

# Catullus in English

by Rose Williams



Gaius Valerius Catullus (ca. 84 – 54 BC) has always fascinated later generations. Tennyson called him “the tenderest of Roman poets” (*Frater, Ave Atque Vale*). He was certainly the most Romantic, not only because he was a distracted lover but also because his brief, tempestuous life and early death are the very stuff of which Romance is made. According to scholars’ best calculations he lived just about 30 years. He is represented today by only 116 poems, many of which have only two or four lines. In spite of this short life and sparse output, he is one of the most influential voices of Roman literature. This document includes translations, commentaries, and variations of his various works, as well as poems inspired by him.

## *Carmen I*

by Andrew Lang (1888)

[cf Catullus 1]

My little book, that’s neat and new,  
Fresh polished with dry pumice stone,  
To whom, Cornelius, but to you,  
Shall this be sent, for you alone—  
[Who used to praise my lines, my own]—  
Have dared, in weighty volumes three,  
[What labors, Jove, what learning thine!]  
To tell the Tale of Italy,  
and all the legend of our line.  
So take, whate’er its worth may be,  
My book—but Lady and Queen of Song,  
This one kind gift I crave of thee,  
That it may live for ages long!



## *Passer Mortuus Est*

by Edna St. Vincent Millay

[cf Catullus 3]

Death devours all lovely things;  
Lesbia with her sparrow  
Shares the darkness,—presently  
Every bed is narrow

Unremembered as old rain  
Dries the sheer libation,  
And the little petulant hand  
Is an annotation.

After all, my erstwhile dear,  
My no longer cherished,  
Need we say it was not love,  
Just because it perished?



***From A Letter From Lesbia***

**by Dorothy Parker**

[cf Catullus 3]

... So, praise the gods, at last he's away!  
And let me tend you this advice, my dear:  
Take any lover that you will, or may,  
Except a poet. All of them are queer.

It's just the same -- a quarrel or a kiss  
Is but a tune to play upon his pipe.  
He's always hymning that or wailing this;  
Myself, I much prefer the business type.

That thing he wrote, the time the sparrow died --  
(Oh, most unpleasant -- gloomy, tedious words!)  
I called it sweet, and made believe I cried;  
The stupid fool! I've always hated birds ...

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***From Catullus V***  
**by Sir Walter Raleigh**

-- The sun may set and rise,  
But we, contrariwise,  
Sleep, after our short light,  
One everlasting night.

***My Sweetest Lesbia***

**by Thomas Campion (1567-1620)**

[cf Catullus 5]



My sweetest Lesbia, let vs liue and loue,  
And though the sager sort our deedes reprove,  
Let vs not way them : heau'ns great lampes doe diue  
Into their west, and straight againe reuiue,  
But soone as once set is our little light,  
Then must we sleepe one euer-during night.

If all would lead their liues in loue like mee,  
Then bloudie swords and armour should not be,  
No drum nor trumpet peaceful sleepes should moue,  
Vnles alar'me came from the campe of loue :  
But fooles do liue, and wast their little light,  
And seeke with paine their euer-during night.

When timely death my life and fortune ends,  
Let not my hearse be vext with mourning friends,  
But let all louers rich in triumph come,  
And with sweet pastimes grace my happie tombe;  
And Lesbia close vp thou my little light,  
And crown with loue my euer-during night.

*from Corinna's Going A-Maying*

by Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

[cf Catullus 5]

Come, let us go, while we are in our prime,  
And take the harmless folly of the time!  
We shall grow old apace, and die  
Before we know our liberty.  
Our life is short, and our days run  
As fast away as does the sun.  
And, as a vapor or a drop of rain,  
Once lost, can ne'er be found again,  
So when you or I are made  
A fable, song, or fleeting shade,  
All love, all liking, all delight  
Lies drowned with us in endless night.  
Then, while time serves, and we are but decaying,  
Come, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying.

*Out of Catullus*

by Richard Crashaw (1612-1649)

[cf Catullus 5]

Richard Crashaw

Come and let us live my Deare,  
Let us love and never feare,  
What the sowrest Fathers say:  
Brightest *Sol* that dies today  
Lives againe as blithe to morrow,  
But if we darke sons of sorrow  
Set; o then, how long a Night  
Shuts the Eyes of our short light!  
Then let amorous kisses dwell  
On our lips, begin and tell  
A Thousand, and a Hundred, score  
An Hundred, and a Thousand more,  
Till another Thousand smother  
That, and that wipe of another.  
Thus at last when we have numbred  
Many a Thousand, many a Hundred;  
We'll confound the reckoning quite,  
And lose our selves in wild delight:  
While our joyes so multiply,  
As shall mocke the envious eye

*Come, My Celia*

by Ben Jonson (1572-1637)

[cf Catullus 5 and 7]

Come, my Celia, let us prove  
While we may, the sports of love;  
Time will not be ours forever;  
He at length our good will sever.  
Spend not then his gifts in vain.  
Suns that set may rise again;  
But if once we lose this light,  
'Tis with us perpetual night.  
Why should we defer our joys?  
Fame and rumor are but toys.  
Cannot we delude the eyes

Of a few poor household spies,  
Or his easier ears beguile,  
So removed by our wile?  
'Tis no sin love's fruit to steal;  
But the sweet theft to reveal.  
To be taken, to be seen,  
These have crimes accounted been.  
Kiss me, sweet; the wary lover  
Can your favours keep, and cover,  
When the common courting jay  
All your bounties will betray.  
Kiss again; no creature comes.  
Kiss, and score up wealthy sums  
On my lips thus hardly sund'red

While you breathe. First give a hundred,  
Then a thousand, then another  
Hundred, then unto the tother  
Add a thousand, and so more  
Till you equal with the store  
All the grass that Rumney yields,  
Or the sands in Chelsea fields,  
Or the drops in silver Thames,  
Or the stars that gild his streams  
In the silent summer nights  
When youths ply their stol'n delights:  
That the curious may not know  
How to tell them as they flow;  
And the envious, when they find  
What their number is, be pined.

## ***To Virgins to Make Much of Time***

**by Robert Herrick** (1591-1674)

[cf Catullus 5]

GATHER ye rosebuds while ye may,  
Old time is still a-flying :  
And this same flower that smiles to-day  
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,  
The higher he's a-getting,  
The sooner will his race be run,  
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,  
When youth and blood are warmer ;  
But being spent, the worse, and worst  
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,  
And while ye may go marry :  
For having lost but once your prime  
You may for ever tarry.

## ***Nay, Lesbia***

**by John Oldham** (1653-1683)

[cf Catullus 7]

Nay, Lesbia, never ask me this,  
How many kisses will suffice?  
Faith, tis a question hard to tell,  
Exceeding hard; for you as well  
May ask what sums of Gold suffice  
The greedy Miser's boundless Wish:  
Think what drops the Ocean store,  
With all the Sands, that make its Shore:  
Think what Spangles deck the Skies,  
When Heaven looks with all its Eyes:  
Or think how man Atoms came  
To compose this mighty Frame:  
Let all these the Counters be,  
To tell how oft I'm kissed by thee:  
Till no malicious Spy can guess  
To what vast height the Scores arise;  
Till weak Arithmetick grow scant,  
And numbers for the reckoning want:  
All these will hardly be enough  
For me stark staring mad with Love.

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## ***To his Coy Mistress***

**by Andrew Marvell** (1621-1649)

[cf Catullus 5]

Had we but world enough, and time,  
This coyness, lady, were no crime.  
We would sit down and think which way  
To walk, and pass our long love's day;  
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side  
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide  
Of Humber would complain. I would  
Love you ten years before the Flood;  
And you should, if you please, refuse  
Till the conversion of the Jews.  
My vegetable love should grow  
Vaster than empires, and more slow.  
An hundred years should go to praise

Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;  
Two hundred to adore each breast,  
But thirty thousand to the rest;  
An age at least to every part,  
And the last age should show your heart.  
For, lady, you deserve this state,  
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found,  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song; then worms shall try  
That long preserv'd virginity,  
And your quaint honour turn to dust,  
And into ashes all my lust.

The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none I think do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
And while thy willing soul transpires  
At every pore with instant fires,  
Now let us sport us while we may;  
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,  
Rather at once our time devour,  
Than languish in his slow-chapp'd power.  
Let us roll all our strength, and all  
Our sweetness, up into one ball;  
And tear our pleasures with rough strife  
Thorough the iron gates of life.  
Thus, though we cannot make our sun  
Stand still, yet we will make him run.



## ***Harden now thy tired Heart***

by **Thomas Campion** (1567-1619)

[cf **Catullus 8**]

Harden now thy tyred hart, with more then flinty rage ;  
Ne'er let her false teares henceforth thy constant grieffe asswage.  
Once true happy dayes thou saw'st when shee stood firme and kinde,  
Both as one then liu'd and held one eare, one tongue, one minde :  
But now those bright houres be fled, and neuer may returne ;  
What then remains but her vntruths to mourne ?

Silly Traytresse, who shall now thy carelesse tresses place ?  
Who thy pretty talke supply, whose eare thy musicke grace ?  
Who shall thy bright eyes admire ? what lips triumph with thine ?  
Day by day who'll visit thee and say ' th'art onely mine ' ?                    10  
Such a time there was, God wot, but such shall neuer be :  
Too oft, I feare, thou wilt remember me.

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## ***If I had your gall, Catullus*** by **Thomas McAfee**

[cf **Catullus 13**]



If I had your gall, Catullus  
I wouldn't worry about the phone bill at the end of the month  
Or how much you owe for last year's  
Income tax. You could live  
On ink and my sweat. I saw  
the dinner invitation you sent:  
*Bring your own food [and make sure  
I'll like it] a beautiful woman,  
And a good wine. Don't forget  
Witty talk, and you have to do  
the laughing.* I know. You don't  
Have to tell me. He might even show  
And you could get drunk and flirt  
With the woman. If he doesn't,  
You'd be depressed anyway.

## ***To Formianus' Young Lady Friend***

**by Ezra Pound**

AFTER VALERUS CATULLUS

[cf Catullus 43]

ALL Hail ! young lady with a nose  
by no means too small,  
With a foot unbeautiful,  
and with eyes that are not black,  
With fingers that are not long, and with a mouth  
undy,  
And with a tongue by no means too elegant,  
You are the friend of Formianus, the vendor of  
cosmetics,  
And they call you beautiful in the province,  
And you are even compared to Lesbia,  
O most unfortunate age !

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## ***O Thou of British Orators the Chief***

**by Christopher Smart (1722-1771)**

[cf Catullus 49]

O thou, of British orators the chief  
That were, or are in being, or belief;  
All eminence and goodness as thou art,  
Accept the gratitude of Poet Smart,--  
The meanest of the tuneful train as far,  
As thou transcend'st the brightest of the bar.

## ***Sir 'Arry***

**by anonymous**

[cf Catullus 84]

Sir 'Arry, though lately created a knight,  
Is unable to order his "h's" aright.  
He expounds the wise views of "a man of haffairs"  
Or explains "'ow 'e 'ates haristorcracy's hairs.  
[To his mother, nee 'Awkins, he owes, I expect,  
This unpleasant, invincible vocal defect.]  
His victims had looked for a respite at least  
While Sir "Arry is occupied "doin' the Heast."  
But alas for our hopes: You've not heard the news?  
What?  
Sir "Arry finds "Hindia" 'ellishly 'ot."

## ***Translations of Catullus 85***

**by Cowley, Pound, and Gregory**

**Abraham Cowley, 1667:**

I hate, and yet I love thee too,  
How can that be? I know not how;  
Only that so it is I know  
And feel with torment that 'tis so.

**Horace Gregory c 1940**

I HATE and love.  
And if you ask me why,  
I have no answer, but I discern  
can feel my senses rooted in eternal torture.

**Ezra Pound c 1940**

I hate and love. Why? You may ask but  
It beats me. I feel it done to me, and ache.



## ***Love's Madness***

**by Walter Savage Landor**

(1775-1864)

[cf Catullus 87]

None could ever say that she,  
Lesbia, was so loved by me;  
Never, all the world around,  
Faith so true as mine was found.

If no longer it endures,  
[Would it did] the fault is yours.  
I can never think again  
Well of you: I try in vain.  
But, be false, do what you will,  
Lesbia! I must love you still.



***By Strangers' Coasts***  
by Robert Fitzgerald  
[cf Catullus 101]

By strangers' coasts and water, many days at sea,  
I came here for the rites of your unworlding,  
Bringing for you, the dead, these last gifts for the living,  
And my words—vain sounds for the man of dust.

Alas, my brother,

You have been taken from me,  
By cold Chance turned a shadow, and my pain.  
Here are the foods of the old ceremony, appointed  
Long ago for the starvelings under earth:  
Take them; your brother's tears have made them wet;  
and take  
Into eternity my hail and my farewell.

***"Hendecasyllabics"***

by Tennyson

O you chorus of indolent reviewers,  
Irresponsible, indolent reviewers,  
Look, I come to the test, a tiny poem  
All composed in a metre of Catullus,  
All in quantity, careful of my motion,  
Like the skater on ice that hardly bears him,  
Lest I fall unawares before the people,  
Waking laughter in indolent reviewers.  
Should I flounder awhile without a tumble  
Thro' this metrification of Catullus,  
They should speak to me not without a welcome,  
All that chorus of indolent reviewers.  
Hard, hard, hard it is, only not to tumble,  
So fantastical is the dainty meter.  
Wherefore slight me not wholly, nor believe me  
Too presumptuous, indolent reviewers.  
O blatant Magazines, regard me rather -  
Since I blush to belaud myself a moment -  
As some rare little rose, a piece of inmost  
Horticultural art, or half-coquette-like  
Maiden, not to be greeted unbenignly.

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***Frater Ave Atque Vale***  
by Alfred, Lord Tennyson



Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione row!  
So they row'd, and there we landed—'O venusta Sirmio!'  
There to me thro' all the groves of olive in the summer glow,  
There beneath the Roman ruin where the purple flowers grow,  
Came that 'Ave atque Vale' of the Poet's hopeless woe,  
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen-hundred years ago,  
'Frater Ave atque Vale'—as we wander'd to and fro  
Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda Lake below  
Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio!



## ***The Scholars*** **by W.B. Yeats**

BALD heads forgetful of their sins,  
Old, learned, respectable bald heads  
Edit and annotate the lines  
That young men, tossing on their beds,  
Rhumed out in love's despair  
To flatter beauty's ignorant ear.  
All shuffle there, all cough in ink;  
All wear the carpet with their shoes;  
All think what other people think;  
All know the man their neighbor knows.  
Lord, what would they say  
Did their Catullus walk that way?

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## ***For Once, Then, Something*** **by Robert Frost**

*[this is in Phalacean meter (hendecasyllabics.); see notes below]*



Others taunt me with having knelt at well-curbs  
Always wrong to the light, so never seeing  
Deeper down in the well than where the water  
Gives me back in a shining surface picture  
Me myself in the summer heaven, godlike  
Looking out of a wreath of fern and cloud puffs.  
Once, when trying with chin against a well-curb,  
I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,  
Through the picture, a something white, uncertain,  
Something more of the depths-and then I lost it.  
Water came to rebuke the too clear water.  
One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple

Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,  
Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?  
Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.

“For Once, Then, Something” (1920) is the only poem Robert Frost ever composed in a classical meter: it is written in phalaecean hendecasyllabics. and points to a greater subtlety in Frost’s engagement with Latin poetry than is usually proposed. Frost’s poem is, among other things, a response to hostile critics. Scholars of Catullus—and Catullus was Frost’s favorite Roman author—have pointed to a link between hendecasyllabics and the poetic mode of rebuttal to one’s critics. That poets in the English tradition understood this link can be demonstrated by adducing two hendecasyllabic poems of Tennyson’s: “Hendecasyllabics” (1863), in which the poet fires back at his magazine reviewers, and “The Gentle Life” (1870), in which he attacks his leading critic. An ardent admirer of Catullus, Tennyson naturally turned to the hendecasyllabic as the appropriate vehicle for such a response. By casting his own retort in hendecasyllabics, and by emulating other stylistic features in Catullus’ hendecasyllabics, Frost evidently places himself within this tradition.

I, beholding the summer dead before me,  
Set my face to the sea and journeyed silent,  
Gazing eagerly where above the sea-mark  
Flame as fierce as the fervid eyes of lions  
Half divided the eyelids of the sunset;  
Till I heard as it were a noise of waters  
Moving tremulous under feet of angels  
Multitudinous, out of all the heavens;  
Knew the fluttering wind, the fluttered foliage,



Shaken fitfully, full of sound and shadow;  
And saw, trodden upon by noiseless angels,  
Long mysterious reaches fed with moonlight,  
Sweet sad straits in a soft subsiding channel,  
Blown about by the lips of winds I knew not,  
Winds not born in the north nor any quarter,  
Winds not warm with the south nor any sunshine;  
Heard between them a voice of exultation,  
“Lo, the summer is dead, the sun is faded,  
Even like as a leaf the year is withered,  
All the fruits of the day from all her branches  
Gathered, neither is any left to gather.  
All the flowers are dead, the tender blossoms,  
All are taken away; the season wasted,  
Like an ember among the fallen ashes.  
Now with light of the winter days, with moonlight,  
Light of snow, and the bitter light of hoarfrost,  
We bring flowers that fade not after autumn,  
Pale white chaplets and crowns of latter seasons,  
Fair false leaves (but the summer leaves were falser),  
Woven under the eyes of stars and planets  
When low light was upon the windy reaches  
Where the flower of foam was blown, a lily  
Dropt among the sonorous fruitless furrows  
And green fields of the sea that make no pasture:  
Since the winter begins, the weeping winter,  
All whose flowers are tears, and round his temples  
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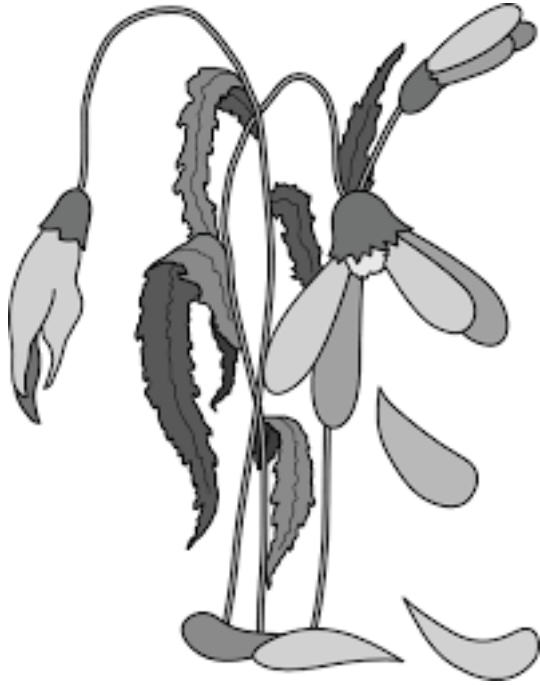
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Shaken fitfully, full of sound and shadow;  
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All the flowers are dead, the tender blossoms,  
All are taken away; the season wasted,  
Like an ember among the fallen ashes.  
Now with light of the winter days, with moonlight,  
Light of snow, and the bitter light of hoarfrost,  
We bring flowers that fade not after autumn,  
Pale white chaplets and crowns of latter seasons,  
Fair false leaves (but the summer leaves were falser),  
Woven under the eyes of stars and planets  
When low light was upon the windy reaches  
Where the flower of foam was blown, a lily  
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Since the winter begins, the weeping winter,  
All whose flowers are tears, and round

***Hendecasyllabics***  
**by Algernon Charles Swinburne**



In the month of the long decline of roses  
I, beholding the summer dead before me,  
Set my face to the sea and journeyed silent,  
Gazing eagerly where above the sea-mark  
Flame as fierce as the fervid eyes of lions  
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All whose flowers are tears, and round his temples  
Iron blossom of frost is bound for ever.”  
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## The Wedding songs below are patterned after Catullus 61 and 64



### *Epithalamion* by e.e. cummings

I.

Thou aged unreluctant earth who dost  
 with quivering continual thighs invite  
 the thrilling rain the slender paramour  
 to toy with thy extraordinary lust,  
 (the sinuous rain which rising from thy bed  
 steals to his wife the sky and hour by hour  
 wholly renews her pale flesh with delight)  
 -immortally whence are the high gods fled?

Speak elm eloquent pandar with thy nod  
 significant to the ecstatic earth  
 in token of his coming whom her soul  
 burns to embrace-and didst thou know the god  
 from but the imprint of whose cloven feet  
 the shrieking dryad sought her leafy goal,  
 at the mere echo of whose shining mirth  
 the furious hearts of mountains ceased to beat?

Wind beautifully who wanderest  
 over smooth pages of forgotten joy  
 proving the peaceful theorems of the flowers  
 -didst e'er depart upon more exquisite quest?  
 and did thy fortunate fingers sometime dwell  
 (within a greener shadow of secret bowers)



among the curves of that delicious boy  
 whose serious grace one goddess loved too well?  
 Chryselephantine Zeus Olympian  
 sceptred colossus of the Pheidian soul  
 whose eagle frights creation, in whose palm  
 Nike presents the crown sweetest to man,  
 whose lily robe the sun's white hands emboss,  
 betwixt whose absolute feet anoint with calm  
 of intent stars circling the acerb pole  
 poises, smiling, the diadumenos  
 in whose young chiseled eyes the people saw  
 their once again victorious Pantarkes  
 (whose grace the prince of artists made him bold  
 to imitate between the feet of awe),  
 thunderer whose omnipotent brow showers  
 its curls of unendured eternal gold  
 over the infinite breast in bright degrees,  
 whose pillow is the graces and the hours,  
 father of gods and men whose subtle throne  
 twain sphinxes bear each with a writhing youth  
 caught to her brazen breasts, whose foot-stool tells  
 how fought the loser of the warlike zone  
 of her that brought forth tall Hippolytus,  
 lord on whose pedestal the deep expels  
 (over Selene's car closing uncouth)  
 of Helios the sweet wheels tremulous-  
 are there no kings in Argos, that the song  
 is silent, of the steep unspeaking tower  
 within whose brightening strictness Danae  
 saw the night severed and the glowing through  
 descend, felt on her flesh the amorous strain  
 of gradual hands and yielding to that fee  
 her eager body's unimmortal flower  
 knew in the darkness a more burning rain?

## II.

And still the mad magnificent herald Spring  
 assembles beauty from forgetfulness  
 with the wild trump of April: witchery  
 of sound and odour drives the wingless thing  
 man forth in the bright air, for now the red  
 leaps in the maple's cheek, and suddenly  
 by shining hordes in sweet unserious dress  
 ascends the golden crocus from the dead.

On dappled dawn forth rides the pungent sun  
 with hooded day preening upon his hand  
 followed by gay untimid final flowers  
 (which dressed in various tremulous armor stun  
 the eyes of ragged earth who sees them pass)  
 while hunted from his kingdom winter cowers,  
 seeing green armies steadily expand  
 hearing the spear-song of the marching grass.

A silver sudden parody of snow  
 tickles the air to golden tears, and hark!  
 the flicker's laughing yet, while on the hills  
 the pines deepen to whispers primeval and throw  
 backward their foreheads to the barbarous bright  
 sky, and suddenly from the valley thrills  
 the unimaginable upward lark  
 and drowns the earth and passes into light  
 (slowly in life's serene perpetual round  
 a pale world gathers comfort to her soul,  
 hope richly scattered by the abundant sun  
 invades the new mosaic of the ground  
 -let but the incurious curtaining dusk be drawn  
 surpassing nets are sedulously spun  
 to snare the brutal dew, -the authentic scroll  
 of fairie hands and vanishing with the dawn).

Spring, that omits no mention of desire  
 in every curved and curling thing, yet holds  
 continuous intercourse-through skies and trees  
 the lilac's smoke the poppy's pompous fire  
 the pansy's purple patience and the grave  
 frailty of daises-by what rare unease

revealed of teasingly transparent folds-  
with man's poor soul superlatively brave.

Surely from robes of particoloured peace  
with mouth flower-faint and undiscovered eyes  
and dim slow perfect body amorous  
(whiter than lilies which are born and cease  
for being whiter than this world) exhales  
the hovering high perfume curious  
of that one month for whom the whole years dies,  
risen at length from palpitating veils.

O still miraculous May! O shining girl  
of time untarnished! O small intimate  
gently primeval hands, frivolous feet  
divine! O singular and breathless pearl!  
O indefinable frail ultimate pose!  
O visible beatitude sweet sweet  
intolerable! silence immaculate  
of god's evasive audible great rose!

### III.

Lover, lead forth thy love unto that bed  
prepared by whitest hands of waiting years,  
curtained with wordless worship absolute,  
unto the certain altar at whose head  
stands that clear candle whose expecting breath  
exults upon the tongue of flame half-mute,  
(haste ere some thrush with silver several tears  
complete the perfumed paraphrase of death).

Now is the time when all occasional things  
close into silence, only one tree, one  
svelte translation of eternity  
unto the pale meaning of heaven clings,  
(whose million leaves in winsome indolence  
simmer upon thinking twilight momentarily)  
as down the oblivious west's numerous dun  
magnificence conquers magnificence.

In heaven's intolerable athanor  
inimitably tortured the base day  
utters at length her soft intrinsic hour,

and from those tenuous fires which more and more  
sink and are lost the divine alchemist,  
the magus of creation, lifts a flower-  
whence is the world's insufferable clay  
clothed with incognizable amethyst.

Lady at whose imperishable smile  
the amazed doves flicker upon sunny wings  
as if in terror of eternity,  
(or seeming that they would mistrust a while  
the moving of beauteous dead mouths throughout  
that very proud transparent company  
of quivering ghosts-of-love which scarcely sings  
drifting in slow diaphanous faint rout),

queen in the inconceivable embrace  
of whose tremendous hair that blossom stands  
whereof is most desire, yet less than those  
twain perfect roses whose ambrosial grace,  
goddess, thy crippled thunder-forging groom  
or the loud lord of skipping maenads knows,-  
having Discordia's apple in thy hands,  
which the scared shepherd gave thee for his doom-

O thou within the chancel of whose charms  
the tall boy god of everlasting war  
received the shuddering sacrament of sleep,  
betwixt whose cool incorrigible arms  
impaled upon delicious mystery,  
with gaunt limbs reeking of the whispered deep,  
deliberate groping ocean fondled o'er  
the warm long flower of unchastity,  
imperial Cytherea, from frail foam  
sprung with irrevocable nakedness  
to strike the young world into smoking song-  
as the first star perfects the sensual dome  
of darkness, and the sweet strong final bird  
transcends the sight, O thou to whom belong  
the hearts of lovers! - I beseech thee bless  
thy suppliant singer and his wandering word.

## *Epithalamion*

by Edmund Spenser

Ye learned sisters, which have oftentimes  
Beene to me ayding, others to adorne,  
Whom ye thought worthy of your gracefull rymes,  
That even the greatest did not greatly scorne  
To heare theyr names sung in your simple layes,  
But joyed in theyr praise;  
And when ye list your owne mishaps to mourne,  
Which death, or love, or fortunes wreck did rayse,  
Your string could soone to sadder tenor turne,  
And teach the woods and waters to lament  
Your dolefull dreriment:

Now lay those sorrowfull complaints aside;  
And, having all your heads with girlands crownd,  
Helpe me mine owne loves prayes to resound;  
Ne let the same of any be envide:  
So Orpheus did for his owne bride!  
So I unto my selfe alone will sing;  
The woods shall to me answer, and my Eccho ring.

Early, before the worlds light-giving lampe  
His golden beame upon the hils doth spread,  
Having disperst the nights unchearefull dampe,  
Doe ye awake; and, with fresh lusty-hed,  
Go to the bowre of my beloved love,  
My truest turtle dove;  
Bid her awake; for Hymen is awake,  
And long since ready forth his maske to move,  
With his bright Tead that flames with many a flake,  
And many a bachelor to waite on him,  
In theyr fresh garments trim.  
Bid her awake therefore, and soone her dight,  
For lo! the wished day is come at last,  
That shall, for all the paynes and sorrowes past,  
Pay to her usury of long delight:  
And, whylest she doth her dight,  
Doe ye to her of joy and solace sing,  
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Bring with you all the Nymphes that you can heare  
Both of the rivers and the forrests greene,  
And of the sea that neighbours to her neare:  
Al with gay girlands goodly wel beseene.  
And let them also with them bring in hand  
Another gay girland  
For my fayre love, of lillyes and of roses,  
Bound truelove wize, with a blew silke riband.  
And let them make great store of bridale poses,  
And let them eeke bring store of other flowers,  
To deck the bridale bowers.  
And let the ground whereas her foot shall tread,  
For feare the stones her tender foot should wrong,  
Be strewed with fragrant flowers all along,  
And diapred lyke the discolored mead.  
Which done, doe at her chamber dore awayt,  
For she will waken strayt;  
The whiles doe ye this song unto her sing,  
The woods shall to you answer, and your Eccho ring.

Ye Nymphes of Mulla, which with carefull heed  
The silver scaly trouts doe tend full well,  
And greedy pikes which use therein to feed;  
(Those trouts and pikes all others doo excell;)  
And ye likewise, which keepe the rushy lake,  
Where none doo fishes take;  
Bynd up the locks the which hang scatterd light,  
And in his waters, which your mirror make,  
Behold your faces as the christall bright,  
That when you come whereas my love doth lie,  
No blemish she may spie.  
And eke, ye lightfoot mayds, which keepe the deere,  
That on the hoary mountayne used to towre;  
And the wylde wolves, which seeke them to devoure,  
With your steele darts doo chace from comming neer;  
Be also present heere,  
To helpe to decke her, and to help to sing,  
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Wake now, my love, awake! for it is time;  
 The Rosy Morne long since left Tithones bed,  
 All ready to her silver coche to clyme;  
 And Phoebus gins to shew his glorious hed.  
 Hark! how the cheerefull birds do chaunt theyr laies  
 And carroll of Loves praise.  
 The merry Larke hir mattins sings aloft;  
 The Thrush replyes; the Mavis descant playes;  
 The Ouzell shrills; the Ruddock warbles soft;  
 So goodly all agree, with sweet consent,  
 To this dayes merriment.  
 Ah! my deere love, why doe ye sleepe thus long?  
 When meeter were that ye should now awake,  
 T' awayt the comming of your joyous make,  
 And hearken to the birds love-learnèd song,  
 The deawy leaves among!  
 Nor they of joy and pleasance to you sing,  
 That all the woods them answer, and theyr eccho ring.  
 My love is now awake out of her dreames,  
 And her fayre eyes, like stars that dimmèd were  
 With darksome cloud, now shew theyr goodly beams  
 More bright then Hesperus his head doth rere.  
 Come now, ye damzels, daughters of delight,  
 Helpe quickly her to dight:  
 But first come ye fayre houres, which were begot  
 In Joves sweet paradice of Day and Night;  
 Which doe the seasons of the yeare allot,  
 And al, that ever in this world is fayre,  
 Doe make and still repayre:  
 And ye three handmayds of the Cyprian Queene,  
 The which doe still adorne her beauties pride,  
 Helpe to addorne my beautifullest bride:  
 And, as ye her array, still throw betweene  
 Some graces to be seene;  
 And, as ye use to Venus, to her sing,  
 The whiles the woods shal answer, and your eccho ring.

Now is my love all ready forth to come:  
 Let all the virgins therefore well awayt:  
 And ye fresh boyes, that tend upon her groome,

Prepare your selves; for he is comming strayt.  
 Set all your things in seemely good aray,  
 Fit for so joyfull day:  
 The joyfulst day that ever sunne did see.  
 Faire Sun! shew forth thy favourable ray,  
 And let thy lifull heat not fervent be,  
 For feare of burning her sunshyny face,  
 Her beauty to disgrace.  
 O fayrest Phoebus! father of the Muse!  
 If ever I did honour thee aright,  
 Or sing the thing that mote thy mind delight,  
 Doe not thy servants simple boone refuse;  
 But let this day, let this one day, be myne;  
 Let all the rest be thine.  
 Then I thy soverayne prayses loud wil sing,  
 That all the woods shal answer, and theyr eccho ring.

Harke! how the Minstrils gin to shrill aloud  
 Their merry Musick that resounds from far,  
 The pipe, the tabor, and the trembling Croud,  
 That well agree withouten breach or jar.  
 But, most of all, the Damzels doe delite  
 When they their tymbrels smyte,  
 And thereunto doe daunce and carrol sweet,  
 That all the sences they doe ravish quite;  
 The whyles the boyes run up and downe the street,  
 Crying aloud with strong confusèd noyce,  
 As if it were one voyce,  
 Hymen, iö Hymen, Hymen, they do shout;  
 That even to the heavens theyr shouting shrill  
 Doth reach, and all the firmament doth fill;  
 To which the people standing all about,  
 As in approvance, doe thereto applaud,  
 And loud advaunce her laud;  
 And evermore they Hymen, Hymen sing,  
 That al the woods them answer, and theyr eccho ring.

Loe! where she comes along with portly pace,  
 Lyke Phoebe, from her chamber of the East,  
 Arysing forth to run her mighty race,

Clad all in white, that seemes a virgin best.  
So well it her beseemes, that ye would weene  
Some angell she had beene.  
Her long loose yellow locks lyke golden wyre,  
Sprinckled with perle, and perling flowres atweene,  
Doe lyke a golden mantle her attyre;  
And, being crownèd with a girland greene,  
Seeme lyke some mayden Queene.  
Her modest eyes, abashèd to behold  
So many gazers as on her do stare,  
Upon the lowly ground affixèd are;  
Ne dare lift up her countenance too bold,  
But blush to heare her prayes sung so loud,  
So farre from being proud.  
Nathlesse doe ye still loud her prayes sing,  
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Tell me, ye merchants daughters, did ye see  
So fayre a creature in your towne before;  
So sweet, so lovely, and so mild as she,  
Adornd with beautyes grace and vertues store?  
Her goodly eyes lyke Saphyres shining bright,  
Her forehead yvory white,  
Her cheekes lyke apples which the sun hath rudded,  
Her lips lyke cherries charming men to byte,  
Her brest like to a bowle of creame uncrudded,  
Her paps lyke lyllies budded,  
Her snowie necke lyke to a marble towre;  
And all her body like a pallace fayre,  
Ascending up, with many a stately stayre,  
To honors seat and chastities sweet bowre.  
Why stand ye still ye virgins in amaze,  
Upon her so to gaze,  
Whiles ye forget your former lay to sing,  
To which the woods did answer, and your eccho ring?  
But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,  
The inward beauty of her lively spright,  
Garnisht with heavenly guifts of high degree,

Much more then would ye wonder at that sight,  
And stand astonisht lyke to those which red  
Medusaes mazeful hed.  
There dwels sweet love, and constant chastity,  
Unspotted fayth, and comely womanhood,  
Regard of honour, and mild modesty;  
There vertue raynes as Queene in royal throne,  
And giveth lawes alone,  
The which the base affections doe obay,  
And yeeld theyr services unto her will;  
Ne thought of thing uncomely ever may  
Thereto approach to tempt her mind to ill.  
Had ye once seene these her celestial treasures,  
And unrevealèd pleasures,  
Then would ye wonder, and her prayes sing,  
That al the woods should answer, and your echo ring.

Open the temple gates unto my love,  
Open them wide that she may enter in,  
And all the postes adorne as doth behove,  
And all the pillours deck with girlands trim,  
For to receyve this Saynt with honour dew,  
That commeth in to you.  
With trembling steps, and humble reverence,  
She commeth in, before th' Almightyes view;  
Of her ye virgins learne obedience,  
When so ye come into those holy places,  
To humble your proud faces:  
Bring her up to th' high altar, that she may  
The sacred ceremonies there partake,  
The which do endlesse matrimony make;  
And let the roring Organs loudly play  
The praises of the Lord in lively notes;  
The whiles, with hollow throates,  
The Choristers the joyous Antheme sing,  
That al the woods may answer, and their eccho ring.  
Behold, whiles she before the altar stands,  
Hearing the holy priest that to her speakes,  
And blesseth her with his two happy hands,  
How the red roses flush up in her cheekes,

And the pure snow, with goodly vermill stayne  
Like crimsin dyde in grayne:  
That even th' Angels, which continually  
About the sacred Altare doe remaine,  
Forget their service and about her fly,  
Ofte peeping in her face, that seems more fayre,  
The more they on it stare.  
But her sad eyes, still fastened on the ground,  
Are governèd with goodly modesty,  
That suffers not one looke to glaunce awry,  
Which may let in a little thought unsownd.  
Why blush ye, love, to give to me your hand,  
The pledge of all our band!  
Sing, ye sweet Angels, Alleluya sing,  
That all the woods may answere, and your eccho ring.

Now al is done: bring home the bride againe;  
Bring home the triumph of our victory:  
Bring home with you the glory of her gaine;  
With joyance bring her and with jollity.  
Never had man more joyfull day then this,  
Whom heaven would heape with blis,  
Make feast therefore now all this live-long day;  
This day for ever to me holy is.  
Poure out the wine without restraint or stay,  
Poure not by cups, but by the belly full,  
Poure out to all that wull,  
And sprinkle all the postes and wals with wine,  
That they may sweat, and drunken be withall.  
Crowne ye God Bacchus with a coronall,  
And Hymen also crowne with wreathes of vine;  
And let the Graces daunce unto the rest,  
For they can doo it best:  
The whiles the maydens doe theyr carroll sing,  
To which the woods shall answer, and theyr eccho ring.

Ring ye the bells, ye yong men of the towne,  
And leave your wonted labors for this day:  
This day is holy; doe ye write it downe,  
That ye for ever it remember may.

This day the sunne is in his chieftest hight,  
With Barnaby the bright,  
From whence declining daily by degrees,  
He somewhat loseth of his heat and light,  
When once the Crab behind his back he sees.  
But for this time it ill ordainèd was,  
To chose the longest day in all the yeare,  
And shortest night, when longest fitter weare:  
Yet never day so long, but late would passe.  
Ring ye the bells, to make it weare away,  
And bonefiers make all day;  
And daunce about them, and about them sing,  
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Ah! when will this long weary day have end,  
And lende me leave to come unto my love?  
How slowly do the houres theyr numbers spend?  
How slowly does sad Time his feathers move?  
Hast thee, O fayrest Planet, to thy home,  
Within the Westerne fome:  
Thy tyrèd steedes long since have need of rest.  
Long though it be, at last I see it gloome,  
And the bright evening-star with golden creast  
Appeare out of the East.  
Fayre childe of beauty! glorious lampe of love!  
That all the host of heaven in rankes doost lead,  
And guydest lovers through the nights sad dread,  
How chearefully thou lookest from above,  
And seemst to laugh atweene thy twinkling light,  
As joying in the sight  
Of these glad many, which for joy doe sing,  
That all the woods them answer, and their echo ring!

Now ceasse, ye damsels, your delights fore-past;  
Enough it is that all the day was youres:  
Now day is doen, and night is nighing fast,  
Now bring the Bryde into the brydall boures.  
The night is come, now soon her disaray,  
And in her bed her lay;  
Lay her in lillies and in violets,

And silken courteins over her display,  
And odour'd sheetes, and Arras coverlets.  
Behold how goodly my faire love does ly,  
In proud humility!  
Like unto Maia, when as Jove her took  
In Tempe, lying on the flowry gras,  
Twixt sleepe and wake, after she weary was,  
With bathing in the Acidalian brooke.  
Now it is night, ye damsels may be gon,  
And leave my love alone,  
And leave likewise your former lay to sing:  
The woods no more shall answere, nor your echo ring.

Now welcome, night! thou night so long expected,  
That long daies labour doest at last defray,  
And all my cares, which cruell Love collected,  
Hast sumd in one, and cancellèd for aye:  
Spread thy broad wing over my love and me,  
That no man may us see;  
And in thy sable mantle us enwrap,  
From feare of perrill and foule horror free.  
Let no false treason seeke us to entrap,  
Nor any dread disquiet once annoy  
The safety of our joy;  
But let the night be calme, and quiet some,  
Without tempestuous storms or sad afray:  
Lyke as when Jove with fayre Alcmena lay,  
When he begot the great Tirynthian groome:  
Or lyke as when he with thy selfe did lie  
And begot Majesty.  
And let the mayds and yong men cease to sing;  
Ne let the woods them answer nor theyr eccho ring.

Let no lamenting cryes, nor dolefull teares,  
Be heard all night within, nor yet without:  
Ne let false whispers, breeding hidden feares,  
Breake gentle sleepe with misconceivèd dout.  
Let no deluding dreames, nor dreadfull sights,  
Make sudden sad affrightes;  
Ne let house-fyres, nor lightnings helpelesse harmes,

Ne let the Pouke, nor other evill sprights,  
Ne let mischivous witches with theyr charmes,  
Ne let hob Goblins, names whose sence we see not,  
Fray us with things that be not:  
Let not the shriech Oule nor the Storke be heard,  
Nor the night Raven, that still deadly yels;  
Nor damnèd ghosts, cald up with mighty spels,  
Nor griesly vultures, make us once affeard:  
Ne let th' unpleasant Quayre of Frogs still croking  
Make us to wish theyr choking.  
Let none of these theyr drery accents sing;  
Ne let the woods them answer, nor theyr eccho ring.

But let stil Silence trew night-watches keepe,  
That sacred Peace may in assurance rayne,  
And tymely Sleep, when it is tyme to sleepe,  
May poure his limbs forth on your pleasant playne;  
The whiles an hundred little wingèd loves,  
Like divers-fethered doves,  
Shall fly and flutter round about your bed,  
And in the secret darke, that none reproves,  
Their prety stealthes shal worke, and snares shal spread  
To filch away sweet snatches of delight,  
Conceald through covert night.  
Ye sonnes of Venus, play your sports at will!  
For greedy pleasure, carelesse of your toyes,  
Thinks more upon her paradise of joyes,  
Then what ye do, albe it good or ill.  
All night therefore attend your merry play,  
For it will soone be day:  
Now none doth hinder you, that say or sing;  
Ne will the woods now answer, nor your Eccho ring.

Who is the same, which at my window peepes?  
Or whose is that faire face that shines so bright?  
Is it not Cinthia, she that never sleepes,  
But walkes about high heaven al the night?  
O! fayrest goddesse, do thou not envy  
My love with me to spy:  
For thou likewise didst love, though now unthought,

And for a fleece of wooll, which privily  
The Latmian shepherd once unto thee brought,  
His pleasures with thee wrought.  
Therefore to us be favorable now;  
And sith of wemens labours thou hast charge,  
And generation goodly dost enlarge,  
Encline thy will t'effect our wishfull vow,  
And the chast wombe informe with timely seed  
That may our comfort breed:  
Till which we cease our hopefull hap to sing;  
Ne let the woods us answer, nor our Eccho ring.

And thou, great Juno! which with awful might  
The lawes of wedlock still dost patronize;  
And the religion of the faith first plight  
With sacred rites hast taught to solemnize;  
And eeke for comfort often callèd art  
Of women in their smart;  
Eternally bind thou this lovely band,  
And all thy blessings unto us impart.  
And thou, glad Genius! in whose gentle hand  
The bridale bowre and geniall bed remaine,  
Without blemish or staine;  
And the sweet pleasures of theyr loves delight  
With secret ayde doest succour and supply,  
Till they bring forth the fruitfull progeny;  
Send us the timely fruit of this same night.  
And thou, fayre Hebe! and thou, Hymen free!  
Grant that it may so be.  
Til which we cease your further prayse to sing;  
Ne any woods shall answer, nor your Eccho ring.

And ye high heavens, the temple of the gods,  
In which a thousand torches flaming bright  
Doe burne, that to us wretched earthly clods  
In dreadful darknesse lend desired light  
And all ye powers which in the same remayne,  
More then we men can fayne!  
Poure out your blessing on us plentiously,  
And happy influence upon us raine,

That we may raise a large posterity,  
Which from the earth, which they may long possesse  
With lasting happinesse,  
Up to your haughty pallaces may mount;  
And, for the guerdon of theyr glorious merit,  
May heavenly tabernacles there inherit,  
Of blessed Saints for to increase the count.  
So let us rest, sweet love, in hope of this,  
And cease till then our tymely joyes to sing:  
The woods no more us answer, nor our eccho ring!

*Song! made in lieu of many ornaments,  
With which my love should duly have been dect,  
Which cutting off through hasty accidents,  
Ye would not stay your dew time to expect,  
But promist both to recompens;  
Be unto her a goodly ornament,  
And for short time an endlesse monument.*

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## ***Epithalamium***

**by Matthew Rohrer**

In the middle garden is the secret wedding,  
that hides always under the other one  
and under the shiny things of the other one. Under a tree  
one hand reaches through the grainy dusk toward another.  
Two right hands. The ring is a weed that will surely die.  
There is no one else for miles,  
and even those people far away are deaf and blind.  
There is no one to bless this.  
There are the dark trees, and just beyond the trees.