

# Philodemus' Poetry

Post by "Pacatus" of November 14, 2022 at 12:14 PM

## The Silent Lamp

- A free rendering from a Greek poem by Philodemus

The loyal nightstand lamp keeps silent:  
confidante of intimate affairs  
we dare not speak of, even in the dark.

But intoxicate her wick with perfumed oil,  
Philaenis, inflame the room with light -  
and leave us alone behind locked door.

For Eros desires no living witness  
other than herself, Xantho - as in our bed  
we explore Aphrodite's ecstatic lore.

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From Epigram 5.4 of The Greek Anthology cited above. In addition to that translation, I also consulted Nisbet's translation from "Epigrams from the Greek Anthology: a new translation by Gideon Nesbit" (Oxford World Classics, 2020); here is his translation:

The silent lamp, complicit partner in

The things we mustn't speak of carelessly:

Philaenis, make it drunk with drops of oil.

Then take your leave: for Love alone desires

No living witness; close the jointed door.

And you, dear Xantho—but the lover's bed

Well knows what Aphrodite has in store.