

The Poet's Way

In "Sonnet 130," the narrator disdains his lover's characteristics. In "Sonnet 138," the narrator bemoans the shortcomings of a dysfunctional relationship.

Sonnet 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.

Sonnet 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 untutor'd 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 suppress'd.

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 flatter'd be.