

Noi Sian le Triste Penne Isbigotite · *Guido Cavalcanti*

We are the sad, bewildered quills,
the creaking scissors and the penman's knife,
who through our grief make strife
of words, till the parchment sheet distills

sound to your ear, that saith, what wills
caused us to leave, to come: saying,
"The moving hand felt such dubious
apparitions in the heart, such powers that destroyed him

and brought him so near to death
that naught of him, that was man, remains,
save the shaking sound of his breath.

And we crave with that power of prayer we have
that you let us stay with you a little, for long enough
til such time, that pity cast a small glance, your way."

(from the Italian, ca. 1927-1934)