

61. EPITHALAMION: FOR VINIA AND MANLIUS



ou, who live on *Helicon* [p. 214]'s
 hills, the son of *Urania* [p. 236],
 who carry the tender virgin
 to her man, O Hymanaeae *Hymen* [p. 214],
 O Hymen Hymenaeae:
 crown your brow with sweet flowers
 of marjoram fragrance,
 put on the glad veil, here,
 come, wearing the saffron shoes
 on your snow-white feet:
 summoned to the happy day
 singing the nuptial songs
 with ringing voice,
 strike your feet on the ground, shake
 the pine torch in your hand.
 Now *Vinia* [p. 238] comes to her *Manlius* [p. 236],
 as *Venus* [p. 237], adorning Mount *Ida* [p. 215],
 came to *Paris* [p. 223], her *Phrygian* [p. 227] judge,
 a rare girl wedded to rare fortune,
 like the myrtle of Asia born
 on the flowering branches,
 that the divine *Hamadryads* [p. 212]
 playfully tend themselves
 with shining dew.

So come, suffer yourself to approach,
leave the *Aonian* [p. 198] cave among
the cliffs of *Thespia* [p. 235],
leave the nymph *Aganippe* [p. 197]
and her cooling stream.
And call the bride to her
new husband's loving home,
her heart bound fast with love,
as the clinging ivy enfolds the tree,
winding here and there.
And you chaste virgins too,
whose own day will come,
singing harmoniously
cry, O Hymanae Hymen,
O Hymen Hymenae.
That, hearing himself called
to perform his service, he may
suffer himself to approach,
the commander of wedding joys,
the true uniter-in-love.
What greater god do you love
sought out by lovers?
What divine one do men
worship more, O Hymanae Hymen,
O Hymen Hymenae?
You her trembling father
invokes: for you
the virgin belt's untied:

for you the bridegroom waits,
fearful with new desire.
You give the young girl fresh
from her mother's breast,
to the young novice's
hands, O Hymanae Hymen,
O Hymen Hymenae.
Venus can take no advantage
of what good custom allows,
without you, but she can
if you're willing. What god dare
compare with you in this?
No house bears offspring
without you, no parent can be
brightened by children: but they can
if you're willing. What god dare
compare with you in this?
No ruler can set the boundaries
to his country: but he can
if you're willing. What god dare
compare with you in this?
Open the lock of the door.
The virgin comes. Do you see how
the torches scatter brilliant sparks?

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Noble shame holds back.
However obedient she is,
she weeps that she has to go.
Don't weep. There's no danger
to you *Aurunculeia* [p. 201],
nor will bright day see
a lovelier girl than you
rise from the Ocean waves.
Such a hyacinth flower
as blooms in a rich man's
colourful little garden.
But you linger: the day vanishes.
Let the new bride appear.
Let the new bride appear, so
she can now be viewed, and listen
to my words. See? The torches
scatter golden sparks:
let the new bride appear.
Your husband's not fickle,
given to sinful adulteries,
chasing shameful vices,
does not wish to flee from
sleep in your tender breasts,
and as the vines slowly wind
about the trees they claim,
he'll be wound in your
embrace. But the day vanishes:
let the new bride appear.
O bridal-bed, that for all

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at the foot of the shining couch,
comes to your master,
what joy, what wandering
night, what noon
delights! But the day goes by:
let the new bride appear.
O, you boys, lift the torches:
I see the flame approach.
Come: let the song sound in harmony
'io Hymen Hymenaeae io,
io Hymen Hymenaeae.'
Don't hold back the bold
Fescennine [p. 211] laughter,
don't let this obedient concubine
abandoning his master's love
deny the boys their nuts.
Give nuts to the boys, you idle
concubine! You've toyed
with the nuts long enough:
now be pleased to serve *Hymen* [p. 233].
Concubine, give them nuts.
Girls seemed vile to you,
concubine, yesterday, till today:
now the hair-curler smooths
your beard. Wretch of a wretch,
concubine, give them nuts.
You'll speak ill of abstaining
from your slaves, perfumed

husband, but abstain.

Io Hymen Hymenaeae io,

io Hymen Hymenaeae.

We know what's allowed to you

when you're known to be single,

but married it's not allowed.

Io Hymen Hymenaeae io,

io Hymen Hymenaeae.

Bride, beware you don't deny

what your man comes seeking,

lest he goes seeking elsewhere.

Io Hymen Hymenaeae io,

io Hymen Hymenaeae.

Powerful in your house,

and happy in your powers,

that act without you there,

Io Hymen Hymenaeae io,

io Hymen Hymenaeae,

until with trembling motion

white-haired old age

nods at all and everything.

Io Hymen Hymenaeae io,

io Hymen Hymenaeae.

In your saffron shoes cross

the threshold with good omens,

and enter the shining door.

Io Hymen Hymenaeae io,

io Hymen Hymenaeae.

Look inside where your man
lies on a *Tyrian* [p. 236] bed
waiting for you alone.

Io Hymen Hymenaeae io,
io Hymen Hymenaeae.

He no less than you
burns with fire in his heart,
but inwardly much greater.

Io Hymen Hymenaeae io,
io Hymen Hymenaeae.

Page, let go the young
girl's shapely arm: now
she reaches her husband's bed.

Io Hymen Hymenaeae io,
io Hymen Hymenaeae.

You good wives who know
the powers of old to bring
young girls to marriage.

Io Hymen Hymenaeae io,
io Hymen Hymenaeae.

Now bridegroom, you may come:
your wife waits in your bed,
her lovely face gleaming,
like a white poppy,
on a saffron field.

But, husband, let the gods
joy, you are no less
handsome, nor does Venus

neglect you. But the daylight flies:
come now, don't delay.

He's not lingered:

now he comes. Kind Venus
shall aid you, since you desire
openly what you desire, you
won't forget kind love.

He who would count your joys,
many thousands, must first
tally the grains of Africa's sands,
and the glittering stars.

Play as you wish, and quickly
give her children. It's not right
for an ancient name to be
childless, but it should create
from the same root.

I want a young *Torquatus* [p. 236]
to stretch out his tender hand
from his mother's lap
sweetly smiling to his father
from half-open lips.

Let him be like his father
Manlius, let that be known
by all the unknowing,
and let his face reveal,
his mother's faithfulness.

So our praise approves
one born of a noble mother,

just as unparalleled fame echoes
from *Penelope* [p. 225], the mother
of excellent *Telemachus* [p. 234].

Close the doorways, virgins:
we're satisfied with our play. But you
brave partners live truly, and
do your duty constantly,
with vigour and with joy.



'Penelope Unraveling Her Web'
Joseph Wright of Derby (English, 1734 - 1797)
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