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# Intimacy, Influence, and Imitation:: a Study of the Courtly Love Poetry of Sir Walter Raleigh

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INTIMACY, INFLUENCE, AND IMITATION: A STUDY OF THE COURTLY LOVE  
POETRY OF SIR WALTER RALEGH

A thesis submitted to  
Regis College  
The Honors Program  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for Graduation with Honors

by

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## LIST OF FIGURES

1. *The Portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh*, artist unknown, appears in chapter 1, page 4 of the thesis.
2. *Sir Walter Raleigh*, painted by H. in 1588, appears in chapter 1, page 5 of the thesis.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The handsome, tall, slender, young Walter Raleigh arrives at the Elizabethan court around the year 1580. It is obvious from his clothing and thick Devonshire accent that he is not of the court, yet he carries himself with a certain degree of haughtiness and self-assuredness that asserts his nobility. He is an attractive man, and in his eyes burns an indescribable charisma. In fact, his entire persona radiates a certain fiery intensity. Here is a man who ignites both the passions of himself and of others at will, although the results are not always positive. Fire is certainly appropriate as a characterization of this stunningly brilliant, intensely attractive, and enigmatically elusive man.

While certainly one for fierce, fiery passion, Walter's name sounds so very close to water when pronounced with an English tongue that it also becomes part of his identity. Fiery Sir Walter is likened to floods and streams, oceans and rivers. Water, like its opposite, characterizes this attractive courtier because of his overwhelming, awe-inspiring capability to express himself through unbridled, untamable ardor.

However, in embodying both of these elements, this Devonshire courtier dichotomizes himself. Both fire and water symbolize volumes of uninhibited fervor and both are associated with an intense personality, but inherently both are opposites vying for the upper hand and they cannot coexist harmoniously. Raleigh spent his life at the Elizabethan court trying to reconcile his longing to continue his piratical adventures on



the open seas and his desire to sit beside the hearth with Queen Elizabeth, and these conflicted feelings resonate within his poetry. Indeed, this situation makes for a mysteriously complex, almost mythical, figure of the Elizabethan court whose dichotomized interests caused moments of both tragedy and success within his life.

In keeping with the mythology regarding Raleigh, rumors abound about the supposed laying down of his cloak over a puddle so that Queen Elizabeth would not get her feet wet when she stepped on it. This chivalric myth persists even today in many film renditions of Raleigh's life, though it has yet to be verified as an actual historical event. Other myths exist in memoirs written by Francis Osborne during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I which describe Raleigh as the "Court Leviathan . . . [laying in an] ocean of favor" (Osborne 34) where the Queen was concerned. Both his reputation as a seaman and a courtier surround his character in Osborne's recollection of Raleigh, making him into a vast and powerful monster of the sea. Still other myths address his poetic courtship with Elizabeth, including the writing of a love poem anonymously addressed to the Queen in the frost that had accumulated in one of the castle windows that she would most certainly notice (Greenblatt 58). The validity of these stories is questionable at best. Indeed, even if they were true, we as a modern audience would have no way of knowing. But the validity of these tales is not important; what is important is that they exist at all because they speak to the mythic nature that Raleigh has come to inhabit.

Raleigh experienced a quick rise to favor in the Elizabethan court. After arriving in 1580 as a soldier serving the British Crown in Ireland, Raleigh took no time in

establishing himself as one of the Queen's favorites. Elizabeth, almost 20 years Raleigh's senior, found the attention he paid her flattering. His attractive physique and personality intrigued Queen Elizabeth. In 1587, Elizabeth appointed Raleigh Captain of the Guard, a position which meant that Raleigh would never have to leave the Queen's side. Though a mere formality, the title of Captain of the Guard reveals the favor Raleigh gained from the Queen in being her courtier. In fact, from this combination of physical attractiveness, charisma, and accomplishment within the courtly setting, Raleigh is often described as the quintessential Renaissance courtier.

The standard by which all courtiers are measured during the Renaissance comes from Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1560), translated into English by Thomas Hoby. Almost immediately after it had been translated into English, *The Book of the Courtier* became an immediate success among the English nobility. Everyone had read it and knew of the attributes and qualities it espoused for a proper courtier (Greenblatt 41-42). According to Castiglione, the most important qualities for a courtier are being a warrior and having the proper grace, physique, and dress. All of these attributes must be acquired through what Castiglione calls *sprezzatura*, or an air of effortlessness and nonchalance wherein the qualities of a courtier come naturally and are not apparently forced or contrived. A courtier must also be skilled in gaining the favor of the ladies of the court and in studying and writing poetry and prose (Castiglione 288-289).

In terms of grace, Raleigh exuded such grace and confidence when he arrived at court that, despite his humble parentage, he was able to gain the favor and respect of the

English nobility and the English monarch. Concerning grace, a man must possess “that mysterious quality which renders a man’s speech, his actions, the movements of his body not merely impressive or accomplished but appealing, touching, beautiful” (Greenblatt 35).

If one were to look at the painting entitled *The Portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh* (author unknown), one might get an idea of what Castiglione is talking about regarding the proper development of a courtier’s aura. Raleigh’s facial expression in this portrait is one of confidence and pensiveness that “make him at first sight pleasing and lovable to all who see him” (Castiglione 29). Raleigh’s charisma manifests itself even in this painting and would thereby indicate his finely developed skills of both grace and air as a courtier.



*The Portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh*

By all accounts, Raleigh was an attractive man who, in keeping with Castiglione’s vision of the ideal courtier, was “neither extremely small nor big” in bodily frame and was “well built and shapely of limb[,] . . . [demonstrating] strength and lightness and suppleness” (36). In the painting *The Portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh*, Raleigh is depicted wearing a pair of white tights which, while contributing to Castiglione’s theory of how one should dress as a courtier, also accentuate the shapely firmness of Raleigh’s legs. The musculature in Raleigh’s legs alone reveals his well-built physique which, in keeping with Castiglione’s criteria, is neither too small nor too large. Rather, his legs appear shapely and well-defined but still manage to retain their graceful slimness.

Regarding dress, a painting entitled *Sir Walter Raleigh* that supposedly depicts Raleigh in 1588 will be instrumental to examine his aptitude of dressing in accordance with Castiglione's rules of attire for courtiers. In the painting, Raleigh is wearing a white tunic and a black cape, simultaneously exuding an air of simplicity and elegance. Also, the pearl in his left ear denotes a man of wealth and provides a sharp contrast with the starkly black background.



*Sir Walter Raleigh* by H. (1588)

The painting also exudes an exotic feel in the intricate, yet not entirely English, designs on Raleigh's breeches. Castiglione states that a courtier should "consider what appearance he wishes to have and what manner of man he wishes to be taken for, and dress accordingly" (123). In fashioning an identity for himself, Raleigh had several traits in mind that he wanted to embody in order to convey his paradoxical nature. For that reason, as the entire atmosphere of the painting conveys, Raleigh wished to be taken for a man who was simple yet elegant, wealthy yet humble, and English yet exotic. Here again Raleigh demonstrates his aptitude as an ideal courtier in the Elizabethan court.

In terms of gaining favor of the ladies in the court, this almost goes without saying. Because of his natural intelligence, his prowess at sailing, his background as a soldier, and his ability to write poetry, Queen Elizabeth "raised [Raleigh] high" (Brigden 122) despite his Devonshire background. Like Castiglione, Raleigh understood that the way to gain "the favor of ladies . . . [was] through serving them and pleasing them"

(Castiglione 267) which was precisely what Raleigh did in order to accomplish his high status in the English court. If the Queen commanded something to be done, Raleigh obeyed, and this in turn flattered the Queen and endeared her to Raleigh even more than before.

What also contributed to both Raleigh's persona as a courtier and the Queen's favor was his poetry. Castiglione describes the ideal courtier as one who is "more than passably learned in letters, at least in those studies which we call the humanities" (70). The courtier also must be "versed in the poets . . . [and] practiced also in writing verse and prose, especially in [his] own vernacular" (70) so as to better woo the ladies of the court. The depth and breadth of Raleigh's accomplishments in this arena will be discussed at length in later chapters. At this moment, suffice it to say that Raleigh made numerous poetic accomplishments in his courtly love poetry written during his extended courtship of Queen Elizabeth I.

However, Raleigh's relationship with the Queen was not always without conflict. For seven years, Raleigh remained the undisputed favorite at the court, earning high political positions and great esteem from Queen Elizabeth. But in 1587, his position was threatened with the arrival of Robert Devereux, the young Earl of Essex. Indeed, after only two years, in 1589, after dazzling the Queen for nine years and quickly becoming one of her favorites, Raleigh and Elizabeth had a slight falling out, the details of which are quite unclear today. What scholars have since deduced from Raleigh's time in Ireland is that he fled after being humiliated by Essex, who was younger and considered more

attractive by Queen Elizabeth in her later years.<sup>1</sup> From July to December of 1589 (*Introduction xl*) after their mysterious disagreement, Raleigh lived in Ireland, seemingly in exile.

After his brief stint in Ireland, Raleigh soon returned to Elizabeth's court, bringing the poet Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) and a few poems of his own along with him. Presented with Raleigh's poetry, with "verses so sweet and sorrowful" (xvi), and Edmund Spenser's *The Faery Queen*, the Queen reestablished her courtly relationship with Raleigh and he once again rose to favor within the courtly setting. Raleigh's quick re-ascent to power and favor with Elizabeth reaffirmed his superior courtly position over his rival Essex, though at the cost of deepening the schism between the two adversaries.

Sadly, Raleigh could not sustain his courtship with Elizabeth forever and thus the relationship ended in failure, receiving its fatal blow in 1592. Though rekindled, Raleigh's fame was fast dwindling as Essex proved himself younger, sexier, and wealthier in the eyes of the Queen. That, coupled with the fact that Raleigh's secret marriage to one of Queen Elizabeth's chamber maids, Elizabeth Throckmorton, became part of the Queen's intelligence early in the year 1592, sealed Raleigh's failure. Infuriated that one of her courtiers would have the audacity to pursue one of her chamber maids, Elizabeth sent Raleigh and his new wife to the Tower of London. Raleigh's punishment was not uncommon for Elizabeth's courtiers who decided to marry without her permission: Robert Dudley of Leicester met a similar fate when the Queen, upon discovering his

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<sup>1</sup> For support of this theory, most scholars turn to Essex's epistolary correspondence in 1589 with other nobles where he boasts that he sent Raleigh to Ireland to sulk after an argument that the two of them had had. See Walter Oakeshott's *The Queen and the Poet*.

marriage, “visited him with the same unreasoning anger which she was to show to others of her admirers when they turned their eyes elsewhere” (Oakeshott 26). Though she and the rest of her court sustained the image of her supposed virginity and she purportedly resisted the sexual advances of her courtiers, Queen Elizabeth was unwilling to share her courtiers with other women. Thus, Raleigh spent time in the Tower and later he and his wife were exiled, resulting in a five year absence from court (xvii). During this period of exile, Raleigh wrote his final testament of love for Queen Elizabeth in a poem entitled *The Ocean to Cynthia* and then proceeded to turn to other sources of inspiration for his poetry.

Whether out of love, compassion, or a sense of duty, Queen Elizabeth eventually pardoned Raleigh and his wife and actually allowed Raleigh to return to court in 1597. However, from that point forward, the two lovers never rekindled their passionate poetic exchange with one another. Though Raleigh continued to write poetry, he no longer dwelled upon the subject of love. He did not write poetry as a means of political preservation because the muse that inspired him to write in that vein had moved on; rather, he wrote of other topics and seems to have avoided love and flattery completely. Also, the political stability that Raleigh spent so many years constructing for himself shook upon its foundation, threatening to collapse at any moment because he no longer had the undying favor and support of the English monarch. In short, the later years of the Raleigh/Elizabeth relationship can be characterized by a coolly cordial interaction between an ex-courtier and his mistress who each felt emotionally slighted by the other.

Raleigh chose to pursue a woman well above his station, Queen Elizabeth, in order

to obtain a more politically stable position at court, a venture ultimately doomed to fail. In order to accomplish this, Raleigh “cast himself in the part of a passionate lover pursuing a remote and beautiful lady” (25) and sustained that role for as long as he possibly could. Yet even though his romantic venture was doomed to failure, he valiantly pressed onward through the use of his poetry. This perseverance ensured the inflation of his god-like reputation during a time when the veritable gods of literature roamed the earth. Like William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, and Sir Phillip Sidney who preserved their poetic insights for posterity, Raleigh took the emotions he felt for Elizabeth and transformed them into universalized expressions of love through his poetry.

Some Renaissance scholars have criticized Raleigh’s poetry, and indeed all courtly poetry written during the Renaissance as political ventures written for the continued preservation of the courtier’s noble status (Waller). In some respects regarding Raleigh, this may very well be the case as part of Raleigh’s success was his ability to manipulate Elizabeth’s favors through his poetry to gain political power and prestige. However, this also makes for a seemingly one-dimensional and reductivist view of courtly poetry. When dealing with royalty, politics are always involved; such is the nature of government. However, it seems impossible that Raleigh would be able to maintain his extended courtship with the Queen for twelve years if it were based solely on politics. Inevitably, if the relationship had been strictly political, Elizabeth would not have entertained Raleigh’s favor for so long as there were times when she and Raleigh became angry at one another. When Elizabeth found out about Raleigh’s secret marriage for



example, she behaved like a betrayed and angry lover by punishing Raleigh. However, Elizabeth revealed her affection for Raleigh because she did not kill him and only condemned him to imprisonment although the aforementioned was well within her power.

With the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603 came the end of the Tudor dynasty and also an end to Raleigh's political favor. While able to capture the attention and favor of Elizabeth, Raleigh could not do the same for James, and the enmity and dislike between the two was no secret in the Jacobean court. When King James I assumed the throne, he almost immediately found cause to sentence Raleigh to treason and Raleigh was put on trial and was expected to be executed. Remarkably, because of his eloquence and grace, skills he gained from being Elizabeth's courtier for so many years, Raleigh was able to avoid the execution block because he captured the hearts of almost all assembled at his trial with the notable exception of King James (Greenblatt 1). From this point forward, Raleigh spent 15 years in the Tower of London, made one last failed expedition to Guiana, and was finally executed by King James on October 28, 1618 for charges of treason similar to those raised against him by the King 15 years before. However, added to Raleigh's retinue of charges, though unstated, was Raleigh's failure in Guiana. Tensions between England and Spain were palpable and James had ordered Raleigh not to exacerbate those differences in Guiana. James of course knew that this was an impossible request, but Raleigh's failure gave him the grounds he needed to execute the man he had so longed to kill for over a decade. A poet to the very end, Raleigh sat composing his final epitaph on the eve of his execution, remembering the flower of his

youth, Elizabeth as his muse, and that life eventually ends in dust (“These Verses”).

This thesis examines six poems by Raleigh and demonstrates how each in turn expresses Raleigh’s dichotomized, yet evolving, self as a courtier and as a man. All of the poems chosen for this project focus on love and each in its own way addresses Raleigh’s courtship of Queen Elizabeth I and both the successes and calamities that befell him as a result of this turbulent and volatile relationship. Oftentimes it is easy for modern readers to bypass Raleigh’s contributions to poetry by writing them off as mere political works written only to earn and maintain the favor of Queen Elizabeth I. However, because Raleigh was able to hone his poetic craft in order to universalize his own passions for Elizabeth, his contributions are no less valuable than his contemporaries whose poetic motives are more easily discernable. For this reason, Raleigh’s courtly poetic works should not be written off as mere political ventures and should be recognized by posterity for the emotionally evocative works of literature that they are. These works gain their importance by revealing the art of influence, imitation, and intimacy in the Elizabethan Renaissance and by assisting in examining Raleigh’s own life as a successful courtier, both of which are necessary in understanding the courtly poetry of the English Renaissance.

In the pages to follow, chapter two will focus on Harold Bloom’s theory of the anxiety of influence and situate Raleigh in this framework of literary analysis. Chapter three will expand upon Bloom’s theory by delving into three of Raleigh’s shorter and less-intimate poems that progressively approach intimacy, but ultimately fall short of accomplishing that end. The poems are “A Poem Put Into My Lady Laiton’s Pocket by

Sir W. Rawleigh,”<sup>2</sup> “The Excuse,” and “To His Love when He has Obtained Her.” Chapter four examines two of Raleigh’s poems, “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” and “Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen,” that do in fact achieve a deeply personal sense of intimacy. Interestingly, the influence for these works comes from far more specific sources than the earlier works. Chapter five depends on a synthesis of Raleigh’s use of influence, imitation, and intimacy to achieve his purpose by analyzing his unfinished masterpiece, *The Ocean to Cynthia*. Chapter six concludes with a look at the way in which Raleigh’s commitment to his role as a courtier—to which his courtly love poetry was an integral part—manifested itself in his later life after Queen Elizabeth died and Raleigh had all but stopped writing courtly love poetry.

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<sup>2</sup> All of the poems discussed in this thesis by Raleigh come from Agnes Latham’s *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh* and will be referenced by the title of the poem and the line number in question throughout this text.

Determining the authorship of many of the poems is a task that still baffles scholars today as Raleigh never printed any of the works himself. Miscellanies that date back to Raleigh’s lifetime and have since been attributed to him were submitted under the guise of an anonymous poet, the most significant example being *The Phoenix Nest*. The rest of Raleigh’s poetry was either published posthumously or without the author’s consent; however, four poems in manuscript form written in Raleigh’s hand still exist, *The Ocean of Cynthia* being among them. Thus, apart from these four poems referred to as the Hatfield House collection, attaching authorship to many of these poems remains an on-going pursuit for scholars and will doubtless continue through future generations.

For more information regarding the authorship of Raleigh’s poems, see Agnes Latham’s “Textual Commentary” (87-92) in *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh*.

## **Chapter 2: Petrarchan Humanism: Influence and Imitation at the Elizabethan Court**

This chapter focuses on the nature of influence and imitation during the English Renaissance, exploring the idea that Raleigh and his contemporaries are fixed in the literary tradition and thereby struggle to assert their own identities within their courtly love poetry. Literature is an art of influence and imitation, authors building upon those who came before them, altering ideas and concepts in order to make their work their own. For example, Homer's *Odyssey* establishes the qualifications of an epic hero and an epic poem that Virgil later capitalizes on in his *Aeneid*. However, in using Homer's epic form, Virgil changes the vantage point from which the story is told, thus making the work his own. Later, Dante expands Virgil's, and therefore Homer's, epic form to make a religious narrative in the *Inferno*, thereby making the epic his own original creation. Later still, Milton writes *Paradise Lost* which combines the influential elements from Homer, Virgil, and Dante, but does it in such a way that he borrows from their ideas but ultimately creates his own unique work. For Raleigh, this means taking the precedent set for proper courtly love poetry and transforming that to suit his own emotional needs in a way that makes the poems appear universal in nature.

Harold Bloom, a literary critic central to this thesis, is a particularly strong advocate of this notion of poetry, and he defines the nature of poetic influence as follows:

Poetic Influence—when it involves two strong, authentic poets,—always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism.

(30)

Within the phrase “strong, authentic poet[,]” Bloom implicitly asserts certain qualifications of a good poet. Notice that Bloom does not use the word “original” to describe a poet, choosing instead to use “authentic.” This suggests that a strong poet is not one who strives to escape the literary tradition by asserting his uniqueness; instead, the strong poet is one who seeks to make the literary tradition his own by offering his own unique interpretation to earlier works from earlier poets. This caveat is essential in understanding the nature of poetic influence because it reinforces the notion that no poet has the power to overcome the influence of his predecessors completely in his own poetic works. As a framework for reading Raleigh, this recognition is essential because it notes that Raleigh’s emotions are shared with his contemporaries and predecessors; his originality comes in the way he chooses to express those emotions, but ultimately he is still dogged by the anxiety of influence.

Perhaps the two most important words that require some explanation in Bloom’s definition and that contribute to the understanding of a strong and authentic poet are *misreading* and *misinterpretation*; indeed, these two words are key to fully grasping Bloom’s theory. To a reader unfamiliar with Bloom’s vocabulary, this language appears

as though Bloom suggests that the later poet has made a mistake. However, Bloom actually means that the later poet, after examining the work of his predecessor, finds a moment at which he believes the predecessor has made a mistake; this mistake is the point at which the later poet believes that the predecessor has not fully explored the idea he champions, or perhaps that he has made the wrong conclusion from the information he has been presented with. From this point onward, the later poet commits acts of *creative correction* which transcends the previous poet's message, thus creating his own personal work. Bloom asserts that this process of *misreading* and *misinterpretation* of the predecessor is necessary for the later poet because it enables him to assert his own creativity.

Bloom believes that poets constantly face this overwhelming need to assert their individual creative identity through their poetic works. However, subconsciously, poets also realize that because they are entrenched in the literary tradition, they are incapable of creating a truly original work because their inspiration inevitably comes from an earlier poet or poem. This powerlessness to escape the literary tradition in order to assert an individual identity becomes an anxiety-inducing experience. In essence, Bloom says that the great poets of the past cast such great shadows of influence on future creative endeavors that later poets cannot help but create within that vast darkness in the hopes that one day the light of their insights might eclipse that wholly unnatural darkness in which they write. By doing this, later poets hope to overcome the anxiety of influence that they feel in relation to their predecessors.

Since the time that poets first sat down to compose their verse, "every poet [after]

is a being caught up in a dialectical relationship (transference, repetition, error, communication) with another poet or poets” (91). Here again Bloom’s language becomes slightly technical, thus defining some key terms is in order. By *transference*, Bloom is explaining the process by which poets take the ideas from a predecessor and use them in a poem of their own; the poets often achieve this through the *repetition* of their predecessors. By *repetition*, Bloom suggests that poets repeat phrases, themes, motifs, or images from the work of their predecessors. In doing this, poets retain some of the similar ideology of their predecessors, but at some point poets deviate from their predecessors, thus committing *error*. With *error*, Bloom is not suggesting that poets have made a mistake; rather, he is hinting at the idea of *misreading* and *misinterpretation* which are not mistakes but necessary for poets to do in order to overcome the anxiety of influence. Once poets have reconciled their debt to their predecessor and feel as though they have established their own poetic identity independent from earlier poets, they will then be comfortable enough to be in direct *communication* with the sources of the past that provided them with their inspiration. As such, even the greatest poets who have ever written, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton, carry echoes of the influence of their predecessors and their contemporaries within their poetic masterpieces, and the same can be said of lesser-known poets.

In order to understand the nature of influence and imitation in Raleigh’s world, we must first examine the tradition of humanism and its birthplace in the Italian Renaissance. According to C.S. Lewis, humanists were those who “taught, or learned, or at least strongly favored, Greek and the new kind of Latin; and by humanism, the critical

principles and critical outlook which ordinarily went with these studies” (18). In other words, the movement towards humanism stressed a revitalization of the literature, artwork, and philosophy of the ancient Greeks and Romans. While the Middle Ages reinforced the idea of man’s sinfulness, the humanistic tradition of the Renaissance encouraged an emphasis on the greatness of mankind and its accomplishments. In England, this renewal of classical ideology manifested itself within the classroom and with renowned poets of the age: in schools, students were taught the ancient texts such as Homer’s *The Odyssey* and Virgil’s *The Aeneid* in their respective original languages, and poets created epics in the lyric style which greatly imitated their classical counterparts. Whatever text they taught or used as an example, the key motive for all of the humanists “was to use what they called the study of humanity to make people more civilized and more humane” (Zophy 71). Through wisdom and learning, humanism simultaneously celebrated man’s nature and encouraged man to better that nature through the study of classical art, literature, and philosophy, often through the act of imitating the influence established by the great humanists who had come before.

While to a modern audience imitation of one’s predecessors appears an act of plagiarism, Goethe, one of the greats of German literature, explains that ‘only by making the riches of the others our own do we bring anything great into being’ (Bloom 52). Certainly during the English Renaissance this practice of imitation of the masters was not exclusive to just Raleigh, nor was it met with the prejudice that a modern audience now feels against the authorial borrowing of ideas. As George Puttenham, an eminent humanist during the Elizabethan Renaissance, so eloquently describes, poetry is “an art



not only of making, but also of imitation” (94), suggesting that a poet must not only be creative, but must be able to identify and exploit the creativity of others. Indeed, Bloom also speaks to this notion when he defines imitation as the ability “to convey the substance or riches of another poet to his own use” (27). No doubt the rare closeness of the English court facilitated in this literary practice. So intimate was the courtly setting in Elizabethan England that no poet could possibly compose his masterpiece without using some of the material from his contemporaries.

Later in his description of the art of English poetry, George Puttenham describes the process by which the influence of Italian poetry came to England under the rule of King Henry VIII: two distinguished English poets, Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, ventured into Italy and, having “tasted the sweet and stately measures and style of the Italian poesy[,]” returned to England and proceeded to “greatly polish [the] rude and homely manner of vulgar [English] poesy from that it had been before” (148). During the Middle Ages, English poetry was viewed as “either astonishingly tame and cold, or, if it [attempted] to rise, the coarsest fustian[,]” thus making poetry frustratingly dull and in a state of “metrical disorder” (Lewis 1). With the introduction of the “knowledge of antiquity, [and] new poetry from Italy and France” (1), a new sense of order was instated in the vulgar English poetic verse, thereby improving poetry in England by Renaissance and humanistic standards.

Wyatt (1503-1542) and Surrey (1517-1547) introduced Petrarch’s poetry which initiated, among other things, the sonnet tradition. Wyatt and Surrey familiarized themselves and the rest of England with the sonnet form by translating Petrarch’s works

into English while attempting to keep Petrarch's specific 14 line formula and a pentameter comparable to the Italian meter used in Petrarch's sonnets. However, through the act of translation from Italian to English, Wyatt and Surrey often wrote vastly different poems with dissimilar meanings even though the source of influence for both poems was the same. Furthermore, these poems also deviated from the Petrarchan original as both English poets took certain liberties with the strictness of Petrarch's message. This discontinuity could be a result of both Wyatt's and Surrey's poetic *misreading* of Petrarch's original. An excellent example of this is Wyatt's and Surrey's translations of Petrarch's Sonnet 140, entitled "The long love that in my thoughts doth harbor" and "Love that doth reign and live within my thoughts" respectively.

From a structural perspective, Wyatt's translation of the sonnet resembles what modern critics have dubbed the Italian sonnet structure, as established by Petrarch, with its eight line proposition and six line resolution. However, in his translation, Wyatt does not remain completely loyal to Petrarch's model because the rhyme scheme breaks down in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> lines. Petrarch's rhyme scheme generally follows an ABBAABBA CDCDEE format, but in Wyatt's case, his rhyme is ABBAABBA CDCCDD. This seeming act of inattentiveness in Wyatt's translation is not unique to his other works either. Ultimately, Wyatt's concern was not so much structure as he was with the overall message. In this respect, Wyatt does not reveal an anxiety to overcome Petrarch structurally as he imitates the Italian master's technique. Instead, Wyatt chose to maintain the structure and merely remake Petrarch's message to suit the needs of the English people, thereby overcoming the anxiety of influence in that respect.

In Surrey's translation, he reinvents the sonnet form, introducing what modern literary critics have dubbed the English sonnet structure with its twelve line proposition and two line conclusion. Also, Surrey's translation is far more rigid than Wyatt's. The rhyme scheme, ABABCDCDEFEGG, remains perfect throughout the entire poem and at no point does Surrey's iambic pentameter break down or reveal any flaws. In order to overcome the anxiety of influence, Surrey, unlike Wyatt, believed that the structure of the sonnet had as much importance as the text itself as both had the power to transform a poet's work and make it unique.

In interpreting the actual verse, Wyatt professes that "good is the life ending faithfully" (14) to one's lord rather than pursuing the love of a woman. For Wyatt, as explained in the closing line, the speaker's duty to his lord relieves him of his conflict between choosing love of a lady or loyalty to a lord because he knows which of the two he should choose. The question is one of "reason" (Wyatt 7) which negates the existence of the emotion that the speaker might feel towards the lady. When faced with conflict, Wyatt resolves his issue by relying on his powers of reason that determine right from wrong and therefore separate duty from emotion in a similar binary. Aside from having the original written in Italian and the later work written in English, there appears little deviation from Petrarch's and Wyatt's poems. This, as Bloom explains, is a phenomenon of "*aphroades*" wherein it appears that "the later poet himself [has] written the precursor's characteristic work" (16), ultimately failing to overcome the anxiety of influence he feels.

Surrey's conclusions are far more complicated. The final line pronounces that

“sweet is the death that taketh end by love” (Surrey 14), but the love to which the speaker is referring is ambiguous. Surrey could be talking about the love he feels for his lord, but he also could be talking about the love he feels for the woman who has caught his attention. Unlike Wyatt’s speaker who makes his decision using reason, Surrey’s speaker makes his decision from “shame” (7), something deeply rooted in the emotional realm rather than the intellectual realm. This authorial choice on the part of Surrey makes his speaker’s decision far more nuanced because the choice to not pursue the lady is not necessarily logical. Only through a deep-seated sense of guilt does Surrey’s speaker come to the conclusion that loyalty to a lord is better than the love of the lady. In this respect, Surrey has *creatively corrected* Wyatt by tempering Wyatt’s clear-cut conclusion with emotional ambiguity and a feeling of divided loyalty to both lord and lady. This process of *misreading* on behalf of both Wyatt and Surrey is essential, especially when examining Raleigh’s poem “Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen,” discussed in greater detail in chapter four. Like Surrey, Raleigh has once again reinvented the sonnet form to better accommodate the message he conveys in the poem. Furthermore, Raleigh takes the complexities Surrey feels about loyalty and diminishes them by making the conclusion more clear-cut in tribute to Wyatt. However, unlike Wyatt, Raleigh concludes that love, not loyalty, is the deciding factor in any decision. By deviating from his predecessors both structurally and thematically, Raleigh effectively overcomes his anxiety of influence.

Not only did he develop the sonnet form, but Petrarch is also credited with devising the Petrarchan mistress based on his love, Laura. In England, courtier poets frequently used this canonized mistress to describe Queen Elizabeth because of her

striking resemblance to the subject of Petrarch's poems. The Petrarchan mistress is a woman who is so beautiful, so charming, so seductive, that the poet cannot help but elevate her up to the status of goddess. Once he has done this, the poet must throw himself at his mistress' feet and submit himself completely, entreating advances while realizing that he is not truly worthy to possess her. Unfortunately for the poet, the Petrarchan mistress also recognizes her superior position. She therefore manipulates her pursuers long enough to make them think they have a chance before reminding them of their inferiority and deflating them of their confidence. Unavoidably, however, the poet is drawn to his mistress even in the face of her denial; indeed, "the lady's effects upon the lover are like fire, ice, blindness, torture, and yet the lover is inevitably drawn to her even though he is puzzled and anguished over his self-torture" (Waller 76). When reminded of his inferior position, the poet must retreat to the point he started from and repeat his advances, all the while bemoaning his quarry's stubbornness and cruelty.

Sir Thomas Wyatt capitalized on Petrarch's mistress in his poem, "Whoso list to hunt" which is an adaptation of Petrarch's Sonnet 190. Within this poem, Wyatt's speaker pursues a woman who belongs to a man of higher social status, presumably Anne Boleyn, and ultimately fails to win the lady over successfully because of the lady's willful stubbornness to be contained. This poem, coupled with Raleigh's "Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen," which makes similar connections between Queen Elizabeth and the Petrarchan mistress, shall be examined in greater detail in chapter four. Indeed, Elizabeth's courtier's attempts to woo her are best described by saying they "conclude[ed] where [they] [began], which [was] for the most part in Expectation"

(Osborne 31) of a love that could never come to fruition.

Within his sonnet sequence, “Astrophil and Stella,” Sir Phillip Sidney (1554-1586), a contemporary of Sir Walter Raleigh’s at the Elizabethan court, utilizes the figure of the Petrarchan mistress by giving Stella, the female subject of his sonnets, similar attributes to those of Laura. From the outset of Sonnet 1, the speaker establishes an air of despair because he wishes to write his love for Stella in verse form but cannot because of her superiority over him. He also lays the foundation for his mistress’ cruelty when, in line two, he says “that she [Stella] might take some pleasure of [his] pain” (Sidney 2). The proceeding lines of the poem then continue to build upon this foundation of despair on the part of the male speaker and of cruelty on the part of the female subject. The speaker admits to “beating [himself] for spite” (13), perpetuating that sense of self-torture a man experiences in his pursuit of his mistress. The concluding line then provides a perfectly Petrarchan summation of events: “Fool” (14) the speaker declares, continuing to punish himself for his love before coming to the ultimate conclusion that he should “look in [his] heart and write” (14). By making this pronouncement, the speaker announces his inferior position to the woman and his dogged pursuit of her in spite of that awareness. In short, Sidney’s male subject exemplifies his resiliency to maintain his pursuit of love even in the face of total refusal, keeping in line with Petrarch’s poetic form. In this respect, Sidney has not *misread* Petrarch’s influence, choosing instead to imitate it and follow the path set by his predecessor rather than forge his own.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>As they became more comfortable with Petrarch’s poetic forms, Elizabethan poets like Sidney began to toy with the concept of the Petrarchan mistress, much as they did with the sonnet. In doing this, they developed the anti-Petrarchan mistress whose attributes parody those of the Petrarchan goddess. However, this technique, while amusing, never became very popular, especially among the poets most closely

Petrarch and his Italian contemporaries also made use of pastoral modes in their poetry, yet another tribute to the Greco-Roman humanistic tradition embodied by Theocritus and Virgil. This influence later spread across Europe. Pastoralism pertains to idyllic landscapes off in the countryside, often including shepherds and even livestock (Norbrook 19). Though this definition may seem basic, the pastoral mode became a powerful representation of the collective ideologies of Elizabethan society. According to Puttenham, the pastoral mode achieved this by “[representing] the rustical manners of loves and communication . . . under the veil of homely persons and in rude speeches to insinuate and glance at greater matters” (128), such as honesty, truth, and other virtues. For this reason, pastoral poems were often perceived as romantic and also didactic.

Virgil, the father of the pastoral, set this precedent of didacticism and romanticism in his *Eclogues*. In “The Dispossessed” for example, the scene begins with Meliboeus complaining to his fellow countryman, Tityrus, that Meliboeus must leave his farm. The romantic undertones begin at the outset of the dialogue when Meliboeus mentions that Tityrus lies “sprawling in the shade, teaching the woods to echo back the charms of Amaryllis” (Virgil 21), Tityrus’ love. Later, as Meliboeus expresses his envy that Tityrus can keep his land while the others must flee, he says that Tityrus is a “happy old man” (22) because he still owns his land and because he can stay “between the rivers that [he] [knows] so well, by springs that have their Nymphs, and find some cool spot underneath the trees” (23). By calling to mind these images, Meliboeus engages the pastoral setting

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connected to the monarch, such as Raleigh. This is owing to the fact that testing the Queen’s sense of humor was always a risky political gamble as she could either be highly amused or absolutely infuriated by what a poet chose to say about her in following in the anti-Petrarchan vein.

as a means to express Tityrus' fortune of maintaining his land. Later, Meliboeus views his exile from the idyllic farm setting as punishment for "Romans [who] took to fighting one another" (23), emphasizing the morality of the pastoral as Puttenham later defines. In the closing moves of "The Dispossessed," Tityrus also sends readers a moral message by inviting Meliboeus into his home for the night before he leaves in exile. By closing his narrative with Tityrus' proffered hand of hospitality, Virgil underscores the importance of this virtue within Roman society.

Later, Surrey engages the pastoral landscape as something that speaks to both the collective needs of the Elizabethan society and of the virtues it celebrates in his poem "The soot season that bud and bloom forth brings." The first twelve lines of this sonnet paint the scene of an idyllic natural setting, a scene of new life and rebirth as the seasons change from winter to spring and summer. The statement that "summer is come" (Surrey 5) and the fish with its "new-repaired scale" (8) convey imagery of a regenerated landscape that is teeming with life. It is nature, not the oppressive city, that has restored itself and given itself new life. However, Surrey complicates this idyllic setting with the last line of the sonnet which reads, "each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs" (14). Initially, with decaying cares, or rather becoming care-free, Surrey almost suggests that he will end this sonnet on a positive note. Instead, the last phrase dashes that as from this regeneration and growth comes sorrow for the poet. In this regard, Surrey suggests that physically he has been renewed by the pastoral landscape, but when he thinks of his mistress, he becomes sorrowful once again. This recalls Petrarch's mistress and suggests that not even the idyllic setting of the pastoral can diffuse her cruelty. In both the case of



Virgil and Surrey, the seeming celebration of the regeneration of nature is tempered by human sadness. However, while Virgil's tale ends with a reconciliation of friendship and an offer of hospitality, Surrey *creatively corrects* this notion with the introduction of the Petrarchan mistress whose presence destroys the idyllic landscape and brings an irreconcilable grief to the speaker.

Edmund Spenser, author of *The Faery Queen* and a dear friend of Raleigh's, also explores the pastoral in order to exemplify the virtues of Elizabethan society in poetry. In canto five, stanza 32 of Book Three of *The Faery Queen*, Spenser describes Belphoebe, the heroine of the story, searching for herbs to heal the wounded Timias, a loyal squire in the service of King Arthur who was modeled after Raleigh. At this moment in the poem, Spenser highlights the restorative powers of nature as Belphoebe searches for "panachea or polygony" (Spenser 5.32.7) in order to heal Timias who "all [the] while lay bleeding out his heart-blood" (5.32.8) on the ground nearby. By setting the poem in the idyllic location of the woods rather than in a city setting, Spenser underscores the virtue of altruism as Belphoebe comes to the aid of the squire when he is about to die, as well as education as the knowledge of healing herbs, "taught of the nymph from [Belphoebe's] infancy" (5.32.4), allows Belphoebe to help her fallen comrade. In this regard, Spenser has *creatively corrected* Virgil's precedent of the pastoral by transforming the Virgilian landscape into a topical allegory regarding 16<sup>th</sup> century society England in order to reveal the virtues most important to the Elizabethan community. This point is essential when reading Raleigh because Spenser showed Raleigh how to personalize the pastoral, and idea that Raleigh will later inflate and therefore *misread* in *The Ocean to Cynthia*. While

Spenser casts Raleigh as the humble squire, Timias, Raleigh will later cast himself as the vast ocean, a move that self-aggrandizes Raleigh and therefore marks the most significant *misinterpretation* of Spenser's earlier work.

If viewed in a historical context, the movement towards pastoralism can possibly be attributed in part to the *discovery* of the New World. Especially during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I as England made its first attempt at colonization of the New World under her rule. Everyone in Europe envisioned the Americas as a gateway of opportunity, their chance to explore this *virgin* landscape and exploit its resources, and England was no exception. As a bustling metropolis even in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Londoners yearned to escape the oppressive walls of the city in order to explore new frontiers. Raleigh and his contemporaries understood this longing and capitalized on it in their poetry as a means of echoing that cultural trend towards pastoralism. In order for a poet to be successful, the trend of the times required poems with a pastoral setting that would simultaneously exemplify his meaning in the poem and his longing for a more idyllic place (Norbrook 18).

Perhaps the best illustration of England's fascination with the New World is Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. Having "been inspired by contemporary accounts of the people of the New World living lives of primal innocence" (Brigden 5), More sets his tale on an island off the coast of the Americas. In this fictional work, More explains the idyllic lifestyles that the people of the New World have, and with that ideal lifestyle comes an ideal government and an ideal society. While not particularly popular among English nobility because of the fact that it exposes many flaws in the English monarchical system

of government, some of More's *Utopia* reveals that deep-seated longing to escape to the New World in hopes of a better, more idyllic life. As readership of *Utopia* increased, so too did the desire to depart from London in search of a more perfect place to start anew.

The discovery of the New World is especially pertinent to the life of Sir Walter Raleigh and its influence features in many of his poems. When Queen Elizabeth reigned, Raleigh helped prepare for the first English colonial expedition to the Americas. He did not, however, accompany his fellow Englishmen on the actual voyage to the New World, instead keeping himself close by Queen Elizabeth's side in England. Some of those who did venture into the New World founded the first English colony of Roanoke in 1587 on an island off the coast of present-day Virginia. When a ship came to bring fresh supplies and food to Roanoke approximately four months later, they found that the entire population had mysteriously vanished, thus marking a failed first attempt for English colonization in the New World (Brigden 275). While not a part of the actual expedition to the Americas, Raleigh planned a great deal of his countrymen's failed venture into the *virgin* landscape. Doubtless this failure resonated within Raleigh and thus his poetry often takes the less-traditional stance regarding the romantic pastoral landscape and thereby *misinterprets* it in relation to his contemporaries. In *misreading* the pastoral style to suit his own perceptions of the world and his place within it, Raleigh still maintained the didactic nature of this poetic form, though in a manner unlike any of his contemporaries.

Indeed, the most important mode of influence for poets in Elizabethan England was not that of a poet's predecessors but that of a poet's contemporaries. Even in the case of contemporary influence, however, the anxiety-inducing experience a poet feels in

trying to escape the shadow of the literary tradition is just as prevalent. While the majority of Bloom's theory of influence relies on the notion that writers are influenced by the works of previous poets, a portion of his thesis deals with the smaller influence contemporaries have on their fellow poets. In order to support this notion, Bloom draws from the language of Goethe who asked, 'Do not all the achievements of a poet's predecessors and contemporaries rightfully belong to him?' (Bloom 52), thereby suggesting that the borrowing of ideas from one's contemporaries is a frequent occurrence and an acceptable practice among aspiring poets. Certainly the exchange of ideas between contemporaries occurred rapidly in the intimate setting of the Elizabethan court and therefore the influence of contemporaries was highly significant.

A look again at Wyatt's and Surrey's translations of Petrarch's Sonnet 140, "The long love that in my thoughts doth harbor" and "Love that doth reign and live within my thoughts" respectively, provides an excellent example of poets building off of their contemporaries in order to assert their own individual creative identities and also in order to cast off the shadow of influence. Wyatt's translation, written some time earlier than Surrey's, reveals a rudimentary translation of the Petrarchan original. He has remained mostly loyal to Petrarch's poetic structure and the conclusion he reaches at the end is fairly straight forward: he commits himself to stay in "the field with [his lord] to live and die" (Wyatt 13) because dying faithfully serving his lord is more important for Wyatt's speaker than honoring his love of his mistress. However, Wyatt has overcome his anxiety of influence by the sheer act of translation from Petrarch's Italian into English because the language barrier automatically puts Wyatt into a position to *misread* and

*misinterpret* Petrarch's text.

The slightly younger Surrey, on the other hand, had a larger shadow of influence to overcome as he not only had to break away from Petrarch's model, but his contemporary's, Wyatt's, as well. Surrey achieves this by making a more technically perfect poem in terms of rhyme and meter, electing to use a structure of his own invention, later known as the English sonnet form, instead of the Italian sonnet form, indicating a break from the precedent set by both Petrarch and Wyatt. Furthermore, Surrey complicates Wyatt's thesis, thus demonstrating a misreading of Wyatt's original intention. All of these changes in Surrey's poem reveal a certain degree of anxiety. He does not want his poem to necessarily be associated with either Petrarch's or Wyatt's poems in either terms of structure or message, but rather to have it stand alone as an individual literary accomplishment even though both the work of his predecessor and his contemporary were instrumental in composing his poem.

Certainly in the English Renaissance, the influence of contemporaries was highly significant because of the vast concentration of poetic talent that surrounded the English court. Indeed, Queen Elizabeth I's court served as the stage for the coming together of many of the greatest literary minds who ever set pen to paper (Zophy 252). Men the likes of William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Phillip Sidney, and Edmund Spenser gravitated around the charismatic Virgin Queen, producing phenomenal literary accomplishments often in her honor or by her request. This rare gathering of talent allowed truly unique circumstances for Raleigh and his contemporaries because it provided exceptional material that was immediately available to read, study, and emulate

for all aspiring poets and writers. Thus, the power of influence is seen during this period in history perhaps more clearly than in any other era.

Verses from Shakespeare's sonnets and plays, Marlowe's poetry, and Spenser's *The Fairy Queen* circulated widely throughout the court and no doubt Raleigh was privy to hearing or seeing all of them. During his stint in Ireland, Raleigh became acquainted with Spenser. During their correspondence with one another, Spenser shared many lines from his epic work and Raleigh in turn shared lines of his unfinished epic *The Ocean to Cynthia*. When he returned to England, Raleigh brought Spenser along with him and Spenser in turn presented the Queen, whose character had provided the inspiration for his epic in the first place, with *The Faery Queen*. At this moment, it is almost certain that Raleigh would have become familiar with the other pieces of Spenser's work that he may not have seen initially.

Raleigh gained much of his poetic flair from the other poets at the Elizabethan court, borrowing from Spenser to write his *The Ocean to Cynthia* as well as from Marlowe to write his "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" and from Wyatt to write his "Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen" and many others besides. Recognizing the talent of these other distinguished men, Raleigh began quoting or referencing their poetry in his own works, and certainly the most profound verses and lines from these other men were constantly echoing in his brain.

Interestingly, Raleigh also influenced himself, and Bloom does not discuss this in his theory on the anxiety of influence. However, much of Raleigh's poetry carries a similar theme, each poem seemingly building upon the last as if the poet was in a

constant state of revision (*Introduction* xli). But, in drawing his influence from his earlier works, Raleigh provides a fresh outlook on each of the poems in question. At times, the image of dust serves as a source of death and despair for the poet, a reason for not living, while at others it serves as a justification for the idea of *carpe diem* and enjoying life to its fullest because no one can live forever.

In this respect, reading Raleigh's poetry is akin to studying an author's autobiography. Students of Raleigh can clearly trace the development of Raleigh's philosophies of love, death, time, and betrayal, as well as pinpoint specific life events that came to shape these particular views. Raleigh pours his very life into his creative musings, a distinctive characteristic which enables readers to find patterns that resonate throughout all of his poetry.

### **Chapter 3: Raleigh's First Poetic Encounters with Influence and Intimacy**

When Raleigh first arrived at the Elizabethan court, his poetry appeared artificial and contrived. Using the typical tropes, symbols, and allusions of the English Renaissance to convey his message, the poetry Raleigh writes during this early period, dating roughly from 1580-1588, reads superficially. The speaker's voice is not Raleigh's, nor is it any other particular voice of the English Renaissance. Even though Raleigh uses the pronoun I in these poems, as though to include himself in this drama and thereby make it seem more personal and intimate, the pronoun I does nothing more than provide a voice that guides the poem along. While a somewhat foreign concept to modern readers, deeply impersonal poetry was actually normal during the 16<sup>th</sup> century in England. Poetry was not intended as a form of self-expression, a reflection on one's personal life; rather, it sought to express, through the ornamentation of language and the universality of its symbols, the prevailing societal moods and dispositions, often with a desire to flatter others in the hope of gaining political favors. C.S. Lewis defines this kind of poetry as "drab" which "marks a period in which, for good or ill, poetry has little richness either of sound or of images" (64), making the poetry impersonal and lacking of any qualities that would make it unique. Thus, this chapter will examine specifically the poems "A poem put into My Lady Laiton's Pocket by Sir W. Rawleigh," "The Excuse," and "To His Love when He has Obtained Her" by Raleigh. The cohesive element that unites these three



poems is their total lack of intimacy and analysis of each will discuss how they advance themselves towards personal intimacy, though the trajectory falls short of this destination, making the poems ultimately Drab.

Because of its universality, love became one of the foremost themes in Renaissance poetry, especially for courtiers seeking to gain the favor of wealthy nobles and monarchs. However, people of this era considered the personal expressions of love improper for poetry, choosing instead to demonstrate their emotions through popularly understood symbols. For example, Raleigh uses fire as a symbol for love in “A poem put into my Lady Laiton’s pocket by Sir. W. Rawleigh” as he hopes that “som drop of grace wold quench [his] scorchyng fyre” (4). The fire Raleigh mentions refers to the “desire” (2) that he mentions two lines previous, symbolizing the typical notion that fire represents burning ardor, passion, and desire. To this end, Raleigh does not in fact *misread* anyone in particular, choosing instead to imitate the poems already in existence without venturing to put his own stamp of originality on the work.

In order to more fully express himself, Raleigh pays tribute to the humanistic writers by using rhetoric as a means of articulating his arguments with better clarity and persuasiveness. In keeping with the connection between fire and desire, Raleigh also engage “depth[,]” “desire” (2), “deserve” (3), and “drop” (4) in order to reinforce his passions. The alliterative repetition of the consonant sound calls the reader’s attention to the emotions in question and it is no small accident either that desire and fire rhyme, thereby adding a further connection to the attraction the speaker feels for this woman. Though he admits that he does not deserve a drop of his lover’s grace, he still feels

compelled to reinforce the depth, the profundity, of the desires he feels for her.

The final stanza abandons the alliterative d consonant sound, but it includes other instances of rhetoric in order to speak to the same theme of the depth of the poet's desire. While introducing the idea that "the wynde of woe, hath torne [the speaker's] Tree of Trust" ("A Poem" 14), this violent imagery almost seeks to undo the tender passions the speaker feels. However, the introduction of this violence speaks to another important element of this poem: the Petrarchan mistress.<sup>4</sup>

This particular Petrarchan mistress causes physical agony to the speaker, a concept reinforced by the alliteration in line 14 whose repeated sounds resemble a violent, tearing action. Because of the Petrarchan mistress' aloofness, the speaker suffers; and even though he is aware of this, he cannot abandon his emotions. Thus, the poem concludes,

But yett amonges those Cares, which Crosse my Rest,

Thys Comfort Growes, I thynke I Love thee Beste. (17-18)

*Rest* in this case refers back to the idea of burial and death, speaking to the idea that "hellp lyes buried in the Duste" (16). The agony that the speaker has experienced as a result of his Petrarchan mistress has literally killed him as well as killing any hope he had that she might help him out of his plight and thereby save him. However, by recollecting his mistress and the burning ardor he feels for her, the speaker loves his mistress all the more in spite of the fact that she has murdered something inside of him. Thus, Raleigh adopts the typical standpoint of Petrarchan poems wherein the speaker plays the role of

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<sup>4</sup> For a description of the Petrarchan mistress, see chapter 2, page 21.

“the worshipper, devoted to the unapproachable mistress or of the idealizing devotee with the Queen as the wavering star, the chaste goddess, the imperial embodiment of justice, the timeless principle on which the universe turns” for the poet (Waller 118).

“The Excuse,” written some time later, advances the speaker to a closer state of intimacy with the subject, though here again the speaker ultimately falls short of expressing his genuine emotions on the subject. In approaching intimacy, Raleigh develops more fully the idea of the Petrarchan mistress introduced in “A poem put into my Lady Laiton’s pocket.” This poem, like its predecessor, uses the pronoun I and describes the personal love of a woman in a wholly impersonal fashion. The first two stanzas begin with the speaker describing the self-destructive attraction he feels towards the woman in question, presumably Queen Elizabeth (Oakeshott 27). His eye, having spotted this beautiful mistress, seeks to “entice [the] hart to seeke to leaue [his] brest” (“The Excuse” 2) in order to abandon its owner and follow the woman instead. Having been filled with anger at his eye’s disobedience, the speaker “[thinks] to pull it out” (3) because the emotions he feels causes him unrest and discomfort. At a later moment, the heart harbors within it love for the woman and the speaker, once again full of rage, “would have [his heart] slaine” (11) in order to relieve himself of the agonizing love he feels for the mistress.

Included in Raleigh’s vocabulary of self-violence is “leaue” (2), “rage” (3), “vnrest” (4), “warrs” (10), “slaine” (11), and “slay” (16), making love out to be an incredibly painful and torturous endeavor for the speaker as he only begins to feel this way after he has fallen in love with his mistress. Initially, the speaker does not even

understand these emotions or why he feels this way. All that he understands is that this process of self-violence did not begin until after his encounter with the Petrarchan mistress. What is interesting about each of these words is that they all fall internally within the line, thus not drawing attention to themselves because of their inconspicuous placement within the poem. Raleigh then juxtaposes this idea with the words “grace” (5) and “face” (6), end stop lines in direct reference to the Petrarchan mistress. The word “grace” calls to the reader’s mind an idea of salvation from a holy source. Thus, by connecting “grace” with the word “face” by virtue of the rhyme the two words share, Raleigh is suggesting that the mistress’ face is transcendent, otherworldly, holy, and god-like. Thus, even though she is the cause of the speaker’s suffering, she has the power to redeem the speaker and make all of his suffering worthwhile because of her holy attributes. The result of this Petrarchan structure is that “Elizabeth is transformed almost completely beyond human personality, appearing as an image of static, timeless perfection to the mortal who speaks, or rather chants, her praises” (Greenblatt 65). While she may be the cause of all of the speaker’s hurt, the Petrarchan mistress remains blameless and perfect in the eyes of the speaker.

Finally the speaker comes to the melodramatic conclusion that “my selfe now slay I will” (“The Excuse” 16) when he recognizes that it is neither his eye nor his heart that is to blame for the agony he has suffered. However, at the critical moment after the speaker gives this grave pronouncement he concludes,

But when I found my selfe to you was true,  
I lou’d my selfe, bicause my selfe lou’d you. (17-18)

This final couplet softens the drama and violence of the earlier lines, introducing the contrasting idea of self-love rather than self-hate, and this becomes Raleigh's final message. In keeping in line with Petrarch's mistress and the suitor who pursues her, the speaker, though miserable with the fact that he is in love, can do nothing to change his fate. He is drawn to this mistress even as it causes him physical agony and drives him to want to gouge out his eyes, tear out his heart, and end his life. The entire poem serves as an excellent model for the ideal Petrarchan mistress and her suitor. Seemingly unconcerned for her suitor, indeed Raleigh gives her no voice within the poem, the Petrarchan mistress stands coolly aside, not bothering to intervene at any of the moments of violence within the poem. The speaker, acting in proper Petrarchan fashion, shamelessly throws himself at the feet of the woman, as though entreating a respite by her hand from his self-inflicted harm. When she does not intervene, the speaker is left to say his monologue; and though the outset of the poem seems one of self-absorption, Raleigh ends the poem with the idea that no matter how cruel she may be, the speaker cannot abandon his Petrarchan mistress, not even for death and thereby the relief of suffering.

Raleigh chose to conclude every line within this poem with an end stop, suggesting that the speaker is gauging the importance of every phrase before expressing himself. Indeed, the most significant end stops come in the final couplet. "True" in line 17 comes directly before a comma and suggests to the reader that the speaker is considering the implications of the word in question. If it falls in connection with "myself," mentioned three words earlier, it references the speaker. Therefore, it suggests fidelity and devotion to his Petrarchan mistress. However, "true" could also be read in

connection to the word that it rhymes with in the following line, “you,” putting the focus instead on the Petrarchan mistress. For the mistress, if we assume that Raleigh is speaking to Queen Elizabeth, the word “true” carries the implications of chastity and purity, thus a tribute to the virtues Elizabeth allegedly championed.

George Puttenham praises this final couplet in *The Art of English Poesie* for Raleigh’s skill in the art of rhetoric. In the final lines, Raleigh executes what Puttenham defines as a “ploche” or “doubler” which is a kind of repetition that is “a speedy iteration of one word but with some little intermission by inserting one or two words between” (Puttenham 285). Raleigh conspicuously repeats three words in the final lines of “The Excuse:” myself, you, and loved. This formation isolates the couplet from the rest of the poem in significant and meaningful ways. The first two stanzas are of personal reflection. The pronoun “you” is used only once in these first twelve lines and even then it is used only to provide a transition from the second stanza to the third. Without his mistress—the “you” within the poem—the speaker is self-hating, violent, and confused. However, once the “you” is introduced, the mood shifts immediately to self-love as well as love for another person.

By ending the poem with “you” and the period that comes after it, Raleigh underscores the mistress as the most important element of this poem. Because it gets the last word within the poem, “you” will be remembered long after the rest of the poem is forgotten. In the end, none of the self-violence, self-hate, and self-love matters because all that readers will remember is “you.” This then is the grand conclusion Raleigh has come to about love: it is self-erasing, only about the other person within the relationship.

The period that comes after this pronouncement leaves no doubt within the reader's mind that love is the ultimate finality; there is nothing left after "you" because love of another person, according to the speaker, is all that truly matters. While not quite accomplishing intimacy, finishing the poem with "you" marks a profound *misinterpretation* of the works of Raleigh's contemporaries: the pronoun shifts the focus away from the speaker and onto the mistress without specifying who she is, giving the poem a far more universal message as the unspecified "you" could feasibly be *anyone*.

"To His Love When He Had Obtained Her" marks a profound transition towards intimacy in Raleigh's poetry, yet it still carries many of the same properties as the earlier poems. Presumably written in 1592 and unlike some of his other mature works, Raleigh continues to refrain from inserting himself in the poem. Raleigh's early poetry has either a "virtually anonymous speaker" or "a personal voice, [with a] tone of sorrow and regret" (Greenblatt 70). Usually his mature works demonstrate a "bringing together" (70) of these two opposing speakers, but this particular poem lacks the personal element. However, while still impersonal, Raleigh has mostly abandoned the use of the pronouns "I" and "you" and replaced them instead with "wee" ("To His Love" 2), "vs" (15), and "our" (29). The speaker and his mistress are no longer separate but a combined entity or a partnership working together towards a common goal. This marks a later period in Raleigh's courtly life after he has established himself as a courtier. The self-assuredness and confidence, invisible in the earlier poems, borders on haughtiness and arrogance, as though Raleigh is finally comfortable enough in his surroundings to think himself invincible to a fall in social favor.

According to the official myths, Queen Elizabeth I was a virgin whose chastity was celebrated far and wide by her admirers and onlookers. However, this poem speaks to activities that are anything but chaste and virginal. Raleigh's speaker attempts to coerce his mistress to help him "shorten tedious nightes" (4) because time is such a limited commodity for all men. Thus, two possible explanations exist as the motivation for this poem: Raleigh has grown at ease enough with Queen Elizabeth that he can joke with her about making sexual advances, making the poem something of a parody of the *carpe diem* theme, or he could be speaking instead to his new wife, Elizabeth Throckmorton, who, by virtue of being the Queen's lady in waiting, was also presumably chaste and virginal up until the moment she secretly married Sir Walter Raleigh. The exact date of the poem, whether just before or just after Queen Elizabeth's discovery of the marriage, is unknown and so both sources of motivation become legitimate possibilities. However, regardless of whom it was addressed to, this poem was a risky political venture for Raleigh. If addressed to the Queen, Raleigh's poem gambled on the Queen's sense of humor, banking on the fact that she would not take offense to his parody of her virtue of chastity. If addressed to Elizabeth Throckmorton, Raleigh's poem gambled that it would remain a secret and would not fall into the wrong hands, a gamble that put the odds against Raleigh.

Regardless of his motivations, Raleigh relied heavily on pastoralism in order to convey his message. He encourages his mistress to "gather Flowers in their prime" (12) because even they are "subject vnto conquering Time" (11). At this point in his career as both a courtier and a poet, Raleigh reveals the depth of his understanding of the women at



court. By comparing the beauty of his mistress' face to that of a flower, both of which "will not stay / with [her] allwaies" (5-6), he capitalizes on the vanity of women and the fear that they had even during the Renaissance of getting older and losing physical beauty. The aging Queen, more than 20 years Raleigh's senior, was no exception to this mentality of vanity, even refusing to have mirrors in the court that would reflect her age and portraits, if painted at all, were heavily censored in order to make the Queen appear more youthful and vigorous than was actually the case (Brigden 311). In keeping in line with Castiglione's definition of an ideal courtier, Raleigh learned the ways of women and in turn used this knowledge in order to gain favors from Queen Elizabeth.

In order to bolster his argument that he and his mistress must make much of the time and the youth they have been given, Raleigh turns again to nature, suggesting that "nature her bountyes did bestow / on vs that wee might vse them" (14-15). As this line indicates, the speaker believes that nature has the power to both grant beauty and to take it away. Thus, because nature will inevitably rescind her gifts of youth and beauty, men must live their lives to the fullest and savor each opportunity for a new experience whenever one comes along. Here again Raleigh's theme of *carpe diem* is strengthened by his incorporation of the pastoral elements.

In keeping with his *carpe diem* theme, Raleigh makes some interesting stylistic moves that mark the maturity of his poetic achievements as well as the *creative correction* of his predecessors and contemporaries. Beginning with line 14 and ending with line 26, this entire twelve line sequence is a series of enjambed lines. Thus, the majority of the poem passes in a blur as though the speaker is racing against time to

deliver his case. Ideas such as “youth” (17), “forme” (17), and “oppertunety” (18) dominate this section of the poem, and yet these concepts are hardly remembered at all by the end. Like the pastoral elements, this particular stylistic choice reinforces the fleeting nature of life. The very structure of the poem reveals the urgency the speaker feels to make the most of the time nature has given him. Even the final couplet is enjambed:

And shew our plenty. They are poore  
That can count all they haue and more. (29-30)

This suggests that not even love can sustain itself when faced with the destructive force of time. Here again the structure reveals the urgency to live life to its fullest as well as the awareness that time shall eventually destroy everything, the flowers, beauty, youth, opportunity, and especially love.

All of these poems were written with the intent of flattery and an advance in politics, nothing more; certainly preserving himself for posterity was not Raleigh’s intent. This defining characteristic is typical of the poetry in the English Renaissance, for “Elizabethan court poetry often speaks with the voice of a collectivity and its authors are scriptors or spokesmen for the values of a dominant class and its ideology” (Waller 117). However, scholars do not believe that Elizabeth was oblivious to this poetic trend; indeed, “there is no reason to believe that he [Raleigh], or she [Queen Elizabeth] put a higher value on such writing than it deserved” (Oakeshott 27). In each poetic instance, the speaker is simultaneously Raleigh and every other man of the time period, and the mistress he is speaking to is simultaneously Queen Elizabeth and every other woman of the English court. Although Raleigh uses personal pronouns in order to describe

seemingly intimate scenes, he has removed himself from the poem by not inserting any genuine emotion into his works. Explicitly, he reveals nothing about his own personal life or his courtship of the Queen, forcing modern-day scholars to make conjectures about his poetic motivations. Even his sources of influence in these poems are broad and universal, seemingly applicable to any poet living in any era. Thus, Raleigh's *misinterpretations* at this stage of his poetic career, while notable, do not in fact add significantly to his retinue of original or authentic works. Rather, Raleigh only sought to reveal the collective emotions, needs, and anxieties of the English Renaissance in order to gain political favor and power and the Queen in turn rewarded this behavior.

#### **Chapter 4: Raleigh's More Mature Poetic Interactions with Influence and Intimacy**

As he matured as a poet, Raleigh's sources of influence, as well as the subjects of his poems, became more personal and intimate. Indeed, Raleigh's mature poetry speaks with a "personal voice, [with] its tone of sorrow and regret, its deep rootedness in time, and its almost total absorption in the poet's emotions" (Greenblatt 70). The Raleigh who served as Captain of the Guard in 1587 did not write the same poetry as the Raleigh who came to court as a Devonshire soldier in 1580. As he became more intimately woven into the fabric of the Elizabethan court, Raleigh targeted specific poets of the English court who had already made names for themselves and sought to rewrite their most famous poems in order to overcome his anxiety of influence and make a name for himself. Two poems that embody his more mature and intimate sides are "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" and "Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen." The first responds to Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," the latter to Sir Thomas Wyatt's "Whoso list to hunt."

Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love" was one of the most successful and highly talked about poems of the sixteenth century; indeed, when it appeared in *England's Helicon 1600*, it was accompanied by poems written by other authors in tribute to Marlowe's work. One such example is "Another of the same nature, made since," whose first stanza reads

Come live with mee, and be my deere,

And we will revel all the yeere,

In plaines and groaues, on hills and dales:

Where fragrant ayre breedes sweetest gales. (*England's Helicon 1600*, 217, 1-4)

This stanza of course parallels quite nicely Marlowe's first stanza that reads

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. (1-4)

Marlowe cast a great shadow of influence over the works of both his contemporaries and later poets with this poem. As demonstrated by "Another of the same nature, made since," fellow poets thought so highly of Marlowe's work that they chose to imitate his work rather than innovate it. This anonymous author elected not to *creatively correct* any of Marlowe's message or structure, preferring instead to use Marlowe's ideas and put them into his own, though similar, words. The result is a poem that is almost indistinguishable from its original source of influence because it carries so many more elements of imitation than it does *misinterpretation*.

In writing such a dynamically popular poem, Marlowe set a poetic precedent for those who came after him. In order to accomplish this, Marlowe engages the pastoral by incorporating shepherds into his title and making reference to both the shepherd and his flock in his work; however, the shepherd differs from the shepherds who have come before him, thus marking Marlowe's *misreading* of his predecessors. Marlowe's

shepherd sits with his lover and watches other “shepherds feed their flocks” (Marlowe 6), painting a peaceful and tranquil mental picture for his readers. In his portrayal, Marlowe illustrates the classical vision of the pastoral setting: one which offers its inhabitants the possibility for romance and love. By incorporating the pastoral in order to convey this particular message, Marlowe *misreads* the nature of courtship that was so important during the English Renaissance. Thus, Marlowe’s pastoral setting does precisely the opposite of what it should according to George Puttenham: it does not “contain [or] inform moral discipline for the amendment of man’s behavior” (128). Through the desperately entreating shepherd, readers view courtship as something materialistic rather than romantic.

In keeping with the humanistic tradition, Marlowe incorporates rhetorical devices within his poem in order to emphasize the desired courtship between the shepherd and his mistress. Marlowe allows his shepherd rhetorical license in the form of a hyperbole when he boasts that he and his lover, if brought together, may “all the pleasures prove” (2). The idea that two lovers could prove *all* of the pleasures of the world is quite an excessive claim; however, Marlowe executes it so elegantly that the poem as a whole becomes a highly successful case for the two lovers to be united. As the art of argument, rhetoric, for Marlowe, is essential in developing the shepherd’s reasoning for why the nymph should come live with him and be his love. In this regard, Marlowe does not so much innovate as he does imitate the master rhetoricians of classical antiquity. In other words, Marlowe has not *creatively corrected* the use of rhetoric, but has taken the precedent already established and used it to develop his shepherd’s argument.

In proposing his case to the mistress, Marlowe elevates the subject of the poem to the status of goddess while simultaneously allowing his speaker, the shepherd, to submit himself to her in the appropriate Petrarchan fashion. The shepherd's impassioned speech shifts the focus away from himself and onto his quarry. The shepherd demonstrates himself willing to do anything to obtain the love of his mistress including offering lavish gifts to her such as "beds of roses" (9), "a gown of finest wool" (13), and a "belt of straw and ivy buds" (17). Throughout this process, the shepherd says nothing about his own comfort, only that of his Petrarchan goddess. Thus, Marlowe's speaker follows the Petrarchan pattern of minimalizing his own importance as he mentions nothing of himself and directs all of the focus of the poem onto the mistress.

The historical context and motivation for Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply" is somewhat unclear. Certainly on the surface, Raleigh's poem is arguably nothing more than his attempt to outdo Marlowe, and from some standpoints of literary criticism, this explanation would suffice. Indeed, these men share a common intellectual bond as both were accused of being atheists and of reading Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* in an age where both were considered unacceptable behaviors. Thus, on the one hand, the nature of Raleigh's influence comes from the source of his intellectual equal. From this perspective, "The Nymph's Reply" appears almost as a school-boy rebuttal to his rival's work.

Raleigh challenges Marlowe's poetic precedent in writing his reply because the nymph criticizes the shepherd for his materialistic focus, and herein lies Raleigh's *creative correction* of both Marlowe and the anonymous author who wrote "Another of

the same nature, made since” with regards to the pastoral. Raleigh’s shepherd is one who may or may not have “truth in . . . tongue” (“The Nymph” 2). The shepherd’s questionable integrity destroys the ideal romantic countryside as Raleigh ops for the view that the pastoral setting is not necessarily all that poets and readers of the period made it out to be as the gifts that it offers cannot last forever. The Nymph continues on to further criticize the shepherd for his obviously materialistic drive for the relationship because of the fleeting nature of those tokens of adoration he offers. This jaded view of the pastoral may be in part because unlike Marlowe, Raleigh had come into contact with the New World through his experience as a sailor and colonist. Thus, his knowledge of what that pastoral landscape truly had to offer doubtless influenced the approach he took when writing about it.

Raleigh also understood the power of rhetoric and therefore allows his speaker some rhetorical license although the intention and effect of the nymph’s rhetoric differs from that of the shepherd. The nymph alliterates her observations of the effects of time such that the line “[t]ime driues the flocks from field to fold” (5), already carrying dark undertones about the transience of mortal life, becomes even more darkly depressing with the repetition of the consonant sound. Raleigh, and the nymph for that matter, is able to underscore the prevailing theme of the poem through the utilization of rhetorical alliteration. Though he, like Marlowe, does not necessarily *misread* the art of rhetoric, Raleigh understood its importance and used it effectively to bolster the nymph’s arguments in favor of *carpe diem* without ever stating the popular Latin phrase outright.

What also contributes to Raleigh’s theme of the fleeting nature of life and the idea



that men must seize the day while they still have the opportunity to do so is his application of end stop lines. Not a single line is enjambed in Raleigh's poem. The effect is that the nymph appears to be laboring to emphasize the importance of her words to the seemingly dull-witted shepherd. By using this type of cadence, the nymph underscores the gravity of the subject she is discussing with the shepherd. The poem as a whole feels heavy and weighty because of the number of pauses the speaker makes; this then contributes to the importance of the realization of limited time and mortality that the nymph is discussing. The comma that concludes the line "[t]o wayward winter reckoning yeeldes" (10) as well as the colon which finishes the statement "soone forgotten" (15) are not placed there by mere accident. In the case of both of these, Raleigh allows the speaker to emphasize the passing nature of life head on. In line 10, the message is clear: all life must eventually culminate in the frozen, barren, and dead wasteland of winter and that nothing lasts forever. Line 15 carries on in a similar vein by stressing that everything will eventually be forgotten because time continues pressing forward at a pace with which man cannot compete. By utilizing the proper prosody, Raleigh is once again able to stress his point without ever explicitly making it known to his readers, a fact that once again speaks of imitation of powerful writing and not innovation.

Unlike Marlowe, who makes no definite allusions to classical Greece or Rome in his poem, Raleigh defers to classical mythology by specifically alluding to the story of "Philomel" (7), thereby incorporating elements of the humanistic tradition. Philomel was a woman who, after being raped, had her tongue cut out by her rapist and was therefore struck dumb by the act. In utilizing this story that would doubtless be familiar

to his Renaissance audience, Raleigh is again stressing the violent and fleeting nature of the passage of time. Philomel's chastity and speech were robbed from her by a single act. Likewise, time robs mortals of those assets they hold most dear, and principle among those assets are love and life. In the end, Raleigh's allusion is effective as it heightens the dark reality that nothing, not even a woman's purity or a shepherd's love may last forever.

Because Raleigh crafted his poem in direct answer to Marlowe's poem, he could only choose either the shepherd or the nymph as his speaker. Interestingly Raleigh chose the Petrarchan mistress to be his speaker, a choice which in and of itself changes the meaning and dynamic of Marlowe's original. The result of Raleigh's decision means that "[t]he reply constitute[s] a contemporary gloss on the principle poem, though the gloss in verse end[s] in a refutation of the original argument" (Martines 74). By shifting the focus of the poem away from the shepherd and his passionate entreaty and toward the cold, unrelenting Petrarchan nymph, the poem is a rejection of love and an endorsement of *carpe diem* by reminding the shepherd of the ephemeral nature of life. The nymph refuses the shepherd's advances, as all good Petrarchan mistresses are ought to do, and chides him in his foolishness by citing the fact that "flowers doe fade" ("The Nymph" 9), that gowns "soone breake, soone wither, [and are] soone forgotten" (15), and that a "belt of straw and iuie buds" (17) cannot persuade her "[t]o come to [the shepherd], and be [his] loue" (20). All of the gifts the shepherd has offered to his lover in Marlowe's poem are transient and ephemeral when in fact the mistress desires the opposite, or at least for her lover to face the reality that permanence is a commodity that no mortal can afford;

unfortunately, what the shepherd cannot offer his lover because of time's inexorable power to eventually destroy everything, and his inability to face the reality of that fact, is precisely what she wants most:

But could youth last, and loue still breede,  
Had ioyes no date, nor age no neede,  
Then these delights my minde might moue,  
To liue with thee, and be thy loue.                   (21-24)

If the gifts that the shepherd has offered could somehow be preserved forever and if the shepherd and the nymph could somehow stay young forever, then perhaps the gifts the shepherd has offered would be appropriate. However, this is not the case and the nymph's purpose is to stress this point to her pursuer. This becomes Raleigh's greatest *misreading*, not of Marlowe, but of Petrarch. The Petrarchan mistress is supposed to ensnare men, lead them on, and then dash their hopes the moment they become too intimate; however, Raleigh's nymph does not even attempt to entrap the shepherd in her feminine beauty, choosing instead to turn him down and spurn his advances from the very outset of the poem.

In writing this poem, Raleigh reveals his deep sense of anxiety from Marlowe's influence. He demonstrates this to his readers by incorporating some elements of imitation with other elements of *misinterpretation* in order to create a poem uniquely his. Raleigh's approach to the subject, in rewriting the *carpe diem* theme, was a choice that he made independent of Marlowe's influence. Understanding this, Raleigh's greatest act of *creative correction* lies in the speaker he chose and in the shift in focus from a union

between nymph and shepherd to a tribute to *carpe diem*, a choice which doubtless had autobiographical motivations. As both of these poems were printed side by side in *England's Helicon 1600*, they obviously must have appeared sometime before that date and thus understanding the biographical details of Raleigh's life before 1600 is essential in understanding this unique composition.

In the years leading up to 1600, Raleigh had successfully worked his way deep into the favors of many of the nobility of the court as well as Queen Elizabeth herself. During this time, much of Raleigh's energy was focused on being courtier to the Queen and responding to her every whim, giving her flattery when she needed it and acting always with the utmost adoration of her. However, Elizabeth had sworn to herself to remain the virgin Queen of England; thus, although she enjoyed the attention she received from her suitors, she coyly refused all of their advances regarding a romantic relationship (Waller 80). If taken in this context, Raleigh's poem betrays a level of resentfulness by illuminating the clear, cold character of his nymph. In a conversation with the Duke of Buckingham regarding flattery of the Queen, Raleigh reportedly said "that Minions were not so happy as vulgar judgments thought them, being frequently commanded to uncomely and sometimes unnaturall employments" (Osborne 33). These uncomely employments Raleigh mentions conveys the idea of the obsequious role of the Elizabethan courtier whose job often was to submit himself to all sorts of humiliation in order to entertain that elusive Petrarchan mistress. With this in mind, readers can see resonances of Queen Elizabeth in Raleigh's nymph and actually, Raleigh himself carries some striking similarities to Marlowe's shepherd. Understanding this, one might find

historical resonances between the desperately entreating shepherd, Raleigh, who wishes only to be loved by the nymph, and the unrelenting, unyielding Petrarchan mistress, Queen Elizabeth, whose cold refusal would lead even the best of shepherds to find another nymph. Thus Raleigh's *misreading* is a product of his turbulent relationship with Elizabeth coupled with his school-boy desire to outdo his friend and competitor that resulted in a deeply personal expression of frustration over the Queen's refusal to further her relationship with Raleigh.

"Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen," written presumably after "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," once again showcases some of Raleigh's finest mature poetry and reveals Raleigh at one of his most intimate stages as he develops more fully the speaker's relationship to the Petrarchan mistress. In many ways, "Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen" imitates "Whoso list to hunt" written during the reign of King Henry VIII by Sir Thomas Wyatt. In both instances, the motivation for writing these poems came from an external source: Wyatt's from translating Petrarch, and Raleigh's from Wyatt. In seeking to imitate his predecessor, Raleigh sought to create his own individual work with the unconscious hopes of overcoming his anxiety of Wyatt's influence, much as he sought to outdo Marlowe's poetic influence with "The Nymph's Reply."

Wyatt became particularly masterful at translating Petrarch's poems, and in doing so, he often added a literary twist that made the poem distinctly English. Wyatt remained faithful to the rigidity of the Petrarchan sonnet by maintaining the rhyme scheme and a comparable meter (Rees 15). However, the lines that receive the greatest emphasis in Wyatt's poem mark his greatest *misinterpretation* of Petrarch. For Petrarch, the couplet

at the end of the sonnet was merely a stylistic convention. For Wyatt, the couplet took on greater importance and indeed became the very thrust of the poem. Effectively summing the sonnet up in the last two lines, the couplet became the most important aspect of the English sonnet (20). For this reason, credit is due to Wyatt because he *creatively corrected* a poetic tradition and the result was something refreshingly new, different, and distinctly English.

The semi-colon in line two of “Whoso list to hunt” indicates the finality of an idea as well as a continuation of that idea in the proceeding sentence. This indefinite state fits well with the line because before the caesura, Wyatt says he is no longer going to hunt his quarry (Wyatt 1-2), but the semi-colon tells the reader that in fact Wyatt is not certain whether he is actually going to call off the hunt or not. Perhaps Wyatt is attempting to reassure courtly listeners that he is no longer drawn on this quest, but the caesura betrays his true feelings to anyone reading the sonnet closely.

Rhyme is also an important stylistic convention for the Tudor poets, and Wyatt is no exception. Indeed, the most significant rhyme appears in the couplet at the end of the poem which is not united by a true rhyme but a sight rhyme. The phrase about the deer’s neck, “[*n*]oli me tangere, for Caesar’s I am” (13), explains in part why the speaker is toying with the idea of giving up. His quarry is branded with the words: do not touch me. According to this line, the speaker’s inability to touch the object he desires is because the object belongs to Caesar. The following line complicates this issue, and by doing so, reaches the crux of the poem’s meaning. It reads “[a]nd wild for to hold, though I seem tame” (14), which indicates that while Caesar is able to brand his objects as his own, not

even he can contain this particular mistress. Hence, the message of the speaker is made clear: his lack of success in pursuing the mistress is not a result of Caesar's power, but a result of the mistress's indomitable will and no one will ever be successful at containing that wild force.

Harboring a lustful passion for Anne Boleyn, Wyatt wrote ciphered love poems to or about her. She was his muse, his inspiration, and "his poetry records the reality of love and its riddle" (Howarth 80). He was completely enamored with her, and yet he could only speak of his love in riddles because Anne belonged to Henry VIII, the Caesar of "Whoso list to hunt[.]" Wyatt needed to express his passions to Anne implicitly for fear that if he did not, Henry VIII would take his life. An indication of this implicit declaration of passion comes with the word "deer" (Wyatt 6) because, when read aloud, it can sound like the animal, deer, or dear, a term of endearment for the woman Wyatt loves. Interestingly enough, in this particular sonnet, while it is assumed that Wyatt is writing about Anne Boleyn, the imagery he chooses to use is predominantly masculine which would appeal more to the men at court and also reflect the male dominance of the court when Henry VIII was in power. Thus, Wyatt's *misinterpretation* of Petrarch's mistress comes in the targeted audience; Petrarch wrote his verses for the general public's consumption whereas Wyatt wrote to appeal to men. Hence, the Petrarchan mistress, though unequalled in feminine charms and beauty, is mired in male-oriented symbolism.

Wyatt asserts this dominant masculinity by citing several activities that appeal exclusively or predominantly to men. Hunting a deer is a manly activity. Braving and needing to subdue the natural elements such as the "wind" (8), also speaks of machismo.

The use of “diamonds” (11), while effeminate in their connection to jewelry, also connotes masculine imagery because they are hard and chiseled. Furthermore, the speaker views the subject of the poem, the woman, as an object of conquest and something to be conquered, by likening her to a deer and the wind, rather than a human being. This begs the question of why, if written in honor of a woman, would Wyatt choose to use such dominantly masculine imagery? The answer lies within the dynamics of the court. Henry VIII was a devoted admirer of Anne Boleyn also; he admired her so much in fact that he divorced Catherine of Aragon, his first wife, so that he could marry Anne instead. Thus, Wyatt had to make his poetry appeal to Henry’s masculine instincts in hopes that the King might overlook the underlying sensual implications about Wyatt’s desired relations with Henry’s future wife.

When Queen Elizabeth I took the throne in 1558, the shifting social tides required that an adaptation be made to the literary tradition in order for it to continue to flourish and thrive. Suddenly, the hierarchal structure of Tudor England had been reversed as a woman was now on the throne, not a man. Literature had to adapt accordingly if poets wished to maintain the favor of the monarch because what appealed to Henry VIII in his male-dominated court was not the same as what appealed to Elizabeth I when she came into power. Sir Walter Raleigh rose to the challenge by borrowing elements from Wyatt and then manipulating those elements in order to write “Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen.” The result of this poem is a *misreading* of Wyatt in order to necessarily assert the shifting social dynamics of the Tudor court. Indeed, Raleigh’s greatest *misinterpretation* with Wyatt’s poetry comes when he takes the passions and emotions implicitly stated by



Wyatt for Anne and transforms them into explicit declarations of love for the subject of Raleigh's poem, something he could not have accomplished had it not been for the change in monarch.

In this regard, moments in "Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen" tie Raleigh to Wyatt as both men view love as an act of "conquest" (12). In Wyatt's case, the idea is implicit within the hunting imagery, but in Raleigh's case, the idea is explicit as he states the word outright. Indeed, Raleigh was "[d]efiant, darkly imaginative[,] and jauntily reckless" (Brooke 101), but above all, one who was "after Queen Elizabeth's heart" (101). His defiance came when he tore apart the conventions of English poetry, and his imaginativeness came when he reassembled those conventions in a new and innovative way. His recklessness came when he so ardently pursued the Queen's heart though she was a woman well above his station. His ardent pursuit of the Queen's heart can be seen within the poem when Raleigh makes reference to "floods and streames" (Raleigh 1) which relate to water; Raleigh likens himself to water because of his name, Walter. This deviates from Wyatt's poem because "Whoso list to hunt" refers to masculinity in general, making the poem a universalized expression of masculine love; on the other hand, "Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen" deals exclusively in the Raleigh/Elizabeth relationship but somehow makes those specific expressions of passion seem universal. Thus, Raleigh effectively writes himself into the poem which heightens the intimacy of his relationship with Elizabeth because both appear in this passionate expression of love.

Because Wyatt and Raleigh were both students of Petrarch, this effectively unites the two poets with a common bond and a common vantage point from which their

respective works may be studied. However, unlike Wyatt, Raleigh did not stick to the strict conventions of the Petrarchan sonnet and instead innovated heavily upon Petrarch's standard in order to bring the sonnet to "new levels of self-serving appropriateness" (5) in order to achieve the intended effect. In "Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen," Raleigh inverts the structure of the sonnet in order to achieve exactly the effect of serving his own purposes and satisfying his own agenda, thereby indicating a *creative correction* of both Petrarch and Wyatt. He keeps with the sonnet form by having the resolution of passion consist of six lines and the subsequent expressions of passions being eight lines each. However, the resolution of the passions the speaker feels comes at the beginning of the poem, and the overwhelming nature of those passions comes at the end instead of the traditional form wherein the passions come first and the resolution comes last.

In *Sixteenth Century Poetry*, Gordon Braden describes the first stanza, the resolution, as one that is "metrically anomalous" (333) and more than likely an unfinished oversight on Raleigh's part. However, by utilizing a different meter, Raleigh draws special attention to this significant piece of the poem. Also, by reversing the traditional structure of the sonnet, Raleigh gives the feelings of passion precedent over the resolution of what those passions mean or how the speaker is going to act upon them. Thus, by his break with tradition, Raleigh tells his readers that passions are infinitely more important than what men choose to do with them.

Raleigh, like Wyatt, includes a couplet that carries the main thrust of the poem. However, unlike Wyatt, the couplet figures into the middle of the poem rather than at the end. This was not an oversight of Raleigh's, but rather a highly intentional positioning

that effectively *misreads* Wyatt and separates Raleigh from his predecessor. The couplet itself reads

That they are Rich in Words must needs discover

That they are Poore in that which makes a Louer. (5-6)

which underscores the importance that passions, not words make lovers. The assertion is ironic because Raleigh chooses to make his point that words are insufficient to express love in a poem about love. However, the placement of the couplet subverts the irony because the couplet appears in the middle, or the heart wherein passions reside, of the poem rather than being tacked upon the end, suggesting the minimal importance Raleigh placed on the sonnet structure and introducing an element of poetic hybridity. Unlike Wyatt, Raleigh establishes his poem as a body and it is no small coincidence that the meaning rests in the very heart of his words.

The rest of the poem, that is to say stanzas 2-5, helps to develop Raleigh's conclusion in a manner that underscores the intimate relationship between the speaker and his mistress. The words that precede the end stops in each stanza are significant to note because they follow the thread of a common theme. "[D]uety" (Raleigh 14), "healing" (22), "suitor" (30), and "compassion" (38) are all qualities associated with one who is a "louer" (6) either in describing the actual lover or the obligations the lover is bound to. They also contribute to a rich Tudor poetic tradition that extends far beyond just Wyatt and Raleigh. For instance, as this poem was written presumably around 1589, Raleigh's use of "healing" (22) and "compassion" (38) could be an allusion to Belphoebe's rescuing of Timias in Spenser's the *Faery Queen*. If this is the case, Raleigh

has enmeshed his and Elizabeth's literary identities into the poem, personalizing the message even more fully than before. Here again reveals another *misreading* of Wyatt because Raleigh chose to draw upon the work of his contemporary in order to further evolve Wyatt's original work.

While the focus of Wyatt's poem is principally the Petrarchan mistress and her elusiveness, Raleigh *misinterprets* the focus of Wyatt's original by making the poem about the partnership that exists between the two lovers. However, Raleigh does include the elements of a Petrarchan mistress and her speaker. The speaker refers to his lover as "A saint of such perfection" whom "all desire but none deserve / A place in her affection" (16-18). The line "none deserve" gives the speaker a moment of self-abasement where he declares himself, and indeed everyone else, to be unworthy of possessing this beautiful and saintly maiden. The speaker also elevates the mistress, not only by giving her sainthood, but also by referring to her as "Empresse of [his] Heart" (7), giving her noble status in the court of passion. By using the word empress, Raleigh includes Queen Elizabeth, the empress of England, into this intimate exchange between two lovers.

Indeed, the greatest indications of genuine intimacy appear throughout the entire poem because of Raleigh's diction. The word "discretion" (26,27,29), already carrying connotations of secrecy, is strengthened by its three time repetition. It relates to other words signifying clandestine activities: "murmure" (2), "couer" (26), "silence" (31), and "secret" (36). By repeating these words and the overall concept, Raleigh is inviting his audience to share this secret with him. At this juncture, it is important to note that the title of the poem addresses itself specifically to the Queen; thus, Raleigh's secret was

meant to be shared only with Elizabeth. This signifies yet another move toward intimacy with the Queen, for only Raleigh and Elizabeth are meant to share this secret together.

Unlike Wyatt, Raleigh did not have to encode his passions within cryptic verse, ironically declaring a secretive love using a medium that would ensure virtually no secrecy at all. As “Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen” is addressed specifically to a woman rather than merely talking about her, the language is more abstract, less tactile, and therefore more appealing to females. Wyatt’s descriptions of the “deer” (Wyatt 6), the writing about the deer’s neck (12), the “net” (8), and even the nature of the hunt (7) are all tactile, making “Whoso list to hunt” a poem that readers can feel in their hands. On the other hand, Raleigh’s poem speaks more to the heart and the emotions harbored within. Raleigh was able to do this because he did not have to fear the wrath of a jealous husband and King.

While Wyatt and Raleigh were not the original creators of the sonnet form, their successive *misinterpretations* were such that the sonnet took on a new degree of originality. At any rate, both men evolved the sonnet thereby demonstrating the adaptability of the poetic form in order to achieve their purposes. For Raleigh, this meant a more decisive move towards a deeper sense of personal intimacy, thereby *creatively correcting* Petrarch, Wyatt, and Raleigh’s own earlier, less intimate works. The result of this is a far more personal and intimate brand of poetry that reveals more precisely Raleigh’s feelings as well as his own unique poetic style.

## **Chapter 5: Raleigh's Unfinished Masterpiece: an in-depth look at *The Ocean to Cynthia***

The capstone to Raleigh's poetic achievement as a courtier is indisputably his *The 21<sup>st</sup> and last book of the Ocean to Cynthia*, or, more commonly, *The Ocean to Cynthia*. In order to express himself properly, Raleigh introduces elements of hybridity in his sources of influence, his poetic forms, and his emotions. In doing so, Raleigh reveals the impassioned complexities of his Petrarchan despair after Queen Elizabeth has imprisoned him for his secret marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton. However, instead of showcasing only Raleigh's despair and resentment that Elizabeth has imprisoned him, the poem he writes proceeds to vacillate for the next 522 lines between despair that the relationship has ended and hope that it may one day be revitalized. In doing this, Raleigh transforms his own profound intimacy with Queen Elizabeth into a poem of epic proportions that achieves a kind of universality of emotion. Thus, this chapter will explore Raleigh at his most intimate point in his poetry, revealing the manner in which, by becoming more specific and deeply intimate, the more universally applicable his poetry has become.

Raleigh's epitaph as a courtier, his passionate *The Ocean to Cynthia*, is a poem written by a spurned and indignant lover and not of a man who lost merely his political career. Locked away in the Tower of London with his new wife, Raleigh still dwells upon

his relationship with the Queen and transcribes his feelings of despair and remorse within the unfinished epic work of *The Ocean to Cynthia*. Indeed, while some might initially question Raleigh's genuine feelings of affection for Queen Elizabeth, a letter written to Robert Cecil by Raleigh shortly after his imprisonment reveals the same "rudderless loneliness" (Oakeshott 40) and feelings of love as the poem itself. As he watched Queen Elizabeth depart, Raleigh professed that

My heart was never broken till this day, that I hear the Queen goes away so far off—whom I have followed so many years with so great love and desire, in so many journeys, and am now left behind her in a dark prison all alone. While she was yet near at hand, that I might hear of her once in two or three days, my sorrows were the less: but even now my heart is cast into the depths of all misery.  
(47)

While perhaps a bit melodramatic, the sentiments of love, longing, and despair ring out amid the flowered language. This letter, when taken into context with *The Ocean to Cynthia*, arguably denies the possibility of a political move: both reveal too deeply the hurt Raleigh feels and his remorse over losing his fair and beautiful Cynthia.

Most likely, Queen Elizabeth never saw any part of Raleigh's poem (Greenblatt 79). Although the title addresses itself to Cynthia, the text of the poem reveals that in fact it is "addressed . . . to the poet himself" (Greenblatt 79). Because Raleigh probably never intended for Elizabeth to read *The Ocean to Cynthia*—in all likelihood, if she had seen it, the poem would only serve to make her angrier—one cannot "dismiss the expressions of love in *The Ocean to Cynthia* as mere cynical flattery" (Greenblatt 79).

Raleigh reveals the impassioned depths of his very soul to no one but himself. Had he not loved Elizabeth, he could have said so in the poem or not written it at all; instead, Raleigh transcribed his passions and thereby stayed true to his courtier role up to the very end. Hence, the vacillation of Raleigh's moods that appears everywhere in the poem "probes the hidden frustration and resentment of a man who . . . had played the rapt worshiper for over 10 years" (Greenblatt 79). Unlike his other courtly poetry, *The Ocean to Cynthia* is a deeply personal poem of a man attempting to make sense of all that has happened to him. As readers of this poem, we are intruders on this personal scene wherein we can hear Raleigh's heart beat, the pain, the confusion, the despair, with every word.

In order to fully comprehend Raleigh's despair, one must understand the dynamics of the English court: "To lose place at Court was more than hurtful financially: it was a loss of being, loss of identity" (Martines 73), especially for courtiers whose whole identity was based upon their position at court. By imprisoning Raleigh, Elizabeth had in some way removed all that he identified with as a courtier, as a poet, and as a man. In fact, Raleigh's entire dichotomized world was destroyed by his imprisonment without the promise or hope of reconciliation. For this reason, the poem "is not only about the death of love but about the death of a whole imaginative world sustained by love" (Greenblatt 86) that Raleigh created during his courtship. Raleigh can no longer make sense of the world he lives in because he no longer recognizes it and this lends itself to a certain degree of ambiguity in Raleigh's attempts to sum up his relationship and find closure. These reveal themselves at critical moments within *The Ocean to Cynthia*.

The ambiguousness of the poem makes it difficult for readers to pin down



Raleigh's feelings towards his ended relationship. This vacillation reveals itself at the very outset of the poem because its title, *The Ocean to Cynthia*, suggests a beautifully symbolic relationship. Cynthia, goddess of the moon and representative of Queen Elizabeth, waxes and wanes, controlling the ocean's ebb and flow while she sits coldly, beautifully, and distantly in the sky far above the ocean; the ocean, representative of Raleigh, submits to the moon and responds always to its ever-changing moods while itself feeling rather restless. However, within the poem, "the queen is at one moment the moon and at the next the sun (see 104-109) and Raleigh, the 'ocean,' is alternately drowning in destructive floods (see 132-142) and dying of fierce thirst (see 237-240, 478-480)" (Greenblatt 86). The self-fashioned identity that Raleigh once nurtured can no longer be sustained, as much as he tries to return to his old way of life; however, the memories of his courtship of Elizabeth continue to haunt him, drowning him in despair and misery, leaving him surrounded by water and without a drop to drink.

The result of all of these courtly politics in Raleigh's poem is a deep sense of despair. Reflecting upon his twelve year courtship of Elizabeth, Raleigh declares "Twelve yeares intire I wasted in this warr, / Twelve yeares of my most happy younger dayes" (*The Ocean* 120-121). What has come of Raleigh's relationship is merely twelve years of his life that have been wasted in the uncertain, war-like pursuit of the Queen wherein Raleigh fought tirelessly to keep and maintain her favor. Sadder still is the fact that those twelve years Raleigh sees as wasted were twelve years he was in the prime of his life. Having ended his virile stage of life in the court, Raleigh writes this poem as his final epitaph: these are "words scratched in the dust by a dying man" (Greenblatt 86). All that

Raleigh has left to cling to are his memories of his youth, which are “broken, fragmented, withered, and distorted” (86).

Whether Raleigh wrote, or even intended to write, all 21 books of his poem is a matter of scholarly debate. All that survives today is the unfinished final book. However, whether finished or not, the title and the length of the last book indicate a poem of grandiose proportions, which falls in line with the mythic, larger-than-life reputation Raleigh spent fashioning for himself for the twelve years he spent serving the Queen (Greenblatt 62). This ambitious endeavor Raleigh set for himself recalls the humanistic tradition of the epic, beginning with Virgil’s *The Aeneid* and culminating in Spencer’s *The Faery Queen*.

Characteristics of the epic that Raleigh borrows from Virgil include an extended narration which develops historically important moments that have come to form a people. In Virgil’s case, *The Aeneid* details the founding of the Roman Empire, showcasing Rome’s heroes and demonstrating a deep sense of patriotism and pride for Rome. According to Harold Bloom, Raleigh *misreads* this in his *The Ocean to Cynthia* by elevating himself to the status of hero and making the personally historic events of his courtship with Elizabeth appear as though they are events of national importance. However, in the case of both *The Aeneid* and *The Ocean to Cynthia*, the sense of moral didacticism becomes almost overwhelming at times. Both Virgil and Raleigh wrote their works with the intention of educating their readers about an important theme, moral, or virtue, something that separates Virgil, and indeed Raleigh, from the Homeric epic style.

Regarding the English poetic tradition, Raleigh was not the only poet who

experimented with the epic form. Perhaps the most famous example from the English Renaissance is the poet Edmund Spenser, author of *The Faery Queen*. Having met in Ireland during 1589 when Raleigh was in exile, he and Edmund Spenser became close friends, united by their poetic talents and respect for the Queen. Spenser's *The Faery Queen*, intended to be twelve books long—the same length in fact as Virgil's *The Aeneid*—falls in line with the epic tradition established by the humanists. However, in writing his epic, Spenser does not strictly follow the guidelines of the epic, choosing instead to write a hybrid work that involves both elements of the epic and of the romance. In this manner, Spenser has fused the elements of the Virgilian epic of stating the poem's intended moral theme at the beginning of each book, using epic similes, and celebrating Spenser's patriotism with romantic elements such as chivalry and knighthood. Doubtless this idea of hybridity within Spenser's work influenced Raleigh as well because *The Ocean to Cynthia* itself does not fit the definition of the epic, although it certainly has epic elements that have led some critics to believe that the work was intended to be read as such.

What is particularly intriguing about the Raleigh/Spenser relationship is that in *The Faery Queen*, Spenser has actually written Raleigh into book three of his romantic epic. In this work, Raleigh is the character of Timias, the loyal squire to King Arthur, who is rescued by Belphoebe, an allegorical representation of Queen Elizabeth. In order to leave no doubt that the squire Timias is indeed Raleigh, Spenser writes that Belphoebe heals his wounds with "tobacco" (5.32.6) which served as "a byword [because] it was a novelty [Raleigh] brought back from his Virginia" (Oakeshott 90). In Spenser's story,

Timias, though he loves Belphoebe, is nonetheless denied as a lover due to Belphoebe's devotion to the virtue of chastity. The scene where this drama takes place occurs after Timias has been wounded and Belphoebe has taken him home to nurse him back to health. While his leg is healing well, Timias comes down with a different malady: that of being in love with a chaste and virginal woman. Wanting to preserve Belphoebe's honor, Timias does not make any sexual advances, though this causes him great pain (Spenser 5.42-55).

The first three books of *The Faery Queen* were published in 1590 with a preface that was a letter written by Spenser to Raleigh explaining Spenser's intent for the three books already published as well as the plan for those to come. Clearly by this time, Raleigh and Spenser had formed a close relationship with one another during Raleigh's time in Ireland. In fact, scholars believe that Spenser wrote much of the Timias/Belphoebe relationship into his story as a means of smoothing over the mysterious falling out Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth had had in the summer of 1589. There is also evidence that Raleigh and Spenser had exchanged poetic works and had therefore edited and commented upon each other's ideas. Thus, Raleigh had already read large sections of *The Faery Queen*, including book three (Greenblatt 62).

Evidences of Spenser's influences on Raleigh's *The Ocean to Cynthia* are perhaps more easily discernable than those from Virgil. Raleigh actually alludes directly to Spenser's Belphoebe in his own poem, stating that "A queen shee was to mee, no more Belphebe" (*The Ocean* 327), which inevitably reminds readers of Spenser's representation of Timias' heartache over the love of Belphoebe. Other evidences of

Spenser's influence on Raleigh, while more subtle, are nonetheless present as well. Raleigh's poem breaks off at the 522<sup>nd</sup> line and a book that came after *The Ocean to Cynthia*, *The End of Books of the Ocean's Love to Cynthia*, and *the Beginning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Book, Entreating of Sorrow*, also conspicuously includes the number 22. For Spenser, the number 22 "symbolizes chastity, virginity, and self-denial, all qualities appropriate to the virgin queen who is the stimulus for Raleigh's poem" (Mills 11). In this regard, Raleigh borrowed certain symbolic representations from his friend and contemporary in order to write his own work, *The Ocean to Cynthia*.

In keeping with the epic elements introduced in this poem, Raleigh alludes to the New World in a way that reminds readers of the far off lands discussed in both Virgil's and Spenser's works. Autobiographically, Raleigh explains how he prepared himself "to seeke new worlds, for golde, for prayse, for glory" (61). However, his plans changed as Elizabeth formulated a way

To call [him] back, to leue great honors thought,  
To leue [his] frinds, [his] fortune, [his] attempte,  
To leue the purpose [he] so longe had sought  
And holde both cares, and cumforts in contempt. (65-68)

This story serves as an example of Raleigh's entire courtship with Elizabeth. He expresses his longing to escape the oppressive walls of London in order to explore the New World and help in the formation of his own colony, a desire that parallels Aeneas' founding of Rome in Virgil's epic. The reality of Raleigh's situation is that he cannot in fact ever reach that landscape because of his relationship with the Queen. While he is her

favorite courtier, she does not permit him to see the New World and fulfill that longing of founding his own colony. In this regard, while he does include the epic element of a far-off, seemingly mythic land, it serves only as a tantalizing dream rather than a reality as it is with Aeneas and his crew. Perhaps Raleigh's *The Ocean to Cynthia* might better be described as the anti-epic: it includes many of the elements of the epic, but methodically undoes each of them throughout the poem.

For example, Raleigh's speaker does not undergo the experiences of mythical worlds. Rather, the drama is sequestered entirely in the speaker's mind and memories. Herein lies what Bloom would describe as Raleigh's "act of creative correction [as defined in chapter 2]" (Bloom 30) of both his predecessors and his contemporaries that allows him to overcome the anxiety of influence that he feels as he writes his poetry. Although based entirely on autobiographical events and emotions, Raleigh's poem is no less compelling than Aeneas' avoiding the blinded Polyphemus and evading the love-struck Dido for the sake of a higher purpose. By abandoning the epic monsters and substituting them instead for the symbols of a more simplistic life, Raleigh relates himself to the everyman whose life is defined through every day, often mundane, conflicts that are no less important in the grander scheme of a man's life than battling a great and epic monster.

In order to achieve this, Raleigh used what is now deemed the Plain style of writing rather than the more popular golden style of the Elizabethan court. As it is defined, the Plain style "is more colloquial, townish, intellectual, and searching than the golden style; also it is rougher in numbers . . . , and so is a better vehicle for the

expression of everyday experience” (Martines 80). Indeed, it is “the very universality and simplicity of the images [that] only heightens the sense of the poet’s powerful shaping fancy” (Greenblatt 88). Audiences are drawn to Raleigh’s poem precisely because they can relate to the events and emotions it reveals in plain, unornamented language.

In *creatively correcting* his predecessors and contemporaries, Raleigh also *misread* some of his own earlier works. Indeed, many of his themes and symbols in *The Ocean to Cynthia* appear in the earlier poems discussed in chapters three and four. For example, as he describes himself as “slayne with sealf thoughts, amasde in fearfull dreams, / woes without date, discumforts without end” (*The Ocean* 19-20), readers are forcibly reminded of the first two stanzas of Raleigh’s earlier poem “The Excuse” which describes Raleigh’s relationship with the Queen as an agonizing process of self-torture and destruction. Another instance of self-influence appears when Raleigh states in *The Ocean to Cynthia* that

So farr as neather frute nor forme of floure  
Stayes for a wittnes what such branches bare,  
Butt as tyme gave, tyme did agayne devoure  
And chandge our risinge ioy to fallinge care;           (245-248)

which inevitably reminds readers of Raleigh’s “To His love when he had obtained her” when he states in that poem that “so frail is all things as we see, / So subject unto conquering time” (“To His love” 10-11). Raleigh’s views on time are contiguous in both of these poems though the overarching message is not. Thus, Raleigh has kept the theme

of time from his earlier work, but has placed it in a different context that simultaneously gives it a similar and different view of time, and herein lies Raleigh's *misreading* of himself. This may seem odd, but in fact *The Ocean to Cynthia* "is not the only example among Raleigh's poems of the recasting of earlier work" ("Sir Walter Raleigh's Cynthia" 131). Raleigh was constantly in a state of revision, both in his own life and in his poetry and the poetry itself represents a vast ocean, shifting its tides and changing its shape but always recognizable as the ocean.

The involvement of the ocean calls to mind not only Raleigh's state of mind, but also the naturalism that inspired Virgil. While instrumental in contributing to the epic form, Virgil is also recognized as the father of the pastoral. Within book one of *The Aeneid*, Virgil recounts how, though blown off course from Italy to Northern Africa, Aeneas and his people still find solace in the comforts of nature. Exhausted, Aeneas and his people "make for the nearest land, / turning their prows toward Libya" (Virgil 1.217-18), in the hopes of finding sustenance and a place to rest. The description that follows showcases all that this natural land has to offer for the tired sailors and the description suggests that the land, seemingly untouched by mankind, shall offer a safe-haven for these fatigued people. The caves provide "fresh water and seats in the living rock" (I.230), demonstrating both that this land holds drinking water as well as areas to relax at the water's side. While anchored in this idyllic world, Aeneas is able to find and kill seven deer, enough to feed his entire crew of men on seven ships. Having then fortified his people with food and rest, Aeneas rallies his people once again to continue on in their journey to Italy. However, Aeneas could not have accomplished this had he not found



himself in such an idyllic, natural landscape that offered all of the resources Aeneas needed in order to restore the strength and hope of his people.

Within the English poetic tradition, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, utilizes the pastoral form as established by Virgil. Within his “The soot season that bud and bloom forth brings,” Surrey describes a pastoral landscape as one full of natural riches for those seeking them that reminds readers of Aeneas’ experiences in Libya. As “the buck in brake his winter coat he flings” (Howard 7) and “the adder all her slough away she slings” (9), readers are forced to imagine a scene wherein the animals in this pastoral landscape have been revitalized and fortified through the changing seasons. As the animals abandon their winter coats, they feel a sense of lightness and rejuvenation, much like Aeneas and his men after they are able to rest and find good food and clean water in order to revive their bodies. In this pastoral landscape, the burdens of winter are cast off, much as Aeneas and his crew lightened their burdens by resting in their natural safe-haven until they once again felt strong enough to travel onward.

Edmund Spenser’s hybridized romantic epic *The Faery Queen* also carries elements of the pastoral theme that influenced Raleigh. After Belphoebe has brought Timias back to her house in order to better attend to his illness and nurse his wounds, Belphoebe is described as “a dainty rose . . . / . . . whose flower / the garland of her honor did adorn” (Spenser 5.51.1-3). Here, Spenser uses floral imagery in order to expound upon Belphoebe’s commitment to chastity. Thus, as was typical in the English Renaissance according to George Puttenham, Spenser’s use of pastoral elements seeks to “insinuate and glance at greater matters” (Puttenham 128), the virtues the English society

at that time deemed important. While indeed all of book three of *The Faery Queen* discusses the virtue of chastity, at this instance the virtue is seen more clearly because of Spenser's inclusion of the pastoral imagery. As though presenting Raleigh with a road-map for *creative correction*, Spenser transforms Aeneas' epic struggles involved in the founding of Rome by transplanting the Elizabethan community into this naturalistic landscape. In doing so, Spenser reveals the virtues most important in the Tudor court at this time and thereby personalizes the pastoral.

Raleigh then takes this personalization to the next level by eliminating the macrocosm of the Elizabethan community and going straight to the microcosm of his individual relationship with Elizabeth. The tone at the beginning of Raleigh's poem is one of loss and despair: "The blossomes fallen, the sapp gon from the tree" (*The Ocean* 13) is the imagery Raleigh provides to describe the relationship that has ended. The flowers that Raleigh had encouraged his lover to gather in "To his love when he has obtained her" have finally wilted and perished and have left only the dry vessels of what had once been a vibrant source of life. Raleigh seems to have accepted that his relationship with Queen Elizabeth has ended and that it cannot ever be recovered. He has resigned himself in this passage to the consequences of his imprisonment and the ramifications of the loss of both his political clout and his relationship with Queen Elizabeth, an idea that is fortified through pastoral imagery.

Thus, Raleigh pays tribute to the elements and traditions of pastoralism that contributed to the formation and understanding of humanistic poetry as a whole. References of showers, leaves, streams, and rocks abound in this poem, giving it a

naturalistic, earthy feel typical of pastoral poetry. The use of the pastoral in *The Ocean to Cynthia* describes “feildes clothed with leues and floures / the banks of roses smelling pretious sweet” (241-42), painting an image that readers have come to associate with the idyllic feeling of the pastoral landscape. However, unlike his contemporaries and predecessors, Raleigh undoes this ideal scene almost the moment he establishes it, thus undermining the work he has done to give the poem a pastoral feel. The lines that follow Raleigh’s description of the beautiful hillsides transform the pastoral: “ther bewties date, and tymely houres, / and then defast by winters cold, and sleet” (243-44). Instead of transitioning from winter to spring like Surrey, Raleigh takes the reverse tact by transitioning from spring and summer, a time of greenery and fertility, to winter, a time of barrenness and dead landscapes.

Other moments occur in *The Ocean to Cynthia* where Raleigh has deconstructed and thereby *creatively corrected* the pastoral landscape in order to speak to the theme of time, or rather, the limitedness of time. In doing so, Raleigh also illuminates the deceptiveness of nature by deluding men into thinking that they, like the landscape, may be revitalized with the coming of each new spring:

Yeuen as the moysture in each plant that growes,

Yeuen as the soonn vnto the frozen grovnd,

Yeuen as the sweetness, to th’ incarnate rose,

Yeuen as the Center in each perfait rovnd,

As water to the fyshe, to men as ayre,

As heat to fier, as light vnto the soonn.

Oh love is but vayne, to say thow weare,

Ages, and tymes, cannot thy poure outrun . . . . (430-437)

Here again Raleigh speaks to the ability of time to conquer all things, including the pastoral landscape and, on a metaphorical level, love. For Virgil, Surrey, and Spenser, nature's timeless powers of healing and rejuvenation give the subjects of their poems hope that life may be reborn. Their focus is on the virtues that can be exalted through poetic metaphor and on the power nature has to strengthen men and animals in a way that gives both a new, youthful vigor. Raleigh contrasts this with the fact that the beauties of spring are inevitably accompanied by the harsh realities of winter. Also, Raleigh reminds his readers that though the seasons may change and landscapes may be reborn, the lives of men are set on iron rails to progress from spring through the seasons to winter without the possibility of restoration.

Thus, the manner in which Raleigh then uses the pastoral elements sets him apart from both his predecessors and his contemporaries, though his intention of didacticism remains the same. While typically understood to give hope and solace to those who wrote and read about it, the pastoral landscape in Raleigh's case can no longer sustain him. For Raleigh there exists "no feedinge flockes, no shepherds cumpunye / that might renew [his] dollorus consayte" (29-30) of being imprisoned by his ex-lover. His needs have surpassed that which the pastoral landscape may provide, leaving him only with the vision of a barren wasteland that serves as the very antithesis of the romantic and idyllic pastoral landscape. In doing this, Raleigh cautions both himself and his readers about the dangers of relying on ideal perfection and allowing time to pass by unchecked instead of

understanding the realities of one's life and thereby maximizing the very limited time left to men on earth.

Raleigh's pastoralism reveals an unattainable idyllic landscape that has, in many ways, betrayed him in deluding him about the reality of his situation. His "shepherds staff" has given him the "false hope" (504) that he could prevail in both his relationship with Elizabeth and with the identity that came with his association with the Queen. As he became more invested in his larger-than-life identity, Raleigh lost sight of the reality that he could not in fact sustain his courtier role forever. There came a point in Raleigh's life where he thought himself invincible to social disgrace because of his alliance with Elizabeth. When that relationship did not come to its full fruition, Raleigh was left only with the empty shell of his self-fashioned identity; a hollow identity that lacked fullness because that which had filled it, Elizabeth, destroyed it in an instance of jealous rage. Juxtaposed with the idyllic pastoral landscape, Raleigh's reality check reveals that he lives in a world of "aching loneliness and total isolation of the self" (Greenblatt 85) and all that he has left to dwell upon in relation to his courtship with Elizabeth is the false hope that the pastoral landscape instilled within him.

While *The Ocean to Cynthia's* ambitiously stated proportions resemble those of the epic, Raleigh's poem also resembles that of the elegy. While modern audiences are familiar with the elegy because of its association with eulogizing the dead, the Elizabethan use of the elegy included "love poems, particularly complaints" so that the term elegy could actually be applied to "both a love poem and a poem of mourning" (Harmon and Holman 178-79). What is particularly interesting in the case of *The Ocean*

*to Cynthia* is that it actually includes both elements of love and mourning, giving the poem a largely elegiac feel though the structure is not entirely homogenous.

Raleigh doubtless studied Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey's poetry because of Surrey's contribution of the sonnet form in English poetry. However, some of Surrey's sonnets contain elements of hybridity, such as "The soot season that bud and bloom forth brings," which combines the English sonnet with elegiac narration and doubtless Raleigh was a student of this as well. Utilizing the pastoral landscape, Surrey presents his speaker as lamenting over the loss of love. Nature has regenerated herself: "summer is come, for every spray now springs" (Howard 5), yet amidst this liveliness and happiness, the speaker is unhappy for "among these pleasant things / each care decays, and yet [his] sorrow springs" (13-14). Here, Surrey has combined the elegiac elements of both love and mourning. Summer, if taken metaphorically, refers to the period in life in which people fall in love. However, the speaker's emotions run contrary to this cycle in nature, suggesting that in fact the summer is not a season of love, but rather a season of the loss of love for him. Biographically speaking, Surrey was also a courtier who ran afoul of the English monarchy and was beheaded on charges of treason by King Henry VIII. In this respect, Surrey's life as a courtier runs parallel to that of Raleigh's. Both had cause to lament their loss of political power and subsequently their identities; thus the instances of Surrey's hybridization of the sonnet form with that of the elegiac becomes an apparent source of influence for Raleigh's later hybridization of the elegiac form.

The most important source of influence for Raleigh in this poem is Petrarch's mistress. In this instance, Raleigh is of course speaking of his failed relationship with

Queen Elizabeth I and in doing so, “attempting to understand how the same love could be both the emblem of eternity and the embodiment of mutability” (Greenblatt 64). As Raleigh recollects his relationship with Elizabeth, he remembers her bewitching beauty, but also the fact that she was “free from evry yevill but crueltye” (*The Ocean* 212), referring to her seductive powers over Raleigh, only to cruelly dash his hopes and destroy his career. As he continues in this nostalgic vein, Raleigh recalls his own feelings of affection toward the Queen:

My love is not of tyme, or bound to date

My harts internall heat, and livinge fier

Would not, or could be quencht, with suddayn shoures. (301-303)

He has enumerated his feelings of despair and betrayal in stanzas previous, and yet at this moment, Raleigh is once again speaking of the passions he feels for the Queen. He utilizes the conventional notion of fire in order to express the burning ardor he still feels for this unattainable mistress, but he also juxtaposes this with the idea of showers. Raleigh embodies both fire and water, the aforementioned by his personality and latter by the pronunciation of his name. In this regard, the two complete opposites are vying for the upper hand: fire seeks to maintain its passion while showers seek to douse the passions in lieu of the harsh reality that the passion cannot find any productive outlet.

However, the way Raleigh represents water in this moment is important and unlike other moments of water imagery in the poem. Before this moment, water comes in the representation of oceans, rivers, and streams, all of which have fast-moving currents that have swept up the speaker and drowned him in the volume of water they disgorge.

Showers, on the other hand, are gentle and without great force or destructive power. In other words, Raleigh lacks conviction as he says that his heart's fire has been extinguished "with suddayn shoures" (303). What seems to be a clear and even dichotomy between fire and water becomes more convoluted. Try as he may to quench his own feelings for Queen Elizabeth, the fire Raleigh feels within his soul takes the upper hand by virtue of the weakness of the water imagery at this moment. As painful as it may be, Raleigh is drawn to his Petrarchan mistress even though his better judgment endeavors to dissuade this course of action by attempting to douse the flames of Raleigh's emotions.

The caesura that comes after "time" (301) also speaks to this idea that in fact Raleigh's emotions are not mutable and cannot be doused by showers. While he has spoken against the belief of thinking oneself outside of time in lines previous, Raleigh boldly asserts that his love exists outside the realm of time. This suggests that while Raleigh perceives time as the great destroyer of men and of relationships, passions and love, if felt strongly enough, can actually withstand the flood of time. The caesura calls attention to this bold statement. It renders the poet's previously stated lines about the ephemeral nature of men and of men's relationships untrue because Raleigh has in fact found something that can survive time, though in doing so it causes much despair and distress.

By running the lines together as he does, Raleigh emulates the flowing manner of water, like that of a stream. This in turn contributes to the confusion Raleigh introduces with the two elements of fire and water and it also makes it unclear which of the elements he favors. Does he wish for the fire to be extinguished? Or does he prefer that fire gain



the upper hand? The form of the lines does not help in answering these questions. The flowing nature does not remind readers of fire, but it does not speak to showers either. What it instead presents is a torrent of words, like a torrent of water, which could indeed extinguish his heart's passions although the water has not succeeded. By juxtaposing fire and water both in his words and through the enjambment, Raleigh demonstrates that he is "inevitably drawn to [Elizabeth] even though he is puzzled and anguished over his self-torture" (Waller 76). Raleigh recognizes that no good may come of his continued feelings for Elizabeth as she has banished him from the royal court and imprisoned him in the tower. Even so, Raleigh cannot abandon his Petrarchan mistress because of her alluring qualities.

Thus, Raleigh cannot help but to reflect upon the ended relationship with fondness and nostalgia: "Out of that mass of mirakells, my Muse, / gathered thos floures, to her pure sences pleasing" (*The Ocean* 45-6). Try as he may to forget the relationship he with Elizabeth, he cannot because he devoted himself for so long to this particular role. Here, according to Raleigh's memories, the flowers of his and Elizabeth's relationship have neither died nor wilted; in fact, they appear as whole, healthy, and beautiful as before. This nostalgic view Raleigh has of his relationship reveals a mentality of hopefulness. Although some piece of Raleigh has accepted that his political favor and his relationship have both ended, the ghosts of his nostalgic past visit him and encourage him that his old courtier life can be renewed. The result of this entire poetic drama is that Raleigh "undergoes a prolonged crisis of identity; conflicting images of the self and the beloved present themselves on the stage of his consciousness for a moment and then

retire” (Greenblatt 93), leaving him at a loss to try and make sense of the present situation.

His vacillation between the knowledge that he should abandon his passions and the feelings he may still have for Queen Elizabeth reflect precisely what Petrarch had experienced with his mistress Laura. In a moment of seeming finality, Raleigh declares that “Shee is gonn, Shee is lost!” (*The Ocean* 493) suggesting the dual meaning that he has come to terms with his banishment from Elizabeth’s heart and that he has successfully purged himself of the memory of her. However, Raleigh destroys that sense of closure in the very same line as he concludes that in fact “Shee is fovnd, shee is ever faire” (493). Try as he may to embark upon his new life without Elizabeth and thereby end this cycle of self-violence and self-torture, Elizabeth’s charms, her beauty, and her charisma lures him back into his idolization of her. In responding in this fashion, Raleigh exemplifies the resiliency of one who has committed himself to pursue a Petrarchan mistress even in the face of failure and denial.

The final couplet, conspicuous because of its break in rhyme scheme, is Raleigh’s final stab at attempting to find closure for the relationship:

But be it so, or not, th’ effects, ar past.

Her love hath end; my woe must ever last. (*The Ocean* 521-22)

Within these two lines, Raleigh has crystallized precisely the feelings of ambiguity, love, and despair that he has been grappling with for the entire poem. The end stop lines give the reader a sense of finality, as though this issue has been resolved and Raleigh has submitted himself at last to his fate. However, the caesura, a semicolon, in line 522

undoes this sense of finality. The word “end” that appears directly before the caesura would indicate that finality and closure Raleigh has searched for, but the caesura betrays the lack of conviction Raleigh feels when he says this. Furthermore, the use of the feminine ending in line 522, “last,” leaves the reader without a sense of closure.

Although Raleigh ended this line with a period, the feelings he has for Elizabeth have not in fact ended and the conclusion Raleigh has come to is not actually a conclusion at all but a further testament to the confused feelings of hope and despair that dominate this poem. According to the way Raleigh has written this, he still believes that the Queen still loves him and he her. For Raleigh, while the relationship is ended and past, the feelings of intimacy and love are not.

Though unfinished, Raleigh’s greatest accomplishment in this vast body of verse is the feeling of total intimacy the reader has with the speaker. Raleigh has personalized his poem to the extent that the emotions are entirely genuine and relatable; readers can understand and empathize with his state of mind. Interestingly, it is only after Raleigh overcomes his anxiety of influence and lets down all his defenses, abandons all his secrecy, and confronts his own passions, that he stumbles upon the universality of his emotions.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

Within the history books, Sir Walter Raleigh is remembered as a gallant soldier, an intrepid explorer, the father of tobacco, and the debonair courtier to the Queen. Modern cinematic adaptations of Raleigh's life have capitalized on these attributes, inflating the mythology surrounding his life. While Raleigh has certainly earned each of his titles and even the romantic mythology that surrounds his persona, this overview of his accomplishments neglects to acknowledge the richness and fullness of his pursuits in each of these endeavors. His poetry especially has been overshadowed by his more voluminous prose work, *The History of the World*, and perhaps this is to some degree at the insistence of the author himself.

After his *The Ocean to Cynthia*, though Raleigh continued to write poetry, he no longer dwelled upon the topic of love. The muse that he had used as a source of passionate inspiration had departed and left in her wake only cold despair and a desire for continued self-preservation in an increasingly hostile courtly environment. From the summer of 1592 onward, Sir Walter Raleigh's identity is no longer that of a courtier; rather, it is that of a man searching in vain for another purpose in his life after the first has been ruthlessly taken from him. However, *The Ocean to Cynthia* remains with him even after that summer and reappears, in classic Raleigh fashion, as a later petition to Queen Anne to set him free after King James I has imprisoned him once again in the Tower of

London for treason. Clearly Raleigh's anxiety of influence, of his predecessors, contemporaries, and himself, persists even after his masterpiece, *The Ocean to Cynthia*. This relationship between the two poems provides what is perhaps the clearest evidence that Raleigh's passions have not died away even after Queen Elizabeth has died and another monarch has taken the throne. While no longer able to delude himself into thinking that the relationship could be restored—Elizabeth has been dead for several years at this point—his nostalgic remembrances of his former courtly life prevail, indicating that indeed his passions cannot be quenched by sudden showers or even floods and streams.

In the interceding years leading up to the Queen's death and Raleigh's subsequent imprisonment, Raleigh became almost a nonentity at the Elizabethan court, ostensibly writing very little and drawing little attention to himself. Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, filled Raleigh's place as the Queen's favorite after Raleigh's imprisonment in 1592. Interestingly after his return, Raleigh worked closely with Essex and it appeared that both had set their old rivalry aside. Raleigh played the role of the reformed sinner while Essex was the unquestioned favorite of Queen Elizabeth. In 1600 however, Essex was indicted and executed for conspiring against the Queen, a case to which Raleigh gave damning evidence against Essex. This duplicitous act against his ally reveals Raleigh's determination to reestablish his favor with the Queen and make himself once again the unquestioned favorite.

The most important lesson we may learn from Raleigh comes from his undying commitment to the role he was assigned. He committed himself to be the rapt worshipper

of Queen Elizabeth, and served that role faithfully in her service for twelve years. Even after his secret marriage and subsequent fall from favor, Raleigh persevered on the courtship of the Queen. Letters to various dignitaries of the Tudor court, *The Ocean to Cynthia*, and other poems written by Raleigh reveal the tortured state of Raleigh's mind as he seeks to reconcile the divided personalities of fire and water that both sought the favor of Queen Elizabeth and ultimately consumed and destroyed one another.

As Raleigh approached the scaffold on October 28, 1618, his sickly and aged frame was wracked with malaria (Greenblatt 2). However, by all accounts he did not emphasize his suffering and instead stood as tall and proud as his frame would allow. Unlike Essex at his execution, Raleigh did not plead for mercy with his executioner (9). Instead, he delivered an elegant defense of his innocence for the charges leveled against him and then laid his head upon the block to patiently await his death. The speech elicited a startling response from onlookers: as one eyewitness account relates, Raleigh's command of himself and his rhetoric on that day 'made all believe that he was neither guilty of former treasons nor of unjustly injuring the King of Spain' (19), while another account describes the way in which Raleigh's final performance 'changed the affection of the enemies who had come to witness it, and turned their joy to sorrow, [and] it filled all men else with emotion and admiration' (20).

As a final testament to his bravery and his stiff resolve to die with dignity, he refused the blindfold and told the executioner not to strike until he had lifted his hand. He then gave the signal, and when the executioner hesitated, cried out, "What dost thou fear? Strike, man!" (21) to which two blows of the axe severed his neck. On the scaffold,

the poetry of Raleigh's life had finally found the resolve it lacked in the conclusion of *The Ocean to Cynthia*: a man approaching death bravely and unflinchingly, accepting that eventually "all drops, all dies, [and] all [is] trodden under dust" (*The Ocean* 253).

## Appendix: Raleigh's Poetry

### A Poem pvt into my Lady Laiton's pocket by Sir W. Rawleigh

Lady farewell whom I in Sylence serve  
    Wold god thou knewste the depth of my desire,  
Then might I hope, thouge nought I can deserve,  
    Som drop of grace wold quench my scorchyng fyre.  
But as to Love vnknown I have decreed, (5)  
So spare to speake doth often spare to speed.

Yett better twere that I in woe should waste  
    Then sue for Grace and Pyty in Despighte,  
And though I see in thee such pleasure plaste  
    That feedes my Joy and breedes my cheef delyghte, (10)  
Wythall I see a chast Consentt Dysdayne  
Theyr Suytes, whych seke to wyn thy wyll ageane.

Then farewell Hope and Hellpe to each mans Harme  
    The wynde of woe hath torne my Tree of Truste,  
Care Quenchde the Coales, whych did my Fancy warme, (15)  
    And all my Hellp Lyes buryed in the Duste.  
But yett amonges those Cares, which Crosse my Rest,  
Thys Comfort Growes, I thynk I Love thee Beste.



### The Excuse

Calling to mind mine eie long went about,  
T' entice my hart to seeke to leaue my brest,  
All in a rage I thought to pull it out,  
By whose deuce I liu'd in such vnrest,  
    What could it say to purchase so my grace? (5)  
    Forsooth that it had seene my Mistres face.

Another time I likewise call to minde,  
My hart was he that all my woe had wrought,  
For he my brest the fort of Loue resignde,  
When of such warrs my fancie neuer thought, (10)  
    What could it say, when I would him haue slaine?  
    But he was yours, and had forgone me cleane.

At length when I perceiu'd both eie and hart,  
Excusde themselues, as guiltles of mine ill,  
I found my selfe was cause of all my smart, (15)  
And tolde my selfe, my selfe now slay I will:  
    But when I found my selfe to you was true,  
    I lou'd my selfe, bicause my selfe lou'd you.

**To his Love when hee had obtained her**

Now Serena bee not coy;  
Since wee freely may enjoy  
Sweete imbraces: such delights,  
As will shorten tedious nightes.  
Thinke that beauty will not stay (5)  
With you allwaies; but away;  
And that tyrannizing face  
That now holdes such perfect grace,  
Will both chaing'd and ruined bee;  
So fraile is all thinges as wee see, (10)  
So subject vnto conquering Time.  
Then gather Flowers in their prime,  
Let them not fall and perish so;  
Nature her bountyes did bestow  
On vs that wee might vse them: And (15)  
Tis coldnesse not to vnderstand  
What shee and Youth and Forme perswade  
With Oppertunety, that's made  
As we could wish itt. Lett's then meete  
Often with amorous lippes, and greet (20)  
Each other till our wantonne Kisses  
In number passe the dayes Ulysses  
Consum'd in trauaile, and the starrs  
That look vpon our peacefull warrs  
With envious lustere. If this store (25)  
Will not suffice, wee'le number o're  
The same againe, vntill wee finde,  
No number left to call to minde  
    And shew our plenty. They are poore  
    That can count all they haue and more. (30)

### **The Nymphs reply to the Sheepheard**

If all the world and loue were young,  
And truth in euery Sheepheards tongue,  
These pretty pleasures might me moue,  
To liue with thee, and be thy loue.

Time driues the flocks from field to fold, (5)  
When Riuers rage, and Rocks grow cold,  
And Philomell becommeth dombe,  
The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers doe fade, and wanton fieldes, (10)  
To wayward winter reckoning yeeldes,  
A honny tongue, a heart of gall,  
Is fancies spring, but sorrowes fall.

Thy gownes, thy shoos, thy beds of Roses,  
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy poesies,  
Soone breake, soone wither, soone forgotten: (15)  
In follie ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and Iuie buddes,  
Thy Corall claspes and Amber studdes,  
All these in mee no meanes can moue, (20)  
To come to thee, and be thy loue.

But could youth last, and loue still breede,  
Had ioys no date, nor age no neede,  
Then these delights my minde may moue,  
To liue with thee, and be thy loue.

### Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen

Our passions are most like to floods and streames;  
The shallow Murmure; but the Deep are Dumb.  
So when Affections yeeld Discourse, it seems  
The bottom is but shallow whence they come.  
    They that are Rich in Words must needs discover           (5)  
    That they are Poore in that which makes a Louer.

Wrong not, deare Empresse of my Heart,  
    The Meritt of true Passion,  
With thinking that Hee feels no Smart  
    That sues for no Compassion:                                   (10)  
Since, if my Plaints serue not to proue  
    The Conquest of your Beauty,  
It comes not from Defect of Loue,  
    But from Excesse of duety.

For knowing that I sue to serue                                   (15)  
    A Saint of such Perfection  
As all desire, but none deserue,  
    A place in her Affection:  
I rather chuse to want Reliefe  
    Than venture the Reuealing;                                   (20)  
When Glory recommends the Griefe,  
    Despaire distrusts the Healing.

Thus those desires that aim too high,  
    For any mortall Louer,  
When Reason cannot make them dye,                               (25)  
    Discretion will them Couer.  
Yet when discretion dothe bereaue  
    The Plaints that they should vtter,  
Then your discretion may perceiue,  
    That Silence is a Suitor.                                       (30)

Silence in Loue bewraies more Woe,  
    Than Words, through ne'r so Witty.  
A Beggar that is dumb, yee know,  
    Deserueth double Pitty.  
Then misconceiue not (dearest Heart)                           (35)  
    My true, though secret Passion,  
He smarteth most that hides his smart,  
    And sues for no Compassion.

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