

*Not marble nor the gilded monuments
 Of princes shall outlive this pow'rful rhyme,
 But you shall shine more bright in these contents
 Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.
 When wasteful war shall statues overturn
 And broils root out the work of masonry,
 Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
 The living record of your memory.
 'Gainst death, and all oblivious enmity
 Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room,
 Even in the eyes of all posterity
 That wear this world out to the ending doom.
 So till the judgment that your self arise,
 You live in this, and dwell in lover's eyes.*

The next step up the ladder to immortality is the speaker's, as the first two lines assert the power of the poet's "rhyme." The solidity of marble and princely monuments is an illusion—a shadow—but the friend (addressed in line three) will gain light more lasting than any shadow or tombstone "besmeared"—made illegible—by uncaring time.

The second quatrain goes on to illustrate the same theme with images of warfare: statues overturned, masonry structures uprooted by the broils of battle, the assault of the war god Mars with his sword, and sudden conflagrations. Artfully, the speaker works towards the climax of this single sentence quatrain: none of these horrifying attacks can destroy "the living record" of the youth's memory.

The third quatrain begins by firmly asserting his friend's invulnerability to death and any enmity that threatens oblivion. The speaker vividly creates an image of the youth emerging unscathed from the onslaught. Then, he says, "shall you pace forth." (l. 10) Though no mention has been made of martial successes, the speaker, as poet, has managed to suggest them. Not only does his friend appear as hero, his future reputation is guaranteed. It will last till doomsday when even the world will have worn out.

Thus the poet reaffirms his role of eternal preserver, the savior of a hero. Hyperbole will win, the speaker trusts, because admirers will keep the youth alive when they hear of his exploits. The admirers, of necessity, are admirers of the poet. More than one salvation is assured.