Edmund Spenser, “Garden of Adonis” stanzas from *The Faerie Queene* Bk III

She brought her to her ioyous Paradize,
       Where most she winnes, whe[n] she on earth
does dwel.
So faire a place, as Nature can duize:
Whether in Paphos, or Cytheron hill,
       Or it in Gnidus be, I wote not well;
But well I wote by tryall, that this same
All other pleasant places doth excell,
       And called is by her lost louers name,
The Gardin of Adonis, farre renownmd by fame.

In that same Gardin all the goodly flowres,
       Wherewith dame Nature doth her beautifie,
And decks the girldons of her paramoures,
Are fetcht: there is the first semanarie
Of all things, that are borne to liue and die,
       According to their kindes. Long worke it were,
Here to account the endless progenie
Of all the weedes, that bud and blossome there;
But so much as doth need, must needs be
       countd here.

It sited was in fruitfull soyle of old,
       And gilt in with two walles on either side;
The one of yron, the other of bright gold,
That none might thorough breake, nor ouer-
       stride:
And double gates it had, which opened wide,
       By which both in and out men moten pas;
Th'one faire and fresh, the other old and dride:
Old Genius the porter of them was,
       Old Genius, the which a double nature has.

He letteth in, he letteth out to wend,
       All that to come into the world desire;
A thousand thousand naked babes attend
About him day and night, which doe require,
That he with fleshly weedes would them attire:
       Such as him list, such as eternall fate
Ordained hath, he clothes with sinfull mire,
       And sendeth forth to liue in mortall state,
Till they againe returne backe by the hinder gate.

After that they againe returned beene,
       They in that Gardin planted be againe;
And grow afresh, as they had neuer seene
Fleshy corruption, nor mortall paine.
Some thousand yeares so doen they there
       remaine;
And then of him are clad with other hew,
       Or sent into the chaungefull world againe,
Till thither they returne, where first they grew:
       So like a wheele around they runne from old to new.

Ne needs there Gardiner to set, or sow,
       To plant or prune: for of their owne accord
All things, as they created were, doe grow,
And yet remember well the mightie word,
Which first was spoken by th'Almighty lord,
       That bad them to increase and multiply:
Ne doe they need with water of the ford,
       Or of the clouds to moysten their roots dry;
For in themselues eternall moisture they imply.

Infinite shapes of creatures there are bred,
       And uncouth formes, which none yet euer knew,
And every sort is in a sundry bed
Set by it selfe, and ranckt in comely rew:
Some fit for reasonable soules t'indew,
       Some made for beasts, some made for birds to weare,
And all the fruitfull spawne of fishes hew
In endless rancks along enraunged were,
That seem'd the Ocean could not containe them there.

Daily they grow, and daily forth are sent
       Into the world, it to replenish more;
Yet is the stocke not lessened, nor spent,
But still remaines in euerlasting store;
As it at first created was of yore.
       For in the wide wombe of the world there lyes,
In hatefull darkenesse and in deepe horrore,
An huge eternall Chaos, which supplyes
The substances of natures fruitfull progenyes.
All things from thence doe their first being fetch,
And borrow matter, whereof they are made,
Which when as forme and feature it does ketch,
Becomes a bodie, and doth then invade
The state of life, out of the griesly shade.
That substance is eterne, and bideth so,
Ne when the life decayes, and forme does fade,
Doth it consume, and into nothing go,
But chaunged is, and often altred to and fro.

The substance is not chaunged, nor altered,
But th'only forme and outward fashion;
For every substance is conditioned
To change her hew, and sundry formes to don,
Meet for her temper and complexion:
For formes are variable and decay,
By course of kind, and by occasion;
And that faire flowre of beautie fades away,
As doth the lilly fresh before the sunny ray.

Great enimy to it, and to all the rest,
That in the Gardin of Adonis springs,
Is wicked Time, who with his scyth addrest,
Does mow the flowring herbes and goodly things,
And all their glory to the ground downe flings,
Where they doe wither, and are lowly mard:
He flyes about, and with his flaggy wings
Beateth downe both leaues and buds without regard,
Ne euer pittie may relent his malice hard.

Yet pittie often did the gods relent,
To see so faire things mard, and spoyled quight:
And their great mother Venus did lament
The losse of her deare brood, her deare delight:
Her hart was pierst with pittie at the sight,
When walking through the Gardin, them she spyde,
Yet no'te she find redresse for such despight.
For all that liues, is subject to that law:
All things decay in time, and to their end do draw.

But were it not, that Time their troubler is,
All that in this delightfull Gardin growes,
Should happie be, and haue immortall blis:
For here all plentie, and all pleasure flowes,
And sweet loue gentle fits emongst them throwes,
Without fell rancor, or fond gealousie;
Franckly each paramour his leman knowes,
Each bird his mate, ne any does enuie
Their goodwill meriment, and gay felicitie.

There is continuall spring, and haruest there
Continuall, both meeting at one time:
For both the boughes doe laughing blossomes beare,
And with fresh colours decke the wanton Prime,
And eke attonce the heavy trees they clime,
Which seeme to labour under their fruits lode:
The whiles the joyous birds make their pastime
Emongst the shady leaues, their sweet abode,
And their true loues without suspition tell abrode.

Right in the middest of that Paradise,
There stood a stately Mount, on whose round top
A gloomy grove of mirtle trees did rise,
Whose shadie boughes sharpe steele did neuer lop,
Nor wicked beasts their tender buds did crop,
But like a girdon compassed the hight,
And from their fruitfull sides sweet gum did drop,
That all the ground with precious dewe bedight,
Threw forth most dainty odours, & most sweet delight.

And in the thickest couert of that shade,
There was a pleasant arbour, not by art,
But of the trees owne inclination made,
Which knitting their rancke braunches part to part,
With wanton yuie traynyld athwart,
And Eglantine, and Caprifole among,
Fashion abowe within their inmost part,
That nether Phoebus beams could through them throng.
Nor Aeolus sharp blast could worke them any wrong.
And all about grew euery sort of flowre,  
To which sad louers were transformd of yore;  
Fresh Hyacinthu, Phoebus paramoure,  
And dearest loue:  
Foolish Narcisse, that likes the watry shore,  
Sad Amaranthu, made a flowre but late,  
Sad Amaranthus, in whose purple gore  
Me seemes I see Amintas wretched fate,  
To whom sweet Poets verse hath giuen endlesse date.

There wont faire Venus often to enioy  
Her deare Adonis ioyous company,  
And reape sweet pleasure of the wanton boy;  
There yet, some say, in secret he does ly,  
Lapped in flowres and pretious spycery,  
By her hid from the world, and from the skill  
Of Stygian Gods, which doe her loue enuy;  
But she her selfe, when euer that she will,  
Possesseth him, and of his sweetnesse takes her fill.

And sooth it seemes they say: for he may not  
For euer die, and euer buried bee  
In balefull night, where all things are forgot;  
All be he subiect to mortalitie,  
Yet is eterne in mutabilitie,  
And by succession made perpetuall,  
Transformed oft, and chaunged diuerslie:  
For him the Father of all formes they call;  
Therefore needs mote he liue, that liuing giues to all.

There now he liueth in eternall blis,  
Ioying his goddesse, and of her enioud:  
Ne feareth he henceforth that foe of his,  
Which with his cruell tuske him deadly cloyd:  
For that wilde Bore, the which him once annoyd,  
She firmely hath emprisoned for ay,  
That her sweet loue his malice mote auoyd,  
In a strong rocky Caue, which is they say,  
Hewen vnderneath that Mount, that none him losen may.
But she to none of them her loue did cast,
    Saue to the noble knight Sir Scudamore,
To whom her louing hart she linked fast
In faithfull loue, t'abide for euer more,
And for his dearest sake endured sore,
Sore trouble of an hainous enimy;
Who her would forced haue to haue forlore
Her former loue, and stedfast loialty,
As ye may elsewhere read that ruefull history.

But well I weene, ye first desire to learne,
What end vnto that fearefull Damozell,
Which fled so fast from that same foster stearne,
Whom with his brethren Timias slew, befell:
That was to weet, the goodly Florimell;
Who wandring for to seeke her louer deare,
Her louer deare, her dearest Marinell,
Into misfortune fell, as ye did heare,
And from Prince Arthur fled with wings of idle feare.