

Edmund Spenser, "Bowre of Blisse" stanzas from The Faerie Queene Bk II.

Thence passing forth, they shortly do arriue,
Whereas the Bowre of Blisse was situate;
A place pickt out by choice of best aliue,
That natures worke by art can imitate:
In which what euer in this worldly state
Is sweet, and pleasing vnto liuing sense,
Or that may dayntiest fantasie aggrate,
Was poured forth with plentifull dispence,
And made there to abound with lauish affluence.

Goodly it was enclosed round about,
Aswell their entred guesstes to keepe within,
As those vnruely beasts to hold without;
Yet was the fence thereof but weake and thin;
Nought feared their force, that fortilage to win,
But wisdomes powre, and temperaunces might,
By which the mightiest things efforced bin:
And eke the gate was wrought of substaunce
light,
Rather for pleasure, then for battery or fight.

Yt framed was of precious yuory,
That seemd a worke of admirable wit;
And therein all the famous history
Of Iason and Medea was ywrit;
Her mighty charmes, her furious louing fit,
His goodly conquest of the golden fleece,
His falsed faith, and loue too lightly flit,
The wondred Argo, which in venturous peece
First through the Euxine seas bore all the flowr of
Greece.

Ye might haue seene the frothy billowes fry
Vnder the ship, as thorough them she went,
That seemd the waues were into yuory,
Or yuory into the waues were sent;
And other where the snowy substaunce sprent
With vermell, like the boyes blood therein shed,
A piteous spectacle did represent,
And otherwhiles with gold besprinkeled;
Yt seemd th'enchanted flame, which did Creüsa
wed.

All this, and more might in that goodly gate
Be red; that euer open stood to all,
Which thither came: but in the Porch there sate
A comely personage of stature tall,
And semblaunce pleasing, more then naturall,
That trauellers to him seemd to entize;
His looser garment to the ground did fall,
And flew about his heeles in wanton wize,
Not fit for speedy pace, or manly exercize.

They in that place him Genius did call:
Not that celestiall powre, to whom the care
Of life, and generation of all
That liues, pertaines in charge particulare,
Who wondrous things concerning our welfare,
And straunge phantomes doth let vs oft forsee,
And oft of secret ill bids vs beware:
That is our Selfe, whom though we do not see,
Yet each doth in him selfe it well perceiue to bee.

Therefore a God him sage Antiquity
Did wisely make, and good Agdistes call:
But this same was to that quite contrary,
The foe of life, that good enuyes to all,
That secretly doth vs procure to fall,
Through guilefull semblaunts, which he makes vs
see.
He of this Gardin had the gouernall,
And Pleasures porter was deuizd to bee,
Holding a staffe in hand for more formalitee.

With diuerse flowres he daintily was deckt,
And strowed round about, and by his side
A mighty Mazer bowle of wine was set,
As if it had to him bene sacrificide;
Wherewith all new-come guests he gratifide:
So did he eke Sir Guyon passing by:
But he his idle curtesie defide,
And ouerthrew his bowle disdainfully;
And broke his staffe, with which he charmed
semblants sly.

Thus being entred, they behold around
 A large and spacious plaine, on euery side
 Strowed with pleasauns, whose faire grassy
 ground
 Mantled with greene, and goodly beautifide
 With all the ornaments of Floraes pride,
 Wherewith her mother Art, as halfe in scorne
 Of niggard Nature, like a pompous bride
 Did decke her, and too lauishly adorne,
 When forth from virgin bowre she comes in
 th'early morne.

Thereto the Heauens alwayes Iouiall,
 Lookt on them louely, still in stedfast state,
 Ne suffred storme nor frost on them to fall,
 Their tender buds or leaues to violate,
 Nor scorching heat, nor cold intemperate
 T'afflict the creatures, which therein did dwell,
 But the milde air with season moderate
 Gently attemptred, and disposd so well,
 That still it breathed forth sweet spirit & holesome
 smell.

More sweet and holesome, then the pleasaunt hill
 Of Rhodope, on which the Nimphe, that bore
 A gyaunt babe, her selfe for grieve did kill;
 Or the Thessalian Tempe, where of yore
 Faire Daphne Phoebus hart with loue did gore;
 Or Ida, where the Gods lou'd to repaire,
 When euer they their heauenly bowres forlore;
 Or sweet Parnasse, the haunt of Muses faire;
 Or Eden selfe, if ought with Eden mote compaire.

Much wondred Guyon at the faire aspect
 Of that sweet place, yet suffred no delight
 To sincke into his sence, nor mind affect,
 But passed forth, and lookt still forward right,
 Bridling his will, and maistering his might:
 Till that he came vnto another gate,
 No gate, but like one, being goodly dight
 With boughes and braunches, which did broad
 dilate
 Their clasping armes, in wanton wreathings
 intricate.

So fashioned a Porch with rare deuice,

Archt ouer head with an embracing vine,
 Whose bounches hanging downe, seemed to
 entice

All passers by, to tast their lushious wine,
 And did themselues into their hands incline,
 As freely offering to be gathered:
 Some deepe empurpled as the Hyacint,
 Some as the Rubine, laughing sweetly red,
 Some like faire Emeraudes, not yet well ripened.

And them amongst, some were of burnisht gold,
 So made by art, to beautifie the rest,
 Which did themselues emongst the leaues enfold,
 As lurking from the vew of couetous guest,
 That the weake bowes, with so rich load opprest,
 Did bow adowne, as ouer-burdened.
 Vnder that Porch a comely dame did rest,
 Clad in faire weedes, but fowle disordered,
 And garments loose, that seemd vnmeet for
 womanhed.

In her left hand a Cup of gold she held,
 And with her right the riper fruit did reach,
 Whose sappy liquor, that with fulnesse sweld,
 Into her cup she scruzd, with daintie breach
 Of her fine fingers, without fowle empeach,
 That so faire wine-presse made the wine more
 sweet:
 Thereof she vsd to giue to drinke to each,
 Whom passing by she happened to meet:
 It was her guise, all Straungers goodly so to greet.

So she to Guyon offred it to tast;
 Who taking it out of her tender hond,
 The cup to ground did violently cast,
 That all in peeces it was broken fond,
 And with the liquor stained all the lond:
 Whereat Excesse exceedingly was wroth,
 Yet no'te the same amend, ne yet withstond,
 But suffered him to passe, all were she loth;
 Who nought regarding her displeasure forward
 goth.

There the most daintie Paradise on ground,
 It selfe doth offer to his sober eye,
 In which all pleasures plenteously abound,

And none does others happinesse enuye:
 The painted flowres, the trees vpshooting hye,
 The dales for shade, the hilles for breathing space,
 The trembling groues, the Christall running by;
 And that, which all faire workes doth most
 aggrace,
 The art, which all that wrought, appeared in no
 place.

One would haue thought, (so cunningly, the rude,
 And scorned parts were mingled with the fine,)
 That nature had for wantonnesse ensude
 Art, and that Art at nature did repine;
 So striuing each th'other to vndermine,
 Each did the others worke more beautifie;
 So diff'ring both in willes, agreed in fine:
 So all agreed through sweete diuersitie,
 This Gardin to adorne with all varietie.

And in the midst of all, a fountaine stood,
 Of richest substaunce, that on earth might bee,
 So pure and shiny, that the siluer flood
 Through euery channell running one might see;
 Most goodly it with curious imageree
 Was ouer-wrought, and shapes of naked boyes,
 Of which some seemd with liuely iollitee,
 To fly about, playing their wanton toyes,
 Whilest others did them selues embay in liquid
 ioyes.

And ouer all, of purest gold was spred,
 A trayle of yuie in his natue hew:
 For the rich mettall was so coloured,
 That wight, who did not well auis'd it vew,
 Would surely deeme it to be yuie trew:
 Low his lasciuious armes adown did creepe,
 That themselues dipping in the siluer dew,
 Their fleecy flowres they tenderly did steepe,
 Which drops of Christall seemd for wantones to
 weepe.

Infinit streames continually did well
 Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,
 The which into an ample lauer fell,
 And shortly grew to so great quantitie,
 That like a little lake it seemd to bee;

Whose depth exceeded not three cubits hight,
 That through the waues one might the bottom see,
 All pau'd beneath with Iaspar shining bright,
 That seemd the fountaine in that sea did sayle
 vpright.

And all the margent round about was set,
 With shady Laurell trees, thence to defend
 The sunny beames, which on the billowes bet,
 And those which therein bathed, mote offend.
 As Guyon hapned by the same to wend,
 Two naked Damzelles he therein espyde,
 Which therein bathing, seemed to contend,
 And wrestle wantonly, ne car'd to hyde,
 Their dainty parts from vew of any, which them
 eyde.

Sometimes the one would lift the other quight
 About the waters, and then downe againe
 Her plong, as ouer maistered by might,
 Where both awhile would couered remaine,
 And each the other from to rise restraine;
 The whiles their snowy limbes, as through a vele,
 So through the Christall waues appeared plaine:
 Then suddainly both would themselues vnhele,
 And th'amarous sweet spoiles to greedy eyes
 reuele.

As that faire Starre, the messenger of morne,
 His deawy face out of the sea doth reare:
 Or as the Cyprian goddess, newly borne
 Of th'Oceans fruitfull froth, did first appeare:
 Such seemed they, and so their yellow heare
 Christalline humour dropped downe apace.
 Whom such when Guyon saw, he drew him neare,
 And somewhat gan relent his earnest pace,
 His stubborne brest gan secret pleasaunce to
 embrace.

The wanton Maidens him espying, stood
 Gazing a while at his vnwonted guise;
 Then th'one her selfe low ducked in the flood,
 Abasht, that her a straunger did auise:
 But th'other rather higher did arise,
 And her two lilly paps aloft displayd,
 And all, that might his melting hart entise

To her delights, she vnto him bewrayd:
The rest hid vnderneath, him more desirous made.

With that, the other likewise vp arose,
And her faire lockes, which formerly were
bownd
Vp in one knot, he low adowne did lose:
Which flowing long and thick, her cloth'd
arownd,
And th'yuorie in golden mantle gownd:
So that faire spectacle from him was reft,
Yet that, which reft it, no lesse faire was fownd:
So hid in lockes and waues from lookers theft,
Nought but her louely face she for his looking left.

Withall she laughed, and she blusht withall,
That blushing to her laughter gaue more grace,
And laughter to her blushing, as did fall:
Now when they spide the knight to slacke his
pace,
Them to behold, and in his sparkling face
The secret signes of kindled lust appeare,
Their wanton meriments they did encrease,
And to him beckned, to approach more neare,
And shewd him many sights, that courage cold
could reare.

On which when gazing him the Palmer saw,
He much rebukt those wandring eyes of his,
And counseld well, him forward thence did draw.
Now are they come nigh to the Bowre of blis
Of her fond fauorites so nam'd amis:
When thus the Palmer; Now Sir, well auise;
For here the end of all our trauell is:
Here wonnes Acrasia, whom we must surprise,
Else she will slip away, and all our drift despise.

Etfsoones they heard a most melodious sound,
Of all that mote delight a daintie eare,
Such as attonce might not on liuing ground,
Saue in this Paradise, be heard elsewhere:
Right hard it was, for wight, which did it heare,
To read, what manner musicke that mote bee:
For all that pleasing is to liuing eare,
Was there consorted in one harmonee,

Birdes, voyces, instruments, windes, waters, all
agree.

The ioyous birdes shrouded in chearefull shade,
Their notes vnto the voyce attempted sweet;
Th'Angelicall soft trembling voyces made
To th'instruments diuine response meet:
The siluer sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmure of the waters fall:
The waters fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, vnto the wind did call:
The gentle warbling wind low answered to all.

There, whence that Musick seemed heard to bee,
Was the faire Witch her selfe now solacing,
With a new Louer, whom through sorcere
And witchcraft, she from farre did thither bring:
There she had him now layd a slombering,
In secret shade, after long wanton ioyes:
Whilst round about them pleasauntly did sing
Many faire Ladies, and lasciuious boyes,
That euer mixt their song with light licentious
toyes.

And all that while, right ouer him she hong,
With her false eyes fast fixed in his sight,
As seeking medicine, whence she was stong,
Or greedily depasturing delight:
And oft inclining downe with kisses light,
For feare of waking him, his lips bedewd,
And through his humid eyes did sucke his spright,
Quite molten into lust and pleasure lewd;
Wherewith she sighed soft, as if his case she rewd.

The whiles some one did chaunt this louely lay;
Ah see, who so faire thing doest faine to see,
In springing flowre the image of thy day;
Ah see the Virgin Rose, how sweetly shee
Doth first peepe forth with bashfull modestee,
That fairer seemes, the lesse ye see her may;
Lo see soone after, how more bold and free
Her bared bosome she doth broad display;
Loe see soone after, how she fades, and falles
away.

So passeth, in the passing of a day,

Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre,
 Ne more doth flourish after first decay,
 That earst was sought to decke both bed and
 bowre,
 Of many a Ladie, and many a Paramowre:
 Gather therefore the Rose, whilst yet is prime,
 For soone comes age, that will her pride deflowre:
 Gather the Rose of love, whilst yet is time,
 Whilst louing thou mayst loued be with equall
 crime.

He ceast, and then gan all the quire of birdes
 Their diuerse notes t'attune vnto his lay,
 As in approuance of his pleasing words.
 The constant paire heard all, that he did say,
 Yet swarued not, but kept their forward way,
 Through many couert groues, and thickets close,
 In which they creeping did at last display
 That wanton Ladie, with her louers lose,
 Whose sleepe head she in her lap did soft dispose.

Vpon a bed of Roses she was layd,
 As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin,
 And was arayd, or rather disarayd,
 All in a vele of silke and siluer thin,
 That hid no whit her alablaster skin,
 But rather shewd more white, if more might bee:
 More subtile web Arachne can not spin,
 Nor the fine nets, which oft we wouen see
 Of scorched deaw, do not in th'aire more lightly
 flee.

Her snowy brest was bare to readie spoyle
 Of hungry eies, which n'ote therewith be fild,
 And yet through languour of her late sweet toyle,
 Few drops, more cleare then Nectar, forth distild,
 That like pure Orient perles adowne it trild,
 And her faire eyes sweet smyling in delight,
 Moystened their fierie beames, with which she
 thrild

Fraile harts, yet quenched not; like starry light
 Which sparckling on the silent waues, does seeme
 more bright.

The young man sleeping by her, seemd to bee
 Some goodly swayne of honorable place,

That certes it great pittie was to see
 Him his nobilitie so foule deface;
 A sweet regard, and amiable grace,
 Mixed with manly sternnesse did appeare
 Yet sleeping, in his well proportiond face,
 And on his tender lips the downy heare
 Did now but freshly spring, and silken blossomes
 beare.

His warlike armes, the idle instruments
 Of sleeping praise, were hong vpon a tree,
 And his braue shield, full of old moniments,
 Was fowly ra'st, that none the signes might see;
 Ne for them, ne for honour cared hee,
 Ne ought, that did to his aduancement tend,
 But in lewd loues, and wastfull luxuree,
 His dayes, his goods, his bodie he did spend:
 O horrible enchantment, that him so did blend.

The noble Elfe, and carefull Palmer drew
 So nigh them, minding nought, but lustfull game,
 That suddein forth they on them rusht, and threw
 A subtile net, which onely for the same
 The skilfull Palmer formally did frame.
 So held them vnder fast, the whiles the rest
 Fled all away for feare of fowler shame.
 The faire Enchauntresse, so vnwares opprest,
 Tryde all her arts, & all her sleights, thence out to
 wrest.

And eke her louers stroue: but all in vaine;
 For that same net so cunningly was wound,
 That neither guile, nor force might it distraine.
 They tooke them both, & both them strongly
 bound
 In captiue bandes, which there they readie found:
 But her in chaines of adamant he tyde;
 For nothing else might keepe her safe and sound;
 But Verdant (so he hight) he soone vntyde,
 And counsell sage in steed thereof to him applyde.

But all those pleasant bowres and Pallace braue,
 Guyon broke downe, with rigour pittillesse;
 Ne ought their goodly workmanship might saue
 Them from the tempest of his wrathfulnesse,
 But that their blisse he turn'd to balefulnesse:

Their groues he feld, their gardins did deface,
 Their arbers spoyle, their Cabinets suppresses,
 Their banket houses burne, their buildings race,
 And of the fairest late, now made the fowlest place.

Then led they her away, and eke that knight
 They with them led, both sorrowfull and sad:
 The way they came, the same retourn'd they right,
 Till they arriued, where they lately had
 Charm'd those wild-beasts, that rag'd with furie
 mad.

Which now awaking, fierce at them gan fly,
 As in their mistresse reskew, whom they lad;
 But them the Palmer soone did pacify.
 Then Guyon askt, what meant those beastes,
 which there did ly.

Said he, These seeming beasts are men indeed,
 Whom this Enchauntresse hath transformed thus,
 Whylome her louers, which her lusts did feed,
 Now turned into figures hideous,
 According to their mindes like monstrous.
 Sad end (quoth he) of life intemperate,
 And mournfull meed of ioyes delicious:
 But Palmer, if it mote thee so aggrate,
 Let them returned be vnto their former state.

Streight way he with his vertuous staffe them
 strooke,

And streight of beasts they comely men became;
 Yet being men they did vnmanly looke,
 And stared ghastly, some for inward shame,
 And some for wrath, to see their captiue Dame:
 But one aboue the rest in speciall,
 That had an hog beene late, hight Grille by name,
 Repined greatly, and did him miscall,
 That had from hoggish forme him brought to
 naturall.

Said Guyon, See the mind of beastly man,
 That hath so soone forgot the excellence
 Of his creation, when he life began,
 That now he chooseth, with vile difference,
 To be a beast, and lacke intelligence.
 To whom the Palmer thus, The donghill kind
 Delights in filth and foule incontinence:
 Let Grill be Grill, and haue his hoggish mind,
 But let vs hence depart, whilest wether serues and
 wind.

Finis Book II.