



**11. Of the Young Man and the Cat**<sup>120</sup>

Grimalkin's grandchild, Tybert's noble race,<sup>121</sup>  
 For beauty gave no cattish damsel place.  
     Round was her face;  
 Her eyes were grey<sup>o</sup> as Germans', or the Gaul;<sup>122</sup>  
 5      The stars that fall  
 Through gloomy shade cast no such dazzling light,  
 Nor glow-worms that most glorious are by night;  
     Her bosom soft and white  
 Like down of silver swans; her head was small,  
 10      And round as any ball;  
 Daily she wore a particoloured<sup>o</sup> gown,  
 Curiously mixed with white, black, grey, and brown.

Stol'n from her mother's teat, a young man bred  
 This female up, and laid her in his bed;  
 15      Each morning fed,  
 And evening, with warm strokings from the cow;  
     Would fish allow,  
 But not to wet her tender feet afford;  
 She may in pleasant gardens catch a bird,  
 20      Or make afeared.  
 Scorched with love's cruel flames, this youth did now  
     At Venus' altars bow,  
 That she his love would change into a maid,  
 When thus with reared-up hands to Heaven he prayed:

25 'O Citherea,<sup>123</sup> since the cruel dart  
 Of thy dear son hath strangely pierced my heart,  
     Some aid impart.  
 Thou at the prayer of sad Pygmalion<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup> In the first book of fables, *The Fables of Aesop*, this is fable 73, which marks the beginning of another three-fable sequence.

<sup>121</sup> Grimalkin and Tybert were typical names for a cat.

<sup>122</sup> i.e., the French

<sup>123</sup> Citherea is another name for Venus, the goddess of love; her 'dear son' mentioned in the next line is Cupid.

<sup>124</sup> Pygmalion, the son of Cilax the Cypriot, deterred by the beastly life of the Proetides, and the vices generally incident to women, resolved to live a single life; who, carving the image of a virgin in ivory, fell in love with his own workmanship;

Mad'st flesh of stone,  
 30 Formed a soft woman from obdurate<sup>o</sup> flint;  
 That had no soul, this hath a spirit in't;  
 This hath her passions, hath affection shown,  
 And loves or me, or none.  
 Make her for marriage fit, and she and I  
 35 Will day and night adore thy deity.'

The goddess heard; first on her hairy face  
 Did lilies of untainted beauty place,  
 Which roses grace,  
 And now her grey eyes sparkle more by day;  
 40 A Milky Way  
 'Twixt hills of snow, which coral fountains shows,  
 And her clear neck like silver dawn arose;  
 Her white foot grows  
 Now a fair palm, whence fingers long display,  
 45 Where azure<sup>o</sup> rivers stray.  
 A virgin then appeared, so fair and sweet

---

at whose prayers Venus converted the statue into a woman, of whom he begot Paphus. Thus Ovid relates the fable:

*Sit Conjux opto, non ausus, eburnea virgo,  
 Dicere Pygmalion, similis mea dixit eburnae, etc.*

'Give me a wife, one like,' Pygmalion said,  
 But durst not say, 'Give me my ivory maid.'  
 The golden Venus, present at her feast,  
 Conceives his wish, and friendly signs expressed;  
 The fire thrice flaming, thrice in flames aspires.<sup>o</sup>  
 To his admired image he retires,  
 Lies down besides<sup>o</sup> her, raised her with his arm,  
 Then kissed her tempting lips, and found them warm.  
 That lesson oft repeats; her bosom oft  
 With amorous touches feels, and felt it soft;  
 Th'ivory, dimpled with his fingers, lacks  
 Accustomed hardness, as Hymettian<sup>o</sup> wax  
 Relents with heat, which chafing thumbs reduce  
 To pliant forms, by handling framed for use.  
 Amazed with doubtful joy and hope that reels,  
 Again the lover what he wishes feels;  
 The veins beneath his thumbs' impression beat,  
 A perfect virgin full of juice and heat, etc. [Ogilby's note.]

Ogilby quotes Ovid's *Metamorphoses* X.275–76, but (loosely) translates X.275–89.

She seemed a heaven all o'er, from head to feet.

Nor could the ravished youth admire too much,  
Nor could believe, till by enduring touch

- 50       He found her such,  
But when she spake, sweet love was in his breast  
      With joy oppressed,  
And loud he cries, 'Come all my friends, and see  
The gods' great gift, what Heaven hath done for me;  
55       I shall too happy be!  
Bring silk and gold; with gems let her be dressed;  
      Prepare the marriage feast!'  
All came, and wonder; women's envious eye,  
Surveying her, could not one blemish spy.

- 60   All rites performed, and Hymen's torch put out,<sup>125</sup>  
Who of the joys of marriage bed could doubt,  
      Or fear a flout?°

The Cyprian goddess then desired to find  
      If that her mind

- 65   Was with her form improved; a little mouse  
Straight she presents on th'eaves<sup>o126</sup> of the house.  
      The bride leaps from her spouse,  
And leaves the young man to embrace the wind.  
      The cat will after kind.°

- 70   Just when he thought to reap the joy of joys,  
'A mouse!' she cries, and all his hope destroys.

When Venus thus, highly incensed, stormed:  
'A hateful cat t'a virgin we transformed,

- 75       But still deformed,  
And bestial thoughts within her breast remain;  
      The task was vain:

No power can stave off nature. Though our art  
Gave fair dimensions to the outward part,  
      We could not change the heart.'

- 80   Here she transformed her to a cat again;

---

<sup>125</sup> i.e., the marriage ceremony having been completed; Hymen is the god of marriage

<sup>126</sup> In modernizing *The Fables of Aesop's* 'Evins' as 'eaves', we have altered the metre of this line.

JOHN OGILBY

Then did the youth complain:  
‘Thy pity, Venus, thou hast turned to spite.  
Wouldst thou not let me have her one short night?’

Moral

85 No punishment, no penalty, nor hire  
Can repulse nature led by strong desire.  
So barbarous people civilized with care,  
The least occasion turns to what they were.

**ARTHUR GOLDING'S *A MORAL FABLETALK*  
AND OTHER RENAISSANCE  
FABLE TRANSLATIONS**

Edited by

Liza Blake and Kathryn Vomero Santos

MODERN HUMANITIES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION  
2017

Published by  
The Modern Humanities Research Association  
Salisbury House  
Station Road  
Cambridge CB1 2LA  
United Kingdom

© The Modern Humanities Research Association, 2017

Liza Blake and Kathryn Vomero Santos have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the authors of this work.

Parts of this work may be reproduced as permitted under legal provisions for fair dealing (or fair use) for the purposes of research, private study, criticism, or review, or when a relevant collective licensing agreement is in place. All other production requires the written permission of the copyright holder who may be contacted at [rights@mhra.org.uk](mailto:rights@mhra.org.uk)

First published 2017

ISBN 978-1-78188-606-9 (hbk)

ISBN 978-1-907322-25-9 (pbk)

Copies may be ordered from [www.tudor.mhra.org.uk](http://www.tudor.mhra.org.uk)