

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Sonnet 101

O truant¹ Muse what shall be thy amends²

For thy neglect of truth in beauty dyed?

Both truth and beauty on my love³ depends;

So dost thou too, and therein dignified⁴.

5 Make answer Muse: wilt thou not haply⁵ say,

"Truth needs no colour⁶, with his colour fixed;

Beauty no pencil⁷, beauty's truth to lay⁸;

But best is best, if never intermixed"?

Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?

10 Excuse not silence so, for't lies in thee

To make him much outlive a gilded⁹ tomb

And to be praised of ages yet to be.

Then do thy office, Muse; I teach thee how

To make him seem, long hence, as he shows now.

(114 words)

¹**truant** absent – ²**amends** excuse, recompense – ³**my love** (the young man) – ⁴**dignified** given dignity – ⁵**haply** perhaps – ⁶**colour** disguise, painting, essence, nature – ⁷**pencil** painter's brush – ⁸**lay** apply, paint – ⁹**gilded** artificially decorated