



Poemas—Poems

Traductor: David Lee Garrison

“Al túmulo deste mismo Pintor, que era el Griego de Toledo”¹
Hortensio Félix Paravicino y Aliaga (España, 1580–1633)

Del Griego aquí lo que encerrarse pudo
yaze, piedad lo esconde, fee lo sella,
blando le oprime, blando mientras huella
çafir la parte que se hurtó del nudo.

Su fama el Orbe no reserva mudo,
humano clima, bien que a obscurecella,
se arma una embidia, y otra tanta estrella,
nieblas no atiende de Horizonte rudo.

Obró a siglo mayor, mayor Apeles,
no el aplauso venal, y su estrañeza
admirarán, no imitarán edades.

Creta le dio la vida, y los pinceles
Toledo, mejor patria donde empieça
a lograr, con la muerte, eternidades.

For the tomb of this same Painter, el Greco of Toledo

The remains of the Greek—what we can dignify—
lie here, held softly down by love and faith,
but part of him slipped through the knot of death
to walk above us in the sapphire sky.
The world will not be silent in its praise
of him, though human envy’s harshest breath





blow at his flame. His star will never dread
the ones that climb the stark horizon's haze.

Surpassing Apelles, surpassing even time
itself, he shunned applause. While many rush
to laud his strangeness, none will match sublime

creations of the man from Crete. His brush
came from Toledo, homeland in his prime,
the perfect place for him to find forever's hush.

“Soneto de repente”²

Lope de Vega (España, 1562–1635)

Un soneto me manda hacer Violante,
que en mi vida me he visto en tanto aprieto;
catorce versos dicen que es soneto:
burla burlando van los tres delante.

Yo pensé que no hallara consonante
y estoy a la mitad de otro cuarteto,
mas si me veo en el primer terceto,
no hay cosa en los cuartetos que me espante.

Por el primer terceto voy entrando
y parece que entré con pie derecho,
pues fin con este verso le voy dando.

Ya estoy en el segundo, y aun sospecho
que voy los trece versos acabando;
contad si son catorce, y está hecho.

Impromptu Sonnet

Violante wants me to compose a sonnet—
in my life I've never been in such a fix;
they say that fourteen verses wins the bonnet:
first three, now this one from my bag of tricks.

I thought I'd never find another rhyme,
and yet I'm halfway through the second quatrain.





If I can make it to the tercets, I'm
beyond my fear of quatrains, that's for certain.

I'm entering the sestet still unchecked,
I've started on the right foot, it would seem,
for when this stanza ends, there's only one

more left—the second tercet. I suspect
I'm ending thirteen verses of the scheme.
Let's count them up—fourteen—and there! It's done.

“Pedís, Reina, un soneto: ya le hago”⁴
Diego Mendoza de Barros (España, XVII)

Pedís, Reina, un soneto: ya le hago;
ya el primer verso y el segundo es hecho;
si el tercero me sale de provecho,
con otro verso el un cuarteto os pago.

Ya llego al quinto: ¡España, Santiago!
Fuera, que entro en el sexto: ¡sús, buen pecho!
Si del séptimo salgo, gran derecho
tengo a salir con vida deste trago.

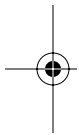
Ya tenemos a un cabo los cuartetos.
¿Qué me decís, Señora? ¿No ando bravo?
Mas sabe Dios si temo los tercetos.

Y si con bien este soneto acabo,
¡nunca en toda mi vida más sonetos!
Ya de éste, gloria a Dios, he visto el cabo.

“A Sonnet for My Queen”

You want a sonnet, Majesty? It's coming,
first and second verse already done.
If I can find a third line—ah, here's one!—
another line will have this quatrain humming.

And now it's five, for Spain and Santiago!
On with six, dear Jesus, keep me strong!
If I get past seven without going wrong,
by rights I might outlive this weird farrago.





At last we've brought the first eight round the bend.
 What say you? Am I not brave, my Lady?
 And yet God knows how much I fear the tercets.

I'll try to finish well and flee this Hades,
 never in my life to write more verses.
 To God the glory, here's the sonnet's end!

“Un soneto me pide que le haga”
 Jose Bergamín (España, 1895–1983)

Un soneto me pide que le haga,
 ignorando las reglas del soneto,
 otra nueva Violante, a quien, discreto,
 pedirá mi soneto dulce paga.

Como en el eco de la voz se apaga
 de la ripiosa consonancia el veto,
 prisión será el soneto de un secreto
 que ni su eco ni su voz propaga.

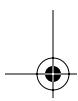
Secreto a voces que el silencio apura,
 sonoramente, con el crepitante
 temblor del verso como el de la llama.

Secreto que a sí mismo se asegura
 por su sonora son soneteante
 cuando enmascara un corazón que ama.

“She Asks Me for a Sonnet”³

She asks me to extemporize a sonnet,
 but this new Violante doesn't know
 the sonnet's rules, nor that it ever so
 discreetly asks a tender payment on it.

As in the echo of the voice all sound
 except the final harmony is lost,
 so has this sonnet in its prison tossed
 a secret so its voice cannot resound.





A shouted secret that disturbs the silence
sonorously with the crackling tremble of
its verses like the crackling flight of flame.

A secret that assures itself in the wry sense
of its sonorous, sonneteering sound, that same
sound with which a heart has masked its love.

Notes

¹ Emilie Bergmann, "Art Inscribed: El Greco's Epitaph as Ekphrasis in Góngora and Paravicino," *MLN* 90 (1975): 169–182, at p. 157.

² Elias L. Rivers, ed., *Renaissance and Baroque Poetry of Spain with English prose translations*. New York: Dell, 1966. p. 225.

³ David Garrison, ed. & trans., *Poems of José Bergamín 1895–1983: Echoes of a Distant Sea*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991. pp. 56–57.

⁴ Elias L. Rivers, p. 26. This poem has often been wrongly attributed to Diego Hurtado de Mendoza. Little is known about Mendoza de Barros. See "English Translations of Lope de Vega's 'Soneto de repente,'" *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 19.2 (1995): 311–325.

