Sonnets by Pablo Neruda

Sonnet XVII

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz, 
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off. 
I love you as certain dark things are to be loved, 
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms 
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers; 
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance, 
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where. 
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride; 
so I love you because I know no other way 
than this: where I does not exist, nor you, 
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand, 
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

Sonnet XXV

Before I loved you, love, nothing was my own: 
I wavered through the streets, among 
Objects: 
Nothing mattered or had a name: 
The world was made of air, which waited.

I knew rooms full of ashes, 
Tunnels where the moon lived, 
Rough warehouses that growled 'get lost', 
Questions that insisted in the sand.

Everything was empty, dead, mute, 
Fallen abandoned, and decayed: 
Inconceivably alien, it all 

Belonged to someone else - to no one: 
Till your beauty and your poverty 
Filled the autumn plentiful with gifts.
Sonnet XXVII

Naked, you are simple as one of your hands,
Smooth, earthy, small, transparent, round:
You have moonlines, applepathways:
Naked, you are slender as a naked grain of wheat.

Naked, you are blue as the night in Cuba;
You have vines and stars in your hair;
Naked, you are spacious and yellow
As summer in a golden church.

Naked, you are tiny as one of your nails,
Curved, subtle, rosy, till the day is born
And you withdraw to the underground world,
as if down a long tunnel of clothing and of chores:
Your clear light dims, gets dressed, drops its leaves,
And becomes a naked hand again.
The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door -
Only this, and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;
- vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow
- sorrow for the lost Lenore -
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore -
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me - filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,
"'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door -
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;
This it is, and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"- here I opened wide the door;
Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!" -
Merely this, and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice:
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore -
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore; -
'Tis the wind and nothing more."

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a fling and flutter,
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door -
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door -
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore.
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the Nightly shore -
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."
Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning- little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blest with seeing bird above his chamber door -
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered- not a feather then he fluttered -
Till I scarcely more than muttered, "other friends have flown before -
On the morrow he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before."
Then the bird said, "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore -
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never - nevermore'."

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore -
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o'er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee - by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite - respite and nepenthe, from thy memories of Lenore:
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil! -
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted -
On this home by horror haunted- tell me truly, I implore -
Is there - is there balm in Gilead? - tell me - tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil - prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us - by that God we both adore -
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore -
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."
"Be that word our sign in parting, bird or fiend," I shrieked, upstarting -
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!- quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted - nevermore!
The Cremation of Sam McGee
By Robert Service

There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.

Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee, where the cotton blooms and blows. Why he left his home in the South to roam 'round the Pole, God only knows. He was always cold, but the land of gold seemed to hold him like a spell; Though he’d often say in his homely way that "he’d sooner live in hell."

On a Christmas Day we were mushing our way over the Dawson trail. Talk of your cold! through the parka’s fold it stabbed like a driven nail. If our eyes we’d close, then the lashes froze till sometimes we couldn’t see; It wasn’t much fun, but the only one to whimper was Sam McGee.

And that very night, as we lay packed tight in our robes beneath the snow, And the dogs were fed, and the stars o’erhead were dancing heel and toe, He turned to me, and "Cap," says he, "I’ll cash in this trip, I guess; And if I do, I’m asking that you won’t refuse my last request."

Well, he seemed so low that I couldn’t say no; then he says with a sort of moan: "It’s the cursèd cold, and it’s got right hold, till I’m chilled clean through to the bone.
Yet 'tain’t being dead — it's my awful dread of the icy grave that pains; So I want you to swear that, foul or fair, you'll cremate my last remains."

A pal’s last need is a thing to heed, so I swore I would not fail; And we started on at the streak of dawn; but God! he looked ghastly pale. He crouched on the sleigh, and he raved all day of his home in Tennessee; And before nightfall a corpse was all that was left of Sam McGee.

There wasn’t a breath in that land of death, and I hurried, horror-driven, With a corpse half hid that I couldn’t get rid, because of a promise given; It was lashed to the sleigh, and it seemed to say: "You may tax your brawn and brains, But you promised true, and it’s up to you, to cremate those last remains."

Now a promise made is a debt unpaid, and the trail has its own stern code. In the days to come, though my lips were dumb, in my heart how I cursed that load.
In the long, long night, by the lone firelight, while the huskies, round in a ring,
Howled out their woes to the homeless snows — Oh God! how I loathed the thing.

And every day that quiet clay seemed to heavy and heavier grow;
And on I went, though the dogs were spent and the grub was getting low;
The trail was bad, and I felt half mad, but I swore I would not give in;
And I'd often sing to the hateful thing, and it hearkened with a grin.

Till I came to the marge of Lake Lebarge, and a derelict there lay;
It was jammed in the ice, but I saw in a trice it was called the "Alice May."
And I looked at it, and I thought a bit, and I looked at my frozen chum;
Then "Here," said I, with a sudden cry, "is my cre-ma-tor-eum."

Some planks I tore from the cabin floor, and I lit the boiler fire;
Some coal I found that was lying around, and I heaped the fuel higher;
The flames just soared, and the furnace roared — such a blaze you seldom see;
And I burrowed a hole in the glowing coal, and I stuffed in Sam McGee.

Then I made a hike, for I didn't like to hear him sizzle so;
And the heavens scowled, and the huskies howled, and the wind began to blow.
It was icy cold, but the hot sweat rolled down my cheeks, and I don't know why;
And the greasy smoke in an inky cloak went streaking down the sky.

I do not know how long in the snow I wrestled with grisly fear;
But the stars came out and they danced about ere again I ventured near;
I was sick with dread, but I bravely said: "I'll just take a peep inside.
I guess he's cooked, and it's time I looked"; ... then the door I opened wide.

And there sat Sam, looking cool and calm, in the heart of the furnace roar;
And he wore a smile you could see a mile, and said: "Please close that door.
It's fine in here, but I greatly fear, you'll let in the cold and storm —
Since I left Plumtree, down in Tennessee, it's the first time I've been warm."

_There are strange things done in the midnight sun_
  _By the men who moil for gold;_
_The Arctic trails have their secret tales_
  _That would make your blood run cold;_
_The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
  But the queerest they ever did see_
_Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge_
  _I cremated Sam McGee._