

# Sir John Davies

## 1569-1626

For a biography of Davies, a discussion of his other works, and selections from his other poetry, see the print anthology, pp. 1137-53.

EDITION: *Orchestra or A poem of dauncing*. London: Printed by J. Robarts for N. Ling, 1596. STC 6360.



from *Orchestra or, a Poem of Dancing*<sup>1</sup>

1  
Where lives the man that never yet did hear  
Of chaste Penelope, Ulysses' queen?  
Who kept her faith unspotted twenty year  
Till he returned that far away had been,  
And many men and many towns had seen;  
Ten year at siege of Troy he ling'ring lay,  
And ten year in the midland sea did stray.<sup>2</sup>

2  
Homer, to whom the Muses did carouse<sup>3</sup>  
A great, deep cup with heavenly nectar filled,  
The greatest, deepest cup in Jove's great house  
(For Jove himself had so expressly willed),  
He drank off all, ne let one drop be spilled;  
Since when, his brain that had before been dry  
Became the wellspring of all poetry—

---

<sup>1</sup> The rest of the title reads: "Judicially Proving the True Observation of Time and Measure in the Authentical and Laudable Use of Dancing." It is followed by a Latin epigram from Ovid's *The Art of Love*, that translates as follows: "So if you've a voice, then sing; or if your movements / Are graceful, dance. Please with whatever gifts / You possess to give pleasure" (in *The Erotic Poems*, trans. and ed., P. Green [London, 1982], ll. 595-97).

<sup>2</sup> In Homer's *Odyssey*, Penelope, the wife of Ulysses (Odysseus), the king of Ithaca, is courted by many local nobles, who believe that the long-absent Ulysses is dead. Penelope tries to delay her seemingly-inevitable forced marriage to one of them, by stating that she will wed as soon as she has finished weaving a shroud for her father-in-law. She manages to delay three years, by taking the work she has done during the day and unravelling it at night. Finally discovered in her deception, she then hits on another delaying tactic: she promises to wed the man who can string and shoot the great bow of her husband; *midland* Mediterranean.

<sup>3</sup> *carouse* to drink "all out," especially in unrestrained toasting.

3  
Homer doth tell in his abundant verse  
The long, laborious travails<sup>4</sup> of the man,  
And of his lady, too, he doth rehearse,  
How she illudes<sup>5</sup> with all the art she can  
Th' ungrateful<sup>6</sup> love which other lords began;  
For of her lord false Fame<sup>7</sup> long since had sworn  
That Neptune's<sup>8</sup> monsters had his carcass torn.

4  
All this he tells, but one thing he forgot,  
One thing most worthy his eternal song;  
But he was old and blind and saw it not,  
Or else he thought he should Ulysses wrong  
To mingle it his tragic acts among.  
Yet was there not in all the world of things  
A sweeter burden<sup>9</sup> for his Muse's wings.

5  
The courtly love Antinous<sup>10</sup> did make,  
Antinous, that fresh and jolly knight,

---

<sup>4</sup> *travails* "travels," but also "labours."

<sup>5</sup> *illudes* eludes (but the spelling suggests how Penelope avoids her suitors through deception or illusion). See p. 1, note 2.

<sup>6</sup> *ungrateful* unpleasant, disagreeable (perhaps with a glance at the suitors' lack of "gratitude" to Ulysses).

<sup>7</sup> *Fame* rumour, report.

<sup>8</sup> *Neptune* god of the sea, whose hatred of Ulysses led to many of the hero's trials on his journey home to Ithaca.

<sup>9</sup> *burden* load, weight; but also, the bass accompaniment to a melody.

<sup>10</sup> *Antinous* in the *Odyssey*, Penelope's chief and most persistent suitor. When Ulysses arrives home, he presents himself at his own palace disguised as a beggar. When Ulysses finally reveals himself and slaughters the suitors en masse, he kills Antinous first, shooting him through the throat with an arrow. Antinous is named by one of his fellow suitors, Eurymachus, as the man chiefly responsible for the dishonouring of Ulysses' household.

Which of the gallants that did undertake  
To win the widow had most wealth and might,  
Wit to persuade, and beauty to delight.  
The courtly love he made unto the Queen  
Homer forgot as if it had not been.

6  
Sing then, Terpsichore,<sup>1</sup> my light<sup>2</sup> muse, sing  
His gentle art and cunning courtesy.  
You, lady, can remember everything,  
For you are daughter of Queen Memory.  
But sing a plain and easy melody,  
For the soft mean that warbleth but the ground  
To my rude ear doth yield the sweetest sound.<sup>3</sup>

7  
One only night's discourse I can report.  
When the great torch-bearer of heaven<sup>4</sup> was gone  
Down in a mask unto the Ocean's court  
To revel it with Thetis,<sup>5</sup> all alone  
Antinous, disguised and unknown,  
Like to the spring in gaudy ornament,  
Unto the castle of the Princess went.

8  
The sovereign castle of the rocky isle  
Wherein Penelope the princess lay  
Shone with a thousand lamps which did exile  
The shadows dark and turned the night to day.  
Not Jove's blue tent, what time the sunny ray  
Behind the bulwark of the earth retires,  
Is seen to sparkle with more twinkling fires.

<sup>1</sup> *Terpsichore* from the Greek, meaning "dance-enjoying," the name of the Muse of dancing and the dramatic chorus, daughter of Zeus (Jove/Jupiter) and Mnemosyne (Memory).

<sup>2</sup> *light* lively, nimble.

<sup>3</sup> *For the soft mean ... sound* The "mean" is the middle of the vocal range, and thus an alto or tenor voice; the "ground" is the melody of the piece. Davies employs a modesty topos here, asking the Muse for a moderate or modest amount of inspiration for his poem; *rude* untrained, and, perhaps, unsophisticated.

<sup>4</sup> *great torch-bearer of heaven* Apollo, god of the sun.

<sup>5</sup> *Thetis* the goddess of the sea, wife of Oceanus.

9  
That night the Queen came forth from far within  
And in the presence of her Court was seen,  
For the sweet singer Phemius<sup>6</sup> did begin  
To praise the worthies that at Troy had been.  
Somewhat of her Ulysses she did ween<sup>7</sup>  
In his grave hymn the heav'nly man would sing,  
Or of his wars, or of his wandering.

10  
Pallas that hour, with her sweet breath divine,  
Inspired immortal beauty in her eyes,<sup>8</sup>  
That with celestial glory she did shine  
Brighter than Venus, when she doth arise  
Out of the waters to adorn the skies.  
The wooers all amazed do admire,  
And check their own presumptuous desire.

11  
Only Antinous, when at first he viewed  
Her star-bright eyes that with new honour shined,  
Was not dismayed; but therewithal renewed  
The noblesse and the splendour of his mind;  
And as he did fit circumstances find,  
Unto the throne he boldly gan advance,  
And with fair manners wooed the Queen to  
dance:

12  
"Goddess of women, sith<sup>9</sup> your heav'nliness  
Hath now vouchsafed itself to represent  
To our dim eyes, which though they see the less  
Yet are they blest in their astonishment,  
Imitate heaven, whose beauties excellent  
Are in continual motion day and night,  
And move thereby more wonder and delight.

<sup>6</sup> *Phemius* in the *Odyssey*, the court musician at Ithaca.

<sup>7</sup> *ween* anticipate, think likely.

<sup>8</sup> *Pallas ... eyes* Pallas Athena, the goddess of war, wisdom and the arts; she was also the protector and patron of the Greeks in general and Ulysses in particular. Her Greek epithet "glaukopis" could mean "bright-eyed." The "her" refers to Penelope.

<sup>9</sup> *sith* since, seeing that.

13

“Let me the mover<sup>1</sup> be, to turn about  
Those glorious ornaments that youth and love  
Have fixed in your every part throughout;  
Which if you will in timely measure move,  
Not all those precious gems in heav’n above  
Shall yield a sight more pleasing to behold,  
With all their turns and tracings<sup>2</sup> manifold.”

14

With this the modest Princess blushed and smiled,  
Like to a clear and rosy eventide,  
And softly did return this answer mild:  
“Fair sir, you needs must fairly be denied  
Where your demand cannot be satisfied.  
My feet, which only nature taught to go,  
Did never yet the art of footing<sup>3</sup> know.

15

“But why persuade you me to this new rage?<sup>4</sup>  
(For all disorder and misrule is new)  
For such misgovernment in former age  
Our old divine forefathers never knew;<sup>5</sup>  
Who if they lived, and did the follies view  
Which their fond nephews make their chief affairs,  
Would hate themselves that had begot such heirs.”

16

“Sole heir of virtue, and of beauty both,  
Whence cometh it,” Antinous replies,  
“That your imperious virtue is so loath  
To grant your beauty her chief exercise?”

Or from what spring doth your opinion rise,  
That dancing is a frenzy and a rage,  
First known and used in this new-fangled age?

17

“Dancing, bright lady, then began to be  
When the first seeds whereof the world did  
spring,  
The fire, air, earth, and water, did agree,  
By Love’s persuasion, Nature’s mighty king,<sup>6</sup>  
To leave their first disordered combating,  
And in a dance such measure to observe  
As all the world their motion should preserve.

18

“Since when they still are carried in a round  
And, changing, come one in another’s place,  
Yet do they neither mingle nor confound,  
But every one doth keep the bounded space  
Wherein the dance doth bid it turn or trace.  
This wondrous miracle did Love devise,  
For dancing is Love’s proper exercise.

19

“Like this he framed the gods’ eternal bower,  
And of a shapeless and confused mass  
By his through-piercing and digesting power<sup>7</sup>  
The turning vault of heaven formed was,  
Whose starry wheels he hath so made to pass  
As that their movings do a music frame,<sup>8</sup>  
And they themselves still dance unto the same.

<sup>1</sup> *mover* Antinous compares himself to God as the *primum mobile* (the prime mover), who sets the universe in motion.

<sup>2</sup> *turns* journeys, courses; also, rotations, turnings-about; *tracings* paths, courses; also, the treading of a measure; dancing.

<sup>3</sup> *footing* dancing.

<sup>4</sup> *rage* madness (an earlier meaning perhaps applies here: “riotous or wanton behaviour, game, or sport”).

<sup>5</sup> Davies refers to the classical notion that history is characterized by a decline from an original golden age of human and natural perfection, through a series of increasingly degenerate ages. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Nature’s mighty king* Cupid, the god of love, appears here in his less common guise as a powerful adult as opposed to his more popular one as a blind, mischievous boy. See Plato, *Symposium*, 1.178, as well as N. Conti, “On Cupid,” *Natale Conti’s Mythologies: A Select Translation*, trans. and ed., A. DiMatteo (New York, 1994), pp. 238-48.

<sup>7</sup> *through-piercing and digesting power* i.e., a power that sees completely into and one that is capable of dividing or organizing.

<sup>8</sup> *The turning vault of heaven ... frame* Davies refers to the Ptolemaic notion of the universe as a series of concentric spheres, set one inside the other with the earth at its centre. In their motion, these spheres created a harmonious and divine music.

20  
 “Or if this all which round about we see  
 (As idle Morpheus<sup>1</sup> some sick brains hath taught)  
 Of undivided notes compacted be,  
 How was this goodly architecture wrought?  
 Or by what means were they together brought?  
 They err that say they did concur by chance.<sup>2</sup>  
 Love made them meet in a well-ordered dance.”

[...]

25  
 This said, the Queen with her sweet lips divine  
 Gently began to move the subtle air,  
 Which, gladly yielding, did itself incline  
 To take a shape between those rubies fair,  
 And, being formed, softly did repair<sup>3</sup>  
 With twenty doublings in the empty way  
 Unto Antinous’ ears, and thus did say:

26  
 “What eye doth see the heav’n but doth admire  
 When it the movings of the heav’ns doth see?  
 Myself, if I to heav’n may once aspire,  
 If that be dancing will a dancer be.  
 But as for this, your frantic jollity,  
 How it began, or whence you did it learn,  
 I never could with reason’s eye discern.”

27  
 Antinous answered: “Jewel of the earth,  
 Worthy you are that heav’nly dance to lead,  
 But, for you think our dancing base of birth  
 And newly-born but of a brainsick head,  
 I will forthwith his antique gentry<sup>4</sup> read,

<sup>1</sup> *Morpheus* the god of sleep and dreams.

<sup>2</sup> *Or if this all ... by chance* Epicurus (341-270 BCE), moral and natural philosopher, argued that the universe is the result of the chance collision of randomly moving atoms, although Lucretius later took up this idea as well (*OCD*, pp. 532-33). Cicero rejects this theory in *De Natura Deorum* (“The Nature of the Gods,” especially, 1.70-72 and 2.15-19, 56, 75-77), as does Davies here and in *Nosce Teipsum*, ll. 215-16.

<sup>3</sup> *repair* go, make [its] way to.

<sup>4</sup> *antique gentry* ancient gentlemanly pedigree or descent.

And for I love him will his herald<sup>5</sup> be,  
 And blaze his arms, and draw his pedigree.<sup>6</sup>

28  
 “When Love had shaped this world, this great  
 fair wight<sup>7</sup>  
 That all wights else in this wide womb contains,  
 And had instructed it to dance aright  
 A thousand measures with a thousand strains,<sup>8</sup>  
 Which it should practice with delightful pains  
 Until that fatal instant should revolve  
 When all to nothing should again resolve:

29  
 “The comely<sup>9</sup> order and proportion fair  
 On every side did please his wand’ring eye  
 Till, glancing through the thin, transparent air,  
 A rude, disordered rout<sup>10</sup> he did espy  
 Of men and women that most spitefully  
 Did one another throng and crowd so sore<sup>11</sup>  
 That his kind eye in pity wept therefore.

30  
 “And swifter than the lightning down he came,  
 Another shapeless chaos to digest,<sup>12</sup>  
 He will begin another world to frame  
 (For Love, till all be well, will never rest);

<sup>5</sup> *herald* an official whose duties included the regulating of the use of armorial bearings (i.e., the escutcheon, the shield or shield-shaped surface on which a coat of arms is depicted), and the recording of the names and pedigrees of those entitled to them; only those of the rank of gentleman or above were entitled to such “arms.”

<sup>6</sup> *blaze his arms* i.e., describe heraldically the components, colours, and other pictorial features of an individual’s coat of arms; *draw his pedigree* construct his genealogical record (often in the form of a table).

<sup>7</sup> *wight* living being, creature; here, the world.

<sup>8</sup> *measures* dances (especially grave or stately dances); *strains* melodies, tunes.

<sup>9</sup> *comely* decent, proper; pleasing to the moral sense, notions of propriety, or aesthetic taste.

<sup>10</sup> *rude* barbarous, uncivilized; *rout* crowd, mob.

<sup>11</sup> *sore* grievously, oppressively, with perhaps the sense of “violently” or “so as to cause physical suffering, pain.”

<sup>12</sup> *digest* compose into a systematic order.

Then with such words as cannot be expressed  
 He cuts<sup>1</sup> the troops, that all asunder fling,  
 And ere they wist he casts them in a ring.<sup>2</sup>

31  
 “Then did he rarefy<sup>3</sup> the element  
 And in the centre of the ring appear;  
 The beams that from his forehead shining went  
 Begot an horror and religious fear  
 In all the souls that round about him were,  
 Which in their ears attentiveness procures  
 While he, with such like sounds, their minds  
 allures:

32  
 ‘How doth Confusion’s mother, headlong Chance,<sup>4</sup>  
 Put Reason’s noble squadron to the rout?<sup>5</sup>  
 Or how should you, that have the governance  
 Of Nature’s children, heaven and earth  
 throughout,  
 Prescribe them rules and live yourselves without?<sup>6</sup>  
 Why should your fellowship a trouble be,  
 Since man’s chief pleasure is society?’

33  
 ‘If sense hath not yet taught you, learn of me  
 A comely moderation and discreet,  
 That your assemblies may well-ordered be;  
 When my uniting power shall make you meet,  
 With heav’nly tunes it shall be tempered sweet,  
 And be the model<sup>7</sup> of the world’s great frame,  
 And you, Earth’s children, “dancing” shall it name.

<sup>1</sup> *cuts* divides, separates.

<sup>2</sup> *ere they wist* before they know (what is happening); *casts* shapes, arranges, orders. The ring or circle is an ancient emblem of perfection and eternity.

<sup>3</sup> *rarefy* refine, purify.

<sup>4</sup> Love’s direct address begins. It finishes in stanza 60.

<sup>5</sup> *Put ... to the rout* to effect an opponent’s hasty and disorderly retreat.

<sup>6</sup> *Or how ... without?* Referring to the dominion God grants Adam over Earth’s animals (“Nature’s children”) in Genesis 1:26-28.

<sup>7</sup> *model* imitation or copy.

34  
 ‘Behold the world, how it is whirled round,  
 And for it is so whirled, is named so;  
 In whose large volume many rules are found  
 Of this new art, which it doth fairly show;  
 For your quick eyes in wand’ring to and fro,  
 From east to west, on no one thing can glance,  
 But, if you mark it well, it seems to dance.

[...]

48  
 ‘If, then, fire, air, wand’ring and fixed lights  
 In every province of th’ imperial sky  
 Yield perfect forms of dancing to your sights,  
 In vain I teach the ear that which the eye  
 With certain view already doth descry.<sup>8</sup>  
 But for your eyes perceive not all they see  
 In this I will your senses’ master be.

49  
 ‘For, lo, the sea that fleets about the land  
 And like a girdle clips her solid waist,  
 Music and measure both doth understand;  
 For his great crystal eye is always cast  
 Up to the moon, and on her fixed fast,  
 And as she danceth in her pallid sphere  
 So danceth he about the centre here.’

[...]

51  
 ‘Only the Earth doth stand forever still;  
 Her rocks remove not, nor her mountains meet  
 (Although some wits, enriched with learning’s  
 skill,  
 Say heav’n stands firm and that the earth doth  
 fleet  
 And swiftly turneth underneath their feet);<sup>9</sup>  
 Yet though the earth is ever steadfast seen,  
 On her broad breast hath dancing ever been:

<sup>8</sup> *descry* discern, perceive.

<sup>9</sup> *Only the Earth ... underneath their feet* Referring to the contemporary conflict between the Ptolemaic (earth-centred) and Copernican (sun-centred) models of the solar system.

52

‘For those blue veins that through her body spread,  
Those sapphire streams which from great hills do  
spring  
(The Earth’s great dugs,<sup>1</sup> for every wight is fed  
With sweet, fresh moisture from them issuing),  
Observe a dance in their wild wandering;  
And still their dance begets a murmur sweet,  
And still the murmur with the dance doth meet.’

[...]

59

‘But why relate I every singular?<sup>2</sup>  
Since all the world’s great fortunes and affairs  
Forward and backward rapt<sup>3</sup> and whirled are  
According to the music of the spheres,<sup>4</sup>  
And Chance<sup>5</sup> herself her nimble feet upbears  
On a round, slippery wheel that rolleth ay,<sup>6</sup>  
And turns all states with her impetuous<sup>7</sup> sway.

60

‘Learn then to dance, you that are princes born  
And lawful lords of earthly creatures all!  
Imitate them, and thereof take no scorn,  
For this new art to them is natural,  
And imitate the stars celestial,  
For when pale Death your vital twist shall sever,  
Your better parts must dance with them forever.’<sup>8</sup>

61

‘Thus Love persuades, and all the crowd of men  
That stands around doth make a murmuring,  
As when the wind, loosed from his hollow den,<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *dugs* lactating breasts.

<sup>2</sup> *singular* single thing.

<sup>3</sup> *rapt* rushed along (as “wrapped,” however, the word may mean “enveloped” or “surrounded”).

<sup>4</sup> *music of the spheres* See p. 3, note 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Chance* Fortune.

<sup>6</sup> *ay* forever, always.

<sup>7</sup> *impetuous* capricious, based on whim.

<sup>8</sup> Love’s speech ends here, and the following stanzas consist of Antinous’ interpretation of it.

<sup>9</sup> *As ... den* Aeolus is the classical guardian and controller of the winds (*Odyssey*, Book 10).

Among the trees a gentle bass doth sing,  
Or as a brook through pebbles wandering;  
But in their looks they uttered this plain speech:  
That they would learn to dance if Love would  
teach.

[...]

77

“Since when all ceremonious mysteries,  
All sacred orgies<sup>10</sup> and religious rites,  
All pomps and triumphs and solemnities,  
All funerals, nuptials, and like public sights,  
All parliaments of peace and warlike fights,  
All learned arts and every great affair  
A lively shape of dancing seems to bear.

[...]

96

“Lo, this is Dancing’s true nobility:  
Dancing, the child of Music and of Love,  
Dancing itself both love and harmony,  
Where all agree and all in order move,  
Dancing, the art that all arts do approve,  
The fair character<sup>11</sup> of the world’s consent,  
The heav’ns’ true figure and the earth’s ornament.”

97

The Queen, whose dainty ears had borne too long  
The tedious praise of that she did despise,  
Adding once more the music of the tongue  
To the sweet speech of her alluring eyes,  
Began to answer in such winning wise<sup>12</sup>  
As that forthwith Antinous’ tongue was tied,  
His eyes fast fixed, his ears were open wide.

---

<sup>10</sup> *orgies* In the classical world, secret rites or ceremonious practices in the worship of various deities, especially those connected with the festivals in honour of Bacchus (Dionysus); these festivals featured singing and dancing.

<sup>11</sup> *character* sign or stamp.

<sup>12</sup> *winning wise* alluring or attractive manner.

98

“Forsooth,” quoth she, “great glory you have won  
To your trim minion<sup>1</sup> Dancing all this while  
By blazing him Love’s first begotten son,  
Of every ill the hateful father vile  
That doth the world with sorceries beguile,  
Cunningly mad, religiously profane,  
Wit’s monster, reason’s canker, sense’s bane.<sup>2</sup>”

99

“Love taught the mother that unkind desire  
To wash her hands in her own infants’ blood;<sup>3</sup>  
Love taught the daughter to betray her sire  
Into most base unworthy servitude;<sup>4</sup>  
Love taught the brother to prepare such food  
To feast his brothers that the all-seeing sun,  
Wrapped in a cloud, that wicked sight did shun.<sup>5</sup>”

100

“And even this selfsame Love hath dancing taught,  
An art that showeth th’ idea of his mind,  
With vainness, frenzy, and disorder fraught;<sup>6</sup>  
Sometimes with blood and cruelties unkind,  
For in a dance Tereus’ mad wife did find

<sup>1</sup> *trim minion* elegantly dressed favourite or beloved. The phrase usually has negative connotations, implying that the beloved is unworthy of the esteem in which he/she is held, and that the lover is foolish or blind or to have elevated such a worthless creature.

<sup>2</sup> *canker* literally, an eating, spreading sore or ulcer; figuratively, that which corrupts or consumes slowly and secretly; *bane* curse.

<sup>3</sup> *Love ... blood* Abandoned by the hero Jason in favour of Glauce (sometimes called Creusa), daughter of the king of Corinth, Medea murders her two children by Jason to avenge her betrayal.

<sup>4</sup> *Love taught ... servitude* For the story of Nisus’s daughter, Scylla, her crazed love for her city’s besieger, King Minos of Crete, and her consequent betrayal of her father and people, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Love taught ... did shun* When Atreus, king of Mycenae, discovered that his brother, Thyestes, had been having an incestuous affair with his wife, Aerope, he took revenge, by killing the children produced by this union, cooking them up, and serving them to his brother. The sun reportedly dimmed in horror at the sight (Cicero, *De natura deorum* [“The Nature of the Gods”], 3.68).

<sup>6</sup> *fraught* accompanied; filled.

Fit time and place, by murder of her son,  
T’ avenge the wrong his traitorous sire had done.<sup>7</sup>”

101

What mean the mermaids when they dance and  
sing  
But certain death unto the mariner?<sup>8</sup>  
What tidings do the dancing dolphins bring  
But that some dangerous storm approacheth near?  
Then sith<sup>9</sup> both Love and Dancing liveries<sup>10</sup> bear  
Of such ill hap,<sup>11</sup> unhappy may I prove  
If, sitting free, I will either dance or love!”

102

Yet once again Antinous did reply:  
“Great Queen, condemn not Love, the innocent,  
For this mischievous lust which traitorously  
Usurps his name and steals his ornament.  
For that true Love which dancing did invent  
Is he that tuned the world’s whole harmony  
And linked all men in sweet society.

103

“He first extracted from th’ earth-mingled mind  
That heav’nly fire, or quintessence divine,  
Which doth such sympathy in beauty find  
As is between the elm and fruitful vine,<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *For in a dance ... had done* Tereus, king of Thrace, having ostensibly brought his wife Procne’s sister, Philomela, from Athens for a visit, secreted her away in a tower, raped her, and then cut out her tongue when she threatened to reveal his assault. Philomela depicts her tragedy in a tapestry that she manages to send to Procne. The two sisters revenge themselves by killing Procne and Tereus’ son, Itys, cooking him, and serving him up to his father (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 6).

<sup>8</sup> In the *Odyssey*, the mermaids or “sirens” are a group of sea nymphs whose singing was so entrancing that listeners would become entranced, losing themselves in the music and finally starving to death because they forgot to eat (Book 12).

<sup>9</sup> *sith* since, seeing that.

<sup>10</sup> *liveries* clothing and/or badges that identify a particular nobleman’s servants.

<sup>11</sup> *ill hap* evil fortune.

<sup>12</sup> *the elm and fruitful vine* It was a common horticultural practice to train vines on elm trees.

And so to beauty ever doth incline.  
Life's life it is, and cordial<sup>1</sup> to the heart,  
And of our better part the better part.

[...]

117  
"But if these eyes of yours (loadstars<sup>2</sup> of love,  
Showing the world's great dance to your mind's  
eye)

Cannot with all their demonstrations move  
Kind apprehension<sup>3</sup> in your fantasy<sup>4</sup>  
Of dancing's virtue and nobility,  
How can my barbarous tongue win you thereto  
Which heav'n and earth's fair speech could never  
do?

118  
"O Love, my king, if all my wit and power  
Have done you all the service that they can,  
Oh, be you present in this present hour  
And help your servant and your true liegeman<sup>5</sup>  
End that persuasion which I erst began.  
For who in praise of dancing can persuade  
With such sweet force as Love, which dancing  
made?"

119  
Love heard his prayer, and swifter than the wind,  
Like to a page<sup>6</sup> in habit, face, and speech,  
He came and stood Antinous behind,  
And many secrets to his thoughts did teach.  
At last a crystal mirror he did reach  
Unto his hands, that he with one rash<sup>7</sup> view  
All forms therein by Love's revealing knew,

<sup>1</sup> *cordial* comforting, reviving, cheering.

<sup>2</sup> *loadstar* a guiding star (figuratively, that on which one's attention or hope is fixed).

<sup>3</sup> *Kind apprehension* sympathetic understanding.

<sup>4</sup> *fantasy* imagination.

<sup>5</sup> *liegeman* a vassal or servant sworn to support and serve his lord, in return for the promise of protection, advancement, etc.

<sup>6</sup> *page* a boy or youth employed as an attendant.

<sup>7</sup> *rash* swift, quick, although the more common meaning of "hasty, reckless, impetuous" may also be implied.

120  
And, humbly honouring, gave it to the Queen  
With this fair speech: "See, fairest Queen," quoth  
he,  
"The fairest sight that ever shall be seen  
And th' only wonder of posterity,  
The richest work in Nature's treasury,  
Which she disdains to show on this world's stage  
And thinks it far too good for our rude age.

121  
"But in another world, divided far,  
In the great, fortunate, triangled isle<sup>8</sup>  
Thrice twelve degrees remov'd from the North  
Star,  
She will this glorious workmanship compile  
Which she hath been conceiving all this while  
Since the world's birth; and will bring forth at last  
When six and twenty hundred years are past."<sup>9</sup>

122  
Penelope the queen, when she had viewed  
The strange, eye-dazzling, admirable sight,  
Fain would have praised the state and pulchritude,<sup>10</sup>  
But she was stricken dumb with wonder quite,  
Yet her sweet mind retained her thinking might;  
Her ravished<sup>11</sup> mind in heav'nly thoughts did  
dwell,  
But what she thought no mortal tongue can tell.

123  
You, Lady Muse,<sup>12</sup> whom Jove the Counsellor  
Begot of Memory, Wisdom's treasurers,  
To your divining<sup>13</sup> tongue is given a power  
Of uttering secrets large and limitless.  
You can Penelope's strange<sup>14</sup> thoughts express

<sup>8</sup> The isle, of course, is England.

<sup>9</sup> *She will ... past* A reference to Elizabeth I as the epitome of the work of Nature.

<sup>10</sup> *Fain ... state ... pulchritude* *Fain* willingly; *state* costly and imposing display, such as befits persons of rank, wealth, and splendour; *pulchritude* beauty.

<sup>11</sup> *ravished* entranced, enraptured.

<sup>12</sup> *Lady Muse* Terpsichore. See p. 2, note 1.

<sup>13</sup> *divining* prophesying.

<sup>14</sup> *strange* exceptional (to a degree that excites wonder or admiration).



Which she conceived, and then would fain have  
told,  
When she the wondrous crystal did behold.

124

Her winged thoughts bore up her mind so high  
As that she weened<sup>1</sup> she saw the glorious throne  
Where the bright moon<sup>2</sup> doth sit in majesty;  
A thousand sparkling stars about her shone,  
But she herself did sparkle more alone  
Than all those thousand beauties would have done  
If they had been confounded<sup>3</sup> all in one.

125

And yet she thought those stars moved in such  
measure  
To do their sovereign honour and delight,  
As soothed her mind with sweet, enchanting  
pleasure,  
Although the various change amazed her sight  
And her weak judgment did entangle quite.  
Beside, their moving made them shine more clear,  
As diamonds moved more sparkling do appear.

126

This was the picture of her wondrous thought,  
But who can wonder that her thought was so  
Sith<sup>4</sup> Vulcan, king of fire, that mirror wrought  
(Which things to come, present, and past doth  
know)<sup>5</sup>  
And there did represent in lively show  
Our glorious English Court's divine image  
As it should be in this, our golden age.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *weened* thought, believed.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to Elizabeth's identification with Diana, goddess of the moon, the hunt, and virginity.

<sup>3</sup> *confounded* intermingled, intermixed.

<sup>4</sup> *Sith* since, seeing that.

<sup>5</sup> *Vulcan ... know* Vulcan, god of the forge, created many marvels, including tripod automata and metal dogs (the latter for Alcinous in *Odyssey*, Book 7), as well as the armour the gods wore in their battle with the giants, and the armour used by the heroes Achilles and Aeneas.

<sup>6</sup> On the golden age, see p. 3, note 5 and print anthology, p. 1151, note 1. According to J.R. Brink, "the mirror reflects ideal Platonic 'forms,'" where Elizabeth, the moon, is encircled by her courtiers, the

127

Away, Terpsichore,<sup>7</sup> light muse, away!  
And come, Uranie,<sup>8</sup> prophethess divine!  
Come, Muse of Heav'n, my burning thirst allay!  
Even now for want of sacred drink I tine.<sup>9</sup>  
In heav'nly moisture dip this pen of mine  
And let my mouth with nectar overflow,  
For I must more than mortal glory show.

128

Oh, that I had Homer's abundant vein,  
I would hereof another *Ilias*<sup>10</sup> make,  
Or else the man of Mantua's<sup>11</sup> charmed brain,  
In whose large throat great Jove the thunder  
spake.  
Oh, that I could old Geoffrey's<sup>12</sup> muse awake,  
Or borrow Colin's<sup>13</sup> fair heroic style,  
Or smooth my rhymes with Delia's servant's<sup>14</sup> file!

129

O, could I, sweet companion, sing like you,  
Which of a shadow, under a shadow sing;<sup>15</sup>

---

dancing stars. The phrasing, however, allows the reader to interpret this image in at least two different ways: it may either praise Elizabeth and her Court as being the embodiment of ideal Platonic forms, or it may suggest the gap between the Platonic ideal of the Court and its reality in Elizabethan England ("Sir John Davies's *Orchestra*: Political Symbolism and Textual Revisions," *Durham University Journal* 72 [1980]: pp. 200).

<sup>7</sup> *Terpsichore* See p. 2, note 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Uranie* Urania, the muse of astronomy, and thus of heavenly matters in general.

<sup>9</sup> *want* lack; *tine* suffer.

<sup>10</sup> *Ilias* the *Iliad*, Homer's epic poem about the Trojan War and the fall of Troy.

<sup>11</sup> The man of Mantua is Virgil (70-19 BCE), Roman poet and author of the epic poem, the *Aeneid*.

<sup>12</sup> *old Geoffrey* Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400), author (most famously) of *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*.

<sup>13</sup> *Colin* Edmund Spenser (?1552-99), so-called after the poet-shepherd in his *Shepbeardes Calender* (1579). His "fair heroic style" refers to his epic romance, *The Faerie Queene* (1590; 1596).

<sup>14</sup> *Delia's servant* Samuel Daniel (1562-1619), author of the sonnet sequence, *Delia* (1592).

<sup>15</sup> *could I ... sing* A.B. Grosart suggests this is an allusion to Edward Guilpin, author of the 1599 work *Skialetheia, or a Shadow of Truth in Certain Epigrams and Satires (Complete Poems of Sir John Davies, 2 vols. [London, 1876], 1.212, note 2), but Davies's (continued)*

Or like fair Salve's sad lover true,<sup>1</sup>  
 Or like the Bay, the Marigold's darling,<sup>2</sup>  
 Whose sudden verse Love covers with his wing,  
 Oh, that your brains were mingled all with mine,  
 T' enlarge my wit for this great work divine.

130  
 Yet Astrophel<sup>3</sup> might one for all suffice,  
 Whose supple muse chameleon-like doth change  
 Into all forms of excellent device.  
 So might the Swallow,<sup>4</sup> whose swift Muse doth  
     range  
 Through rare ideas and inventions strange,  
 And ever doth enjoy her joyful spring,  
 And sweeter than the nightingale doth sing.

131  
 Oh, that I might that singing Swallow hear  
 To whom I owe my service and my love!  
 His sugared tunes would so enchant mine ear  
 And in my mind such sacred fury<sup>5</sup> move  
 As I should knock at Heav'n's great gate above  
 With my proud rhymes, while of this heav'nly state  
 I do aspire the shadow to relate.

FINIS.

—1596

---

most recent editor R. Krueger says Davies probably refers to either George Chapman—author of *Shadow of Night* [1594] and *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* [1595], the latter of which is prefaced by two dedicatory sonnets by Davies—or Thomas Campion—author of *Umbrā* [Latin, “Shadow”], which includes an epigram addressed to Davies (*The Poems of Sir John Davies* [Oxford, 1975], p. 376).

<sup>1</sup> *fair Salve's sad lover true* Krueger suggests the emendation “Salices” for “Salues,” and thus the likely allusion here is to Fulke Greville's sonnet sequence *Caelica* (p. 376).

<sup>2</sup> *the Bay, the Marigold's darling* Grosart suggests that the allusion is to the writer Charles Best (fl. 1602-11) [1.212-213, note 3]. He was a poet and a contributor to Francis Davison's popular poetic miscellany, *Poetical Rhapsody* (1602), but nothing else is known about him (A.H. Bullen, rev. E. Goldring, “Charles Best,” *DNB online*). Krueger suggests the emendation “Bee” for “Bay,” and thus the more likely candidate is T. Cutwode, author of *Caltha Poetarum* [“The Marigold of Poets”]: *Or the Bumble Bee* (1599, but MS copies may have circulated earlier [p. 376]).

<sup>3</sup> *Astrophel* Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86), so-called after the lover in his sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella* (1591).

<sup>4</sup> *Swallow* Davies's critics agree that the “Swallow” refers to *Orchestra's* dedicatee, Richard Martin (1570-1618), since a martin is a kind of swallow (Grosart, 1.213, note 4).

---

<sup>5</sup> *sacred fury* a reference to the notion of true poetry as that produced by a divinely-inspired frenzy or poetic “rage.”