

DARK LADY SONNETS

127

In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;
But now is black beauty's successive heir,
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame:
For since each hand hath put on Nature's power,
Fairing the foul with Art's false borrowed face,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Sland'ring creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says beauty should look so.

128

How oft when thou, my music, music play'st,
Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
With thy sweet fingers when thou gently sway'st
The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap,
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
Whilst my poor lips which should that harvest reap,
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!
To be so tickled, they would change their state
And situation with those dancing chips,
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
Making dead wood more bless'd than living lips.
Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

129

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action: and till action, lust
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight;
Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait,
On purpose laid to make the taker mad.
Mad in pursuit and in possession so;
Had, having, and in quest to have extreme;
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;
Before, a joy proposed; behind a dream.
All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red, than her lips red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,
As any she belied with false compare.

131

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,
As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;
For well thou know'st to my dear dotting heart
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel.
Yet, in good faith, some say that thee behold,
Thy face hath not the power to make love groan;
To say they err I dare not be so bold,
Although I swear it to myself alone.
And to be sure that is not false I swear,
A thousand groans, but thinking on thy face,
One on another's neck, do witness bear
Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place.
In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,
And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds.

132

Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,
Knowing thy heart torments me with disdain,
Have put on black and loving mourners be,
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.
And truly not the morning sun of heaven
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the even,
Doth half that glory to the sober west,
As those two mourning eyes become thy face:
O! let it then as well beseem thy heart
To mourn for me since mourning doth thee grace,
And suit thy pity like in every part.
Then will I swear beauty herself is black,
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.

133

Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan
 For that deep wound it gives my friend and me!
 Is't not enough to torture me alone,
 But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be?
 Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
 And my next self thou harder hast engrossed:
 Of him, myself, and thee I am forsaken;
 A torment thrice three-fold thus to be crossed.
 Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward,
 But then my friend's heart let my poor heart bail;
 Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard;
 Thou canst not then use rigour in my jail:
 And yet thou wilt; for I, being pent in thee,
 Perforce am thine, and all that is in me.

134

So now I have confessed that he is thine,
 And I my self am mortgaged to thy will,
 Myself I'll forfeit, so that other mine
 Thou wilt restore to be my comfort still:
 But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,
 For thou art covetous, and he is kind;
 He learned but surety-like to write for me,
 Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.
 The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take,
 Thou usurer, that put'st forth all to use,
 And sue a friend came debtor for my sake;
 So him I lose through my unkind abuse.
 Him have I lost; thou hast both him and me:
 He pays the whole, and yet am I not free.

135

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will,
 And Will to boot, and Will in over-plus;
 More than enough am I that vexed thee still,
 To thy sweet will making addition thus.
 Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
 Shall will in others seem right gracious,
 And in my will no fair acceptance shine?
 The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,
 And in abundance addeth to his store;
 So thou, being rich in Will, add to thy Will
 One will of mine, to make thy large will more.
 Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;
 Think all but one, and me in that one Will.

136

If thy soul check thee that I come so near,
 Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy Will,
 And will, thy soul knows, is admitted there;
 Thus far for love, my love-suit, sweet, fulfil.
 Will, will fulfil the treasure of thy love,
 Ay, fill it full with wills, and my will one.
 In things of great receipt with ease we prove
 Among a number one is reckoned none:
 Then in the number let me pass untold,
 Though in thy store's account I one must be;
 For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold
 That nothing me, a something sweet to thee:
 Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
 And then thou lovest me for my name is 'Will.'

137

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes,
 That they behold, and see not what they see?
 They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
 Yet what the best is take the worst to be.
 If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,
 Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,
 Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,
 Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied?
 Why should my heart think that a several plot,
 Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?
 Or mine eyes, seeing this, say this is not,
 To put fair truth upon so foul a face?
 In things right true my heart and eyes have erred,
 And to this false plague are they now transferred.

138

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
 I do believe her though I know she lies,
 That she might think me some untutored youth,
 Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
 Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
 Although she knows my days are past the best,
 Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:
 On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed:
 But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
 And wherefore say not I that I am old?
 O! love's best habit is in seeming trust,
 And age in love, loves not to have years told:
 Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
 And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

139

O! call not me to justify the wrong
 That thy unkindness lays upon my heart;
 Wound me not with thine eye, but with thy tongue:
 Use power with power, and slay me not by art,
 Tell me thou lov'st elsewhere; but in my sight,
 Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside:
 What need'st thou wound with cunning, when thy
 might
 Is more than my o'erpressed defence can bide?
 Let me excuse thee: ah! my love well knows
 Her pretty looks have been mine enemies;
 And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
 That they elsewhere might dart their injuries:
 Yet do not so; but since I am near slain,
 Kill me outright with looks, and rid my pain.

140

Be wise as thou art cruel; do not press
 My tongue-tied patience with too much disdain;
 Lest sorrow lend me words, and words express
 The manner of my pity-wanting pain.
 If I might teach thee wit, better it were,
 Though not to love, yet, love to tell me so;
 As testy sick men, when their deaths be near,
 No news but health from their physicians know;
 For, if I should despair, I should grow mad,
 And in my madness might speak ill of thee;
 Now this ill-wresting world is grown so bad,
 Mad slanderers by mad ears believed be.
 That I may not be so, nor thou belied,
 Bear thine eyes straight, though thy proud heart go
 wide.

141

In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,
 For they in thee a thousand errors note;
 But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,
 Who, in despite of view, is pleased to dote.
 Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune delighted;
 Nor tender feeling, to base touches prone,
 Nor taste, nor smell, desire to be invited
 To any sensual feast with thee alone:
 But my five wits nor my five senses can
 Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,
 Who leaves unswayed the likeness of a man,
 Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be:
 Only my plague thus far I count my gain,
 That she that makes me sin awards me pain.

142

Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,
 Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving:
 O! but with mine compare thou thine own state,
 And thou shalt find it merits not reproving;
 Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,
 That have profaned their scarlet ornaments
 And sealed false bonds of love as oft as mine,
 Robbed others' beds' revenues of their rents.
 Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lov'st those
 Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee:
 Root pity in thy heart, that, when it grows,
 Thy pity may deserve to pitied be.
 If thou dost seek to have what thou dost hide,
 By self-example mayst thou be denied!

143

Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch
 One of her feather'd creatures broke away,
 Sets down her babe, and makes all swift dispatch
 In pursuit of the thing she would have stay;
 Whilst her neglected child holds her in chase,
 Cries to catch her whose busy care is bent
 To follow that which flies before her face,
 Not prizing her poor infant's discontent;
 So runn'st thou after that which flies from thee,
 Whilst I thy babe chase thee afar behind;
 But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me,
 And play the mother's part, kiss me, be kind;
 So will I pray that thou mayst have thy 'Will,'
 If thou turn back and my loud crying still.

144

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
 Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
 The better angel is a man right fair,
 The worser spirit a woman coloured ill.
 To win me soon to hell, my female evil,
 Tempteth my better angel from my side,
 And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
 Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
 And whether that my angel be turned fiend,
 Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
 But being both from me, both to each friend,
 I guess one angel in another's hell:
 Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
 Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

145

Those lips that Love's own hand did make,
 Breathed forth the sound that said 'I hate',
 To me that languished for her sake:
 But when she saw my woeful state,
 Straight in her heart did mercy come,
 Chiding that tongue that ever sweet
 Was used in giving gentle doom;
 And taught it thus anew to greet;
 'I hate' she altered with an end,
 That followed it as gentle day,
 Doth follow night, who like a fiend
 From heaven to hell is flown away.
 'I hate', from hate away she threw,
 And saved my life, saying 'not you'.

146

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
 (???) these rebel powers that thee array,
 Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
 Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
 Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
 Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
 Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
 Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
 Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
 And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
 Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
 Within be fed, without be rich no more:
 So shall thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
 And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

147

My love is as a fever longing still,
 For that which longer nurseth the disease;
 Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
 The uncertain sickly appetite to please.
 My reason, the physician to my love,
 Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
 Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
 Desire is death, which physic did except.
 Past cure I am, now Reason is past care,
 And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;
 My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,
 At random from the truth vainly expressed;
 For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
 Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

148

O me! what eyes hath Love put in my head,
 Which have no correspondence with true sight;
 Or, if they have, where is my judgment fled,
 That censures falsely what they see aright?
 If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,
 What means the world to say it is not so?
 If it be not, then love doth well denote
 Love's eye is not so true as all men's: no,
 How can it? O! how can Love's eye be true,
 That is so vexed with watching and with tears?
 No marvel then, though I mistake my view;
 The sun itself sees not, till heaven clears.
 O cunning Love! with tears thou keep'st me blind,
 Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should find.

149

Canst thou, O cruel! say I love thee not,
 When I against myself with thee partake?
 Do I not think on thee, when I forgot
 Am of my self, all tyrant, for thy sake?
 Who hateth thee that I do call my friend,
 On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon,
 Nay, if thou lour'st on me, do I not spend
 Revenge upon myself with present moan?
 What merit do I in my self respect,
 That is so proud thy service to despise,
 When all my best doth worship thy defect,
 Commanded by the motion of thine eyes?
 But, love, hate on, for now I know thy mind,
 Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am blind.

150

O! from what power hast thou this powerful might,
 With insufficiency my heart to sway?
 To make me give the lie to my true sight,
 And swear that brightness doth not grace the day?
 Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,
 That in the very refuse of thy deeds
 There is such strength and warrantise of skill,
 That, in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds?
 Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,
 The more I hear and see just cause of hate?
 O! though I love what others do abhor,
 With others thou shouldst not abhor my state:
 If thy unworthiness raised love in me,
 More worthy I to be beloved of thee.

151

Love is too young to know what conscience is,
Yet who knows not conscience is born of love?
Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,
Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove:
For, thou betraying me, I do betray
My nobler part to my gross body's treason;
My soul doth tell my body that he may
Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther reason,
But rising at thy name doth point out thee,
As his triumphant prize. Proud of this pride,
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.
No want of conscience hold it that I call
Her love, for whose dear love I rise and fall.

152

In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn,
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing;
In act thy bed-vow broke, and new faith torn,
In vowing new hate after new love bearing:
But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee,
When I break twenty? I am perjured most;
For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee,
And all my honest faith in thee is lost:
For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep kindness,
Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy constancy;
And, to enlighten thee, gave eyes to blindness,
Or made them swear against the thing they see;
For I have sworn thee fair; more perjured eye,
To swear against the truth so foul a lie!

