

A Monument more Lasting than Bronze ?

WILLIAM GERBER

The Roman poet Horace proclaimed, "I have made me a monument more lasting than bronze" (*Exegi monumentum aere perennius*), as a consequence of which, he went on to say, 'I shall not wholly die' (*Non omnis moriar*). Horace, however, was not alone among poets in predicting evergreen life for his literary output. From classical times through Ronsard, Spenser, and Shakespeare, and on to Archibald MacLeish and other versifiers of the twentieth century, *many* poets have confidently said that their works would be read and enjoyed long after they themselves had ceased to live.

Were they right in their expectation of lasting glory? Surely, some of them were right, including those whom I just mentioned as examples. For you would not have recognized the names of these poets if the memory of them and their work had not lasted until today. Others, however, who made such forecasts about themselves and their work were unfortunately not right, since not all who deemed themselves worthy of literary immortality actually achieved it.

I am going to present, in this paper, a variety of proclamations such as Horace's, and let you, the reader, judge the extent to which the authors thereof were reliable in their anticipation of everlasting fame. If you recognize some of these authors as indeed eminent writers, attracting and uplifting readers even today, then your conclusion will be that *their* self-judgements of immortality were accurate. It should not be surprising, however, if, in other cases, you will not recognize the names of poets mentioned here, and you conclude that *their* self-judgements of immortality were flawed.

Several of my illustrative passages, you will observe, reflect not a prediction about a poet's *own* work but instead a paean to the abiding life of *another* poet's writings—or else a somber prediction that the other poet was *not* destined to achieve immortal fame.

Ancient Egypt

1. An anonymous Egyptian master, in a document entitled "Praise of Learned Scribes", predicted long life for the writings not of himself but of certain members of his trade. He declared: "They did not make for themselves pyramids of metal, ... [b]ut their names are still pronounced because of their books... ; and the memory of ... [them] lasts to eternity"

There may be other pronouncements of this kind among the remains of ancient Egyptian literature, but the one that I have quoted stands out, I think, as phrased in especially charming and elegant language.

Greek Period

Of the six Greek authors who I shall quote on the idea of leaving a monument more lasting than bronze, each one discussed not the fate of his or her *own* poems but instead the chances for fame of the writings of someone else.

2. Our first example from Greek literature comes from Sappho of Lesbos. Her poem to be cited here is a warning to a female poet of her own time that poets's writings, since they lacked inspiration and polish, were *not* destined to enjoy everlasting life.

Here are three English versions of Sappho's warning to her ill-fated contemporary, who apparently did not pay enough attention to her art. Each version reflects special view of the translator's craft.

- (a) Dead shalt thou lie for ever, and forgotten,
For whom the flowers of song have never bloomed;
A wanderer amidst the unbegotten,
In Hades' house a shadow by entombed.

—Translated by H. De Vere Stackpole

- (b) When dead, thou shalt in ashes lie,
Nor live in human memory:
Nor any page in time to come
Shall draw thee from thy shrouding tomb.
For thou didst never pluck the rose
That on Pieria's mountain grows:
Dim and unseen thy feet shall tread
The shadowy mansions of the dead.

—Translated by Charles A. Elton

- (c) You have no time for poetry?
My dear, I doubt it not.
Yet think - when you are dead you'll lie
Unwanted and forgot;

And as in this your earthly home
You're never in the swim,
You'll wander in the world to come
With spirits just as dim.

—Translated by Janet M. Todd

About four centuries after Sappho's time, we find an additional comment on the likelihood or unlikelihood of survival to posterity of the writings of *another* poet. This time, by contrast with what Sappho had said about *her* contemporary, the prediction about the future life of the writings of the other poet is favourable.

3. The predictor this time is Callimachus, who asserted that the “nightingales” (verses) of his deceased friend and fellow poet Heraclitus *would* remain alive, and would be heard and enjoyed by future generations. (This Heraclitus is not the well-known philosopher.) As in the case of Sappho’s *negative* conclusion, I present you with three translations of Callimachus’s *favourable* prediction.

- (a) They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
I wept as I remembered how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales awake;
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

—Translated by William J. Cory

In the next translation, the reference is not to “my dear old Carian guest” but to “my Halicarnassian guest.” Halicarnassus was the capital of the district of Caria, in Asia Minor.

- (b) I wept, my Heraclitus, when they told
That thou wert dead; I thought of days of old, —
How oft in talk we sent the sun to rest:
Long since hast thou, my Halicarnassian guest,
Been dust: yet live thy nightingales—on these
The all-plundering hand of death shall never seize.”

—Translated by William Hay

In the third translation which I am offering, the reference is not to nightingales (standing for poems) but to Philomel, who was a mythological nightingale.

- (c) I hear, O friend, the fatal news
Of Heraclitus’ death.
A sudden tear my cheek bedews
And sighs suppress my breath.
For I must often call to mind
How from the crowd we [’d] run;
And how, to jesting still inclined,
We sported in the sun.

Alas! He’s gone, and part we must
And repartee’s no more;
But, though my friend be sunk in dust,
His *muse* shall ever soar.

The dart of death shall never fly
To stop *her* waving wings:
Like Philomel, she mounts on high,
And still, like her, she sings.

—Translated by H.W. Tyler

4. About a century after Callimachus died, a Stoic philosopher-poet whose name was Antipater followed the already well-established practice of composing lines about the everlasting literacy monument of *another* writer. Antipater admiringly addressed his lines of this kind to a long-dead poetess, Erinna, who had been a contemporary of Sappho. Antipater wrote :

Few were thy words, Erinna, short thy lay,
But thy short lay the *Must* herself had given:
Thus never shall thy memory decay,
Nor night obscure thy fame, which lives in heav'n.

—Translated by John H. Merivale

5. Next, we hear from Posidippus, a verse dramatist of approximately the same era as Antipater. While Antipater wrote about Sappho's contemporary Erinna, Posidippus offered a prediction about Sappho herself. What Posidippus predicted is that Sappho's poem about an Egyptian girl named Doricha, of the town of Naucratis, would cause Doricha to live in the minds of readers as long as ships shall sail the Nile. Thus, this poem expressed the idea, often imitated by later writers, that a cited poem would live as long as *the culture in which it was written* would remain alive and vibrant. Posidippus's poem reads, in part:

But Sappho, and the white leaves of her song,
Will make your name a word for all to learn,
And all to love thereafter, even while
It's but a name; and this will be as long
As there are distant ships that will return
Again to your Naucratis and the Nile.

—Translated by Edwin Arlington Robinson

6. Not long after Posidippus's time, a poet of whom we know only his name—Philip—predicted eternal fame for Homer's epics (written several centuries earlier), as follows:

Sooner shall heaven put out its starry light,
The sun, with noon-day splendour deck the night;
Sooner the salt-sea taste, like fountains, sweet,
Or to the living turn the dead their feet,
Than shall oblivion seize on Homer's name
And of the page of old destroy the fame.

—Translated by George Burges

In this accolade, Philip predicted that Homer would be read not as long as the culture of the area survived (as in Posidippus's similitude), but as long as the *modus operandi* of earth and heaven (e.g., the sun shining only during the day) remained constant; that is, as long as the world survived.

7. My last illustration from ancient Greece comes from the poetess Nossis, who lived in a Greek colony in southern Italy. Nossis celebrated the writings of the verse dramatist Rhinthon by composing the following epitaph for him, predicting that the crown he had won would endure forever:

Pass by and wish me well,
Smile and be not afraid;
Within this narrow cell
Rhinthon is laid.

A humble bird of song,
A mimic playwright gay:
But yet the crown I won
Abides always.

—Translated by F.A. Wright

Roman Period

Seven Roman poets sang serenely of the fame of their *own* output (not merely the output of others) that would surely, they thought, outlive them. These seven are Ennius, in the early period; Virgil and Ovid, writers of long poems; Catullus, Propertius, and Horace among those best known for shorter pieces; and the epigram-writer Martial.

8. Quintus Ennius, who flourished about two centuries before the sparkling literary age of the Emperor Augustus, wrote:

Let none with tears *my* funeral grace, for *I*
Claim for my works an immortality.

—Translated by C.D. Yonge

9. In Virgil's epic, its hero Aeneas praised Queen Dido as a glorious monarch whose reputation for virtue would be unending. Why would her reputation be unending? Presumably because a future poet named Virgil would favourably mention Dido in an epic that would never die. To make his point, Virgil gave Aeneas's speech on this subject a form similar to *Philip's* comparison (item 6, above) of the longevity of the earth, sun, etc., as follows:

While rolling rivers into seas shall run,
And round the space of heav'n the radiant sun;
While trees the mountain tops with shade supply,
Your honor, name, and praise shall never die.

—Translated by John Dryden

10. The foregoing episode occurs in book I of the *Aeneid*. In book IX of that work, Virgil again predicted that his epic would long endure. There, referring to two brave warriors whose deeds he had recounted, he wrote:

Then pierced he sinks upon his comrade slain,
and death's long slumber puts an end to pain.
O happy pair! If aught my verse ensure,
No length of time shall make your memory wane
While, throned upon the Capitol secure,
The Aeneian house shall reign, and ...[Rome] endure.

—Translated by E. Fairfax Taylor

In this passage, Virgil used Posidonius' procedure (item 5, above): So long as this culture remains alive, my poem will be read.

My next Roman author, Ovid, in his *Amores* (Loves), predicted immortal fame not only for himself but also for his contemporary Tibullus.

11. Regarding himself, Ovid said, in language reminiscent of Horace's words which were quoted above ("I shall not wholly die") :

So when the final fires my bones consume,
I'll live, and much of me survive the tomb."

—Translated by J. Wright Duff

12. The foregoing quotation, about the destiny of Ovid's *own* writings, is taken from book I of the *Amores*. In book III of the same work, Ovid made two points with reference to the death of *another* poet of his era, namely, Tibullus: (a) Poets die physically just as everyone else does, but (b) their souls, in the Elysian fields, are forever blest. This is not the same as saying that the *fame* of poets endures beyond their physical death, but it is some kind of celebration of poets' immortality. Here is what Ovid wrote:

But what can Death's abhorred Stroke withstand?
Say what so sacred he will not profane?
On all the Monster lays his dusky Hand,
And Poets are immortal deem'd in vain.

And yet, if ought beyond this mouldering Clay
But empty Name and shadowy Form remain,
Thou liv'st dear Youth! Forever young and gay,
... [And] ever blest shalt ranght' Elysian Plain. ...

Thou, polish'd Bard! Thy Loss tho' here we mourn,
Hast Swell'd the sacred Number of the Blest.
Safe rest thy gently Bones within their Urn!
Nor heavy press the Earth upon thy Breast !

—Translated by "Mr. P——"(1759)

Ovid presented two forecasts, set forth below, about his *own* chances for lasting fame in another of his works—*Tristia* (Sorrows), written during his exile from Rome. The Emperor Augustus had banished Ovid for reasons now unknown, apparently unconnected with the frankness of his amatory poems.

13. Book III of the *Tristia* contains the following message from Ovid to his wife at Rome:

But thou (for after death I shall be free)
Fetch home these bones, and what is left of me,
A few Flowers give them, with some Balme, and lay
Them in some Suburb-grave hard by the way,
And to Informe posterity, who's there
This sad Inscription let my marble weare,
'Here lyes the soft-soul'd Lecturer of Love,
Whose envy'd wit did his own ruine prove.'
But thou (whoe'er thou beest, that passing by
Lendst to this sudden stone a hastie Eye)
If e'er thou knew'st of Love the sweet disease,
Grudge not to say, May Ovid rest in peace!
This for my tombe: but in my books they'll see
More strong and lasting Monuments of mee,
Which I believe (though fatall) will afford
An endless name unto their ruin'd Lord.

- Translated by Henry Vaughan

14. In book IV of the *Tristia*, Ovid wrote again briefly on the same subject, as follows:

If then we poets can the truth divine,
Come death whenever, dust, I am not thine.

—Translated by John Gower

15. My last quotation from Ovid is taken from his most famous work, the *Metamorphoses* (Mythological Transformations):

Now have I brought a work to end
Which neither Jove's fierce wrath,
Nor sword, nor fire, nor fretting age
With all the force it hath

Are able to abolish quite.
Let come that fatal hour
Which, saving of his brittle flesh,

Hath over me no power.

And at his pleasure make an end
Of my uncertain time;
Yet shall the better part of me
Assured be to climb

Aloft above the starry sky:
And all the world shall never
Be able for to quench my name;
For look! How far so ever

The Roman Empire by the right
Of conquest shall extend
So far shall all folk read this work;
And time without all end,

If poets as by prophecy
About the truth may aim,
My life shall everlastingly
Be lengthened still by fame.

—Translated by Arthur Golding

The foregoing prediction, with its reference to the expansion of the Roman Empire, exemplifies once more the concept of Posidonius (item 5) that an inspired poet's writings will be read as long as the social milieu in which worked continues to thrive.

Of the Roman writers of shorter poems, I shall now quote pertinent extracts from the works of Catullus, Propertius, and the one with whom I began this article, Quintus Horatius Flaccus.

16. Catullus did not *predict* that the fame of his poems would be eternal. Instead, he *prayed* for that happy outcome. His prayer, addressed to the Poetic Muse as "Lady and Queen of Song," was as follows:

My Book, ... [0] Lady and Queen of Song,
This one kind gift I crave of thee,
That it may live for ages long!

—Translated by Andrew Lang

17. Propertius declared that great poetry *in general* enjoys enduring life, but he probably hoped that this *own* works would be included in the category of great poetry. He wrote:

Time cannot wither talents' well-earned fame:
True genius has secured a deathless name.

—Translator not known

I come now to Horace, whose writings are sprinkled with references to lasting fame resulting from poetic creativity. The passages which I shall quote from Horace on this subject are:

Odes—book III, odes 13 and 30; book IV, ode 9

Epistles—book I, epistle 20

18. In book III, ode 13, Horace said of the Bandusian Fount (*Fons Bandusiae*) that it will live forever because he, Horace, had sung about it. Parts of this ode, in two versions, are especially worth quoting on our subject.

(a) O gurgling font ! thy fame shall spread
When songs of mine are telling
Of yonder oak that lifts its head
Above thy rocky dwelling!

—Translated by Henry H. Pierce

(b) [Bandusian Fount, this] verse of mine
Will rank thee one with founts divine.

—Translated by Austin Dobson

19. In Horace's most famous poem on this theme (ode 30 of book III) he said that his writings would be read as long as the pontiff of the Roman religion, along with the Vestal Virgins, shall continue to climb the Capitoline Hill in Rome for their daily ritual. This illustrates once more Posidonius's maneuver of predicting that a poet's fame will endure as long as the surrounding culture continues to be vigorous.

I shall quote pertinent parts of this ode in three prominent translations.

(a) Now have I reared a monument
More durable than Brass,
And one that doth the royal scale
Of pyramids surpass ...

Not all of me shall die: my praise
Shall grow, and never end,
While pontiff and mute vestals shall
The Capitol ascend.

—Translated by William E. Gladstone.

Gladstone was a Prime Minister of Great Britain during the reign of Queen Victoria.

(b) Not lasting bronze nor pyramid upreared
By princes shall outlive my powerful rhyme.
The monument I build, to men endeared,
Not biting rain, nor raging wind, nor time,

Endlessly flowing through the countless years,
Shall e'er destroy. *I* shall not wholly die;
The grave shall have of *me* but what appears;
For *me* fresh praise shall ever multiply.

As long as priest and silent Vestal wind
The Capitolian steep, tongues shall tell o'er
How humble Horace rose above his kind
Where Aufidus's rushing waters roar.

—Translated by Grant Showerman

Aufidus is the name of a river flowing near Horace's dwelling place.

(c) I've areared a monument, my own,
More durable than brass,
Yea, kingly pyramids of stone
In height it doth surpass.

Rain shall not sap, nor driving blast
Disturb its settled base,
Nor countless ages rolling past
Its symmetry deface.

I shall not wholly die. Some part
Nor that a little, shall
Escape the dark destroyer's dart,
And his grim festival.

For long as with his Vestals mute
Rome's Pontifex shall climb
The Capitol, my fame shall shoot
Fresh buds through future time.

—Translated by Sir Theodore Martin

20. Horace, in book IV, ode 9, stated three themes pertinent to our topic. The *first* theme, long life for his own poems, was expressed in the following lines:

Think not these words are doomed to die
Which, wedded to the tuneful string,
With newborn arts of minstrelsy
From sounding Aufidus I sing.

—Translated by William E. Gladstone

The *second* theme celebrates the abiding fame of two Greek lyricists, namely, Sappho and her younger compatriot, Anacreon. Here are selected translations of what Horace said about that pair of poets.

(a) Not even trifles of the kind
Anacreon wrote decay,
The passion in her muse enshrined
Still breathes through Sappho's lay.

—Translated by A.E. Aglen

(b) The generations pass away
But spare Anacreon's sportive lay;
And love still breathes where Sappho sings
And still the soul of rapture clings
To the wild throbbings of ... [their] strings.

—Translated by Sir Stephen de Vere

(c) Time hath not yet effaced the merry jest
Anacreon sang. Still lives and glows the fire
Aeolian Sappho to her lyre
Whispered from love-sick breast.

—Translated by John Marshall (1908)

The *third* theme of book IV, ode 9, is: There were brave men before Agamemnon, but they all lie unsung, whereas Agamemnon was lucky to have his Homer. I shall quote versions of this theme by two translators already cited (Gladstone and Pierce), as well as a paraphrase by Alexander Pope.

(a) Era Agamemnon saw the light
There lived brave men: but tearless all,
Enfolded in eternal night,
For lack of sacred minsterels, fall.

—Translated by William E. Gladstone

(b) Ah! Many a hero fought and bled
Era Agamemnon breathed the air.
Yet all have joined the stranger dead
Unwept, because no bard was there.

—Translated by Henry H. Pierce

(c) Sages and chiefs long since had birth
Era Caesar was, or Newton named:
These raised new empires o'er the earth,
And those new Heavens and systems framed;

Vain was the chiefs, and sages' pride;
They had no poet, and they died.
In vain they schemed, in vain they bled.
They had no poet, and are dead.

—Translated by Alexander Pope

21. My last quotation from Horace is taken from his *Epistles*, book I, epistle 20,

where, addressing his scroll (book I), he predicted that it would be used as a textbook in suburban schools. Not having found a good verse translation of this epistle, I quote from the version of it published in the Loeb Classical Library:

You will be loved in Rome, ... [but this] fate, too, awaits you,
that ... [will] teach boys their A B C in the city's outskirts.

—Translated by H. Rushton Fairclough

22. Martial, supposedly doubting whether he would be read in the future, asked for signs of recognition *before* he died. He wrote:

He unto whom thou art so partial,
Oh, reader! Is the well-known Martial,
The Epigrammatist: while living,
Give him the fame thou wouldst be giving:
So shall he hear, and feel, and know it—
Post-obits rarely reach a poet.

—Translated by Lord Byron

Oriental Writers

I turn now to the Orient for several striking pronouncements on this idea of a lasting monument formed by a poet's writings.

23. Valmiki is the reputed author of the Hindu epic *Ramayana* (or, as the name appears in my quotation, *Ramayan*). In the passage to be quoted, the god Brahma is speaking. He says:

As long as in this firm-set land
The streams shall flow, the mountains stand,
So long throughout the world, be sure,
The great *Ramayan* shall endure.

—Translated by T.H. Griffith

You will recognize, in the passage just quoted, the phenomenon first set forth in item 6 above, namely, the prediction that the fame of a great poet will last as long as the world of nature itself survives.

24. From India, I move to Persia, where Firdausi (ninth century) wrote an epic called the *Shah Nameh* (Dynasty of the Shahs). In it, Firdausi declared:

- From poesy I've raised a tower high
Which neither wind nor rain can ever harm.
- Over this work the years shall come and go,
And he that wisdom hath shall learn its charm.

—Translated by A.V.W. Jackson

Firdausi's compatriot Hafiz (died 893) is the last of the Oriental poets who I shall quote on the subject of inspired writing as an everlasting monument. Hafiz's grave, near Shiraz, is said to be even today a shrine for lovers of lyric poetry.

25. The theme of my first example taken from Hafiz is: My fame will last so long and will so much honor my monarch (the Shah-in-Shah) that he should reward me now generously.

So fresh and sweet these songs that Hafiz sings,
They shall be young still when the world is old;
I often marvel that the King of Kings
Covers him not from head to foot with gold.

—Translated by Richard Le Gallienne

26. The theme of the second example from Hafiz is: My fame will keep alive the memory of my loved one.

All future time shall dream of what you were:
Such magical endurance hath *his* breath,
Hafiz shall keep thy face a flower still
In spite of death.

—Translated by Richard Le Gallienne

27. Thirdly, Hafiz seems to have reflected as follows on the relation of future fame to present living: Although your fame, Hafiz, will be everlasting, enjoy life while you can. Hafiz, remember well how short is spring, ...
Thou nightingale that shall forever sing.

—Translated by Richard Le Gallienne.

Continental Europe

Many of Europe's writers in the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era were more deeply concerned with immortality in the traditional sense that in Horace's idea of a literary monument that will outlast the Pyramids. Nevertheless, some intrepid humanists continued to express the thought that great poetry will endure.

28. Moses ibn Ezra, for example, a poet living in Spain in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries and writing in Hebrew, associated, as had others before him, the poet's fame with that of his beloved. Foreshadowing Ben Jonson's "Drink to me only with thine eyes," ibn Ezra wrote as follows:

Come, Ophrah, fill my cup—but not with wine;
The splendor of thine eyes therein let shine.
So shall the draught thou pour'st this night in Spain
Bear to far lands and days thy fame—and mine!

—Translated by Solomon Solis-Cohen

29. Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585) modestly declared that his songs about his sweetheart would be sung *at least by her* until she was old.

When you are very old, at evening
You'll sit and spin beside the fire, and say,

Humming my songs, 'Ah, well, ah well-a-day!
When I was young, of me did Ronsard sing'.

—Translated by Andrew Lang

30. In Poland, Jan Kochanowski (1530-1584) again expressed the idea (following ibn Ezra) that the loved one will be remembered because the poet's portrayal of her will endure.

Thy name, sweet lady, that my glad lips love,
That my pen joys to celebrate in rhyme,
Shall in my lines a lasting honour prove
And proud preeminence in future time.

Should men high porphyry in tribute raise
In sculptured grace, adorn'd with molten gold,
To give your worth and beauty fitting praise,
Yet would the luster of *that* work grow old

Nor pillar nor Egyptian monument
Can ward off ineluctable decay.
For fire and deluge all their rage will vent
And time's harsh envy waste their stones away.
Only my deathless verse your fame uprears.
Above the rapine and the wreck of years.

—Translated by Watson Kirkconnell

Predecessors and Younger Contemporaries of Shakespeare

31. Our exhibits from English poets on enduring literary fame begin with a stanza written by John Heywood (born about 1497). It associates the poet's fame with that of his inamorata, as do large numbers of the examples from English literature that will follow this one.

This gift alone I shall her give
When death doth what he can:
Her honest fame shall ever live
Within the mouth of men.

Two samples from Edmund Spenser (born 1552) continue our exhibition. Both samples are taken from his sonnet sequence called "Amoretti." The word "thereof" in the first extract refers to the peerless beauty of his lady love.

32. Even this verse vowd to eternity.
Shall be thereof immortal monument
And tell her prayse to all posterity,

That may admire such worlds rare wonderment.

—From sonnet 69

33. One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washed it away:
Agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray

Wayne man, sayd she, that doest in vayne assay,
A mortall thing so to immortalize,
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
And eek my name bee wyped out lykewise.

Not so (quod I), let baser things devize
To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
And in the hevens wryte your glorious name.

Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

—Sonnet 75

Next we shall pluck relevant extracts from the corpus of a writer much less famous than Spenser—Samuel Daniel (born about 1562). I shall quote five passages from Daniel on our theme of literary fame predicted by poets.

34. The first of my illustrative passages from Daniel echoes Horace's compelling thought, "I shall not wholly die."

[We] give our labours yet this poor delight,
That when our days do end they are not done;
And though we die, we shall not perish quite,
But live two lives, where others have but one.

—From "Musophilus"

35. The second example from Daniel invokes the idea, which we have met a number of times before, that the poet's output will be read as long as his culture continues to exist.

I know I shall be read, among the rest,
So long as men speak English, and so long,
As verse and virtue shall be in request,
Or grace to honest industry belong.

—From "To the Reader"

The final three examples from Daniel are in another previously discussed category—

of promises to the beloved of lasting fame for her on the basis of the poet's celebration of her qualities. Two of the three are from the sonnet sequence which Daniel addressed "To Delia."

36. This may remain thy lasting monument,
Which happily posterity may cherish;
These colours with thy fading are not spent,
These may remain when thou and I shall perish.
If they remain, then shalt thou live thereby;
They *will* remain, and so thou canst not die.

—From sonnet 34

37. These are the arks, the trophies I erect,
That fortify thy name against old age;
And these thy sacred virtues must protect
Against the dark and time's consuming rage.
Though th' error of my youth they shall discover,
Suffice, they show I lived and was thy lover.

—From sonnet 46

38. Finally, I quote from a similar promise made by Daniel, which was addressed not to Delia but to a friend named Rosamund.

[Before] I die, this much my soul doth vow, ...
[These lines] shall sweeten death with ease of mind, ...
[For] I will cause posterity ... [to] know
How fair thou wert above all womankind.

Our next author, Michael Drayton (born 1563, a year before Shakespeare), has provided us with two striking statements on our theme, both of which appear in his sonnet sequence to which he gave the curious title "Idea."

39. In the first passage to be presented here, Drayton, in the manner of Samuel Daniel, not only promises his lady immortality through his enduring verse, but also applies to himself Horace's prediction that he will not wholly die (Drayton says that his "better part" will live).

And though in youth my youth untimely perish
To keep those from oblivion and the grave,
Ensuing ages yet my rhymes shall cherish,
Where I, entombed, my better part shall save;
And though this earthly body fade and die,
My name shall mount upon eternity.

—From sonnet 34

The rhyming of "perish" and "cherish" in this passage reminds us of the same rhyme in the third extract the poems of Samuel Daniel.

40. In another sonnet, Drayton again promises his beloved the gift of “eternity” though his “immortal song.” In line 8 of this poem, Drayton seems to use the word: “superfluous” to mean not “more than necessary” but rather “superabundant.”

How many paltry, foolish, painted things,
That now in coaches trouble ev’ry street,
Shall be forgotten, whom no poet sings,
Era they be well wrapped in their winding sheet!

Where I to thee eternity shall give
When nothing else remaineth of these days,
And queens hereafter shall be glad to live
Upon the alms of thy superfluous praise;

Virgins and matrons reading these my rhymes
Shall be so much delighted with thy story
That they shall grieve they lived not in these times,
To have seen thee, their sex’s only glory.
So shalt thou fly above the vulgar throng.
Still to survive in my immortal song.

—Sonnet 6

Shakespeare

In 1564, there came into the world William Shakespeare, who, as we shall see, contributed landmark lines to our saga on poets’ sanguine hopes of achieving literary immortality.

41. Of the seven Shakespearian sonnets containing passages pertinent to our theme, the first one urged the loved one to leave a child or children to posterity, and then promised her literary immortality as well as long-lasting lineage.

But were some child of yours alive that time,
You should live twice—in it, and in my rime.

—From sonnet 17

42. In his next treatment of lasting literary fame, Shakespeare added to his promise of long life for *his beloved* a prediction that *he, the poet*, would be read as long as humanity continues to exist. In the second line of this poem, “fair” is a noun (meaning “beauty”), and “owest” means “ownest.”

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander’st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st:

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long live this, and and this gives life to thee.

—From sonnet 18

43. The promise to his sweetheart—of immortality through his poems—is repeated in the next extract.

Yet do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young.

—From sonnet 19

Thus, in three successive sonnets, numbers 17 to 19, Shakespeare proclaimed his hope of being read by generations to come.

44. In the next sample, we find not only the promise of lasting fame for the beloved but also the notion of the poet's having built a monument more lasting than bronze and, in addition, the idea that the poet's words will be read as long as the world itself shall last (he says: until the day of judgment).

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme.
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmer'd 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 pacee 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 judgement ... [day when you] arise
You live in this, and dwell in lover's eyes.

—Sonnet 55

In each of my final three samples from the sonnets, which are now to be presented, Shakespeare invokes the notion of his poems as *providing the one that he loves* ("You" ... "he" ... and "thou") with a monument that will last forever.

45. Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;
And tongues to be your being shall rehearse
When all the breathers of this world are dead.
You [still] shall *live*—such virtue hath my pen—

Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.

—From sonnet 81

46. Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?

Excuse not silence so, for 't lies in thee

To make him much outlive a gilded 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.

—From sonnet 101

47. And thou in this shalt find thy monument,

When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

—From sonnet 107

48. That Shakespeare's writings would long outlive Shakespeare is a thought expressed not only by himself but also by Ben Jonson (1573?-1637), who wrote:

Thou art ... alive still, while thy book doth live

And we have wits to read and praise to give.

Seventeenth Century

49. Having thus exploited Shakespeare for my purpose, I turn now to his younger contemporary, Richard Barnsfield (born 1574), who wrote as follows, not reading the future of his own poetic output, but instead regarding the prospects for the poetic work of Chaucer, Sir Philip Sidney, and other authors:

Yet, though their bodies lie full low in ground,

As every thing must die that erst was born,

Their living fame no fortune can confound,

Nor ever shall their labors be forlorn.

50. A curious contradiction of our theme of the poet's hope of everlasting fame is found in the following lines written by John Marston (born around 1575):

... Let others pray

Forever their fair poems flourish may;

But as for me, hungry oblivion

Devour me quick.

51. Giles Fletcher (born around 1588) proceeded to reverse Marston's negative hope, and expressed the thought that the admirable qualities of her whom he (Fletcher) cherished would be celebrated, as would her friend the poet, as long as time shall last. Fletcher wrote:

In time the storg and stately turrets fall,

In time the rose and silver lilies die,

In time ht emonarchs captive are, and thrall,

In time the sea and rivers are made dry. ...

Thus all, sweet fair, in time must have an end,

Except thy beauty, virtues, and thy friend.

Thomas Carew, the source of our next few specimens, was born around 1598 and was thus ten years younger than Giles Fletcher. Carew was a diplomat as well as a poet.

52. In the first of three poems of Carew's that I shall quote on our subject, he says that, if he is truly inspired by his muse, then the name of her whom he addresses in the poem will be an "immortal name."

So may my goddess from her heaven inspire
My frozen bosom with a Delphic fire;
And then the world shall, by that glorious flame,
Behold the blaze of thy immortal name.

53. The second poem by Carew which deals with the topic of lasting literary fame takes the form of a dialogue between Cleon (the poet) and Celia (his beloved):

Cleon—Thus are we both redeem'd from time,
I by thy grace.

Celia — And I
Shall live in thy immortal rhyme,
Until the Muses die.

54. Finally, Carew offers this advice to himself: If she whom you adore does not requite your love, *leave* her (he says, "Die!"), and she as a consequence will *fail* to achieve immortality through your writings. Thus:

If she must still deny,
Weep not, but die;
And in thy funeral fire
Shall all her fame expire.

55. Thomas Randolph (born 1605) wrote, modestly comparing his poetry to a connection with the next generation:

Let clowns get wealth and heirs;
When I am gone, ...
If I a poem leave,
That poem is my son.

56. Edmund Waller (born 1606) expressed some skepticism about the predictions of poets that their writings will be read in the distant future. In his famous poem that begins "Go, lovely rose!" he remarked on the *short span of life* of those who are "so wondrous sweet and fair." As to whether (by contrast) their *fame* will live after them because they are celebrated in poems, Waller wrote wryly in another composition as follows:

Poets may boast, as safely vain
Their works shall with the world remain:
Both bound-together live or die,
Their verses and their prophecy.

57. John Milton (Born 1608) seconded Ben Jonson's prediction (item 48 above) of

lasting fame for what Shakespeare had written. Milton's tribute to Shakespeare was as follows:

What needs my Shakespear for his honour's Bones,
The labour of an age in piles Stones,
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid
Under a Stary-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 thy self a live-long Monument. ...
And so Sepulcher's in such pomp dost lie
That kings for such a Tomb would wish to die.

For his own poetry, Milton made no such dramatic claim of long life. He wrote, however, in one of his prose works: "[I hope] that by labour and ... study ... I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die."

58. From John Suckling (born 1609), we have a statement on the enduring life not of *his* poems but of the poems of *ancient writers*. He declared:

The ancient poets and their learned rhymes
We still admire in these our later times,
And celebrate their fame. Thus, though they die,
Their names can never taste mortality.

Eighteenth Century

Since most of the writings of Joseph Addison (born 1672) were published after 1700, I present his two contributions to our theme as the opening items under a heading for the new century. The *first* of his two contributions, however, was published in 1694; the second, in 1703.

59. Addison predicted that the works of Edmund Waller (see item 56 above) would move our passions (and the comeliness of Waller's Sacharissa would kindle love) as long as beautiful women arouse desire. He wrote:

While tender airs and lovely dames inspire
Soft melting thoughts and propagate desire,
So long shall Waller's strains our passions move,
And Sacharissa's beauties kindle love.

60. In his other contribution, Addison seems to have Horace in mind. Horace, you will remember, declared that he had immortalized the Bandusian Fount by his poetry which celebrated its gurgling (item 18). In keeping with that proposition, Addison wrote that streams so celebrated "run forever."

I look for streams immortaliz's in song,
That lost in silence and oblivion lie
(Dumb are their fountains and their channels dry),
Yet run forever by the Muse's skill,
And in the smooth descriptions murmur still.

61. Ambrose Philips (born about 1675) wistfully *hoped* but did not *predict* that his poems would be read by posterity. He wrote, using Colin as a conventional designation for a rustic rhyming lover:

O that like Colin I had skill rhymes:
To purchase credit with succeeding times.

62. If we truly heard an echo of Horace in Addison (item 60), then probably another reverberation of Horace will be found in a poem of John Gay (born 1685). Horace, in the final ode of his third book of lyrics, declaimed, "I have made me a monument more lasting than bronze," and on that account "I shall not wholly die" (item 19). Gay also argued that his complete works would be "ripe of immortality" and that therefore the "Eternal Part" of him (his fame) would not die. Here is how Gay stated this prediction:

And now compleat my gen'rous Labours lye,
Finished, and ripe for Immortality.
Death shall entomb in Dust this Mould'ring Frame,
[And after present writers are forgotten,]
This work shall shine, and Walkers bless my Name.

Perhaps the reference to "Walkers" means: As long as humans walk the earth, my poems will be remembered.

63. In the case of Alexander Pope (born 1688), since almost all of his "The Rape of the Lock" is mock-heroic, it is hard to say how seriously we should take four lines in that poem in which Pope says, in effect: Belinda, your eyes ("fair suns") and your hair will die, but your *name* will live because of what my muse has here wrought. The four lines are as follows:

When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
This Lock the Muse shall consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

As it happens, the writers whom I have cited on recent pages have all been English. For two pertinent non-English comments, I now turn to France. Voltaire (Francois Marie Arouet, born 1694) made one affirmative prediction and one negative prediction about the lasting fame of certain specimens of poetry.

65. Voltaire's first comment relates to a line in Lucretius's long philosophical poem, *De Rerum Natura* (The Nature of Things). The line which Voltaire cites alludes to a grisly

human sacrifice, that of Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, to enable the Greek fleet to proceed to Troy. Lucretius's line, a magnificent example of dactylic hexameter, reads as follows: *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum* (book I, line 101).

A lively translation of the line just quoted is found in William Ellery Leonard's version of the poem. His translation of this line, itself a magnificent example of blank verse, reads:

Such are the crimes to which religion leads.

Voltaire, in the anti-religious spirit of the French Enlightenment, said of this line that it will last as long as the world itself lasts.

66. The other comment that Voltaire made on lasting literary fame relates to a poem by Jean-Jacques Rousseau entitled (in English translation) "Ode to Posterity." Voltaire's appraisal was that the poem "will never reach its destination."

67. My final example of a pronouncement from the eighteenth century on the lasting fame of poets is statement made by Edward Gibbon (born 1737). In 1796, he wrote in his *Memoirs* that among the consolations of old age is "the vanity of authors who presume the immortality of their name and writings."

In the section that follows, however, we shall find a number of appraisals more sanguine than Gibbon's of poets' predictions about the durability of their writings.

Nineteenth Century

68. William Wordsworth (born 1770) predicted that grateful readers would love the poems of John Dyer (1700-1758) as long as sheep stray and thrushes pipe in Dyer's region (Gongan Hill).

Yet pure and powerful minds, hearts meek and still,
A grateful few, shall love thy modest lay,
Long as the shepherd's bleating flocks shall stray...
Long as the thrush shall pipe on Gongon Hill.

On two occasions, Walter Savage Landor (born 1775) asserted that posterity would remember not only him but also the girl that he wrote about.

69. In 1831, Landor propounded the view that future *lovers* at least would remember him and his girl.

Soon shall Oblivion's deepening veil
Hide all the peopled hills you see,
The gay, the proud, while lovers hail
In distant ages you and me.

70. In 1863, Landor *expanded* the category of those who would remember him

and his friend. This time, it was men unborn.

I have since written what no tide
Shall ever wash away, what men
Unborn shall read o'er oceans wide
And find lanthe's name agen.

71. Lord Byron (born 1788), in "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," observed that Sappho had *given* eternal life to those that she celebrated in her immortal poetry, and he pondered the question, Could not her verse save *her*? In the last line of the following extract on this point, Byron seems to use the verb "live" in its sense of "live bodily," but he then uses the noun "life" in an allegorical sense, meaning "lasting fame."

Dear Sappho! Could not verse immortal save
That breast imbued with such immortal fire?
Could she not live who life eternal gave?

72. Here I interpose an American poet among the Britishers. William Cullen Bryant (born 1794) addressed as follows the inspired poet *as a type* (not a specific poet), whose magic words, Bryant said, would survive:

So shalt thou frame a lay
That haply shall endure from age to age,
And they who read shall say
'What witchery hangs upon this poet's page!'

73. John Keats (born 1795) enters our story with a poem about a specific poet, Leigh Hunt, who was eleven years younger than Keats. Hunt had been imprisoned for having offended the Prince Regent. After Hunt's release, Keats wrote the following sonnet in which he expressed the opinion that Hunt would continue to live in memory long after his prisoners are forgotten.

What though, for showing truth to flatter'd state,
Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,
In his immortal spirit, been as free
As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.

Minion of grandeur! Think you he did wait?
Think you he nought but prison walls did see,
Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key?
Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate.

In Spenser's halls he stray's, and bowers fair,
Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew
With daring Milton through the fields of air:
To regions of his own his genius true
Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?

74. As is true of Keats, Lord Tennyson (born 1809) also wrote on the lasting fame not of himself but of another poet. In Tennyson's case, the other poet was Catullus, who in ancient Rome composed an elegy, still widely read, on the death of a sparrow that was dear to Catullus's on-again, off-again mistress, Lesbia. Tennyson, ascribing eternal life to the sparrow (meaning the poetry *about* the sparrow), cheered "Catullus, whose dead songster never dies."

At this point, I again interpose an American among the many British writers who have dealt with our theme. Walt Whitman (born 1819) made three contributions to the theme of the writer's contact with posterity.

75. To one a century hence or any number of centuries
hence,
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.
When you read these ...

Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now with you.)

76. You distant, dim unknown—or young or old—countless,
unspecified, readers below'd

We never met, and ne'er shall meet—and yet our souls
embrace, long close and long.

77. Camerado, this is no book
Who touches this touches a man,
(Is it night? Are we here together alone?) ...
Dear friend whoever you are take this kiss,
I give it specially to you, do not forget me, ...
Remember my words, I may again return,
I love you, I depart from materials,
I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.
I return to England now for the next group of writers.

78. William C. Bennett (born 1820) assured his lady love that she would remain alive in the songs about her that he had written, because those songs would *retain their popularity*.

For thou shalt live, defying time
And mocking death,
In music on—O life sublime!—
A nation's breath;
Love, in a people's songs, shall be
The eternal life I'll give to thee.

79. A clerk in the British Admiralty, Frederick Locker-Sampson (born 1821), provides

our next example, on the same theme as Bennett's, with two additional points, namely, that the lasting fame which Locker-Sampson can offer through his verses (a) is longer-lasting than any gift that the lady love can possibly offer him and (b) is also longer-lasting than her beauty.

You boast a gift to charm the eyes,
I boast a gift than Time defies:
For mine will still be mine, and last
When all your pride of beauty's past. ...
For ages hence the great and good
Will judge you as I choose they should.
In days to come, the peer or clown,
With whom I still shall win renown,
Will only know that you were fair
Because I chanced to say you were.

80. Austin Dobson (born 1840) returned to the theme that the passage of time *cannot* destroy what the poet has created.

Even the gods must go;
Only the lofty Rhyme
Not ... years can overthrow—
Nor long array of time.

81. William Watson (born 1858) referred to himself as:

The maker of this verse, which shall endure
By splendour of its theme that cannot die.

The "theme" to which Watson alluded is itself the immortality of poets, as shown in the following lines from the same poem of Watson's in which Maro, the Mantuan, is Virgil; "thou" refers to Tennyson; and the idea is expressed that the poet's works will be read not only as long as his culture lasts, but even longer (*survi ving* his "racee and tongue").

Captains and conquerors leave a little dust,
And kings a dubious legend of their reign;
The swords of Caesars, they are less than rust;
The poet doth remain.

Dead is Augustus, Maro is alive;
And thou, the Mantuan of our age and clime,
Like Virgil shalt thy race and tongue survive,
Bequeathing no less honeyed words to time,
Embalmed in amber of eternal rhyme,
And rich with sweets for every Muse's hive.

Twentieth Century

We begin our examples from the twentieth century with two extracts from the writings of Edna St. Vincent Millay. In the first extract, she *predicted* that her verses will be read in

the future; in the second, she *pleaded* that future readers remember her.

82. It pleases me, somehow, to say,
'This book when I am dead will be
A little faint perfume of me.'

83. Stranger, pause and look;
From the dust of ages
Lift this little book,
Turn the tattered pages,

Read me, do not let me die!
Search the fading letters, finding
Steadfast in the broken binding
All that once was I! ...

Boys and girls that lie
Whispering in the hedges,
Do not let me die,
Mix me with your pledges;...

Women at your toil,
Women at your leisure,
Till the kettle boil
Snatch of me your pleasure.

84. The passage which I shall quote from Jamie Holme's writings expresses confidence (of the kind that we have often encountered in our samplings) that the future holds lasting fame for the poet and his beloved.

My love, long after we have laid aside
These mortal vestures love has found so fair;
When hungry earth has swallowed all our pride,
And veiled with dust our lips and eyes and hair—...

Someone may turn the pages of this book
To read of us, his eyelids stung with tears,
And wandering in the ways that we forsook
Thrill to their beauty, down the gulf of years.
Strange, strange to think, when you and I are gone,
Our love in yellowing parchment will live on.

I now present two portions of a poem by Archibald MacLeish. In the first portion, the contention that poets will live on by reason of their work is rejected. In the second portion, however, MacLeish argues that *his* description of the beauty of his beloved will live on.

85. Here is the first portion:

The praisers of women in their proud and beautiful poems,
Naming the grave mouth and the hair and the eyes,
Boasted those they loved should be forever remembered:
These were lies.

86. In the second portion, MacLeish wrote that, because of *his description* of “the shape of a leaf [that] lay once on your hair,” that shape will endure forever:
Till the world ends and the eyes are out and the mouths broken
Look! It is there!

87. I close this garland of striking passages on poetic survival with a dramatic statement by Yevgeny Yevtushenko which is reminiscent of Horace’s dictum “I shall not wholly die.” Yevtushenko declared on this subject, “[S]omething of me will survive my stay on Earth.”

Conclusion

The propositions exemplified in the foregoing garland may be summarized as follows :

1. My poems will be read by posterity. As a consequence, I shall not wholly die.
2. My poems constitute a monument more lasting than material structures.
3. My poems will be read as long as my culture lasts—or even longer (as long, perhaps, as humans can read, or indeed as long as the world lasts).
4. Since my poems celebrate the girl that I love, *she* will not wholly die.
5. Individuals who are important during their lives but are *not* glorified in poetic writings are destined to be forgotten.
6. The poems of another writer, whom I admire, will be read by posterity.
7. Poems of *some* other writers, since they lack inspiration, will *not* survive to posterity.

3077 Chestnut St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20015