

# **FOUR FROM PROENSA**

**GUILLEM IX  
BEATRITZ DE DIA  
PEIRE VIDAL  
ANONYMOUS**

**TRANSLATED BY PAUL BLACKBURN**

## GUILLEM IX

(1071-1127)

*Mout jauzens me prenc en amar*

LUCKILY, I take great joy of love,  
wanting only to relax and enjoy it.

And wanting now  
to return to such joy, I  
should go to the best if I can.

And beyond all expectation, I  
have credit from the fairest a  
man could see or hear of.

As you know,  
I do not boast or credit myself,  
in the hour of composition, with  
any extravagant praise.  
But, if any joy could flower, this  
one should  
bear grain beyond all others  
and gleam beyond all others,  
like a dark day  
broken into by sun.

No man can fashion that body in his mind,  
by no turn of desire raise it by  
hard thought or dream.

Such joys as I am thinking of  
will find their equal nowhere.  
I could not praise her properly  
in a year of trying.

All joys give ground before her,  
all arrogance is obedient by  
reason of her soft mien,  
by reason of her soft glance.  
He who has joy of her will last

a hundred years at least.

There shines from her an exaltation and  
the sick are made well.  
Her anger would kill a paragon of health.  
The wisest man goes mad, the Don Juan  
moults his beauty-the peasant  
feels himself ennobled, the courtier  
turns to a dolt.

Since man can find no better one,  
neither eye see or mouth make known,  
I want  
to keep her close  
for my own use,  
to refresh the heart within, reno-  
vate the flesh,  
then it will never grow gaunt.

If my lady will give her love  
I am thankful and ready to take it,  
conceal it and never boast of it,  
ready to flatter, ready to  
say and make pleasure for her and  
never count the cost,  
to prize her worth,  
promote her praises everywhere ...

I do not dare  
send the thing by another,  
I have such fear she will flare up,  
nor go myself.  
I'm so afraid of failing  
I dare not assemble in strength my love's evidences;  
.. for she knows it is through her alone -  
I have any healing.

## BEATRITZ DE DIA

(Second half of the 12th Century)

*Estat ai en greu cossirier*

I have been in heavy thought  
over a cavalier I'd had.  
I want it clear to everyone  
that I've loved him to excess,  
and now I see he's left me: pre-  
text, I refused him my love.  
I seem to be mistaken, then,  
as to what was going on,  
dressed or in bed.

I'd love to hold my cavalier  
naked one evening in my arms,  
he would think he were on fire  
if I'd be his pillow then.  
For I burn more for him than  
Floris did for Blancheflor,  
deliver him my love, my heart, my  
sensuality, my eyes, my life.

My dear and lovely friend, if ever  
I come to have you in my power  
and get into bed with you one night  
and give you love-kiss, know it:  
I'd have such a great desire  
to hold you in my husband's place,  
if you'd promise me to do  
everything I'd want you to.

## PEIRE VIDAL

(c. 1175-1205)

*Tart mi vieran mei amic en T olosa*

It'll be a long time again before my friends  
In Toulouse see me, and long also  
Before I see Montreal or Puy,  
For I'm staying here with en Barral,  
Mon Bel Rainier: here's ambience  
    And security.  
    But Loba!  
    Because my eyes  
Cannot contain you in their compassing,  
They are blurred and wet-my heart  
Sighs after you, remembering  
    The slender body on you,  
    The soft stroke of your voice,  
        A smile  
    Your face wore once-

Your name is such the best are envious, and  
You can afford to let their bitchery run.  
Your welcomes are so greatly prized, men come  
    Only to hear and see. Beauty's dress  
Is your soft speech and youth, your insolent  
    Vigor, and your balanced mind.

Na Raimbauda, at Biolh I'm fixing to  
Take a garden and a house for hire.  
    To be near  
    Her I most desire. Among  
Such mountains, who can recall the plain?  
Lady, lovely lady, how I love you! Life  
's nothing without you, death more than life.  
May clemency and mercy come upon you,  
For my heart's in you, and all my desire.

Lady, when I was within your hall,  
It seemed St. Julian must have been my host.  
God never made such a perfect day  
As you formed of that day with your hand.  
In your making He made no mistake;  
Such arms were cast only to kill me, sure.  
I trust your excellence is too good a thing,  
    But even if you killed me,  
    It'd be my honor,  
    And if I died,  
I could only die praising, and rejoicing.

## ANONYMOUS

*Mort m'an li semblan que madona-m fai  
E li seu bel oil amoros e gai*

The intimations kill me  
that my lady gives me  
when her handsome eyes  
are bright and full of love.

If I fail the closeness  
and have no part of her  
the intimations kill me I that my lady gives me  
I shall go before her  
hands folded like a beggar  
the intimations kill me I that my lady gives me  
to request that she  
make consolation for me,  
a soft kiss at least.  
The intimations kill me I that my lady gives me  
when her handsome eyes I are bright and full of love.

Her body's white as snow is  
fallen upon ice  
the intimations kill me I that my lady gives me  
and her color is so fresh  
as, in May, a rose  
the intimations kill me I that my lady gives me.  
Above her face the ashen gold  
of hair that pleases me  
is softer and more lovely  
than my words can say.  
The intimations kill me I that my lady gives me  
when her handsome eyes I are bright and full of love.

God has made no other  
as beautiful as she is  
the intimations kill me I that my lady gives me

nor will make another  
and besides I love her  
the intimations kill me I that my lady gives me  
I love her for her straight and slender  
body while I live,  
and I shall die, believe it,  
if I cannot have her love.

The intimations kill me  
that my lady gives me  
when her handsome eyes  
are bright and full of love.



The preceding poems are taken from *Proensa: A Anthology of Troubadour Poetry*, selected and translated by Paul Blackburn. The first version of this anthology was first published in 1953 by Robert Creeley's Divers Press. An expanded version followed in 1978, edited by George Economou, and published by the University of California Press. Long out of print, a new edition of this collection is forthcoming in late 2016 from New York Review Books.

Thanks to George Economou, and to Nicholas During of NYRB, for their permission to include these poems.