it was a brilliant idea to produce the narrative poems and sonnets as a single edition...[Burrow's] book-length introduction [is] the best study there is of Shakespeare as a poet. "If the bookshelf had room for only one edition of Shakespeare's poems, Burrow's would be the one" Stephen Orgel, London Review of Books. "It is a superb edition, beautifully conceived, learned, intelligent, generous, judicious; but most impressive in the way it locates Shakespeare's poems in relation to each other and to his career." Steph
Many editions of Shakespeare's poems, and of the Sonnets in particular, present themselves as having solved some or all of the many unanswered questions which surround these works. The questions have varied with each age, as have the answers. Commentators since the late eighteenth century have argued over the identity of "Mr W.H." to whom the Sonnets volume is dedicated, and have worked themselves into a fine froth over the nature of Shakespeare's sexuality. Furthermore, the article argues that the multivalent ending of the poem is of a piece with Keats's concept of negative capability in that it accepts the finality of death without resolving the conflict between life and death or sublimating his fears into some higher reality or an immortal afterlife. The article concludes by pointing out the irony that while the poem expresses Keats's fears that an early death would not give him the chance to achieve maturity as a poet, fear of death itself may be regarded as one of the driving forces behind his fast maturity and remarkable achievement.