

Classic Poetry Series

**Bernard de Ventadorn**  
**- poems -**

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# Bernard de Ventadorn(1150 - 1195)

Bernart de Ventadorn also known as Bernard de Ventadour or Bernat del Ventadorn, was a prominent troubador of the classical age of troubadour poetry. Now thought of as "the Master Singer" he developed the cançons into a more formalized style which allowed for sudden turns. He is remembered for his mastery as well as popularisation of the trobar leu style, and for his prolific cançons, which helped define the genre and establish the "classical" form of courtly love poetry, to be imitated and reproduced throughout the remaining century and a half of troubadour activity.

Bernart was known for being able to portray his woman as a divine agent in one moment and then in a sudden twist, portraying her as Eve, the cause of man's initial sin. This dichotomy in his work is portrayed in a "graceful, witty, and polished" medium.

## <b>Life</b>

According to the troubadour Uc de Saint Circ, Bernart was possibly the son of a baker at the castle of Ventadour (Ventadorn), in today's Corrèze(France). Yet another source, a satirical poem written by a younger contemporary, Peire d'Alvernha, indicates that he was the son of either a servant, a soldier, or a baker, and his mother was also either a servant or a baker. From evidence given in Bernart's early poem *Lo temps vai e ven e vire*, he most likely learned the art of singing and writing from his protector, viscount Eble III of Ventadorn. He composed his first poems to his patron's wife, Marguerite de Turenne.

Forced to leave Ventadour after falling in love with Marguerite, he traveled to Montluçon(France) and Toulouse (France), and eventually followed Eleanor of Aquitaine to England and the Plantagenet court;evidence for this association and these travels comes mainly from his poems themselves. Later Bernart returned to Toulouse, where he was employed by Raimon V, Count of Toulouse; later still he went to Dordogne, where he entered a monastery. Most likely he died there. About 45 of his works survive.

## <b> Influence </b>

Bernart is unique among secular composers of the twelfth century in the amount of music which has survived: of his forty-five poems, eighteen have music intact, an unusual circumstance for a troubador composer (music of the trouvères has a higher survival rate, usually attributed to them surviving the Albigensian

Crusade, which scattered the troubadours and destroyed many sources). His work probably dates between 1147 and 1180. Bernart is often credited with being the most important influence on the development of the trouvère tradition in northern France, since he was well known there, his melodies were widely circulated, and the early composers of trouvère music seem to have imitated him. Bernart's influence also extended to Latin literature. In 1215 the Bolognese professor Boncompagno wrote in his *Antiqua rhetorica* that "How much fame attaches to the name of Bernard de Ventadorn, and how gloriously he made cansos and sweetly invented melodies, the world of Provence very much recognises."

On screen, Bernart was portrayed by actor Paul Blake in the BBC TV drama series *The Devil's Crown* (1978)

# Amics Bernart De Ventadorn

Amics Bernartz de Ventadorn,  
com vos podetz de chant sofrir,  
can aissi auzetz esbaudir  
lo rossinholet noih e jorn?  
Auyatz lo joi que demena!  
Tota noih chanta sotz la flor,  
melhs s'enten que vos en amor.

Peire, lo dormir e.l sojorn  
am mais que.l rossinhol auvir;  
ni ja tan no.m sabriatz dir  
que mais en la folia torn.  
Deu lau, fors sui de chadena,  
e vos e tuih l'autr' amador  
etz remazut en la folor.

Bernartz, greu er pros ni cortes  
que ab amor no.s sap tener;  
ni j tan fara doler  
que mai no valha c'autre bes,  
car, si fai mal, pois abena.  
Greu a om gran be ses dolor;  
mas ades vens lo jois lo plor.

Peire, si fos dos ans o tres  
lo segles faihz al meu plazer,  
de domnas vos dic eu lo ver:  
non foran mais preyadas ges,  
ans sostengran tan greu pena  
qu'elas nos feiran tan d'onor  
c'ans nos prejaran que nos lor.

Bernatz, so non es d'avinen  
que domnas preyon; ans cove  
c'om las prec e lor clam merce;  
et es plus fols, mon escien,  
que cel qui semn' en l'arena,  
qui las blasma ni lor valor;  
e mou de mal ensenhador.

Peire, mout ai lo cor dolen,  
can d'una faussa me sove,  
que m'a mort, e no sai per que,  
mas car l'amava finamen.  
Faih ai lonja carantena,  
e sai, si la fezes lonhorn,  
ades la trobara peyor.

Bernartz, foudatz vos amena,  
car aissi vos partetz d'amor,  
per cui a om pretz e valor.

Peire, qui ama, desena,  
car las trichairitz entre lor  
an tout joi e pretz e valor.

(- Friend Bernard de Ventadorn, how can you refrain from singing when thus you hear the nightingale rejoicing day and night? Listen to the joy he manifests.

Every night he sings under the flowers; he is wiser in the ways of love than you.

- Pierre, I prefer sleep and rest to the nightingale's voice. And you can speak this way to me for a long time before I relapse into folly. God be praised, I am free of the chains, while you and the other lovers remain in folly.

- Bernard, it is difficult to be courtly and successful for him who does not persevere in love. Neither can love cause us such sorrow that it is not worth more than any other good. For if it hurts, later it consoles. It's hard to have a great boon without suffering; but joy conquers tears.

- Pierre, if for two or three years the world were made as I would like, the ladies (I tell you the truth) would no longer be pursued. Instead they would undergo such extreme pain that they would do us the honor of bring suit, rather than us to them.

- Bernard, it is not seeming for women to court, it is rather the man who pursues and asks for mercy. Maddier than he who sows in the sand, in my opinion, is he who denigrates their virtue, and such a man is badly educated.

- Pierre, my heart is very sad when I remember that false one who killed me, I know not why, unless it was because I loved her truly. I have long been in quarantine, and if I prolonged it, I would find her worse still.

- Bernard, folly has gained you, for you leave off love, through which one gains worth and valor.

- Pierre, he who loves is mad, for the traitresses among them have undone joy and worth and valor.)

Bernard de Ventadorn

# Bel M'Es Can Eu Vei La Brolha

Bel m'es can eu vei la bròlha  
reverdir per mei lo brolh  
ram son cubert de folha  
e.l rossinhols sotz de folh  
chanta d'amor, don me dolh;  
e platz me qued eu m'en dolha,  
ab sol qued amar me volha  
cela qu'eu desir e volh.

Eu la volh can plus s'orgolha  
vas me, mas oncas orgolh  
n'ac va lei. Per so m'acolha  
ma domna, pois tan l'acolh  
c'a tota autras me tolh  
per lei, cui Deus no me tolha.  
Ans li do cor qu'en grat colha  
so que totz jorns s'amor colh.

S'amor colh, qui m'empreizona,  
per lei que mala preizo  
me fai, c'ades m'ochaizona  
d'aisso don ai ochaizo.  
Tort n'a, mas eu perdo,  
e mos cors li reperdona,  
car tan la sai bel'e bona  
que tuih li mal m'en son bo.

Bo son tuih li mal que.m dona;  
mas per Deu li quer un do:  
que ma bocha, que jeona,  
d'un douz baizar dejeo.  
Mas trop quer gran guizerdo  
celei que tan guizardona;  
e can eu l'en arazona,  
ilh me chamja ma razo.

Ma razo chamja e vira;  
mas eu ges de lei no.m vir  
mo fi cor, que la dezira

aitan que tuih mei dezir  
son de lei per cui sospir.  
E car ela no sospira,  
sai qu'en lei ma mortz se mira,  
can sa gran beutat remir.

Ma mort remir, que jauzir  
no.n posc ni no.n sui jauzire;  
mas eu sui tan bos sofrir  
c'atendre cuit per sofrir.

(It pleases me to see the trees turning green in the middle of the forest, when the branches are covered with leaves and the nightingale under the leaves sings of love, that from which I suffer. And it pleases me to suffer from love, if only she whom I desire wants to love me.

I want her, though she is haughty towards me, but I have never been haughty towards her. May thus my lady welcome me, since I welcome her so well that I abandon all the others for her, provided that God does not abandon me. May it inspire in her rather the desire to acknowledge the fact that I acknowledge each day her love in me.

I acknowledge her love that imprisons me, for her who casts me into a bad prison. Now she reproaches me things for which I bear her she is, but I pardon her, and my heart pardons her, for I know the season to be fair and good, and that all wrongs to me are good.

Good are all the wrongs she does me, but I ask God one gift: that my mouth, which is fasting, receive from her a sweet kiss as break-fast. I demand too great a reward of she who rewards so generously; and when I reason to her, she changes my reasons.

My reason changes and shifts, but I hardly change at all my faithful heart, which desires her so much that all my desires are for her for whom I sigh. And since she does not sigh [for me], I know that in her my death is contemplated, when I contemplate her great beauty.

I contemplate my death, since I cannot pleasure in her and am not pleased. But I am such a good patient that I can await in patience.)

Bernard de Ventadorn

# Can Vei La Lauzeta

When I see the lark joyfully moving its wings against the sun's rays, and falling because of the sweetness that enters its heart, ah! a great envy comes upon me of all those who I see happy. I am astonished that my heart does not melt with desire.

Alas! I thought I knew so much about love, and I know so little, because I cannot stop loving the one from whom I will never obtain anything. She has taken my heart, myself, herself, and the whole world, and has left me with nothing but yearning and a languishing heart.

I no longer have power over myself, and am no longer my own person, from the moment when she lets me look into her eyes, that mirror that pleases me so. Mirror, since I am mirrored in you, my sighs have caused my death, for I am lost just as Narcissus lost himself in the fountain.

I despair of women; never more shall I trust them. As once I exalted them, now shall I cast them down. Since I see that not one of them is for me against she who destroys and confounds me, I doubt and mistrust them all, since I well know they are all the same.

And in this I see that my lady is very much a woman, and that is why I criticize her. For she does not want that which she should want, and that which she is forbidden, she does. I am fallen very low, and I have acted like the fool on the bridge. And I don't know why this has happened to me, unless it's because I tried to mount too high.

Since nothing works any more with my lady - neither prayers nor pity nor my rights concerning her; and since it no longer pleases her that I love her, I will never more say it to her. And so I take my leave and go away from her. She has killed me, and I respond to her with death. And I leave, since she doesn't retain me, I the unhappy one, into exile, I know not where

Bernard de Ventadorn

## Can Vei La Lauzeta ( L'Envoi Chanté Par Jean-Luc):

Tristans, ges no.n aures de me,  
qu'eu m'en vau, chaitius, no sai on,  
De cantar me gic e.m recre  
e de joi e d'amor m'escon.

Bernard de Ventadorn

# Cantarai D'Aquest Trobadors

Cantarai d'aquestz trobadors  
que canton de maintas colors  
e.l pieier cuida dir mout gen;  
mas a cantar lor er aillors  
q'entrametre.n vei cen pastors  
c'us non sap qe.s mont'o.s dissen.

(I shall sing of the troubadours  
who sing in every kind of way;  
and many think the worst of them.  
But I see a hundred shepherds,  
and don't know if they are going  
up or going down.)

Bernard de Ventadorn

## En Cossirer E En Esmai

En cossirer et en esmai  
sui d'un amor que.m lass'e.m te,  
que tan no vau ni sai ni lai  
qu'ilh ades no.m tenh' en so fre,  
c' aras m'a dat cor e talen  
qu' eu enqueses, si podia,  
tal que, si.l reis l'enqueria,  
auria faih gran ardimen.

Ai las, chaitius! e que.m farai?  
ni cal cosselh penrai de me?  
Qu'ela no sap lo mal qu'eu trai  
ni eu aus clamar merce.  
Fol nesci! ben as pauc de sen,  
qu'ela nonca t' amaria  
per nom que per drudaria,  
c'ans no.t laisses levar al ven!

E doncs, pois atressi.m morrai,  
dirai li l'afan que m'en ve?  
Vers es c'ades lo li dirai.  
no farai, a la mia fe.  
si sabia c'a un tenen  
en fos tot' Espanha mia;  
mais vol morir de feunia  
car anc me venc en pessamen.

Pois messatger trametrai  
ni a me dire no.s cove,  
negu cosselh de me no sai;  
mais d'una re me conort be:  
ela sap letras et enten,  
et agrada.m qu'eu escria  
los motz, e s'a leis plazia,  
legis los al meu sauvamen.

(In anguish and torment am I because of a love that grips and holds me so that I can go neither here nor there without her holding me in her harness. And now I have courage and desire to court, if I can, one who, if the King himself were to

pursue her, he would show great audacity.

Alas, unhappy one that I am! What shall I do? What counsel shall I take? For she does not know the sorrow that I bear, nor do I dare beg her for mercy. Fool, you have little understanding, since she will never love you, neither in name nor through intimacy. Let yourself be blown away by the wind. And so, since I must die, shall I confess to her my sorrow? Truly, I should do it right away. I won't do it, by my faith, even if I knew that all Spain would be mine. I would rather die of shame than to have entertained such a thought.

Since I shall not send her a messenger, and it is not fitting for me to speak myself, I don't know how to advise myself. But one thing consoles me: she knows the alphabet, and how to read, and I enjoy writing words, and if she pleases, may she read them so that I may be saved.)

Bernard de Ventadorn

## Era.M Conseillatz

Era.m cosselhatz, senhor,  
vos c'avetz saber e sen:  
una domna.m det s'amor,  
c'ai amada lonjamen;  
mas eras sai de vertat  
qu'ilh a autr'amic privat,  
ni anc de nul companho  
companha tan greus no.m fo.

D'una re sui en error  
e.n estau en pensamen:  
que m'alonje ma dolor,  
s'eu aquest plai li cossen,  
e s'aissi.l dic mon pessat,  
vei mon damnatge doblat.  
Cal que.n fassa o cal que no,  
re no posc far de mo pro.

E s'eu l'am a dezonor,  
esquerns er a tota gen;  
e tenran m'en li pluzor  
per cornut e per sofren.  
E s'aissi pert s'amistat,  
be.m tenh per dezeretat  
d'amor, e ja Deus no.m do  
mais faire vers ni chanso.

Pois voutz sui en la folor,  
be serai fols, s'eu no pren  
d'aquestz dos mals lo menor;  
que mais val, mo essien,  
qu'eu ay' en leis la meitat  
que.l tot perda per foldat,  
car anc a nul drut felo  
d'amor non vi far so pro.

Pois vol autre amador  
ma domn', eu non defen;  
e lais m'en mais per paor

que per autre chاوزimen;  
e s'anc om dec aver grat  
de nul servizi forsat,  
be dei aver guizerdo  
eu, que tan gran tort perdo.

De l'aiga que dels olhs plor,  
escriu salut z mais de cen,  
que tramet a la gensor  
et a la plus avinen.  
Mantas vetz m'es pois membrat  
de so que.m fetz al comjat:  
vi cobrir sa faisso,  
c'anc no.m poc dir oc ni no.

Garsio, ara.m chantat  
ma chonso, et la.m portat  
a mo Messenger, qu'i fo,  
q'elh quer cosselh qu'el me do.

(Now give me counsel, Lords, you who are wise and intelligent. A lady, whom I long loved, gave me her love. But now I know for sure that she has another lover in secret, and never the company of another companion was so hard to bear. One thing makes me out of sorts and pensive: that I prolong my suffering if I agree to this case. And if I say what I think, I see my injuries doubled. Whatever I do, or don't do, I can't accomplish for my own good.

And if I love her in dishonor, I shall be scorned by all; and the majority will consider me a passive cuckold. But if I lose her friendship, I hold myself disinherited by love, and may God never permit me again to compose verses and songs.

Since I am involved in madness, I should be mad if I did not chose the lesser of these two evils. for it is better, in my opinion, to have half of her than to loose everything through folly; for I have never seen an unfaithful lover win out for himself in love.

Since you want another lover, my lady, I shall not forbid it. And I agree more from fear than from anything else. And if ever someone should be grateful for forced labor, I should be rewarded, who have pardoned so great a wrong.

With the water that flows from my eyes, I send greetings, more than a hundred,

that I transmit to the most fair and noble one. Often do I remember what she would do on parting -- how she would cover her face, so that she would be saying neither yes nor no.

Garsio, now go and sing my song, and bring it to my Messenger, who was there, and to whom I demand what counsel he [she] would give.)

Bernard de Ventadorn

## Lancan Vei La Folha

Tuit cil que.m preyon qu'eu chan,  
volgra saubesson lo ver,  
s'eu n'ai aize ni lezer.  
Chantes qui chantar volria,  
qu'eu non saup ni chan ni via,  
pois perdei ma benanansa  
per ma mala destinansa.

Bernard de Ventadorn

# Lancan Vei Per Mei La Landa

Lancan vei per mei la landa  
dels arbres chazer la fòlha,  
ans frejura s'espanda  
ni.l gens termini s'esconda,  
m'es bel que si' auzitz mos chans,  
qu'estat n' aurai mais de dos ans,  
e cové que.n fass' esmenda.

Mout m'es greu que ja reblanda  
celeis que vas me s'orgòlha  
car si mos cors demanda,  
platz que mot m'i responda.  
Be m'auci mos nescis talans,  
car sec d' amor los bels semblans  
e no ve c' amors lh' atenda.

Deus, que tot lo mon garanda,  
li met' en cor que m'acòlha,  
c' a me no te pro vianda  
ni negus bes no.m aonda.  
Tan sui vas la bela doptans,  
per qu' e.m ren a leis merceyans:  
platz, que.m don o que.m venda!

Mal o fara, si no.m manda  
venir lai on se despòlha,  
qu'eu sia per sa comanda  
pres del leih, josta l'esponda,  
sotlars be chaussans,  
a genolhs e umilians,  
platz que sos pes me tenda.

Faihz es lo vers tot a randa,  
si que motz no.i deschapdòlha,  
outra la terra normanda,  
part la fera mar prionda;  
e si.m sui de midons lonhans,  
vas se.m tira com azimans  
la bela cui Deus defenda.

Si.l reis engles e.l ducs normans  
o vol, eu la veira abans  
que l'iverns nos sobreprenda.

(parlé)Pel rei sui engles e normans,  
e si no fos Mos Azimans,  
resterà tro part calenda.

(When I see the leaves of the trees fall off in the middle of the fields, before the cold spreads and the good season disappears, it seems good to me that my song be heard, for I have not done so in over two years, and I should atone for that. It is painful for me to serve still the one who is so haughty towards me, for if my heart demands something of her she doesn't wish to speak even a word. My foolish desire kills me, because it pursues the fair appearance of love, and does not see that love awaits.

May God, who guards the universe, place in her heart a welcome for me, for no food is of benefit to me, and no bounty consoles me. I am so uncertain concerning the fair one that I deliver myself, pleading for mercy, to her. So if she wishes, she can give me away, or sell me.

She would do a wrong if she did not invite me to come to the place where she undresses, so that I may be at her command, next to her, at the edge of the bed, and I would take off her graceful slippers, on my knees and humble, if it pleased her to extend to me her feet.

This poem is perfectly made, without a single badly-made word, beyond the land of Normandy, beyond the wild and deep sea. And although I am far from my lady, I am drawn to her like a magnet, she whom God may protect.

If the English king and the Norman duke wish it, I shall see her before the winter takes us by surprise. By grace of the king I am English, and Norman, and if it were not for My Magnet, I would remain here until after Christmas.)

Bernard de Ventadorn

# Lo Gens Temps De Pascor

Lo gens temps de pascor  
ab la frescha verdor  
nos adui folh'e flor  
de diversa color,  
per que tuih amador  
son gai e chantador  
mas eu, que planh e plor  
c'us jois no m'a sabor

a totz me clam, senhor  
de midons e d'Amor,  
c'aicist dui traïdor,  
car me fiav' en lor  
me fan viur'a dolor  
per ben e per onor  
c'ai faih a la gensor,  
que no.m val ni.m acor.

Pois fom amdui efan  
l'am ades e la blan;  
e.s vai m'amors doblan  
a chascu jorn del an.  
E si no.m fai enan  
amor e bel semblan,  
cant er velha,.m deman  
que l'aya bo talan.

Las! e viure que.m val,  
s'eu no vei a jornal  
mo fi joi natural  
en leih, sotz fenestral,  
cors blanc tot atretal  
com la neus a nadal,  
si c'amdui comunal  
mesuram s'em egal?

Be fór'oimais sazos,  
bela domna e pros,  
que. m fos datz a rescos

en baizan guizardos,  
si ja per als no fos,  
mas car sui enveyos,  
c'us bes val d'autres dos,  
can per fors'es faihz dos.

Bel Vezer, si no fos  
mos enans totz en vos  
laissat agra chansos  
per mal dels enoyos.

(The fair season of Easter, with new green, brings us leaves and flowers of various colors, so that all lovers are gay, and sing, except for me, weeping and lamenting, for I taste of no joy. I make my case to you all, gentlefolk, against my lady and Love; for these two traitors, in whom I had trusted, make me live in sorrow, for all the good and honor I have done for the fair one, who neither values nor succors me.

Since the time when we were both children I love and court her. And my love doubles every day of the year. And if we don't make love now and aren't friendly, she can just try asking later on, when we are old, if I feel like it.

Alas! What is life worth to me, if I cannot see every day my true, natural joy in bed, under the window, her body all white like the Christmas snow, so that in common we can take measure to see if we are equal?

It's the season henceforth, fair and precious lady, that in secret you give me a kiss as recompense, for no other reason than that I desire it. For such a kiss is worth two of the other kind, those that are given by constraint.

Fair-to-See, if my welfare were not entirely dependent on you, I would have left off singing because of the meanness of the bluestockings.

Bernard de Ventadorn

# Non Es Meravelha S'Eu Chan

Non es meravelha s'eu chan  
melhs de nul autre chantador,  
que plus me tra.l cors vas amor  
el melhs sui faihz a so coman.  
Cor e cors e saber e sen  
e fors' e poder i ai mes.  
Si.m tira vas amor lo fres  
que vas outra part no.m aten.

Cant eu la vei, be m'es parven  
als olhs, al vis, a la color  
car aissi tremble de paor  
com fa la folha contra.l ven.  
Non ai de sen per un efan  
aissi sui d'amor entrepres;  
e d'ome qu'es aissi conques  
pot domn'aver almorna gran.

Ai Deus! car se fosson trian  
d'entrels faus li fin amador,  
lauzenger trichador  
portesson corns el fron denan!  
Tot l'aur del mon e tot l'argen  
i volgr'aver dat, s'eu l'agues,  
sol que ma domna conogues  
aissi com eu l'am finamen.

Bona domna, re deman  
mas que.m prendatz per servidor,  
qu' servirai com bo senhor,  
cossi que del gazardo m'an.  
m'al vostre comandamen,  
francs cors umils, gais e cortes  
Ors ni leos non etz vos ges  
que.m aucizatz, s'a vos me ren.

A Mo Cortes, lai on ilh es,  
tramet lo vers, e ja pes  
car n'ai estat tan lonjamen.

English

(It's no wonder that I sing better than any other singer,  
for I am the one whose heart is most strongly drawn towards love,  
and the most obedient to Love's law.  
Heart and body, intellect and instinct,  
strength and power, all these have I engaged.  
And the bridle steers me so strongly to love that I  
pay no attention to anything else.

When I see her, it's visible in my eyes,  
my face, my color,  
because I tremble with fear like a leaf in the wind.  
I have no more sense than a babe,  
so dominated am I by love;  
and for a man so vanquished,  
a lady should have great sollicitude.

Oh, God! If it were only possible  
to separate out the true lovers and the false;  
and if the flatterers and cheats only wore horns  
in the middle of their foreheads.  
All the gold in the world, all the silver,  
if I had them, I would give them away,  
so that my lady could see how truly I love her.

Good Lady, I ask you nothing else but  
that you take me as your servant,  
so that I could serve you as a good master,  
whatever my reward may be.  
You see me here at your orders,  
you who are honest and humble,  
cheerful and courtly.  
You are neither a lion nor a bear,  
who would kill me if I gave myself to you.

To my Courtly One, where she is, I send this verse, and may it not weigh that  
am so far distant.)



## Per Mels Cobrir Lo Mal Pes (Anne)

Per melhs cobrir lo mal pes e.l cossire  
chan e deport et ai joi e solatz;  
e fatz esfortz car sai cantar ni rire,  
car eu me mor e nul semblan no.n fatz;  
e per Amor sui si apoderatz,  
tot m'a vencut a forsa e batalha.

Anc Deus no fetz trebalhas ni martire,  
ses mal d'amor, qu'eu no sofris en patz;  
mas d'aquel sui, si be.m peza, sofrire,  
c'Amors mi fai amar lai on li platz;  
e dic vos be que s'eu no sui amatz,  
ges no reman en lai mia nualha.

Midons sui om et amics e servire,  
e en quer mais autras amistatz  
mas c'a celat los seus bels olhs me vire,  
que gran be.m fan ades can sui iratz;  
e ren lor en laus e merces e gratz,  
qu'el mon non ai amic que tan me valha.

Dins en mo cor me corrotz e.m azire,  
car eu sec tan las mias voluntatz.  
Mas negus om no deu aital re dire,  
c'om no sap ges com s'es aventuratz.  
Que farai doncs dels bels semblans privatz?  
Falhirai lor? Mais volh que.l mons me falha!

Corona, man salut e amistaz,  
e prec midons que m'ayut e me valha.

(To better hide the dark thoughts and the pain, I sing and play around, I have pleasure and solace; I make an effort, because I know how to sing and laugh. Still, I am dying, but show no sign of it, and by Love am so overcome, for Love has conquered me by force and battle.

Never has God created martyrdom and travail that I could not undergo peacefully, except for lovesickness. Still, although it weighs on me, I suffer it, for Love makes me love where he pleases. And I say to you that if I am not loved, it

is not the fault of my passivity.

I am the servant and friend and vassal of my lady, and I do not ask from her any other favor but this: secretly, to turn her fair eyes to me, for when I am distraught they do me much good. In my heart I blame and accuse myself for following so my desires. Noone should say such things, because we never know what our destiny will be. What shall I do, then, with her beautiful, secret glances? Shall I fail them? Better that the world itself fail me.

Corona, I send greetings and love, and I pray my lady that she aid and assist me.)

Bernard de Ventadorn

# Pois Preyatz Me, Senhor

Pois preyatz me, senhor,  
qu'eu chan, eu cantarai;  
e can cuit chantar, plor  
a l'ora c'o essai.  
Greu veiretz chantador  
be chan, si mal li vai.  
Vai me doncs mal d'amor?  
Ans mels que no fetz mai!  
E doncs, per que m'esmai?

Gran ben e gran onor  
conosc que Deus me fai,  
qu'eu am la belazor  
et ilh me, qu'eu o sai.  
Mas eu sui sai, alhor,  
e no sai com l'estai!  
So m'auci de dolor,  
car ochaizo non ai  
de soven venir lai.

Amors, e que.m farai?  
Si garrai ja ab te?  
Ara cuit qu'e.m morrai  
del dezirer que.m ve,  
bela lai on jai  
no m'aizis pres de se,  
qu'eu la manei e bai  
et estrenha vas me  
so cors blanc, gras e le.

Bona domna, merce  
del vostre fin aman!  
Mas jonchas, ab col cle,  
vos m'autrei e.m coman.  
Qu' pliu per bona fe  
c'anc re no amei tan.  
E si locs s'esdeve,  
vos me fatz bel semblan,  
que molt n'ai gran talan.

(Since you request me to sing, my Lords, I shall when I think of singing, I weep just at the moment when I begin. You will hardly ever here a singer who sings well, if he is unhappy. Am I thus unhappy in love? No, rather better than ever. Then why I am I in disarray?

I know that God has done me a great honor, since I love the most beautiful of women and she me, as far as I know. But I am elsewhere, and I do not know how she is, which kills me with sorrow, for I do not often have the opportunity to go there.

Now, Love, what shall I do? Shall I ever be cured of you? Right now I think I will die of the desire that comes upon me, if the fair one invites me to be near her, where she sleeps, so that I can caress and kiss and hold next to mine her body, white, round, and smooth.

Sweet lady, have pity on your faithful lover! Hands joined, head bowed, I commend myself to your mercy. For I swear to you in faith that I have never loved anyone as much as you. And if the right moment occurs, show me your best behavior, for I really desire it so.)

Bernard de Ventadorn

# Quan L'Herba Fresqu'El.H Folha

Can l'erba fresch' folha par  
e la flors boton'el verjan  
e.l rossinhols autet e clar  
leva sa vots e mou so chan,  
joi ai de lui, e joi ai de la flor  
e joi de me e de midons major;  
daus totas partz sui de joi claus e sens,  
mas sel es jois que totz autres jois vens.

Tan am midons e la tenh car,  
e tan la dopt' e la reblan  
c'anc de me auzi parlar,  
ni re quer ni re man.  
Pero elh sap mo mal e ma dolor,  
e can li plai, mi fai be e onor,  
e can li plai, eu m'en sofert ab mens,  
per so c'a leis no.n avenha blastens.

S'eu saubés la gen enchantar,  
mei enemic foran efan,  
que ja us no saubra triar  
ni dir re tornes a dan.  
Adoncs sai eu que vira la gensor  
e sos bels olhs e sa frescha color,  
e la bocha en totz sens,  
si que d'un mes i paregra lo sens.

Be la volgra sola trobar,  
que dormis, o.n fezés semblan,  
per qu' emblès un doutz baizar,  
pus no valh tan qu'eu deman.  
Per Deu, domna, pauc esplecham d'amor;  
vai s'en lo tems, e perdem lo melhor!  
Parlar degram ab cubertz entresens,  
e, pus val arditz, valgués nos gens!

Ai las! com mor de cossir!  
que manhtas vetz en cossir tan:  
lairó m'en poirian portar

que re no sabia que.s fan.  
Per Deu, Amors! be.m tròbas vensedor:  
ab pauc d'amics e ses autre senhor.  
Car una vetz tan midons no destrens  
abans qu'eu fos del dezirer estens?

Messatger, vai, e no m'en prezes mens,  
s'eu del anar vas midons sui temens.

(When the new vegetation and the leaves appear, when the flowers bloom on the branch, and when the nightingale clear and loud raises its voice and begins to sing, I rejoice in the nightingale, and in the flowers, and in myself, and most of all in my lady. I am surrounded by joy on all sides, but she is the joy from which all other joys come.

So much do I love my lady, and hold her dear, and so much do I fear and honor her, that I dare not talk to her of myself. I ask her nothing and I send her nothing. But still she knows of my pain and sorrow, and when it pleases her she bestows on me grace and honor, and when it pleases her I submit to even less so that no blame may come to her.

If I knew how to cast spells on people, my enemies would become babes, so that none of them could discover anything that could be turned against us. I know now that I will see my lady, and her fair eyes and fresh color, and I will kiss her on the mouth every which way, so that for a month the marks will be visible.

I would like to find her alone, sleeping, or pretending to sleep, so that I could steal a sweet kiss from her, since I am not worth so much that I could ask it of her. By God, lady, little do we profit from our love; time passes, and we are losing the best moments. We should speak in a coded language, and since audacity is worth little, may ingenuity be the thing.

Alas! I die from desire. For often, I am so full of yearning that thieves could carry me off, and I wouldn't even realize what was happening. By God, Love! you find me Defeated (vensedor=Ventadorn), with few friends and without another master. Why don't you, once, ensnare my lady, before I am consumed with passion?)

Bernard de Ventadorn

# Tant Ai Mo Cor

Tant ai mo cor ple de joya,  
tot me desnatura.  
Flor blancha, vermeilh'e groya  
me par la frejura,  
c'ab lo ven et ab la ploya  
me creis l'aventura,  
per que mos chans mont' e poya  
e mos pretz melhura.  
Tan ai al cor d'amor,  
de joi e de doussor,  
per qu'el gels me sembla flor  
e la neus verdura.

Anar posc ses vestidura,  
nutz en ma chamiza,  
car fin'amors m'asegura  
de la freja biza.  
Mas es fols qui.s desmezura,  
e no.s te de guiza,  
Per qu'eu ai pres de me cura,  
deis c'agui enquiza  
la plus bela d'amor,  
don aten tan d'onor,  
car en loc de sa ricor  
non volh aver Piza.

Eu n'ai la bon'esperansa.  
Mas petit m'aonda,  
c'atressi.m ten en balansa  
com la naus en l'onda.  
Del mal pes que.m desenansa,  
non sai on m'esconda.  
Tota noih me vir'e.m lansa  
desobre l'esponda.  
Plus trac pena d'amor  
de Tristan l'amador  
que.n sofri manta dolor  
per Izeut la blonda.

Mas fals lauzengier engres  
m'an lunhat de so pais  
que tals s'en fai esdevis  
qu'eu cuidera qu'ens celes  
saubes ams d'un coratge.

(My heart is so full of joy that everything is changed for me. The cold season seems like a flower, white, vermillion, and yellow. For with the wind and the rain my good fortune grows, so that my singing rises up, and my worth augments. I have so much love in my heart, so much joy and sweetness, that the ice seems like flowers, and the snow like greenery.

I go around without clothes, naked under my nightshirt, for true love protects me from the cold wind. But he is mad who goes beyond measure and does not behave according to custom. And so I have been on my guard since I have sought the love of the most beautiful lady, from whom I expect much honor. For I would not give up all her riches for Pisa itself.

I have good hope. But that's of little help, because she holds me in balance like a ship on the waves. From the bad thoughts that depress me I do not know how to escape. Every night I toss and turn on my bed. I have more pain from love than Tristan the lover, who suffered many woes for Iseult, the Blond.

(But the false intriguers have distanced me from her country; and that one has become a spy whom / thought would have helped us, if he knew our souls had one will.)

Bernard de Ventadorn

# The Nightingale

When grass grows green, and fresh leaves spring,  
And flowers are budding on the plain,  
When nightingales so sweetly sing,  
And through the greenwood swells the strain,  
Then joy I in the song and in the flower,  
Joy in myself, but in my lady more;  
All objects round my spirit turns to joy,  
But most from her my rapture rises high.

Bernard de Ventadorn

# When I Behold The Lark

When I behold the lark upspring  
To meet the bright sun joyfully,  
How he forgets to poise his wing  
In his gay spirit's revelry,  
Alas! that mournful thoughts should spring  
E'en from that happy songster's glee!  
Strange, that such gladdening sight should bring  
Not joy, but pining care to me!

I thought my heart had known the whole  
Of love, but small its knowledge proved.  
For still the more my longing soul  
Loves on, itself the while unloved:  
She stole my heart, myself she stole,  
And all I prized from me removed;  
She left me but the fierce control  
Of vain desires for her I loved.

All self-command is now gone by,  
E'er since the luckless hour when she  
Became a mirror to my eye,  
Whereon I gazed complacently.  
Thou fatal mirror! there I spy  
Love's image; and my doom shall be,  
Like young Narcissus, thus to sigh,  
And thus expire, beholding thee.

Bernard de Ventadorn

# When Nightingales Their Lulling Song

When nightingales their lulling song  
For me have breathed the whole night long,  
Thus soothed, I sleep; - yet, when awake,  
Again will joy my heart forsake,  
Pensive in love, in sorrow pining  
All other fellowship declining:  
Not such was once my blest employ,  
When all my heart, my song, was joy.

And none who knew that joy, but well  
Could tell how bright, unspeakable,  
How far above all common bliss,  
Was then my heart's pure happiness;  
How lightly on my fancy ranged,  
Gay tale and pleasant jest exchanged,  
Dreaming such joy must ever be  
In love like that I bore for thee.

They that behold me little dream  
How wide my spirit soars from them,  
And, borne on fancy's pinion, roves  
To seek the beauteous form it loves:  
Know, that a faithful herald flies  
To bear her image to my eyes,  
My constant thought, for ever telling  
How fair she is, all else excelling.

I know not when we meet again,  
For grief hath rent my heart in twain:  
For thee the royal court I fled,--  
But guard me from the ills I dread,  
And quick I'll join the bright array  
Of courteous knights and ladies gay.

Ugonet, faithful messenger!  
This to the Norman queen go bear,  
And sing it softly to her ear.

