

Bridging the Time Divide

neo-Latin poems

from the *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum*

(1637) translated by

David McOmish & Steven Reid

with new versions commissioned for StAnza 2015

by Robert Crawford, Rab Wilson and JL Williams

presented at StAnza 2015 in association with Steven Reid and David McOmish

and Bridging the Continental Divide

Pro Nuptiis Cari et Carinæ

Legitimas quicumque audes traducere tædas,
disce verecundo parcius ore loqui.

Ullane jura vetant nuptam bis quatuor annos,
quæ gelido jacuit silensque toro,
deserere imbelles thalamos, mollemque maritum,
et dare semiviri regna tenenda viro?

Crede mihi, jus est Naturæ abdicere fundum
agricolæ, qui nil quo fodiatur habet.

Robert Ayton

From *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum*, page 69

[On the Marriage of Dear Carr to his beloved girl \(original Latin version read by Rab Wilson\)](#)

You who would dare to put out legitimate marriage torches, learn how to speak more sparingly in modest speech. Do any laws stop a wife, who has lain unlubricated and unmoved on a cold bed for eight years, from deserting an impotent marriage bed, and a limp husband, and from handing over the domain of an effeminate husband into the possession of a manly one? Believe me, it is nature's law to take away the property of the farmer who does not have anything to dig with.

Robert Ayton, translated by David McOmish

On the Marriage of dear Carr to his beloved girl

Eftir Robert Ayton

A wee pussiont 'pistle frae Ayton's gleg pen,
Gies Boabby Devereux a witherin blast,
Whilst handselin in Rab Carr's handfast
Tae Frances (doutin her chyce in men!).
Boabby it seems wis a Jenny Wullock,
Wha left Fanny's maukin fir years uncreeshed,
A larbar wha's pintle her dree decreed;
Tae dee lik Jenkin's Hen oan a hillock!
Fan's mairriage bed aye wis mair famine than feast,
Boabby – leistweys wi her! – wisnae randy,
(Ower mony gae-douns tae play houghmagandy!)
The torch o their mairriage nou dowsed, she's released! ;
Dame Natuir it seems aye hains back her stibble,
Frae fairmers wantin the graith fir tae dibble!

Rab Wilson

[On the Marriage of Dear Carr, read by Rab Wilson](#)



In eclipsin solis anno 1597

Ecce nova nuper Phœbum ferrugine Phœbe
textit, et in media nox stetit atra die.
Tum simul arva, urbes, homines, pecudesque,
ferasque
et volucres humilis stravit ab axe pavor.
Vultus, Phœbe, tuos sic fœdo obduxerat ore
Cynthia, quæ lucet non nisi luce tua.
Iustitiæ Sol, Christe, tuum jubar impia condant
sæcula, quæ lucent non nisi luce tua.
At rursum Sol Lunam ultro illustravit opacam.
Lucem et cæca vident lumina, Phœbe, tuam.
Sol radiis, Sol alme, tuis tristem excute nubem,
ut lucem accipiant corda renata novam.
Ne stellas cœlo in terram draco verbere caudæ
proruat, in priscum vertat et astra chaos.
Luce tua in statione sua tibi splendeat aster
omnis. Nonne tuo lumine Luna micat?

Andrew Melville

Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum (1637) page 120

On the eclipse of the sun in the year 1597

Behold not long ago Phoebe covered Phoebus with a strange darkness, and black night was present in the middle of the day. At that moment from the sky base fear enveloped the fields, the cities, the human race, and both cattle and wild beasts, and even the birds. Cynthia had thus covered your countenance, Phoebus, with her shameful face - she who does not sparkle unless through your light! Christ, Sun of Justice, would the wicked goddess that does not shine unless through your light hide your brilliance! But in its cycle the Sun has once again enlightened the obscure Moon, and dimmed eyes now see your brilliance, Phoebus. Sun, nourishing Sun, cast out the gloomy clouds with your rays, so that our reborn hearts may receive your new light. May the dragon not bring crashing down the stars in heaven to earth with a whip of his tail, and cast the heavens back into ancient chaos. May every star shine for you with its own light in your place, if the Moon does not radiate with your light!

Andrew Melville, translated by David McOmish

Through Man Does Woman Shine

on the eclipse of the sun in the year 1597

It is midday when that woman, shamed,
flings her dirty robes at your face.

Everyone is afraid. In the cities we cower,
humans and bulls. Even the herons shudder.

A woman whose brilliance is yours, sun,
mooning the universe!

How dare the slut expose light's secret,
denying the world Christ's justice!

With fiery teeth, chew the shroud
as we wring gloom from our eyes.

Torch our memory of her pale valleys,
the silvered pouch of her river.

Mists smoke under your bright reign.
Our hearts, red apples, bake on the bough.

May the dragon not whip the stars to sea-froth,
may the heavens resist the chaos of our birth.

If the moon again dares reveal her true self,
may every star shine for you!

JL Williams

Through Darkness We Realise Shining
on the eclipse of the sun in the year 2015

The people in the old film called me.
In the silvery light their hands and lips said
Behold, you will join us in death.

I have never been so afraid.

Those I passed on the streets were ghosts,
the pity I felt for the whippets and pigeons
shattered the lantern inside me.

In this strange new night, the lizard's tongue
flicked as slowly as an angel's.

My religious beliefs fell like ash in the hearth,
the last hot red coal turned grey.

I stood on the bank of the murky river,
smelling, to my horror, nothing. No rotting leaves,
no loose blood, no salt of a hundred fishes.

*What appeared in the form of love
could hardly penetrate the darkness.*

You joined me on the bank of the river
and scent returned with light; the pale new grass,
the apple blossom, straw burning in the field.

Through drifting smoke I saw your face,
sun in each tear on your cheek.

Every time the darkness returns,
may we realise this shining.

JL Williams

A Jest against Gallus the cuckold

locus in Gallum cuculum

Conjux dicitur impudica Galli, &
cocis improba mulionibusque
substerni, ac juvenum fovere natos,
quorum glubere mentulas solebat.
Nec Gallum tamen hæc movere possunt.
Rumores graviter negat ferendos.
Se, ni viderit, assis æstimare.
Et cum viderit, assis æstimare.
Et, mirabile quod magis videtur,
uxoris pueros adulterinos
partus legitimos cupit putari;
passim filiolos suos venustos,
Laudat, filiolos suos vocatque:
quod formam referant bonæ parentis.
Non quod conjugis impudica vita
possit tam vigilem virum latere,
aut quod se sobolis putet parentem,
sicco corpore mentula exfutita:
sed quod quos sibi copulata conjux
enixa est, pueros putet mariti.
Nec deceptus opinione falsa est,
nam quamvis alius colonus arva
vertat, contuleritque semen alter,
debetur Domino quod inde crescit.

Thomas Maitland

A Jest against Gallus the cuckold

Gallus' lewd and wanton wife (it is said) used to get laid beneath cooks and mule-drivers, and raises the children of the young men whose tools she strips raw. Yet these tales cannot upset Gallus. He denies the rumours which are bound to circulate, or to reckon them worth a penny, unless he will see them himself. And when he has seen them for himself, he still reckons they are worth a penny. And, what is more incredible, he seeks that the children born from his wife's adultery be recognised as legitimate offspring; wherever he goes he praises his little boys, and calls his little boys charming because they bring to mind again their mother's beauty. It is not because the wife's lewd living can be hidden from so observant a man, or because he thinks himself the father of children despite a dried-up body and a clapped-out tool; but because the wife gave birth to them after sex with him, he thinks the sons are the husband's. Neither is he deluded by a false impression, for however many other tillers plough the field, and have enriched it with different seed, it is down to the Lord which of it grows.

Thomas Maitland, translated by Steven Reid

Mr Gallus

eftir the Latin o Thomas Maitland (c.1545-1572)

Ah've heard Mrs Gallus

Shags cuiks,

Shags muleteers,

Shags oniebodie

And raises their weans. Mr Gallus

Disnae bother, isnae fashed,

Braggs aa the weans are his ain, brags

They're aa braw – like Mrs Gallus.

It's nae cos

He disnae ken whit's whit,

It's nae cos

He thinks his ain runkled todger faithered them,

But just cos yon Mrs G

Shags him tae:

He kens, hooever monie ithers

Ploo his wee croft,

Plantin it oot,

It's still, eftir aa, the work o the Lord

Which seed is gonnae sprout.

Robert Crawford

This installation was a collaboration between StAnza, Scotland's International Poetry Festival and Bridging the Continental Divide, and was originally featured at StAnza 2015 (4th to 8th March 2015) in the Byre Theatre, St Andrews. More information about the installation at StAnza is available [online here](#).

More information about StAnza can be found [online here](#).

More information about Bridging the Continental Divide can be found [online here](#).

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