is so
absurd that only lovers can find it.

tomorrow
yes (ter) day
to day

“Yesterday is gone forever,
& tomorrow will never come.
The 9th wave is a long time coming.
Destiny in the balance.
No second chance.”

*See Time that flies and spreads
his hasty wing!*

Distance & solitude may be what I need
some monument of peace

that opens into all above—but
clouds foreboding
ruffled by the winds in my life's storm.

I have found heaven below.

CANTO 56

Mileva Maric & Albert Einstein
developing a special
relativity
Dark matter,
dark energy
C squared = the square root of E
Divided by M initials carved
on the wall of spacetime.

Why does a drop of water rise in the
channel of an inserted straw?
Penetrate the air?
Where is gravity?

New gravity. You walk on air
in your new gravity. No matter how
Heavy, you keep it up—ignoring signs,
moving with your heart. A new gravity,
Disagree, it loses authority.
Overheard—“Those people, are you
One of those, too?”—A leaf, you move
into openness. You have important things
To do & no time for details.

Live deep—summon laziness, a breeze,
The shape it comes forth in.

Some go the way you think they might.
So a leaf in a warm wind starts out.

Æolus operates, veins filled w/ sunlight.
Wind strikes a chord, skirts bellow, &

Bodies dance whether they want or not.
Wind affects a single figure,

so many measures of one scale,
Then so many of another—
wheatfields augmented w/backroads.

Fields come to meet me, wires loose,
the light harsh, I await a late bus.

At rest, I stay at rest until you
enter. Do you have a date?

In a manner of speaking, you say
leaving for the Corner Stone.

Sunday night at Rodeo, down on all
fours in the shoots. The grass, brutal
Compared to your caress, the mint rank
beside your scent, the creek's chatter
Overwhelmed our words.

Earth loved us.

Green shadows follow the late afternoon.

To my eyes, a field between two firs.
I listen to grasshoppers. Their thighs
make clear sounds in the stillness.

The bobwhite bobwhites, and a bird
called purplewreath purplewreathes.

Another, purple crepe, purple crepe.

The chitbird's chit chit chit's heard.
One sings drinkyourtea, one,

takeoffyourunderwearitisspring.

I hear voices, I see visions, but no matter
how disordered my senses,
I'm no Fool—or, if so, in the grand tradition.
Knowing all lovers change, although
I'd be The Last, I try again to impress
my heart in yours. Let me move w/in
You by the reading of my gift.

You will succeed & be acknowledged,
absorbing much that is wrong.
You will, by instinct, become an artist
& be remembered for what is yours alone.
You've got that bod. You are
sensuous pleasure & your clothes
Doubly liquefactive.
You were made to be laid, no matter
Some find that shameful.
You have been given a gift by Love,
To transform what is base into grace.

Hand on hand, smile on smile,
I think and think, I do as I do.
Unhealed, the hurt hurts.
Everything past was once in the future.
What's next? "Tell me," you say,
"It's not just DNA."

CANTO 57

Letter f/ Laura to Francesco

In some ways I think that living here is a bit like being in a convent. The Inuit girls are “protected” with strict rules, including no men in their wings—not even for a day visit. As a resident advisor, I cannot have men over either. Some of the other RA’s have lived here four years or more and some are religious. Others are young things going to graduate school.

Most are not celibate however; therefore the analogy is not strictly correct. The evening security guard is a divinity student and studying to be a minister as well as a professor. This place used to be a Catholic orphanage, and some vestiges of religious iconography can be found. Not much about the building has been changed since the Indian School took it over 15 years ago.

The Inuits are one of the indigenous groups of Indians in the Arctic. The names Eskimo and Aliut refer to all the different sea mammal-hunting peoples in Arctic Alaska, and the Inuits of Arctic Canada & Greenland.

We are up a hill in a very expensive, green neighborhood on a big piece of land, near some large parks. The best part is the green and trees and birds, rabbits, even coyote, it is rumored.

Letter f/ Francesco to Laura

a lover’s parallel with abelard & heloise comes to mind, with your living in a place “a bit like a convent” and me continuing along my monk’s path, and the narrative of old pet rock is thus rejuvenated, and if i suffer, i am putting this to good use went to a wonderful house w/ bromige, owned by a landscape artist who has built a healing palace on joy road, which runs along the ridge between graton & occidental, a house w/forty ft ceilings covered with arabic rugs of all sizes, woven between 1700 & 1850, the cutoff point where non-traditional dyes were introduced, rugs from palaces & many prayer rugs, and the host very knowledgeable, talked about the tree of life motif, which represents the chakras and how prayer opens the crown chakra, as detailed in the rugs’ designs our host is a body worker & he worked on bromige, who has been needing some healing energy, since he has been slow to recover from his strokes, as well as being diabetic and physically inactive due to

his infected foot, while bromige was being realigned, i went for a walk through a terraced garden, laid out in eight levels representing the sufi heavens & it was getting late & i knew cecelia was expecting us for dinner

She can get heated.
Boy, can she get heated—
she was heated that evening
When we were late, 3 hours late
We could have phoned
But we got into those rugs,
and Brian, he had his maniacal
Agenda, and the other guy was
into doing his bodywork &
Mysticism, and the house was so big,
it was easy to get lost
If she had been there, she would
understood how time disappeared
At one point, I thought we were leaving
but he said, “Oh, another half hour”
So, I went to the garden, and it
wasn't a half hour, it was another hour
And I walked in the garden feeling
suspicious, trying my utmost to believe
Someone wanted to give all this energy
& go on giving, long after you
Didn't want them to, a feeling like being
caught in a riptide.

Love f/ Mister Sweet Lips

Letter f/ Laura to Francesco

I want to tell you that your kisses, before I left, tasted so sweet and good and surprised me with their intensity and ability to open me up. But it also sounds like you are teasing me, signing your letter Mr. Sweet Lips, so I feel foolish (but

I guess I can take the teasing) and really it was your mouth that tasted sweet and maybe it was just because of the Pepsi you drank, but maybe people either inherently taste sweet or they don't. I enjoyed reading the first cantos although some of the references certainly were lost on me since I am not familiar with the work it is based on but would be curious to read that original poem. Also I am curious about the story of Heloise and Abelard.

But this I can probably find readily on my own or even imagine what it probably is, because once you know the structure of these stories they tend to repeat themselves, and it is how they are told that makes all the difference.

XOXOXO Laura

CANTO 58

The way of magnanimous
 understanding
where a gerbil knows he's a gerbil

& thus acts correctly & refrains
 from pissing in the river

& my Laura is released
to live with me forever in non-gluttony

 non-idleness a-sleep

 where true love flourishes
& not just in the suburbs of my brain

As for the iceberg known as meaning

Were there a Heaven
We would want to go there

Were there a Humanity
We would want to wear it
not as burden, rather, ornament

Were there a God
We would want him to like us
to be his unisex handmaidens

Were the world blind
compared to what
we'd sail away to a finer port

Were there a will in the wind
we would wish its intelligence
to fetch us through dark valleys
& stop us dwelling upon faults

Orient me, each would cry
Each to the sun in his sky

Quantity-wise & quality-wise
piteous tears reach critical mass
in of all eras, ours

If I could play with your rosebud
minding to press *down*

Critical mass, like a gathering,

a gathering in the nerves
might bend Justice Herself.

LeMond.

Gluttony, pornography, sprawling us
 across the cushions of idleness
& self-congratulation
 along the American Way

supported by slavery & murder
 at the borders.

Those days!

My other life went up my nose
 & lives in splendid isolation
 somewhere in my brain

that barely functions. “Help!?”

Help what? A river to arise on Helicon
headed straight to here, uprooting
what quickly’s so much trash
 or
rescue one more gerbil from just fate?

et e si spento ogni benigno lume

As for laurels, gerbils elect gerbils
& act purely proud & high & mighty
but their poems, when they write them,
 happy as clams at high tide
to use the word ‘spir-it-u-al-it-y’
 as if for them God might still exist

suck

like the mud at low tide

So goes the State
How goeth Laura?

Does any love discard the garbage dump?

“Philosophy.
You can’t afford the rent!”

Where will my friends afford to live?

You will have few
along the way you take.

Then there’s the question of grace
Grace for sinners, grace for not
& how to distinguish it from offers
Zinging in f/ the Chamber of Commerce
(What do you personally
not like so far?
And who are you?)

These three lines appear in the original Mss. only.

Respect? You want respect?
I’ll show you respect!

Let’s start a fresh Crusade
140 acres each for all your men
Let Babylon tremble

And, oh yes, tell us about yourself,
ditz, your special needs. But
at the same time, Aidez-moi!
Language is people.

CANTO 59

Letter from Laura

Recently, my beloved poets, by chance someone brought me a copy of the first forty-nine cantos of *The Petrarch Project*, and I saw at once that it was about us, and was all the more eager to read it since the writers are so dear to my heart. Having lost them in reality I hoped at least to create an image of them from the words. But nearly every line of this poem is filled with ambiguity and distortion as it tells the pitiful story of our condition and the direction which you, my only love, continue to go. The ambiguity, I suppose, is in the many voices of the poem. You and Bromige have several voices, a voice as each of yourselves in the first person and a third person omnipotent voice, which I take to be the narrator.

On top of this you both have a voice in the persona of Petrarch. And, then, there are some minor characters who deliver a line or two. The corporal has a voice, and I occasionally hear the groaning of a German guy dying from a gunshot wound. Also, Laura is given a voice, and this is where the story seems to get distorted, as there seem to be a wide variety of Lauras.

In your case, Francesco, there are several Lauras from the past, and that is fine, since I can see it has been awhile since you've received any tenderness. These Lauras, I can see, are now dead to your ardent affections. The present Laura, which I take to be me, I recognize as through a glass darkly, and as for Petrarch's Laura, all I can say in my guise as Heloise is that she lived two centuries after me. As for your collaborator, he has only one Laura, his present wife, Cecelia.

In this letter you do carry out the

promise you made your friend at the beginning, that he would think his own troubles little or nothing, in comparison with yours. He's had his strokes and his diabetes, and you've had your cancer and broken legs, but whereas he has a beautiful, blonde Laura, named Cecelia, in his present life, your yidam has been the Wrathful Lion-headed Dakini, Simhamukha for many years.

All the characters in *Spade* bewail injuries to their physical bodies and finally find surcease from the treacheries of life in the Sufi Fourth Heaven. You poets certainly do have your ways.

Only the abominable jealousy and violent attacks of the Neocoms could drive poets to such a state. Your compassion is boundless when you gloss over what at their instigation was done to your distinguished poetic and publishing work.

I have heard of the plots against you and the foul slanders spread against you and the scandal stirred up among many people because you have created works contrary to custom. Your spirits hold up well against the intolerable persecution that you've endured at the hands of the present regime.

Imagine

being called mere language poets at this stage of your careers and being stripped of your laurels. You brought your sad story to an end with the enthronement of Thom Gunn in the Fourth Heaven. No one could read or hear this story dry-eyed.

In this second set of cantos, you seem to be suffering on the level of the romantic heart, and the wounds are inflicted on your psyche rather than your body.

My own sorrows are renewed by the detail in which you have each told of our meetings and partings, in my stepping from the shadows and changing

everything, & especially in the online romance using instant messenger. The wings of angels are definitely singed by that electronic intercourse.

All of us here at the Inuit School are driven to despair of your suffering, and every day we await in fear and trembling the latest rumors. We beg you to write of your perils in which you are still storm-tossed.

XOXOXO Laura

Letter from Francesco

at first, after having the radioactive seed implantation, i was feeling bruised and glowing wildly and needed healing vibes from everyone, now i feel better since i feel less oppressed by my cancer and released from the deliberation of the should i? shouldn't i? wait and see, mental games going on in my head, the operation really no worse than a kick in the groin with a steel-toed boot, i hardly noticed, yesterday, i went down to my bone doc and had him remove the pins from my right ankle, so i can sit in the lotus position without the pins pressing into the rug, no excuse now for not being able to sit in the full lotus

the doc gave me a few local anesthetic shots around the ankle, but then he couldn't find his screw driver, so i told him it would be ironic if i had to go out to my car and get my philips-head, and he said his screw driver was special, but that a small allen wrench would do, finally, he borrowed his office partner's instrument, and went to work, and he got them right out of there, couldn't feel anything, but the idea of little screws being screwed out of my ankle made me twitchy, so i got on a passing cloud shaped like a garuda bird and flew to snowy tibet while they worked, and the nurse gave me a count down

there's number 2, one more to go, squit, squit, squit sounds, very small threads, squit, squit, ik, whoa, i felt that one, but keep going, not much of an incision, so once the screws were removed, i hardly cared about the radioactive seeds, & i did pass a seed, must've made it down a little passageway in the prostate, caught it in my handy radioactive seed screen

and put it in my personal lead-lined pillbox, very doctor tellerish, went to the urologist this morning, who told me i'm fine

i had a list of questions, are the rivets in my jeans picking up radioactivity? "no," told him that i showed the seed i passed to a friend, will that hurt him? "no, you get more radioactivity w/an x-ray," i told him i was becoming concerned about all this radioactivity, so they covered me with a lead jacket, am i being overly cautious? "yes," how many times did you insert the needle with the seeds? "about 2 dozen," how many seeds did you plant? "over 100," did you put some extras around the tumor? "2 or 3," are the effects of the hormone treatment going to conflict with the radioactivity as it relates to getting an accurate psa reading? "probably, so we'll wait for 3 months to get a blood test, anything else?" oh, yes, remember you weren't sure exactly what a curie was? it's a unit of radiation determined by disintegration, 3.70×10^{10} to the tenth power per second, named after madame curie, one of my heroines, did you ever see that movie where she and her husband make a vat of radioactive soup & distill the radium until they have a lump that glows in the dark? well, i asked the guy from oncology how much a curie was, "that little guy with the mustache?" yes, i asked him, and he told me that one curie was a lot, that we're using microcuries, small amounts that are decaying fast, he sd, "you have a very analytical mind"

guess i won't be having psychic surgery in the philippines

finally, I ask this of you above all else: at present you are over-anxious about the danger to my body, but then your chief concern must be my attaining the two accumulations of merit, and you can show your care by the special support of prayers chosen for me

be mindful of me,
Francesco

CANTO 60

Returning to the story of Einstein
& his first wife, Mileva Maric, she
was Serbian and studied physics in
Switzerland at the same school as young
Albert, & they became friends & confidants
& eventually lovers

She could keep up with him, a they
collaborated on some early papers,
the investigation into corpusculence,
a paper that nearly got them flunked because in the 1880s
electromagnetism was all the rage and where the money was, and these
two were missing classes and trying to figure out why
a drop of liquid rises when a straw is inserted into a liquid like water,
where is the gravity? why this penetration of one
into another?

Perhaps increased electron interaction
within the space-of-a-hair, and they could talk and kid one another and
make up secret names
he was Johnny and she was Dolly

& they exchanged colossal kisses
& tender kisses & got down to a
special understanding of relativity
& how things merge into one thing
& then another & the one is the same as the other, now peaceful,

now wrathful, now joyous

In Vajrayana (Tibetan Buddhism), a vajra guru (read spreader of light), especially a *terton* (read discoverer of hidden, thought treasures) needs a consort (read a female counterpart who interacts (read what you will) with the terton in the discovery of the *ter* (read treasure), an earth *ter* can arrive in a tiny casket, which contains jeweled yellow scrolls written in either illusory miraculous script or non-illusory miraculous scrip (for *dakini*, read wild, wise woman, in wrathful or ecstatic form, who challenges the guru into going further & whom, living as she does on the Sambhogakaya (read an imaginary) plane, can translate the language of the dakinis for him and so enable him to write the message down in plain text

Now these termas can come f/ sky, water, fire, earth, or be mind termas, Johnny & Dolly got themselves a mind terma, a whopper, one hidden by Yeshe Tsogyel (read girl friday to Guru Rinpoche, the second Buddha) Yeshe Tsogyel hid this teaching for the Kali Yuga Age, & here she must have been in her Wrathful Samatahadri form (read Mother of the Universe in a pissed off moment)

Every eon must come to an end, so what better method than with the Fire of Shiva, as Oppenheimer so insightfully realized the A-bomb to be on that fine morning in Los Alamos when there were two suns burning in the sky

As for Johnny & Dolly, by then they had married and had kids and divorced and Albert had hooked up with and married a distant cousin of his and moved to Princeton, while Mileva suffered a nervous breakdown and a World War on her head and received not a nod of recognition for all the E + M stuff they had decoded

Abelard & Heloise had their
fusions & fissions too and circulated
their inner secret feelings in public.
After 900 years we can still imagine them both embracing the wall
separating their two cells,
 each of them
sending their ecstatic thoughts
 through stone

In Tibet, the imprints of hands and
buttocks are still apparent in the rocks around caves where yogins &
yoginis did their stuff, while here in my cell there is only a wilting
dianthus and a
 wastebasket of tears

CANTO 61

Mileva in the spring
nominated for the role.

The mind is torn, the page is ripped
and needs a drink. The heart
 important organ
beats all.

Action. Now in autumn
the leaves give way to the sky.
 "I loved, therefore love
even today."

Item

for when I merely gaze,
oblivion rains into my cistern
to sweep away, sweep away the dregs of Lethe.

H o w
c o u l d
y o u , c l o u d ?

In an instant all that Art, Wit, Nature
Heaven
can do, is done. I look into the eyes
of my darling, as I have done
when she was some other
darling most darling
my most darling darling. Oblivion

is it a moral virtue?
When what I hear strikes so that I write
words I can forever
maybe
take out to sigh about.

Do we think I may be taken out

You had to be there
Silence in court!

Guard your love, pilgrim
then throw it in the Arno
and boast you're human
once you're reft & alone.

Enter a chorus of children

To sing the Plea for Help.
 The Audience applauds
 And this is Pity,
 Citizens,
 The Last Ethic
 Time enjoyed
 As we forgot so many
 We could not live without
 forgotten.

CANTO 62

Rapid fire from the orchestra pit.
 Rodents of introspection fight over my name.
 Night and day in dizzying assent
 Over-amor me, but only by natural means.

Wait & see. Come in & see. Neither course
 Looks friendly, neither deckchairs in the noise,
 Nor praying when they rip. Drift to the sea
 If go you must, the green weed sings a serene
 /sarong.

The ivy of our lives has a sweet tone.
 That's a moment; the carnival consists of stanzas.
 We read Adorno while the fuchsia bloomed.

Basically, when you trod on my neck,
 I admired your foot and kissed it, while

The last line of this sonnet, so nearly completed was erased by a lightning strike.

CANTO 63

A long time ago now
it seem I became
a seminal event from two nothings
made one. For me
there was to be No
turning back. Like a sentence
to death. It was
a sentence to life the glorious
shoals of opportunities

that slip in
& out...
As if one were a net.
from a nest
made for me by those
who'd fetch me here

I migrated
to another
made by myself for others

one among whom

misses me tonight
as I do her.

Let her hear
that I could not stop for
the velocity set in motion
14 billion years since
made a previous appointment.

Look up at the arrayed
evidence. It regards
you as all
intelligent
enough for now to consider
grief in this scale

arises only from wasted life
the life one has't lived
in the shadow of death.

For speaking of dying
that fills each life
at the moment of closure.

Nothing.

A cruel magic trick
brought down the house
& the curtain
would be sleep.
Child, sleep,
so we can wake.

At eleven, the dream
of the transposed genitalia.
In the day, we read, studied,
jouer au football. Counted ants.
Learned to trust.

To decline to climb symbolically.
Intelligence was our coin. But falling
ill, there appeared the staircase
down to the snug.

There was a shadow,
considerable. It parted
& my love stepped out, so her gait
arrived with her smile, her smile
with her voice, which said everything.

He wrote, "As though I had never lived
until this minute," stopped by a lie
or truth.

Hold it.
A failing not unworthy of pardon.

She says, "And you have so many."

From the distance you cannot help
but keep watching.

Fidelity. A Savings & Loan.

La-orr-ah
face in the hmm hmm hmm
soft clouds.

The chance of She
My eye an open highway to the heart
My ear our auras tears
Eros penetrated
Ferir me de saetta She
On another's arm

& so spoken for,
cloud cover yielding but one

single ray, yet spoke
Di mi quando,
Quando, quando...

The gift not quite
handed down
generation to the next

& me grinning from ear to ear,
being such a glorious grinner

& me grieving from basement up
as born to it

Amor takes of all human faces, hers

Van Gogh stars whirled above the dune
Love set above reason

A joke is consciousness

Re verses

Moves

Frost of the world in his hair
del dolce loco ov'a sua eta fornita
e da la famigliuola sbigottita
at his having moved
in his imagination...

hot-head
per causa

forcing these stiff shanks
to crank him
up once more.

The extreme dalliance of his
extreme dalliance
with daywardness
addendum to the vita
of a cool bonnie feller
busted by age along the rotting road.

Language is rotting. rotten.
—You bastards!
red days when the shirts stank
& the venality of Rome, second
to Desire, to admire
the semblance

hoped-for as the Pope has to hope Heaven
be all that She, for him could be.

NB: If the Romans of the first century had put insurgents to death with swarms of stinging bees, at times of crisis or at the dinner table when family visit, when running onto the soccer pitch, or when kneeling in church, instead of making the sign of the Cross, we should flail wildly around ourselves in all directions. But they didn't.

CANTO 64

The animals rest. But we—

earth, sun, day, stars, wood, dawn
And I—
dawn, earth, wood, sun, stars, day
created of the above & below

can curse the above & below,
far below the animals hold a grudge.
It's so hard to forgive
 oneself for having loved,
giorno, alba, stelle, terra, sole, selva.

If I hadn't dialed 911
 I would have killed her,
she hurt me so, I,
 creature of hot blood.
The minion of the law explained
It is wrong to hit.
She regarded the earth. We usually take
 one such as you into custody.
She had the good grace to blanch.

It was something I had written
 that I did threaten
to have posted in a public place.

Challenging the law she went by me w/o fault. She struck a cowardly
blow.

Lo mio fermo desir vien de stelle.
Lo mio fermo desir vien de stelle.
 Before I am stardust once more,
 you bastards,
 before I am powdered earth,

that she should grant me one glimpse,

one glimpse of an understanding
laying out of her part in it, and mine,
distinct. Or an understanding I at the
outset attributed to her, held was her
capability, thus loved her for.

Thus all that ensued.

Then even the sun setting could warm,
warm my aging blood. If I could think,
“She hates me, has for many years, but

once, for a time, her love was true—”
I could feel that the happiness I sacrificed
on her account had been just sacrifice.

My life justly a waste.

Then, con lei foss'io de che si parte il sole.

Sun, stars, dawn, selva, giomo, terra!

But that will be a frosty Friday.

I of the biggest heart,
father of the humanities,
squandered my emotional capital.

If I was an asshole

they who said so
were gerbils. Big mistakes
require large hearts to make them.

And my mistakes were colossal.

The casket is lowered. The stars, tiny,
the sun, no longer a concern of mine.

The dawn I found sweet.

The earth

The stars I found steadfast & wild

The wood

Where with my true love I might

The day that was offered to one
more discerning

Out like a light
dolce.

CANTO 65

Something small,
the size of a star.
Did you make a wish?
Far away,
far, far away.
Hard, hard
like a star.
A miss, a
mysterious maid
made of mist.
A face that enters
my dreams
& a kiss I miss

when awake.
Look up,
both ways,
& down.
Splendor balanced
quietly—her voice,
a carriage of song.

Love sighs,
never, forever.
The world is
small,
the heart, huge.
Love sighs,
never, forever.
Pisces quivers
on the horizon.
Venus exalted,
her dream is deep.
She fairly
bristles
with romance.

She walks
to work on the stars,
a goddess
in her constellation.
Believe me,
the stars
are really there.
The stars,
music, joy
in all weather,
& those few moments
we made real.

Under your heart,
I long to suffer.
Look up,
both ways, & down.
Morning warmth,
wet mist weighing on me.
So it is—
my love
is earthy.
She walks
to work on
the stars.
Love's location
hidden
w/ in the tiniest
of spaces.

CANTO 66

The emails of Francesco & Laura are remarkable, as De Sade points out in his *Mémoires pour la vie de Petarque*, because it appears Laura, in accepting her role as Muse, had indeed kissed the lips of Francesco.

-----Original Message-----

From: Laura DeNoves
<lauralai@hotmail.com>
To: Francesco Petrarch
<petrock@sonic.net>
Date: Thursday, July 08, 1327 11:22 AM
Subject: re: should i go on?

Dear Francesco, Your imagination is so fertile and mind so full of connections that it is fun to hear of all the departures you are making. As for your poem, I consider it a construction of your mind and imagination, and I am not too concerned about the trasmogrifications that may result, though I am curious about the type of baggage you were referring to and of course am curious about the cantos that may result. So feel free to go on however you please and I will not take anything you write too literally.

-----Original Message-----

From: Francesco Petrararch

>petrock@sonic.net

To: Laura DeNoves >

<lauralai@hotmail.com

Date: Thursday, July 08, 1327 3:04 PM

Subject: re: encouragement

dear laura, thank you for your encouraging words about my project, the baggage i was referring to was mine, emotional ferment around resurrecting old memories and love agonies in the initial cantos, & unable to do more than parody the models of my betters, and i had not anticipated the deep feelings to emerge in the writing after our kiss, and there was a quantum shift from the spade poem, which was following the poetic style of ezra pound but which had dante's

divine comedy as its true inspiration—

dante saw beatrice in the street, and one look was all he needed to fall unalterably in love—& although she died without even knowing of his love, dante kept faith in this unobtainable ideal, & when the poet reaches paradise, she pulls his head up from the stream of lethe & takes him on a tour of the heavenly realms

petrarch sought his ideal in the real world, & although he didn't get as much as a kiss from his laura, mainly because she was a married woman, his moans and groans are the suffering of an unrequited heart which basically wants a good toss
in a big brass bed

attached you will find the themes in
petrarch's *rime sparse* and other lyrics, which i have culled f/ *The
Sonnets, Triumphs, & Other Poems of Petrarch*, translated by Various
Hands and published by George Bell & Sons, London, 1897:

He confesses the vanity of his passion
He tells how he became the victim of Love
He blames Love for wounding him on Good Friday
He celebrates the birthplace of Laura
He plays upon the name Laureta or Laura
Of his foolish passion for Laura
Feigning an address f/ some birds he had presented
Perceiving his passion, Laura's severity increases
He hopes time will render her more merciful
Laura's beauty leads him to the contemplation of God
He invites his eyes to feast themselves on Laura
He compares himself to a pilgrim
His state when Laura is present, & when she departs
He flies, but passion pursues him

He compares himself to a moth
The praises of Laura transcend his poetic powers
Rejected by Laura, he will perish, unless she relents
Night brings him no rest, as he is prey to despair
His sufferings since he became the slave of Love
On the movement of the Emperor against the infidels, and Rumsfield's tour of the
battlefield in Baghdad
His support of a proposed crusade against the infidels
Whether or not he should cease to love Laura
Though despairing of pity, he vows to love her unto death, no end to his woe
On Laura dangerously ill
Laura, who is ill, appears to him in a dream, and assures him she still lives
He compares her to a laurel, which he supplicates Apollo to defend
He seeks solitude, but love follows him everywhere
He prays for death, but in vain

He grieves in absence from Laura
He complains of the veil, and hand of Laura, that they deprive him of the sight of her

eyes

He excuses himself for having delayed visiting her
He asks from a friend the loan of James Joyce's *Ulysses*
When Laura departs, the heavens grow dark
Her return gladdens the earth and calms the sky
The grief of Phœbus at the loss of his love
Some have wept for their worst enemies, but Laura deigns him not a single tear
Laura at her looking-glass
He inveighs against Laura's mirror, because it make her forget him
He desires again to gaze on the eyes of Laura
His heart is all in flames, but his tongue is mute, in her presence
In her presence he can neither speak, nor sigh
Night brings repose to others, but not to him

Such are his sufferings that he envies the insensibility of marble
Anything that reminds him of Laura renews his torments
On being beseeched to restore to Rome her ancient glory
A love journey—danger—he turns back
He thought himself free, but finds that he is more than ever enthralled by Love
His blighted hopes
Few the sweets, but many the bitters of Love
A sonnet to his friend, Brian, with a present
He will always love her, though denied sight of her
Imprecations against the laurel
He blesses all the circumstances of his passion
Conscious of his folly, he prays God to turn him to a better life
Her kind salute saves him from death
He entreats Laura not to hate the heart from which she can never be absent

He prays Love to kindle also in her the flame by which he is unceasingly
tormented
He compares Laura to winter, and foresees that she will always be the same
The view of Rome prompts him to tear himself
Fleeing f/Love, he falls into the hands of his ministers
He would console himself with song, but is constrained to weep
In praise of Laura's eyes: the difficulty of his theme:sweet eyes beyond belief
In praise of Laura's eyes: they lead him to contemplate the path of life
He wonders at his long endurance of such toil and suffering
He is never weary of praising Laura's eyes
Love's chains are still dear to him

On the portrait of Laura painted by Modigliani
He desires only that Modigliani had been able to impart speech to his portrait of
Laura

If his passion still increase, he must die
He prays to God to guide his frail bark to a safe port

He confesses his errors, and throws himself on the mercy of God
Unless Laura relents, he will abandon her
Though not secure against the wiles of Love he feels strength enough to resist them
Dialogue between the poet and his eyes: weep, evermore we weep
He loves, & will always love, the spot & the hour he first became enamored of
Laura

Better is it to die happy than to live in pain
He calls the eyes of Laura foes, because they keep him in life only to torment him
He counsels lovers to flee, rather than be consumed by the flames of Love
He longs to return to the captivity of love
He paints the beauties of Laura, protesting his unalterable love
He describes the state of two lovers, and returns in thought to his own suffering
He complains that to him alone is faith hurtful
Having once surrendered himself, he is compelled ever to endure the pangs of
Love
He deplores the lost liberty of his present state

Though he has struggled unsuccessfully, he still hopes to conquer his passion
The countenance does not always truly indicate the heart
On enigmas
He allegorically describes the origin of his passion
Her eyes are now more powerful than at first
He apostrophizes the spot where Laura saluted him
When Love disturbs him, he calms himself by thinking of the eyes and words of
Laura

Her kind and gentle salutation thrills his heart with pleasure
He relates to a friend his unhappiness, and the varied mood of Laura
Leaving Rome, he desires only peace with Laura
Laura turning to salute him, the sun, through jealousy, withdrew behind a cloud
Wherever he is, he sees only Laura
Could he but see the house of Laura, his sighs might reach her more quickly
Though he is unhappy, his love remains ever unchanged

He prays to Love that he will take vengeance on the scornful pride of Laura

To a friend, who in a poem, had lamented Petrarch's supposed death
E'en in our ashes live our wonted fires
Laura learns to dance the Frug
He finds Laura's image everywhere
Though far from Laura, solitary and unhappy, envy still pursues him
On the contradictions and inconsistencies of Love
The courage and timidity of Love
He compares himself to all that is most strange in creation
He predicts the arrival of some great personage who will bring virtue to
government
He attributes the wickedness of the regime to its great wealth
He likens himself to the insect which, flying into one's eyes, meets its death
He tells the story of his love, resolving henceforth to devote himself to a higher
good
He is charmed by his sight of Laura and realize the invincible constancy of his love

Laura makes the Dean's list at the School of Beauty and Virtue
Her looks both comfort and check him
Though she be less severe, he is still not tranquil at heart
He dialogues with his Heart and is led by Love to Reason
He prays Laura either welcome or dismiss him
He implores Mercy or Death
He recalls her as he saw her when in tears
He relates the effects of her grief on him
Her image is ever in his heart
Her every action is divine
Every circumstance of his passion is a torment to him
He envies every spot that she frequents
He will not suffer, so as not to displease Laura
Night brings peace to all save him

He admires her walk, looks, words and air
Laura is Earth's single siren, sent to him from Heaven
Life will fail him before hope
His tongue is tied by excess of passion
Love unmans his resolution
He cannot end her cruelty, nor she his hope
Envy may disturb, but cannot destroy his hope
To pine for her is better than to enjoy happiness with another He accepts the sweets
and bitters of Love

Ever thinking on her, he passes fearless and safe through the forest of Ardeenes
To be near her recompenses him for the perils
He hears the voice of Reason, but cannot obey
He appeases her by humility, and exhorts a friend to do likewise
He addresses the River Po, on quitting Rome and Laura
He compares himself to a bird caught in a net

He is continually in fear of displeasing her
He compares her to the Phoenix and feels a liquid subtle fire
The most famous poets of antiquity would extol her only, had they seen her
He is incapable of worthily celebrating her
He addresses the Sun, whose setting hid Laura's dwelling from his view
Under the figure of a tempest-tossed vessel, he describes his own sad state
All his happiness is in gazing upon her
To see her and hear her is his greatest bliss
Journeying to visit Laura, he feels renewed ardor as he approaches
His wounds can be healed only by pity or death
The gentle breeze (L' aura) recalls to him the time when he first saw her hair,
her eyes
His heart lies tangles in her hair
Though racked by agony, he does not complain
Posterity will accord to him the pity which Laura refuses

He rejoices at being on Earth, as he is thereby enabled better to imitate her virtues
He consoles himself with the thought that he will be envied by posterity
He vehemently rebuts the charge of loving another
He cannot live without seeing her, but would not die that he may still love her
Strange sustenance, he feeds on his death and lives in flames
Journeying along the Rhone to Avignon, Petrarch bids the river kiss Laura's hand,
as it will arrive at her dwelling before him
He leaves Laura, but his spirit remains with her
His woes are unexampled
He describes his state, specifying the date of his attachment
Though so long Love's faithful servant, his only reward has been tears
The enchantments that enthrall him
The history of his love; and prayer for help
She unites in herself the highest excellences of virtue and beauty
Cruelty renders life worse than death to him

His nights are, like his days, passed in misery

He lives destitute of all hope save that of rendering her immortal
All nature would be in darkness were she its sun, to perish
Though her eyes destroy him, he cannot tear himself away
Happy who steered the boat, or drove the car, wherein she sat and sang
He envies the breeze which sports with her, the stream that flows toward her
Under the figure of a laurel, he relates the growth of his love
Though in the midst of pain, he deems himself the happiest of men
At her return, his sorrows vanish
He fears that an illness which has attacked the eyes of Laura may deprive him of
their sight
He rejoices at participating in her suffering
He no longer finds relief in solitude
He excuses himself for visiting Laura too often, and loving her too much
He prays Love, who is the cause of his offences, to obtain pardon for him

He despairs of escape from the torments by which he is surrounded
She is moved neither by his verses nor his tears
Melancholy recollections and presages
He envies the kiss of honor given by Charlie Chaplin to Laura at a banquet
He prays that he may die before Laura
He invites those to whom his praises seem excessive to behold the object of them
Whoever beholds her must admit that his praises cannot reach her perfection
he announces to him, in a vision, that he will never see her more
He cannot believe in her death, but if true, he prays to God to take him also from
Life
To his longing to see her again is now added the fear of seeing her no more
He signs for those glances from which, to his grief, Fortune ever delights to
withdraw him
Hearing no tidings of her, he begins to despair
Contrary to the wont of lovers, he prefers morn to night
His soul visits her in sleep
On remembering Laura putting her hand before her eyes while he was gazing
on her

A smiling welcome, which Laura gave him unexpectedly, almost kills him with joy
On the announcement of the death of Laura
He asks counsel of Love, whether he should follow Laura, or still endure existence
Her form still haunts him in solitude
Unless Love can restore her to life, he will never again be his slave
Past, present, and future are now alike painful to him

He encourages his Soul to lift itself to God, and to abandon the vanities of Earth
He compares himself to a besieged city, and accuses his own heart of treason
He endeavors to find peace in the thought that she is in Heaven
With her, his only solace, is taken away all his desire of Life
He desires to die, that his soul may be with her, as his thoughts already are
She is ever present to him
He thanks her that from time to time she returns to console him with her presence
Her presence in visions is his only consolation

The remembrance of her chases sadness from his heart
Her counsel alone affords him relief
She returns in pity to comfort him with advice
He acknowledges the wisdom of her past coldness to him
Since her death, nothing is left to him but grief
He comforts himself with the hope that she hears him in Heaven
He glories in his love & blesses Laura for her virtue
His poems were written only to soothe his own grief: otherwise he would have
 labored to make them more deserving of the fame they have acquired
The union of beauty & virtue is dissolved by her death
The remembrance of the past enhances his misery
He enumerates and eulogizes the graces of Laura
He envies Earth, Heaven, and Death their possession of his treasure
Soaring in imagination to Heaven, he meets Laura, and is happy
He vents his sorrow to all who witnessed his former felicity

Had she not died so early, he would have learned to praise her more worthily
He prays Laura to look down upon him from Heaven
Love and he seek Laura, but find no traces of her except in the sky
Unworthy to have looked upon her, he is still more so to attempt her praises
He attempts to paint her beauties, but not her virtues
It is impossible for him to describe her excellence
Returning Spring brings him only increase of grief
The song of the Nightingale reminds him of his unhappy lot
Nothing that Nature offers can afford him consolation
His only desire is again to be with her
He recalls with grief their last meeting
Just when he might fairly hope some return of affection, envious Death
 carried her off
He consoles himself with the belief that she now at last sympathizes with him
Death has robbed him in one moment of the fruit of his life

Under the allegory of a laurel he again deplores her death
His passion finds its only consolation in contemplating her in Heaven
The sight of Laura's house reminds him of his misery
Under various allegories he paints the virtue, beauty, and untimely death of Laura
His grief at surviving her is mitigated by the consciousness that she now knows
his heart
Death may deprive him of the sight of her beauties, but not the memory of her
virtues
Her own virtues immortalize her in Heaven, and his praises on Earth
He prays that she will be near him at his death, which he feels approaching
He prays that, in reward for his virtuous attachment, she will visit him in death
Beauty showed itself in, and disappeared with Laura
She is so fixed in his heart that at times he believes her still alive
He no longer contemplates the mortal, but the immortal beauties of Laura
The laurel in who he placed all his joy has been taken from him to adorn Heaven
Her true worth was known only to him and to Heaven

His praises are, compared with her deserts,
but as a drop to the ocean
He prays her to appear before him in a vision,
and his prayer is heard
He describes the apparition of Laura
He would die of grief were she not
sometimes to console him
Reflecting that Laura is in Heaven, he repents
his excessive grief, and is consoled
He directs all his thoughts to heaven, where
Laura awaits and beckons him
He conjures Laura, by the pure love he ever
bore her, to obtain for him a speedy
admission to her in Heaven
His only comfort is the expectation of
meeting her again in Heaven
He feels the day of their reunion is at hand
He tells her in sleep of his sufferings, and,
overcome by her sympathy, awakes
Far from fearing, he prays for death
Since her death he has ceased to live
She appears to him, and, with more than

wanted affection, endeavors to console him
Love, summoned by the poet to the Tribunal of
Reason, passes a splendid eulogium on Laura
He awakes to a conviction of the near approach
of Death
He seems to be with her in Heaven
Wearied of Life, now that she is no longer with
him, he devotes himself to God
He confesses and regrets his sins, and prays God
to save him from Eternal Death
He owes his own salvation to the virtuous
conduct of Laura
Beholding in fancy the shade of Laura, he tells
her the loss that the World sustained in her departure
He begs Love to assist him, that he may
worthily celebrate her
The plaintive song of a bird recalls to him his
own keener sorrow

* * *

Each day offers the choice: to live or die.
Poets have another choice: not to die.
My favorites are Leonard Cohen and
Hank Williams. Thanks, Petrarch

CANTO 53

The sun goes down. Venus flings off her gown. Who is drowned emerges from the sea of mad and drunken illusion. Astray, an atom whirling wildly, Love illuminates my way.

I ask her opinion of the wine, giving her back things, her flute, her tiara, this very room, in which I've circled for 600 years. Easy to get caught up, until I think I should do something. Anything. I feel like a hermit talking to a trout. I touch her softly, and she darts away. I can't make her make up her mind, although I've caught her heart in a net.

Two eyes look at two eyes; two hands play a simple air. The hot, dry wind blows through her hair. We conjugate the tenses of the body's language. Relax, Love, it's true, love is senses, nonsense and double sense intensely.

She's hot. To me, she'll be hot when she's 50 and still be saying, "I'm hot. God, it's hot. This house is hot. This cup looks like hell, and I'm drinking from it, but it's cold and wet."

Life is huge and cruel, and, at best, we get a chance to dance. Let's turn it upside down. Life's up, down and crosswise. We're not hiding behind disguises.

Love of love makes the poet mad. He dies and makes death wise. I called my love false love, but what she said then. Sing Pine, Sing Pine, Sing all a Pine, no one blame her. I invite her scorn. What's next? Who knocks? It is the wind.

You're in your tower, addled on Freud. I hear the celestial choir, and wonder what's beyond. I going to the East; let's meet somewhere in the West, say, New York. It's a very expensive place. I'll get some special shoes to live in when it's cold.

It's after midnight, hours since I came home, her eyes still before me. It's after midnight. Time has passed, and I am in a harsh, gray desert, thinking with my feelings. Encountering each tiny sensation, I gather up the warm truths and the sad ones, while she dances in the moonlight, covered in colored scarves, alone but not lonely.

Birds dart up. I see her name in their flight. I see her in the moving water, the clouds, even the sun. The world is new and true and lovely. Nothing else to be.

He takes her for his pleasure. I give her her pleasure, this sunrise, this pink rose.

Cut roses in a vase, invisible roses, also growing there. All too well, I can divine her look. Everything she does is a leading worthwhile.

I'm in a room with a door she can go through but I can't. She's in a room

with a door I can go through but she can't. Now, I see her face in another place and try to catch the echo of her voice.

She is that woman despised by all other women and most desired by men. She is tormented by the hostile sex that saturates her. She has spiteful days when she feels ugly and yearns for someone to understand her pain.

She dreamed she saw frozen DNA, but really it was an angel, coiled and waiting to be discovered, in the palace of her mind. Nature has no memory. The past vanishes like the winter winds. She's discovered that romantic love is a sentiment invented, and that all her cluttered days culminate in this fact.

Heart, how close you are. Like lightning, you strike. If you seek me, look towards the lake. I'm free of my cage. I am Love. My pheromones can have a field day.

I fly high. I fly low. Questions in the sky, answers in the snow. Love is not less for falling.

Love's way is a ricochet.

"Numerologically," she says, "*jello* is a 9." I feel displaced and listen to *The Screaming Trees*. Sing Willow, Sing Willow, Da na, da na, da na, da na, hey, hey, hey, hey.

CANTO 54

My sorrow, Ceclia, & my love,
Have but a single source, as You,
I trust, completely understand:
That myself, now being old & ill,
Am altering beyond repair the man
You fell for, 30 years ago. Cecelia!

3 years I'd loved You, dear Cecelia,
& never spoke of it; I saw your love
Was for your husband; & I liked the man,

& loved my wife, tho' not as I loved You.
But then I heard you had split up— ill
Will both ways, you wept. To understand

I asked for more, but we two understood.
We parted with me saying, "Cecelia,
Could we meet sometime?" You took it ill,
I though, during your long pause; love
The last thing on your mind. Then You,
At last, spoke: "Thanks, I needed that: Oh, man,

I heard the thought went into that; a man
Could not help tell himself: "She understands."
As day by day I waited, days became weeks, You
Failed to phone. "Ah well, I see, Cecelia
Is not for me." A month had gone. "David, love,
A female student wants to speak to you." "Ill,

Were you? I missed You!" Silence. Then: "Ill
Mentally, I guess. I made a mistake. Wrong man.
Wrong me. I kept wanting you. It's you I love."
"I can't tell you how glad I am to hear—I understand
The delay—glad to hear you're better, Cecelia.
Can You see me at that café, Tuesday noon? See You

Then." To my wife: "an ex-student. Here. I'll show you
Some of her poetry." In the weeks to come, the ill
Will between my wife and I ripened, while Cecelia
& I were happy, as if for the first time, woman & man
Together, a joy that strengthened us until we understood
That betrayal of our marriages must be borne for love

That would outlast betrayal. And soon it did; for love
Afresh came to our spouses. And for 6-&-20 years, You
Have come with me, thru ill & good, to understand—
As our wonderful, complex daughter shall—that of ill
& good our lives are made, that often, a man
must wait out darkness, 'til soon or late, Cecelia

Shine through; a Cecelia, I hope, for any man
Patient & bold, though ill maybe, but understanding,
So that a You may come to you, & learn your love.

