

## Valentines

By Julian Scutts

She was the one he ate that apple for.  
(from a song in the musical The Pajama Game)

When We Sipped Cider

How sweet was cider in that year  
we sipped our fill before the fall!  
How gold, how glorious the sky,  
so rosy-red the stones around,  
how long the shade of Michael's tower.  
In each other's arms entwined,  
we sipped sweet cider and we kissed,  
at the Cross in Coventry.  
O Eve, my love, where are you now?  
And where, O dear, am I?  
The Choosing Well

To choose one girl from many  
Is a task that's sweet and sour,  
For every girl is wonderful,  
Or should be, like a flower.  
Some dazzle with their beauty,  
Though they may prick or sting,  
But each one has her glory,  
Come summer, winter, spring,  
And when we make the choosing  
We know not that we do.  
The process is mysterious,  
Man's way with maid is pathless,  
And pathless is the sea.  
Thee choose I black and beautiful,  
The reason none enquire!  
'Tis vain to count her virtues,  
or balance them with vices,  
to mark if nimble paces  
or halting gait attend her way.  
'Tis vain. She's mine I say.

Capillary Attraction

But a brush and a touch, one parting more,  
Delilah, Moon-girl, you stole my strong light.  
I, your Sun-boy, am shorn having blackout,  
But remember my close shaves, the honey,  
Dead days, my foes jaw-struck, the longwinded ass  
My aid. Drawn by love's waves, I come to.  
With influence silverish, drowning  
My golden locks, the yolk-eating fish-god wins  
For a period till dawn's yellow round.  
I shake gold pillars that in Ashdod  
The uncut dye, for at noon I burn for you,  
Daily I die for you, O Delilah.

After a Medieval German Rhyme by an Anonymous Poetess

I am yours. You are mine.  
This is the sure and certain sign  
You are enclosed within my heart.  
Its little key no man shall find.  
Here then remain as long as time.

Laura  
(after Petrarch)

Mine ne'er to be, yet mine always;  
Laura, spirit of dawn. Darkest night  
Cannot hide thee nor obscure thy rays.  
Though Black Death hath by his temporal right  
Claimed thee, dost thou, my love, indwell this heart.  
Though Charon's hammer this clay vessel break,  
The winds ne'er scathed by Time's envenomed dart  
Shall of its pure content aye possession take  
And spread abroad thy fragrance to all Man,  
Fill the valleys and linger o'er the seas.  
'Tis not my part all future times to scan,  
But thankfully to muse by pastures, groves and leas,  
Await thy returning, nightly count the hours  
"Till I rejoice with singing birds and flowers."

Feminine Rhymes

Though few of us sigh like furnace  
with ballads made our mistress's eyebrow  
these days . . .  
a poem is still as good as a bunch of flowers  
when it comes to expressing our feeling  
about a woman we like.

A poem is rather like a woman, come to think.  
A good poem may have a pleasing form,  
or by inner virtues compensate for this.  
A good poem does not reveal too much at once  
But leaves a lot to imagination's powers.  
Rather it teases without being coquettish. It is reticent but not prudish,  
for a poem that gives nothing away  
may well end up on the shelf.  
A good poem is not unapproachable, remote,  
like some model with a past.  
Too much logic jars in poems, too.  
Smooth rhymes can be a shade too glib.  
A good poem saves from complacency  
Without haranguing day and night.  
It can, of course, be taken to bed.  
It wife-like serves us food for thought  
and tells home truths with good intent.

And Ne'er the Twain Shall Meet

Leaving his men in the rigging to fight it out,  
A boy chasing a butterfly,  
He followed her gilded galleon  
With purple sails to Egypt's sands.  
There the rough Roman botched his exit,  
His salto mortale being performed  
With something less than a surgeon's skill,  
So inconsiderate and unnecessary  
The ensuing nasty mess.

Only she knew death to be a royal repose  
And dying an exquisite languor  
Within a chamber scented by Arabian sap  
Above the balmy shade of palms.

Apologies to William Cowper

When the British warrior queen,

Bleeding from the Roman rods,  
Sought, with an indignant mien,  
Counsel of her country's gods.

Sage beneath a spreading oak,  
Sat the Druid, hoary chief,  
Ev'ry burning word he spoke,

Full of rage and full of grief.

(opening strophes of Boadicea)

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When once a lovelorn callow swain,  
Heartbroken by a maid's rebuff  
Sought balsam for his heart's deep pain,  
Of female wiles had had enough,

Grave listener at the local pub,  
Sat Tom inured to pangs of love,  
Who spoke as lion to his cub  
Or to a chick a turtledove.

"Son, weep not! I know thy disarray,  
And I recall that time ah! Long gone by  
When I, a callow youth of Haringay,  
Did to my first love like a furnace sigh.

With ardent kisses she the fire would stoke.  
Oh how the temperature did rise,  
Till one day she give it such a soak  
That out it fizzled to my woeful cries.

Nought could relieve my darkness until Alice,  
A fulsome wench from Walthamstow,  
Changed my gloom into a Crystal Palace.  
Bang crash the day she found another beau!

Oh nothing salved my bitter bitter spleen,  
No medicine, herb, apothecary's lotion,  
Till I met a luscious blonde from Woodford Green.  
How she set my heart and soul in motion.

All went well until I met her mother,  
Who asked in innocence how much I earned.  
My honest answer love's fickle flame did smother,  
So once again I got my fingers burnt.

By now I'd grown cynical a bit,  
So when true love came knocking at my door,  
I lost my nerve and had a fainting fit,  
And so she went. I saw her nevermore.

Thus, my son, I live to tell the tale.  
Renounce the frolics of thy frivolous youth.  
A loaf but nibbled soon is hard and stale.  
Let wisdom early teach this hard-won truth."

Frantically Romantic

My first love was much kissed,  
And when she went, much missed,  
For I was young, romantic,  
And loving drove me frantic.  
One evening, just as it got dark,

We put on Beethoven or Bach.  
While I had things sublime in mind,

She, more sensually inclined

To my surprise lay on her back,  
And I, a callow youth, alack!  
Grew much confused, indeed perplexed,  
Not knowing rightly what came next. BUZZ OFF WORDS TO A SPIDER

A silver spider spied a golden fly,  
and to it most amorously did sigh:  
"O most glorious of flies!  
What fine wings you have, what eyes!  
No earthly thing shows beauty more.  
I shall weave in silver thread  
a garb for you, a vestment fair,  
that we be forever wed,  
a common destiny to share.  
I in you, and you in me,  
O how happy we shall be.  
You shall be my metaphor.  
To you I'll pose reality."  
"I'm sure what moves you is benign,"  
the fly replied in dulcet tone.  
"Yet I regretfully decline  
your offer of a common home.  
My gold is - like your silver - pure,  
and may such purity endure,  
for purity, if once alloyed,  
as sure as fate must be destroyed.  
To sun and moon it was decreed  
not fusion but duality  
should constitute reality.  
Cohabitation I debar!  
I shall admire you - from afar!" Like an Angel

My love is like an angel.  
Her eyes are wide and blue.  
Her hanging locks are golden,  
but is her heart so too?

When shall my arms next clutch her?  
At the rising of the sun?  
Or when the full moon glimmers  
ere the course of day has run?

To this I have no answer,  
and now is darkest night.  
The star of eve and morning  
eludes my powers of sight.

Behold! There looms a rose-bush,  
which is budding in the gloom.  
May yet that knave named Jack Frost  
snatch summer's scarlet bloom?

My love is like an angel,  
but one who rarely sings.  
She finds new perches easily  
thanks to her fluffy wings.

Better to Have Loved and Lost

Have you no tongue? So faint of heart?  
Go tell her there's no other  
so wonderful, and that apart,  
so very like her mother!  
Declare your hand, say it out loud  
and never mind the lingo.  
Why hide your ardour in a cloud.  
She'll be yours, by jingo!

"Ich liebe dich!," "O, je t'adore!"  
"ik hou van jou!," "ahubuk!"

But when you're prostrate on the floor?  
And when she shows you to the door?  
Don't lose your nerve, or run amuck,  
read Tennyson for better luck.