

Piazza Piece

by John Crowe Ransom

Poetry is a condensed form of language. It says very much in very few words. The ways that make possible this “linguistic economy” are many. Let us take John Crowe Ransom’s “Piazza Piece” for example and see the various ways in which the poet has managed to enrich his meaning. Here is the text of the poem:

Piazza Piece

--I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying
To make you hear. Your ears are soft and small
And listen to an old man not at all;
They want the young men’s whispering and sighing.
But see the roses on your trellis dying
And hear the spectral singing of the moon;
For I must have my lovely lady soon,
I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying.

--I am a lady young in beauty waiting
Until my truelove comes, and then we kiss.
But what grey man among the vines is this
Whose words are dry and faint as in a dream?
Back from my trellis, Sir, before I scream!
I am a lady young in beauty waiting.