

The Mythological Sonnets of Manuel de Faria e Sousa

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Manuel de Faria e Sousa (1590-1649) is best remembered today as the editor and commentator of Camões, both the *Rimas* (printed 1685-89) and *Lusiads* (1639). Although his critical works are in Spanish, he was also a poet in his own right in Portuguese and Spanish, in his *Divinas y humanas flores* (1624) and *Fuente de Aganipe*, of which six volumes were published in his lifetime, and the seventh book remains in manuscript (Askins, 1983: 245-77). For an overview of his work, see Oliveira e Silva, 2001: 61-76. He is little studied today as a poet.

This paper focuses on seven sonnets by Faria on mythological topics, beginning with one on Hercules which will exemplify a particular type of sonnet structure, a structure which has a history before Faria, which he identified in his critical work, and which I will argue informed Faria's concept of the Camões canon.

A aquel que diô motivos al espanto,
i glorioso fin hizo al deseo;
que entrando por las ondas del Leteo
fue escandalo al poder de Radamanto:
Que en el ayre dexô con valor tanto
el hijo de la Tierra por trofeo;
que el monstruo, oïdo horrible; visto, feo,
venciô por las malezas de Erimanto:
A aquel, cuyas celadas, i cimeras,
fueron rotas cabeças de Leones,

donde los ojos arrojavan fuego:
Que con mano feroz rasgava fieras,
llevando enteros pinos por bastones,
un rapaz le venciô desnudo, i ciego.
([Centuria I], 59; Faria, 1646: f. 15v)

The import of the poem is made clear by Faria: ‘Que no ay fuerças no rendidas del amor de la belleza’ (f. 27r).

Hercules is unnamed, an indication that the poet is addressing an audience of connoisseurs of Classical culture. When Faria says that Hercules ‘glorioso fin hizo al deseo’, I believe he is referring to the work of various mythographers who interpreted such labours as the defeat of the Hydra, Antaeus, the Erymanthean Boar and Atlas as lessons in overcoming bodily desires (Villena, 1958: 68, 93, 114, 133; Bull, 2006: 106, citing Fulgentius). Lines 3-4 refer to Hercules’s eleventh labour, the descent into the Underworld. In 5-6 he defeats Antaeus, son of the Earth. In 7-8 Hercules overcomes the Erymanthean boar (his fourth labour). In 9-11 Faria describes Hercules’s traditional garb, the lion skin, but with a degree of hyperbole. Hercules wore but one lion’s head, that of the Nemean lion, and the eyes certainly did not continue to dart flames. Similarly, his club was just a stick, falling short of the pine tree which Faria gives him in 13. (Faria likely gives him one of the monstrous attributes of the cyclops Polyphemus (‘pinus, baculi quae praebuit usum’, says Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIII, 782).

Now, Hercules had a number of degrading relations with women, principally Iole (often confused with Omphale), who prevailed on him to swop clothes with her

and made him spin (Bull, 2006: 132-34; Huemer, 1979: 562-74). This is a motif in art in Antiquity (Huemer, 1979: 556-68.). In the early seventeenth century the beloved is replaced by the personified Love: in Otto Vaenius's emblem of 1659 Cupid teaches Hercules to spin, under the inscription: 'Amor docet artes' (Bagley, 1996: 92). The closest analogue I have seen to Faria is actually one of the oldest, an epigram of Geminus in the *Greek Anthology*:

On a statue of Heracles

Heracles, where is thy great club, where thy Nemean cloak and thy quiver full of arrows, where thy stern glower? Why did Lysippus mould thee thus with dejected visage and alloy the bronze with pain? Thou art in distress, stripped of thy arms. Who was it that laid thee low? Winged Love, of a truth one of thy heavy labours.
(GA XVI, 103; Paton, 1916-18: V, 217).

This likeness to the *Greek Anthology* brings me to the history of the sonnet before Faria. Most sonnetteers who treated mythological themes used them as a reflection of the suffering of the poet-lover. This tendency is exemplified by a sonnet of Camões, the import of which is: 'Apollo killed the Python, but when Cupid struck him with his golden arrow [he had a lead arrow too to make people fall out of love] he fell for the unyielding Peneia. All his powers did him no good. So, what can I expect in my love-life?' asks the poet.

O filho de Latona esclarecido,
que com seu raio alegre a humana gente,
o hórrido Píton, brava serpente,
matou, sendo das gentes tão temido.
Feriu com arco, e de arco foi ferido
com ponta aguda de ouro reluzente;
nas tessálicas praias, docemente,
pela ninfa Peneia andou perdido.
Não lhe pôde valer, para seu dano,
ciência, diligências, nem respeito
de ser alto, celese e soberano.

Se este nunca alcançou nem um engano
de quem era tão pouco em seu respeito,
eu que espero de um ser que é mais que humano?
(Camões 81 [1616])¹

Here we see as so often the primacy in the sonnet of the lyric first person.

From the fifteenth century onward, it was common to describe the sonnet as the modern successor to the ancient epigram. The first author to make the identification is Lorenzo de' Medici in 1482-84. In the sixteenth century, in Portugal and elsewhere, we find a small corpus of sonnets couched not in the first person but the third (Taylor, 2007). The earliest example I know is by Sannazaro on Icarus. These mythological sonnets, true to their inheritance from the classical epigram, ended in a pithy, often ironic, comment. And it is this structure which informs Faria's on Hercules.

Faria theorizes on this structure in his *Discurso de los sonetos*:

Algunos Sonetos ay, *que* todos sirven solo de lo que ahi diximos servía el primer terceto, que es hazer la cama a una sentencia con que se pretende acabar el terceto segundo; i a vezes acaba en un ultimo verso, como el 13. de Garcí-Lasso a Daphne i Apolo, donde el ultimo verso es la sustancia de todo el Soneto: i como aquel de Camões a Iacob i Raquel, *que* quitado el verso ultimo, todo lo otro es una senzilla relacion del caso. I, todavia por aquel solo verso viene a ser el *que* mas se celebra en Castilla: siendo assi, *que* quando èl no sea de los ultimos suyos, apenas es de los segundos. Mirese como llegará a los primeros, i como los he examinado quien le celebra mas por este. A imitacion dèl he escrito pocos, i singularmente el de Orfeo, *que* es el 47. de la Cent. 3. (Faria, 1646 : sigs d4v-d5r).

The cited poem on Orpheus is the following.

¹ Text according to Saraiva's *editio maior* (Camões, 1980); as this edition does not number the poems, I use the numeration in Saraiva's *editio minor* (Camões, 1990). For sonnets by Camões I include the date of first publication.

Del Orco a las cavernas tenebrosas
el musico de Tracia llega osado;
la causa allí ganó de su cuidado:
que Furias rinden voces deliciosas.
Pudo usurparla a llamas temerosas:
diosela el fiero Rey, mas obligado
a que no mire el dulce objecto amado
mientras viere las puertas pavorosas.
El peligroso acuerdo incauto admite.
Fue forçoso romperlo, pues ley era,
siendo Euridice bella, Amante Orfeo.
Con bolverla a perder penas repite.
Quan dichoso se hallàra, si supiera
templar como su Lira su deseo! (f. 70v [III] 43)

Although Faria does not name Orpheus at the beginning, he does in l. 11. The first 12 lines narrate his descent to the Underworld to reclaim Eurydice. He is successful, as ‘delightful voices defeat the Furies’, as Faria has it. The ‘fiero Rey’ Pluto hands Eurydice over, on condition that Orpheus does not look at her. But look at her he must, with tragic consequences. Faria rounds off the narrative with the epigrammatic comment: if only Orpheus could have tempered his desire as he had tuned his lyre.

Faria’s sonnet on Apelles’s painting of Venus takes its inspiration from Pliny’s note in the *Natural History* (XXXV, 92) that the famous painter left his portrait of Venus unfinished at his death.

A la Venus de Apeles (f. 86v)
Del Efesio pinzel la industria hermosa,
que a Venus mudamente traduzia,
de colores con unica armonia,
hora fatal suspende rigurosa.
No lo pudo evitar la bella Diosas,
si bien con aficion la copia via,
que emulava con alta valentia

de su Deidad la Luz, la nieve, i la rosa.
Ver sola su mitad fue su destino,
quando de los doctissimos pinzeles
segô la Parca el pulso peregrino.
Ved, si las fuerças apurô crueles?
si heriendo con lo humano lo divino,
media Venus muriô con todo Apeles. (f. 70r, [III] 40)

Faria concludes: half of Venus died when all of Apelles did. If we need to, we can tease out the conceit to see the play of *half* against *whole* and the paradox of the death of an immortal goddess.

Faria has three sonnets on Icarus and Daedalus. His sonnet on the death of Icarus exists in two versions, published in 1624 and 1646 and it seems perfectly logical to read the latter as an authorial revision of the first.

Obligada dos veces la escultura
de Dédalo dejó la diestra mano,
para haber de emular del hijo vano,
el daño, la caída, y la locura.
Dos veces el cincel mostrar procura
como al aire volaba un cuerpo humano,
el peligro del rayo soberano,
la muerte en Sol, y en mar la sepultura.
Pero dos veces de dolor vencidas
las manos, desmayó sin duda alguna,
porque a tal simulacro el fin no cuadre.
Así que el joven tuvo tres caídas,
desde la esfera de las llamas, una,
y dos, desde la idea de su padre. [1624, cited from Turner, 1976: 136].

Bolando por el diafano elemento
timido Viejo, i Moço temerario,
hizieron ver, con buelo extraordinario,
pàxaros racionales por el viento.
Si racional ha sido el pensamiento
para poder huir, suceso vario
con un castigo le mostrô, plenario,
que ha sido irracional el ardimiento.
Quando alguno de vida se despoje,
quien tanto en excederse a si se emplea,

es justo que padezca igual desayre.
Cada qual contra si solo se enoje;
i jamàs màs dichoso fin se crea
quien expusiere la Razon al Ayre. (1646: f. 70r [III] 41).

In the first quatrain, you might have seen paradoxical ‘rational birds’ flying through the air. In quatrain 2, their desire to escape from the labyrinth of Minos was rational, but their taking to the skies was not. Faria’s ironic conclusion is that Icarus deserved the end he got when he, a rational creature, invaded the realm of the irrational birds. (Faria’s meaning is obscured by his brevity.)

In the sequel, Faria returns to the theme of the artist. Daedalus was a sculptor as well as an inventor, and attempted to create a sculpture showing the fall of his son Icarus.

Dedalo haziendo la Escultura de la caida de su hijo (f. 87r)

En gentil elegancia de escultura
Dedalo pretendiô, con diestra mano,
al Mundo presentar del Hijo vano,
el daño, la caida, i la locura.
Dos vezes el sinzel mostrar procura
como al ayre bolava un cuerpo humano;
el peligro del rayo soberano;
la muerte en Sol; en mar la sepultura.
Pero dos vezes quiso la Fortuna
que no acertasse, con dolor interno,
de las ideas dôs el fin de alguna.
Cayô tres vezes, pues, el joven tierno:
desde la Esfera de las llamas una;
i luego dôs desde el sinzel Paterno. (f. 70r [III] 42)

In the second quatrain Faria compresses the story of Icarus in a remarkable piece of brevity. Daedalus is overcome twice by grief: it would not be an overreading

to imagine Daedalus twice throwing down his chisel. Thus, Faria says, Icarus fell three times.

I conclude with Faria's Portuguese sonnet on Leander. The long tradition of brief poems on the death of Leander, leading from Martial, via Garcilaso and Sa de Miranda to Faria, is well studied by Alatorre (1975). The *locus classicus* is Martial *De spectaculis*, 29 (25b). (The *De spectaculis* is on the spectacles presented to the Emperor Titus in the recently completed Colosseum.)

Cum peteret dulces audax Leandrus amores,
et fessus tumidis iam premeretur aquis,
sic miser instantes affatus dicitur undas:
'Parcite dum propero, mergite dum redeo.'

[When bold Leander was seeking his sweetheart and the swollen waters were already overwhelming his weary body, he is said, poor fellow, to have addressed the surging waves in these words: 'Spare me as I hasten, drown me as I return.']

And now Faria:

Lo notorio de Leandro i Ero. (f. 176v)
Seguindo vay Leandro o vivo lume
que da torre nas agoas lhe era norte:
porem, como do mar o estreito corte
tam largo Amor, caber em vão presume.
Hero, se em ti Leandro se consume,
nam ves quam pouco a luz acesa importe,
se a de teus olhos segue, cuja sorte
foy ser enveja da do quarto Cume?
Os braços remos, ondas alterando;
novo baxel de Amor o jovem sendo,
contraria morte na agoa estam provando.
Hũ se abrasa, hũ se enfria; ambos morrendo:
no estreito mar de Abido Amor nadando;
no gram fogo de Amor Leandro ardendo. f. 163v [VI], 63

We might note that Hero gets little attention, beyond being told that her eyes are a brighter beacon than the tower, or indeed the ‘quarto cume’ which I cannot identify.² The more important relationship is between Leander and Love: these are the ‘ambos’ of l. 12. Leander becomes a metonym of love, a new vessel, a new container of love. This is how I understand ‘novo baxel de Amor’ in l. 10. Leander dies, and the ship of love dies – but both are Leander.

I mentioned at the beginning that I believed that the mythological sonnets which Faria himself wrote are reflected in his concepts of the corpus of Camões’s sonnets. I identified nine sonnets of this type attributed to Camões, and five of these are first attributed to him in the seventeenth century. Five of Camões’s sonnets of this type are translated into Spanish by Faria.³

Number	First printed	Myth	Faria’s Translation
95	1595	Lethaeia	
179	1595	Porcia	III, 96
113	1598	Dido	III, 95
205	1598	Lucretia	III, 97
97	1616	Leander	
129	1616	Cephalus and Procris	III, 93
130	1616	Cephalus and Procris	III, 94
66	1668	Endymion	
96	1668	Orpheus	

² Professor Thomas Earle kindly suggested to me the reading ‘quarto lume’, a reference to the Spheres.

³ His translations are: III.93, 94, III.95, III.96, III.97.

Thus in conclusion, by reinforcing their position in the Camões corpus by editing, by translating, and by imitation, Faria helped further the concept of the epigrammatic sonnet on mythical themes.

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