

# Margaret Cavendish, "A Dialogue betwixt Wit and Beauty"

## Description

MARGARET CAVENDISH

### • A Dialogue betwixt Wit and Beauty •

Mixt *Rose* and *Lilly*, why are you so proud,  
Since *Fair* is not in all Minds like allow'd?  
Some do like *Black*, some *Brown*, and some like *White*;  
Some *Eyes* in all *Complexions* take delight.  
Nor doth one *Beauty* in the World still reign; 5  
For *Beauty* is created in the *Brain*.  
But, say there were a *Body* perfect made,  
*Complexion* pure, by *Nature's* Pencil laid;  
A *Countenance*, where all sweet *Spirits* meet;  
A *Hair* that's thick, and long, curl'd to the Feet: 10  
Yet, were it like a *Statue* made of *Stone*,  
The *Eye* would weary grow to look upon:  
Had it no *Wit*, the *Mind* still to delight,  
It soon would weary be, as well as *Sight*.  
For, *Wit* is fresh and new, doth sport and play; 15  
And runs about the *Humour* every way.  
With all the *Passions*, *Wit* can well agree;  
*Wit* tempers them, and makes them pleas'd to be.  
Ingenious 'tis, doth new *Inventions* find,  
To ease the *Body*, and divert the *Mind*. 20  
When I appear, I strike the *Optick Nerve*;  
I wound the *Heart*, and make the *Passions* serve.  
*Souls* are my *Prisners*, yet do love me well:  
My *Company* is *Heaven*, my *Absence* *Hell*.  
Each *Knee* doth bow to me, as to a *Shrine*; 25  
And all the *World* accounts me as *Divine*.  
*Beauty*, you cannot long *Devotion* keep;  
The *Mind* grows weary, *Senses* fall asleep:  
As those which in the *House of God* do go,  
Are very *Zealous* in a *Prayer* or two; 30  
But, if they must an *Hour-long* kneel to pray,  
Their *Zeal* grows cold, nor know they what they say:  
So *Admirations* are, they do not last;  
*After Nine days*, the greatest *Wonder* past.  
The *Mind*, as th' *Senses* all, delights in change; 35

They nothing love, but what is *new* and *strange*.  
 But subtil *Wit*, can please both *long*, and *well*:  
 For, to the *Ear*, *Wit* a new Tale can tell.  
 And, for the *Tast*, doth dress Meat several ways.  
 To thâ€™*Eye*, it can new Forms and Fashions raise. 40  
 And for the *Touch*, *Wit* spins both Silk and Wool,  
 Invents new ways, to keep *Touch* warm, and cool.  
 For *Scent*, *Wit* Mixtures and Compounds doth make,  
 That still the *Nose*, a fresh new *Smell* may take.  
 I, by Discourse, can represent the *Mind* 45  
 With several Objects, though the *Eyes* be blind.  
 Iâ€™*Brain* I can create *Idea*s, and  
 Those make to thâ€™*Mind* seem real, though but feignâ€™d.  
 The *Mind*s a Shop, where sorts of Toys I sell;  
 With fine Conceits, I fit all Humours well. 50  
 I can the Work of *Nature* imitate,  
 And, in the *Brain*, each several Shape create.  
 I Conquer all, am Master of the Field,  
 And make fair *Beauty*, in *Love*s Warrs to yield.

**NOTES:**

**Title** *Wit* – The faculty of thinking and reasoning in general; mental capacity, understanding, intellect, reason (QED).

**16** *Humour* – A particular temperamental inclination (QED).

**29** *House of God* A church or place of worship (OED).

**50** *Conceits* – A fanciful or ingenious expression, metaphor, turn of thought (QED).

**SOURCE:** *Poems, Or, Several Fancies in Verse: With the Animal Parliament in Prose, Part II, Third Edition (London, 1668), pp. 117-18. [Google Books]*

*Edited by Izabella Garcia*