

# **Gaspara Stampa**

## **Fifty More Selected Sonnets**

Translated by A. S. Kline © 2021 All Rights Reserved  
This work may be freely reproduced, stored, and transmitted, electronically  
or otherwise, for any non-commercial purpose.

## Contents

Introduction.....	6
Translator's Note .....	6
Sonnets.....	8
I: I liken my lord, often, to the glow (5: Voi ch'ascoltate in questo meste rime).....	8
II: An intellect angelic and divine (6: Un'intelletto angelico, e divino) .....	8
III: What wonder then, that at the first assault (14: Che meraviglia fu, s'al primo assalto).....	9
IV: When I see my fair ray of light appear (18: Quando i veggio apparir, il mio bel raggio).....	9
V: The beauty, that the eye sees outwardly (20: Il bel, che fuor per gli occhi appare, e'l vago) .....	10
VI: 'If I, a god, with weapons about me (21: 'S'io, che son Dio, ed ho meco tant'armi') .....	10
VII: May you sometimes turn a merciful eye (22: Rivolgete talhora pietoso gli occhi) .....	11
VIII: You Graces, that dwell ever in those eyes (23: Gratie, che fate mai sempre soggiorno).....	11
IX: No other fire or dart, prison or knot (27: Altri mai foco, stral, prigione, ò nodo) .....	12
X: When I'm before those bright eyes, fair, divine (28: Quando innanti a i begli occhi almi, e lucent).....	12
XI: Midst this illustrious, noble company (30: Fra quell'illustre e nobil compagnia).....	13
XII: When will you e'er be sated, satisfied (33: Quando sarete mai satie e satolle).....	13
XIII: Do you know why, Amor, your mother placed (34: Sai tu, perche ti mise in mano Amore) .....	14
XIV: Proud nest, fair Venice, where my living Sun (37: Altero nido, ove'l mio vivo Sole).....	14
XV: Whenever deep sighs issue at each breath (38: Qualunque dal mio petto esce sospiro).....	15
XVI: Amor, you promised amicable peace (42: Tu pur mi promettesti amica pace) .....	15

XVII: The stars above are cruel, yet crueller still (43: Dura e la stella mia, maggior durezza) .....	16
XVIII: Hour upon hour, I seek to portray you, (45: Io vo pur descrivendo d' hora in hora) .....	16
XIX: High Hill and heavenly river, where dwell (46: Alto Colle, almo fiume, ove soggiorno) .....	17
XX: Like to the swan, that Phoebus holds so dear (48: Come l'augel, ch' à Febo è grato tanto) .....	17
XXI: Since Amor, with his savage dart, through you (50: Poi ch' Amor mi ferì di crude ponte).....	18
XXII: Amor, come view the glory I've acquired (51: Vieni, Amor, à veder la gloria mia).....	18
XXIII: If unwearied by burning and loving (53: Se d'arder, e d'amar, io non mi stanco).....	19
XXIV: Here Love, and there, cruel Fortune afflict me (60: Quinci Amor, quindi cruda empia Fortuna).....	19
XXV: Now, as sweet Spring returns to all the world, (62: Hor, che torna la dolce Primavera) .....	20
XXVI: This little space of time that's granted me (63: Questo poco di tempo, che m'è dato) .....	20
XXVII: You ladies, who've embarked but recently (64: Voi, che novellamente Donne entrate) .....	21
XXVIII: Alas, who now disturbs my lengthy peace? (88: Lassa, chi turba la mia lunge pace?) .....	21
XXIX: You, who upon the bitter path of love (90: Voi, che per l'amoroso aspro sentiero).....	22
XXX: Would you speak with me, a moment, Amor (125: Vorrei, che me dicessi un poco, Amor) .....	22
XXXI: Rise up Hope, O rise up, your weapons seize (127: Sù Speranza, sù è, prendete l'armi).....	23
XXXII: How fierce and savage, now, it has become (135: Quanto e questo fatto hora aspro, e selvaggio).....	23
XXXIII: Blessed and sacred river, besides who's shore (138: Sacro fiume beato, a le cui sponde).....	24
XXXIV: River, you that this name of mine now share (139: Fiume, che dal mio nome, nome prendi) .....	24

XXXV: When shall I see compassion in those eyes (143: Quando fia mai, ch'io vegga un dì pietoso).....	25
XXXVI: Procne and Philomela, sing with me (173: Cantate meco Progne, e Filomela) .....	25
XXXVII: No more rhymes can I find, with which to praise (184: Io non trovo piu rime, onde più possa) .....	26
XXXVIII: As some purple Hyacinth, flowering (188: Quasi vago, e purpereo Giacinto) .....	27
XXXIX: Accustom yourself, spirit, weak and frail (190: Acconciatevi spirti stanchi, e frali) .....	27
XL: Little by little, my unhappy soul (191: Comincia alma infelice à poco à poco) .....	28
XLI: If this weight of pain, that my heart afflicts (194: Se quel grave martir, che'l cor m'afflige) .....	28
XLII: 'Is this the firm, enduring loyalty (202: 'È questa quella viva, e salda fede) .....	29
XLIII: How will you bring an end, Love, to my pain (207: Qual darai fine Amor a le mie pene, .....	29
XLIV: I see you, bend your bow, afresh, Amor (212: Veggio Amor tender l'arco, e novo strale) .....	30
XLV: To see the heart, little by little, won (214: Un veder torsi à poco à poco il core) .....	30
XLVI: Now, my lord, that you have looped, with art (217: Signor, poi che m'havete ill collo avinto).....	31
XLVII: You, who drew forth from their native country (223: Tu, che traesti dal natio paese) .....	31
XLVIII: Divine Phoenix, who with golden plumage (224: Alma Fenice, che con l'auree piume).....	32
XLIX: 'You Graces, rendering fresh and serene (247: Gratie che fate il ciel fresco e sereno) .....	32
L: 'Shepherd, you who adorn the happy breast (261: Pastor, che d'Adria il fortunato sereno) .....	33

## Introduction

Gaspara Stampa (1523-1554) was born in Padua, her father Bartolomeo being a prosperous jewel merchant. After Bartolomeo's death in 1530, her mother Cecilia returned to Venice, her native city. Cecilia was highly-educated, and her house became a gathering place for cultural figures of the day. By the mid 1540's Gaspara and her sister Cassandra were praised for their musical ability, and Gaspara likely composed and performed settings for the madrigals she wrote, as well as being a notable singer of others' works. Near to Christmas (see Sonnet 2), in 1548, she met Count Collaltino di Collalto, a member of a wealthy family owning land around Treviso. He was a soldier, the same age as Gaspara, and a published poet (1545), who spent much of his life in military engagements in France and Italy, before his death in 1569. There is a notable portrait thought to be of Collaltino in armour, painted by Veronese. Their connection seems to have terminated around 1551. Gaspara died in April 1554, leaving behind her unpublished sonnets and other *rime* recording her apparently unrequited love for Collaltino, amongst other poems, which were published, through the efforts of her sister Cassandra, in that same year. In dedicatory poems prefacing that edition she is referred to as the 'Sappho of our day.'

Gaspara Stampa is invoked by Rilke in his '*Duino Elegies*', primarily as an example of a notable woman possessed by unrequited love, but that is to somewhat under-estimate the sheer literary quality of her verse, which stands as part of the long tradition of love-poetry, from Sappho and the Roman elegiac poets through to Dante and Petrarch, including the many poems addressed to a '*love afar*', as seen, for example, in Troubadour poetry and the works of Catherine de Pisan. Gaspara can be seen to explore this tradition, and that of the Petrarchan sonnet, as a literary persona in her own right, not simply as someone involved in an apparently one-sided love affair. Without doubting her love for Collaltino, one should note her equal passion for the Muse.

## Translator's Note

Due to the limited number of rhymes available in English compared to Gaspara's Italian, the rhyme scheme in these translations has been altered

throughout, in order to produce viable English rhyming verse, while preserving the basic structure of the sonnet form. With the same objective, a few minor changes or additions to the content have also been made, which do not substantially alter the sense and intent of her verse. The numeral given, before the bracketed Italian opening line of each sonnet, is the number of that sonnet in the 1544 edition.

## Sonnets

### I: I liken my lord, often, to the glow (5: Voi ch'ascoltate in questo meste rime)

I liken my lord, often, to the glow  
Of the heavens. His visage is the Sun,  
His eyes the stars, and his fair speech like one  
Of those sweet melodies of Apollo;  
Tempest, rain, thunder, frost, all show  
His disdain when he is prone to anger;  
Fair weather, and serene days, thereafter,  
A benign veil o'er his wrath do bestow.  
Spring, and the bursting forth of flower,  
Mark my hope's flowering, for his sweet grace  
Promises to maintain me in that state.  
But then comes vile winter, when my fate  
He threatens with a change of heart, and place,  
And I'm despoiled of all my rich honour.

### II: An intellect angelic and divine (6: Un'intelletto angelico, e divino)

An intellect angelic and divine,  
A Nature true, worthy, full of valour,  
An ardent desire for fame and honour,  
A way of speaking serious and fine;  
A famed lineage, kin to royalty,  
A fortune that's possessed by but a few,  
An age that befits his flowering too,  
A manner just, kind, full of modesty.  
A visage shining brighter than the Sun,  
In which, in form ne'er seen or heard before,  
Amor maintains his beauty and his grace,  
These, the chains that bind me, every one  
And on me make sweet, honourable war;  
O, may Love ever hold me in this place.



**III: What wonder then, that at the first assault (14: Che meraviglia fu,  
s'al primo assalto)**

What wonder then, that at the first assault,  
Young and alone, I remained in cover,  
As Love, armed with his arrows, as ever,  
Struck, now high, now low, with ne'er a halt,  
And that Lord whom, with rhyme, I adorn,  
Whom I exalt, though my words but falter,  
With eyes, unlike them, made the Sun render  
Light a burden, his heart of metal born.  
How, hemmed in, on my flanks, could I win free,  
Or offer a defence in any way,  
Against such power, such bright nobility?  
These were the enemies that won the day,  
And captured me; nor do I grieve, while he  
Seeks no new ventures, no new role to play.

**IV: When I see my fair ray of light appear (18: Quando i veggio  
apparir, il mio bel raggio)**

When I see my fair ray of light appear,  
I seem to see the shining Sun arise,  
When sweetness in delay I recognise,  
He seems the shining Sun, lingering here.  
Then all the life and joy I can display  
Show themselves in all my form and face,  
Like verdant grass the bright Sun paints in place,  
At noon, amidst the fullness of sweet May.  
Then when my Sun, a swift-departing guest,  
Leaves me, at last, I seem to see the other,  
Paler, leaving the world, to journey West.  
That sun returns, and earth and life recover,  
But as for my clear, shining East, at best  
Return is doubtful; certain his departure.

**V: The beauty, that the eye sees outwardly (20: Il bel, che fuor per gli occhi appare, e'l vago)**

The beauty, that the eye sees outwardly,  
In my Lord's visage, in his charming face,  
Is such that any who gaze on him, a space,  
Are conquered, satisfied by what they see.  
But if with a lynx's eye, or an enchanter's,  
You gazed there, with look fixed and intense,  
All that is not shown to the outward sense,  
You'd see: Paradise, a lake of wonders.  
Those fatal eyes not only kindle love  
In women, but in grass, herbs, and creatures;  
And stones, and wind and wave, they move.  
This alone my eyes win from those features,  
As compensation for how harsh they prove,  
Which thus of that greater good are teachers.

**VI: 'If I, a god, with weapons about me (21: 'S'io, che son Dio, ed ho meco tant'armi')**

'If I, a god, with weapons about me  
Am not prepared to duel with your lord,  
Whose unique beauty's ready to afford  
Him every chance to do me injury,  
What counsel can I seek to offer you,  
Or how can I grant you a means to move  
That heart of his, that cased in ice doth prove?  
What can my powers, charms, or prayer do?  
You must needs attend on time, or Fortune,  
To guide you in your quest, no other way  
Can I advise now; be it night or noon.'  
So, Love replies, and then he flies away,  
And I remain, crying to Sun and Moon,  
My great mischance, for ever and a day.

**VII: May you sometimes turn a merciful eye (22: Rivolgete talhora pietoso gli occhi)**

May you sometimes turn a merciful eye,  
From your fair self, towards my suffering,  
So that, to your heart, pity it may bring  
To match the pride in you that makes me sigh.  
Then will you see the pain that strikes me so,  
You'll see the empty quiver filled, that Love  
Bears with him, eager his cruel skill to prove,  
Winging his way towards me, with his bow.  
And, perchance, your pity for my torment,  
Will move you, as you take your haughty way,  
Blind to all that I feel, this discontent;  
My pain, thus, less; you less proud always,  
On your return, blessing heaven that sent  
Love, a hundred, two hundred times a day.

**VIII: You Graces, that dwell ever in those eyes (23: Gratie, che fate mai sempre soggiorno)**

You Graces, that dwell ever in those eyes  
I love, eyes that can make of women prey,  
And do, of many; I beg you this day,  
Make Love's temple rich in every wise,  
There where you dance amidst their gleaming rays,  
With Love's cherubim, who all dwell there too;  
Bear witness of my loyalty, anew,  
To him who, in many a verse, I praise.  
And if grace is your name and calling,  
Then make those two orbs gracious to me,  
More splendid than the sun in their shining;  
And since they have seduced me, entirely,  
Ensure (may death never seek their closing)  
That they don't leave me prey to misery.

**IX: No other fire or dart, prison or knot (27: Altri mai foco, stral,  
prigione, ò nodo)**

No other fire or dart, prison or knot  
As lively, sharp, bitter, and as tight-reined,  
Ever so scorched, so pierced, enclosed, constrained,  
As do mine: firm, harsh, acute, burning hot.  
What I die for, bear, suffer and enjoy,  
None died for, bore so, suffered, felt delight:  
A face, fickle, firm, harsh, fair to the sight,  
That I praise, accuse; thus, voice, pen, employ.  
Nor have others found the joy so dear  
I find in suffering, whence I grieve so,  
By gazing on those eyes, now dim, now clear.  
My sole regret now would be to forego  
This impasse, fire, dart, prison, knot, while, here,  
I'm granted means to live, and love also.

**X: When I'm before those bright eyes, fair, divine (28: Quando innanti  
a i begli occhi almi, e lucent)**

When I'm before those bright eyes, fair, divine,  
Through some stroke of ill-fortune, rarely known,  
My speech, my daring, style, the skill I've shown  
My thoughts, conceits, my sentiments so fine,  
All are constrained, or seem completely spent,  
And I am mute almost, and overcome,  
Perchance, by reverence for them, struck dumb,  
Or through seeking their light with such intent.  
Enough that not a word can I utter,  
So fatal is that heavenly aspect  
Seizing my spirit and soul, together.  
O miracle of Love, and rare effect,  
Where but one thing, this sole beauty, ever,  
Grants me life, yet robs me of intellect.

**XI: Midst this illustrious, noble company (30: Fra quell'illustre e nobil  
compagnia)**

Midst this illustrious, noble company  
Of graces, that render you immortal,  
None other, Count, is so beautiful  
When on the wing, as song's sweet harmony.  
It softens every bitter care for us,  
Every evil, lightens our burdens so;  
It renders calm, the waves' furious flow,  
When those fierce easterlies prove boisterous.  
Joy and laughter, Venus, and her offspring,  
Gather to render all around serene,  
Whenever we hear those sweet notes rising.  
And yet, were I beside you, for this scene,  
For this heavenly choir, and all its singing,  
I'd care not one single note, I ween.

**XII: When will you e'er be sated, satisfied (33: Quando sarete mai  
satie e satolle)**

When will you e'er be sated, satisfied,  
At last, by all my torment and my pain,  
Eyes brighter than the Sun, calmly, again,  
Lighting your hill, and the countryside?  
When will my gentle breast be bathed, no more,  
By tears, that with such toil seeks to sustain  
This faint heart, now my power to maintain  
Hope is lost; hope that Love did withdraw?  
When might the day arrive when, in mercy,  
You bring enduring pity, not soon gone,  
As light things vanish, doomed by their frailty?  
Either, that hope I must indeed abandon  
Or, my hair white as snow, desire in me,  
Now burning, prove but ash to gaze upon.

**XIII: Do you know why, Amor, your mother placed (34: Sai tu, perche  
ti mise in mano Amore)**

Do you know why, Amor, your mother placed  
Sharp arrows in your hand, and why, likewise,  
She bound that blindfold about your two eyes?  
So, the hearts of true lovers, here embraced,  
You might thus pierce and wound, yet never see  
The dreadful cruelty of your savage bow;  
More so that you might never pity know,  
Or at least curb not your impiety.  
For if you witnessed my sad wound, someday,  
Either no god, but a cruel beast you'd be  
If gentler you were not made, in your play.  
And yet my Sun's rays I'd not have you see,  
For then the wounds I bear, and so display,  
Perchance, might seem too slight a misery.

**XIV: Proud nest, fair Venice, where my living Sun (37: Altero nido,  
ove'l mio vivo Sole)**

Proud nest, fair Venice, where my living Sun  
His terrestrial burden first assumed,  
Which he bears more lightly than those doomed,  
Likewise, to journey, freedom yet unwon,  
I ever lack the words to praise your worth,  
The many virtues, with which you're endowed,  
Since my style is spare, my head is bowed  
Before those who'll extol you, o'er the earth.  
So, silently, I pray that heaven yet may  
Preserve you, in all your delightful grace,  
So dear, so pleasant in so many ways.  
And let your lord and mine ever embrace  
You, granting you greater fame, fuller praise,  
While I melt, in these treasured flames, apace.

**XV: Whenever deep sighs issue at each breath (38: Qualunque dal mio  
petto esce sospiro)**

Whenever deep sighs issue at each breath,  
As they do oft, now burning and now spent,  
Since to make those my Sun I gave consent,  
Those eyes, that wounded me at once to death,  
They fly, those sighs, towards the Hill I see  
Though it is far away, and with them go  
My thoughts, my feelings; tis no use, I know,  
Seeking to hold them, summon them to me.  
Because their only home, and their true place,  
Is with those eyes, that beauty so divine,  
That first woke my longing for his face.  
Oh, if some signs of pity were but mine,  
Of which I have no hope, see not a trace,  
Finding but cruelty there, not mercy's grace.

**XVI: Amor, you promised amicable peace (42: Tu pur mi promettesti  
amica pace)**

Amor, you promised amicable peace,  
The very day that I began to serve,  
Showed those fine eyes, and actions that deserve  
To please your mother, Venus, without cease.  
Yet like some faithless Lord, of evil name,  
Your yoke I must endure a second time,  
With fresh darts, you perpetrate fresh crime,  
Lighting one fire, and now another flame.  
You pierce and you scorch my heart, thereby;  
The means: a man of such great haughtiness,  
That he seems happiest when others die.  
Thus, I was betrayed, a girl, all heedless,  
One so young she'd faith in Love, yet I  
Know not from whom I now should seek redress.

**XVII: The stars above are cruel, yet crueller still (43: Dura e la stella mia, maggior durezza)**

The stars above are cruel, yet crueller still  
Those that my Count displays; from me he flees,  
I follow; men admire me, seek to please,  
Yet no other beauty doth my gaze so fill.  
I hate who loves, I love him that scorns me.  
To those who yield to me, my heart's unkind,  
While he kills hope to whom I yield, I find,  
To such strange fare my soul accustoms me.  
To him my deeds are cause for fresh disdain,  
While other men do peace and comfort bring;  
I quit them, seek his presence once again.  
All that is contrary to what's fitting,  
Your school, Love, endeavours to maintain;  
The humble scorned, the cruel ever winning.

**XVIII: Hour upon hour, I seek to portray you, (45: Io vo pur descrivendo d'hora in hora)**

Hour upon hour, I seek to portray you,  
The beauty you own, your rare intellect,  
All that might some worthier pen expect,  
Yet none will honour you as, here, I do.  
Though I exhaust my art, I cannot show  
My Count, the least part of your true merit,  
In whom all virtues dwell we inherit,  
You without whom my life is death, I know.  
Thus, the fire that inspires me so to write,  
Is one thing, yet that born of you another,  
And, speaking of you, my words are slight.  
Yet both alike feed my heart, give nurture,  
Bring me deep suffering, and yet shed light;  
Thus, my destined fate fulfilling ever.



**XIX: High Hill and heavenly river, where dwell (46: Alto Colle, almo fiume, ove soggiorno)**

High Hill and heavenly river, where dwell  
The Virtues, Love's company, every Grace,  
Since you first showed to the wide world a face  
That renders me fair, and himself as well,  
Raise the ancient horn, and deck your brow,  
The one with bright water, the other flowers;  
Blessed with new honours, and wider powers  
Your Lord, and mine, is here to greet us now.  
Once he's with you, then, of your courtesy,  
Ensure that he returns to me once more,  
Lacking him, I live on, yet wretchedly;  
And, winter ever far from you, therefore,  
May Flora and Pomona, graciously,  
Grant you such Aprils, Augusts, as endure.

*Note: Flora was the Roman goddess of Spring, Pomona of Autumn.*

**XX: Like to the swan, that Phoebus holds so dear (48: Come l'augel, ch'à Febo è grato tanto)**

Like to the swan, that Phoebus holds so dear,  
That, when approaching death, in its last song,  
Sends out its sweetest notes, that soar among  
The clouds above Meander, pure and clear,  
So, I, far from that blessed and charming face  
Alas, utter my own plaint, clear and pure,  
Above the Adriatic's rich, proud shore,  
Though fear and death surround me in this place.  
Yet to the swan I prove inferior,  
That, in the ancient manner, will return  
To Phoebus, who cherishes it the more,  
While I, undone by dying, may not turn  
To my lord, and rest there for evermore,

Fearing no shred of merit shall I earn.

*Note: Legend had it that the mute, or unmusical swan sang sweetly at its death, making it sacred to Apollo. The ancient Meander is the river in Lydia (the Büyük Menderes. south of Izmir) traditionally a habitat for the species (the mute swan, Cygnus oler, frequents the delta)*

**XXI: Since Amor, with his savage dart, through you (50: Poi ch'Amor mi ferì di crude ponte)**

Since Amor, with his savage dart, through you,  
Wounded me, I've sculpted you, I believe,  
In mind and thought, just as you live and breathe,  
And no other semblance shall prove as true.  
Your eyes, the Hemisphere's twin Suns that mount  
The skies, your countenance, your face, indeed  
That brow of yours, humble, yet proud at need,  
Display your grace, and truly make you Count.  
My portrait, though, of you is dissimilar  
In this, that near me your glance is haughty;  
Tis with others you prove humbler by far.  
Now, so I may capture you, precisely,  
And my likeness reveal you as you are,  
Amend that defect, when you're beside me.

**XXII: Amor, come view the glory I've acquired (51: Vieni, Amor, à veder la gloria mia)**

Amor, come view the glory I've acquired,  
Tis yours as well, because your arrows so  
Work as to make us both immortal grow,  
Where'er, through you, folk love and are desired.  
Famous you render me; one not averse  
To accepting your cruel and mortal blows,  
Caught by those eyes, their glances your arrows,  
That, never before, Nature did rehearse.

Famous yourself you render; in that I  
Praise you, in rhyming speech, as best I may,  
With what you granted me of skill, thereby.  
If it doth please you now, ensure, I pray,  
My guide, the Sun you awoke, from this eye  
Goes not, to leave me lonely, robbed of day.

**XXIII: If unwearied by burning and loving (53: Se d'arder, e d'amar,  
io non mi stanco)**

If, unwearied by burning and loving,  
I, hour by hour, feel love's fierce flames increase,  
And, unrepentant, would have neither cease,  
As Amor knows, who's ever-hovering,  
Why do my hopes seem always to lessen;  
Vanishing like the mist before the breeze,  
Such hopes as come to set my heart at ease,  
Without which none lives, or has ever done?  
Often, deep in my heart, this errant theme  
Proclaims itself: 'O, all your happiness  
Fond wretch, may, in the end, prove but a dream,  
For soon those eyes, that grant you blessedness,  
Must vanish, like reflections in the stream,  
And every joy of yours, with their brightness.

**XXIV: Here Love, and there, cruel Fortune afflict me (60: Quinci  
Amor, quindi cruda empia Fortuna)**

Here Love and, there, cruel Fortune, afflict me  
Such that I know not how I might defend  
Myself against the fierce blows they send,  
That one or the other deals ceaselessly.  
Air, earth, and sea, heaven, Sun, stars, and Moon:  
With what great pride they strive, with what power,  
To ruin me, harming me, hour by hour –  
My fate, alas, since birth, both late and soon.  
And he, who alone doth my hopes sustain,

Won't hesitate to add to all my woe,  
And leave me, in an instant, to my pain.  
Bitter Death at least may yet still follow,  
As, indignant, I my sad lament maintain;  
And save me from the reach of every foe.

**XXV: Now, as sweet Spring returns to all the world, (62: Hor, che torna la dolce Primavera)**

Now, as sweet Spring returns to all the world,  
From me alone, it seems, it must depart;  
And travel far, to seek some distant part,  
Where the Sun's sphere is icily unfurled.  
And the blooms, in white and scarlet flowering,  
Amor casts, from his hand, o'er my lord's face,  
That mighty son of Mars, with martial grace,  
Will gleam, before my eyes, one final evening,  
Then flower for other folk, where there are none  
That live and breathe for their perfume alone,  
As I do who, in life, but woe have won.  
O Love you are too harsh, unjust, I'll own,  
To act so: for, thus, lovers are undone,  
Bodies and hearts apart, and distant grown.

**XXVI: This little space of time that's granted me (63: Questo poco di tempo, che m'è dato)**

This little space of time, that's granted me,  
Rather of life itself, ere you must go,  
You, noblest wonder that the world can show,  
Must spend here at my side, and ne'er be free;  
So that, before you are, thus, torn away  
From this fair, happy, native land of ours,  
I may gain more vigour of your powers,  
That, without you, am miserable alway.  
For if you go ere I gain strength from you,  
My soul is well-nigh certain to render

Itself to death, bare of its every virtue.  
And I fear lest I should mar the splendour  
Of those honours that to your name accrue,  
The steep, wearying mount doth engender.

**XXVII: You ladies, who've embarked but recently (64: Voi, che  
novellamente Donne entrate)**

You ladies, who've embarked but recently,  
To voyage o'er Love's deep and boundless sea,  
Those wastes of error, and of treachery,  
There, where the shipwrecks prove all too many,  
Be cautious, and don't venture out too far,  
Lest you find you can no more win free;  
Trust not the winds, nor the calms you see,  
E'er changeable, as I have found they are.  
And may your little skiff learn much from mine,  
For on the reefs, ill-fated, I was thrown,  
When I'd high hopes of reaching shores benign.  
Above all, let my counsel here be known:  
Find noble lovers, make that your design,  
And in dire peril, comfort you'll be shown.

**XXVIII: Alas, who now disturbs my lengthy peace? (88: Lassa, chi  
turba la mia lunge pace?)**

Alas, who now disturbs my lengthy peace?  
Who rouses me from sleep, mars my deep quiet?  
Who seeks to feed my heart on this new diet  
Of longing, and bring on my own decease?  
You, Amor, with your torch, and with your bow,  
All human happiness, strike down, dissever,  
You wake me but to drink of Lethe's river,  
That harms me more, the sweeter it doth flow.  
Ah, when will it ever dawn, that day, again,  
When I may say I am myself, once more,  
Freed from the heavy yoke that brings but pain?

When might the image stamped there, by Amor,  
Deep in my bones and marrow, quit my brain,  
Quench my woe, and leave me as heretofore?

**XXIX: You, who upon the bitter path of love (90: Voi, che per  
l'amoroso aspro sentiero)**

You, who upon the bitter path of Love  
Journey, dear Ladies, much as I have done,  
And see, and learn, each and every one,  
What cruel darts that archer doth approve,  
Tell me in truth, of your sweet courtesy,  
Should you compare my sufferings to those  
That are now, or have been, do you suppose  
They'd equal those inflicted now on me?  
And tell me, if you've ever viewed a face  
Sweeter in looks and yet one more unkind  
Than my lord's, in amorous dwelling place?  
Love, grant a truce to you, although, I find,  
Harsh separation drives Love, in my case,  
To vent in me his wrath, now unconfined.

**XXX: Would you speak with me, a moment, Amor (125: Vorrei, che  
me dicessi un poco, Amor)**

'Would you speak with me, a moment, Amor,  
About your sisters, Fear and Jealousy,  
And why their only lodging is with me?  
Nowhere dwell they but in my heart, I'm sure.  
You've a thousand other ladies, who know  
As I, the power of your accursed flame,  
So, send your two to live there with those same,  
And let them from my breast be driven so.'  
'Indeed, a thousand' he tells me, 'there are,  
To whom they could be sent, and yet tis you  
Have much the greater cause for fear, by far.  
Those eyes, the lights you love, those very two,

My mother, Venus, chose, to spread, afar,  
Through all lands; jealousy and passion too.

**XXXI: Rise up Hope, O rise up, your weapons seize (127: Sù Speranza,  
sù è, prendete l'armi)**

Rise up Hope, O rise up, your weapons seize  
Against this cruel enemy of mine,  
Importunate Jealousy; her design,  
Devoid of mercy, to gain my decease.  
Let sighs issue forth, speak true poetry,  
That so bitter and vile a pain may cease;  
Seek out such sweet companions as please,  
So that my woe might seem less dire to me.  
If they suffice not, exchange for another  
This love, Hope; quit this, through which I burn;  
Thus, the one grief will defeat the other.  
A beast trapped in a wood, a field, will turn,  
And turn, seeking with natural vigour  
To find a way its freedom, thus, to earn.

**XXXII: How fierce and savage, now, it has become (135: Quanto e  
questo fatto hora aspro, e selvaggio)**

How fierce and savage, now, it seems to be,  
This sea, that was so pleasant, once, and sweet!  
Now your departure from us you complete,  
What sadness for myself I feel, what pity!  
As great as my envy for Hill, beech, pine,  
All that brings you shade; the clear, bright river  
That bathes your feet, and names me, forever,  
Anassilla; all, where the Sun doth shine.  
And were it not the very place that bore you,  
I'd beg the heavens to turn it to a waste,  
The trees withered, the water turbid too,  
But I rest there, and pray to you, to haste  
Back to me, my heart's mirror, and be true,

O glass, in which, all purified, I'm traced.

*Note: The river from which she takes a name is the Piave, or Anasso (the ancient Anaxus) which flows from the Alps to the Adriatic near Venice, passing the Collalto estates (near Susegana) north of Treviso.*

**XXXIII: Blessed and sacred river, besides who's shore (138: Sacro fiume beato, a le cui sponde)**

Blessed and sacred river, besides who's shore  
Is seen the ancient Hill, so fine and high,  
Whereon the tree was born, that to the sky  
Raises its branches, and their verdant store;  
The stars above seconded your desire  
To see that famous offspring close to you,  
So, you might moisten its beauty, anew,  
That doth so oft, alas, from me retire.  
You've granted me a name and, in my verse,  
I'll seek to use my skill to win for you  
A fame that coming ages shall rehearse.  
O may heaven, that oft my joy doth view,  
Take no offence to my intent adverse;  
None but it knows so well what I pursue.

*Note: Again, the river is the Piave, the Hill the seat of the Collalto family at Susegana near Treviso, and the tree her Count Collaltino, poet as well as soldier, and aware of her literary aims.*

**XXXIV: River, you that this name of mine now share (139: Fiume, che dal mio nome, nome prendi)**

River, you that this name of mine now share,  
Who bathe the feet of that high, lovely Hill,  
Where the tall beech, its glory growing still,  
Was born, that sees desire within me flare,



That tree you view, and hear, oft, and at times  
Mirror its fair, sweet image in your flood,  
Contending oft, alas, for that which would  
Content me, its shadow, amidst my rhymes.  
So, notwithstanding that its noble greenery,  
Which I've wept o'er, sung in many a verse,  
Hides it, thanks to you, so frequently,  
I pray that no dark rain-clouds prove perverse,  
Anasso, and obscure your clarity,  
Other than those that my own eyes rehearse.

**XXXV: When shall I see compassion in those eyes (143: Quando fia  
mai, ch'io vegga un dì pietoso)**

When shall I see compassion in those eyes,  
That first, to my misfortune, were revealed  
On these Venetian shores, where Love concealed  
A thousand snares, to trouble and surprise?  
When shall I boldly, free once more, declare,  
With all my tears and my sorrows banished:  
'Comfort yourself, dear soul, all have vanished;  
Smile, and feel joy, for here's an end to care?'  
Alas, I know not; this alone I know,  
That he, and Death, I've oft sought to placate;  
Neither of them, as yet, has yielded though.  
Sadly, this is the end, this is the state  
Of all who love beyond their station, so.  
Ladies, beware lest you are snared by fate.

**XXXVI: Procne and Philomela, sing with me (173: Cantate meco  
Progne, e Filomela)**

Procne and Philomela, sing with me,  
Or rather weep for my deep suffering,  
Now that the Spring and its sweet flowering  
Announce you, and my plaintive melody;

Sisters, for whom the season must renew,  
The pain, your anger, and Tereus' shame;  
While, cruel, bitter parting I must blame  
For bringing me naught but death, unlike you.  
And, since my woe is fresher than your own,  
Help me, friends, to pour forth all my sorrow,  
For I lack that strength, in myself alone.  
And if ever it pleases Love to calm me so,  
Then I'll weep night and day for you, and moan,  
With as much art, and skill, as I can show.

*Note. In myth, Tereus, King of Thrace, raped Philomela, he being husband to her sister Procne. She avenged herself by killing their son Itys and serving his flesh to Tereus. Fleeing him the two sisters were changed into birds, by the gods, Philomela into the nightingale, Procne into the swallow. See Ovid's Metamorphoses, Book VI.*

**XXXVII: No more rhymes can I find, with which to praise (184: Io non trovo piu rime, onde più possa)**

No more rhymes can I find, with which to praise  
Your great beauty, your outstanding valour;  
Or to tell the torments of my heart: the more  
My woes increase, the greater my malaise.  
As, buried beneath ash, a fire will glow,  
But lacks the power to send forth its flame,  
So, my desire within proves much the same,  
Swells my pain, consumes my very marrow.  
Thus, from the ill or good that comes my way,  
That Love has sent, all I have gained is this:  
Naught, of their power or nature, can I say.  
Bright, living Sun my weakness now dismiss;  
Or, Love, grant me wings, that I might display  
To all what smoulders in the heart's abyss.

**XXXVIII: As some purple Hyacinth, flowering (188: Quasi vago, e purpereo Giacinto)**

As some purple Hyacinth, flowering  
Midst meadow grass, and happy so to be,  
Beneath the sweet rays of the heavenly  
Star that tends its glorious awakening,  
May suddenly languish, and is undone,  
Such that you ne'er saw aught more pitiful,  
Denied that light that seemed habitual  
By a concealing cloud that hides the Sun;  
So, my hope, that grows from hour to hour,  
Beneath those rays, of infinite beauty,  
From which all virtue and vigour flower,  
Is weakened, and confused, instantly,  
By dark fears, that soon dilute their power,  
Such that their bright glow fades, all too swiftly.

**XXXIX: Accustom yourself, spirit, weak and frail (190: Acconciatevi spirti stanchi, e frali)**

Accustom yourself, spirit, weak and frail  
To sustain this perilous war, the blows  
That ill Fortune deals, for the bright Sun goes,  
And those eyes that mortally did assail.  
What is all that torment, and all the pain  
You've suffered, since cruel Love laid you low,  
Next to this evil? Mere dream and shadow,  
Now he departs our presence once again.  
Perchance, against that grief, a little strength  
Once made you feel bold, and hence sustained you,  
Though my lord was absent, and at such length,  
That first time; but a greater doth ensue.  
Left without what was yours, not e'en a tenth,  
You've no defence but death, in your purview.

**XL: Little by little, my unhappy soul (191: Comincia alma infelice à poco à poco)**

Little by little, my unhappy soul,  
Come, ready yourself for this fatal blow,  
That, merely to think of, unnerves me so,  
Turns me to sorry pulp, joy swallows whole;  
The noble source of our bright living flame  
Will soon depart, for which I pardon Love;  
Instead, my cruel lord, who doth swift remove  
Himself, altering mind and place, I blame.  
Thus, when the setting Sun departs from you,  
Let not these tears cease, inwardly, to fall,  
For where the power and will prove one not two,  
A firm and constant heart may conquer all,  
And death or time, as they are wont to do,  
Transport you beyond life, or sorrow's thrall.

**XLI: If this weight of pain, that my heart afflicts (194: Se quel grave martir, che'l cor m'afflige)**

If this weight of pain, that my heart afflicts,  
Was not thus tempered, by gracious Amor,  
Long since had I journeyed from the shore  
Of Cocytus, a far shade, beyond the Styx;  
And yet the more I grieve, by love transfixed,  
The more my joy tempers my ardour, so  
Holding my heart between the two, although  
My soul, alas, to neither is affixed.  
My food's ambrosial yet poisonous fare,  
Thus, I of neither life nor death, am sure;  
Now vigour, now languishment my share.  
O strange, new being, one not known before,  
O breast that's full of sorrow and of care,  
O suffering, O delight, that ne'er endure.

**XLII: 'Is this the firm, enduring loyalty (202: 'È questa quella viva, e  
salda fede)**

'Is this the firm, enduring loyalty  
That you once promised your young Shepherdess,  
If, with the Spring, you part from her, no less,  
To fight for France's great king and country?  
O say, if the Sun that scorches, is likewise  
Unfaithful, ungrateful, in word and deed;  
Woe then to me, your handmaiden, indeed,  
Who, in returning, bear so poor a prize.'  
Thus, the woeful, desolate, Anassilla,  
Calling, along the fair Venetian shore,  
To her Shepherd, whom the skies deny her;  
The wind and water resounding, the more,  
As the Sun grows brighter, and still hotter,  
With her sighs, that carry to heaven's door.

**XLIII: How will you bring an end, Love, to my pain (207: Qual darai  
fine Amor a le mie pene,**

How will you bring an end, Love, to my pain,  
If from the cold ashes of one ardour,  
Thanks to you alone, is born a greater,  
So strong that it consumes me once again?  
Amidst the fortunate, hot, sandy waste,  
From a nest afire with perfumes, a worm  
Crawls from the dead phoenix, the germ  
From which the phoenix is, in time, replaced.  
To you, I owe those gracious arrows, Love,  
That e'er find some object, fine and worthy,  
Whence you strike and wound me from above.  
This one is such, and wrought so perfectly,  
With gifts, and equal beauty, all approve,  
I find true joy in burning for him wholly.

*Note: Apparently written after the end of Gaspara's relationship with Collaltino, and celebrating the advent of a new lover (see elsewhere sonnet 206, the 'Salamander' sonnet).*

**XLIV: I see you, bend your bow, afresh, Amor (212: Veggio Amor  
tender l'arco, e novo strale)**

I see you, bend your bow, afresh, Amor,  
And take new arrows to assail my heart,  
Deal new wounds, new pains, new torments start,  
Though those are not yet healed you dealt before.  
So suited is your fatal flame, to me,  
And I so much your servant, night and day,  
That though my soul perceives the better way,  
It scorns to hide, deeming that unworthy.  
Truly the web you weave, all too closely,  
Is of the finest thread, such that my heart  
Rejoices, though it be destroyed wholly;  
And such are your arrows, when, of your art,  
Those wounded die, they know no means, we see,  
To prise life and the highest good apart.

**XLV: To see the heart, little by little, won (214: Un veder torsi à poco à  
poco il core)**

To see the heart, little by little, won,  
Sadly, yet not complain at the offence;  
To see how clear the flame is, and intense,  
Those eyes kindle, yet not flee from passion;  
To seek to sacrifice, and willingly,  
The freedom gained but a brief while ago;  
To own a soul, accomplice to its woe,  
Bent upon others' wishes endlessly;  
To seem to find all liveliness, and grace,  
Whether it seeks to go, stay, speak or no,  
In the form of a single human face;

Such are the reasons why I fear a slow  
Death, lost in a sea of tears without trace;  
Yet pray to God that such I may not know.

**XLVI: Now, my lord, that you have looped, with art (217: Signor, poi  
che m'havete ill collo avinto)**

Now, my lord, that you have looped, with art,  
A noose about my neck, tenacious, strong;  
Now, as I, Love wishes you borne along,  
You, and none other, printed on my heart;  
It's right that the instinctive courtesy  
Granted your heart by virtue and nature,  
Should turn your eyes towards this creature  
You have conquered, she yielding willingly.  
Let our means to lead a life seldom known  
In any age, be peace, trust, humility,  
Charity; let all say: 'O blessed, we own,  
This pair to be, their stars fair and kindly,  
Joined sweetly, and with but one will alone.'

**XLVII: You, who drew forth from their native country (223: Tu, che  
traesti dal natio paese)**

You, who drew forth from their native country,  
Our Muses, who, with those of Helicon,  
Now to the realm of Rhône and Seine are gone,  
Its 'king of kings' greatest in courtesy;  
And all there now, with you, are of one mind,  
Together with Apollo, Leto's son,  
In praising all Crowned Royalty has done,  
The glory in many a work enshrined;  
Famed Alamanni, I would wish to go  
As well, and, once there, join in honouring  
And praising, him with you, and you also.  
But my deep-felt desire meets an opposing  
Truth: I am woman, Love's prey, humble, low;

My pen but weak, though the spirit's willing.

*Note: The sonnet is addressed to Luigi Alamanni (1495-1556), the Florentine poet, an exile in France (during the reign of Henri II) after his involvement in a conspiracy against the Medici.*

**XLVIII: Divine Phoenix, who with golden plumage (224: Alma Fenice, che con l'auree piume)**

Divine Phoenix, who, with golden plumage,  
Beyond all other women, soar in flight,  
Filling all, pole to pole, with wondrous light,  
Venice, Italy; doyen of our age,  
Eternal beauty, angelic presence,  
Breast in which only honest wishes dwell,  
Why cannot I of your great virtues tell,  
By pouring forth a stream of eloquence?  
What would I not give for the laurel, though,  
Woman that I am, to adorn my hair,  
And stand there beside Corinna, Sappho?  
Since to my wish my pen cannot compare,  
Deploy your lovely eyes' divine rays so,  
Yourself make known, this sea blessed, everywhere.

*Note: The addressee of the poem is unknown, possibly her friend Ippolita Mirtilia was intended. Of the female poets of ancient Greece, Corinna and Sappho are the best-known names. Gaspara was herself described as 'the Sappho of our age', and the quality of her poetry makes that a just claim.*

**XLIX: 'You Graces, rendering fresh and serene (247: Gratie che fate il ciel fresco e sereno)**

'You Graces, rendering fresh and serene  
All heaven when you wish, and you, Venus,  
Sacred mother of Love, who so move us,



You, who drive all shadows from the scene,  
Scatter with your fair hands, courteously,  
A cloud perfumed with the fairest flowers,  
O'er these renowned shepherds and their powers,  
That bring me joy, and honour Venice sweetly;  
Let adverse Fortune, the wild storms, no less  
Leave them untroubled in their happy state,  
Bless them, then as now, with every sweetness.'  
With ardent zeal, her burning heart elate,  
Thus, Anasilla prayed, the shepherdess;  
The Graces heard, and Venus gave it weight.

*Note: The renowned shepherds are other Venetian poets, her contemporaries.*

**L: 'Shepherd, you who adorn the happy breast (261: Pastor, che  
d'Adria il fortunato sereno)**

'Shepherd, you who adorn the happy breast  
Of Venice, with such honours, such glory,  
As fills the world with her praise, her story,  
Singing of her, so famous now, so blessed,  
Shepherd, what store of wisdom your mind holds,  
At such a tender age, your years still green,  
Nobly-born, making the sky, now serene  
Now dark, praised in the song your skill unfolds.  
Ah, if I could but share the smallest part  
Of those heavenly splendours that arise,  
Darkness and death were farther from my heart.'  
Anasilla, praising her young yet wise  
Shepherd, to the pure air did this impart,  
Sweet aspects filling all the distant skies.

*Note: The identity of the shepherd, a Venetian poet, is not known, but may be the poet she calls by the classical name, Coridon, who is so addressed in sonnet 262, which speaks of him raising her, and her sister Cassandra, to the sky.*

**The End of Fifty More Selected Sonnets of Gaspara  
Stampa**