

Poetry
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Lecture 10
Sir Thomas Wyatt

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Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)



- Historical context
- Literary Context
- Wyatt, the First Petrarchan
- Wyatt's "I find no peace"
- Illustration of Wyatt's experiments
- The Metaphysical Tradition



In this module we focus on Elizabethan Poetry, particularly the sonnet form. We begin with one of the earliest sonneteers in English, Sir Thomas Wyatt. We will see the historical context, literary context and consider Wyatt, the First Petrarchan, examine his one famous sonnet "I find no peace." We will show how Wyatt has experimented with this sonnet form and connect this experiment with the Metaphysical tradition in English poetry.

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Historical Context



- Early 16th century
- Conflict between the conservative **Thomas More**, Lord Chancellor and the reformist **Thomas Cromwell**, the chief minister over Catherine of Aragon's marriage
- King Henry VIII's wish to annul the marriage
- Divorced himself from Catherine of Aragon
- Married Anne Boleyn but found out her relationships
 - All 'lovers' of Anne Boleyn were executed except Wyatt
- Married Anne of Cleves in 1540 but the King disliked her
- Thomas Cromwell, the chief minister, lost favor and life
 - Wyatt too lost his patron Cromwell.



Sir Thomas Wyatt was born in the early sixteenth century. At this time, there was a conflict between the conservative Thomas More, Lord Chancellor and the reformist Thomas Cromwell, the chief minister over Catherine of Aragon's marriage to King Henry VIII. Actually, King Henry VIII wanted to annul the marriage. He wanted to divorce her and he wanted to marry Anne Boleyn. But there was a problem because of this church restriction.

Anyway, he married her and found Anne Boleyn to have had relationships with others. When this came to his knowledge, he executed many of these people except Sir Thomas Wyatt who was also involved in some way. Later on, King Henry VIII married Anne of Cleves in 1540 but he did not like her. And so, Thomas Cromwell who had some role in arranging this marriage lost the favor and also his own life. It was Thomas Cromwell who was a patron or a supporter for Thomas Wyatt. So, he lost his patron.

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Literary Context



- The beginnings of the Renaissance in England
- Educated youth from the schools and colleges
- Exposure to the classical literature of Europe
- The Renaissance/Petrarchan concept of imitation
- The metaphor of honey making from flowers
 - Translation as a source of originality and introduction of new forms, especially the sonnet
 - Thomas Wyatt & Henry Howard - contemporaries
- Translators of Petrarch's sonnets into English



This was the period in which, Renaissance began to happen seriously in England. Many young people had their education in schools and colleges. They had exposure to the classical literature of Europe and they were familiar with the Petrarchan concept of imitation. For them, the best way to create is to imitate. And this was the metaphor that was very commonly known at this time.

The metaphor of honey bee making honey from various flowers. Translation was considered as a source of originality. And so, translation was used to introduce new forms especially the sonnet into English. Two major poets that is, Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, they were contemporaries, they introduced the sonnet form into English. Actually, they translated Petrarch sonnet into English.

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The First Petrarchan



- The first Petrarchan sonnet in English by Chaucer
Troilus and Criseyde: one sonnet only
- 14 lines into in three stanzas of seven lines each.
- **Sir Thomas Wyatt** seriously interested in Petrarch
- Translated 25 sonnets in three different ways:
 - 1. Imitation; 2. Free Translation;
 - 3. Close Translation
- Emphasis on conceits akin to **metaphysical poetry**
- Inconsistent translations but originals
- Laid the foundation for the English sonnet tradition



As we mentioned earlier, one of the earliest writers from England to translate Petrarch sonnet into English was Chaucer. While writing his poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer translated one poem only. There were 14 lines in Petrarch but Chaucer translated these 14 lines into 3 stanzas of 7 lines each. This was an isolated incident.

With Sir Thomas Wyatt, we find serious interest in Petrarch and Sonnet. He translated 25 sonnets in 3 different ways. In some cases, he imitated Petrarch, in some other cases he translated Petrarch freely, and in some other poems he translated Petrarch very closely.

Thomas Wyatt emphasized on conceits which were close to metaphysical poetry. Many of his translations were inconsistent, not of the same quality but they were all originals as far as his own translation was concerned. Thus, Sir Thomas Wyatt laid the foundation for the English Sonnet tradition and earned this name, The First Petrarchan.

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“I Find No Peace” (P’s 104)

- I find no peace, and all my war is done.
I fear and hope. I burn and freeze like ice.
I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise;
And nought I have, and all the world I season.
5. That loseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison
And holdeth me not—yet can I scape no wise—
Nor letteth me live nor die at my device,
And yet of death it giveth me occasion.
Without eyen I see, and without tongue I plain.
10. I desire to perish, and yet I ask health.
I love another, and thus I hate myself.
I feed me in sorrow and laugh in all my pain;
Likewise displeaseth me both life and death,
And my delight is causer of this strife.



Irony and Paradox

- I find no **peace**, and all my **war** is done.
I **fear** and **hope**. I **burn** and **freeze** like ice.
I **fly** above the wind, yet can I **not arise**;
And **nought** I have, and all **the world** I season.
5. That loseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison
And holdeth me not—yet can I scape no wise—
Nor letteth me **live** nor **die** at my device,
And yet of death it giveth me occasion.
Without eyen I **see**, and without tongue I **plain**.
10. I desire to **perish**, and yet I ask **health**.
I **love** another, and thus I **hate** myself.
I feed me in **sorrow** and **laugh** in all my **pain**;
Likewise displeaseth me both **life** and **death**,
And my delight is causer of this strife.



Use of And & Yet



I find no peace, **and** all my war is done.
I fear **and** hope. I burn **and** freeze like ice.
I fly above the wind, **yet** can I not arise;
And nought I have, **and** all the world I season.
5. That loseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison
And holdeth me not—**yet** can I scape no wise—
Nor letteth me live nor die at my device,
And **yet** of death it giveth me occasion.
Without eyen I see, **and** without tongue I plain.
10. I desire to perish, **and** **yet** I ask health.
I love another, **and** thus I hate myself.
I feed me in sorrow **and** laugh in all my pain;
Likewise displeaseth me both life **and** death,
And my delight is causer of this strife.

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Here we have an example of his translation of Petrarch's Sonnet No. 104. This is called "I find no peace." Let us read it now.

"I find no peace, and all my war is done.

I fear and hope. I burn and freeze like ice.

I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise;

and nought I have, and all the world I season.

5. That loseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison

And holdeth me not- yet can I scape no wise-

Nor letteth me live nor die at my device,

And yet of death it giveth me occasion.

Without eyes I see, and without tongue I plain.

10. I desire to perish, and I yet I ask health.

I love another, and thus I hate myself.

I feed me in sorrow and laugh in all my pain;
Likewise displeaseth me both life and death,
And my delight is a causer of this strife.”

This is a very interesting poem focusing on two aspects of love. On the one hand, we have a happy lover. On the other hand, we have a suffering lover.

In this poem we notice irony and paradox operating predominantly throughout the poem. So if you look at those highlighted words you will see peace - war, fear - hope, burn - freeze, fly - unable to rise, nothing and all the world I experience, live and also die, see - unable to express, perish - health, love - hate, sorrow – laugh have pain, both life and death together, and my delight is causer of this strife. That is, he talks about this his lady love.

In this poem you will also notice very interesting use of And, and Yet. These are coordinating conjunctions. In this ironical paradoxical poem, what do these two conjunctions do? Look at all of them. In every line we have an and atleast and if you do not have and, we have yet. In throughout the poem just 14 lines and how many ands are there? How many yet's are there? And these conjunctions try to bring together two different aspects or very different aspects of the complex emotions the lover feels about his lady love.

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Polysyndeton and Parallelism

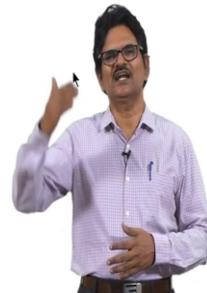
- A common literary technique
- Use of short and simple sentences
- Use of coordinating conjunctions
- Use of “and” & “yet” in “I find no peace”
- Use of two dissimilar/opposite images/ ideas
- Readers need to connect the images/ ideas.
- They have to draw their own conclusions.



This use of and, and conjunction is called polysyndeton. It is a common literary technique that is used by poets. In this case, we have short and simple sentences connected by coordinating conjunctions. In this poem we have And, and Yet. Many different images are brought together, many different ideas are brought together. We readers have to connect them together and then draw our own conclusions about the mental, physical suffering or the joy of this poet. When the poet uses and, and yet in this manner, we find that we have parallel sentence constructions right from the beginning to the end of the poem.

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Line	I find no peace	Rhyme
1	I find no peace, and all my war is done.	A
2	I <u>fear</u> and hope. I burn and <u>freeze</u> like ice.	B
3	I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise;	B
4	And nought I have, and all the world I season.	A
5	That <u>loseth nor locketh</u> holdeth me in prison	A
6	And holdeth me not—yet can I scape no wise—	B
7	Nor <u>letteth me live</u> nor <u>die at my device</u> ,	B
8	And yet of death it giveth me occasion.	A
9	Without eyen I see, and without tongue I plain.	C
10	I desire to perish, and yet I ask health.	D
11	I love another, and thus I hate myself.	E
12	I feed me in sorrow and laugh in all my pain;	C
13	<u>Likewise displeaseth me both life and death,</u>	D
14	And my delight is causer of this strife.	E



In this part we have the rhyme scheme of this poem. As we mentioned earlier a Petrarchan Sonnet has this rhyme scheme of A B B A A B B A C D E C D E. This second part called Sestet may have several variations and, in this case, we have C D E C D E.

You can also look at some underlined words here. Fear and freeze begin with the same sound f a. There are other words beginning with the same sound like loseth nor locket; L sound. Letteth me live, here also we have the la sound. Die at my device, da sound is here.

These are examples, as you can guess are examples of Alliteration. We also have another case of a poetic device here in this sentence. Can you guess? ‘Likewise, displeaseth me both life and death.’ The subject and verb- they are inverted. Both life and death likewise displeaseth me, that

is what the poet says. So, this inversion can tell us about the different aspect of the poet's state of mind.

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Iambic Pentameter



I find no peace, and all my war is done.
I fear and hope. I burn and freeze like ice.
I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise;
And nought I have, and all the world I season.
5. That loseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison
And holdeth me not—yet can I scape no wise—
Nor letteth me live nor die at my device,
And yet of death it giveth me occasion.
Without eyen I see, and without tongue I plain.
10. I desire to perish, and yet I ask health.
I love another, and thus I hate myself.
I feed me in sorrow and laugh in all my pain;
Likewise displeaseth me both life and death,
And my delight is causer of this strife.



Another aspect of poetry that we have to look into is the Rhythm. In this poem, Wyatt uses Iambic Pentameter.

“I find no peace, and all my war is done.

I fear and hope. I burn and freeze like ice.”

The words ‘I’ and then ‘find.’ The first one ‘I’ is unstressed, the second one ‘find’ is stressed. Like this we have many combinations of unstressed, stressed sounds. So, we have iambic meter in this poem. Because we have 5 feet, we call it pentameter. So, we have another example here at the end. “And my delight is causer of this strife.” In between we have many other poetic devices. We will see them.

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Rhyme and Rhythm

End rhymes: ABBA, ABBA, CDE, CDE

done, ice, arise, season;

prison, wise, device, occasion;

plain, health, myself; pain, death, strife

Masculine: done, plain, pain; ice, wise; health, death

Feminine: arise, device; season, prison, occasion;
myself, strife

Alliteration: loseth nor locketh; letteth me live; die at
my device

Caesura: comma, full stop, m dashes

Enjambment: lines 5-6 "in prison/ and"

Disturbed flow: start, stumble, pause, stop,



These devices relate to rhyme and rhythm, specifically rhyme. We have also brought in alliteration again into this section. We have the end rhymes of the Petrarchan sonnet. The words which rhyme are done, ice, arise, season; prison, wise, device, occasion; plain, health, myself; pain, death, strife. The words which are single syllables that rhyme are called Masculine Rhymes: done, plain, pain; ice, wise; health, death.

We also have Feminine Rhyme where we have 2 syllable words like arise, device; season, prison, occasion; myself and strife. Alliteration is seen in loseth nor locketh; letteth me live; die at my device. We have Caesura, which gives pause in the middle of lines, poetic lines. We have end stopped lines. We have some m dashes indicating pauses within the lines and at the end.

We have an example of enjambment where one line, that is, line 5 moves on to the next line to make this run on line "in prison/ and." Throughout the poem, we find some flow but it is disturbed. Stop and start, stumbling and starting, that is the kind of idea we have in this poem.

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Overall Impression



- The speaker's strange and complex feeling of love:
 - Peace in war; fear in hope
 - Burning in ice; flying but unable to arise
 - Nothing but the whole world; escape into prison
 - Living in death; dying in life
 - Seeing without eyes; complaining without tongue
 - Love in hate; sorrow in laughter; delight in strife
- The contradictions of love and life make up a clearly confused and chaotic self
- Polonius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: 1:2:195.
 - "Though this be **madness**, yet there is **method** in't"



On the whole we have the strange feeling of a speaker, the complex feeling of a speaker about his love for his lady. How do you find peace in war or fear in hope? How do you find somebody burning in ice or flying but unable to arise? How can one say that I am nothing and yet feel the person experiences the whole world? Is it possible for us to escape into prison? or How do we live in death or die in life? How do we see the world without eyes? and interestingly How do we complaint about the world without tongue? And is it possible to hate somebody in love or to laugh while we feel sorrow? or When we have strife can we be happy? These are many of the contradictions that we experience in love encounter and these things make up a clearly confused and chaotic self of the poet.

What is this? Is it possible? Is there anything reasonable we can ask? We have another example from this Renaissance literature, that is, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* Polonius says about Hamlet, "Though this be madness, yet there is method in it." So, the madness in the method or method in the madness is what we find in the sonneteers in the Elizabethan period.

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The Metaphysical Tradition



- Misunderstanding of the conceits used by Wyatt
- Initially evaluated as inferior to Surrey
- The wheel of fortune changed with the appreciation for metaphysical poets in 20th century.
- Donne considered an anti-Petrarchan but he used extreme metaphors like those of Petrarch
- The lover's face as a battlefield in "That longe love, that in my thought doeth harbar"
- Not a decorative device but an integrative image
- The metaphysical strain in English poetry from Wyatt



The metaphysical conceits used by Sir Thomas Wyatt from Petrarch were misunderstood at the beginning. He was not considered to be a great poet. When it came to evaluation, he was considered inferior to Surrey but then, the wheel of fortune changed with the appreciation of metaphysical poets in the twentieth century. John Donne was considered an anti-Petrarchan. But he also used extreme metaphors like those of Petrarch. One case of this Petrarchan conceit is this, "The lover's face as a battlefield" in one poem "That longe love, that in my thought doeth harbar."

The poet feels that the love has come onto his face and this face is the battlefield on which there is a conflict. This kind of far-fetched comparison is not a decorative device in the case of metaphysical poets or Petrarchan sonneteers. It is an integrative image which captures the image of the emotion of the poet. Hence, we can say that the metaphysical strain or element in English poetry starts from Wyatt who took it from Petrarch.

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Summary



Historical context
Literary Context
Wyatt, the First Petrarchan
➤ Wyatt's "I find no peace"
Illustration of Wyatt's experiments
The Metaphysical Tradition



In this presentation we have seen the historical context, literary context in which Sir Thomas Wyatt wrote his sonnets. He is considered to be the first Petrarchan along with Surrey. Though they do not exactly belong to this Elizabethan period, they contributed to the rise of the Elizabethan poetry that is why we have brought them here.

We discussed this poem "I find no peace" and showed how Wyatt experimented with the sonnet from Petrarch. Further we connected the metaphysical tradition of English poetry with Wyatt's own translation from Petrarch.

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References



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As usual, we have some references. Please look into them if possible. Thank you.