Pièrre de Ronsard:

Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la chandelle,  
Assise auprès du feu, dévidant et filant,  
Direz, chantant mes vers, en vous émerveillant :  
Ronsard me célébrait du temps que j’étais belle.

Lors, vous n’aurez servante oyant telle nouvelle,  
Déjà sous le labeur à demi sommeillant,  
Qui au bruit de mon nom ne s’aille réveillant,  
Bénissant votre nom de louange immortelle.

Je serai sous la terre et fantôme sans os :  
Par les ombres myrteux je prendrai mon repos :  
Vous serez au foyer une vieille accroupie,

Regrettant mon amour et votre fier dédain.  
Vivez, si m’en croyez, n’attendez à demain :  
Cueillez dès aujourd’hui les roses de la vie.

— *Sonnets pour Hélène*, 1587

“When you are very old...”

When you are very old, at evening, by the fire,  
spinning wool by candlelight and winding it in skeins,  
you will say in wonderment as you recite my lines:  
“Ronsard admired me in the days when I was fair.”

Then not one of your servants dozing gently there  
hearing my name’s cadence break through your low repines  
but will start into wakefulness out of her dreams  
and bless your name — immortalised by my desire.

I’ll be underneath the ground, and a boneless shade  
taking my long rest in the scented myrtle-glade,  
and you’ll be an old woman, nodding towards life’s close,

regretting my love, and regretting your disdain.  
Heed me, and live for now: this time won’t come again.  
Come, pluck now — today — life’s so quickly-fading rose.

— originally published in *Tide and Undertow*  
by Anthony Weir, Belfast 1975

Når du er blitt gammel og sitter alene,

I lyset ved ilden og hesper og spinner,

Vil du si med undring, og fylles av minner:

Ronsard sang til min pris, den unge og pene

Selv kvinnen som da er hos deg for å tjene

– Om hun slumrer ved sin rokk mens dagen svinner –

Vil våkne ved mitt navn, med øyne som skinner,

Og for alltid prise ditt eget, Helene

Da er jeg en benløs dødning, dypt under jord

I myrtelundens stille skyggeland jeg bor.

Du sitter ved ilden, gammel, kroket og grå

Du savner min kjærlighet og tæres av nag,

Ditt hovmod står for fall. Så derfor, lev i dag,

Snart skal òg du forgå, plukk livets roser nå!

Andrew Marvell: “To His Coy Mistress”

Had we but world enough and time,

This coyness, lady, were no crime.

We would sit down, and think which way

To walk, and pass our long love’s day.

Thou by the Indian Ganges’ side

Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide

Of Humber would complain. I would

Love you ten years before the flood,

And you should, if you please, refuse

Till the conversion of the Jews.

My vegetable love should grow

Vaster than empires and more slow;

An hundred years should go to praise

Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;

Two hundred to adore each breast,

But thirty thousand to the rest;

An age at least to every part,

And the last age should show your heart.

For, lady, you deserve this state,

Nor would I love at lower rate.

       But at my back I always hear

Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near;

And yonder all before us lie

Deserts of vast eternity.

Thy beauty shall no more be found;

Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound

My echoing song; then worms shall try

That long-preserved virginity,

And your quaint honour turn to dust,

And into ashes all my lust;

The grave’s a fine and private place,

But none, I think, do there embrace.

       Now therefore, while the youthful hue

Sits on thy skin like morning dew,

And while thy willing soul transpires

At every pore with instant fires,

Now let us sport us while we may,

And now, like amorous birds of prey,

Rather at once our time devour

Than languish in his slow-chapped power.

Let us roll all our strength and all

Our sweetness up into one ball,

And tear our pleasures with rough strife

Through the iron gates of life:

Thus, though we cannot make our sun

Stand still, yet we will make him run.