

Commendatory Poems and Prefaces (1599±±1640)

Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare

Honey-tongued Shakespeare, when I saw thine issue
I swore Apollo got them, and none other,
Their rosy-tainted features clothed in tissue,
Some heaven-born goddess said to be their mother.
Rose-cheeked Adonis with his amber tresses,
Fair fire-hot Venus charming him to love her,
Chaste Lucretia virgin-like her dresses,
Proud lust-stung Tarquin seeking still to prove her,
Romeo, Richard, more whose names I know not±±
Their sugared tongues and power-attractive beauty
Say they are saints although that saints they show not,
For thousands vows to them subjective duty.
They burn in love, thy children; Shakespeare het them;
Go, woo thy muse more nymphish brood beget them.

John Weever
Epigrams (1599)

•

A never writer to an ever reader: news

Eternal reader, you have here a new play never staled with the stage,
never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of
the palm comical, for it is a birth of that brain that never undertook anything
comical vainly; and were but the vain names of comedies changed for the
titles of commodities, or of plays for pleas, you should see all those grand
censors that now style them such vanities flock to them for the main grace
of their gravities, especially this author's comedies, that are so framed to

the life that they serve for the most common commentaries of all the actions of our lives, showing such a dexterity and power of wit that the most displeased with plays are pleased with his comedies, and all such dull and heavy-witted worldlings as were never capable of the wit of a comedy, coming by report of them to his representations, have found that wit there that they never found in themselves, and have parted better witted than they came, feeling an edge of wit set upon them more than ever they dreamed they had brain to grind it on. So much and such savoured salt of wit is in his comedies that they seem, for their height of pleasure, to be born in that sea that brought forth Venus. Amongst all there is none more witty than this, and had I time I would comment upon it, though I know it needs not for so much as will make you think your testern well bestowed, but for so much worth as even poor I know to be stuffed in it. It deserves such a labour as well as the best comedy in Terence or Plautus. And believe this, that when he is gone and his comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition. Take this for a warning, and at the peril of your pleasure's loss and judgement's, refuse not, nor like this the less for not being sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude; but thank fortune for the scape it hath made amongst you, since by the grand possessors' wills I believe you should have prayed for them rather than been prayed. And so I leave

all such to be prayed for, for the states of their
wits' healths, that will not praise it.

Vale.

Anonymous

in *Troilus and Cressida* (1609)

•

To our English Terence, Master Will Shakespeare

Some say, good Will, which I in sport do sing,
Hadst thou not played some kingly parts in sport
Thou hadst been a companion for a king,
And been a king among the meaner sort.
Some others rail; but rail as they think fit,
Thou hast no railing but a reigning wit,
And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reap
So to increase their stock which they do keep.

John Davies

The Scourge of Folly (1610)

•

To Master William Shakespeare

Shakespeare, that nimble Mercury, thy brain,
Lulls many hundred Argus-eyes asleep,
So fit for all thou fashionest thy vein;
At th'horse-foot fountain thou hast drunk full deep.
Virtue's or vice's theme to thee all one is.
Who loves chaste life, there's Lucrece for a teacher;
Who list read lust, there's Venus and Adonis,
True model of a most lascivious lecher.
Besides, in plays thy wit winds like Meander,
Whence needy new composers borrow more
Than Terence doth from Plautus or Menander.
But to praise thee aright, I want thy store.
Then let thine own works thine own worth upraise,
And help t'adorn thee with deserveÁd bays.

Thomas Freeman

Run and a Great Cast (1614)

•

Inscriptions upon the Shakespeare monument, Stratford-upon-Avon

*Iudicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,
Terra tegit, populus maeret, Olympus habet.*

Stay, passenger, why goest thou by so fast?
Read, if thou canst, whom envious death hath placed
Within this monument: Shakespeare, with whom
Quick nature died; whose name doth deck this tomb
Far more than cost, sith all that he hath writ
Leaves living art but page to serve his wit.

*Obiit anno domini 1616,
aetatis 53, die 23 Aprilis*

•

On the death of William Shakespeare

RenowneÁd Spenser, lie a thought more nigh
To learneÁd Chaucer; and rare Beaumont, lie
A little nearer Spenser, to make room
For Shakespeare in your threefold, fourfold tomb.
To lodge all four in one bed make a shift
Until doomsday, for hardly will a fifth
Betwixt this day and that by fate be slain
For whom your curtains need be drawn again.
But if precedency in death doth bar
A fourth place in your sacred sepulchre,
Under this carveÁd marble of thine own,
Sleep, rare tragedian Shakespeare, sleep alone.
Thy unmolested peace, unshareÁd cave,
Possess as lord, not tenant, of thy grave,
That unto us or others it may be
Honour hereafter to be laid by thee.

William Basse (c.1616±±22),
in Shakespeare's *Poems* (1640)

•

The Stationer to the Reader (in *The Tragedy of Othello*, 1622)

To set forth a book without an epistle were like to the old English proverb,
`A blue coat without a badge', and the author being dead, I thought good to
take that piece of work upon me. To commend it I will not, for that which is
good, I hope every man will commend without entreaty; and I am the bolder
because the author's name is sufficient to vent his work. Thus, leaving
everyone to the liberty of judgement, I have ventured to print this play, and
leave it to the general censure.

Yours,
Thomas Walkley.

•

The Epistle Dedicatory (in *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, 1623)

TO THE MOST NOBLE

and

INCOMPARABLE PAIR

of brethren

William

Earl of Pembroke, &c., Lord Chamberlain to the

King's most excellent majesty,

AND

Philip

Earl of Montgomery, &c., gentleman of his majesty's

bedchamber; both Knights of the most noble Order

of the Garter, and our singular good

LORDS.

Right Honourable,

Whilst we study to be thankful in our particular for the many favours we have received from your lordships, we are fallen upon the ill fortune to mingle two the most diverse things that can be: fear and rashness; rashness in the enterprise, and fear of the success. For when we value the places your highnesses sustain, we cannot but know their dignity greater than to descend to the reading of these trifles; and while we name them trifles we have deprived ourselves of the defence of our dedication. But since your lordships have been pleased to think these trifles something heretofore, and have prosecuted both them and their author, living, with so much favour, we hope that, they outliving him, and he not having the fate, common with some, to be executor to his own writings, you will use the like indulgence toward them you have done unto their parent. There is a great difference whether any book choose his patrons, or find them. This hath done both; for so much were your lordships' likings of the several parts when they were acted as, before they were published, the volume asked to be yours. We have but collected them, and done an office to the dead to procure his orphans guardians, without ambition either of self-profit or fame, only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive as was our Shakespeare, by humble offer of his plays to your most noble patronage. Wherein, as we have justly observed no man to come near your lordships but with a kind of religious address, it hath been the height of our care, who are the presenters, to make the present worthy of your highnesses by the perfection. But there we must also crave our abilities to be considered, my lords. We cannot go beyond our own powers. Country

hands reach forth milk, cream, fruits, or what they have; and many nations, we have heard, that had not gums and incense, obtained their requests with a leavened cake. It was no fault to approach their gods by what means they could, and the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious when they are dedicated to temples. In that name, therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your highnesses these remains of your servant Shakespeare, that what delight is in them may be ever your lordships', the reputation his, and the faults ours, if any be committed by a pair so careful to show their gratitude both to the living and the dead as is

Your lordships' most bounden,

JOHN HEMINGES.

HENRY CONDELL.

•

To the Great Variety of Readers

From the most able to him that can but spell: there you are numbered; we had rather you were weighed, especially when the fate of all books depends upon your capacities, and not of your heads alone, but of your purses. Well, it is now public, and you will stand for your privileges, we know: to read and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend a book, the stationer says. Then, how odd soever your brains be, or your wisdoms, make your licence the same, and spare not. Judge your six-penn'orth, your shilling's worth, your five shillings' worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the just rates, and welcome. But whatever you do, buy. Censure will not drive a trade or make the jack go; and though you be a magistrate of wit, and sit on the stage at Blackfriars or the Cockpit to arraign plays daily, know, these plays have had their trial already, and stood out all appeals, and do now come forth quitted rather by a decree of court than any purchased letters of commendation.

It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished that the author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings. But since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envy his friends the office of their care and pain to have collected and published them, and so to have published them as where, before, you were abused with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors that exposed them, even those are now offered to your view cured and perfect of their limbs, and all the rest absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them; who, as he was a happy imitator of nature, was a

most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together, and what he thought he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who only gather his works and give them you, to praise him; it is yours, that read him. And there we hope, to your diverse calpalcities, you will find enough both to draw and hold you; for his wit can no more lie hid than it could be lost. Read him, therefore, and again, and again, and if then you do not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger not to understand him. And so we leave you to other of his friends whom if you need can be your guides; if you need them not, you can lead yourselves and others. And such readers we wish him.

John Heminges, Henry Condell
in *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (1623)

•

To the memory of my beloved, The AUTHOR
MASTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
AND what he hath left us

To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;
While I confess thy writings to be such
As neither man nor muse can praise too much:
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these ways
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise,
For silliest ignorance on these may light,
Which, when it sounds at best, but echoes right;
Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance
The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance;
Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,
And think to ruin where it seemed to raise.
These are as some infamous bawd or whore
Should praise a matron: what could hurt her more?
But thou art proof against them, and indeed
Above th'ill fortune of them, or the need.
I therefore will begin. Soul of the age!
The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!
My Shakespeare, rise. I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie

A little further to make thee a room.

Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive still while thy book doth live
And we have wits to read and praise to give.
That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses:

I mean with great but disproportioned muses.
For if I thought my judgement were of years
I should commit thee surely with thy peers,
And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
From thence to honour thee I would not seek
For names, but call forth thund'ring Aeschylus,
Euripides, and Sophocles to us,
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
To life again, to hear thy buskin tread
And shake a stage; or, when thy socks were on,
Leave thee alone for the comparison
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time,
And all the muses still were in their prime
When like Apollo he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!
Nature herself was proud of his designs,
And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines,
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As since she will vouchsafe no other wit.
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please,
But antiquated and deserted lie
As they were not of nature's family.
Yet must I not give nature all; thy art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion; and that he
Who casts to write a living line must sweat±±
Such as thine are±±and strike the second heat

Upon the muses' anvil, turn the same,
 And himself with it that he thinks to frame;
 Or for the laurel he may gain a scorn,
 For a good poet's made as well as born.
 And such wert thou. Look how the father's face
 Lives in his issue, even so the race
 Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
 In his well-turned and true-filed lines,
 In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
 As brandished at the eyes of ignorance.
 Sweet swan of Avon! What a sight it were
 To see thee in our waters yet appear,
 And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
 That so did take Eliza and our James!
 But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere
 Advanced, and made a constellation there!
 Shine forth, thou star of poets, and with rage
 Or influence chide or cheer the drooping stage,
 Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourned like night
 And despairs day, but for thy volume's light.

Ben Jonson,
 in *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*
 (1623)

•

Upon the Lines and Life of the Famous Scenic Poet, Master William Shakespeare

Those hands which you so clapped go now and wring,
 You Britons brave, for done are Shakespeare's days.
 His days are done that made the dainty plays
 Which made the globe of heav'n and earth to ring.
 Dried is that vein, dried is the Thespian spring,
 Turned all to tears, and Phoebus clouds his rays.
 That corpse, that coffin now bestick those bays
 Which crowned him poet first, then poets' king.
 If tragedies might any prologue have,
 All those he made would scarce make one to this,
 Where fame, now that he gone is to the grave±±

Death's public tiring-house±±the nuntius is;
For though his line of life went soon about,
The life yet of his lines shall never out.
Hugh Holland,
in *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*
(1623)

•

TO THE MEMORY of the deceased author Master William Shakespeare

Shakespeare, at length thy pious fellows give
The world thy works, thy works by which outlive
Thy tomb thy name must; when that stone is rent,
And time dissolves thy Stratford monument,
Here we alive shall view thee still. This book,
When brass and marble fade, shall make thee look
Fresh to all ages. When posterity
Shall loathe what's new, think all is prodigy
That is not Shakespeare's ev'ry line, each verse
Here shall revive, redeem thee from thy hearse.
Nor fire nor cank'ring age, as Naso said
Of his, thy wit-fraught book shall once invade;
Nor shall I e'er believe or think thee dead±±
Though missed±±until our bankrupt stage be sped±±
Impossible±±with some new strain t'outdo
Passions of Juliet and her Romeo,
Or till I hear a scene more nobly take
Than when thy half-sword parleying Romans spake.
Till these, till any of thy volume's rest
Shall with more fire, more feeling be expressed,
Be sure, our Shakespeare, thou canst never die,
But crowned with laurel, live eternally.
Leonard Digges
in *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*
(1623)

•

To the memory of Master William Shakespeare

We wondered, Shakespeare, that thou went'st so soon
From the world's stage to the grave's tiring-room.
We thought thee dead, but this thy printed worth
Tells thy spectators that thou went'st but forth
To enter with applause. An actor's art
Can die, and live to act a second part.
That's but an exit of mortality;
This, a re-entrance to a *plaudite*.

James Mabbe
in *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*
(1623)

•

The Names of the Principal Actors in all these Plays

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| William Shakespeare. | Samuel Gilburn. |
| Richard Burbage. | Robert Armin. |
| John Heminges. | William Ostler. |
| Augustine Phillips. | Nathan Field. |
| William Kempe. | John Underwood. |
| Thomas Pope. | Nicholas Tooley. |
| George Bryan. | William Ecclestone. |
| Henry Condell. | Joseph Taylor. |
| William Sly. | Robert Benfield. |
| Richard Cowley. | Robert Gough. |
| John Lowin. | Richard Robinson. |
| Samuel Cross. | John Shank. |
| Alexander Cook. | John Rice. |

In *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*
(1623)

•

An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, William Shakespeare

What need my Shakespeare for his honoured bones
The labour of an age in pile of stones,
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid

Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such dull witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a lasting monument,
For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavouring art
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
Then thou, our fancy of herself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving,
And so sepulchered in such pomp dost lie
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

John Milton (1630)

in *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*
(1632)

•

Upon the Effigies of my Worthy Friend, the Author Master William Shakespeare, and his Works

Spectator, this life's shadow is. To see
The truer image and a livelier he,
Turn reader. But observe his comic vein,
Laugh; and proceed next to a tragic strain,
Then weep. So when thou find'st two contraries,
Two different passions from thy rapt soul rise,
Say±±who alone effect such wonders could±±
Rare Shakespeare to the life thou dost behold.

Anonymous

in *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*
(1632)

•

On Worthy Master Shakespeare and his Poems

A mind reflecting ages past, whose clear
And equal surface can make things appear

Distant a thousand years, and represent
Them in their lively colours' just extent;
To outrun hasty time, retrieve the fates,
Roll back the heavens, blow ope the iron gates
Of death and Lethe, where confuseÁd lie
Great heaps of ruinous mortality;
In that deep dusky dungeon to discern
A royal ghost from churls; by art to learn
The physiognomy of shades, and give
Them sudden birth, wond'ring how oft they live;
What story coldly tells, what poets feign
At second hand, and picture without brain
Senseless and soulless shows; to give a stage,
Ample and true with life, voice, action, age,
As Plato's year and new scene of the world
Them unto us or us to them had hurled;
To raise our ancient sovereigns from their hearse,
Make kings his subjects; by exchanging verse
Enlive their pale trunks, that the present age
Joys in their joy, and trembles at their rage;
Yet so to temper passion that our ears
Take pleasure in their pain, and eyes in tears
Both weep and smile: fearful at plots so sad,
Then laughing at our fear; abused, and glad
To be abused, affected with that truth
Which we perceive is false; pleased in that ruth
At which we start, and by elaborate play
Tortured and tickled; by a crablike way
Time past made pastime, and in ugly sort
Disgorging up his ravin for our sport,
While the plebeian imp from lofty throne
Creates and rules a world, and works upon
Mankind by secret engines; now to move
A chilling pity, then a rigorous love;
To strike up and stroke down both joy and ire;
To steer th'affections, and by heavenly fire
Mould us anew; stol'n from ourselves±±
This, and much more which cannot be expressed
But by himself, his tongue and his own breast,
Was Shakespeare's freehold, which his cunning brain

Improved by favour of the ninefold train.
The buskined muse, the comic queen, the grand
And louder tone of Clio; nimble hand
And nimbler foot of the melodious pair,
The silver-voiceÁd lady, the most fair
Calliope, whose speaking silence daunts,
And she whose praise the heavenly body chants.

These jointly wooed him, envying one another,
Obeyed by all as spouse, but loved as brother,
And wrought a curious robe of sable grave,
Fresh green, and pleasant yellow, red most brave,
And constant blue, rich purple, guiltless white,
The lowly russet, and the scarlet bright,
Branched and embroidered like the painted spring,
Each leaf matched with a flower, and each string
Of golden wire, each line of silk; there run
Italian works whose thread the sisters spun,
And there did sing, or seem to sing, the choice
Birds of a foreign note and various voice.
Here hangs a mossy rock, there plays a fair
But chiding fountain purleÁd. Not the air
Nor clouds nor thunder but were living drawn
Not out of common tiffany or lawn,
But fine materials which the muses know,
And only know the countries where they grow.

Now when they could no longer him enjoy
In mortal garments pent: death may destroy,
They say, his body, but his verse shall live,
And more than nature takes our hands shall give.
In a less volume, but more strongly bound,
Shakespeare shall breathe and speak, with laurel crowned,
Which never fades; fed with Ambrosian meat
In a well-lineÁd vesture rich and neat.

So with this robe they clothe him, bid him wear it,
For time shall never stain, nor envy tear it.

‘The friendly admirer of his endowments’, I.M.S.,
in *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*
(1632)

•

Upon MASTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, the *Deceased Author, and his* POEMS

Poets are born, not made: when I would prove
This truth, the glad remembrance I must love
Of never-dying Shakespeare, who alone
Is argument enough to make that one.
First, that he was a poet none would doubt
That heard th'applause of what he sees set out
Imprinted, where thou hast±±I will not say,
Reader, his works, for to contrive a play
To him 'twas none±±the pattern of all wit,
Art without art unparalleled as yet.
Next, nature only helped him, for look thorough
This whole book, thou shalt find he doth not borrow
One phrase from Greeks, nor Latins imitate,
Nor once from vulgar languages translate,
Nor plagiary-like from others glean,
Nor begs he from each witty friend a scene
To piece his acts with. All that he doth write
Is pure his own±±plot, language exquisite±±
But O! what praise more powerful can we give
The dead than that by him the King's men live,
His players, which should they but have shared the fate,
All else expired within the short term's date,
How could the Globe have prospered, since through want
Of change the plays and poems had grown scant.
But, happy verse, thou shalt be sung and heard
When hungry quills shall be such honour barred.
Then vanish, upstart writers to each stage,
You needy poetasters of this age;
Where Shakespeare lived or spake, vermin, forbear;
Lest with your froth you spot them, come not near.
But if you needs must write, if poverty
So pinch that otherwise you starve and die,
On God's name may the Bull or Cockpit have
Your lame blank verse, to keep you from the grave,
Or let new Fortune's younger brethren see
What they can pick from your lean industry.

I do not wonder, when you offer at
Blackfriars, that you suffer; 'tis the fate
Of richer veins, prime judgements that have fared
The worse with this deceaseÁd man compared.
So have I seen, when Caesar would appear,
And on the stage at half-sword parley were
Brutus and Cassius; O, how the audience
Were ravished, with what wonder they went thence,
When some new day they would not brook a line
Of tedious though well-laboured Catiline.
Sejanus too was irksome, they prized more
Honest Iago, or the jealous Moor.
And though the Fox and subtle Alchemist,
Long intermitted, could not quite be missed,
Though these have shamed all the ancients, and might
raise

Their author's merit with a crown of bays,
Yet these, sometimes, even at a friend's desire
Acted, have scarce defrayed the seacoal fire
And doorkeepers; when let but Falstaff come,
Hal, Poins, the rest, you scarce shall have a room,
All is so pestered. Let but Beatrice
And Benedick be seen, lo, in a trice
The Cockpit galleries, boxes, all are full
To hear Malvolio, that cross-gartered gull.
Brief, there is nothing in his wit-fraught book
Whose sound we would not hear, on whose worth look;
Like old-coined gold, whose lines in every page
Shall pass true current to succeeding age.
But why do I dead Shakespeare's praise recite?
Some second Shakespeare must of Shakespeare write;
For me 'tis needless, since an host of men
Will pay to clap his praise, to free my pen.

Leonard Digges (before 1636),
in Shakespeare's *Poems*
(1640)

•

In remembrance of

Master *William Shakespeare*.
ODE

1.

Beware, delighted poets, when you sing
To welcome nature in the early spring,
Your num'rous feet not tread
The banks of Avon; for each flower
(As it ne'er knew a sun or shower)
Hangs there the pensive head.

2.

Each tree, whose thick and spreading growth hath made
Rather a night beneath the boughs than shade,
Unwilling now to grow,
Looks like the plume a captive wears,
Whose rifled falls are steeped i'th' tears
Which from his last rage flow.

3.

The piteous river wept itself away
Long since, alas, to such a swift decay
That, reach the map and look
If you a river there can spy,
And for a river your mocked eye
Will find a shallow brook.

Sir William Davenant
Madagascar, with other Poems
(1637)

•

*An Elegy on the death of that famous Writer and Actor,
Master William Shakspeare*

I dare not do thy memory that wrong
Unto our larger griefs to give a tongue;
I'll only sigh in earnest, and let fall
My solemn tears at thy great funeral,

For every eye that rains a show'r for thee
Laments thy loss in a sad elegy.
Nor is it fit each humble muse should have
Thy worth his subject, now thou'rt laid in grave;
No, it's a flight beyond the pitch of those
Whose worthless pamphlets are not sense in prose.
Let learneÁd Jonson sing a dirge for thee,
And fill our orb with mournful harmony;
But we need no remembrancer; thy fame
Shall still accompany thy honoured name
To all posterity, and make us be
Sensible of what we lost in losing thee,
Being the age's wonder, whose smooth rhymes
Did more reform than lash the looser times.
Nature herself did her own self admire
As oft as thou wert pleaseÁd to attire
Her in her native lustre, and confess
Thy dressing was her chiefest comeliness.
How can we then forget thee, when the age
Her chiefest tutor, and the widowed stage
Her only favourite, in thee hath lost,
And nature's self what she did brag of most?
Sleep, then, rich soul of numbers, whilst poor we
Enjoy the profits of thy legacy,
And think it happiness enough we have
So much of thee redeemeÁd from the grave
As may suffice to enlighten future times
With the bright lustre of thy matchless rhymes.

Anonymous (before 1638)
in Shakespeare's *Poems*
(1640)

•

To Shakespeare

Thy muse's sugared dainties seem to us
Like the famed apples of old Tantalus,
For we, admiring, see and hear thy strains,
But none I see or hear those sweets attains.

To the same

Thou hast so used thy pen, or shook thy spear,
That poets startle, nor thy wit come near.

Thomas Bancroft

Two Books of Epigrams and Epitaphs
(1639)

•

To Master William Shakespeare

Shakespeare, we must be silent in thy praise,
'Cause our encomiums will but blast thy bays,
Which envy could not, that thou didst so well;
Let thine own histories prove thy chronicle.

Anonymous

in *Wit's Recreations*
(1640)

•

To the Reader

I here presume, under favour, to present to your view some excellent and sweetly composed poems of Master William Shakespeare, which in themselves appear of the same purity the author himself, then living, avouched. They had not the fortune, by reason of their infancy in his death, to have the due accommodation of proportionable glory with the rest of his ever-living works, yet the lines of themselves will afford you a more authentic approbation than my assurance any way can; to invite your allowance, in your perusal you shall find them serene, clear, and elegantly plain, such gentle strains as shall recreate and not perplex your brain, no intricate or cloudy stuff to puzzle intellect, but perfect eloquence, such as will raise your admiration to his praise. This assurance, I know, will not differ from your acknowledgement; and certain I am my opinion will be seconded by the sufficiency of these ensuing lines. I have been somewhat solicitous to bring this forth to the perfect view of all men, and in so doing, glad to be serviceable for the continuance of glory to the deserved author in these his poems.

John Benson

in Shakespeare's *Poems*
(1640)

•

Of Master *William Shakespeare*

What, lofty Shakespeare, art again revived,
And Virbius-like now show'st thyself twice lived?
'Tis Benson's love that thus to thee is shown,
The labour's his, the glory still thine own.
These learneÁd poems amongst thine after-birth,
That makes thy name immortal on the earth,
Will make the learneÁd still admire to see
The muses' gifts so fully infused on thee.
Let carping Momus bark and bite his fill,
And ignorant Davus slight thy learneÁd skill,
Yet those who know the worth of thy desert,
And with true judgement can discern thy art,
Will be admirers of thy high-tuned strain,
Amongst whose number let me still remain.

John Warren
in Shakespeare's *Poems*
(1640)