

Chapter 2

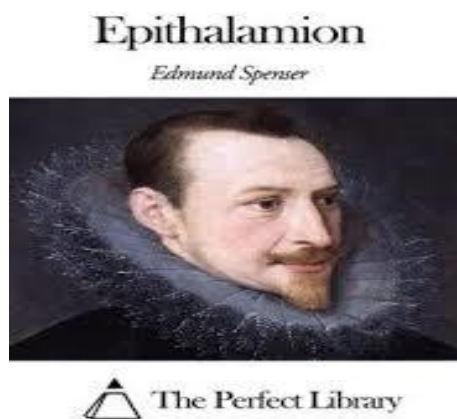
A Wedding Song

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"A Wedding Song," also known as "There is Love," is a popular folk song known for its simple yet profound expression of love and commitment. It's a song often sung at weddings, celebrating the couple's journey together. The lyrics emphasize themes of enduring love, companionship, and the promise of a shared future.

Here's a critical appreciation of the song, focusing on its lyrical content and cultural impact:



Lyrical Themes and Structure:

- **Simplicity and Clarity:**

The song's strength lies in its straightforward language. It avoids complex metaphors or elaborate poetic devices, making its message of love accessible to all.

- **Enduring Love:**

The lyrics focus on the idea of love that lasts through changing seasons

and life's journey, emphasizing companionship and mutual support.

- **Promise of a Shared Future:**

The song envisions a future where the couple faces life's challenges together, highlighting the strength found in unity.

- **Repetitive Structure:**

The repetition of certain phrases and the simple rhyme scheme contribute to the song's memorable and singable quality.

Cultural Impact:

- **Wedding Standard:**

The song's popularity in wedding ceremonies has solidified its place as a classic love song, symbolizing the hopes and dreams of couples embarking on their married life.

- **Emotional Resonance:**

Its simple lyrics and melody evoke strong emotions of love, joy, and hope, making it a meaningful addition to wedding celebrations.

- **Timeless Appeal:**

The song's themes of love and commitment transcend generations, ensuring its continued relevance in various cultural contexts.

Overall:

"The Wedding Song" is a powerful example of how simple language can convey profound emotions. Its celebration of love

and companionship, coupled with its timeless themes, has made it a beloved choice for wedding ceremonies and a cherished expression of romantic commitment.

"A Wedding Song"

Today we stand where dreams begin,
Two hearts as one, in love akin.
The sun bears witness, skies so wide,
As hand in hand, we're unified.
Through every dawn and setting sun,
We vow to walk as only one.
Through storms that shake, and stars
that shine,
Your soul is safe forever in mine.
I'll be your strength when days are
long,
Your laughter in the morning song.
The quiet peace you come home to,
A place that's always holding you.
We write this story, line by line,
In every glance, your eyes in mine.
No riches more than what we share—
A sacred love beyond compare.
So let the bells ring loud and clear,
For every moment draws you near.
Forever starts, not far, but here—
I love you now... and every year.



Epithalamion is an ode written by [Edmund Spenser](#) as a gift to his bride, Elizabeth Boyle, on their wedding day. The poem moves through the couples' wedding day, from the groom's impatient hours

before dawn to the late hours of night after the husband and wife have consummated their marriage. Spenser is very methodical in his depiction of time as it passes, both in the accurate chronological sense and in the subjective sense of time as felt by those waiting in anticipation or fear.

As with most classically-inspired works, this ode begins with an invocation to the Muses to help the groom; however, in this case they are to help him awaken his bride, not create his poetic work. Then follows a growing procession of figures who attempt to bestir the bride from her bed. Once the sun has risen, the bride finally awakens and begins her procession to the bridal bower. She comes to the "temple" (the sanctuary of the church wherein she is to be formally married to the groom) and is wed, then a celebration ensues. Almost immediately, the groom wants everyone to leave and the day to shorten so that he may enjoy the bliss of his wedding night. Once the night arrives, however, the groom turns his thoughts toward the product of their union, praying to various gods that his new wife's womb might be fertile and give him multiple children.

Summary

The groom calls upon the muses to inspire him to properly sing the praises of his beloved bride. He claims he will sing to himself, "as Orpheus did for his own bride." As with most of the following stanzas, this stanza ends with the refrain "The woods shall to me answer and my Eccho ring."

Analysis

In the tradition of classical authors, the poet calls upon the muses to inspire him. Unlike many poets, who called upon a single muse, Spenser here calls upon all the muses, suggesting his subject requires the full range of mythic inspiration. The reference to Orpheus is an allusion to that hero's luring of his bride's spirit from the realm of the dead using his beautiful music; the groom, too, hopes to awaken his bride from her slumber, leading her into the light of their wedding day.

Stanza 2

Summary

Before the break of day, the groom urges the muses to head to his beloved's bower, there to awaken her. Hymen, god of marriage, is already awake, and so too should the bride arise. The groom urges the muses to remind his bride that this is her wedding day, an occasion that will return her great delight for all the "paynes and sorrowes past."

Analysis

Another classical figure, Hymen, is invoked here, and not for the last time. If the god of marriage is ready, and the groom is ready, then he expects his bride to make herself ready as well. The focus is on the sanctity of the wedding day--this occasion itself should urge the bride to come celebrate it as early as possible. Here it is the marriage ceremony, not the bride (or the groom) which determines what is urgent.

Stanza 3

Summary

The groom instructs the muses to summon all the nymphs they can to accompany them to the bridal chamber.

On their way, they are to gather all the fragrant flowers they can and decorate the path leading from the "bridal bower,"



Where the marriage ceremony is to take place, to the door of the bride's chambers. If they do so, she will tread nothing but flowers on her procession from her rooms to the site of the wedding. As they adorn her doorway with flowers, their song will awaken the bride

Analysis

This celebration of Christian matrimony here becomes firmly entrenched in the classical mythology of the Greeks with the summoning of the nymphs. No more pagan image can be found than these nature-spirits strewing the ground with various flowers to make a path of beauty from the bride's bedchamber to the bridal bower. Although Spenser will later develop the Protestant marriage ideals, he has chosen to greet the wedding day morning with the spirits of ancient paganism instead.

Stanza 4

Summary

Addressing the various nymphs of other natural locales, the groom asks that they tend to their specialties to make the wedding day perfect. The nymphs who tend the ponds and lakes should make sure the water is clear and unmolested by lively fish, that they may see their own reflections in it and so best prepare themselves to be seen by the bride. The nymphs of the mountains

and woods, who keep deer safe from ravening wolves, should exercise their skills in keeping these selfsame wolves away from the bride this wedding day. Both groups are to be present to help decorate the wedding site with their beauty.

Analysis

Here Spenser further develops the nymph-summoning of Stanza 3. That he focuses on the two groups' abilities to prevent disturbances hints that he foresaw a chance of some misfortune attending the wedding. Whether this is conventional "wedding day jitters" or a more politically-motivated concern over the problem of Irish uprisings is uncertain, but the wolves mentioned would come from the forests--the same place Irish resistance groups use to hide their movements and strike at the occupying English with impunity.

Stanza 5

Summary

The groom now addresses his bride directly (even if she is not present) to urge her to awaken. Sunrise is long since gone and Phoebus, the sun-god, is showing "his glorious hed." The birds are already singing, and the groom insists their song is a call to joy directed at the bride.

Analysis

The mythical figures of Rosy Dawn, Tithones, and Phoebus are here invoked to continue the classical motif of the ode. Thus far, it is indistinguishable in content from a pagan wedding-song. That the groom must address his bride directly demonstrates both his impatience and the ineffectiveness of relying on the muses and nymphs to summon forth the bride.

Stanza 6

Summary

The bride has finally awakened, and her

eyes likened to the sun wit their "goodly beams/More bright then Hesperus."



The groom urges the "daughters of delight" to attend to the bride, but summons too the Hours of Day and Night, the Seasons, and the "three handmayds" of Venus to attend as well. He urges the latter to do for his bride what they do for Venus, sing to her as they help her dress for her wedding.

Analysis

There is a second sunrise here as the "darksome cloud" is removed from the bride's visage and her eyes are allowed to shine in all their glory. The "daughters of delight" are the nymphs, still urged to attend on the bride, but here Spenser introduces the personifications of time in the hours that make up Day, Night, and the seasons. He will return to this time motif later, but it is important to note that here he sees time itself participating as much in the marriage ceremony as do the nymphs and handmaids of Venus.

Stanza 7

Summary

The bride is ready with her attendant virgins, so now it is time for the groomsmen and the groom himself to prepare. The groom implores the sun to shine brightly, but not hotly lest it burn his bride's fair skin. He then prays to Phoebus, who is both sun-god and originator of the arts, to give this

one day of the year to him while keeping the rest for himself. He offers to exchange his own poetry as an offering for this great favor.

Analysis

The theme of light as both a sign of joy and an image of creative prowess begins to be developed here, as the groom addresses Phoebus. Spenser refers again to his own poetry as a worthy offering to the god of poetry and the arts, which he believes has earned him the favor of having this one day belong to himself rather than to the sun-god.

Stanza 8

Summary

The mortal wedding guests and entertainment move into action. The minstrels play their music and sing, while women play their timbrels and dance. Young boys run throughout the streets crying the wedding song "Hymen io Hymen, Hymen" for all to hear. Those hearing the cries applaud the boys and join in with the song.

Analysis

Spenser shifts to the real-world participants in the wedding ceremony, the entertainment and possible guests. He describes a typical (if lavish) Elizabethan wedding complete with elements harking back to classical times. The boys' song "Hymen io Hymen, Hymen" can be traced back to Greece, with its delivery by Gaius Valerius Catullus in the first century B.C.

Stanza 9

Summary

The groom beholds his bride approaching and compares her to Phoebe (another name for Artemis, goddess of the moon) clad in white "that seemes a virgin best." He finds her white attire so appropriate that she

seems more angel than woman. In modesty, she avoids the gaze of the myriad admirers and blushes at the songs of praise she is receiving.

Analysis

This unusual stanza has a "missing line"-- a break after the ninth line of the stanza (line 156). The structure probably plays into Spenser's greater organization of lines and meter, which echo the hours of the day with great mathematical precision. There is no aesthetic reason within the stanza for the break, as it takes place three lines before the verses describing the bride's own reaction to her admirers.

The comparison to Phoebe, twin sister of Phoebus, is significant since the groom has essentially bargained to take Phoebus' place of prominence this day two stanzas ago. He sees the bride as a perfect, even divine, counterpart to himself this day, as Day and Night are inextricably linked in the passage of time.

Stanza 10

Summary

The groom asks the women who see his bride if they have ever seen anyone so beautiful in their town before. He then launches into a list of all her virtues, starting with her eyes and eventually describing her whole body. The bride's overwhelming beauty causes the maidens to forget their song to stare at her.

Analysis

Spenser engages the blason convention, in which a woman's physical features are picked out and described in metaphorical terms. Unlike his blasons in Amoretti, this listing has no overarching connection among the various metaphors. Her eyes and forehead are described in terms of valuable items (sapphires and ivory), her cheeks and lips compared to fruit (apples and cherries),

her breast is compared to a bowl of cream, her nipples to the buds of lilies, her neck to an ivory tower, and her whole body compared to a beautiful palace.

Stanza 11

Summary

The groom moves from the external beauty of the bride to her internal beauty, which he claims to see better than anyone else. He praises her lively spirit, her sweet love, her chastity, her faith, her honor, and her modesty. He insists that could her observers see her inner beauty, they would be far more awestruck by it than they already are by her outward appearance.

Analysis

Although not a blason like the last stanza, this set of verses is nonetheless a catalogue of the bride's inner virtues. Spenser moves for a moment away from the emphasis on outward beauty so prominent in this ode and in pagan marriage ceremonies, turning instead to his other classical influence: Platonism. He describes the ideal woman, unsullied by fleshly weakness or stray thoughts. Could the attendants see her true

beauty--her absolute beauty--they would be astonished like those who saw "Medusaes mazeful hed" and were turned to stone.

Stanza 12

Summary

The groom calls for the doors to the temple to be opened that his bride may enter in and approach the altar in reverence. He offers his bride as an example for the observing maidens to follow, for she approaches this holy place with reverence and humility.

Analysis

Spenser shifts the imagery from that of a pagan wedding ceremony, in which the bride would be escorted to the groom's house for the wedding, to a Protestant one taking place in a church (although he describes it with the pre-Christian term "temple"). The bride enters in as a "Saynt" in the sense that she is a good Protestant Christian, and she approaches this holy place with the appropriate humility. No mention of Hymen or Phoebus is made; instead the bride approaches "before th' almighties vew." The minstrels have now become "Choristers" singing "praises of the Lord" to the accompaniment of organs.