

The THREE 'R's

RENAISSANCE

REFORMATION

REVOLUTION

**NOMENCLATURE:
 RENAISSANCE or EARLY MODERN?**

- Tradition vs. Scholarly revision
- Modern scholars prefer "Early Modern Period":
 - Emphasizes historical **continuity**;
 - De-emphasizes negative characterization of the Mediaeval Period as "The Dark Ages";
 - Incorporates ideas of **invention** to the existing emphasis on **recovery** of the Classical past:
 - FORWARD- as well as BACKWARD-looking;
 - Posits alternative **criteria** for assessment and taxonomy.

Follow the Ancients to Perfection

"Read, then, and read again (O future poet); ... turn the leaves of your Greek and Latin exemplars, then leave aside all these old French poesies... which do corrupt the taste of our tongue, and serve not, save to bear witness to our ignorance" (Joachim Du Bellay, *The Defense and Illustration of the French Language*, 287).

Follow the Path of the Bourgeoning Nation

"To speak truly, our language [Tuscan] has also its forms of poetry so properly its own that they are not those of any other language or nation. Indeed one ought not to try to hold the Tuscan poetry within the confines that bind the Greek and Latin..." (Giambattista Giraldi, *Discourse on the Composition of Romances*, 275).

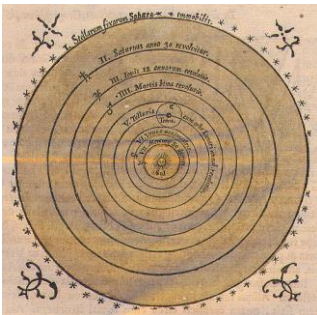
Period of Study: Choosing the Starting Point

- 1300s: translation of Classical Greek and Roman texts from Arabic to Latin (**intellectual**);
- 1435: Alberti's *De Pictura* (**artistic**);
- c. 1475: Printing Press (**technological**);
- ~1400s: "The Great Vowel Shift" (**linguistic**);
- 1490s: Humanist diaspora: Erasmus (**scholarly**);
- 1490s: revival of wool trade; "discovery" of the New World (**economic**);
- 1535: The Act of Supremacy/Protestant Reformation (**religio-political**)

Period of Study: Choosing an End-point

- 1642: closing of the theatres, London (**artistic/social**);
- 1632: Galileo: *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems, Ptolemaic and Copernican* (**scientific**)
- 1660: End of the Commonwealth/Restoration of Charles II (**political**);
- 1660: Royal Society...for Improving Natural Knowledge (**intellectual**);
- 1732: Pope's "Essay on Man" (**literary/philosophical**);
- 1763: steam engine => Industrial Revolution (**technologica/economic**).

Shifting Place in the Universe



<http://youtu.be/VyQ8Tb85HrU>

Period of Study: ENGLISH Early Modern Period

~1530-1660

MEDIAEVAL -> EARLY MODERN -> ENLIGHTENMENT



REFORMATION: Politics of Religion

- 1534: The Act of Supremacy
 - Henry VIII declares himself the head of Church and State
 - Is excommunicated by the Pope
- England's isolation from Catholic European community;
- Destruction of the Monasteries:
 - Loss of libraries and art;
- HERESY=TREASON
 - Codified the interimplication of religion and politics

REFORMATION: Conscience

INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE: the spark of RIGHT REASON in the minds of human beings.

Protestants asserted that the devout should be able to communicate directly with God without the intercession of the priests.

REFORMATION: Language of Devotion

"I had perceived by experience, how that it was impossible to stablysh the laye people in any truth, excepte the scripture where playnly layed before their eyes in their mother tonge, that they might se the process, ordre and meaning of the text..."
(William Tyndale, *CE* 59).

Literary Consequences: ANTI-CATHOLICISM

Pronounced anti-Catholic tone of post-Reformation English literature.

“Cold is God’s way of telling us to burn more Catholics!”
(Blackadder’s Puritan Auntie, “Beer”)

Priest class stereotyped as lazy, avaricious, corrupt, demonic.



Passional Christi und Antichristi
By Lucan Cranarch the Elder, 1521.
The woodcut shows the Pope selling “Indulgences.”

Literary Consequences: ICONOCLASM

“1 the breaking of images; 2 the assailing of cherished beliefs or conventions” (COD).

Protestant distrust of “images” and “idols” that divert worship from the creator to the created.

Produced more wide-reaching debate over the place and function of ART and REPRESENTATION in general

See the “Bowre of Blisse” or “False Florimel” in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*.



St Martin’s, Utrecht, showing the defaced frieze which was then hidden behind a false wall.

RENAISSANCE HUMANISM

- Emphasis on the POTENTIAL of humans to improve, to grow, to change their place in the world;
- Emphasis on the INDIVIDUAL in a SOCIAL context;
- Emphasis on WORLDLY pursuits;
- Reconceived relationship with the PAST and with the FUTURE:
 - POSTERITY
 - CHANGE

Humanist Poetics

- Apply principles of Humanism to the practice of writing and scholarship:
- DOUBLED PERSPECTIVE
- HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
- EMPHASIS ON POTENTIAL: MERITOCRACY
- PUBLIC SERVICE & EDUCATION

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Renaissance Self: Duality

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ INWARD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDUCATION • PRIVACY • INDIVIDUALISM • SELF-EXPRESSION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ OUTWARD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIVIL SERVICE • PUBLIC PERSONA • SOCIAL CONTEXT • PUBLIC EXPRESSION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "MAN OF LETTERS" |
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Spatial Analogue to Historical Sense



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SONNET: THE RENAISSANCE FORM

- LYRICAL;
- Privileges the SUBJECTIVE or inner life of the SPEAKER;
- INTIMATE;
- INTERIORITY;
- LOCALIZED point of view;
- Tendency for readers to CONFLATE the SPEAKER with the AUTHOR

THE SONNET: An Epistemological Structure

TWO TYPES of SONNET:

1. PETRARCHAN (Classical): problem and answer
2. ENGLISH or SHAKESPEAREAN (Early Modern): perspective and ironic reflection

PETRARCHAN SONNET

- Octave (8 lines): Poses a question or problem for consideration;
- Sestet (6 lines): Poses a possible answer

ABBA
CDDC
EFG
EFG

ENGLISH or SHAKESPEAREAN

- 3 QUATRAINS: multiple perspectives on a single topic;
- 1 COUPLET (Volte): an ironic reversal or summation.

ABAB
CDCD
EFEF
GG

Spenserian Variation

ABAB
BCBC
CDCD
EE
