**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 untutored youth,

Unlearnèd 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 suppressed:

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 flattered be.

—William Shakespeare

**Purple William**

**or**

**The Liar’s Doom**

The hideous hue which William is

Was not originally his:

So long as William told the truth

He was a usual-coloured youth.

He now is purple. One fine day

His tender father chanced to say

“What colour is a whelp, and why?”

“Purple” was William’s false reply.

“Pooh” said his Pa, “You silly elf,

It’s no more purple than yourself.

Dismiss the notion from your head.”

“I, too, am purple” William said.

And he *was* purple. With a yell

His mother off the sofa fell

Exclaiming “William’s purple! Oh!”

William replied “I told you so.”

His parents, who could not support

The pungency of this retort,

Died with a simultaneous groan.

The purple orphan was alone.

—A. E. Housman

**Talking in Bed**

Talking in bed ought to be easiest,

Lying together there goes back so far,

An emblem of two people being honest.

Yet more and more time passes silently.

Outside, the wind’s incomplete unrest

Builds and disperses clouds about the sky,

And dark towns heap up on the horizon.

None of this cares for us. Nothing shows why

At this unique distance from isolation

It becomes still more difficult to find

Words at once true and kind,

Or not untrue and not unkind.

—Philip Larkin

**The Lie**

Some bloodied sea-bird’s hovering decay

Assails us where we lie, and lie

To make that symbol go away,

To mock the true north of the eye.

But lie to me, lie next to me;

The world is an infirmity.

Too much of sun’s been said, too much

Of sea, and of the lover’s touch,

Whole volumes that old men debauch.

But we, at the sea’s edge curled,

Hurl back their bloody world.

Lie to me, like next to me,

For there is nothing here to see

But the mirrors of ourselves, the day,

Clear with the odors of the sea.

Lie to me. And lie to me.

—Howard Moss

**The Lie**

As was my custom, I’d risen a full hour

before the house had woken to make sure

that everything was in order with The Lie,

his drip changed and his shackles all secure.

I was by then so practiced in this chore

I’d counted maybe thirteen years or more

since last I’d felt the urge to meet his eye.

Such, I liked to think, was our rapport.

I was at full stretch to test some ligature

when I must have caught a ragged thread, and tore

his gag away; though as he made no cry,

I kept on with my checking as before.

*Why do you call me The Lie?* he said. I swore:

it was a child’s voice. I looked up from the floor.

The dark had turned his eyes to milk and sky

and his arms and legs were all one scarlet sore.

He was a boy of maybe three or four.

His straps and chains were all the things he wore.

Knowing I could make him no reply

I took the gag before he could say more

and put it back as tight as it would tie

and locked the door and locked the door and locked the door

—Don Paterson