

EPITHALAMIUM

EDGAR MCINNIS

Now draw your casement windows close;
This is the strait, low room you chose
From all the wide world's tenements
To cloister love's magnificence
That once was ecstasy and pain
All heaven's high bounds could not contain;
This is the end of heart's desire—
Here all the passion, all the fire
That sang above the dancing air
And all the shining dreams that were
A pathway spread before your eyes
To the tall gates of Paradise,
Here they have brought you, where you may
With six slow numbered strides each way
Metre to its firmament the bourne
That holds your heart till doomsday morn.

Yet still the dew is cool, and still
Above the bare and wind-swept hill
Dawn trembles like a burnished flame
And trumpets chant the proud acclaim
Of Love who lifts a silver horn
Exultant to the shining morn
And makes of earth and sky and sea
One radiant infinity;
And still at dusk along the river
In the warm breathless air a shiver
Runs through the sedge, a flash of white
Between the shadows and the light
Sways, and is gone; and down the glade
The wraith-like echoes drift and fade
Of fluted reeds whose laughter wakes
The dancing feet in hidden brakes;
Oh, still the wild, sweet music calls. . . .
But you have built of roof and walls
A world where dusk and dawn lie pent
In one grey twilight of content.

Here may your fingers trace the mould
And compass of all things, and hold
In two cupped palms these broken gleams
That once had winged the fire of dreams
And now have scarce the scattered worth
Of dust upon the dusty earth.

(Surely the Grail is fair—but who
Shall say what deep and bitter brew
It lifts to lips that dare the quest?
So take this pale thin vintage pressed
Drop by scant drop to brim the cup
Your shallowed hands have lifted up.
Drink unafraid—it will not smite
Your soul with splendour and delight,
Nor stay, though you should drain your fill,
A chalice inexhaustible.
Drink unafraid, nor seek to guess
Why this cool draught of happiness
So pure distilled, so straitly gauged,
Should leave your heart still unassuaged.)

Now close your casement—draw the bars
Upon the high resplendent stars,
And let the silence stop your ear
Against the songs you dare not hear.
This is the house you built to keep
Your weariness secure in sleep,
Safe from desires and dreams that were
The storms that rocked your soul; and here
The lonely love you set apart
Shall lie in slumber on your heart
Night after night your whole life long,
Nor ever stir for star or song.