

Love's Labour's Lost

Act IV, sc. 3 (line 210)

BEROWNE

Sweet lords, sweet lovers, O, let us embrace!

As true we are as flesh and blood can be:

The sea will ebb and flow, heaven show his face;

Young blood doth not obey an old decree:

We cannot cross the cause why we were born;

Therefore of all hands must we be forsworn.

FERDINAND

What, did these rent lines show some love of thine?

BEROWNE

Did they, quoth you? Who sees the heavenly Rosaline,

That, like a rude and savage man of Inde,

At the first opening of the gorgeous east,

Bows not his vassal head and stricken blind

Kisses the base ground with obedient breast?

What peremptory eagle-sighted eye

Dares look upon the heaven of her brow,

That is not blinded by her majesty?

FERDINAND

What zeal, what fury hath inspired thee now?

My love, her mistress, is a gracious moon;

She an attending star, scarce seen a light.

BEROWNE

My eyes are then no eyes, nor I Biron:
O, but for my love, day would turn to night!
Of all complexions the cull'd sovereignty
Do meet, as at a fair, in her fair cheek,
Where several worthies make one dignity,
Where nothing wants that want itself doth seek.
Lend me the flourish of all gentle tongues,--
Fie, painted rhetoric! O, she needs it not:
To things of sale a seller's praise belongs,
She passes praise; then praise too short doth blot.
A wither'd hermit, five-score winters worn,
Might shake off fifty, looking in her eye:
Beauty doth varnish age, as if new-born,
And gives the crutch the cradle's infancy:
O, 'tis the sun that maketh all things shine.

FERDINAND

By heaven, thy love is black as ebony.

BEROWNE

Is ebony like her? O wood divine!
A wife of such wood were felicity.
O, who can give an oath? where is a book?
That I may swear beauty doth beauty lack,
If that she learn not of her eye to look:
No face is fair that is not full so black.

FERDINAND

*O paradox! Black is the badge of hell,
The hue of dungeons and the suit of night;
And beauty's crest becomes the heavens well.*

BEROWNE

Devils soonest tempt, resembling spirits of light.

O, if in black my lady's brows be deck'd,

It mourns that painting and usurping hair

Should ravish doters with a false aspect;

And therefore is she born to make black fair.

Her favour turns the fashion of the days,

For native blood is counted painting now;

And therefore red, that would avoid dispraise,

Paints itself black, to imitate her brow.