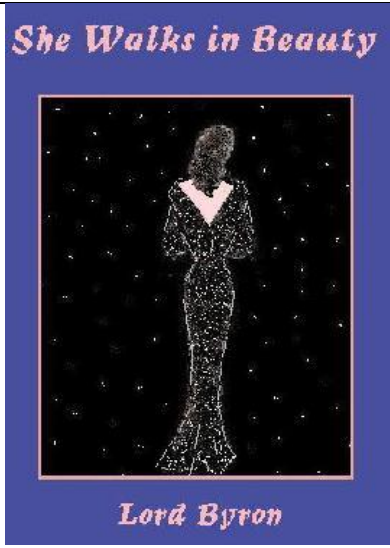


## She Walks in Beauty by: George Gordon (Lord) Byron

This lyric, extracted from the collection *Hebrew Melodies* in 1815, was inspired by Mrs. Wilmot, the wife of Byron's cousin. One evening, while they were at a ball, she enters the hall! "walking in all her beauty" and wearing a black beautiful dress decorated with sparkling glitters. She did not dance because in mourning and neither did Byron, who was also present at the dance, owing to his malformed foot. This event may have created a feeling of affinity in the poet.

She walks in beauty, like the night Of cloudless climes and starry skies; And all that's best of dark and bright Meet in her aspect and her eyes: Thus mellow'd to that tender light Which heaven to gaudy day denies. One shade the more, one ray the less, Had half impair'd the nameless grace Which waves in every raven tress, Or softly lightens o'er her face; Where thoughts serenely sweet express How pure, how dear their dwelling-place. And on that cheek, and o'er that brow, So soft, so calm, yet eloquent, The smiles that win, the tints that glow, But tell of days in goodness spent, A mind at peace with all below, A heart whose love is innocent!	<i>Ella incede in bellezza, come la notte Di climi tersi e di cieli stellati; E tutto il meglio del buio e della luce S'incontra nel suo viso e nei suoi occhi: Così addolciti da quel tenero bagliore Che il cielo nega al giorno fatto.</i>  <i>Un'ombra in più, un raggio in meno, Avrebbero turbato la grazia indicibile Che ondeggia in ogni ricciolo corvino, O dolcemente schiarisce sul suo viso; Dove pensieri serenamente dolci mostrano Quanto pura, quanto cara sia la loro dimora.</i>  <i>E su quella guancia, e su quella fronte, Così dolce, così calma, eppure eloquente, I sorrisi che incantano, i colori che brillano, E raccontano di giorni spesi nella bontà, Una mente in pace con il mondo, Un cuore colmo di amore innocente!</i>	
--	---	---

"*She Walks in Beauty*" is a short poem, consisting of three six-line stanzas. The stanzas are written in an ABABAB rhyme scheme, and the lines follow a regular rhythm: iambic tetrameter, which means that there are four "iambs" (or pairs of one stressed and one unstressed syllable) in every line.

**In the first line** of "She Walks in Beauty," Lord Byron compares a woman's beauty to the night. He uses a simile to liken her beauty to that of "cloudless climes and starry skies," emphasizing the clarity and the brightness of her beauty.

Byron uses light and dark imagery in "*She Walks in Beauty*." He describes the woman's raven-colored hair and praises the balance of "dark and bright" that meets in her eyes. This interplay of light and dark enhances the woman's beauty, producing a "tender light" that softens her features and gives her a "nameless grace."

The poem is a fairly conventional description of a beautiful woman, evidently someone with whom Byron is acquainted but whom the poet never identifies by her name, indicates his relationship to her, or refers to the occasion that brought them together. (Scholars have understood these matters.) Even if such information is not essential to understand the poem, it is surprising that Byron provides so little concrete details about the actual appearance of the woman he is describing. He does not speak of her as tall or short, slender or statuesque; he does not tell his readers the color of her dress or the color of her eyes. In fact, at the end of the poem the only specific fact the reader knows is that she has black hair.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the lady has made a definite impression on the poet. To him, she is beautiful in the same way that "night" is beautiful, and, as he tries to add, he means a particular kind of night, one of "*cloudless climes and starry skies*." There is no threat of a storm in this imagined landscape; there are no clouds to produce even a shower. Such a night is not really dark, for, as readers are told, the sky is filled with stars. Their light is soft and subdued; similarly, the dark lady has "tender" eyes, as unlike those of less subtle women as the light of a "starry" night is from that of "gaudy day."

**The second stanza** of the poem begins with an explicit statement to this effect: either more or less light, he insists, would have at least to some degree "impair'd" (compromesso) her "grace." At this point, the poet finally gives his readers an evidence as to what may have caused his response, for it appears that the lady does have "raven" hair. However, Byron does not have so specific an explanation for the brightness of "her face." He does not seem to mean that she has a rosy skin; instead, it is her "thoughts serenely sweet," so evident in her facial expressions, that account for the impression she makes on all those who observe her.

**In the final stanza**, Byron continues to explore the relationship between inner and outer beauty. The blushes that appear on the lady's "cheek," her "smiles," everything on her "brow," or countenance, all reveal her sterling virtue. In the last lines of the poem, Byron sums up what he surmises: that the lady spends much of her time doing good deeds, that her "mind" harbors no animosity toward anyone, and that when love enters her heart, it is an "innocent" emotion. Byron's description of a dark-haired lady thus becomes much more: It is also his definition of the ideal woman.