

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Sonnet 83

I never saw that you did painting need,
And therefore to your fair¹ no painting set²;
I found, or thought I found, you did exceed
The barren tender of a poet's debt³:

5 And therefore have I slept in your report⁴,
That you yourself, being extant⁵, well might show
How far a modern quill⁶ doth come too short,
Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow.
This silence for my sin you did impute⁷,

10 Which shall be most my glory being dumb;
For I impair not beauty being mute⁸,
When others would give life, and bring a tomb⁹.
There lives more life in one of your fair eyes
Than both your poets can in praise devise.

(116 words)

¹fair beauty – ²set applied – ³The barren tender of a poet's debt such worthless offers to a patron – ⁴slept in your report written nothing about you – ⁵extant alive – ⁶modern quill ordinary poet – ⁷impute attribute, accuse – ⁸mute silent – ⁹a tomb lifeless poetry