

**Poetry**  
**Professor S.P. Dhanavel**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**  
**William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)**

(Refer Slide Time: 00:16)

## William Shakespeare (1564-1616)



- Historical and Literary Context
- The Shakespearean Sonnet
- Introduction to *Sonnets* (1609)
- Sonnet 12: Time and Procreation
- Sonnet 15: Poetry for Immortality
- Sonnet 73: Time and Mortality
- Sonnet 116: True Love
- Sonnet 144: Infidelity



We have been waiting for the sonnets of William Shakespeare at the end of this Elizabethan period. As we did for other poets, we will look into the historical and literary context. We will see the Shakespearean sonnet form. We will have a brief introduction to *Sonnets*, the collection of poems published in 1609. We have five poems for you. The first two we will just read them for the sake of joy. Sonnet 12 deals with Time and Procreation. Sonnet 15 is concerned with Poetry for Immortality. Sonnet 73 discusses time and mortality. It deals with the theme of death profoundly. Sonnet 16 defines True Love. It is one of the fantastic poems from Shakespeare. Next, we will see sonnet 144 which deals with Infidelity and betrayal in human relationships. Shakespeare is great because he was able to deal with various emotions of human beings in such short sonnets in his sonnet sequence called ‘Sonnets.’

(Refer Slide Time: 1:46)

## Historical and Literary Context



- 1588: The defeat of the Spanish Armada
- 1592: The outbreak of the plague in London
- 1592-1593: The closure of theaters in London
- 1591: Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*
- 1592: Constable's *Diana* and Daniel's *Delia*
- 1594: Drayton's *Ideas Mirror*
- 1595: Spenser's *Amoretti*
- 1603: Death of Queen Elizabeth and Accession of King James I
- 1609: *The Sonnets*



If you look into these years that we have given, you will see corresponding actions, historical actions. In 1588, England defeated the Spanish Armada that was a joy for celebration. But it did not long last, something happened in England. The outbreak of the plague in London was seen in 1592. It led to the closure of theatres in London in 1592 and 1593. Shakespeare was more into drama.

But when his theatre was closed, he used the time to write poems. In 1591 Sidney's sonnet sequence 'Astrophel and Stella' was published. We have many other sonnet sequences after this. In 1592, Henry Constable published his sonnet sequence 'Diana,' and Samuel Daniel's sonnet sequence 'Delia' was also published. In the next year we see Michael Drayton's sonnet sequence, 'Ideas Mirror.' Closely we have Spenser's sonnet sequence 'Amoretti.' And soon after this in 1603 we find the great loss in England, that is Queen Elizabeth died and we see the change of monarchy from Queen Elizabeth to King James I. And after this only we find the sonnets published in 1609. Something happened in the life of Shakespeare in 1592, 93 or during this decade. It is considered to be a dark time, probably for Shakespeare and the others as well.

(Refer Slide Time: 4:02)

## The Shakespearean Sonnet

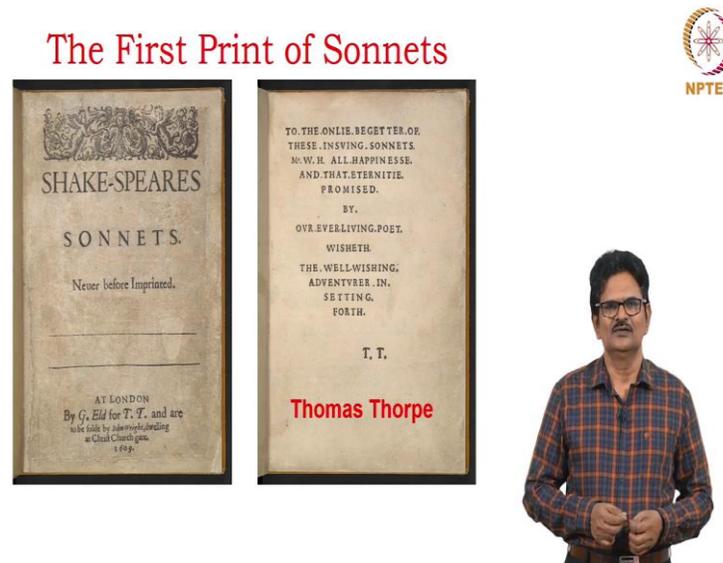


- Traced to Surrey's innovation in the Petrarchan sonnet form
- Three quatrains and a couplet: 14 lines
- Alternating rhymes create a powerful opposition between lines and quatrains and or indicate a progression.
- The couplet sums up or subverts what is presented in the three quatrains.
- The couplet may also stand alone as an epigram.



When Shakespeare attempted his sonnets, he chose to follow this Shakespearean sonnet form introduced by the Earl of Surrey, way back before 1557 through this ‘Tottel’s Miscellany.’ This particular format has three quatrains and a couplet with 14 lines. It is noticeable that this particular form has alternating rhymes which create a powerful opposition between lines and also quatrains and also indicate some kind of progression from one line to another, from one quatrain to another leading to the summary or summation in the couplet. The couplet, usually sums up or it may also subvert what is presented in the previous lines. Usually we find that the couplet could stand alone as an epigram. That is why many of the couplets from Shakespeare are quotable quotes.

(Refer Slide Time: 5:19)



Here is the picture of the first edition of the sonnets published in 1609, Shakespeare's Sonnets. First page, that is the title page, and the front page where the dedication is mentioned. The TT is Thomas Thorpe. This sonnet sequence was dedicated to Mister W H. We do not know who this person is. A lot of critical effort has got into find out who this Mister W H is. Also, a number of critics have attempted to find out the exact order of the sonnets that we have in this collection. It is said these sonnets were published by Thomas Thorpe without the consent or the knowledge of Shakespeare himself. But these sonnets are wonderful sonnets right from the beginning to the end. And they have dealt with all kinds of emotions from human beings.

(Refer Slide Time: 6:32)

## Introduction to the Sonnets



- Total: 154 sonnets, written during the 1590s
- Two Major Groups:
  - 1-126: addressed to the Fair Youth
  - 127-154: addressed to the Dark Lady
- Three Subgroups:
  - 1-17: Procreation theme
  - 78-86: The Rival Poet
  - 153-154: Cupid
- Themes of love, death, time, poetry, friendship, betrayal, of life
- Changed the convention of addressing a fair lady



Totally we have 154 sonnets. They were written during the 1590s. We have two major groups in these 154 sonnets. The first one is from 1 to 126. These sonnets are addressed to a person called the Fair Youth. And the second part of this sonnet sequence is addressed to a lady called the Dark Lady. The exact identity of these characters we do not know. Some conjectures are there of course.

Within these 154 sonnets, we have some three sub groups. Sonnet 1 to 17, they deal with the procreation theme. We cannot live forever here, then how do we find ourselves after our death on this earth. One way we know is through procreation. That is begetting children. We pass on our legacy to the future. We have a young man who does not want to get married. So, Shakespeare, that is the poet, requests the young man, 'get married, procreate, pass on your tradition, your life to others.' We also have another sub group called The Rival Poet group, from 78 to 86. While the young man is a source of joy for the poet, that is Shakespeare, The Rival Poet tries to get attention from the fair youth and also from the lady, and so we have a contrast or a competition, a triangle we have. A triangular situation of involving two men and one woman or involving two women and one man is always very complex, causing endless sorrow for all the participants in this triangular drama. We have this in these 154 sonnets particularly grouping called the rival poet.

The last two poems 153 and 154 are addressed to Cupid, the God of love. All these poems deal with the themes of love, death, time, poetry, friendship, betrayal. In short, the whole of life and death. This sonnet sequence from Shakespeare change the whole Petrarchan convention of writing sonnets to fair ladies, admiring them. Always waiting for their response endlessly.

But Shakespeare use this sonnet form to address a young man called the Fair Youth and also, he addressed a lady called Dark Lady, not a fair lady. Further we find that this dark lady is not chased or virtuous like the ladies that can be found in other sonnet sequences, particularly Petrarch and Dante. Here we find a promiscuous lady, who is dark not only in color but also in character. That is why, this particular sonnet sequence from Shakespeare has been a mystery and a kind of strange attraction for readers throughout the world.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:16)

### Sonnet 12: Time, Death

When I do count the clock that tells the time, A  
 And see the brave day sunk in hideous night; B  
 When I behold the violet past prime, A  
 And sable curls all silvered o'er with white; B  
 5. When lofty trees I see barren of leaves, C  
 Which erst from heat did canopy the herd, D  
 And summer's green all girded up in sheaves, C  
 Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard, D  
 Then of thy beauty do I question make, E  
 10. That thou among the wastes of time must go, F  
 Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake E  
 And die as fast as they see others grow; F  
 And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence G  
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence. G



First, we will read the sonnet number 12, which deals with time and also death.

When I do count the clock, that tells the time, A  
 And see the brave day sunk in hideous night; B  
 When I behold the violet past prime, A  
 And sable curls all silvered o'er with white; B  
 5. When lofty trees I see barren of leaves, C

- Which erst from heat did canopy the herd. D
- And summer's green all girded up in sheaves, C
- Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard, D
- Then of thy beauty do I question make, E
10. That thou among the waste of time must go. F
- Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake E
- And die as fast as they see others grow; F
- And nothing against time's scythe can make defence, G
- Save breed, to brave him when he takes the hence. G

This is an earnest plea from the poet to his friend the Fair Youth to understand the unrelenting time, the time that destroys, the time that marches to its last day, endless day, mercilessly, relentlessly, ruthlessly. Everyone who is subject to time is, has to die. So, he tells the young man, get married and breed, that is reproduce.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:51)

### Sonnet 15: Immortality

- When I consider everything that grows A  
 Holds in perfection but a little moment, B  
 That **this huge stage presenteth nought but shows** A  
 Whereon the stars in secret influence comment; B  
 5. When I perceive that men as plants increase, C  
 Cheered and checked ev'n by the selfsame sky, D  
 Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease, C  
 And wear their brave state out of memory, D  
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay E  
 10. Sets you most rich in youth before my sight, F  
 Where **wasteful time debateth with decay** E  
 To change your day of youth to sullied night; F  
 And **all in war with time for love of you**, G  
 As he takes from you, **I engraft you new**. G



Here is Sonnet No. 15, which deals with Immortality in poetry of course.

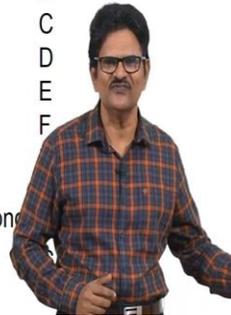
- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
|     | <u>When I consider everything that grows</u>        | A |
|     | Holds in perfection but a little moment.            | B |
|     | That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows    | A |
|     | Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;      | B |
| 5.  | <u>When I perceive that men as plants increase,</u> | C |
|     | Cheered and checked even by the selfsame sky.       | D |
|     | Vaunt in their youthful sap, at high decrease,      | C |
|     | And wear their brave state out of memory,           | D |
|     | <u>Then the conceit</u> of this inconstant stay     | E |
| 10. | Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,        | F |
|     | Where wasteful time debateth with decay             | E |
|     | To change your day of youth to sullied night;       | F |
|     | And all in war with time for love of you,           | G |
|     | As he takes from you, I engraft you new.            | G |

The poet pleads with the young man who does not seem to be listening and so out of pity for that young man, out of love, deep love and affection for the young man, the poet says, 'I engraft you new' in my poetry. Who can win the debate with decay, or the inconstant stay? He refers to the conceit. We can use that idea of inconstancy, that is impermanence and understand it ourselves, and change ourselves. But what do we do with people who do not understand the power of time? We also observe that Shakespeare, the dramatist considers life a stage. This is a huge stage; It presents nothing but shows; we have to play our part; when you are young, you get married, have children and then life keeps going, who can stop time? Even if you wish to stop your own life. So, if you happen to have a good friend like Shakespeare, he may write a poem for you and immortalize you in poetry.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:06)

### Sonnet 73: Death

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.  
5 In me thou see'st 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 see'st the glowing of such fire,  
10 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.  
This thou perceive'st, which makes thy love more strong  
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.



A  
B  
A  
B  
C  
D  
C  
D  
E  
F

We have three specific examples of sonnets from Shakespeare to discuss in detail. One of the sonnets for discussion is Sonnet No. 73. It is a very profound poem on the march of Death. All of us grow, grow young and old to what? to die, to death. Let us read Sonnet No. 73 now.

“That time of year thou mayst in me behold A  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang B  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold, A  
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang. B  
5. In me thou see'st the twilight of such day C  
As after sunset fadeth in the west; D  
Which by and by black night doth take away, C  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest. D  
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire, E  
10. That on the ashes of his youth doth lie. F  
As the deathbed whereon it must expire, E

Consumed with that which it was nourished by. F

This thou perceive'st which makes thy love more strong, G

To love that well which thou must leave ere long. G

Before we go to the next part of discussion, please look at those highlighted words, particularly the verbs behold, see'st in the second quatrain, again see'st in the third quatrain. And at last in the couplet, perceive, See, behold, behold, see, perceive, see, see, perceive. It is all about perception, observation. See death coming. See death as an eternal presence. So, how does Shakespeare present death to us, the reality of death to us? Death, that we cannot see with our own hands, but we can see the passing of time, the passing of, the coming of death, the slowly disappearing of death, we can see. From that time of year, to the twilight of such day, lastly the glowing of such fire, it is all transition, change. Change to the last day of our life.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:47)

### Thematic Contrast

- Theme of time and eternity; love and death
- Autumn is common to nature and human life.
- Autumn changes to winter and dawn to dusk.
- The sun dawns and disappears in the night.
- Human beings grow young **and** old to death.
- What nurtures growth causes death too.
- The young man is aware of the changing wheel of year, day, and the moment of human life.
- The speaker's death is the young man's loss but the love is strong.



Let us now analyze the poem. The thematic contrast that we have in this poem is all about life and death, implicitly is about love. The theme of time and eternity is what we have, which is contrasted with the theme of love and death. First, we see autumn, which is common to nature and human life. At one point of time, we have to face autumn. And then this autumn changes to winter, like dawn becoming dusk, the sun appears in the dawn and it disappears in the night. Human beings grow young and old to death. The paradoxical experience of life, the poet has

captured is this. What nurtures growth, also causes death, that is the beauty of life. The young man is aware of the changing wheel of year, day and the moment, that is the twilight of human life. We may have a span of one year, or we may have a span of 50 years, 70 years, 80 years, we may have a month, a week or a day, we may have hours, we may have minutes, we may have seconds, we may have moments. All this change one after another. Finally, the moment of death is something which the poet is trying to capture in this particular sonnet. The speaker's death is the young man's loss. The speaker is interested in the welfare of the young man, he wishes him well. So, it is a loss for the young man. But the love from the young man is strong for the poet. Probably the mutual love relationship between the two is strong enough and that strength of love, even that strength of love cannot defeat death. Only the poet can write about his strong love, his affection for his friend.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:14)

## Poetic Devices

**Metaphor:** seasonal change – yellow leaves  
Boughs shaking against cold wind  
Ruined choirs where sweet birds sang  
Day turning into night like the old speaker  
reaching his twilight  
The fire of the youth turning into ashes

**Paradox:** Nourishment is also consumption.  
Metaphor, Personification and Symbol work  
together to create a strong image of the  
destruction of time.



We find metaphor predominantly throughout the poem, because it uses a number of images. It deals with a seasonal change in yellow leaves. Boughs and trees shaking against cold wind, and also it refers to ruined choirs in a church probably where sweet birds sang. The day changes into night, like the old speaker turning into twilight. And also, we find the fire of the youth is changed to the ashes of old age. So physically and naturally, the change takes place from birth to death.

In between something happens, that is breeding, the young man was not listening. So at least in poetry, the poet captures the young man now. And elsewhere also. The paradox we find in this

poem is nourishment is also consumption. So, there is not much of a distinction between construction and destruction, or production and destruction. Associated devices are personification and symbol. These objects of nature symbolically convey the message. They all together create a strong image of the destruction of time.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:05)

## Structure, Rhyme, and Rhythm



Structure: three quatrains and a couplet

**Rhyme scheme:** ABAB CDCD EFEF GG

**Rhyme:** behold, hang, cold, sang, day, west, away,  
rest, fire, lie, expire, by, strong, long

**Run-on lines, Caesura, and End stopped lines:**

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



Like every other Shakespearean sonnet, it has three quatrains and a couplet, and similar rhyme scheme we have, ABAB CDCD EFEF and GG. The rhyming words are behold, hang, cold, sang, day, west, away, rest, fire, lie, expire, by, strong, long. The strength of relationship between the two is strong and long, and that is continued in the poem as well. We also look at some run on lines, caesura and end-stopped lines in this sonnet.

Here we have the first quatrain:

“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.”

We have indicated the run-on lines through one symbol, from behold to when, from do hang upon. The caesura is indicated through commas in different places, and the end-stopped lines, at the end of lines we have comma, and also full stop.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:27)

## Overall Impression



- The poem moves from outer natural seasonal changes to human physical changes to old age and death.
- The ageing and dying speaker recognizes that the young man loves him, though he must leave him when he dies.
- The alternating rhyme emphasizes the change of seasons through the various images of leaves, boughs, choirs, birds, and sounds of decay into silence of the black night, death's second self.
- The speaker's loss of life is compensated by the gain of love from the young man.



This famous poem from Shakespeare, moves from outer natural seasonal changes to human physical internal changes which finally take the shape of this old age and death. The aging and dying speaker recognize that the young man loves him though he must leave him when he dies. The alternating rhyme scheme emphasizes the change of seasons through the various images of leaves, boughs, choirs, birds and sounds of decay into silence of the black night which is referred to as 'death's second self' in the poem. The speaker's loss of life is compensated by the gain of love from the young man for the poet. And it is a gain for readers as well, because of such deep profound love for another person, or imaginary person, Shakespeare could write poems for us.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:36)

### Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds A  
Admit impediments. Love is not love B  
Which alters when it alteration finds, A  
Or bends with the remover to remove: B  
5. Oh, no! it is an ever-fixed mark, C  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken; D  
It is the star to every wandering bark, C  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken. D  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks E  
10. Within his bending sickle's compass come; F  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.



We come to yet another famous poem from Shakespeare, Sonnet 116. Everyone would love to read this poem, remember this poem, recite this poem, probably discuss, think about it very often in their life.

“Let me not to the marriage of true minds A  
Admit impediments. Love is not love B  
Which alters when it alteration finds, A  
Or bends with the remover to remove: B  
5. Oh no! it is an ever-fixed mark, C  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken; D  
It is the star to every wandering bark, C  
Whose worth is unknown, although his height be taken. D  
Love is not Time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks, E  
10. Within his bending sickle’s compass come; F  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, E

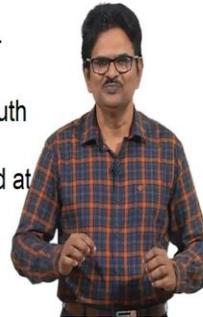
But bears it out even to the edge of doom. F  
If this be error and upon me proved, G  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved. G

It is a very simple poem. But it conveys the profound meaning of love, unaltered, unalterable, idealistic love from Shakespeare. The rhyme scheme here we have. We will see it a little later. (Refer Slide Time: 24:54)

### Thematic Contrast



- The theme of love, rather Platonic love.
- Changing and unchanging love.
- Untruthful and truthful love.
- Marriage of **body and mind**
- True love has no impediments.
- True love does not change according to seasons.
- It is like a guiding star for sailors.
- It is beyond the onslaught of time as it remains truth until the last day.
- If this were to be wrong, no one would have loved at all.



Love is the predominant theme in this poem. It is a platonic love, idealistic love, unaltering love, unchanging love. But then, we also have the contrast with changing love, or changing something which is subject to change. We also have the contrast between untruthful love and truthful love. Most importantly, we have the contrast between marriage of minds and marriage of bodies. As we can see the marriage of body can change. In the sense, bodies can be subject to time, but this idea of marriage of minds is eternal, because even after death, this marriage of minds might be strong enough to continue.

Therefore, the poet says, true love has no impediments, no obstacles, no problems. But the same Shakespeare may say in another context, the course of true love never ends forth. True love does not change according to seasons. That is what we find in this particular poem. It is like a guiding star for sailors. It is beyond onslaught of time as it remains truth until the last day, that is, the

judgment day. If this were to be wrong, that is an error, no one would have loved at all, no one would have written poems like this.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:34)

## Poetic Devices



- **Metaphor:** lighthouse and ships,  
North star and sailors;
- **Personification:** Time's fool and sickle
- **Repetition:** love, alter
- **Hyperbaton:**  
Let me not (to the marriage of true minds)  
Admit impediments.
- **Negation:** not (4), never (2), no (2), nor (1)
- **Rhetorical strategy:** Definition/ Rebuttal (Vendler)
- **Diction:** mostly monosyllabic words



There are many poetic devices in this sonnet. Metaphors we find in the case of light house and ships, north stars and sailors. There is a kind of never changing particular point for ships and sailors. We also have personification in the case of time's fool and sickle. Two words are repeated often in this poem, love and alter, love does not alter. That is the whole idea of this poem.

We also have an inversion in the first lines, first two lines actually. 'Let me not to the marriage of true minds, admit impediments.' Normally we would say, 'let me not admit impediments to the marriage of true minds.' It is remarkable that Shakespeare has used four nots, two nevers, two nos and one nor within this short poem of 14 lines. So why did he do that? Is there any meaning out of it? We can say that this is a rhetorical strategy used by the poet to define love.

But how does he define? Is it only through negation? what is the actual meaning of negation? That is where Helen Vendler says, "Shakespeare is actually using the rhetorical strategy of rebuttal." Probably, he is rebutting his own idea of the, the course of true love never runs smooth. He is rebutting his own previous idea. The diction is very common. Mostly

monosyllabic words. Nothing great about it, but there is lot of greatness about the love that Shakespeare has defined and described in this poem.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:36)

## Structure, Rhyme, and Rhythm



- Three quatrains and a couplet
- **Rhyme scheme:** ABAB CDCD EFEF GG
- **Rhyme:** minds, love, finds, remove, mark, shaken, bark, taken, cheeks, come, weeks, doom, proved, loved
- The alternating rhymes do not alter true love as they are enclosed in the couplet: proved and loved.
- **Run-on lines, Caesura, and End stopped lines**

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:



As usual, we have three quatrains and a couplet in this sonnet. The rhyme scheme is common: ABAB CDCD EFEF and GG. The rhyming words are, minds, love, finds, remove, mark, shaken, bark, taken, cheeks, come, weeks, doom, proved, love. The alternating rhymes do not alter true love as they are enclosed in the couplet, proved and loved. We have run-on lines, we have pauses-in, in the name of caesura. We also have end stopped lines in this poem.

“Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:”

So, at the end, we have end-stopped line in terms of this colon and comma. The poet is able to convey the unaltering love through these strategies.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:53)

## Overall Impression

- The poet argues strongly that true love is possible and desirable whatever may happen in the world.
- There are unchanging guideposts like the lighthouse and the north star to maintain true love until the doomsday.
- Time can only destroy the body but not true love.
- Ordinary words, metaphors, and unusual emphatic negatives strengthen the claim of the speaker



This famous sonnet, one of the most anthologized sonnets, in this, the poet argues strongly that true love is possible and desirable, whatever may happen in the world. There are many unchanging guideposts like the lighthouse and the north star to maintain true love until the doomsday. Time can only destroy the body, not the true love. The poet uses ordinary words, metaphors. But he uses unusual emphatic negatives to strengthen the claim of his statement that true love is always true, it does not change at all.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:47)

## Sonnet 144

- Two loves I have of comfort and despair,  
Which like two spirits do suggest me still  
The better angel is a man right fair,  
The worser spirit a woman coloured ill.  
5. To win me soon to hell, my female evil  
Tempteth my better angel from my side,  
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,  
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.  
And, whether that my angel be turn'd fiend,  
10. Suspect I may, yet not directly tell,  
But being both from me both to each friend,  
I guess one angel in another's hell.  
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,  
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

A  
B  
A  
B  
C  
D  
C  
D  
E  
F  
E  
F  
G  
G



We come to the third and last poem that we have chosen to discuss as part of this Elizabethan poetry, as part of Shakespearean sonnets, Sonnet 144.

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
|     | Two loves I have of comfort and despair,        | A |
|     | Which like two spirits do suggest me still      | B |
|     | The better angel is a man of right fair,        | A |
|     | The worser spirit a woman colored ill.          | B |
| 5.  | To win me soon to hell, my female evil          | C |
|     | Tempteth my better angel from my side.          | D |
|     | And would corrupt m saint to be a devil,        | C |
|     | Wooing his purity with her foul pride.          | D |
|     | And, whether that my angel be turned a fiend,   | E |
| 10. | Suspect I may yet not directly tell.            | F |
|     | But being both from me, both to each friend,    | E |
|     | I guess one angel in another's hell.            | F |
|     | Yet this shall I never know, but live in doubt, | G |
|     | Till my bad angel fire my good one out.         | G |

(Refer Slide Time: 31:44)

## Thematic Contrast



- Love and death, comfort and despair
- Better angel and worse spirit, Heaven and hell,
- Man and woman, Purity and impurity,
- Saint and sinner, Friend and fiend,
- Faith and doubt, Good and evil
- The triangle of a man, his friend, and a woman
- The speaker's faith and doubt in the loyalty of his two angels as both are his.
- Surprisingly, he claims them: "my bad angel" and "my good angel"
- The good and the bad have joined together and deserted the speaker.



Again, we have this contrast between love and death, comfort and despair, better angel and worse spirit, heaven and hell, man and woman, purity and impurity, saint and sinner, friend and fiend, faith and doubt, good and evil. These binaries are brought into the triangle of a man, his friend and a woman. The speaker has both, faith and doubt in the loyalty of his two angels, but both these angels are his angels.

Surprisingly he claims them as my bad angel, my good angel. Even when the angel is bad, he says my bad angel. The good and bad angels have come together as a result the speaker feels left out. And that is where he finds himself desperate. They have come together, leaving me alone, what will I do? who will respect me, recognize me? Why did they do this to me? that is how Shakespeare the poet feels about the triangular situation.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:08)

## Poetic Devices



### Hyperbaton:

“Two loves I have of comfort and despair”  
I have (two loves,) of comfort and despair

**Simile:** like two spirits

**Metaphor:** better angel - man; worse spirit – woman

**Metaphor:** of wooing

**Syncope:** turn'd, ne'er



Here are some poetic devices. Hyperbaton is what we find in the first two lines, “Two loves I have of comfort and despair.” Normally we would say, ‘I have two loves of comfort and despair.’ How do they go together? is a problem, but this is what we find in life. That is why life is contradictory and full of paradoxes. Shakespeare uses two similes, like two spirits. The spirits are angels, one is good angel, another is bad angel that is the devil.

He also metaphorically refers to these angels in terms of man and woman. We also have the metaphor of wooing, the idea of quoting between this better angel and worse angel. Another common device that we find in poems is the syncope, where the sounds are omitted as in turn'd, ne'er.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:20)

## Structure, Rhyme, and Rhythm



- Three quatrains and a couplet
- **Rhyme scheme:** ABAB CDCD EFEF GG
- **Rhyme:** despair, still, fair, ill, evil, side, devil, pride, fiend, tell, friend, hell, doubt, out
- **Eye rhyme:** evil and devil
- **Caesura, Run-on lines, End stopped lines:**

To win me soon to hell, my female evil  
Tempteth my better angel from my side,

- Extra syllables in lines 4, 5, and 7
- Iambic pentameter with trochee in 6 and 8



We have the common structure of sonnet in this poem, three quatrains and a couplet we have. The rhyme scheme is similar ABAB CDCD EFEF and GG. The rhyming words are despair, still, fair, ill, evil, side, devil, pride, fiend, tell, friend, hell, doubt, out. How beautifully doubt is ousted by the poet? that is what he wishes, but he is unable to confirm it. That is where if you pay attention to the rhyming words, you may find some interesting meanings in these poems. We have an eye rhyme, that means in sound they do not really match, but they look similar: evil, devil; v i l, e v i l, they look similar. But when we say evil and devil, they are different.

We have caesura, run-on lines and end-stopped lines. “To win me soon to hell,” we have a pause. “My female evil tempteth my better,” it goes on continuously. “My female evil tempteth my better angel from my side.” We have end stopped line at the end. There is a comma of course, there is a pause. We have extra syllables in line number 4, 5 and 7. If you count them, you can see some more additional syllables, though we have an iambic pentameter in this sonnet, there is some variation of trochee in line number 6 and 8.

(Refer Slide Time: 36:13)

## Overall Impression



- The speaker's two loves, a friend and a mistress, are good and bad angels.
- They like each other and leave out the speaker causing him the agony of separation from both.
- He has no way of finding out what goes on between them until the friend is thrown out by the mistress.
- Relationships are complex. Hence, people live in constant fear and doubt about their relationships even with close friends.
- But the doubt will be out sooner or later. True love alone can save people from the hell of life, as the poet says in Sonnet 116.



This is again one of the greatest poems of Shakespeare, “Two loves I have, one of comfort and another despair.” So, the poet says, the speaker’s two loves are a friend and a mistress. One is a good angel; another is a bad angel. These two angels, good and bad like each other, and leave out the speaker, causing him the agony of separation from both friendship and love. He has no way of finding out, what goes on between the two angels, until the friend is thrown out by the mistress.

That means the mistress is unreliable. She may throw out the friend. Relationships are complex; hence people live in constant fear and doubt about their relationships, even with close friends. That is why life is both comic and tragic. But the doubt will be found out sooner or later. How long can you play with this faith and doubt? Truth will come out one day. True love alone can save people from the hell of life, as the poet says in sonnet number 116.

(Refer Slide Time: 37:40)

## Summary



- Historical and Literary Context
- The Shakespearean Sonnet
- Introduction to *Sonnets*
- Sonnet 12: Time and Procreation
- Sonnet 15: Poetry for Immortality
- Sonnet 73: Time and Mortality
- Sonnet 116: True Love
- Sonnet 144: Betrayal, Infidelity



Shakespeare wrote his sonnets in one of the darkest periods of his life, when the theatres were closed, when he could not write plays for this theater. He used a particular format called Shakespearean sonnet and this sonnet came to be identified as Shakespearean because he used this format in 154 sonnets. Maybe some variations are there, but majorly they have this format.

We also found that these sonnets have 154 sonnets divided into two groups, dealing with the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady, breaking away from the Elizabethan convention of addressing a chaste virtuous woman in sonnet sequences. We read two poems from the first group sonnet number 12 about Time and Procreation. Sonnet number 15 about Poetry for Immortality. We examined in detail three poems, sonnet number 73 about Time and Mortality, sonnet number 116 about True Love and sonnet number 144 dealing with the theme of Betrayal in relationships. Infidelity, in relationship between men and women. And these are strong emotions that Shakespeare has dealt with in his sonnets and these strongest emotions have found profound expressions in Shakespearean sonnets so sweetly, so mellifluously, so memorably and readers all over the world love to read them again and again. We have some references which you may find useful.

(Refer Slide Time: 39:51)

## References



- Henrichs, A. 2019. "Deforming Shakespeare's Sonnets: Topic Models as Poems," *Criticism*, 61 (3): 387-412.
- Mcintosh, H. 2010. "The Social Masochism of Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 50 (1): 109-125.
- Sarkar, M. 1998. "The magic of Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Renaissance Studies*, 12 (2): 251-260.
- Shore, D. R. 1988. "So long lives this": Turning to Poetry in Shakespeare's Sonnets," *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, 14 (1): 1-14.
- Vendler, H. 1994.** "Shakespeare's Sonnets: Reading for Difference," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 47(6 ): 33-50.



One special reference you might like to look into is the last one, Helen Vendler's article on "Shakespeare's Sonnets: Reading for Difference." This idea of Reading for Difference is a critical strategy that we are using in our course on poetry, to indicate how poets differ from one another, how poems differ from one another, although they may use the same language, the same poetic convention, the same poetic form and all, the same poetic theme, but they do differ from each other because of this writing for difference, and we understand that because, we read for difference. Thank you.