JOHN MILTON (1608-1674)

Ode I.5: According to Milton, he “Rendered almost word for word without Rhyme according to the Latin Measure, as near as the Language will permit.”

There is some debate about whether this is a youthful attempt published late in life – in which case it is an innocent experiment of a poet on the verge of genius – OR a poem of experience – a conscious attempt to abandon the particularities of English in favor of a true fusion of Latin and English.

What slender youth, bedew'd with liquid odors,
Courts thee on roses in some pleasant cave,
  Pyrrha? For whom bind'st thou
  In wreaths thy golden hair,
Plain in thy neatness? O how oft shall he
Of faith and changed gods complain, and seas
  Rough with black winds, and storms
  Unwonted shall admire!
Who now enjoys thee credulous, all gold,
Who, always vacant, always amiable
  Hopes thee, of flattering gales
  Unmindful. Hapless they
To whom thou untried seem'st fair. Me, in my vow'd
Picture, the sacred wall declares to have hung,
  My dank and dropping weeds
  To the stern god of sea. (pub. 1673)