

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

## Sonnet 38

How can my muse want<sup>1</sup> subject to invent,  
While thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse  
Thine own sweet argument, too excellent  
For every vulgar paper<sup>2</sup> to rehearse<sup>3</sup>?

5 O! give thy self the thanks, if aught<sup>4</sup> in me  
Worthy perusal<sup>5</sup> stand against thy sight;  
For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,  
When thou thy self dost give invention<sup>6</sup> light?  
Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth  
10 Than those old nine which rhymers<sup>7</sup> invoke<sup>8</sup>;  
And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth  
Eternal numbers<sup>9</sup> to outlive long date.  
If my slight muse do please these curious<sup>10</sup> days,  
The pain<sup>11</sup> be mine, but thine shall be the praise.  
(114 words)

<sup>1</sup>want lack – <sup>2</sup>vulgar paper ordinary poem – <sup>3</sup>rehearse repeat – <sup>4</sup>aught anything – <sup>5</sup>perusal reading – <sup>6</sup>invention imagination –  
<sup>7</sup>rhymers poets – <sup>8</sup>invoke invoke – <sup>9</sup>numbers verses – <sup>10</sup>curious critical, experimental – <sup>11</sup>pain effort