“An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet W. Shakespeare”
John Milton (1630)

What needs my Shakespeare for his honoured bones
The labour of an age in piled stones?
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid
Under a star-y-pointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.
For whilst to th' shame of slow-endavouring 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 itself bereaving,
Doit make us marble with too much conceiving;
And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie,
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.
What neede my Shakespeare for his honour’d bones The labour of an Age in piled stones, Or that his hallow’d Reliques should be hid Under a star-ypointing pyramid? Dear Sonne of Memory, great Heire of Fame, What needest thou such dull witness of thy Name? Thou in our wonder and astonishment Hast built thyself a lasting Monument: For whilst, to the shame of slow endevouring Art, Thy easie numbers flow, and that each heart Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued Booke Those Delphicke Lines with deep Impression tooke; Then thou, our fancy of herself bereaving, Dost make us Marble with too mu “On Shakespeareâ€ is John Miltonâ€™s first published poem, originally published under the title â€œAn Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, W. Shakespeareâ€ in 1632. This sonnet is referred to as an epitaph, which is typically written on the occasion of death. Being that Milton wrote â€œOn Shakespeareâ€™s death, he does not include death or mourning in the poem. Milton instead focuses on the immortality of Shakespeare due to the popularity and lasting qualities of his work. Milton uses many of Shakespeareâ€™s own words throughout the poem in order to praise and commemorate Shakespeare. What needs my Shakespeare for his honored bones The labor of an age in piled stones? Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid Under a star-ypointing pyramid? Dear son of Memory, great heir of Fame, What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name? Shakespeare lived at a time when ideas and social structures established in the Middle Ages still informed human thought and behaviour. Queen Elizabeth I was God’s deputy on earth, and lords and commoners had their due places in society under her, with responsibilities up through to God and down to those of more humble rank. Poetic conventions and dramatic traditions. The poet Edmund Spenser led with the restoration of old words, and schoolmasters, poets, sophisticated courtiers, and travelers all brought further contributions from France, Italy, and the Roman classics, as well as from farther afield. Helped by the growing availability of cheaper, printed books, the language began to become standardized in grammar and vocabulary and, more slowly, in spelling.