

## “Epithalamion” by Gerard Manley Hopkins

*Jonathon Penny*

*Originally published as a fragment in Robert Bridges' 1918 collection of Hopkins' work, here “Epithalamion” gets a little help from Jonathon Penny (in italics). First published at Wilderness Interface Zone on Feb 14, 2012. <http://wilderness.motleyvision.org/2012/epithalamion-by-gerard-manley-hopkins/>*

HARK, hearer, hear what I do; lend a thought now, make believe  
We are leafwhelmed somewhere with the hood  
Of some branchy bunchy bushybowered wood,  
Southern dene or Lancashire clough or Devon cleave,  
That leans along the loins of hills, where a candycoloured, where  
a gluegold-brown  
Marbled river, boisterously beautiful, between  
Roots and rocks is danced and dandled, all in froth and  
waterblowballs, down.  
We are there, when we hear a shout  
That the hanging honeysuck, the dogeared hazels in the cover  
Makes dither, makes hover  
And the riot of a rout  
Of, it must be, boys from the town  
Bathing: it is summer's sovereign good.

By there comes a listless stranger: beckoned by the noise  
He drops towards the river: unseen  
Sees the bevy of them, how the boys  
With dare and with downdolphinry and bellbright bodies  
huddling out,  
Are earthworld, airworld, waterworld thorough hurled, all by  
turn and turn about.

This garland of their gambols flashes in his breast  
Into such a sudden zest  
Of summertime joys  
That he hies to a pool neighbouring; sees it is the best  
There; sweetest, freshest, shadowiest;  
Fairyland; silk-beech, scrolled ash, packed sycamore, wild  
    wychelm, hornbeam fretty overstood  
By. Rafts and rafts of flake-leaves light, dealt so, painted on the  
    air,  
Hang as still as hawk or hawkmoth, as the stars or as the angels  
    there,  
Like the thing that never knew the earth, never off roots  
Rose. Here he feasts: lovely all is! No more: off with—down he  
    dings  
His bleached both and woolwoven wear:  
Careless these in coloured wisp  
All lie tumbled-to; then with loop-locks  
Forward falling, forehead frowning, lips crisp  
Over finger-teasing task, his twiny boots  
Fast he opens, last he offwings  
Till walk the world he can with bare his feet  
And come where lies a coffer, burly all of blocks  
Built of chancequarrièd, selfquainèd rocks  
And the water warbles over into, filleted with glassy grassy  
    quicksilvery shivès and shoots  
And with heavenfallen freshness down from moorland still  
    brims,  
Dark or daylight on and on. Here he will then, here he will the  
    fleet  
Flinty kindcold element let break across his limbs

Long. Where we leave him, froliclavish, while he looks about  
him, laughs, swims.

Enough now; since the sacred matter that I mean  
I should be wronging longer leaving it to float  
Upon this only gambolling and echoing-of-earth note—  
What is . . . the delightful dene?

Wedlock. What the water? Spousal love.

*Who the gamboled groom? Kingfish Christ-our-Saviour  
Or his son. Who the gangway, brindled, bridling bride to shear the  
very sheep of him?*

*Church and churchgoing churchcoming churchliving churchloving  
Christkeeping. Who, indeed, the latecome, lightshorn, grinning,  
gaming guests?*

*We. Us. Poor. Oh!*

Father, mother, brothers, sisters, friends  
Into fairy trees, wild flowers, wood ferns  
Rankèd round the bower *leap! assemble! and withdraw the veiling  
world*

*And witness there the sunblonde, brightburned waking  
And the wedding of the Word wellspoken, wild, child, grown  
Aggrievèd, grieved, and greeted  
Gastly, good.*