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TRADUCTORES



Three Poems

*by* Julia Barella

*translated by*  
Sarah Glenski

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## Introduction

**Julia Barella** is a Spanish poet, professor, and literary critic. Her first collection of poems, *CCJ en las ciudades*, appeared in 2002. Barella has since published four books of poetry: *Hacia Esmeralda* (2004), *Esmeralda* (2005), *Aguas profundas* (2008), and *Praderas de Posidonia* (2013). Originally from León, she currently serves as Professor of Spanish Literature and Director of the School of Writing at the University of Alcalá. In addition to her research, which has focused on the Baroque period, as well as modern literature, she has published two books on the practice of creative writing. Barella has served on the jury for several literary awards, including the Premio Nacional de Poesía given by Spain's Ministry of Culture.

Here, I present three poems from *Praderas de Posidonia* [Meadows of the Mediterranean Sea] (Huerga & Fierro, 2013). I was drawn to them for the unique ways in which they dialogue with each other. The poems offer multiple, nuanced meditations on the themes of woman, creation, and space, all of which are central to the collection and to Barella's poetic production in general. In **"La arquitecta"** —translated here as "Architect"—, woman is synonymous with the act of creation. Her memories and thoughts take up space: they have a physical presence. Even the rhythm of the verses conveys a heaviness. Letting the weight of the past go allows her to continue creating. The reader wonders: What is she constructing? In **"El jardín"** —"Garden"—, a mythical, primal quality permeates. The question of how one's being relates to both natural and man-made spaces is key. The seemingly symbolic becomes very tangible with the allusion to how social and gendered barriers serve to limit women. In the final poem, **"Turismo y ruinas"** —"Tourism and Ruins"—, woman is again a creative force. An affinity exists between the woman and the space she inhabits. She projects her inner light, and the hotel lights shine upon the sea. For its labyrinth-like quality, her hair mirrors the knots of ruins that run along the Mediterranean Sea. Her memories and the ruins are one and the same. The poem comes full circle, having moved from the image of a woman with a vivid imagination to the memory of a lifeless mother.



### About the translator

Sarah Glenski holds a Ph.D. in Spanish literature from Yale University, where she works as a Lector of Spanish. She specializes in the literatures and cultures of Spain, and more broadly of the Iberian Peninsula, during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. These are her first published translations.

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## ARCHITECT

A woman lives off her imagination.  
Each night her memories fade  
lightening the load  
of the day to day.  
We see her at dawn  
training her control  
of every muscle of the brain,  
not wasting an ounce of energy.  
A woman constructs  
by letting go,  
she knows her mission,  
the future is still possible.



## GARDEN

In garden, boat  
and tree,  
a home,  
a cave to inhabit.  
Garden is the stage  
where philosophy finds refuge,  
where speaking with nature  
readies us to withstand the next swarm  
of numb, rational beings.  
Men insist:  
borders are just a human creation,  
but we women see the limits  
imposed by language.



## TOURISM AND RUINS

*For Eduardo Blázquez*

I

The woman at the window  
projects her inner light,  
contemplative,  
she keeps fertile grounds for dreaming.

How tiring the ruins!  
blue, Mediterranean stretches  
illuminated from the terrace balcony of a hotel.  
What passion for contemplation!  
mirror and frame,  
the heroine's coiffed labyrinth of hair,  
a fruited landscape,  
a still life of red brambles  
of burning hawthorn, timid azaleas or violets,  
a garden with its roses and cypresses,  
the light,  
the grotto,  
the heat of summer afternoons.



II

For those of us who had a childhood garden,  
today a painful memory  
of a lifeless mother gazing out the window,  
ruins with their rancid tang  
are knots of vivid reds and blues,  
whose color has faded with time.  
Ruins wear us down,  
they remind us that there is no time to love  
and that those we love have gone.



## *Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner*

Disponibles en/available at: <http://cervantesobservatorio.fas.harvard.edu/en/translation-corner>

1. RT/TC 001 (2019). “A Letter of Federico García Lorca to his Parents, 1935”. Author: Federico García Lorca (Spain); Translator: Christopher Maurer; Genre: Letter.
2. RT/TC 002 (2019). “Like a Night with Legs Wide Open”. Author: José Alcántara Almánzar (Dominican Republic); Translator: Luis Guzmán Valerio; Genre: Short Story.
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15. RT/TC 015 (2021). *Three Poems*. Author: José Luis García Martín (Spain); Translator: Claudia Quevedo-Webb; Genre: Poetry.
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17. RT/TC 017 (2021). *Parallel 35* (three excerpts) and “The Dead Woman”. Author: Carmen Laforet (Spain); Translator: Roberta Johnson; Genre: Chronicle/Short Story.
18. RT/TC 018 (2021). “Torn Lace” and “Native Plant”. Author: Emilia Pardo Bazán (Spain); Translator: Francisca González Arias; Genre: Short Story.
19. RT/TC 019 (2020). *Rincón de Traductores / Translators’ Corner – Volume 2: Compilation 2020-2021*. Various Authors; Various Translators.