Six Sonnets About Love

Sir Philip Sidney: from Arcadia (c.1580)

My true love hath my heart, and I have his, By just exchange one for the other given:
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss;
There never was a bargain better driven.
His heart in me keeps me and him in one;
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides:
He loves my heart, for once it was his own;
I cherish his because in me it bides.
His heart his wound received from my sight;
My heart was wounded with his wounded heart;
For as from me on him his hurt did light,
So still, methought, in me his hurt did smart:
Both equal hurt, in this change sought our bliss,
My true love hath my heart, and I have his.

e. e. cummings (@ 1952)

i carry your heart with me(i carry it in my heart)i am never without it(anywhere i go you go,my dear;and whatever is done by only me is your doing,my darling)

no fate(for you are my fate,my sweet)i want no world(for beautiful you are my world,my true) and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant and whatever a sun will always sing is you

i fear

here is the deepest secret nobody knows (here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows higher than soul can hope or mind can hide) and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart(i carry it in my heart)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Sonnets from the Portuguese #43 (c.1846)

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints, — I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! — and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

George Meredith: from Modern Love (1862)

By this he knew she wept with waking eyes: That, at his hand's light quiver by her head, The strange low sobs that shook their common bed Were called into her with a sharp surprise, And strangled mute, like little gaping snakes, Dreadfully venomous to him. She lay Stone-still, and the long darkness flowed away With muffled pulses. Then, as midnight makes Her giant heart of Memory and Tears Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet Were moveless, looking through their dead black years, By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall. Like sculptured effigies they might be seen Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between; Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

Gwendolyn Brooks: The Sonnet-Ballad (@ 1949)

Oh mother, mother, where is happiness?
They took my lover's tallness off to war,
Left me lamenting. Now I cannot guess
What I can use an empty heart-cup for.
He won't be coming back here any more.
Some day the war will end, but, oh, I knew
When he went walking grandly out that door
That my sweet love would have to be untrue.
Would have to be untrue. Would have to court
Coquettish death, whose impudent and strange
Possessive arms and beauty (of a sort)
Can make a hard man hesitate—and change.
And he will be the one to stammer, "Yes."
Oh mother, mother, where is happiness?

William Shakespeare: Sonnet CXXX (c.1603)

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.