

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Sonnet 85

My tongue-tied Muse in manners holds her still¹,
While comments of² your praise richly compiled³,
Reserve thy character⁴ with golden quill⁵,
And precious phrase by all the Muses filed⁶.

5 I think good thoughts, whilst others write good words,
And like unlettered clerk still cry 'Amen'
To every hymn that able spirit⁷ affords,
In polished form of well-refined pen.
Hearing you praised, I say tis so, 'tis true,'

10 And to the most of praise add something more;
But that is in my thought, whose love to you,
Though words come hindmost⁸, holds his rank before⁹.
Then others, for the breath of words respect,
Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.
(110 words)

¹**in manners ... still** politely remains silent – ²**comments of** poems in – ³**richly compiled** fancifully written – ⁴**Reserve thy character** record their praises – ⁵**golden quill** magnificent skill – ⁶**filed** polished – ⁷**able spirit** clever poet – ⁸**come hindmost** lag behind – ⁹**holds his rank before** (my loving thoughts) come first