English Literature of the Renaissance

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by

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Lecture 1

Renaissance

Renaissance, the great flowering of art, architecture, Politics, and the study of literature, usually seen as the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern world, which came about under the influence of Greek and Roman models. It began in Italy in the late 14th cent., culminated in the High Renaissance in the early 16th cent, (the period of *Michelangelo and *Machiavelli), and spread to the rest of Europe in the 15th cent, and afterwards. Its emphasis was humanist:

that is, on regarding the human figure and reason without a necessary relating of it to the superhuman; but much of its energy also came from the *

tradition in writers such as *Pico della Mirandola. The word Renaissance has been applied in the 20th cent, to earlier periods which manifested a new interest in and study of the classics, such as the 12th cent, and the period of Charlemagne. But the Italian Renaissance is still seen as a watershed in the development of civilization, both because of its extent and because of its emphasis on the human, whether independent of or in association with the divine. See J. A. Symonds, *History of the Renaissance in Italy* (1875-86); W. Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873); J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (English trans., S. G. C. Middlemore, 1929).

This course provides a concise introduction to the literature of Elizabethan and Stuart England (1558–1649). It is aimed chiefly at undergraduate students taking courses on sixteenth and seventeenth-century English literature, but will hopefully be useful, too, for taught postgraduates looking to refresh or consolidate their knowledge of the period's literature, and lecturers preparing or teaching Renaissance courses.

The beginnings of what we now describe as 'Renaissance' or 'Early Modern' English literature precede the accession of Elizabeth I (1558), but Renaissance literary culture only became firmly established in England in the second half of the sixteenth century. Similarly, while the literature produced between 1649 and the Restoration of the Monarchy (1660) could be said to belong to the Renaissance, the unusual historical context in which it was produced marks the Interregnum as a distinctive literary era. This is why this book concentrates on the literature of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries

Renaissance Definition:

The period in European history that marked the end of the Middle Ages. It began in Italy in the late fourteenth century. In broad terms, it is usually seen as spanning the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although it did not reach Great Britain, for example, until the 1480s or so. The Renaissance saw an awakening in almost every sphere of human activity, especially science and philosophy and the arts. The period is best defined by the emergence of a general philosophy that emphasized the importance of the intellect, the individual and world affairs. It contrasts strongly with the medieval worldview, characterized by the dominant concerns of faith, the social, collective and spiritual salvation. Prominent writers during the Renaissance include Niccolo Machiavelli and Baldassare Castiglione in Italy, Miguel de Cervantes and Lope de Vega in Spain, Jean Froissart and Francois Rabelais in France, Sir Thomas More and Sir Philip Sidney in England and Desiderius Erasmus in Holland.

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Following chapters focus on the major literary genres: drama, poetry and prose.

This century, like a golden age, has restored to light the liberal arts . . . achieving what had been honoured among the ancients, but almost forgotten since. (Marsilio Ficino, 1482)

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The 'Renaissance' (meaning 'rebirth') describes the movement which saw renewed European interest in classical culture between the late fourteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries. Having initially sought to emulate the achievements of the Greek and Roman empires, Renaissance scholars and artists later sought to out-do their ancient predecessors, and therefore engaged in fresh intellectual and artistic exploration.

The origins of the 'Renaissance' have been hotly debated but most scholars agree that it originated in late fourteenth-century Italy, where it was fostered by a new generation of humanist scholars. Its influence was gradually felt all across Europe, reaching England by the early sixteenth century**.**

The specific term 'Renaissance' (or *rinascita*) was first used by Italian art historian Giorgio Vasari in his *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters*(1550) to describe the achievements of recent artists; achievements he saw as marking a revival in the arts, after a period of long decay

following the fall of the Roman Empire. Not until the nineteenth century was the term used more broadly to describe the period and culture of early modern Europe (1500–1700); and only in the twentieth century did the term come to be a standard label for the era.

Some modern scholars have questioned the use of the term 'Renaissance', arguing that it overstates the break with the past and downplays Medieval knowledge of classical learning.

Such scholars often prefer to describe the period as 'early modern'; but this label has its drawbacks, too, potentially overemphasising the similarities between Renaissance and modern culture. The more traditional term 'Renaissance' is favoured for the title of this guide, but appears alongside the phrase 'early modern' in the text. Although Elizabethan and Stuart writers did not refer to their era as the 'Renaissance' it was a concept they understood, and highlights the fact that it was an era of new advances in European knowledge, akin to those associated with the great classical civilisations.

Religion

Religion was central to life in Renaissance England. Officially, everyone was Christian. In such a culture religion was not simply an ideology it was a way of life, and to write about any aspect of life was almost inevitably to touch on religion. The importance of Christianity in

early Renaissance Europe was reinforced by the strength of the Catholic Church (led by the Pope). In 1500 all the major Western European states and their people belonged to it; but there had long been discontent within the Catholic community about perceived clerical corruption.

In 1517 … Martin Luther (an ex-monk), nailed ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg that questioned the authority and doctrines of the Catholic Church Luther and

his fellow campaigners sought the reformation of the Church from within, but, faced with intransigence, criticism soon hardened into opposition and the reformers came to believe that the only way to re-establish God's 'true' church was to break away and found their own 'Protestant' Church. This movement became known as the Protestant Reformation.

At first Protestantism was a fringe religion but it grew in power as a number of Northern European states became Protestant.

Henry VIII (1509–47) declared himself 'Supreme Head' of the Church of England. Henry's reasons for challenging the authority of the Pope and the Catholic Church were political and personal, rather than doctrinal. Little more than a decade earlier the Pope had awarded him the title of Defender of the Faith after he attacked Luther's views (1521); but by 1527 Henry was considering divorcing his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, so that he might marry Anne Boleyn.

Given the reasons behind Henry's conflict with Rome, it is perhaps not surprising that the English Church did not alter substantially during his reign .

James did not grant Catholics greater tolerance, as some Puritans had feared he might, and encouraged the preparation of a new English translation of the Bible (published in 1611 as the influential *King James Authorised Bible*).

Such would-be reformers came to be known as 'Puritans' because of their desire to further 'purify' the Church and their favouring of an ascetic religious culture.

Western Europeans were generally Christian but recognised the existence of at least two other religions: Judaism and Islam. The followers of both faiths are conventionally stigmatised in the period's literature. Jews are associated with avarice and usury, while Islamic figures are stereotyped as barbaric, untrustworthy, lustful pagans. Yet most English people would have had little knowledge of either religion. This was especially true of Islam. Although Christians were accustomed to regard Islam as a false faith, most had to rely on second-hand accounts for their knowledge of it because the only Europeans who had much contact with the Islamic East were traders and diplomats. Opposition to Islam and the countries associated with it was deep-rooted, finding its origins in the Medieval Crusades to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims, but Western antipathy was fuelled in the sixteenth century by the growing power of the Ottoman (or Turkish) Empire and its extension westwards with the Turks laying 'claim to pivotal territory in the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, including Cyprus in 1571 and Tunis in 1574'.3 Such was the perceived threat that the Spanish, the Venetians and the Pope formed a league to fight against the Turks, famously defeating them in the Battle of Lepanto (1571).

The Jews had long been persecuted in Europe but were a more familiar religious minority than Muslims, living within (as well as beyond) Europe. Jews were expelled from England in 1290 but returned in small numbers during subsequent centuries. By the late sixteenth century there were small Jewish ommunities in London and Bristol, although those involved were obliged to conform outwardly to Protestantism, both because other religions were not tolerated and because of the strength of contemporary anti-Jewish feeling. Such antipathy had a long history: the association of the Jews with the death of Jesus and with money lending (which the Bible condemned) had long encouraged European Christians to look down on the Jews as an ungodly sect, while their status as an 'alien', homeless people made them a perennial object of suspicion. The curiosity and anxiety aroused by religious and cultural 'aliens' in the period is reflected in the ambivalent representation of Jews in late sixteenth-century plays such as Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice.*

Magic

In Renaissance Europe faith in Christianity co-existed with a widespread belief in magic. Even monarchs and religious leaders took magic seriously. Elizabeth I famously consulted contemporary magus John Dee for advice about the most auspicious date for her coronation, while her successor, James I participated in a series of witchcraft trials and published his own study of the subject, *Demonology* (1597). The extent of popular interest in magic is reflected in the proliferation of texts about magic in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In England such literature included non-fiction books about witchcraft, accounts of witchcraft trials, and a large body of poems, plays and prose romances featuring magicians and witches. Such literature appears to have proved especially popular in the Jacobean period, when the accession of James I generated fresh interest in the subject. One of the best known examples of Jacobean 'witchcraft' literature, William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (performed c. 1606) (which features a chorus of witches who predict the future) is thought to have been written to cater for this fashion.

Perceptions of what constituted magic varied. Some contemporaries distinguished between 'black' and 'white' magic, categorizing magic used to hurt or injure people, animals or property as 'black' and magic used to help or heal as 'white'. Contemporaries, likewise distinguished between different types of magician, such as witches, magi, and cunning men and women. Witches were generally understood to be people 'who either by open or secret league, wittingly and willingly, consenteth to [give help] and assistance … in the working of wonders'; while a magus was believed to be a 'great magician who by dint of deep learning, ascetic discipline, and patient skill could command the secret forces of the natural and supernatural world' (like Shakespeare's Prospero). Far humbler was the figure of the 'cunning' man or woman, who was believed to possess knowledge that allowed him or her to heal animals and people. Some contemporaries, including James I, condemned all kinds of magic as demonic, but anecdotal evidence suggests that others were not opposed to those who practiced 'white' magic; and the witchcraft laws, first introduced in the sixteenth century, focused on those who practiced 'black' magic'

Lecture 2

The Renaissance 1485–1660

CONTEXTS AND CONDITIONS :

At the end of the 1400 s, the world changed. Two key dates can mark the beginning of modern times. In 1485, the Wars of the Roses came to an end, and, following the invention of printing, William Caxton issued the first imaginative book to be published in England – Sir Thomas Malory's retelling of the Arthurian legends as *Le Morte D'Arthur.* In 1492, Christopher Columbus's voyage to the Americas opened European eyes to the existence of the New World.

both geographical and spiritual, are the key to the Renaissance, the 'rebirth' of learning and culture, which reached its peak in Italy in the early sixteenth century and in Britain during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, from 1558 to 1603.

England emerged from the Wars of the Roses (1453–85) with a new dynasty in power, the Tudors. As with all powerful leaders, the question of succession became crucial to the continuation of power.

So it was with the greatest of the Tudor monarchs, Henry VIII, whose reign lasted from 1509 to 1547. In his continued attempts to father a son and heir to the line, Henry married six times. But his six wives gave him only one son and two daughters, who became King Edward VI, Queen Mary I, and Queen Elizabeth I.

The need for the annulment of his first marriage, to Catherine of Aragon, brought Henry into direct conflict with the Catholic church, and with Pope Clement VII (1521–32) in particular. In reaction to the Catholic church's rulings, Henry took a decisive step which was to influence every aspect of English, then British, life and culture from that time onwards. He ended the rule of the Catholic church in England, closed (and largely destroyed) the monasteries – which had for 58 *The Renaissance 1485–1660* centuries been the repository of learning, history, and culture – and established himself as both the head of the church and head of state.

The importance of this move, known as the Reformation, is huge. In a very short period of time, centuries of religious faith, attitudes and beliefs were replaced by a new way of thinking. Now, for example, the King as 'Defender of the Faith' was the closest human being to God – a role previously given to the Pope in Rome. Now, England became Protestant, and the nation's political and religious identity had to be redefined. Protestantism, which had originated with Martin Luther's *95 Theses* in Wittenberg in 1517, became the official national religion, and the King rather than the Pope became head of the church. Although King Henry himself remained nominally Catholic, despite being excommunicated by the Pope, all the Catholic tenets, from confession to heaven and hell, were questioned. It was, quite simply, the most radical revolution in beliefs ever to affect the nation. The closest equivalent shock to the nation's religious and moral identity is Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), whose theories undermined the religious and biblical beliefs of Victorian society and led to a colossal crisis of identity and faith.

The Reformation in the reign of Henry VIII provoked a similarly overwhelming crisis in England in the sixteenth century. England's identity began to be separate and distinct from Europe. The nation was to affirm its individuality historically in two ways: in the conquest of Empire, and in the domination of the seas, achieved during the reign of Henry's daughter Elizabeth I.

Henry VIII's break with Rome was not carried out as an isolated rebellion. Two European thinkers, in particular, established the climate which made it possible. The first of these was the Dutch scholar Erasmus whose enthusiasm for classical literature was a major source for the revival in classical learning. His contempt for the narrowness of Catholic monasticism (expressed in *The Praise of Folly*) was not an attempt to deny the authority of the Pope, but a challenge to the corruption of the Catholic church. Erasmus had no time for unnecessary ritual, the sale of pardons and religious relics. He wished to return to the values of the early Christian church and in order to do so, produced a Greek edition (1516) of the Scriptures in place of the existing Latin one. Through his visits to England, Erasmus became a friend of

Sir Thomas More, who was later beheaded for refusing to support Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Although much of Erasmus's work prepared the ground for Protestant reforms, his aim was to purify and remodel the Catholic church, not to break away from it. He represented the voice of learning and knowledge, of liberal culture and tolerance.

* - For more details about humanists see the end of this lecture

it was a quite different temperament, the German Martin Luther's, which marked the decisive break with Rome. Luther agreed with much of what Erasmus said about the corruption of the Catholic church but they disagreed on their responses and Luther refused to submit to the Pope's authority. Many historians regard 1517, when Luther pinned to a chapel door his *95 Theses Against the Sale of Papal Indulgences*, as the start of the Reformation and the birth of Protestantism. Luther's continuing opposition to the Pope led to his excommunication (1521) and the further spread of religious individualism in Northern Europe. It is against this background that we should place Henry VIII's adoption of the role of the head of the English church and the church's own quite separate style of Anglicanism.

Luther's mission in developing the church outside Catholicism was taken up by the Frenchman, Jean Calvin. Like Luther, Calvin saw the Bible as the literal word of God and the very foundation for his ideas. For the last twenty years of Calvin's life, Geneva became the powerhouse of Protestantism. It functioned as a model of civic organization and behaviour and included a much stricter morality – for example, dress was austere, patriarchy took a stronger grip, drama was censored, women were drowned and men beheaded for adultery.

This was significant because the ideas developed in Geneva spread to regions of Northern Europe, including Scotland and the non-conformist tradition in England and Wales. This influential movement culminated a century later in the triumph of Cromwell's Puritan Commonwealth. After the Reformation, the place of man in the world had to be re-examined. This was a world which was expanding. In 1492, Christopher Columbus travelled in search of the Indies, landing first in the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. For many years he was credited with having 'discovered' the Americas. Over the next century

or so, Copernicus and Galileo would establish scientifically that the Earth was not the centre of the universe. This expansion was reflected in the mental explorations of the time. The figure of the Dutch philosopher Erasmus also takes on considerable importance here. His humanist thinking had a great influence on generations of writers whose work placed man at the centre of the universe.

It was not by accident that neo-Platonic philosophy, from the great age of classical Greece, became dominant in the Renaissance. Its ideals of the harmony of the universe and the perfectibility of mankind, formulated before the birth of Christianity, opened up the humanist ways of thinking that pervaded much European and English Renaissance writing.

Literature before the Renaissance had frequently offered ideal patterns for living which were dominated by the ethos of the church, but after the Reformation the search for individual expression and meaning took over. Institutions were questioned and re-evaluated, often while being praised at the same time. But where there had been conventional modes of expression, reflecting ideal modes of behaviour – religious, heroic, or social – Renaissance writing explored the geography of the human soul, redefining its relationship with authority, history, science, and the future. This involved experimentation with form and genre, and an enormous variety of linguistic and literary innovations in a short period of time.

Reason was the driving force in this search for rules to govern human behaviour in the Renaissance world. The power and mystique of Christianity had been overthrown in one bold stroke: where the marvellous no longer holds sway, real life has to provide explanations. Man, and the use he makes of his powers, capabilities, and free will, is thus the subject matter of Renaissance literature, from the early sonnets modelled on Petrarch to the English epic which closes the period, *Paradise Lost*, published after the Restoration, when the Renaissance had long finished.

The Reformation gave cultural, philosophical, and ideological impetus to English Renaissance writing. The writers in the century following the Reformation had to explore and redefine all the concerns of humanity. In a world where old assumptions were no longer valid, where scientific discoveries questioned age-old hypotheses, and where man was the central interest, it was the writers who reflected and attempted to respond to the disintegration of former certainties. For it is when the universe is out of control that it is at its most frightening – and its most stimulating. There would never again be such an atmosphere of creative tension in the country. What was created was a language, a literature, and a national and international identity.

At the same time there occurred the growth, some historians would say the birth, of modern science, mathematics and astronomy. In the fourth decade of the sixteenth century Copernicus replaced Aristotle's system with the sun, rather than the Earth, at the centre of the universe. In anatomy, Harvey discovered (1628) the circulation of the blood, building on sixteenth-century work in Italy. There was a similar explosion from the start of the seventeenth century in the discovery, development and use of clocks, telescopes, thermometers, compasses, microscopes – all instruments designed to measure and investigate more closely the visible and invisible world.

The writing of the era was the most extensive exploration of human freedom since the classical period. This led English literature to a new religious, social and moral identity which it maintained until the mid nineteenth century. English became one of the richest and most varied of world literatures, and is still the object of interest and study in places and times distant from its origin. The Reformation and the century of cultural adjustment and conflict which followed are crucial keys in understanding English literature's many identities.

The literature of the English Renaissance contains some of the greatest names in all world literature: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster, and Jonson, among the dramatists; Sidney, Spenser, Donne, and Milton among the poets; Bacon, Nashe, Raleigh, Browne, and Hooker in prose; and, at the centre of them all, the Authorised Version of the Bible, published in 1611.

So many great names and texts are involved because so many questions were under debate: what is man, what is life for, why is life so short, what is good and bad (and who is to judge), what is a king, what is love ? These are questions which have been the stuff of literature and of philosophy since the beginning of time, but they were never so actively and thoroughly made a part of everyday discussion as in the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages.

Politically, it was an unsettled time. Although Elizabeth reigned for some forty-five years, there were constant threats, plots, and potential rebellions against her. Protestant extremists (Puritans) were a constant presence; many people left the country for religious reasons, in order to set up the first colonies in Virginia and Pennsylvania, the beginnings of another New World. Catholic dissent (the Counter-Reformation) reached its most noted expression in Guy Fawkes's Gunpowder Plot of 5 November 1605, still remembered on that date every year. And Elizabeth's one-time favorite, the Earl of Essex, led a plot against his monarch which considerably unsettled the political climate of the end of the century.

Elizabeth's reign did, however, give the nation some sense of stability, and a considerable sense of national and religious triumph when, in 1588, the Spanish Armada, the fleet of the Catholic King Philip of Spain, was defeated. England had sovereignty over the seas, and her seamen (pirates or heroes, depending on one's point of view) plundered the gold of the Spanish Empire to make their own Queen the richest and most powerful monarch in the world.

With this growth in the wealth and political importance of the nation, London developed in size and importance as the nation's capital. The increasing population could not normally read or write, but did go to the theatre. Hence, from the foundation of the first public theatre in 1576, the stage became the forum for debate, spectacle, and entertainment. It was the place where the writer took his work to an audience which might include the Queen herself and the lowliest of her subjects. Hand in hand with the growth in theatrical expression goes the growth of modern English as a national language.

Humanism in the Renaissance

The defining concept of the Renaissance was *humanism,* a literary movement that began in Italy during the fourteenth century. Humanism was a distinct movement because it broke from the medieval tradition of having pious religious motivation for creating art or works of literature. Humanist writers were concerned with worldly or secular subjects rather than strictly religious themes. Such emphasis on the mundane was the result of a more materialistic view of the world. Unlike the Medieval Era, Renaissance people were concerned with money and the enjoyment of life and all its worldly pleasures. Humanist writers glorified the individual and believed that man was the measure of all things and had unlimited potential.

CONTEXTS AND CONDITIONS :

Humanism had far-reaching effects throughout Italy and Europe. The advent of humanism ended the church dominance of written history. Humanist writers secularized the view of history by writing from a non-religious viewpoint.

The Humanists also had a great effect on education. They believed that education stimulated the creative powers of the individual. They supported studying grammar, poetry, and history, as well as mathematics, astronomy, and music. Humanists promoted the concept of the well-rounded, or Renaissance man, who was proficient in both intellectual and physical endeavors.

Humanist writers sought to understand human nature through a study of classical writers such as Plato and Aristotle. They believed that the classical writers of Ancient Greece and Rome could teach important ideas about life, love, and beauty. The revival of interest in the classical models of Greece and Rome was centered primarily among the educated people of the Italian city-states and focused on literature and writing.

During the Middle Ages in Western Europe, Latin was the language of the Church and the educated people. The Humanist writers began to use the *vernacular*, the national languages of a country, in addition to Latin.

Some important Italian Humanists are:

1 - Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) was an Italian who lived in Florence and who expressed in his writings the belief that there were no limits to what man could accomplish.

2 - Francesco Petrarca, known as Petrarch (1304-1374) was the Father of Humanism, a Florentine who spent his youth in Tuscany and lived in Milan and Venice. He was a collector of old manuscripts and through his efforts the speeches of Cicero and the poems of Homer and Virgil became known to Western Europe. Petrarch's works also led to the rise of people known as *Civic Humanists*, or those individuals who were civic-minded and looked to the governments of the ancient worlds for inspiration. Petrarch also wrote sonnets in Italian. Many of these sonnets expressed his love for the beautiful Laura. His sonnets greatly influenced other writers of the time.

3 - Leonardo Bruni (1369-1444), who wrote a biography of Cicero, encouraged people to become active in the political as well as the cultural life of their cities. He was a historian who today is most famous for *The History of the Florentine Peoples*, a 12-volume work. He was also the Chancellor of Florence from 1427 until 1444.

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) wrote *The Decameron*. These hundred short stories were related by a group of young men and women who fled to a villa outside Florence to escape the Black Death. Boccaccio's work is considered to be the best prose of the Renaissance.

Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529) wrote one of the most widely read books, *The Courtier*, which set forth the criteria on how to be the ideal Renaissance man. Castiglione's ideal courtier was a well-educated, mannered aristocrat who was a master in many fields from poetry to music to sports.

- Compiled and prepared by Dr M. N. Naimi

Lecture 3

The Sonnet

A sonnet is a fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter with a carefully patterned rhyme scheme. Other strict, short poetic forms occur in English poetry (the sestina, the villanelle, and the haiku, for example), but none has been used so successfully by so many different poets.

The **Italian,** or **Petrarchan** sonnet, named after Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374), the Italian poet, was introduced into English poetry in the early 16th century by Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542). Its fourteen lines break into an **octave** (or **octet**), which usually rhymes *abbaabba*, but which may sometimes be *abbacddc* or even (rarely) *abababab*; and a **sestet**, which may rhyme *xyzxyz* or *xyxyxy*, or any of the multiple variations possible using only two or three rhyme-sounds.

The **English** or **Shakespearean** sonnet, developed first by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-1547), consists of three quatrains and a couplet--that is, it rhymes ***abab cdcd efef gg***.

The form into which a poet puts his or her words is always something of which the reader ought to take conscious note. And when poets have chosen to work within such a strict form, that form and its strictures make up part of what they want to say. In other words, the poet is using the structure of the poem as part of the language act: we will find the "meaning" not only in the words, but partly in their pattern as well.

- **The sonnet can be thematically divided into two sections:**
- **The first presents the theme, raises an issue or doubt.**
- **The second part answers the question, resolves the problem, or drives home the poem's point.**
- **This change in the poem is called the turn and helps move forward the emotional action of the poem quickly.**

The Italian form, in some ways the simpler of the two, usually projects and develops a subject in the **octet**, then executes a **turn** at the beginning of the sestet, so that the sestet can in some way release the tension built up in the **octave**.

"Farewell Love and all thy laws for ever"

Farewell Love and all thy laws for ever,	*a*	
Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more;	*b*	become confused
Senec and Plato call me from thy lore	*b*	science . Plato stands for knowledge
To perfect wealth my wit for to endeavour.	*a*	attempt
In blind error when I did persever,	*a*	
Thy sharp repulse, that pricketh aye so sore,	*b*	your. Rejection. Causes pain, stings
Hath taught me to set in trifles no store	*b*	
And scape forth, since liberty is lever.	*a*	escape.
Therefore farewell; go trouble younger hearts	*c*	
And in me claim no more authority;	*d*	
With idle youth go use thy property	*d*	
And thereon spend thy many brittle darts.	*c*	hard but easily broken
For hitherto though I have lost all my time,	*e*	
Me lusteth no longer rotten boughs to climb.	*e*	

- Wyatt Devonshire (1557) (This sonnet will be explained later in this lecture.)

The Sonnet

The Shakespearean sonnet has a wider range of possibilities. One pattern introduces an idea in the first quatrain, complicates it in the second, complicates it still further in the third, and resolves the whole thing in the final couplet.

"Sonnet 138" or "When My Love Swears that She is Made of Truth"

When my love swears that she is made of truth	*a*
I do believe her, though I know she lies,	*b*
That she might think me some untutor'd youth,	*a*
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.	*b*
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,	*c*
Although she knows my days are past the best,	*d*
Simply I credit her false speaking tongue:	*c*
On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.	*d*
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?	*e*
And wherefore say not I that I am old?	*f*
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,	*e*
And age in love loves not to have years told:	*f*
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,	*g*
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.	*g*

\-

\- William Shakespeare

The Sonnet

The poet will leave love and follow a different way. He has had enough from love. The poet discovers that love is like prison. Now he has changed; he has a hard heart, he will no more be controlled by love. So, he says farewell love and all your rules and restrictions forever. Falling in love is likened to baited hooks which attract the fish to come, and then fall in the trap. The poet says that the same thing happens to lovers, inexperienced ones. When they are attracted by the sweetness and beauty of love, knowing nothing about its painful suffering and bitter endings.

The poet will not be impressed by baited hooks of love anymore. Seneca and Plato are calling him to knowledge and philosophy. He found that he was almost blind when he paid attention to love and was rejected; the thing which painfully hurt him. He knew that love is completely useless.

But now he found the solution which is liberty. So, he again says farewell love, go and trouble people who are young and inexperienced. You have no more authority and control on me. Go to idle people and spend your easily broken arrows on them, although I have wasted and lost my time, I will no longer follow the way of love.

The poet has made up his mind to give up looking for love. Love is a prison and knowledge is liberty. He has found that knowledge is more beneficial than love. He blames himself for the blind mistake he has made when he went to his beloved and sang to her. He should have gone to Plato and Seneca instead. In his opinion, love is a silly thing. Then he asks love to go to those inexperienced lovers. He has got love the waste of time. He does not want to go over rotten branches of trees because if he climbs them he will fall down again.

The couplet tells us, with its punning on 'lie', that Shakespeare is now registered as one among her flatterers and lovers. They pretend to each other in what a critic sees as a relationship not of 'bitterness but acceptance'. Here we Shakespeare feeling his years and deliberately accepting his beloved's flatteries of his youth, while she accepts his of trust in her promises. 'Vainly' simply, habit' give the game away.

The plain, colloquial diction is offset by the questions and answers which take us into the situation, and the punning and play with the important words: think, simple, lie, bring it sadly home. With sonnet (134), this sonnet (138) was the first of Shakespeare's sonnets to be published, in 1599, as part of an anthology entitled *The Passionate Pilgrim*.

- ***First quatrain; note the puns and the intellectual games: [I know she lies, so I believe her so that she will believe me to be young and untutored]***
- ***Second quatrain: [Well of course I know that she doesn't really think I'm young, but I have to pretend to believe her so that she will pretend that I'm young]***
- ***Third quatrain: [so why don't we both fess up? because love depends upon trust and upon youth]***
- ***Final couplet, and resolution:***

[we lie to ourselves and to each other, so that we may flatter ourselves that we are young, honest, and in love]. Note especially the puns].

You can see how this form would attract writers of great technical skill who are fascinated with intellectual puzzles and intrigued by the complexity of human emotions, which become especially tangled when it comes to dealing with the sonnet's traditional subjects, love and faith.

Pay close attention to line-end punctuation, especially at lines four, eight, and twelve, and to connective words like *and, or, but, as, so, if, then, when,* or *which* at the beginnings of lines (especially lines five, nine, and thirteen).

Review

The **Italian,** or **Petrarchan** sonnet:
Fourteen lines
Iambic pentameter
Consists of an **octet** (eight lines) of two envelope quatrains
Usually ***abba abba***,
Sometimes ***abba cddc,***
Or rarely ***abab abab***;
The turn occurs at the end of the octet and is developed and closed in the sestet.
And a **sestet** (six lines)
Which may rhyme ***xyzxyz***
Or ***xyxyxy***

The **English** or **Shakespearean** sonnet:
Fourteen lines
Iambic pentameter
Consists of **three Sicilian quatrains** (four lines)
And a **heroic couplet** (two lines)
Rhymes: ***abab cdcd efef gg***
The turn comes at or near line 13

The Sonnet

A sonnet can be helpful when writing about emotions that are difficult to articulate. It is a short poem, so there is only so much room to work in. As well, the turn forces the poet to express what may not be normally expressible. The writing of the poem in this fixed form gives a better understanding of the emotions drive .

- Compiled and prepared by Dr M N Naimi

Lecture 4

John Donne and metaphysical poetry

There is no real precedent in English for Donne's love lyrics, either for the sustained variety of verse forms or for the comparably great variety of tone and implied occasion; and though Donne's style grows out of a general sixteenth-century aesthetic of "conceited verses," his particular way of tight, combative argumentation, demanding the relentless close attention of his reader, takes that aesthetic to a dramatically new level.

At best, that argumentativeness is of a piece with the subject matter: love as battle of wits, either between the lovers themselves, or between the lovers and the world around them. … Donne writes some of the classic poems … that affirm love with a pitch of hyperbole: radically transformative, unshakeably enduring, with the capacity of rendering everything else irrelevant.

metaphysical poets, the name given to a diverse group of 17th century English poets whose work is notable for its ingenious (clever) use of intellectual and theological concepts in surprising CONCEITS, strange PARADOXES, and far-fetched IMAGERY.

The leading metaphysical poet was John Donne, whose colloquial, argumentative abruptness of rhythm and tone distinguishes his style from the CONVENTIONS of Elizabethan love-lyrics. Other poets to whom the label is applied include Andrew Marvell, Abraham Cowley, John Cleveland, and the predominantly religious poets George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, and Richard Crashaw.

In the 20th century, T. S. Eliot and others revived their reputation, stressing their quality of WIT, in the sense of intellectual strenuousness and flexibility rather than smart humour. The term metaphysical poetry usually refers to the works of these poets, but it can sometimes denote any poetry that discusses metaphysics, that is, the philosophy of knowledge and existence.

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

As virtuous men pass mildly away
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
The breath goes now, and some say, No,
So let us melt and make no noise,
No tear-floods nor sigh-tempests move;
Twere profanation of our joys (not sacred)
To tell the laity our love. (common)

Moving of the earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did and meant; (think)
But trepidation of the spheres, (anxiety)
Though greater far, is innocent.
Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it;

But we, by a love so much refined
That ourselves know not what it is,
Interassurèd of the mind,

Care less eyes, lips, and hands to miss.
Our two souls, therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,

Like gold to airy thinness beat.
If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two.
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth if the other do;
And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and harkens after it,

And grows erect as that comes home.
Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like the other foot obliquely run;
Thy firmness draws my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun

"A Valediction: forbidding Mourning"

The speak explains that he is forced to spend time apart from his lover, (his wife) but before he leaves, he tells her that their farewell should not become anoccasion for mourning and sorrow. In the same way that virtuous men die mildly and without complaint, he says, so they should leave without "tear-floods" and "sigh-tempests," for to publicly announce their feelings in such a way would profane their love.

The speaker says that when the earth moves, it brings "harms and fears," but when the spheres experience "trepidation," though the impact is greater, it is also innocent (simple). The love of "dull sublunary lovers" can not survive separation, but it removes that which constitutes the love itself; but the love he shares with his beloved is so refined and "Inter-assured of the mind" that they need not worry about missing "eyes, lips, and hands."

Though he must go, their souls are still one, and, therefore, they are not enduring a breach (a cut), they are experiencing an "expansion"; in the same way that gold can be stretched by beating it "to aery thinness," the soul they share will simply stretch to take in all the space between them. If their souls are separate, he says, they are like the feet of compass:

His lover's soul is the fixed foot in the center, and his is the foot that moves around it. The firmness of the center foot makes the circle that the outer foot draws perfect: "Thy firmness makes my circle just, / And makes me end, where I begun."

Form

The nine stanzas of this Valediction are quite simple compared to many of Donne's poems, which make use of strange metrical patterns overlaid jarringly on regular rhyme schemes. Here, each four-line stanza is quite unadorned (simple and plain) , with an ABAB rhyme scheme and an iambic tetrameter meter.

"A Valediction: forbidding Mourning" is one of Donne's most famous and simplest poems and also probably his most direct statement of his ideal of spiritual love. For all his sensuality in poems, such as "The Flea," Donne professed a devotion to a kind of spiritual love that transcended the merely physical. Here, anticipating a physical separation from his beloved, he invokes the nature of that spiritual love to ward off (keep away) the "tear-floods" and "sigh-tempests" that might otherwise attend on their farewell.

The poem is essentially a sequence of metaphors and comparisons, each describing a way of looking at their separation that will help them to avoid the mourning (showing sadness) forbidden by the poem's title.

First, the speaker says that their farewell should be as mild as the uncomplaining deaths of virtuous men, for to weep would be "profanation of our joys." Next, the speaker compares harmful "Moving of th' earth" to innocent "trepidation of the spheres," equating the first with "dull sublunary lovers' love" and the second with their love, "Inter-assured of the mind."

Like the rumbling (making deep sound) earth, the dull sublunary (sublunary meaning literally beneath the moon and also subject to the moon) lovers are all physical, unable to experience separation without losing the sensation that comprises and sustains their love. But the spiritual lovers "Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss," because, like the trepidation (vibration) of the spheres (the concentric globes that surrounded the earth in ancient astronomy), their love is not wholly physical. Also, like the trepidation of the spheres, their movement will not have the harmful consequences of an earthquake.

The speaker then declares that, since the lovers' two souls are one, his departure will simply expand the area of their unified soul, rather than cause a rift (cut) between them. If, however, their souls are "two" instead of "one", they are as the feet of a drafter's compass, connected, with the center foot fixing the orbit of the outer foot and helping it to describe a perfect circle. The compass (the instrument used for drawing circles) is one of Donne's most famous metaphors, and it is the perfect image to encapsulate the values of Donne's spiritual love, which is balanced, symmetrical, intellectual, serious, and beautiful in its polished simplicity.

Like many of Donne's love poems (including "The Sun Rising" and "The Canonization"), "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning" creates a dichotomy between the common love of the everyday world and the uncommon love of the speaker. Here, the speaker claims that to tell "the laity," or the common people, of his love would be to profane its sacred nature, and he is clearly contemptuous of the dull sublunary love of other lovers. The effect of this dichotomy is to create a kind of emotional aristocracy that is similar in form to the political aristocracy with which Donne has had painfully bad luck throughout his life and which he commented upon in poems, such as "The Canonization": This emotional aristocracy is similar in form to the political one but utterly opposed to it in spirit.

Few in number are the emotional aristocrats who have access to the spiritual love of the spheres and the compass; throughout all of Donne's writing, the membership of this elite never includes more than the speaker and his lover—or at the most, the speaker, his lover, and the reader of the poem, who is called upon to sympathize with Donne's romantic plight (sad or desperate predicament).

Further comment :

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" shows many features associated with seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry in general, and with Donne's work in particular. Donne's contemporary, the English writer Izaak Walton, tells us the poem dates from 1611, when Donne, about to travel to France and Germany, wrote for his wife this valediction, or farewell speech. Like most poetry of Donne's time, it did not appear in print during the poet's lifetime. The poem was first published in 1633, two years after Donne's death, in a collection of his poems called *Songs and Sonnets*. Even during his life, however, Donne's poetry became well known because it circulated privately in manuscript and handwritten copies among literate Londoners.

The poem tenderly comforts the speaker's lover at their temporary parting, asking that they separate calmly and quietly, without tears or protests. The speaker justifies the desirability of such calmness by developing the ways in which the two share a holy love, both physical and spiritual in nature. Donne's celebration of earthly love in this way has often been referred to as the "creed of love."

Donne treats their love as sacred, elevated above that of ordinary earthly lovers. He argues that because of the confidence their love gives them, they are strong enough to endure a temporary separation. In fact, he discovers ways

of suggesting, through metaphysical conceit, that the two of them either possess a single soul and so can never really be divided, or have twin souls permanently connected to each other.

A metaphysical conceit is an extended metaphor or simile in which the poet draws an ingenious (clever) comparison between two very unlike objects. "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" ends with one of Donne's most famous metaphysical conceits, in which he argues for the lovers' closeness by comparing their two souls to the feet of a drawing compass—a simile that would not typically occur to a poet writing about his love!

The compass image suggests a connection between the lovers even as they are apart. Yet Donne ingeniously finds further meanings. He considers the difference between a central, “fixed” foot at “home” and a roaming, “obliquely” moving foot. He suggests ideas of desire: leans,” and “hearkens,”.”He concludes with an idea of love as the perfect (“just”) circle that ends where it began.

The occasion of the poem seems to be parting. Walton asserts that the poem was penned in 1611 when Donne was planning for a tour of France with the Drury family. Parting here is pictured as a miniature enactment of death. The poet refers to an untheatrical form of death where the dying mildly give away to death. Sometimes death may be anticipated, nevertheless at times it comes as an intruder in spite of one saying :”No.”

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move ;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

The term ‘melt’ may also signify a change in physical state. Just as the dead body decays, the bond between both of the lovers shall dissolve. He introduces the three elements-air, water and earth to show that these elements constitute the circle of life and death on earth. The air is referred to in ‘sigh-tempests’, water in ‘tear-floods’ and earth with reference to earthquakes. The poet bringing on all these natural calamities seems to imply their parting is of less consequence as compared to these. Moreover, as compared to such dreaded catastrophes, my parting shall not cause any harm to our love.

The speaker states that earthquakes may be dreadful, but not the oscillation of the heavenly spheres. This is, because the consequences of the earthquakes can be apprehended (understood), but the effect of the oscillation of the heavenly spheres cannot be perceived. What the poet means to say is that -only things that can be apprehended should be worried about. He advises his lady-love not to fret (worry) too much about their separation.

Ethereal lovers completely testify to spiritual love. Therefore their physical proximity(closeness in space and time) /absence is of no consequence. The soul is placed above its elemental form, the physical form.

But we by a love so much refined,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assurèd of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips and hands to miss.

The poet asserts that their love is so pure that it can be apprehended through the senses, and this does not necessarily require the sensory perceptions. The poet then goes to elaborate in the next stanza that their souls are one, and therefore do not see their breach as a gap, but rather recognize it as an expansion. Donne makes use of the image of gold beaten into airy thinness; likewise earthly love is transformed into divine love.

The poet likens the twin legs of a compass to the lovers' sense of union during absence. This an apt example of metaphysical wit, which yokes dissimilar things together. The two hands of the compass though separated for a small fraction of time were destined to always meet. Also, the compass points the direction to others, suggesting that they

were a paradigm for others to follow. Again, a compass drew a circle that was the shape of perfection, according to Ptolemy. By utilizing this shape Donne proves that their love is perfect, physically and spiritually.

Besides, the two hands are incomplete without each other. With reference to the compass, it is their separation that actually defines them. It is the firmness of one foot that actually renders the other perfect. It makes him end at where he begun-and therefore the circle (of their divine love) becomes complete. This divine circle may also refer to a halo that their divine status has endowed (gave) them .

conceit : a metaphor used to build an analogy between two things or situations not naturally, or usually, comparable. Conceits can be compact or extended. A familiar example of a more elaborate conceit occurs in John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." Like most conceits, this one is structural and lingering rather than momentary. Donne compares, at some length, two temporarily parted lovers to the two pointed legs of a compass, which move and hearken (listen) in tandem.

paradox : A paradox is a contradiction that somehow proves fitting or true. As such, it is a central device of seventeenth-century literature, in the work of writers like John Donne, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, and Thomas Browne.

- Prepared and compiled by Dr m n naimi

Lecture 5

Christopher Marlowe and Sir Walter Raleigh : The Pastoral

pastoral (L 'pertaining to shepherds') A minor but important mode which, by convention, is concerned with the lives of shepherds. It is of great antiquity and interpenetrates many works in Classical and modern European literature. It is doubtful if pastoral ever had much to do with the daily working-life of shepherds, though it is not too difficult to find shepherds in Europe (in Montenegro, Albania, Greece and Sardinia, for instance) who compose poetry sing songs and while away the hours playing the flute.

For the most part pastoral tends to be an idealization of shepherd life, and, by so being, creates an image of a peaceful and uncorrupted existence; a kind of a clean world.

Marlowe's poem and Raleigh's carefully symmetrical response were printed together in *England's Helicon* (1600); the attribution of the second to Raleigh is first made by Izaak Walton in *The Complete Angler* (1653), where both poems are reprinted.

Slightly longer versions appear in Walton's second edition (1655). Donne's "The Bait" (also quoted by Walton) is inspired by the exchange. Marlowe's poem embodies the classic example of *carpe diem*, as can be seen in the shepherd's attitude, while Raleigh's nymph finds in them an argument precisely for not seizing the day.

In the late r6th c. many other works amplified the pastoral tradition, such as Marlowe's The Passionate Shepherd to His Love, which evoked a memorable reply from Sir 'Walter Raleigh.

The Passionate Shepherd to his Love

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills and fields,
Woods or steepy mountain yields.
And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.
And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies;
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;
A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair linèd slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;
A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs.
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my love.
The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning.
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.
Time drives the flocks from field to fold;
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold
And Philomel becometh dumb,
The rest complains of cares to come.
The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward winter reckoning yields;
A honey tongue, a heart of gall
Is fancy's spring but sorrow's fall.
Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten,
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.
Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,
All these in me no means can move
To come to thee and be thy love.
But could youth last and love still breed,
Had joys no date, nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Notes

1. prove: test, try out
2. madrigals: poems set to music and sung by two to six voices with a single melody or interweaving melodies
3. kirtle: dress or skirt
4. myrtle: shrub with evergreen leaves, white or pink flowers, and dark berries. In Greek mythology, a symbol of love.
5. coral: yellowish red;
6. amber: yellow or brownish yellow
7. swains: country youths.
8. Philomel : the nightingale.

Type of Work

"The Passionate Shepherd" is a pastoral poem. Pastoral poems generally center on the love of a shepherd for a maiden (as in Marlowe's poem), on the death of a friend, or on the quiet simplicity of rural life. The writer of a pastoral poem may be an educated city dweller, like Marlowe, who extolls the virtues of a shepherd girl or longs for the peace and quiet of the country. *Pastoral* is derived from the Latin word *pastor*, meaning *shepherd*.

Setting

Christopher Marlowe sets the poem in early spring in a rural locale (presumably in England) where shepherds tend their flocks. The use of the word madrigals (line 8)—referring to poems set to music and sung by two to six voices with a single melody or interweaving melodies—suggests that the time is the sixteenth century, when madrigals were highly popular in England and elsewhere in Europe. However, the poem could be about any shepherd of any age in any country, for such is the universality of its theme.

Characters

The Passionate Shepherd: He importunes a woman—presumably a young and pretty country girl—to become his sweetheart and enjoy with him all the pleasures that nature has to offer.
The Shepherd's Love: The young woman who receives the Passionate Shepherd's message.
Swains: Young country fellows whom the Passionate Shepherd promises will dance for his beloved.
Theme :
The theme of "The Passionate Shepherd" is the rapture of springtime love in a simple, rural setting. Implicit in this theme is the motif of *carpe diem*—Latin for "seize the day." *Carpe diem* urges people to enjoy the moment without worrying about the future.

Writing and Publication Information
Marlowe wrote the poem in 1588 or 1589 while attending Cambridge University at its Corpus Christi College. It first appeared in print in poetry collections published in 1599 and 1600.

1. The main features of metaphysical poetry of John Donne: his poetry is full of clever (ingenious) abstruse (difficult to understand) and unnecessary arguments.
2. His poetry has abrasive (harsh in manner) colloquiality, in contrast with the smooth Elizabethan lyrics before him.
3. his poem starts with exclamation and takes the form of an argument with another person, lover, or god.
4. He like to indulge in fantastical flights of logic.

Meter
The meter is iambic pentameter , with eight syllables (four iambic feet) per line. (An iambic foot consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.) The following graphic presentation illustrates the meter of the first stanza.

.....1.....2.....3.....4
Come **LIVE**..|..with **ME**..|..and **BE**..|..my **LOVE**,
.....1.....2.....3.....4
And **WE**..|..will **ALL**..|..the **PLEA**..|..sures **PROVE**
.....1.....2.....3.....4
That **HILLS**..|..and **VALL**..|..eys, **DALE**..|..and **FIELD**,
.....1.....2.....3.....4
And **ALL**..|..the **CRAG**..|..gy **MOUNT**..|..ains **YIELD**.

Rhyme
In each stanza, the first line rhymes with the second, and the third rhymes with the fourth.

Structure :
The poem contains seven quatrains (four-line stanzas) for a total of twenty-eight lines. Marlowe structures the poem as follows:
Stanza 1: The shepherd asks the young lady to "live with me and be my love," noting that they will enjoy all the pleasures of nature.
Stanzas 2-4: The shepherd makes promises that he hopes will persuade the young lady to accept his proposal.
Stanzas 5-7: After making additional promises, the shepherd twice more asks the lady to "live with me and be my love."

The Passionate Shepherd to His Love

Summary

"The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" is a pastoral lyric, a poetic form that is used to create an idealized vision of rural life within the context of personal emotion. Pastoral poems had been in vogue among poets for at least seventeen hundred years when Marlowe wrote this one. The Greek poet Theocritis, in the third century B.C.E. (Shipley 300-1,) was the first pastoralist poet, and he, too, wrote about shepherds. All pastoral poetry, including Marlowe's, is to some degree influenced by this original practitioner.

The poem is written in very regular iambic tetrameter. Each line contains exactly four heavy stresses, and the metrical feet are almost always iambic. Similarly, most lines contain eight syllables, and the few that don't create a specific poetic effect (such as lines 3 and 4), or have easily elided syllables which may be read as eight. This regular meter, sustained through the twenty-four lines, remarkably never descends into the sing-song quality so prevalent in tetrameter, primarily because Marlowe salts his lines with a variety of devices that complement the meter without drawing too much attention to its rigid regularity. Marlowe's use of soft consonants (such as W, M, Em, F) to start lines, with the occasional "feminine" ending of an unstressed syllable (in the third stanza) lend a delightful variety to an essentially regular and completely conventional form.

In the first stanza, the Shepherd invites his love to come with him and "pleasures prove" (line 2.) This immediate reference to pleasure gives a mildly sexual tone to this poem, but it is of the totally innocent, almost naïve kind. The Shepherd makes no innuendo of a sordid type, but rather gently and directly calls to his love. He implies that the entire geography of the countryside of England "Valleys, groves, hills and fields/Woods or steepy mountains" will prove to contain pleasure of all kinds for the lovers. This vision of the bounteous earth (reminiscent of the New Testament's admonishment "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them

" Matthew 6:26) is a very common theme in pastoral poetry. The idealization of rural life is essentially what separates pastoral poetry from simple rustic verse. Realism, which would not come into being as a poetic or literary style for many centuries after Marlowe, has little place in pastoral verse.

The next stanza suggests that the lovers will take their entertainment not in a theatre or at a banquet, but sitting upon rocks or by rivers. They will watch shepherds (of which the titular speaker is ostensibly one, except here it is implied that he will have ample leisure) feeding their flocks, or listening to waterfalls and the songs of birds. The enticements of such auditory and visual pleasures can be seen as a marked contrast to the "hurly-burly" (a phrase Marlowe used in his later play, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Act IV, Scene 1) of the London stage plays which Marlowe would write. These are entirely bucolic, traditional entertainments; the idea of Marlowe, the young man about town who chose to live in London, actually enjoying these rustic pleasures exclusively and leaving the city behind is laughable

Again, these invitations are not to be taken literally. Marlowe may well have admired pastoral verse, and the ideals of it (such as Ovid's ideals of aggressive, adulterous heterosexual love) were not necessarily those he would espouse for himself.

The third, fourth, and fifth stanzas are a kind of list of the "delights", mostly sartorial, that the Shepherd will make for his lady love. Here it becomes clearer that the "Shepherd" is really none of the same; indeed, he is more like a feudal landowner who employs shepherds.

The list of the things he will make for his lady: "beds of roses" (a phrase, incidentally, first coined by Marlowe, which has survived to this day in common speech, though in the negative , "no bed of roses" meaning "not a pleasant situation") "thousand fragrant posies," "cap of flowers," "kirtle embroidered with leaves of myrtle," "gown made of the finest wool/Which from our pretty lambs we pull," "fair-linèd slippers," "buckles of the purest gold," "belt of straw and ivy buds," "coral clasps," and "amber studs") reveal a great deal about the situation of the "Shepherd" and what he can offer his love.

While certainly many of the adornments Marlowe lists would be within the power of a real shepherd to procure or make (the slippers, the belt, possibly the bed of roses (in season), the cap of flowers, and the many posies, and possibly even the kirtle embroidered with myrtle and the lambs wool gown,) but the gold buckles, the coral clasps, and the amber studs would not be easily available to the smallholder or tenant shepherds who actually did the work of sheepherding. This increasingly fanciful list of gifts could only come from a member of the gentry, or a merchant in a town.

This is another convention of pastoral poetry. While the delights of the countryside and the rural life of manual labor are celebrated, the poet (and the reader) is assumed to be noble, or at least above manual labor. The fantasy of bucolic paradise is entirely idealized; Marlowe's Shepherd is not a real person, but merely a poetic device to celebrate an old poetic ideal in verse. Incidentally, the plants mentioned (roses, flowers, and myrtle) are conventional horticultural expressions of romance. The rose, especially, was sacred to the goddess Venus (and it is how roses have come to symbolize romantic love in some modern Western cultures.) The myrtle was associated with Venus, too, and especially with marriage rituals in Ancient Rome.

This connotation would have been known to Marlowe's readers. The attribute of virginity should not necessarily be assumed here; it was not for a few more centuries that myrtle would come to symbolize sexual purity. Therefore the kirtle embroidered with myrtle is not just a pretty rhyme and a word-picture of a desirable garment. It was meant to symbolize that this was a nuptial invitation, and that the Shepherd's lady was not strictly defined (though she may well have been meant to be) a virgin bride. Myrtle was an appropriate nature symbol from the Greek and Roman mythologies (from which the first pastoral poems come) to insert into a love-poem.

The image of the Shepherd as a member of the gentry becomes complete when, in the last stanza, it is said "The shepherd swains shall dance and sing/For thy delight each May-morning." The picture here is of other shepherds doing the speaker's bidding. A rustic form of performance – in the open air and not on a stage – is again in marked contrast to the kind of formal performance of plays on the Renaissance stage, which would make Marlowe famous at a very young age.

The poem ends with an "if" statement, and contains a slightly somber note. There is no guarantee that the lady will find these country enticements enough to follow the Shepherd, and since the construction of them is preposterous and fantastical to begin with, the reader is left with the very real possibility that the Shepherd will be disappointed.

Analysis

"The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" was composed sometime in Marlowe's early years, (between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three) around the same time he translated Ovid's *Amores*. This is to say, Marlowe wrote this poem before he went to London to become a playwright. Thornton suggests that Marlowe's poetic and dramatic career follows an "Ovidian career model" (xiv), with his amatory poems belonging to his youth, followed later by epic poems (such as *Hero and Leander*) and *Lucan's First Book*). The energy and fanciful nature of youth is evident in "Passionate Shepherd", which has been called "an extended invitation to rustic retirement" (xv).

It is headlong in its rush of sentiment, though, upon examination, it reveals itself to be a particularly well-balanced piece of poetry. This poem is justly famous: though it may not be immediately identifiable as Marlowe's (it is often mistakenly thought to be a sonnet of Shakespeare, though that is incorrect in both authorship and poetic form) it has a place in most anthologies of love-poetry. It may well be the most widely recognized piece that Marlowe ever wrote, despite the popularity of certain of his plays.

The meter, though seemingly regular, gives a great deal of meaning and music to this poem. In line 10 the iambic pattern, so far unbroken, reverses to trochaic (stressed, unstressed). The line is innocuous "And a thousand fragrant posies" – there is no special meaning in this line that requires a complete reversal of the meter. But it is a completely

complementary line to the one above it (which contains an almost perfect match of nine iambic syllables), and creates movement and motion in the poem

This kind of temporary shift of meter makes the poem lighter to read, and, while preserving regularity, lessens any sing-song quality that might occur if too many regular lines appear in sequence. This skillful change is one of the reasons this poem is so often read aloud. It is musical and regular to the ear, but it is never rigid or predictable.

Line endings, too, can create variety within regularity, and also call attention to the subject matter of the lines. The only stanza which contains the line ending termed "feminine" (that is, an additional unstressed syllable following the final stressed syllable – while it may not have been called "feminine" in Marlowe's day, the softer consonant at the end of a disyllabic word such as those in this stanza definitely can convey femininity) is the third. "There **will** I **make** thee **beds** of **ro**ses" This is done by using disyllabic words at the end of the line. The second syllable of most two-syllable words is usually an unstressed one.

These lines all end with particularly feminine objects, too – roses, posies, kirtle (a woman's garment), and myrtle. It should be noted that every other line-terminating word in the entire poem is a monosyllabic one, with the lone exception of line 22, in which the "masculine" stressed ending is forced by the hyphenated construction "**May**-morn **ing**". Marlowe chose his words with very great care.

Scansion of poetry is never exact; while lines 1 and 20 are often read as iambic, the beginning (especially line 20) can easily be read as a spondee (two long syllables – **Come live** with me **and be** my love/ rather than Come **live** with **me** and **be** my **love**/). A skillful and expressive reader might read this repeated line thusly, upon its second occurrence. The different stress would add pleading to the tone of the line (the emphases on the verbs "come live" and "and be") and bespeak a slight desperation on the part of the Shepherd.

If read the opposite way from the first line (spondaic rather than iambic) the meaning of the line changes just enough to create a development of emotion. This is no mean feat in a poem only twenty-four lines in length. (Note that there is disputed stanza (second from the last) "Thy silver dishes for thy meat" which appears in some older editions – the latest critical editions do not include it.)

At first glance "The Passionate Shepherd To His Love" can seem to be a nice piece of pastoral frippery. Considering that it was written, probably, in Marlowe's late adolescence, and if read as a superficial exercise in the practice of a very old form of poetry, it can seem to be light and insubstantial. But any studied analysis of the poem reveals its depth; the poem can be read as containing irony (as written by an urbane man who longed for the city rather than the country, and thus constructed impossible rustic scenarios), serious and heartfelt emotion, a slight political commentary, a gentle sadness, and a transcendent love of nature. Good poetry is often many things to different readers, and Marlowe was able to create, within a codified (and one might say ossified) form of poetry a piece of clever and flexible Elizabethan verse. The Shepherd may not have been real, but the emotions and effects created by this poem have their own reality.

Comparison :

Notes for "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd."

Raleigh argues that it is not society that taints sexual love. We are already tainted before we enter society. Raleigh combines *carpe diem* with *tempus fugit* in an unusual way. Normally we should seize the day because time flies. Raleigh argues that because time flies, we should NOT seize the day. There will be consequences to their roll in the grass. Time does not stand still; winter inevitably follows the spring; therefore, we cannot act on impulses until we have examined the consequences.

*rocks grow cold
*fields yield to the harvest
*the flocks are driven to fold in winter
*rivers rage
*birds complain of winter (a reference to the story of Philomela who was raped and turned into a nightingale).
We live in a fallen world. Free love in the grass in impossible now because the world is not in some eternal spring. The seasons pass, as does time. Nymphs grow old, and shepherds grow cold.

"The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" is a pastoral poem written by Christopher Marlowe in the late sixteenth century. According to Dr. Debora B. Schwartz, Pastoral is a term that comes from the Latin word for (Schwartz). This poem was set in a shepherd's field or dwelling. The only information that we have about the speaker is that he is a shepherd and thinks romantically and idealistically. Marlowe does not focus much on the setting or character, but more on the argument that the shepherd is trying to make to the girl. The prominent theme of this poem is of idealistic love and pleasure. Carpe diem was a popular subject in poems of this era, and this also shows as a theme. The speaker urges his love to live with him and enjoy the pleasures of the day.

Sir Walter Raleigh wrote a response to this poem in 1600 called "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd." He uses the young girl as the speaker, responding to the shepherd. There are no clues to the setting or the girl's physical appearance. The themes of this poem are doubt and the point that time changes things. The young girl thinks realistically and refutes the ideas of the idyllic world the young man had proposed to her. The shepherd seems to be very much of an optimist, whereas the young girl is a pessimist. The structure of these two poems is exact. There are six stanzas consisting of four lines each. This shows that "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" is responding directly to the shepherd in "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.

"In each ideal proposal he gives, she gives him the realistic answer to why they cannot be together. The speaker in "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" is a young shepherd who proposes a passionate love affair to the girl he desires. He uses nature largely to appeal to her senses. He tells her they will sit will have a life of pleasure and relaxation. He says he will make beds of roses and give her fragrant posies. He promises to outfit her in fine clothes and that she will not want for anything. He uses all these tempting things to help his argument, but he does not make any mention of true love or marriage. It seems he only wants a passionate physical relationship. The pleasures and delights he speaks of are only temporary. His concept of time is only in the present, and he does not seem to think much about the future.

In "the Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," the young girl is responding to the shepherd's plea. She thinks about life in a practical way, so the shepherd's words have no bearing on her decision. She rebuts his argument and says that if time had no end and every man told the truth, that the pleasures he had promised would convince her to be his lover. The theme of carpe diem is usually that one should "seize the day". However, the girl turns it around and says that because life is short, we should not seize the day. The serious decisions of life such as this one should not be taken lightly and acted upon irrationally.

She states that flowers wither and die, and all the material possessions he offered would eventually break and be forgotten. She realizes that something substantial such as true love, is the only thing that will outlast the material items. In her mind, it is worth waiting for true love. Nothing he had to give can convince her, because she knows that he is only thinking about the present time and has no future plans for them. At the end of the poem, she reiterates the point she had made at the beginning:
But could youth last and love still breed
Had joys no date or age no need

The these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy love (Raleigh 21-24).

The use of imagery in "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" is the main way that the shepherd's voice comes alive for the reader. He describes nature in such a vivid way that it makes them seem as if they accept his offer. The response sounds as if there is a bit of a mocking attitude towards the shepherd for his assumption that she will say yes to him. She is looking for something eternal, and all he has to offer to her are things that are fleeting. In the shepherd's poem, he alludes to the fact that he just wants a physical relationship with her. Because of this, she does not trust him and her words in the response seem to carry a negative connotation. Instead of the girl saying that time passes, she says that "Time drives the flocks from field to fold" (Raleigh 5). She speaks of rivers raging instead of running, and also speaks of the "reckoning" of the fields. The use of negative imagery really shows the distrust in the girl's mind and makes her refutation of the shepherd's pleas seem much more believable.

These two poems can teach a lesson even in the present day. The idealistic world that the shepherd dreamed of seemed like a wonderful thing, but there was nothing substantial to back it up. There are many instances of this in life, not just in love. The young girl had the presence of mind to realize that the things he was offering, though tempting, were not what she wished for in life. She knew that because time is short and life does not last forever, that one must think about the impact decisions made today will have on the future.

- Prepared & Compiled by Dr m n Naimi

Lecture 6

The Shakespearean Sonnet

Sonnet 55

Not Marble, Nor the Gilded Monuments

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, 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 yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

First Quatrain: "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments"

The speaker of Shakespeare sonnet 55 begins by proclaiming that his poem is more powerful than "marble" or "gilded monuments." Princes have nothing on poets when it come to enshrining truth: "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme." The poet/speaker has faith that his sonnets will outlast any stone statue that is "besmear'd with sluttish time."

Marble and stone monuments become mere obscene gestures when compared to the written monuments that contain a true poet's tributes to truth and beauty. The poet knows that truth is soul inspired, and therefore it is eternal.

Second Quatrain: "When wasteful war shall statues overturn"

In the second quatrain, the speaker insists that nothing can erase "The living record of your memory." The poem's memory is permanent; even though "wasteful war" may "overturn" "statues" and "broils root out the work of masonry." The poem is ethereal and once written remains a permanent record written on memory.

"The living record" includes more than just parchment and ink; it includes the power of thought that is born in each mind. The true seer/poet creates that living record in his poems to remind others that truth is indelible, beautiful, and eternal and cannot be waylaid even "[w]hen wasteful war shall statues overturn, / And broils root out the work of masonry."

Third Quatrain: "'Gainst death, and all oblivious enmity"

The poem containing truth and beauty is immortal; it is "'Gainst death." No enemy can ever succeed against that soul-truth; as the speaker avers, "your praise shall still find room / Even in the eyes of all posterity / That wear this world out to the ending doom."

This poet/speaker, as the reader has experienced many times before in his sonnets, has the utmost confidence that his poems will be enjoying widespread fame and that all future generations of readers, "eyes of all posterity," will be reading and studying them. The speaker's faith in his own talent is deep and abiding, and he is certain they will continue to remain "[e]ven in the eyes of all posterity / That wear this world out to the ending doom."

The Couplet: “So, till the judgment that yourself arise”

In the couplet, “So, till the judgment that yourself arise, / You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes,” the speaker caps his claims by asserting that in the accounting of the poem, the poetic truth and beauty will exist forever and remain imbedded in the vision of future readers.

Conclusion:

The poem aims to immortalize the subject in verse. The poem is meant to impress the subject with the poet's intent. The poem shall survive longer than any gold-plated statue (gilded monument), that might be erected to a prince, etc. The subject of the poem (probably some winsome beauty that the poet really really wants to shag), will be portrayed in the poem for all time, etc. Further, the ending basically says that she'll be immortalized in the poem until the Day of Judgement (reference Judeo-Christian belief system), and she "rises" from her grave to face said Judgement

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That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death’s second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv’st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

Analysis :

Shakespeare is perhaps the most well known poet of all time. Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. Before his death at the age of 52, Shakespeare had written a great number of comedies, tragedies, plays and sonnets. Shakespeare's 73rd sonnet consists of 14 lines, 3 quatrains and a couplet in an iambic pentameter form. The first line of the sonnet is sometimes referenced as the title. It reads, "That time of year thou mayst in me behold." The poet paints a picture in each quatrain of the sonnet conveying his anxieties of the impending harshness of old age. He wants the reader to understand the value of life and love. He does this by illustrating that life is limited by time.

In the first section of the sonnet, the poet draws an allusion between an external image and an internal state of mind. The poet anticipates the impending chill and abandonment that comes with old age. The first four lines read, "That time of year thou mayst in me behold/ When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang/ Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,/ Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang." (1-4). The imagery of a harsh autumn day is made more tactile by the use of pauses in the second line. Each pause helps to create the imagery of leaves blowing away, one by one, and feeling the chill of a late autumn wind. The choice of the words, "Bare ruin'd choirs" is a reference to the remains of a church that has been stripped of its roof, exposing it to the elements and left to decay. It seems as if the poet is saying, "See this place, this is how I am feeling; old, cold and abandoned. I am in a state of ruin and I am barely hanging on." The knowledge that joy once existed in this place, as alluded to by the bird's sweet song, sets the emotional tone, one of sympathetic pity.

Fading youth is represented by twilight in the second section of the sonnet. "In me thou see'st the twilight of such a day/ As after sunset fadeth in the west," (5-6). The denotation of twilight as referenced in the Franklin dictionary is the light from the sky between sunset and full night. Here, a visual sense of darkness approaching with the connotation that

the end is near is clearly illustrated. "Which by and by black night doth take away, /Death's second self, that seals up all in rest." (7-8). The twilight is rapidly taken away by the black night, figuratively expressed as, "death's second self." Sleep is often portrayed as a second self of death, or death's brother.

In the third quatrain of the sonnet, the poet makes it clear by using a different metaphor, that his death will be permanent. "In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire/ That on the ashes of his youth doth lie, / As the death-bed whereon it must expire/ (9-11). He uses this simile to imply that the ashes of his youth equate to death. "Consumed with that which it was nourished by. / (12). The connotation simply stated, life lived is death.

- The type of Sonnets rhyme schemes :
  - abab cdcd efef gg is the Shakespearean rhyme scheme
  - abab bcbc cdcd ee is the Spenserian rhyme scheme
  - abbaabba cdecde is the Petrarchan rhyme scheme

- The division of the Shakespearean sonnet : 3 quatrains (the quatrain is 4 lines) and a couplet (2 lines) .
- The division of the Petrarchan sonnet : octave or octet (8 lines) and a sestet (six lines) .
- Every form of sonnet is 14 line. This is a fixed form.
- **Prepared and compiled by Dr m n naimi**

The final two lines read, "This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong, / To love well which thou must leave ere long." (13-14). These last two lines remind me of my grandmother. She constantly reminded me to visit her often (to love her well) because as she said, "I'm not going to be around much longer you know." Her wise reminder gave me the insight to savor the moments I spent with her. I think Shakespeare wanted from his friend what my grandmother wanted from me.

The true message of this sonnet is clearly written in the first line of each quatrain. I can hear Shakespeare shouting, "SEE ME, I am cold, abandoned and separated from joy! SEE ME, my mortal end is near! SEE ME, and know your love for me is strengthened! I beg you to understand; my life has an ending imposed by the restrictions of time. It is not a continuous cycle. Spring may follow winter and dawn may follow night, but alas, my youth will not, cannot, follow the decay of death. Know this and love me well!"

lecture 7

On His Blindness By John Milton (1608-1674)

On His Blindness by John Milton

When I consider how my light is spent[1]
Ere half my days[2] in this dark world and wide
And that one talent[3] which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless,[4] though my soul more bent
To serve therewith[5] my Maker, and present
My true account,[6] lest he returning chide;
"Doth God exact[7] day labor, light denied?"
I fondly[8] ask. But Patience,[9] to prevent
That murmur, soon replies,. "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts.[10] Who best
Bear his mild yoke,[11] they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,.
And post[12] o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.[13]

Notes

1. light is spent: This clause presents a double meaning: (a) how I spend my days, (b) how it is that my sight is used up.

2. Ere half my days: Before half my life is over. Milton was completely blind by 1652, the year he turned 44.

3. talent: See Line 3 which is a key to the meaning of the poem.

4. useless: Unused.

5. therewith: By that means, by that talent; with it

6. account: Record of accomplishment; worth

7. exact: Demand, require

8. fondly: Foolishly, unwisely

9. Patience: Milton personifies patience, capitalizing it and having it speak.

10. God . . . gifts: God is sufficient unto Himself. He requires nothing outside of Himself to exist and be happy.

11. yoke: Burden, workload.

12. post: Travel.

13. chide: scold or reproach gently.

Examples of Figures of Speech:

Alliteration: *my **d**ays in this **d**ark **w**orld and **w**ide* (line 2)

Metaphor: *though my soul more bent / To serve therewith my Maker* (lines 3-4). The author compares his soul to his mind.

Personification/Metaphor: *But Patience, to prevent / That murmur, soon replies* . . . (lines 8-9).

Paradox: *They also serve who only stand and wait*.

Background

John Milton's eyesight began to fail in 1644. By 1652, he was totally blind. Strangely enough, he wrote his greatest works, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, after he became blind. Many scholars rank Milton as second only to Shakespeare in poetic ability.

Meter

All the lines in the poem are in iambic pentameter. In this metric pattern, a line has five pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables, for a total of ten syllables. The first two lines of the poem illustrate this pattern:

1.....2..... 3.....4.....5
When **I |** con **SID |** er **HOW.|** my **LIFE |** is **SPENT**

1.....2..... 3.....4.....5
Ere **HALF |** my **DAYS |** in **THIS |** dark **WORLD.|** and **WIDE**

Type of Work and Year Written:

"On His Blindness" is a Petrarchan sonnet, a lyric poem with fourteen lines. This type of sonnet, popularized by the Italian priest Petrarch (1304-1374), has a rhyme scheme of ABBA, ABBA, CDE, and CDE. John Milton wrote the poem in 1655.

As This sonnet has simple diction, enjambment (not end-stopped). Milton has used his extensive knowledge of the Bible to create a deeply personal poem, and gently guide himself and the reader or listener from an intense loss through to understanding and gain

The main themes of this poem are Milton's exploration of his feeling of fear, limitation, light and darkness, duty and doubt, regarding his failed sight, his rationalisation of this anxiety by seeking solutions in his faith.

John Milton was an English Poet with controversial opinions. One of his most read poem among others is 'Paradise Lost'. He became blind in 1651, which in no way affected his writings. In this poem about his blindness he says

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent

He describes how he is living his life in a "wide" world which is now "dark" like a grave because of the loss of his sight, which he refers to as his "light that is spent" or now used up (lost).

He cannot even use the one way out which is to commit suicide even though his soul bends towards this idea. This will remain a "useless talent" within him which he will never use. He refers to death with sarcasm as a "talent", something that is not normally done in society. This reflects his own way of being angry or hurt as Milton enjoyed writing and his blindness must have presented him with a lot of difficulty. It was his faith that kept him strong and deterred (restrained) him from taking his own life. The strength of his faith is shown in the next lines of the sonnet.

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask; But patience, to prevent

He will serve his Maker no matter how he is suffering as he will have to present to Him a "true account" of his life. He will do this in case he is chided (spoken to angrily) when he returns to God and is asked if he carried on with his day to day life even without his eyesight.

That murmur, soon replies "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

He answers his own question saying that God will not need "either man's work or his own gifts" meaning that God has no need for gifts from men. He is served by thousands of angels who are at his beck (being ready to carry out somebody's wish) "post o'ver land and ocean without rest" to do his bidding. He also adds that angels will serve those who are patient and wait through all sorts of problems that they face.

- Milton's faith in God seems to give him the courage to face his life despite his blindness. It is this faith that seems to give him courage and patience to cope and also gives him the hope that salvation lies for those who wait in patience.

- Allusion: in lines 3 to 6 of the poem Milton alludes to the "Parable of the Talents" in Chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew, verses 14 to 30.

- In line 7, the speaker, in his attempts to blame somebody, is about to ask a rhetorical question about God's justice before patience interrupts him.

- In line 8, we have personification: "patience" is personified as advice giver.

- in Line 11 we have a metaphor: the humans are submitted to God. "The Yoke"

is the symbol brings together the humans and the animals.

- The word "wait" implies "pun" in the sense that he will wait until the end of his life.

- Prepared and Compiled by Dr. M N Naimi

Lecture 8

Macbeth

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Macbeth

Macbeth Plot Summary :

King Duncan's generals, Macbeth and Banquo, encounter three strange women on a bleak Scottish moorland on their way home from quelling a rebellion. The women prophesy that Macbeth will be given the title of Thane of Cawdor and then become King of Scotland, while Banquo's heirs shall be kings. The generals want to hear more but the weird sisters disappear. Duncan creates Macbeth Thane of Cawdor in thanks for his success in the recent battles and then proposes to make a brief visit to Macbeth's castle.

Lady Macbeth receives news from her husband of the prophecy and his new title and she vows to help him become king by any means she can. Macbeth's return is followed almost at once by Duncan's arrival. The Macbeths plot together and later that night, while all are sleeping and after his wife has given the guards drugged wine, Macbeth kills the King and his guards.

Lady Macbeth leaves the bloody daggers beside the dead king. Macduff arrives and when the murder is discovered Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain flee, fearing for their lives, but they are nevertheless blamed for the murder.

Macbeth is elected King of Scotland, but is plagued by feelings of guilt and insecurity. He arranges for Banquo and his son, Fleance to be killed, but the boy escapes the murderers. At a celebratory banquet Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo and disconcerts the courtiers with his strange manner. Lady Macbeth tries to calm him but is rejected.

Macbeth seeks out the witches and learns from them that he will be safe until Birnam Wood comes to his castle, Dunsinane. They tell him that he need fear no-one born of woman, but also that the Scottish succession will come from Banquo's son.

Macbeth embarks on a reign of terror and many, including Macduff's family are murdered, while Macduff himself has gone to join Malcolm at the court of the English king, Edward. Malcolm and Macduff decide to lead an army against Macbeth.

Macbeth feels safe in his remote castle at Dunsinane until he is told that Birnam Wood is moving towards him. The situation is that Malcolm's army is carrying branches from the forest as camouflage for their assault on the castle. Meanwhile Lady Macbeth, paralysed with guilt, walks in her sleep and gives away her secrets to a listening doctor. She kills herself as the final battle commences.

Macduff challenges Macbeth who, on learning his adversary is the child of a Ceasarian birth, realises he is doomed. Macduff triumphs and brings the head of the traitor to Malcolm who declares peace and is crowned king.

Macbeth Soliloquy: Is This A Dagger

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one halfworld
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace.

With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

Explanation:

(Macbeth speaks to himself) Is this a dagger which I see before me, with its handle stretching towards my hand? Let me catch hold of you! (apostrophe) I can not hold you, and yet I see you all the time (antithesis). You fatal dagger, aren't you perceptible by touch

as well as sight? Or, are you only a false creation, a product of my over-excited brain? I see you (visionary dagger) as clearly as I see this dagger which I am drawing. You guide me along the way I was going (the dagger positions Macbeth as a man without will or as an object). It is exactly such a dagger that I was to use. Either my eyes are deceived by the other senses, or all my other senses are wrong and my eyes alone are trustworthy. This is to say that Macbeth's sight is either less acute or sharper than his other senses. You are still there before my eyes, but now I see drops of blood on your blade, which was first stainless…This dagger must be an illusion! It is only the bloody deed I propose to do that takes the shape of the dagger before my eyes!....

One half of the world is now asleep and foul dreams beguile (deceive) men lying asleep in their curtained beds. It is the time when witches worship their Queen Hecate and make offerings to her. It is the time when ghost-like murderer, awakened by the cry of the wolf (which acts as his watch), stealthily moves towards his victim with silent steps, as I am doing now, or as did Tarkin, when he went to ravish Lucrece…

Let not the safe and firmly-set earth hear my footsteps or know which way I walk, lest the very stones should proclaim my presence and force me to put off this horrible deed, so well suited to this time when all are asleep as if they were dead…While I waste my time in idle threats, Duncan continues to be alive! Words can have a damping (cooling) effect on the heat of action one wishes to perform.

Let me go and soon it will be over. The bell calls upon me to the deed. May you not hear this bell, Duncan, for it is the death bell which calls you either to heaven or to hell.

Concluding summary:

After Banquo and his son Fleance leave, and suddenly, in the darkened hall, Macbeth has a vision of a dagger floating in the air before him, its handle pointing toward his hand and its tip aiming him toward Duncan. Macbeth tries to grasp the dagger and fails. He wonders whether what he sees is real or a "dagger of the mind, a false creation / Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain" (2.1.38–39). Continuing to gaze upon the dagger, he thinks he sees blood on the blade, then abruptly decides that the vision is just a manifestation of his unease over killing Duncan.

The night around him seems thick with horror and witchcraft, but Macbeth stiffens and determines to do his bloody work. A bell rings—Lady Macbeth's signal that the guards are asleep—and Macbeth starts walking toward Duncan's chamber.

Significance:

Macbeth's soliloquy in Act 2. scene1.33-61 is significant because of what it reveals to the audience about Macbeth's character, this is conveyed through vocabulary, imagery, his attitude and development and Lady Macbeth's actions. It is also significant because of the way in which it creates tension. This is conveyed through the presence of supernatural, vocabulary and references to historical events and theme.

Apostrophe:
A statement, question, or request addressed to an inanimate object or concept or to a nonexistent or absent person. Requests for inspiration from the muses in poetry are examples of apostrophe, as is Marc Antony's address to Caesar's corpse in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar:*
"O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, That
I am meek and gentle with these butchers! . . . Woe
to the hand that shed this costly blood! . . ."

Mood: the prevailing emotions of a work or of the author in his or her creation of the work. The mood of a work is not always what might be expected based on its Subject matter. The mood could be melancholic, sad, confident, pessimistic or optimistic.
Parable: a story intended to teach a moral lesson or answer an ethical question. In the West, the best examples of parables are those of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, notably "The parable of the Talent."
Allusion: a reference within a literary text to some person, place, or event outside the text. In his poem, On His Blindness, Milton alludes or refers to the Bible. In line 3 to 6 of that poem Milton, for example, allude to the "Parable of the Talents" in Chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew, verses 14 to 30.

Soliloquy : in DRAMA, a MONOLOGUE in which a character appears to be thinking out loud, thereby communicating to the audience his inner thoughts and feelings. It differs from an ASIDE, which is a brief remark directed to the audience. In performing a soliloquy, the actor traditionally acts as though he were talking to himself, although some actors directly address the audience.
The soliloquy achieved its greatest effect in English RENAISSANCE drama. When employed in modern drama, it is usually as the equivalent of the INTERIOR MONOLOGUE in FICTION.

Lecture 9

Edmond Spenser (1552-1599)

Edmond Spenser

There is not a great deal known about Spenser's life. Spenser was born in London, England, most likely in 1552, and as a child attended a forward thinking grammar school. He was educated there for eight years, beginning in 1561. His education was a classical one, meaning his studies centered on Latin And Greek language, philosophy, and literature. In 1569, Spenser attended college at Cambridge University. After receive a bachelor of arts degree in 1573, Spenser studied for his master of arts degree, which he received in 1576. Cambridge at this time was largely populated by radical Puritans, although the impact of such teachings on Spenser has been debated.

After receiving his master of arts degree, Spenser held a number of offices, working in 1578 as the secretary to the former master of Pembroke Hall, Edward Young, and in 1579 working in the household of the Earl of Leicester, uncle to Spenser's friend and fellow poet Sir Philip Sidney. In 1580 Spenser traveled to Ireland to work as secretary to Governor Arthur Lord Grey de Wilton. During this time, England was attempting to conquer Ireland, through violence as well as by encouraging the English to settle there. Spenser was an enthusiastic participant in this effort. He served in various capacities in Ireland during the 1580s and 1590s. He was granted a large estate, Kilcolman, in 1590.

From his home in Ireland, Spenser began to write in earnest, having already published a series of pastoral poems, The Shepheardes Calendar, in 1579. He published the first part of his famous epic poem, The Faerie Queene, in 1590, and the second part in 1596. Spenser married Elizabeth Boyle in 1594, and in her honor wrote the love poems and wedding song known collectively as Amoretti and Epithalamion, published in 1595. That is why he is considered as the only sonneteer who wrote a sonnet sequence to his wife. After being appointed to the position of High Sheriff of Cork in 1598, he was forced to return to London after rebels burned down his home at Kilcolman. Spenser died in London of unknown causes on January 13, 1599, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Sonnet 75

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washe` d it away:
Agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray.
''Vayne man,'' sayd she, ''that doest in vaineassay,
A mortall thing so to immortalize,
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,

And eek my name bee wype` d out lykewise.''
''Not so,'' quod I, ''let baser thingsdevize,
To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens wryte your glorious name.
Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.''

Lines 1–4

In Spenser's ''Sonnet 75,'' the poet expresses in a straightforward manner his conviction regarding the immortal nature of his affection for his lover. With the first two lines the speaker establishes the framework for the poem. He relates how he Wrote the name of his lover in the sand on the beach, only to have it washed away by the waves. In the next two lines (lines 3 and 4), he reveals that he attempted to write her name again, only to have the ocean tide once more erase his efforts. Through these lines, the speaker's diligence is revealed. Despite the fact that the waves wash away his lover's name, he repeats what is clearly a futile effort.

Lines 5–8

The next four lines of the poem (lines 5–8) reveal that the poem is not simply the speaker's expression of his feelings, but a recollection of a dialogue with his lover. He explains in these lines what his lover stated when she witnessed his actions. The lover's response to the speaker's endeavors to inscribe her name in so impermanent a medium as wet sand is gently chastising in tone. Apparently a practical woman, she tells the speaker that he exerts himself to no end. The lover goes on to compare her name written in the sand, and its being washed away by the tide, to her own existence, and its inevitable end one day by death. Her tone and her words reprimand the speaker for attempting such a prideful display. She accuses him both of being vain for making such an effort and acting in vain, for his desire to affix their love to a specific time and place is ultimately, and obviously, a fruitless one.

Lines 9–12

In lines 9–12, the speaker responds to his lover's protests. Here his idealism and the fullness of his love is revealed. He tells her that only lower, less worthy creatures will die and be reduced to dust. She, rather, will certainly live on through the fame he will create for her with his poetic verses. His poetry, he assures her, will record forever her singular virtues, thereby immortalizing her name.

Lines 13–14

In the last two lines of the poem, the speaker makes plain that not only will his lover live on forever through his poetry, but also that when death conquers the world, their love will remain and be renewed in the next life. The last lines suggest the speaker's belief in some form of life after death, although whether he describes

a bodily or spiritual existence remains unclear. In a sense, the speaker's intention to immortalize his lover through his poetry validates his lover's accusation that he is vain. His boasts about his ability to create such lasting fame for her reveals his grand opinion of his skill as a poet. Despite this vanity, however, the final lines of the poem make clear the depth of his love and his belief that the feelings they share will live in after death.

* **Themes** : love and Immortality Like most Elizabethan sonnets, Spenser's ''Sonnet 75'' is concerned with an amorous relationship. Often such sonnets itemize a lover's virtues or reveal the extent of a lover's passion. In this poem, rather than focusing on the qualities of his lover that inspire his admiration, the speaker explores the

enduring nature of his love for the woman in question. He dismisses his lover's matter-of-fact expressions of the notion that her name, and their love, is transitory. She quite clearly states that their relationship is a mortal one. She is adamant that she will, in fact, die, and the memory of her presence on earth be extinguished,

erased like her name in the sand. However, the speaker is quick to deflate her argument. Only low, base creatures are destined to die, the speaker replies The language of the sonnet is archaic. He also mentions the tide washing away the name he had written in the sand. Therefore, we know the beach must have been near the ocean, rather than a lake, as lakes do not cover enough area to be effected by the gravitational pull of the moon and consequently do not have tides.

At the end of ''Sonnet 75,'' Spenser references the notion of an afterlife. It is known that Spenser was a Protestant, perhaps of the more radical variety known as a Puritan. Research the beliefs of sixteenth-century Protestants regarding predestination, death, and the resurrection of the soul.

The Power of Language:

The speaker in Spenser's ''Sonnet 75'' displays supreme confidence in the power of his own written words. He claims that through his poetic verses he will eternalize his lover's goodness, her best qualities. Through his words, her name and her glory will be written for all time.

The speaker has faith that after death their love will live on; this concept is as much related to religious faith in the nature of the immortal soul as it is to the couple's faith in the depth of their love for one another. Yet what the speaker vows to achieve through his writing is quite different than what will transpire for the faithful after the death of the body. The revival in the afterlife of the relationship between the speaker and his lover is generated by the strength of the couple's love. Yet the speaker promises that his lover's immortality on earth will be assured by the strength of his poetry alone. Mere words written by the speaker will be enough, he insists, to insure that his lover's name will never be forgotten.

Spenserian Sonnet:

Spenser, through the poems in Amoretti and Epithalamion, developed a style of sonnet that incorporated the use of an interlocking rhyme scheme; this became known as the Spenserian sonnet. In such a rhyme scheme, the rhyming words at the end of each line (or end rhymes) form a pattern in which each section of the poem is linked with the following section through the repetition of the rhyming words. When discussing rhyme schemes, lines are assigned a letter in order to show the repetition of the rhyme. The Spenserian sonnet rhyme scheme is: abab bcbc cdcd ee. The effect of this rhyme scheme is a structuring of the poem into three quatrains (a section of a poem consisting of four lines of verse) and a couplet (a section consisting of two lines of verse).

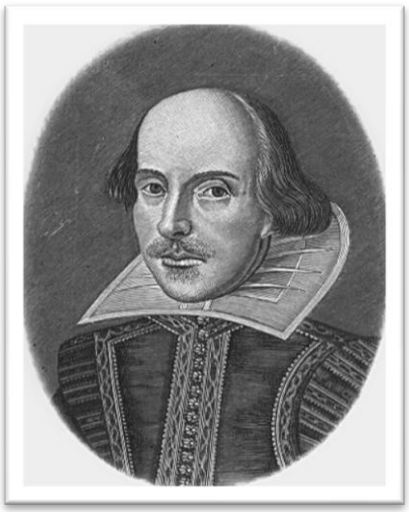
This physical structure relates to the poem's meaning. The first quatrain describes the speaker's actions on the beach, the second quatrain reveals the presence of the lover and her objections, the third quatrain contains the speaker's response, and the final couplet sums up the speaker's argument.

Prepared and Compiled by Dr. M N Naimi

Lecture 10

THE SHAKESPEAREAN THEATER

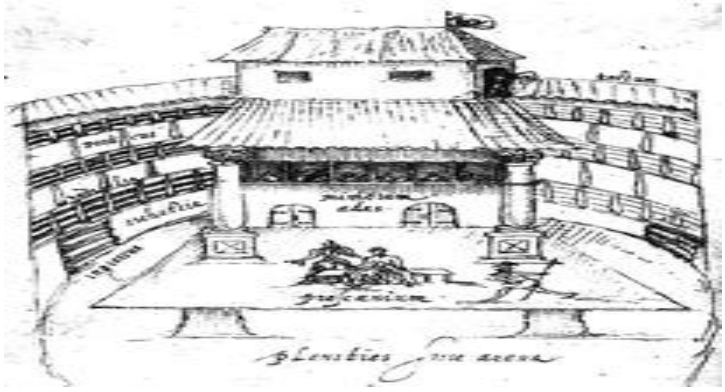
William Shakespearean



The Shakespearean Theater

The Curtain Theatre (centre, with flag flying)—from "a view of the Cittye of London from the North", C. 1600.

The (Elizabethan) Shakespearean Theater



Before Shakespeare's time and during his boyhood, groups of actors performed wherever they could—in halls, courts, courtyards, and any other available open spaces. In 1574, however, when Shakespeare was ten years old, the Common Council passed a law requiring plays and theaters in London to be licensed. In 1576, actor and future Lord Chamberlain's Man, James Burbage, built the first permanent theater called simply The Theatre outside London's city walls. Thereafter, many more theaters were established around the city of London, including the Globe Theatre in which most of Shakespeare's plays were performed. (The image shows an illustration of the Curtain Theater, which was built some 200 yards away from The Theater and also housed many Shakespearean plays.)

Elizabethan theaters were generally built after the design of the original Theatre. Built of wood, these theaters comprised three rows of seats in a circular shape, with a stage area on one side of the circle. The audience's seats and part of the stage were roofed, but much of the main stage and the area in front of the stage was open to the elements sun as rain. About 1,500 audience members could pay an extra fee to sit in the covered seating areas, while about 800 "groundlings" (standing spectators) paid less to stand in the open area before the stage.

The stage itself was divided into three levels: a main stage area with doors at the rear and a curtained area in the back for "discovery scenes"; an upper, canopied (decorated cover with clothes) area called "heaven" for balcony scenes; and an area under the stage called "hell," accessed by a trap door in the stage. There were dressing rooms located behind the stage, but no curtain in the front of the stage, which meant that scenes had to flow into each other and "dead bodies" had to be dragged off.

Performances took place during the day, using natural light from the open center of the theater. Since there could be no dramatic lighting and there was very little scenery or props (The objects and furniture used in the play), audiences relied on the actors' lines and stage directions to supply the time of day and year, as well as the weather, location, and mood. Shakespeare's plays convey such information masterfully. In Hamlet, for example, the audience learns within the first ten lines of dialogue where the scene takes place ("Have you had quiet guard?"), what time of day it is ("'Tis now struck twelve"), what the weather is like ("'Tis bitter cold"), and what mood the characters are in ("and I am sick at heart").

One important difference between plays written in Shakespeare's time and those written today is that Elizabethan plays were published after their performances and sometimes even after their authors' deaths. The scripts were in many ways a record of what happened on stage during performances, rather than directions for what should happen. Actors were allowed to suggest changes to scenes and dialogue and had much more freedom with their parts than contemporary actors. A scene illustrative of such freedom occurs in Hamlet: a crucial passage revolves around Hamlet writing his own scene to be added to a play in order to ensnare (gain power over somebody by using dishonest means) his murderous uncle.

Shakespeare's plays were published in various forms and with a wide range of accuracy during his time. The discrepancies between versions of his plays from one publication to the next make it difficult for editors to put together authoritative editions of his works. Plays could be published in large anthologies in folio format (the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays contains 36 plays) or smaller quartos. Folios were so named because of the way their paper was folded in half to make a large volume. Quartos were smaller, cheaper books containing only one play. Their paper was folded twice, making four pages. In general, the First Folio is considered to be more reliable than the quartos.

Although Shakespeare's language and classical references seem archaic (old) to many readers today, they were accessible to his contemporary audiences. His viewers came from all classes and his plays appealed to all kinds of sensibilities, from "highbrow" accounts of kings and queens to the "lowbrow" blunderings of clowns and servants. Even utterly tragic plays like King Lear or Macbeth contain a clown or fool to provide comic relief and to comment on the events of the play.

Audiences would also have been familiar with his numerous references to classical mythology and literature, since these stories were staples (an essential part) of the Elizabethan knowledge base. And yet, despite such a universal appeal, Shakespeare's plays also expanded on the audience's vocabulary. Many phrases and words that we use today—such as "amazement," "in my mind's eye," and "the milk of human kindness," to name only a few—were coined by Shakespeare. His plays contain indeed a greater variety and number of words than almost any other work in the English language.

About Macbeth :

Legend says that Macbeth was written in 1605 or 1606 and performed at Hampton Court in 1606 for King James I and his brother-in-law, King Christian of Denmark. Whether it was first performed at the royal court or was performed at the Globe theatre, there can be little doubt that the play was intended to please the King, who had recently become the patron of Shakespeare's theatrical company. We note, for example, that the character of Banquo—the legendary root of the Stuart family tree—is depicted very favorably. Like Banquo, King James was a Stuart. The play is also quite short, perhaps because Shakespeare knew that James preferred short plays. And the play contains many supernatural elements that James, who himself published a book on the detection and practices of witchcraft, would have appreciated. Even something as minor as the Scottish defeat of the Danes may have been omitted to avoid offending King Christian.

The material for Macbeth was drawn from Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1587). Despite the play's historical source, however, the play is generally classified as tragedy rather than a history. This derives perhaps from the fact that the story contains many historical fabrications—including the entire character of Banquo, who was invented by a 16th-century Scottish historian in order to validate the Stuart family line. In addition to such fictionalization, Shakespeare took many liberties with the original story, manipulating the characters of Macbeth and Duncan to suit his purposes. In Holinshed's account, Macbeth is a ruthless and valiant leader who rules competently after killing Duncan, whereas Duncan is portrayed as a young and soft-willed man. Shakespeare draws out certain aspects of the two characters in order to create a stronger sense of polarity. Whereas Duncan is made out to be a venerable and kindly older king, Macbeth is transformed into an indecisive and troubled young man who cannot possibly rule well.

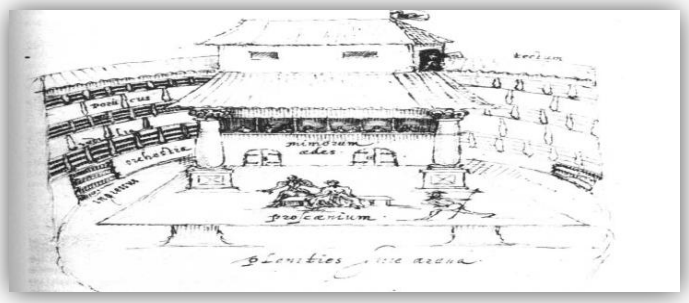
Macbeth is certainly not the only play with historical themes that is full of fabrications. Indeed, there are other reasons why the play is considered a tragedy rather than a history. One reason lies in the play's universality. Rather than illustrating a specific historical moment, Macbeth presents a human drama of ambition, desire, and guilt. Like Hamlet, Macbeth speaks soliloquies that articulate the emotional and intellectual anxieties with which many audiences identify easily. For all his lack of values and "vaulting ambition," Macbeth is a character who often seems infinitely real to audiences. This powerful grip on the audience is perhaps what has made Macbeth such a popular play for centuries of viewers.

Given that Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's shortest plays, some scholars have suggested that scenes were excised (removed) from the Folio version and subsequently lost. There are some loose ends and non-sequiturs* in the text of the play that would seem to support such a claim. If scenes were indeed cut out, however, these cuts were most masterfully done. After all, none of the story line is lost and the play remains incredibly powerful without them. In fact, the play's length gives it a compelling, almost brutal, force. The action flows from scene to scene, speech to speech, with a swiftness that draws the viewer into Macbeth's struggles. As Macbeth's world spins out of control, the play itself also begins to spiral towards to its violent end.

- **A non-sequitur : is a statement, remark, or conclusion that does not follow naturally or logically from what has been said.**
- **Prepared and compiled by Dr. m n naimi**

Lecture 11

Christopher Marlowe & The Professional Playwrights



- The first English plays told religious stories, and were performed in or near churches. These early plays are called Miracle or Mystery Plays and Morality plays. The subject of Miracle plays is various such as Adam and Eve, Noah and the great flood. The Morality plays are different from the Miracle plays in the sense that the characters in them were not people but abstract values such as

  virtues (like truth) or bad qualities such as greed or revenge.

- The religious plays contain comic , and mundane interludes and these were provided with demonic and grotesque figures behaving in a buffoonish manner, gambolling about and letting off fireworks. There is some connection between these "characters" who ran clowning among the audience. From this the English Renaissance and modern drama sprang. Comedy was better than tragedy. There were many playwrights, but Christopher Marlowe outshined them all.

The first generation of professional playwrights in England has become known collectively as the <u>university wits</u>. Their nickname identifies their social positions, but their drama was primarily middle class, patriotic, and romantic. Their preferred subjects were historical or semi-historical, mixed with clowning, music, and love interest.

Marlowe wrote many great sophisticated plays. For instance, in *Tamburlaine the Great* (two parts, published 1590) and *Edward II* (*c.* 1591; published 1594), traditional political orders are overwhelmed by conquerors and politicians who ignore the boasted legitimacy of weak kings; *The Jew of Malta* (*c.* 1589; published 1633) studies the man of business whose financial sharpness of mind and trickery give him unrestrained power; *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* (*c.* 1593; published 1604) depicts the overthrow of a man whose learning shows little regard for his own Christianity. The main focus of all these plays is on the uselessness of society's moral sanctions (medieval spirit) against pragmatic, amoral will (renaissance spirit).

They patently address themselves to the anxieties of an age being transformed by new forces in politics, commerce, and science; indeed, the sinister, ironic prologue to *The Jew of Malta* is spoken by Machiavelli. In his own time Marlowe was damned because his plays remain disturbing and because his verse makes theatrical presence into the expression of power, enlisting the spectators' sympathies on the side of his gigantic villain-heroes. His plays thus present the spectator with dilemmas that can be neither resolved nor ignored, and they articulate exactly the divided consciousness of their time (conflict between the medieval and renaissance values).

There is a similar effect in *The Spanish Tragedy* (*c.* 1591) by Marlowe's friend Thomas Kyd, an early revenge tragedy in which the hero seeks justice for the loss of his son but, in an unjust world, can achieve it only by taking the law into his own hands. Kyd's use of Senecan conventions (notably a ghost impatient for revenge) in a Christian setting expresses a genuine conflict of values, making the hero's success at once triumphant and horrifying. Doctor Faustus represents this conflict <u>par excellence</u>.

Doctor Faustus :

Doctor Faustus, a well-respected German scholar, grows dissatisfied with the limits of traditional forms of knowledge—logic, medicine, law, and religion—and decides that he wants to learn to practice magic. His friends Valdes and Cornelius instruct him in the black arts, and he begins his new career as a magician by summoning up Mephostophilis, a devil. Despite Mephastophilis's warnings about the horrors of hell, Faustus tells the devil to return to

his master, Lucifer, with an offer of Faustus's soul in exchange for twenty-four years of service from Mephastophilis. Meanwhile, Wagner, Faustus's servant, has picked up some magical ability and uses it to press a clown named Robin into his service.

Mephastophilis returns to Faustus with word that Lucifer has accepted Faustus's offer. Faustus experiences some misgivings and wonders if he should repent and save his soul; in the end, he agrees to sign the contract with his blood. As soon as he does so, the words "Homo fuge," Latin for "O man, fly," appear branded on his arm. Faustus again has second thoughts, but Mephostophilis gives him rich gifts and a book of spells to learn. Later, Mephastophilis answers all of his questions about the nature of the world, refusing to answer only when Faustus asks him who made the universe. This refusal prompts yet another round of misgivings in Faustus, but Mephastophilis and Lucifer bring in personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins to convince Faustus, and he is impressed enough to quiet his doubts.

Armed with his new powers and attended by Mephastophilis, Faustus begins to travel. He goes to the pope's court in Rome, makes himself invisible, and plays a series of tricks. He disrupts the pope's banquet by stealing food and boxing the pope's ears. Following this incident, he travels through the courts of Europe, with his fame spreading as he goes. Eventually, he is invited to the court of the German emperor, Charles V (the enemy of the pope), who asks Faustus to allow him to see Alexander the Great, the famed fourth-century b.c. Macedonian king and conqueror. Faustus conjures up an image of Alexander, and Charles is suitably impressed. A knight makes fun of Faustus's powers, and Faustus punishes him by making antlers (bony horns) coming from his head. Furious, the knight vows revenge.

Meanwhile, Robin, Wagner's clown, has picked up some magic on his own, and with his fellow, Rafe, he starts a number of comic misadventures. At one point, he manages to summon Mephastophilis, who threatens to turn Robin and Rafe into animals (or perhaps even does transform them; the text isn't clear) to punish them for their foolishness.
Faustus then goes on with his travels, playing a trick on a horse-courser along the way. Faustus sells him a horse that turns into a heap of straw when ridden into a river. Eventually, Faustus is invited to the court of the Duke of Vanholt, where he performs various tricks. The horse-courser shows up there, along with Robin, a man named Dick (Rafe in the A text), and various others who have fallen victim to Faustus's trickery. But Faustus casts spells on them and sends them on their way, to the amusement of the duke and duchess.

As the twenty-four years of his deal with Lucifer come to a close, Faustus begins to dread his approaching death. He has Mephastophilis call up Helen of Troy, the famous beauty from the ancient world, and uses her presence to impress a group of scholars. An old man urges Faustus to repent, but Faustus drives him away. Faustus summons Helen again and expresses great admiration for her exceptional beauty. But time is growing short. Faustus tells the scholars about his pact, and they are horror-stricken and resolve to pray for him. On the final night before the expiration of the twenty-four years, Faustus is overcome by fear and remorse. He begs for mercy, but it is too late. At midnight, a group of devils appears and carries his soul off to hell. In the morning, the scholars find Faustus's limbs and decide to hold a funeral for him.

Critical Analysis of Doctor Faust

This play is about how Faustus puts on a performance for the Emperor and the Duke of Vanholt. The main thesis or climax of this play is when Faustus two friends Valdes and Cornelius who are magicians, teach him the ways of magic. Faustus uses this magic to summon up a devil named Mephistophilis. Faustus signs over his soul to Lucifer (Satan), in return to keep Mephistophilis for 24 years. We also see what happens when magic power gets in the wrong hands when Mephistophilis punishes Robin, who is a clown and his friend Ralph for trying to make magic with a book they have stolen from Faustus. In the beginning angels visit Faustus, and each time he wonders whether or not to repent, but the devil appears and warns him not to by tempting him of magic to possess. In the end of the play the two good

and evil angels have been replaced by an old man, who urges Faustus to repent. But it is to late for so doing and the play ends with the devil carrying him off to hell.

Key points about English Drama

• Maundane Drama: Growing restrictions on religious drama in the late sixteenth century contributed to the English theatre.
• Professional Stage: The late sixteenth century saw the establishment of the first permanent theatres and the professionalisation of the English theatre world.
• Acting Companies: Acting was company-based and all-male. Women were not allowed to act publicly. Acting companies were generally of two types: adult and boy companies.
• Playwriting: There was a massive expansion in the number of plays in English in the late sixteenth century; many were written collaboratively; they drew on a variety of sources and classical and Medieval dramatic traditions.
• Regulation: All plays had to be licensed for performance and for printing; some were subject to censorship, generally because they dealt directly with living individuals or contentious issues.
• Publication: Plays were generally written for performance not reading; only some were printed. Printed versions of plays were not necessarily the same as each other or as the versions that were originally performed in the theatre.
• Staging: Renaissance plays had to be adaptable for a variety of venues (stages) and therefore generally relied on a minimalist staging style; scenery and sets were not used; settings were usually evoked through textual allusions.
• Academic Drama: It was common to study and perform classical plays in schools and at the universities, as a way of training students in Latin, rhetoric and oratory.
• Inns of Court Drama: Lawyers occasionally hosted professional performances and mounted their own plays and masques. Their own entertainments were often politically topical in theme and satirical in mode.
• Court Drama: Dramatic entertainments were a central part of court culture. As well as hosting play and masque performances, monarchs were accustomed to being entertained with short 'shows' when they went round the country. These often combined advice or requests for patronage.
• Household/Closet Drama: Noblemen and women sometimes patronised and played host to professional players; some also staged amateur performances and/or wrote their own plays and masques. Some of these texts are 'closet' dramas (intended for reading), others appear to have been written for performance.
• Attitudes to Drama: The large audiences drawn to players' performances point to a popular taste for public theatre, but the stage had its opponents. Some complained that plays were morally corrupting; others were concerned that theatres were causes for crime, disease and disorder. Opponents of the theatre were often characterised as puritans but not all puritans were opponents of drama or vice versa.
• Comedy: Comedies dominated the professional stage in the late sixteenth century; they were defined by their happy endings rather than their use of humour, and borrowed from classical and European comic writing.
• Tragedy: The first English tragedies were written in the Renaissance and were in influenced by Senecan tragedy and Medieval tales. Tragedy only became one of the dominant genres in the Jacobean period.
• History: History plays dramatized the stories of (reputedly) historical characters and events and were particularly fashionable in the 1590s; many were based on material found in the wave of historical chronicles published in the sixteenth century.
• Romance and Tragicomedy: Early Elizabethan plays often mixed tragedy and comedy. In the early seventeenth century there was a renewed taste for plays which mixed the genres, including romances and tragicomedies. Some contemporaries complained about such generic hybrids, but tragicomedy became the dominant dramatic genre on the Stuart stage.
• Masques: The masque was a lavish, multimedia form of entertainment developed in the Renaissance and particularly popular at the Stuart court. The proscenium arch(front stage), perspective staging, and female performance were pioneered in England in court masques (Prepared and Compiled by Dr. m n naimi)

Lecture 12

The Cavalier Poets

The 'cavalier' poets, who are usually said to include Robert Herrick, Richard Lovelace, Sir John Suckling and Thomas Carew, take their name from the term used to describe those who supported the royalist cause in the English Civil War. As this connection suggests, they share a belief in loyalty to the monarch and are generally royalist in sympathy. As writers mostly active in the Caroline era, this meant that they participated in the royal idealisation of the relationship between Charles I and Henrietta Maria, composing poems which celebrated Platonic (as well as sensual) love of the kind the royal couple expressed, and loyal devotion to the beloved ruler . Other shared values include a prizing of friendship, hospitality and a commitment to the classical concept of the 'Good Life'. Many of these values, and the neo-classical poetic style with which they are associated, were inherited from Ben Jonson.

Alongside the fourishing of the religious lyric and new types of love lyric, the early seventeenth century witnessed a fashion for various forms of occasional poetry and encomiastic verse (poetry of praise), such as verse epistles praising individuals, epithalamiums (or wedding poems), epitaphs and elegies. In similar fashion, a number of early seventeenth-century poets wrote poems which celebrated particular places or buildings. Probably, the most famous of these are the so-called 'country-house' poems which became popular following the publication of Aemilia Lanyer's 'The Description of Cookham' (1611) and Ben Jonson's 'To Penshurst' (1616) (see below).

In contrast to Donne (as we have already seen in his poem, A Valediction Forbidding Mourning) stood the writing of Ben Jonson. The Jonsonian tradition was, broadly, that of social verse, written with a Classical clarity and weight and deeply informed by ideals of civilized reasonableness, ceremonious respect, and inner self-sufficiency derived from Seneca. It is a poetry of publicly shared values and norms. Ben Jonson's own verse was occasional. It addresses other individuals, distributes praise and blame, and promulgates (declares) serious ethical attitudes. His favored forms were the ode, elegy, satire, epistle, and epigram, and they are always beautifully crafted objects, achieving a Classical harmony and monumentality. For Jonson, the unornamented style meant not colloquiality but labour, restraint, and control. A good poet had first to be a good man, and his verses lead his society toward an ethic of gracious but responsible living.

With the Cavalier poets who succeeded Jonson, the element of urbanity and conviviality (pleasant and sociable life) tended to loom larger. Robert Herrick was perhaps England's first poet to express impatience with the tediousness (boring) of country life. However, Herrick's "The Country Life" and "The Hock Cart" rival Jonson's 'To Penshurst' as panegyrics to (praising) the Horatian ideal of the "good life," calm and retirement, but Herrick's poems gain retrospective poignancy (looking at the past with pain and sadness) by their implied contrast with the disruptions of the Civil Wars. The courtiers Carew, Sir John Suckling, and Richard Lovelace developed a manner of ease and naturalness suitable to the world of gentlemanly pleasure in which they moved. Suckling's A *Session of the Poets* (1637; published 1646) lists more than 20 wits then in town.

The Cavalier poets were writing England's first verse about the society, lyrics of compliments and casual liaisons, often cynical, occasionally sensual.

UPON JULIA'S CLOTHES

UPON JULIA'S CLOTHES.
by Robert Herrick

WHENAS in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
That brave vibration each way free ;
O how that glittering taketh me !

"UPON JULIA'S CLOTHES" ROBERT HERRICK (1648):

- The poem is a response to a dress worn by an imaginary woman called Julia.
- The poet likes the flowing, liquid effect of the silk dress.
- The woman appears to be attractive when she wears this style, but the emphasis is on the look of the clothes.
- In the second stanza Herrick praises the shiny fluttering of the dress.
- He claims to be very attracted to the effect it creates.

A brief but popular poem, ROBERT HERRICK's "Upon Julia's Clothes" often appears in anthologies. Its six lines offer a masterful imagery with a unity of purpose, rhythm, and RHYME that combine to elevate its common subject matter above its proper station. The speaker begins, "When as in silks my Julia goes," and Herrick adds repetition in the next line, "Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flows." The parenthetical remark gives a touch of realism to the sentiment, while the flow of Herrick's words imitates that of the silk he describes. The noun in the third line represents the height of sensuality, as the speaker describes what flows so sweetly, "That liquefaction of her clothes."

Herrick's introduction of the scientific term *liquefaction into his obviously artistic creation evokes a* hardy contrast and emphasizes the grace within the silks required to reduce them to a liquid, organic skin that flows about Julia's body. The final triplet is the expression of a man exulting in woman's beauty, as Herrick writes,

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
That brave Vibration each way free;
O how that glittering take me.

The speaker notes the liberated movement of Julia's body with a gaze that is deliberately "cast" in Julia's direction. The speaker remains consumed by Julia's "brave Vibration," seeing her body as a glittering mass that threatens to consume him, as does his passion.

Imagery The poem is built around an image of a woman named Julia wearing a free flowing silk dress. He probably picked the name 'Julia' to fit in with the picture of the flowing dress.

Metaphor The movement of the dress is compared to flowing liquid: 'liquefaction'. It also glitters or shines like jewels.

Paradox [apparent contradiction] Silk, a solid material, is compared to something liquid.

Assonance Notice the musical effect of vowel repetition in the second and fourth lines where the 'e' sound is repeated.

Consonance [repetition of a consonant sound anywhere in a word] The six 'l' sounds of the first stanza emphasise the flowing or liquid movement of the silk dress.

Lecture 13

Humanism in the Renaissance

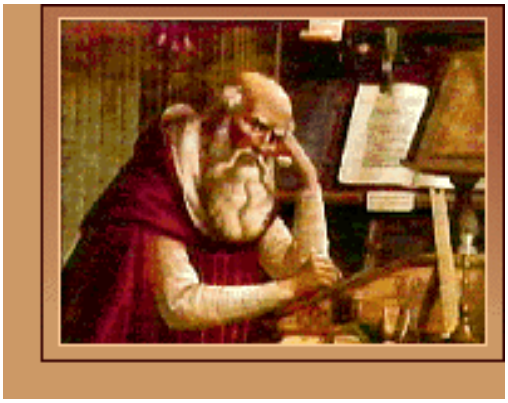
Emergence of Humanism :

Books helped to spread awareness of a new philosophy that emerged when Renaissance scholars known as humanists returned to the works of ancient writers. Previously, during the Middle Ages, scholars had been guided by the teachings of the church, and people had concerned themselves with actions leading to heavenly rewards. The writings of ancient, Greece and Rome, called the "classics," had been greatly ignored. To study the classics, humanists learned to read Greek and ancient Latin, and they sought out manuscripts that had lain undisturbed for nearly 2,000 years.

The humanists rediscovered writings on scientific matters, government, rhetoric, philosophy, and art. They were influenced by the knowledge of these ancient civilizations and by the emphasis placed on man, his intellect, and his life on Earth.

The Humanist Philosophy :

The new interest in secular life led to beliefs about education and society that came from Greece and Rome. The secular, humanist idea held that the church should not rule civic matters, but should guide only spiritual matters. The church disdained the accumulation of wealth and worldly goods, supported a strong but limited education, and believed that moral and ethical behavior was dictated by scripture. Humanists, however, believed that wealth enabled them to do fine, noble deeds, that good citizens needed a good, well-rounded education (such as that advocated by the Greeks and Romans), and that moral and ethical issues were related more to secular society than to spiritual concerns.



Rebirth of Classical Studies :

The rebirth of classical studies contributed to the development of all forms of art during the Renaissance. Literature was probably the first to show signs of classical influence. The Italian poet Petrarch (1304-1374) delighted in studying the works of Cicero and Virgil, two great writers of the Roman age, and he modeled some of his own writings on their works. Although he often wrote in Latin, attempting to imitate Cicero's style, Petrarch is most renowned for his poetry in Italian. As one of the first humanists, and as a writer held in high esteem in his own time, he influenced the spread of humanism--first among his admirers, and later throughout the European world.

The defining concept of the Renaissance was *humanism,* a literary movement that began in Italy during the fourteenth century. Humanism was a distinct movement because it broke from the medieval tradition of having pious religious motivation for creating art or works of literature. Humanist writers were concerned with worldly or secular subjects rather than strictly religious themes. Such emphasis on the mundane was the result of a more materialistic view of the world. Unlike the Medieval Era, Renaissance people were concerned with money and the enjoyment of life and all its worldly pleasures. Humanist writers glorified the individual and believed that man was the measure of all things and had unlimited potential.

Humanist writers sought to understand human nature through a study of classical writers such as Plato and Aristotle. They believed that the classical writers of Ancient Greece and Rome could teach important ideas about life, love, and beauty. The revival of interest in the classical models of Greece and Rome was centered primarily among the educated people of the Italian city-states and focused on literature and writing.

During the Middle Ages in Western Europe, Latin was the language of the Church and the educated people. The Humanist writers began to use the *vernacular*, the national languages of a country, in addition to Latin.

Some important Italian Humanists are:

1 - Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) was an Italian who lived in Florence and who expressed in his writings the belief that there were no limits to what man could accomplish.

2 - Francesco Petrarca, known as Petrarch (1304-1374) was the Father of Humanism, a Florentine who spent his youth in Tuscany and lived in Milan and Venice. He was a collector of old manuscripts and through his efforts the speeches of Cicero and the poems of Homer and Virgil became known to Western Europe. Petrarch's works also led to the rise of people known as *Civic Humanists*, or those individuals who were civic-minded and looked to the governments of the ancient worlds for inspiration. Petrarch also wrote sonnets in Italian. Many of these sonnets expressed his love for the beautiful Laura. His sonnets greatly influenced other writers of the time.

3 - Leonardo Bruni (1369-1444), who wrote a biography of Cicero, encouraged people to become active in the political as well as the cultural life of their cities. He was a historian who today is most famous for *The History of the Florentine Peoples*, a 12-volume work. He was also the Chancellor of Florence from 1427 until 1444.

4 - Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) wrote *The Decameron*. These hundred short stories were related by a group of young men and women who fled to a villa outside Florence to escape the Black Death. Boccaccio's work is considered to be the best prose of the Renaissance.

5 - Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529) wrote one of the most widely read books, *The Courtier*, which set forth the criteria on how to be the ideal Renaissance man. Castiglione's ideal courtier was a well-educated, mannered aristocrat who was a master in many fields from poetry to music to sports.

Humanism had far-reaching effects throughout Italy and Europe. The advent of humanism ended the church dominance of written history. Humanist writers secularized the view of history by writing from a non-religious viewpoint.

The Humanists also had a great effect on education. They believed that education stimulated the creative powers of the individual. They supported studying grammar, poetry, and history, as well as mathematics, astronomy, and music. Humanists promoted the concept of the well-rounded, or Renaissance man, who was proficient (well skilled) in both intellectual and physical endeavors.

Humanism is a concept that has changed since the sixteenth century. Its original meaning was the belief in the validity of the human spirit that coincided with piety for God. Now, humanism refers to the glorification of man. The passing of time has transformed the concept of love, also. In our present society, one "loves" pizza or one "loves" a spouse. Currently, love encompasses a vast majority of ideas and intensities. The sonnets and poems of Surrey, Sidney, Spenser, and Wyatt consider love as a consuming passion. To the sixteenth century poet, love is a powerful force that creates misery, but surpasses the pain to be a worthy endeavor. Love is a personified superior entity which must be obeyed. In Wyatt's The Love That in My Thought Doth Harbor, love is his "master" (441; ln. 12). His master controls his heart, and endeavors to reign. Even when love retreats in fear from shame the poet still supports him.

In Astrophil and Stella, love's decrees must be followed, since they have such power (Sidney 460; sonnet 2, ln. 4). Love can act such as wringing (squeeze or twist) one's heart and giving wounds (Surrey 452; ln. 6; Sidney 460; sonnet 2, ln. 2). Love possesses one's self to produce much affliction (pain). Wyatt wrote a poem, Farewell Love, to express his tumultuous emotions. He desired for love to leave him after years of suffering at love's mercy (Wyatt 440). In My Lute, Awake, Wyatt addresses love as an illness: "I am past remedy" (442; ln.14). Wyatt also desires to watch his former love suffer for the pain she inflicted on him. Surrey considers love the reason for his discomfort in Alas! So All Things Now Do Hold Their Peace (452; ln. 11). Sidney endeavors to ignore love, yet at the same time "with a feeling skill I paint my hell" (460; sonnet 2, ln. 13-4). Love's pain produces

a type of hell and a disease for those ensnared (trapped) that cannot be ignored. The misery love produces cannot surpass the benefit of love. Surrey considers love his lord and writes "Yet from my lord shall not my foot remove: Sweet is the death that taketh end by love" (451; ln. 13-4). Death is even pleasurable if caused from love. Sidney addresses love by writing, "I call it praise to suffer tyranny" (460; ln. 11). Later in Astrophil and Stella, Sidney says that love's effect

caused anguish (extreme anxiety), but that "the cause more sweet could be" (471; sonnet 87, ln. 12-3). The rule of love is still worthy of praise, regardless of the affliction.

According to Spenser's Amoretti, "love is the lesson which the Lord us taught" (737; sonnet 68, ln. 14). Love would be desirous because God uses it to teach us. Love painfully invaded the lives of the poets, but resulted in an eventual joy, even if the joy was at death. Love dominated their poetry as it dominated their lives. Today, our spouses may afflict our emotions, but love of pizza will probably never leave a deep emotional attachment. Our society has downgraded love in our life from what was considered the normal experience. Despite the hermeneutical transformation applied to the concept of love, the words of the nineteenth century poet Tennyson ring true today as they would have in the sixteenth century: "'tis better to have loved and lost, than to have never loved at all" (qtd. in Stevenson 1463).

In the Renaissance, the highest cultural values were usually associated with active involvement in public life, in moral, political, and military action, and in service to the state. Of course, the traditional religious values coexisted with the new secular values; in fact, some of the most important Humanists, like Erasmus, were Churchmen. Also, individual achievement, breadth of knowledge, and personal aspiration (as personified by Doctor Faustus) were valued. The concept of the "Renaissance Man" refers to an individual who, in addition to participating actively in the affairs of public life, possesses knowledge of and skill in many subject areas. (Such figures included Leonardo Da Vinci and John Milton, as well as Francis Bacon, who had declared, "I have taken all knowledge to be my province.")

Nevertheless, individual aspiration was not the major concern of Renaissance Humanists, who focused rather on teaching people how to participate in and rule a society (though only the nobility and some members of the middle class were included in this ideal). Overall, in consciously attempting to revive the thought and culture of classical antiquity, perhaps the most important value the Humanists extracted from their studies of classical literature, history, and moral philosophy was the social nature of humanity.

A common oversimplification of Humanism suggests that it gave renewed emphasis to life in this world instead of to the otherworldly, spiritual life associated with the Middle Ages. Oversimplified as it is, there is nevertheless truth to the idea that Renaissance Humanists placed great emphasis upon the dignity of man and upon the expanded possibilities of human life in this world. For the most part, it regarded human beings as social creatures who could create meaningful lives only in association with other social beings.

In the terms used in the Renaissance itself, Humanism represented a shift from the "contemplative life" to the "active life." In the Middle Ages, great value had often been attached to the life of contemplation and religious devotion, away from the world (though this ideal applied to only a small number of people).

Humanism :

An intellectual movement originating in renaissance Italy that encouraged the fresh study of classical literature, and which emphasized the importance of learning as a means of improving one's self.

Lecture 14

The Country-House Poem

The Country-house poem :

The English ‘country-house’ poem was an invention of the early seventeenth century and is defined by its praise of a country-house estate and its (usually male) owner.

Country house poetry is a sub-genre of Renaissance poetry and was first written during the Seventeenth century. It was closely linked to patronage poetry, in which poets (sometimes outrageously) flattered patrons in order to gain sponsorship and status. At this time, many houses were built in the countryside as a display of wealth, and as a retreat for the courtier when overwhelmed by the court and city life. Country houses were not, originally, just large houses in the country in which rich people lived. Essentially they were power houses - the houses of a ruling class. As such they could work at the local level of a manor house, the house of a squire who was a little king in his village and ran the county. They could work at a local and national level as the seat of a landowner who was also a member of parliament.

Basically, people did not live in country houses unless they either possessed power, or, by setting up in a country house, were making a bid to possess it. Country house poems generally consisted of complimentary descriptions of the said country house and its surrounding area which often contained pastoral detail, and praised cultivated nature. The purpose of the central part of this essay is to assess the effectiveness of Renaissance 'country house' poetry as social criticism.

Country house poems were written to flatter and please the owner of the country house. Why did poets do this? Until the nineteenth century the wealth and population of England lay in the country rather than the towns; landowners rather than merchants were the dominating class. Even when the economic balance began to change, they were so thoroughly in control of patronage and legislation, so strong through their inherited patronage and expertise that their political and social supremacy continued.

As a result, from the Middle Ages until the nineteenth century anyone who had made money by any means, and was ambitious for himself and his family, automatically invested in a country estate. Poets tried to gain the favour and patronage of these landowners through praise of their homes.

Ben Jonson :

Ben Jonson's country house poem *To Penshurst* was written to celebrate the Kent estate of Sir Robert Sidney, Viscount Lisle, later earl of Leister (father of Mary Wroth). The poem idealises country life and sets up an opposition between the city and the country. The title *To Penshurst* indicates that the poem is a gift, in praise of Penshurst. Jonson begins by telling us what Penshurst is not:

Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious
show . . . nor can boast a row of polish'd pillars
. . . thou hast no latherne.

This tells us that Penshurst was not built to show off the wealth of its owners, and is far from ostentatious. The qualities that cannot be found at Penshurst are listed to make it

seem humble and down-to-earth compared to the average country house. Perhaps this is done to prevent peasants' resentment of lavish spending on luxuries by the wealthy. A more likely explanation, however, is that it is subtle criticism of other, more flamboyant residences. Jonson seems to take a Christian standpoint in his encouragement of modesty and his veiled criticism of the vanity of the owners of more showy edifices. Or perhaps it is a frustrated stab at the inequalities of capitalism. Penshurst is said to boast natural attractions:

> of soyle, of ayre, of wood, of water:
> therein thou art fair.

The idea that nature is beautiful and does not need decoration is emphasised. The opening lines of the poem may lead the reader into thinking that Penshurst is a dull place, so the employment of classical allusions serves to seize the reader's attention, and also adds an air of mystery and uncertainty. This also gives the impression of a Pagan society, and reinforces mythological stereotypes about the countryside, although we are told towards the end of the poem that "His children...have been taught religion".

This may be an illustration of popular pre-conceptions of country life by townsfolk, i.e. that it is Pagan and uncivilised, whereas, in reality (we are told), country living is Christian. It is significant that the poem mentions the poet Philip Sidney: "At his great birth, where all the Muses met.“ We are told that Penshurst was the birthplace of Sidney, and this serves to disperse the stereotype that country folk were unintelligent:

The absentee landlord, who dissipated his time and fortune in living it up in the city, became a stock figure in contemporary satire. But so did the boozy illiterate hunting squire, the Sir Tony Lumpkin or Sir Tunbelly Clumsy, who never left the country at all, or if he did only made himself ridiculous.

Philip Sidney was seen as the model of a Renaissance man. He was a courtier, talented poet, advisor and Cupbearer to the Queen, and soldier. His whole family were patrons of the arts, so the connection made between Penshurst and the Sidney family gives the impression that Penshurst was the epitome of an educated, cultured household.

In the central part of the poem, Jonson makes Penshurst sound like a countryside Utopia. The copse "never failes to serve thee season'd deere”, "each banke doth yield thee coneyes (rabbits, "the painted partrich lyes in every field . . . willing to be kill'd.“ This kind of submission sounds too good to be true - animals are biologically programmed to survive, there is no way any creature would give its life "for thy messe”.

It is likely that Jonson's portrayal of country life has a satirical edge. He says that "fat, aged carps runne into thy net“ and that when eels detect a fisherman, they "leape . . . into his hand." This irony may be directed towards those who boast that country life is trouble-free. The theme of capitalism runs through this poem - we see the final product e.g. the food at the table, but we are not told about the killing process or the toiling that must have taken place in the construction of Penshurst. Instead, we are told that "thy walls....are rear'd with no man's ruine, no mans grone." No man died, or even groaned in the building of the walls. A modern comparison would be a pair of Nike trainers - we only see the final, shiny, commercially advertised product, not the assembly of the trainers by grossly under-paid 'workers' of the Far East.

The picture of this perfect world is ominously underscored by the biblical allusion in lines 39-44: "The Earely cherry...fig, grape and quince....hang on thy walls, that every child may each." This could be reference to the Christian story of the Creation, because fig leaves were used by Adam and Eve to cover their naked bodies, and Eden was surrounded by a wall. The allusion implies that although this world may seem flawless at the moment, it is inevitable that the perfection will have to end at some point in the near future.

Contradictorily, the poem displays aspects of Communism as well as Capitalism. For example, all of the people from the surrounding area make their own specific contribution to the feast that takes place. Everyone is allowed to eat "thy lords owne meat”, beer, wine and bread. Nobody makes a note of how much is consumed by individuals, "Here no man tells my cups", and there is a strong sense of altruistic sharing and togetherness: "That is his Lordships, shall also be mine.“ There does not seem to be any kind of hierarchy present (even when the king visits), all persons are treated as equals, all are equally important. Perhaps the inclusion of the biblical reference is a pre-emptive suggestion that Communism can only fail (due to Man's greedy nature).

Once society began to reorganise on class basis, the victory ultimately lay with the largest class. The centre of power began to move down the social scale. First the gentry, then the middle classes, and ultimately the working classes grew in power and independence. This posed the upper classes with a dilemma. Should they fight the movement or accept it? The most successful families were those who accepted it, and, on the basis of their inherited status and expertise, set out to lead the classes below them rather than to fight them. But leadership of this kind involved association; as a result, first the gentry and then the middle classes disappeared from great households as employees or subordinates, and reappeared as guests. Medieval dukes were unwilling to sit at table with anyone of lower rank than a baron; Victorian dukes were prepared to meet even journalists at dinner. Jonson shows that Penshurst is the kind of place that embraces the lower classes, and allows them to eat at the same table as the king of the country.

The generosity of the people is greatly emphasised in this poem. No one comes "empty-handed" to the feast. The guest is offered more than enough food and drink. Every provision imaginable is in plenty, from the beer to the meat, from the fire to the clean linen. This implies that unlike some country houses at this time which were grandiose but unwelcoming, Penshurst is a place of hospitality and modesty. The king made an impromptu visit to Penshurst, and the house was neat and tidy, "as if it had expected such a guest". The king often visited the houses of those he least favoured because the cost of the event often led to the bankruptcy of the proprietor. The poem shows that Penshurst can withstand this threat, and was even in an immaculate condition when the king arrived unexpectedly. The portrayal of the king as humble enough to dine at Penshurst with all classes of people flatters the crown, and is likely to gain Jonson favour with the king.

Aemilia Lanyer :

Aemilia Lanyer (1569-1645) was of Italian Jewish descent. She may have served in the Duchess of Kent's household. Her volume of poems *Salve deus rex Judoeorum*, 1611, was in part a bid for support from a number of prominent women patrons. Her country house poem *The Description of Cooke-ham* gives us an account of the residence of Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland, in the absence of Lady Clifford, who is depicted as the ideal Renaissance woman - graceful, virtuous, honourable and beautiful. Lanyer describes the house and its surroundings while Lady Margaret is present, and while she is absent. While Lady Margaret was around, the flowers and trees:

Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee!
The very hills right humbly did descend,
When you to tread upon them did intend.
And as you set you feete, they still did rise,
Glad that they could receive so rich a prise.

It seems as if nature is there for the sole purpose of pleasing Lady Margaret. The birds come to attend her, and the banks, trees and hills feel honoured to receive her. Nature is personified throughout the poem, and, when Lady Margaret leaves, appears to go through a process of mourning: "Every thing retaind a sad dismay,". Many poems emphasise the strength of nature and the weakness of humans (for example, *Ozymandias* by Percy Bysshe Shelley), but in this poem, nature seems to be at the mercy of a human, and a woman at that. This unrealistic notion of Lady Margaret's control over the elements greatly flatters her, and the poem is therefore likely to gain Lanyer's favour with the Countess. A far more rational explanation would be that Lady Margaret resided at Cooke-ham during the summer months, and just after she left, autumn came upon the countryside. In order to flatter Lady Margaret, Lanyer implies that the countryside is mourning her departure, but in actual fact she sees the turn of the season, which is not affected by Lady Margaret. Just as in *To Penshurst* the lifestyle seemed too good to be true, in *A Description of Cook-ham*, the Lady of the house seems to be too close to perfection to be real.

Perhaps Lanyer's poem is a satirical take on the relationship between the poet and the patron. She appears to be saying that poets will write anything to flatter patrons in order to gain their favour - even something as ridiculous as the idea that nature is emotionally sensitive ("the grasse did weep for woe", and mourns the departure of a human being.

Conclusion

The social criticism contained in these two poems is subtle, and shrouded. Society is never criticised directly by the poets, and irony was their most valuable tool. Nature behaves in strange, abnormal ways in both of the poems. In *To Penshurst*, animals seem unrealistically submissive towards the wills of the people, provisions are acquired with the minimum of effort. The timber crisis of the seventeenth century illustrates the extent to which poets grappled with contradictory images of nature: "Nature, on the one hand, is the fallen, postlapsarian realm of scarcity and labour and, on the other, the divinely ordered handiwork of a beneficent God that can be made to yield infinite profits."

The social criticism present in To Penhurst is very effective because it is so unexpected. The role of country house poems was to praise and flatter, yet it is possible to detect a strong sense of irony in the descriptions, and we see the criticism present if we read between the lines.

Similarly, love poetry is sometimes used as a way for poets to discuss other things. The poem *Who so list to hount I knowe where is an hynde*, written by Sir Thomas Wyatt, at first appears to be a love poem, but it could also be interpreted as criticism of patronage, hunting and politics. The hunter and the hunted are compared to the patron and the poet. At this time, poets were afraid to be direct in their criticism of the world they lived in, because they could incur the wrath of the monarch, which was never beneficial if the poet wanted to gain patronage.

The poems are effective as social criticism because the criticism is not obvious, but if one looks closely, it becomes apparent. However, it was unlikely that people read country house poetry to be provided with political or social insights, so it is likely that many of the allusions were lost on the majority of readers.

تم بحمد الله ~

اللهم انفعنا بما علمتنا . . وعلما ما ينفعنا . . وزدنا علما

❋

مع تمنياتي القلبية للجميع بالتوفيق والنجاح

~Queen~