

*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.*

Now the tone changes to the light-hearted bawdiness appropriate to the occasion, and the occasion is the final triumph of the body over the soul, which seemed unlikely in previous sonnets. The speaker begins with an aphorism: "Love is too young to know what conscience is." This is not unbridled license because he adds immediately that everyone knows that "conscience is born of love." (l. 2) Despite the ambiguity of *love* and the questionable truth of the pronouncements, a certain lightness and charm carries the idea along.

The cruel mistress now becomes a "gentle cheater" (a phrase reminiscent of the "tender churl" applied to the youth in Sonnet 1), and the speaker urges her to refrain from citing his sins. If she doesn't she may show that she is guilty of the same ones. Just as you have betrayed me, he says, I betray my "nobler part" (his soul) by my "gross body's treason." (l. 6) Recognition of his self-betrayal seems virtually complete.

The next surprise comes when the speaker's soul tells his body that he (the body) may triumph in love. Sexual union may be consummated. Then, topping that, the flesh responds immediately – it doesn't need another argument (it "stays no farther reason," l. 8); but rising at the mistress' name, points her out as his "triumphant prize" (l. 10). Now the speaker turns back wittily to his previous complaints of slavery. Only this time he (the penis, specifically) is proud, and content to be the mistress'

“poor drudge” (l. 11). Like a good soldier he will “stand” in her affairs and “fall” by her side.

In the couplet, the speaker turns to the audience and declares that when he calls his mistress his “love” it is not because he has no conscience. Rather he rises and falls because of her “dear love.” This is a contradiction of the opening aphorism. The speaker has seemed aware that he is blind (see Sonnet 149, for example), but here he does not acknowledge his lack of conscience.