SONNET 83. *1 painting* artificial beautifying. *2 fair* beauty. *set* applied. *4 The barren . . . debt* the fruitless offering with which a poet attempts to repay his patron. *5 slept in your report* neglected to flatter you. *6 being extant* simply being alive. *7 modern quill* ordinary, commonplace pen. *8 Speaking of worth* when it writes of true value. *what worth of* what worth. *grow* exist. *9 silence* failure to flatter you. *11 impair* harm. *12 bring a tomb* create only an elaborate lifeless monument.

83

I never saw that you did painting need,
And therefore to your fair no painting set;
I found (or thought I found) you did exceed
The barren tender of a poet's debt;
And therefore have I slept in your report,
That you yourself, being extant, well might show
How far a modern quill doth come too short,
Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow.
This silence for my sin you did impute,
Which shall be most my glory, being dumb;
For I impair not beauty, being mute,
When others would give life, and bring a tomb.
There lives more life in one of your fair eyes
Than both your poets can in praise devise.

84

Who is it that says most which can say more
Than this rich praise — that you alone are you?
In whose confine immured is the store
Which should example where your equal grew.
Lean penury within that pen doth dwell
That to his subject lends not some small glory;
But he that writes of you, if he can tell
That you are you, so dignifies his story,
Let him but copy what in you is writ,
Not making worse what nature made so clear,
And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,
Making his style admired everywhere.
You to your beauteous blessings add a curse,
Being fond on praise, which makes your praises worse.