

Francesco Petrarch (July 1304 - July 1374)

from *Rime Sparse*

original Italian

i

Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono
di quei sospiri ond'io nudriva 'l core
in sul mio primo giovenile errore
quand'era in parte altr'uom da quel ch'ì sono,

del vario stile in ch'io piango et ragiono
fra le vane speranze e 'l van dolore,
ove sia chi per prova intenda amore,
spero trovar pietà, nonché perdono.

Ma ben veggio or sí come al popol tutto
favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente
di me mesdesmo meco mi vergogno;

et del mio vaneggiar vergogna è 'l frutto,
e 'l pentersi, e 'l conoscer chiaramente
che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.

taken from:

<http://petrarch.petersadlon.com/canzoniere.html>

English translation

i

A You who hear the sound, in scattered rhymes,
B of those sighs on which I fed my heart,
B in my first vagrant youthfulness,
A when I was partly other than I am,

A I hope to find pity, and forgiveness,
B for all the modes in which I talk and weep,
B between vain hope and vain sadness,
A in those who understand love through its trials.

C Yet I see clearly now I have become
D an old tale amongst all these people, so that
E it often makes me ashamed of myself;

C and shame is the fruit of my vanities,
D and remorse, and the clearest knowledge
E of how the world's delight is a brief dream.

trans: A.S. Kline

Emund Spencer (1552 – 1599)

from *Amoretti*

IX

Long while I sought to what I might compare **A**
Those powerful eyes, which lighten my dark sight, **B**
Yet find I nought on earth to which I dare **A**
Resemble th' image of their goodly light. **B**
Not to the sun, for they do shine by night; **B**
Nor to the moon, for they are changed never; **C**
Nor to the stars, for they have purer sight; **B**
Nor to the fire, for they consume not ever; **C**
Nor to the lightning, for they still persever; **C**
Nor to the diamond, for they are more tender; **D**
Nor unto crystal, far nought may them sever; **C**
Nor unto glass, such baseness might offend her; **D**
Then to the Maker self they likest be, **E**
Whose light doth lighten all that here we see. **E**

English Sixteenth-Century Verse: An Anthology. Richard S. Sylvester, ed. W.W. Norton & Co., New York, © 1974.

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)

from *The Sonnets*

126

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power **A**
Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his fickle hour; **A**
Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st **B**
Thy lovers withering, as thy sweet self grow'st. **B**
If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack, **C**
As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back, **C**
She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill **D**
May time disgrace and wretched minutes kill. **D**
Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure! **E**
She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure: **E**
Her audit (though delayed) answered must be, **F**
And her quietus is to render thee. **F**

The Sonnets and Narrative Poems: The Complete Non-Dramatic Poetry. Sylvan Barnet, ed. Signet Classic, Penquin Books, New York, © 1989.

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Nov. 12, 1648/51 — April 17, 1695)

149

Were the perils of the ocean fully weighed,
no man would voyage, or, could he but read
the hidden dangers, knowingly proceed
or dare to bait the bull to frenzied rage.

Were prudent rider overly dismayed,
should he contemplate the fury of his steed
or ponder where its headlong course might lead,
there'd be no reining hand to be obeyed.

But were there one so daring, one so bold
that, heedless of the danger, he might place,
upon Apollo's reins emboldened hand

To guide the fleeting chariot bathed in gold,
the diversity of life he would embrace
and never chose a state to last his span.

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Margaret Sayers Peden, trans.
Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilimgüe, New York, © 1985.

Lady Mary Wroth (1587 — 1651/3)

from *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*

I

When night's blacke Mantle could most darknes prove,
And sleepe deaths Image did my senses hier,
From knowledg of my self, then thoughts did move
Swifter then those, most switnes need require:

In sleepe, a Chariot drawne by wind'd desire,
I sawe: wher sate bright Venus Queene of Love,
And att her feete her sonne, still adding fire
To burning hearts which she did hold above,

But one hart flaming more then all the rest,
The goddesse held, and put itt to my brest,
Dear sonne now shutt (shoot), sayd she: thus must we winne;

Hee her obay'd, and martir'd my poore hart.

I, waking hop'd as dreames itt would depart,
Yett since: O mee, a lover have I binn.

The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth. Josephine A. Roberts, ed.
Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, © 1983.