

Pierre de Ronsard

Translated from the French by Terese Coe

Uncommon Woman

I won't compare your beauty to the moon.
The moon is fickle — your desire is one.
Even less to the sun. The common sun
gives light to all, and you are never common.
Your kindness is paid with jealousy and wrath.
This is not flattery. I mean to praise:
you are yourself, unique in all your ways;
you are at once your God, your star, your path.
Those who make the least comparison
merely presume, or else their reason's gone.
Your mind and spirit beyond all commonplace,
either you hide a fiend I cannot see,
or else you're meant to be a paragon,
or well you may be Pallas, or one of the Graces.

See To It

See to it the wine is as chilled
as icicles in frozen air.
Send for Janne, who is as skilled
on lute as her voice is soft and fair —
she can play while we three dance.
Barbe must also come again,
her hair the pièce de résistance,
her ringlets wild à l'italienne.

You see the day is almost gone?
Never mind some later time!
Fill my cup with good Bourgogne —
why not invent a pantomime?
Curses on the sick at heart!
Doctors make me saturnine.
Sound of mind's a simple art:
simply flood my brain with wine.

Ode to His Lyre

Your wood so soft with mold, too sick to sing,
I grieved to see your desolate condition,
you who added song to the royal feasts
and enchanted guests with your musical tradition.
To return to you your native strings and wood,
to hear your natural sources of tone and soul,
I sacked Apulia and pillaged Theban Greece
to restore you with the spoils that will make you whole.