

Classic Poetry Series

Gaspara Stampa

- poems -

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Rime 08

If I, who am an abject, low-born woman,
Can bear within me such lofty fire,
Why should I not possess at least a little
Poetic power to tell it to the world?
If Love, with such a new unheard-of flint
Lifted me up where I could never climb,
Why cannot I, in an unusual way,
Make pain and pen be equal in myself?
If Love cannot do this by force of nature,
Perhaps as by a miracle he may
Passing and bursting every common measure.
How that can be, I cannot well explain
But yet I feel, because of my great fortune,
My heart imprinted with a strong new style.

Gaspara Stampa

Rime 104

O night to me more splendid and more blessed
Than the most blessed and most splendid of days,
Night worthy of the most exalted praise,
Not just of mine, unworthy and distressed,

You alone have been the faithful giver
Of all my joys; you've made the bitter taste
Of this life sweet and dear, for you've replaced
Within my arms the one who's bound me ever.

I just regret that I did not become
Lucky Alemená then, for whom the dawn
Postponed, against all custom, its returning,
But I can never say such good has come
From you, clear night, for even now my song
Cannot subdue the matter of its yearning.

Gaspara Stampa

Rime 208

Love made me such that I live in fire
like a new salamander on earth
or like that other rare creature, the Phoenix,
who expires and rises at the same time

Gaspara Stampa

Rime 28

When before those eyes, my life and light,
my beauty and fortune in the world, I stand,
the style, speech, passion, genius I command,
the thoughts, conceits, feelings I incite,
in all I'm overwhelmed, utterly spent,
like a deaf mute, virutally dazed, all reverence, nothing but amazed
in that lovely light, I'm fixed and rent.
Enough, not a word can I intone
for that divine incubus never quits
sapping my strength, leaving my soul prone.
Oh Love, what strange and wonderful fits:
one sole thing, one beauty alone,
can give me life and deprive me of wits

Gaspara Stampa

Rime 43

Harsh is my fortune, but harsher still is the fate
dealt me by my count: he flees from me,
I follow him; others long for me,
I cannot look at another man's face.

I hate him who loves me, love him who scorns me;
against the humble lover, my heart rebels,
but I am humble to him who kill my hope;
my soul longs for such harmful food.

He constantly gives me cause for anger,
while others seek to give me comfort and peace;
these I ignore, and I cling instead to him.

Thus in your school, Love, we receive
always the opposite of what we deserve:
the humble are despised, the heartless rewarded.

Gaspara Stampa