

R O N S A R D S I N G S O F H É L È N E



C L I V E J A M E S

For you, it's easy to lay down the law
At your age, just a fraction of my age.
All you need do is turn another page
And suddenly you see my name no more.
Where have I gone? It's almost a surprise,
But all too soon you will believe your eyes

And think I vanished, as you told me to,
From all the world. The world, though, is still here
For me, and achingly devoid of you –
Worse, there are fantasies that come too near
Resembling you. They bend and speak to me
In your voice, whispering “What do you see?”

I see you sighing in the grip of bliss:
That much you heard me say, and now you say
Well, that will do. No more for you today,
Or ever. Not a touch and not a kiss.
I have my life to start. This has to end
With one clean break that no soft soap can mend.

Bravely I take it in and hope you lie,
But know you don't, for you are not the type:
Too true by nature. When you caught my eye
I knew already that our time was ripe
To run its course in just a year or less
And end. And now I live with my distress

And it is worse, far worse, than I supposed
It might be when I first became aware
That I would suffer if you were not there.

I still can't bear to see the chapter closed,
And it is months now and will soon be years
That you are not here to behold my tears.

What was achieved? For you, I hope and trust,
Some guarantee there is a gentle touch
A man can have which proves him not unjust
In this dispute where women risk so much:
And as for me, although I lost, I won
Your love awhile, a great thing to have done.

Throughout this poem I have changed the frame
To bring two rhymes together, then apart,
Thus echoing, with one cry from my heart,
Our dance of love. Let this, then, be your fame
When you are gone, if it be my fame too,
To find true glory through my loss of you.