

**Fourteen Sonnets of
Garcilaso de la Vega.
Translated by Edward Zeind**

Ten years have elapsed since I resolved to plunge into my memory the ensuing noserag-like fourteen sonnets written by Garcilaso de la Vega (1503, Toledo, Spain; 1536, Nice, France), with which one can palliate the snotgreen begotten by the wrack-monger blind Hap, by stubbornness, by the bedeviled industrial Romanticism swilled in Germany and France, by the stilted deaf Providence philosophised by Christianity, and by the uncouth ever-seething heathenism concocted by the warp of our wits. Such are the main themes of his poetry, by the way.

There are, I think, six heads with which one can classify all literary genres, videlicet: Naturalistic Metaphors, Technical Depictions, Endogamic History, Pious Imperialism, Optimistic Evolutionism, Romantic Lyricism, Cosmological Atonement, and Accursed Anarchism. To placate every againsaying fluttering in the mind of my critics, I'll explain in another text how I fetched these heads from Kantian founts. Garcilaso's oeuvre orbs each of them. But since my purpose is not to offer an exhaustive study on the versification of the poet, in a breeze I am going to peruse, at least, the first two concepts applied to his well-wrought poetry.

A skald of note has the accruing sleight to clad compounded things in oneness. This literary sleight might be named "Naturalistic Metaphor". One can say, for instance, "springtime" or "wintertime" in order to announce a change displayed by nature. But if I efface the hollow suffix "-time" and embrace that of "-tide", as in "springtide" or "nighttide" (do ye remember this verse of Tennyson: "the great Sun-Star of morning-tide"?), then each flower, tree, star or shadow becomes a bit of the wholeness of a system. A second was transmogrified into a wave.

Our poet was gifted with the same craft. Garcilaso's *Sonnet 13* tells the heathen classical myth that deals with the covetousness of Apollo steered towards the nymph Daphne, whose shielding father, Peneus, hid her from him by disguising her as a laurel tree. The second quatrain of the aforesaid sonnet runs thus: "The whiteness of her feet was buried/ and transformed into awry roots". In our literary lores the idea of "innocence" has been depicted with the hue of lilies, which the poet plunges into darkness by using the sable word "roots". "Uprightness" is the strongest concept that is brought to mind when one thinks on something earthed. The word "feet", here, stands for the concept of "verticality", and this mollifying foreright spatial smattering is impaired by the word "awry". 'Tis a pity to see the awry feet and the embrewed youth of a nymph! So, light and straightforwardness, or rather space and geometry, which are "aprioristic representations", fall into the grimy part of the world through naturalistic metaphors.

The Spaniard, the knight, brighter than his skaldmanship, withal was hied to split asunder the sameness of eyesores and beauties, such as wars and women. I learnt from Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Willen und Vorstellung* that our soul is affrighted when we are uncapable of foisting objects into concepts. A piercing bard, therefore, by means of his pen analyses what is ungraspable before the eyes of a layman, namely: beauty. But he does not destroy beauty; he fingers the atoms of beauty, he depicts them technically, as it were.

To unfetter the reader from an all-sphering beauty, Garcilaso wrote *Sonnet 23*, which is engaged in describing the ticks and bits of a spelling head. Its second quatrain says: "Thy hair is a wreath drawn/ from gold, which in yare flight,/ athwart thy upright white neck,/ the wind strikes, strows, sprawls". He wields the notion of "wind", or rather its multifarious powers, in order to fraught with cravings the reader. Through the whole sonnet, one finds expressions like these: "battering plight", "wroth blore", and "cold gale". The face, the eyes, the hair, the neck, which philosophically are crumbs of the primaeval stuff, in the poem are muckraked and briskly winged by the winds, or in a bettered word, by "time". I beg pardon to my readers for having forged a new word for this work of art: "woandboosing". The gold turned into not-to-be-unwound braids is "wooded" by the force of air, which, at once, by means of its coldness "boos" it.

The stringent history of literary criticism does not swallow irksome glosses, therefore, now I am going to offer a slight account concerning my translations (Garcilaso de la Vega, *Obra completa*. Madrid, Spain: Biblioteca Edaf, 2004) . I was skulking thwart the never-well-slaked words of Shakespeare, Chapman, and the *King James Bible*, and from this threefold source I dragged old-fashioned and literary English voices such as “foreright”, “wyrde”, “wot”, “ken”, “ween”, “culled”, “enow”, “perchance”, and so on, which frame, I guess, a similar linguistic tissue to Garcilaso’s.

The Spanish tongue is a connotative language, that is, the subjects of its phraseology generally are purveyed by memory and reality; the English tongue is a denotative language, or in other words, the subject of its sentences every time exacts a written symbol. By reason of this, I pitched the word “I” at the beginning of so many verses to swell the lyricism of each stanza. Withal, here and there I plied the term “which” based on Fowler’s tenets (*A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, 1926).

Rhyme was a trait beyond the wile of my pen; instead, it sought, as far as it could, alliteration. In *Sonnet 2*, for instance, the reader will meet this: “a falchion/ wrought to prick a wretch”. By queueing thrice the letter “r” I attempted to raise the sensation of roughness. Finally, some metaphors were put, or rather grafted, where Garcilaso’s tongue is too crumbed. In *Sonnet 32* the gleeman literally says: “I am in evil,/ and suffering does not recognize me”. We superseded the idea and sat somebody: the devil. In *Sonnet 6* “death, the end of manifold evils”, was changed to “death, the undoer of evils”.

Why did I hurl these soft poems into the English tongue? In a canting way I say that if my English, German, Russian, and French perusers learn Spanish and become acquainted with the manly poetry of the gilt Spain owing to this work, then I’ll be a proud man.-

Soneto 1

Cuando me paro a contemplar mi 'stado
y a ver los pasos por do me han traído,
hallo, según por do anduve perdido,
que a mayor mal pudiera haber llegado;

mas cuando del camino 'sto olvidado,
a tanto mal no sé por dó he venido;
sé que m' acabo, y más he yo sentido
ver acabar conmigo mi cuidado.

Yo acabaré, que me entregué sin arte
a quien sabrá perderme y acabarme
si quisiere, y aún sabrá querello;

que pues mi voluntad puede matarme,
la suya, que no es tanto de mi parte,
pudiendo, ¿qué hará sino hacello?

Sonnet 1

When I curb myself to ken my malady
and to glimpse the stroll that put me here,
I ween, according to my aimless wandering,
I could have reached a worse berth.

But being unaware of the road
I can not tell the ways of my ill.
I'm on the wane, and I grok my
own care begets my own end.

I'll efface myself 'cause in lassitude
I left my life at the mercy of one who
knows and craves to shipwreck me.

Since my will may kill me,
yours, which is not on my part,
what could it do but distraught me?

Soneto 2

En fin a vuestras manos he venido,
do sé que he de morir tan apretado,
que aun aliviar con quejas mi cuidado
como remedio m'es ya defendido;

mi vida no sé en qué s'ha sostenido,
sí no es en haber sido yo guardado
para que solo en mí fuese probado
cuánto corta una 'spada en un rendido.

Mis lágrimas han sido derramadas
donde la sequedad y el aspereza
dieron mal fruto della, y mi suerte:

¡basten las que por vos tengo lloradas;
no os venguéis más de mí con mi flaqueza;
allá os vengad, señora, con mi muerte!

Sonnet 2

At length, I came to thy hands,
wherein I wot I'll die anguished.
My outcries may not shield my soundness,
which are banned resources for me.

I do not know what did sustain my life;
but perchance I was culled
to be the sole butt of a falchion
wrought to prick a wretch.

My tears have been shed amongst
dryness, roughness, and haplessness,
which spring weak kernels.

The drops I issued are enow!
Do not wield my meekness as vengeance.
My lady, my death will be thy vendetta!

Soneto 4

Un rato se levanta mi esperanza,
mas cansada d' haberse levantado,
torna a caer, que deja, a mal mi grado,
libre lugar a la desconfianza.

¿Quién sufrirá tan áspera mudanza
del bien al mal? ¡Oh corazón cansado,
esfuerza en la miseria de tu estado,
que tras fortuna suele haber bonanza!

Yo mesmo emprenderé a fuerza de brazos
romper un monte que otro no rompiera,
de mil inconvenientes muy espeso;

muerte, prisión no pueden, ni embarazos,
quitarme de ir a veros como quiera,
desnudo espirtu o hombre de carne y hueso.

Sonnet 4

For a while is hoisted my longing,
but being worn-out due to its swelling,
it falls again and leaves, despite my will,
free room for suspicions.

For who will brave this rough steering
from bliss to evil? O tumbled heart,
fight in the barrenness of your lists,
for behind Fortune there is mirth!

I myself, by dint of endeavoring arms,
will split the cliff others did not crack,
which is teeming with myriads of snags.

Neither death, jail nor cumbersomeness
will impede the sight of you
through my neat ghost or in fleshy bones.

Soneto 5

Escrito 'stá en mi alma vuestro gesto
y cuanto yo escribir de vos deseo:
vos sola lo escribistes; yo lo leo
tan solo que aun de vos me guardo en esto.

En esto estoy y estaré siempre puesto,
que aunque no cabe en mí cuanto en vos veo,
de tanto bien lo que no entiendo creo,
tomando ya la fe por presupuesto.

Yo no nací sino para quereros;
mi alma os ha cortado a su medida;
por hábito del alma misma os quiero;

cuanto tengo confieso yo deberos;
por vos nací, por vos tengo la vida,
por vos he de morir, y por vos muero.

Sonnet 5

Thy mien is written in my soul,
which has all I wish to write on thee.
You alone worded it, and I peruse it
in solitude, far from you.

I'm and I'll be pitched here.
Albeit what I look into thee overrides me,
I believe this bliss, which I can not ken,
as faith is greeted as a guess.

My birth befell to love thee.
The outline of my soul has trimmed thee,
and I desire you were its shroud.

I confess my whole weal I owe thee.
I was raised for thee; thanks to thee I live.
For thee I'll perish. For thee I'm dying.

Soneto 6

Por ásperos caminos he llegado
a parte que de miedo no me muevo,
y si a mudarme a dar un paso pruebo,
allí por los cabellos soy tornado;

mas tal estoy, que con la muerte al lado
busco de mi vivir consejo nuevo,
y conozco el mejor y el peor apruebo,
o por costumbre mala o por mi hado.

Por otra parte, el breve tiempo mío
y el errado proceso de mis años,
en su primer principio y en su medio,

mi inclinación, con quien ya no porfío,
la cierta muerte, fin de tantos daños,
me hacen descuidar de mi remedio.

Sonnet 6

Gallivanting over dry ways I reached
a haven in which fear has frozen me;
if I attempt to stir my foot a jot,
then by the hair I am turned back.

A rascal I'm. With death close to me
I seek fresh counsel for my life;
I know the meliorated, the worst I credit
due to accursed wonts or my bedeviled Fate.

Contrariwise, my so short life,
and the twisted flow of my years,
which erred in its forepart, in its midst;

my likes, with which I do not grudge now,
and the unshunnable death, the undoer of evils,
lead me to disparage any febrifuge.

Soneto 13

A Dafne ya los brazos le crecían
y en luengos ramos vueltos se mostraban;
en verdes hojas vi que se tornaban
los cabellos qu' el oro escurecían;

de áspera corteza se cubrían
los tiernos miembros que aún bullendo ´staban;
los blancos pies en tierra se hincaban
y en torcidas raíces se volvían.

Aquel que fue la causa de tal daño,
a fuerza de llorar, crecer hacía
este árbol, que con lágrimas regaba.

¡Oh miserable estado, oh mal tamaño,
que con llorarla crezca cada día
la causa y la razón por que lloraba!

Sonnet 13

Daphne's arms were growing
and were turned into long branches.
Her gilt locks, I saw, were turned
into green leaves, which shaded them.

Harsh bark was wrapping her mild legs,
which still were seething.
The whiteness of her feet was buried
and transformed into awry roots.

The causer of such a wrack
by sorrowing hoisted the tree,
which was watered with tears.

O threadbare state, huge evil!
The everyday brackish bleating
is the cause that grows his cries!

Soneto 16

No las francesas armas odiosas,
en contra puestas del airado pecho,
ni en los guardados muros con pertrecho
los tiros y saetas ponzoñosas;

no las escaramuzas peligrosas,
ni aquel fiero rüido contrahecho,
d'aquel que para Júpiter fue hecho
por manos de Vulcano artificiosas,

podieron, aunque más yo me ofrecía
a los peligros de la dura guerra,
quitar una hora sola de mi hado;

mas infición de aire en sólo un día
me quitó al mundo y m'ha en ti sepultado,
Parténope, tan lejos de mi tierra.

Sonnet 16

Nor the loathed French arms
arrayed 'gainst the wroth bosom,
nor 'twixt the well-panoplied walls
the galling blows and arrows;

nor the threatening scimmages,
nor the eery rattling noise
that for Jupiter was contrived
by Vulcano's sleighty hands,

were able, howbeit I jostled myself
athwart warlike hard perils,
to vex an hour of my Fate.

But within a day, a sickening waft
winnowed me from the world and tombed me
in Parthenope, banished from my land.

Soneto 17

Pensando qu'el camino iba derecho,
vine a parar en tanta desventura,
que imaginar no puedo, aun con locura,
algo de 'sté un rato satisfecho:

el ancho campo me parece estrecho;
la noche clara para mí es oscura;
la dulce compañía amarga y dura,
y duro campo de batalla el lecho.

Del sueño, si hay alguno, aquella parte
sola qu'es ser imagen de la muerte
se aviene con el alma fatigada.

En fin que, como quiera, 'stoy de arte,
que juzgo ya por hora menos fuerte,
aunque en ella me vi, la que es pasada.

Sonnet 17

I weened the path was foreright
till I reached winding wyerde;
and even in madness I can not shape
something able to appay me.

In my sight the muckle turf is a strait,
the moonlight is an all-darkening fog,
sweet friendship is sour hardship,
and my bed is a harsh joust.

If aught remains of my slumber,
it's the spot resembles the deathly grimace,
which fits my barefoot inner life.

At any rate, I'm in such a mood
that I regard as the softest hours
those that pertain to the tides of yore.

Soneto 18

Si a vuestra voluntad yo soy de cera
y por sol tengo solo vuestra vista,
la cual a quien no inflama o no conquista
con su mirar es de sentido fuera,

¿de dó viene una que, si fuera
menos veces de mí probada y vista,
según parece que a razón resista,
a mi sentido mismo no creyera?

Y es que yo soy de lejos inflamado
de vuestra ardiente vista y encendido
tanto que en vida me sostengo apenas;

mas si de cerca son acometido
de vuestros ojos, luego siento helado
cuajárseme la sangre por las venas.

Sonnet 18

Before thy sight I'm a pliable candle,
and thy eyebrows are my cynosures,
which do not cheer nor vanquish
those who are witless.

Whence does this come from?
I seldom did test or saw it,
which is unfathomable, nay,
it is aught striking to my senses.

From afar I'm incensed by thy
warming eyes, to such a degree,
that my life hangs from a hair.

But if I'm hied aback by your eyes
in my whereabouts, then forthwith
my veins are bloodcurdled.

Soneto 23

En tanto que de rosa y d'azucena
se muestra la color en vuestro gesto,
y que vuestro mirar ardiente, honesto,
con clara luz la tempestad serena;

y en tanto que'l cabello, que'n la vena
del oro s'escogió, con vuelo presto
por el hermoso cuello blanco, enhiesto,
el viento mueve, esparce y desordena:

coged de vuestra alegre primavera
el dulce fruto, antes que 'l tiempo airado
cubra de nieve la hermosa cumbre.

Marchitará la rosa el viento helado,
todo lo mudará la edad ligera
por no hacer mudanza en su costumbre.

Sonnet 23

The hues of time-clapped blossoms
are bragged by thy anleth,
and thy strong shameless gaze
can soothe with light any battering plight.

Thy hair is a wreath drawn
from gold, which in yare flight,
athwart thy upright white neck
the wind strikes, strows, sprawls.

From the rollicking spring
the sweet kernel must be plucked,
ere the wroth blore can ice the lofty top.

The cold gale will wither the red;
the fleeting epoch will stir everything
if the lores are not stirred.

Soneto 32

Mi lengua va por do el dolor la guía;
ya yo con mi dolor sin guía camino;
entrambos hemos de ir con puro tino;
cada uno va a parar do no querría:

yo porque voy sin otra compañía
sino la que me hace el desatino;
ella porque la lleve aquel que vino
a hacella decir más que querría.

Y es para mí la ley tan desigual,
que aunque inocencia siempre en mí conoce,
siempre yo pago el yerro ajeno y mío.

¿Qué culpa tengo yo del desvarío
de mi lengua, si estoy en tanto mal,
que el sufrimiento ya me desconoce?

Sonnet 32

My tongue is fathered by sorrow;
I'm treading stung, bereft of a North Star.
We both will grope our own ways;
we both will reach an ill-foretold place...

because my bare squire is that
depicted by stubbornness;
because she could be reft by one
who can turn her into a babbler.

Quite unjust are these laws 'gainst me;
altho they assayed my shrewdlessness,
I oft amend alien and own blunders.

Did I breed the rascality of my tongue
within this sty, wherein the devil
can not recognize me?

Soneto 34

Gracias al cielo doy que ya del cuello
del todo el grave yugo he desasido,
y que del viento el mar embravecido
veré desde lo alto sin temello;

veré colgada de un sutil cabello
la vida del amante embebecido
en error y en engaño adormecido,
sordo a las voces que le avisan dello.

Alegrame el mal de los mortales,
y yo en aquesto no tan inhumano
seré contra mi ser cuanto parece;

alegrareme como hace el sano,
no de ver a los otros en los males,
sino de ver que dellos él carece.

Sonnet 34

Thanks to the heavens the eldritch burthen
has been put aside from my neck,
and from aloft I'll see, fearless,
the wrath-wrinkled billows of the sea.

I'll see trussed with a frail lock
the life of a distraught, allured,
erred, drowsy lover, whose
earless shuns counseling choirs.

The wretchedness of these tatterdemalions
will glad me, but my humane warp
will rebuke that unjust delight.

I will joy as a hale man:
not by beholding the shame of others,
but by regarding my lack of it.

Soneto 36

Siento el dolor menguarme poco a poco,
no porque ser le sienta más sencillo,
mas fallece el sentir para sentillo,
después que de sentillo estoy tan loco;

ni en sello pienso que en locura toco,
antes voy tan ufano con oïllo
que no dejaré el sello y el sufrillo,
que si dejo de sello, el seso apoco.

Todo me empece: el seso y la locura;
prívame este de sí por ser tan mío;
mátame estotra por ser yo tan suyo.

Parecerá a la gente desvarío
preciarme deste mal do me destruyo:
yo lo tengo por única ventura.

Sonnet 36

This pang undermines me piecemeal;
my turmoils do not simplify it;
the thicker the death, the easier the pain;
I maddened after breasting them.

I guess I do not touch bullheadedness.
I proud loiter when I hearken of this.
I'll not abandon this condition, this ill;
if I disdain them, I could lose my brains.

All batters me: my reason, my stiff-neckedness.
The former, which is of mine, flees from me;
kills me the latter, which is my owner.

Folk might utter is a thriftless praise
to vaunt the spot in which I impair myself:
but I ply it as my secluded happiness.

Soneto 37

A la entrada de un valle, en un desierto,
do nadie atravesaba ni se vía,
vi que con extrañeza un can hacía
estremos de dolor con desconcierto;

ahora suelta el llanto al cielo abierto,
ora va rastreando por la vía;
camina, vuelve, para, y todavía
quedaba desmayado como muerto.

Y fue que se apartó de su presencia
su amo, y no le hallaba, y esto siente:
mirad hasta dó llega el mal de ausencia.

Moviome a compasión ver su accidente:
díjele, lastimado: "Ten paciencia,
que yo alcanzo razón, y estoy ausente".

Sonnet 37

At the door of a dale, in the wilderness,
where no one did trudge nor appear,
I saw a dog who with strangeness
was extremely racking himself.

He casts his woofs towards the op'd clouds.
Tracking down through the path he is.
He hobbles, orbs, halts, and even
like one dead falls into a faint.

His sire has dissevered his presence
from him, who does not find it and suffers.
Too far does reach the sickness of solitude.

To ruth shoved me his pain-ridden state.
I, maimed, told him: "Be in stillness,
'cause altho I've judgment, I'm soulless".