

# English Renaissance Elizabethan Period

# English Renaissance

- Wars of the Roses in the 2nd half of the 15th century - little cultural development
- Thomas More: *Utopia* (1516, in Latin)
- Reformation and the separation of the Church of England



**Sir Philip Sidney**  
***Astrophil and Stella* (1591)**  
***The Defence of Poesy* (1595)**

image: [poetryfoundation.org](https://www.poetryfoundation.org)

## ***Astrophil and Stella: Sonnet 30***

Whether the Turkish new-moon minded be  
To fill her horns this year on Christian coast;  
How Poles' right king means without leave of host  
To warm with ill-made fire cold Muscovy;  
If French can yet three parts in one agree;  
What now the Dutch in their full diets boast;  
How Holland hearts, now so good towns be lost,  
Trust in the shade of pleasing Orange-tree;  
How Ulster likes of that same golden bit  
Wherewith my father once made it half tame;  
If in the Scotch Court be no welt'ring yet:  
These questions busy wits to me do frame.  
I, cumbered with good manners, answer do,  
But know not how, for still I think of you.



## Nicholas Hilliard Young Man among Roses portrait miniature, ca. 1587

“The young man epitomises the age of Shakespeare and the love sonnets of Sir Philip Sidney. Languid, pining, effortlessly elegant, a fur slung over his shoulders, long, slim leg tapering into fine shoes, he leans against the tree, his right hand on his heart.”

Isabella Steer: *Essential History of British Art*. Bath: Parragon, 2001.

image: Victoria and Albert Museum

## ***The Defence of Poesy***

For these three [third] be they which most properly do imitate to teach and delight; and to imitate, borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range only, reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be, and should be. These be they, that, as the first and most noble sort, may justly be termed “vates”; so these are waited on in the excellentest languages and best understandings, with the fore-described name of poets. For these, indeed, do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand, which, without delight they would fly as from a stranger; and teach to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved; which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to bark at them.

## ***The Defence of Poesy***

Now for the poet, he nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth; for, as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true which is false: so as the other artists, and especially the historian, affirmeth many things, can, in the cloudy knowledge of mankind, hardly escape from many lies: but the poet, as I said before, never affirmeth; the poet never maketh any circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what he writeth: he citeth not authorities of other histories, but even for his entry calleth the sweet Muses to inspire into him a good invention; in troth, not labouring to tell you what is or is not, but what should or should not be. And, therefore, though he recount things not true, yet because he telleth them not for true he lieth not (...).

## **Robert Sidney: Sonnet 30**

Absence, I cannot say thou hid'st my light,  
Not darkened, but for ay sett is my sun;  
No day sees me, not when night's glass is run;  
I present, absent am; unseen in sight.

Nothing but I do parallel the night  
In whom all act of light and heat is done:  
She that did all in me, all hath undone;  
I was love's cradle once, now love's grave right.

Absence, I used to make my moan to thee;  
When thy clouds stayed, my joys they did not shine;  
But now I may say joys, cannot say mine.

Absent, I want all what I care to see,  
Present, I see my cares avail me not:  
Present not hearkened to, absent forgot.





## **Edmund Spenser**

*The Shepheardes Calender* (1596)

*The Faerie Queene* (1590)

*Epithalamion* (1595)

image: wikipedia

***from Epithalamion***

Ah when will this long weary day have end,  
And lende me leave to come unto my love?  
How slowly do the houres theyr numbers spend?  
How slowly does sad Time his feathers move?  
Hast thee O fayrest Planet to thy home  
Within the Westerne fome:  
Thy tyred steedes long since have need of rest.  
Long though it be, at last I see it gloome,  
And the bright evening star with golden creast  
Appeare out of the East.  
Fayre childe of beauty, glorious lampe of love  
That all the host of heaven in rankes doost lead,  
And guydest lovers through the nightes dread,

How chearefully thou lookest from above,  
And seemst to laugh atweene thy twinkling light  
As joying in the sight  
Of these glad many which for joy doe sing,  
That all the woods them answer and their echo ring.

Now ceasse ye damsels your delights forepast;  
Enough is it, that all the day was youres:  
Now day is doen, and night is nighing fast:  
Now bring the Bryde into the brydall boures.  
Now night is come, now soone her disaray,  
And in her bed her lay;  
Lay her in lillies and in violets,  
And silken courteins over her display,  
And odour'd sheetes. and Arras coverlets.

Behold how goodly my faire love does ly  
In proud humility;  
Like unto Maia, when as Jove her tooke,  
In Tempe, lying on the flowry gras,  
Twixt sleepe and wake, after she weary was,  
With bathing in the Acidalian brooke.  
Now it is night, ye damsels may be gon,  
And leave my love alone,  
And leave likewise your former lay to sing:  
The woods no more shal answeere, nor your echo ring.

Now welcome night, thou night so long expected,  
That long daies labour doest at last defray,  
And all my cares, which cruell love collected,  
Hast sumdin one. and cancelled for aye:

Spread thy broad wing over my love and me,  
That no man may us see,  
And in thy sable mantle us enwrap,  
From feare of perrill and foule horror free.  
Let no false treason seeke us to entrap,  
Nor any dread disquiet once annoy  
The safety of our joy:  
But let the night be calme and quiet some,  
Without tempestuous storms or sad afray:  
Lyke as when Jove with fayre Alcmena lay,  
When he begot the great Tirynthian groome:  
Or lyke as when he with thy selfe did lie,  
And begot Majesty.  
And let the mayds and yongmen cease to sing:  
Ne let the woods them answer, nor thevr eccho ring.

# The Spanish Tragedie:

OR,

## Hieronimo is mad againe.

Containing the lamentable end of *Don Horatio*, and  
*Belimperia*; with the pittifull death of *Hieronimo*.

Newly corrected, amended, and enlarged with new  
Additions of the *Painters* part, and others, as  
it hath of late been diuers times acted.



LONDON,

Printed by W. White, for I. White and T. Langley,  
and are to be sold at their Shop ouer against the  
Sarazens head without New-gate. 1615.

## Thomas Kyd

### *The Spanish Tragedy* (probably 1589)

image: British Library; bl.uk



## Christopher Marlowe

*The Jew of Malta* (written prob. 1589)

*The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1604)

- the first major author to use the blank verse

image: wikipedia

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LONDON

Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623.

# William Shakespeare

(1564-1616)

- actor
- playwright
- poet

image: title page of the first folio; wikipedia



## **types of Shakespeare's plays:**

- history plays (*Richard III, Henry IV*)
- tragedies (*Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Othello, King Lear*)
- comedies (*A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It, Much Ado about Nothing*)
- romances (*The Tempest*)

## **characteristics:**

- mixing of the high and the low (comic elements in tragedies; serious questions raised in comedies)
- blank verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter
- broad scope of characters
- play-within-play; songs

## tragedies

- high genre: deals with noble characters; tragic events and tragic ending (murder/suicide)
- ***King Lear***: King Lear, daughters Goneril, Regan, Cordelia; the Fool; set in pre-Christian Britain

## comedies

- low genre: low characters are source of comic effect, sharply distinguished from high characters
- low characters often speak in prose, high characters in blank verse
- jokes, puns, witty repartees; sudden reversal of expectations
- romantic comedies: young lovers must overcome some obstacles to be united
- often mixing of identities and gender boundaries
- ***Midsummer Night's Dream***: lovers Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius; magical characters: Queen Titania, King Oberon, their servant Puck; low characters: the mechanicals; set in ancient Greece

## romance

- fairy tale characters, happy ending
- ***The Tempest***: Miranda, ruler Prospero, native character Caliban; setting: remote island

## ***The Sonnets*** (first collection published in 1609)

- thematic groups of sonnets: to a young man with advice to marry; to a Dark Lady; love triangle of two men and one woman; on the passing of time and value of poetry
- three quatrains and a couplet; iambic pentameter

## Sonnet 66

Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry,  
As, to behold desert a beggar born,  
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,  
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,  
And gilded honour shamefully misplac'd,  
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,  
And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,  
And strength by limping sway disabled,  
And art made tongue-tied by authority,  
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,  
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,  
And captive good attending captain ill.

Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone,  
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.