

Gesualdo Madrigals – Book 5

Words – translated by Mick Swithinbank (unless indicated by an *)

No.	Italian	English
1.	<p><i>Gioite voi col canto Mentre piango e sospiro Né dal mio lagrimar punto respiro. Ahi misero mio core, Nato sol al dolore, Piangi, ma piangi tanto Che vinta dal tuo pianto Sia la mia donna e poi rivedi in lei Gl'afanni e i dolor miei.</i></p>	<p>Take pleasure in singing, all of you, while I weep and sigh and, tormented by my own tears, cannot even breathe. Alas, my wretched heart, born only for distress, weep, but weep to such a point that my lady is won over by your complaint, and then you will see in her the same suffering which afflicts me.</p>
2.	<p><i>S'io non miro, non moro, Non mirando, non vivo; Pur morto io son Né son di vita privo. O miracol d'amore, Ahi, strana sorte, Che'l viver non fia vita, E'l morir morte.</i></p>	<p>If I look not, I die not; when I do not look, I am not alive; yet dead I am, though my life has not been taken from me. Oh miracle of love; alas, strange fate, that living should not result in life, nor dying in death.</p>
3.	<p><i>Itene, o miei sospiri Precipitate il volo a lei Che m'è cagion d'aspri martiri. Ditele per pietà Del mio gran duolo Ch'or mai ella mi sia Come bella, ancor pia Che l'amaro mio pianto Cangerò lieto in amoroso canto.</i></p>	<p>My sighs, may you wing your way to her who is causing me bitter torment - Itene. For pity's sake, tell her of my great suffering. If she will be as merciful as she is beautiful, I shall cease my bitter lament and sing a love song.</p>
4.	<p><i>Dolcissima mia vita, A che tardate la bramata aita? Credete forse che'l bel foco ond'ardo Sia per finir perché torcete'l guardo? Ahi, non fia mai, ché brama il mio desire O d'amarti, o morire.</i></p>	<p>Sweetest life, why do you withhold the relief which I long for? Perhaps you think that my burning desire will end, because you turn away whenever I see you? Alas, this cannot be, I must either love you or die.*</p>
5.	<p><i>O dolorosa gioia, O soave dolore, Per cui quest'alma è mesta e lieta more! O miei cari sospiri, Miei graditi martiri, Del vostro duol non mi lasciate privo Poiché sì dolce mi fa morto e vivo.</i></p>	<p>Oh dolorous joy, Oh sweet suffering, which makes this spirit sad, yet causes it to die happy! Oh my beloved sighs, my welcome torment; do not release me from the pain you give me; for so sweetly it makes me feel both dead and alive.</p>
6.	<p><i>Qual fora, donna, un dolce oimè d'Amore Se quell'oimè che da voi tragge, ahì lasso, Lieve dolor così m'incende il core? Misero, a ciascun passo Vo desiando, e so ch'indarno il bramo, Che un dì col cor diciate: 'oimè ch'io t'amo'.</i></p>	<p>What purpose, lady, does a sweet sigh of love serve if the sigh which it draws from you, alas, so inflames my heart with welcome pain? Wretch that I am, at each step that I take I am filled with desire, and know it is in vain for me to hope that one day you will say with all your heart: 'Alas how I love you'.</p>

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7.	<p><i>Felicissimo sonno Che ne le luci di madonna vivi E noi di luce privi, Deh, con un sogno messaggier le mostra L'afflitta anima nostra; Fà che in partir da lei pietà vi resti E pietosa si desti.</i></p>	<p>Most happy sleep, dwelling in the eyes of my lady and so depriving us of light, I beg you, take her a message in a dream to show her the affliction of my¹ soul; when you leave her, let mercy remain in her so that she awakes inclined to pity.</p> <p>¹ Literally 'our', but probably only used for the sake of the rhyme.</p>
8.	<p><i>Se vi duol il mio duolo Voi sola, anima mia, Potete far che tutto gioia sia. Deh, gradite il mio ardore, Ch'arderà lieto nel suo foco il core, E quel duol che vi spiace In me sia gioia, in voi diletto e pace.</i></p>	<p>If my sorrow saddens you, you, my beloved, are the only one who can turn my sorrows all to joy. Alas, accept my passion: My (?) heart will gladly burn in its fire, and that sorrow which displeases you will turn to joy in me, and in you to delight and peace of mind.</p>
9.	<p><i>Occhi del mio cor vita, Voi mi negate, oimè, l'usata aita! Tempo è ben di morire, a che più tardo? A che serbate il guardo? Forse per non mirar come v'adoro. Mirate almen ch'io moro!</i></p>	<p>Eyes, life of my heart, You are denying me the customary help, alas! The time is right for death; why tarry longer? For what do you reserve your gaze? Perhaps to avoid seeing how I adore you. At least see me die!</p>
10.	<p><i>Languisce al fin chi da la vita parte E di morte il dolore L'affligge sì che in crude pene more. Ahi, che quello son io, Dolcissimo cor mio, Che da voi parto e per mia crudel sorte La vita lascio e me ne vado a morte.</i></p>	<p>He who is slipping away from life languishes towards his end, and the suffering of death so afflicts him that he dies in cruel pains. Alas, that person is me, my sweetest love: it is I who am leaving you, and my cruel fate is such that I must part from life and die.</p>
11.	<p><i>'Mercè!', grido piangendo, Ma chi m'ascolta? Ahi lasso, io vengo meno. Morrò dunque tacendo. Deh, per pietade almeno, Dolce del mio cor tesoro, Potessi dirti pria ch'io mora: 'Io moro.'</i></p>	<p>"Mercy!" I cry, weeping. But who hears me? Alas, I faint. I shall die, therefore, in silence. Ah, for pity! At least, oh treasure of my heart, let me tell you before I die, "I die!" *</p>
12.	<p><i>O voi troppo felici, Che mirate il mio sole E cangiate con lui sguardi e parole; Quel che a voi sopravanza, ah, potessi io Raccor per cibo a gli occhi del cor mio.</i></p>	<p>Oh you, too happy people, Who look upon my sun And exchange looks and words with him, If only I could gather your leftovers As food for the eyes of my heart.</p>

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13.	<i>Correte, amanti, a prova, A mirar meco quello Onde s'adorna il mondo e si fa bello! Vista dolce et acerba in cui si trova Virtù di forza tale C'hor breve fa la vita hor immortale.</i>	Come, lovers, hasten to put things to the test, to witness with me a certain thing which adorns the world and gives it all its beauty! A sight both sweet and bitter which has such might that life, as it may befall, seems short or you may feel immortal.
14.	<i>Asciugate i begli occhi, Deh, cor mio, non piangete Se lontano da voi gir mi vedete! Ahi, che pianger debb'io misero e solo, Ché partendo da voi m'uccide il duolo.</i>	Dry those lovely eyes, alas, my beloved, do not weep if you see me wandering far away from you. For, ah, I must weep alone and in misery, because as I part from you, I suffer such bitter pain that my days are numbered.
15.	<i>Tu m'uccidi, o crudele, D'Amor empia homicida, E vuoi ch'io taccia e'l mio morir non grida? Ahi, non si può tacer l'aspro martire Che va innanzi al morire, Ond'io ne vo gridando: 'Oimè, ch'io moro amando!'</i>	You are killing me, cruel lady, Heartless murderer of love, And you expect me to remain silent And not to cry out that I am dying? No, it is impossible to say nothing of the cruel torment Which comes before death And which compels me to cry out: “Alas, I die loving.”
16.	<i>Deh, coprite il bel seno, Che per troppo mirar l'alma vien meno! Ahi! no'l coprite, no, che l'alma avezza A viver di dolcezza Spera, mirando, aita Da quel bel sen che le dà morte e vita.</i>	I beg you, hide your lovely breasts: it makes me faint to look too much upon them. Alas, no, do not hide them: let me become accustomed to enjoy such sweet sensations. As I look at them, I hope for succour from within that bosom which means both death and life to me.
17.	<i>Poiché l'avida sete C'hai del mio tristo e lagrimoso humore Non è ancor spenta, O dispietato core, Spengala il sangue mio C'hor verserà dal mio trafitto petto Un doloroso rio.</i>	Since the keen thirst that you feel for my sad, tearful humour ¹ is not yet slaked, merciless lady, let it be sated with my blood which will issue forth from my pierced chest in a melancholy stream.
		¹ This is presumably a reference both to the poet's mood and to the fluids - the four 'humours' - assumed under ancient physiological theories to exist within the human body and to affect temperament.
18.	<i>Ma tu, cagion di quella atroce pena Che a la morte mi mena, Mira, mal grado tuo, pietoso effetto De la tua crudeltà, del mio tormento, Che, morendo, al mio duol morte non sento.</i>	But you, the cause of that appalling torture which will end my life, see how, despite yourself, one merciful effect flows from your cruelty and the suffering it inflicts: as I die, I am already in such torment that I shall be oblivious to the pain of dying.

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19.	<i>O tenebroso giorno, Infelice mio stato, O mio cor tristo, solo a pianger nato! Quando lieto ritorno Farai dinanzi a quella Che è più d'ogni altra bella, Più leggiadra e più vaga, Che con suoi sguardi morte e vita appaga?</i>	Oh dark day, unhappy is my state: My sad heart, born only to weep! When will you happily return to her who is more beautiful than any other, more graceful and more charming, and who with her glances pours balm on both death and life?
20.	<i>Se tu fuggi, io non resto Ché'l cor ti segue e grida. Ahì, cor crudele, ove impietà s'annida, Dove ten vai? Deh, pria mi rendi il core, E poi ten fuggi, e fugga teco amore.</i>	If you flee I shall not stay behind, Because my heart will follow you and cry out. Alas, cruel heart, devoid of pity, Where are you going? I beg you, return my heart, And then flee – and let love be gone with you.
21.	<i>'Tamo, mia vita' la mia cara vita Mi dice e in questa sola Dolcissima parola Par che trasformi lietamente il core Per farsene signore, O voce di dolcezza e di diletto, Prendila tosto, Amore, Stampala nel mio core! Spiri solo per te l'anima mia: 'Tamo mia vita' la mia vita sia.</i>	"I love you, my life" ¹ is what my beloved Says to me, and in these few sweet words It seems that she joyfully transforms my heart, Taking control of it. Such sweet, delightful words: Cupid, take them and imprint them on my heart. May I live and breathe only for you; Let "I love you, my life" Be my life. (¹ i.e. my sweetheart)