

Classic Poetry Series

Joachim du Bellay

- poems -

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I do not write of love: I am no lover.
I do not write of beauty: I have no woman.
I do not write of gentleness but the human
rudeness I see. And my pleasures are all over,
so I do not try to write of pleasure, but only
misery. Favors? No, I am on my own.
I do not write of riches: I have none.
Or of life at court, when I'm far from it and lonely.

I do not write of health, for I'm often ill.
I cannot write of France from a Roman hill.
Or honor? I see so little of that about.
I cannot write of friendship but only pretence.
I will not write of virtue, here in its absence.
Or knowledge or faith, in ignorance and doubt.

Joachim du Bellay

A Sonnet To Heavenly Beauty

If this our little life is but a day
In the Eternal, - if the years in vain
Toil after hours that never come again, -
If everything that hath been must decay,
Why dreamest thou of joys that pass away,
My soul, that my sad body doth restrain?
Why of the moment's pleasure art thou fain?
Nay, thou hast wings, - nay, seek another stay.

There is the joy whereto each soul aspires,
And there the rest that all the world desires,
And there is love, and peace, and gracious mirth;
And there in the most highest heavens shalt thou
Behold the Very Beauty, whereof now
Thou worshippest the shadow upon earth.

Joachim du Bellay

A Vow to Heavenly Venus

We that with like hearts love, we lovers twain,
New wedded in the village by thy fane,
Lady of all chaste love, to thee it is
We bring these amaranths, these white lilies,
A sign, and sacrifice; may Love, we pray,
Like amaranthine flowers, feel no decay;
Like these cool lilies may our loves remain,
Perfect and pure, and know not any stain;
And be our hearts, from this thy holy hour,
Bound each to each, like flower to wedded flower.

Joachim du Bellay

Hymm to the Winds

To you, troop so fleet,
That with winged wandering feet,
Through the wide world pass,
And with soft murmuring
Toss the green shades of spring
In woods and grass,
Lily and violet
I give, and blossoms wet,
Roses and dew;
This branch of blushing roses,
Whose fresh bud uncloses,
Wind-flowers too.
Ah, winnow with sweet breath,
Winnow the holt and heath,
Round this retreat;
Where all the golden morn
We fan the gold o' the corn,
In the sun's heat.

Joachim du Bellay

To a Friend in Elysium

So long you wandered on the dusky plain,
Where flit the shadows with their endless cry,
You reach the shore where all the world goes by,
You leave the strife, the slavery, the pain;
But we, but we, the mortals that remain
In vain stretch hands; for Charon sullenly
Drives us afar, we may not come anigh
Till that last mystic obolus we gain.

But you are happy in the quiet place,
And with the learned lovers of old days,
And with your love, you wander ever-more
In the dim woods, and drink forgetfulness
Of us your friends, a weary crowd that press
About the gate, or labour at the oar.

Joachim du Bellay

Vision (original French)

Une louve je vis sous l'ancre d'un rocher
Allaitant deux bessons : je vis à sa mamelle
Mignardement jouer cette couple jumelle,
Et d'un col allongé la louve les lécher.

Je la vis hors de là sa pâture chercher,
Et, courant par les champs, d'une fureur nouvelle
Ensanglanter la dent et la patte cruelle
Sur les menus troupeaux pour sa soif étancher.

Je vis mille veneurs descendre des montagnes
Qui bordent d'un côté les lombardes campagnes,
Et vis de cent épieux lui donner dans le flanc.

Je la vis de son long sur la plaine étendue,
Poussant mille sanglots, se vautrer en son sang,
Et dessus un vieux tronc la dépouille pendue.

Joachim du Bellay