



## How Many Books?

***Abstract:** To my dismay, I have discovered that book collecting is neither the cheapest, nor the most practical hobby in the world. All too often my eyes flit across my shelves and see books stacked in front of books. Books stacked on top of books. Books propped between the shelf beam and another stack of books, precarious to behold. I wonder whether the last book was one purchase too many.*

*But I cannot throw anything away. Each book is an adventure. Each book has a voice, a history; each book has made me part of its story. The leaves of any book are by far the most beautiful foliage that I will ever cultivate!*

ἄλλα πόσας ὥρας τερπνὰς γέ διήγαγον, αἴτης,  
 ἐκδήμων δρυμῶν γράμματά που καταψᾶν;  
 ἄλλα πόσους θρήνους ἐξηλοῦν, εἵνεκα σταθμῶν  
 μικροτέρων ὄντων ταῖσδε πάσαις γέ βίβλοις;

Now then, you might ask how many pleasant hours I've passed  
 thumbing the leaves blown from many a-distant country.  
 But what I want to know is how many times I've heard that age-old complaint,  
 that my forest's branches bow under the strain of all the blossom!

## A Talk of Silence

**Abstract:** Perhaps we do not appreciate the beauty of something until we do not have it, or until we are forced to reflect on the fact that we are about to give it up. This talk of silence by Mowbray is as much a panegyric of language and the eloquence of speech; it lends itself to meta-poetic games on reflection of nuance and style of language.

The Greek world is one full of stories and story-tellers. The Homeric bards, the nine Olympian Muses, Aesop and Orpheus...the Greeks loved to use the skill of a speaker for the pleasure of hearing a good story. These Greek ideas of the importance of speech and story lend themselves so beautifully to the weight of this passage, and the images and ideas used in both English and Greek idiom work together harmoniously. A good translation tries to find dynamic cultural equivalents, and so I have tried to make the world of Shakespearean Middle England and Sophocles' Athenian stage meet somewhere in the middle of this interpretation.

κρίσις, τύραννε Διογενές, δ' ἔμε βρίθει,  
 ἥτινα λέγεις σου κύριης γλώσσης ἀπό.  
 κούφου γὰρ ἄθλου, οὔδε τοίγαρ ἀθλίου,  
 τοῦ δῆτ' ἐλαυνόντου με μὴν πέραν πύλων,  
 πρὸς χεῖρος οὕτως ἀξιῶ τυράννικος. 5  
 Μοῦσαι λόγους μοι ἄρ' ἐπαίδευσαν πάλαι,  
 Ἑλληνίκην δῆτ' οἰκίας γε, λειπτέους.  
 ὡς τις λύραν Λητῶαν αἶρει, ἥς τρύφη,  
 ἢ τ' ὄργανον παλαιὸν ἔμπροσθεν φέρει  
 χεῖρσι τραχείαις δῆτ' ἀμάθεσι τῶν γλύκων 10  
 ὑπ' Ὀρφέως μούσων ἄρ' ἀσθείσων πρὸ νῦν,  
 ὡς γλώσσα μου βέβηκεν μᾶλλ' ἀσυμφόρη.  
 γλώσσαν κενὴν μου καὶ κάτερξας εἰς στόμα,  
 αἰρουμένην χεῖλεσσι δ' ἀμφ' ὄδουσί τε.  
 καὶ τ' ἀγνοεῖν δὴ δυσχερὲς γ' ἄγαν πικρὸν, 15  
 ὄν γίγνεται μοι φρουρός, ὄν κύρει κένον.  
 ὠρᾶν ὅλας Ὠρας θάμ' ὥστε τοι τροφὸν  
 σαίνειν πάλιν εἰς τ' ἄττα φοιτᾶν οὐκ ἔχω.  
 ποῖα κρίσις, εἰ μὴ μόρος σιγᾶν ἔλων  
 τὰ πνεῦμα λαμπρῶν ἐγγένων ἔπων ἀπό. 20

## THOMAS MOWBRAY

A heavy sentence, my most sovereign liege,  
And all unlook'd for from your highness' mouth:  
A dearer merit, not so deep a maim  
As to be cast forth in the common air,  
Have I deserved at your highness' hands. 455

The language I have learn'd these forty years,  
My native English, now I must forego:  
And now my tongue's use is to me no more  
Than an unstringed viol or a harp,  
Or like a cunning instrument cased up, 460

Or, being open, put into his hands  
That knows no touch to tune the harmony:  
Within my mouth you have engaol'd my tongue,  
Doubly portcullis'd with my teeth and lips;  
And dull unfeeling barren ignorance 465

Is made my gaoler to attend on me.  
I am too old to fawn upon a nurse,  
Too far in years to be a pupil now:  
What is thy sentence then but speechless death,  
Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath?

- *Richard II* Act I, Scene III