

Remembering Shakespeare (We call him "Bill")

Forty-seven scholars took seven years
To birth King James' Version of the Bible--
One thousand three hundred fifty pages.
One living, breathing man, working alone
Produced one thousand five hundred pages
of sixteen plays, tragedies, comedies,
historical dramas, and fair sonnets,
Composed of twenty thousand English words,
Two thousand of which he himself conceived,
Writing to a beat he could not silence:
Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump

Including his thumbs, he sucked ten fingers.
His first words, "Iambic pentameter!"
Lying in grassy fields, he watched the clouds
Spelling out "iambic pentameter."
Stars glowed in iambic pentameter.
Mark his height: Iambic pentameter.
His shoe size? Iambic pentameter.
His doublet? Iambic pentameter.

Crowds scoffed as his coach and horsemen passed by:
Five horses in front; five coachmen in back.
To William's ears, speech in common meter
Echoed idiot sounds and made no sense.
His heart could not be silent, or silenced:
Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump

Invisible sculpting by God's own hand
Man and woman, the Trinity, doubled--
Appeared as iambic pentameter.
His wedding vows: ten beats to the measure.
At the royal table, ten beats per dish.

He fought foes armed with his chosen weapon:
His saber, iambic pentameter.
The non-stop rhythm of his pulsing heart:
Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump

When his selected iambs riled the King,
Shrouded in iambic pentameter
He took shelter in Stratford-on-Avon.
Exile did not change his ten beats per line.

No cathedral, no Colossus of Rhodes,
No pyramid to mark his spot on earth.
His gifts to adoring fans: words, words, words,
My horse! My horse! my kingdom for a horse!
The tapestry of his writings hangs bright.
Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou?
Each word a gateway to his shrine: words, words.
Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.
His monument on paper: words, words, words:
To be or not to be? Out! Out, damned spot!

Under the spell of an unseen Master,
A crown of laurel, gold medal in hand,
Ten beats per line; five weighty, five softer,
He surrendered his soul to the drumbeat.
And rejoiced at the throbbing of his heart.
Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump
Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump, Ba-bump.