Margaret Cavendish, â??A Dialogue betwixt Wit and Beautyâ?•

Description

MARGARET CAVENDISH

â??*A* Dialogue *betwixt* Wit *and* Beautyâ?•

Mixt *Rose* and *Lilly*, why are you so proud,
Since *Fair* is not in all Minds like allowâ??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;
For *Beauty* is created in the *Brain*.
But, say there were a *Body* perfect made,
Complexion pure, by *Natureâ??s* Pencil laid;
A *Countenance*, where all sweet Spirits meet;
A *Hair* thatâ??s thick, and long, curlâ??d to the Feet:
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;
And runs about the *Humour* every way.
With all the *Passions, Wit* can well agree;
Wit tempers them, and makes them pleasâ??d to be.
Ingenious â??tis, doth new Inventions find,
To ease the *Body*, and divert the Mind.
When I appear, I strike the *Optick Nerve*;
I wound the *Heart*, and make the *Passions* serve.
Souls are my *Prisâ??ners*, yet do love me well:
My Company is *Heavâ??n*, my Absence *Hell*.
Each Knee doth bow to me, as to a Shrine;
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 Prayâ??r or two;
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 Wonderâ??s past.
The *Mind*, as thâ?? *Senses* all, delights in change;
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.
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*
With several Objects, though the *Eyes* be blind.
Iâ??thâ?? *Brain* I can create *Ideaâ??s*, and
Those make to thâ?? *Mind* seem real, though but feignâ??d.
The *Mind*â??s a Shop, where sorts of Toys I sell;
With fine Conceits, I fit all Humours well.
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 *Loveâ??s* Warrs to yield.

NOTES:

Title *Wit* â??The faculty of thinking and reasoning in general; mental capacity, understanding, intellect, reasonâ?• (*OED*).

16 *Humour* â??A particular temperamental inclinationâ?• (*OED*).

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

50 *Conceits* â??A fanciful or ingenious expression, metaphor, turn of thoughtâ?• (*OED*).

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