

# The Birth of Modern Time

*Galileo, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Newton*

# Galileo Galilei

- Aristotle
- Pendulum
- Measurement of time
- Motion-Disproving Aristotle



**1564-1642**

# Petrarch & the Sonnet



Petrarch  
1304-1374

## Before Petrarch

- Petrarch was financially supported by wealthy aristocratic Italian families from the various Italian city-states
- Inspired by great poets who were authors of sonnets: Dante Alighieri, Guido Guinizelli, Guido Cavalcanti
- He transformed the medieval symbolic framework of his predecessor's sonnets and introduced modern lyric focusing on the classical rather than the Christian inspiration
- Shakespeare modified the Petrarchan sonnet but maintained key elements of it
- Petrarch's sonnets inspired Shakespeare's work with sonnets

# The Sonnets & Richard II

*Time according to William Shakespeare*

# William Shakespeare



1664-1616

## Works

- Cultural forms: Primarily plays. Interesting to consider the dramatic time/clock time difference that is apparent in theatrical productions (referencing Irwin Smith, 1969)
- Authored 37 known plays and 5 known works of poetry

## Life and Family

- Married to Anne Hathaway, with whom he had 3 children
- His, Hamnet, son died during adolescence
- His daughters, Judith and Susanna, both produced children, but Shakespeare's direct line ends as his grandchildren produced no heirs.
- Interesting when considering a dominant that we will address today

# William Shakespeare

## Relevant Themes

### - Time as a destructive force:

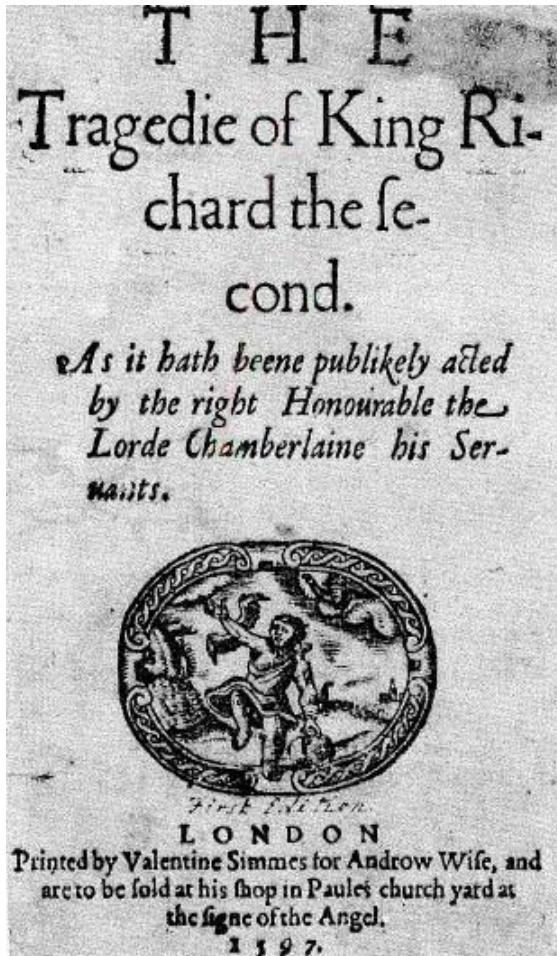
Throughout his histories and sonnets, Shakespeare portrays time as an agent of reality that will destroy and obliterate, but this focuses on individual notions of time rather than collective

### - Continuity through children:

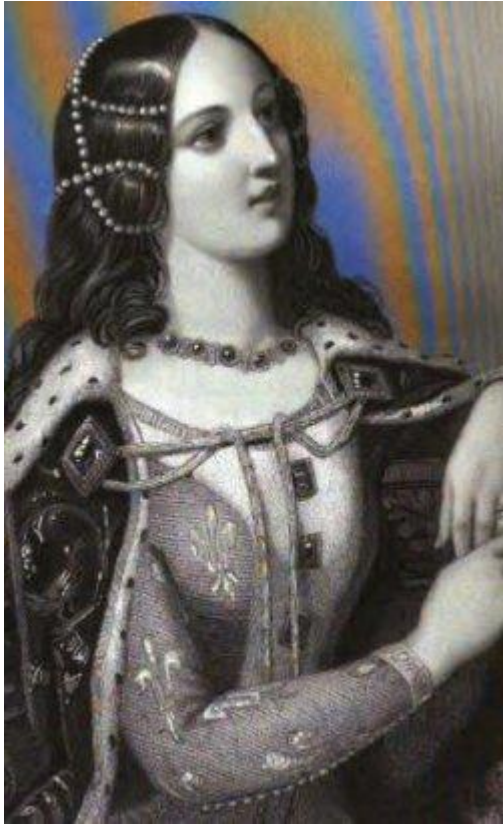
Through progeny, characters can circumvent their destruction by time. In many of his histories, the ruler is unable to reproduce children. Resonates in language in language of Act V, Scene 5 (beget)

### - Continuity through political prowess:

In the historical works, a ruler can avoid destruction by staying ahead of his political rivals and understanding political challenges



# William Shakespeare



Queen Isabella of Valois

## Shakespeare's Struggle with Time

- *Richard II* based on the English king who reigned from 1377-1399
- The character Queen Isabel, based on Richard's second wife Queen Isabella of Valois
- Isabella of Valois was 10 years old when Richard was deposed, the time during which Shakespeare's play was based
- Shakespeare changed her age in the play to make her character older, capable of bearing children, but as the play tells us, bearing none
- He deliberately inserted the theme of time as a destructive force.

**Question: Is this indicative of a desire to control time, and if so, could it be related to the death of his son?**

# Notion of Restoring One's Life Through Poetry



Sonnet 17

**“But were some child of yours alive that time,  
You should live twice: in it and in my rhyme.”**

-Suggesting that her life can be restored once again through his verses

-Shakespeare's poetry has a revitalizing property in that his lines are permanent even though death is inevitable

Sonnet 18

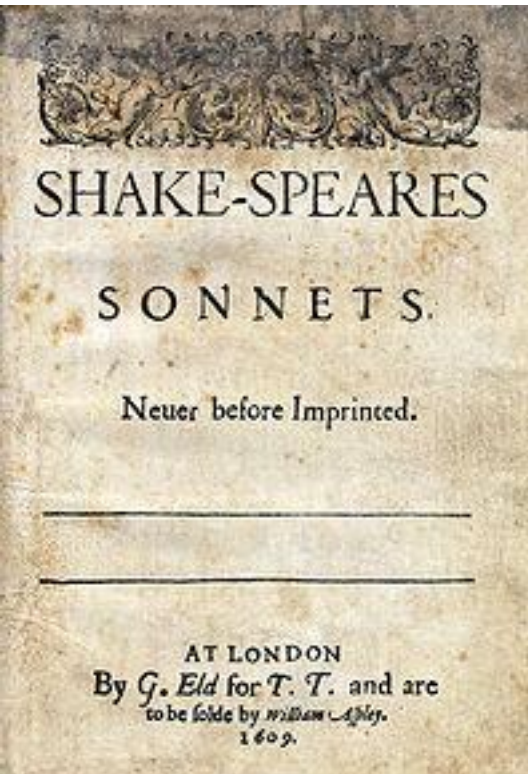
**“But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st,  
Nor shall death brag thou wand’rest in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st.  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”**

-He is captivating her beauty in his poems in order to render them permanent despite the inevitable aging effects of time

-Her liveliness and youth will live on perpetually through his poetry



# Notion of Restoring One's Life Through Poetry



Sonnet 60

**“And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.  
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,  
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.”**

- The cruel hand of time is ultimately the greatest destroyer
- However, his poetry is strong enough to withstand time

Sonnet 16

**“With virtuous wish would bear your living flowers,  
Much liker than your painted counterfeit.”**

- Perhaps there is a more effective way of fighting time?

**We Will Find Out...**

# Procreation as a Means of Combating Time



Sonnet 11

**“Herein lives wisdom, beauty, and increase;  
Without this, folly, age, and cold decay”**

-Having children brings wisdom and beauty, while failing to do so gives in to the decaying effects of time

**“She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby  
Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die.”**

-Metaphor of a stamp as procreation

Sonnet 12

**"And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defense**

**Save breed to brave him when he takes thee hence."**

-Defense against time's destroying powers is through procreation

# Procreation as a Means of Combating Time



Sonnet 13

**“Against this coming end you should prepare,  
And your sweet semblance to some other give”**

-She should pass on her beauty before she is taken away by time and death

**"You had a father; let your son say so."**

-Have children to fight time

**What aspects of beauty does Shakespeare focus on in illustrating the destructive nature of time?**

**What are some examples of phrases that implicitly indicate the passing of time in Shakespeare's sonnets?**

# Personifying Time as a Murderer

## Sonnet 16

"Make war upon this bloody tyrant time"

## Sonnet 63

"Against confounding Age's cruel knife"

## Sonnet 64

"Time will come and take my love away./This thought is as a death, which cannot choose"

## Sonnet 100

"Give my love fame faster than Time wastes life;/So thou prevene'st his scythe and crookèd knife"

## Themes:

Time is depicted as cruel and unfair and as destroying beauty, innocence and love

We are in a race against time, though it is inevitable that we cannot win



# Memories and the Written Word Can Combat the Passing of Time

## **Sonnet 18**

"So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,/So long lives this, and this gives life to thee

## **Sonnet 63**

"That he shall never cut from memory/My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life"

## **Sonnet 19**

"My love shall in my verse ever live long"

## **Sonnet 65**

"That in black ink my love may still shine bright"

## Themes:

Writing is eternal and will remain even after the author has died

Writing captures the "here and now" which is critical in a world where time is constantly passing and things are always changing



# Conflicting Views of Time

## **Sonnet 60**

"Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand"

### Themes

Acknowledges time's creations but also feels time is unfair and passes too quickly

## **Sonnet 66**

"Tired with all these, for restful death I cry"

"Tired with all these, from these I would be gone,/Save that, to die, I leave my love alone"

### Themes

Shakespeare yearns for the peace that only death can bring, but at the same time doesn't want to be separated from his love

In previous sonnets he has proposed fighting time head-on, here he concedes to time and appears to be giving up - perhaps accepting the inevitability of time

## **Sonnet 102**

"My love is strengthened, though more weak in seeming;/I love not less, though less the show appear"

"And sweets grown common lose their dear delight."

### Themes

Idea of love losing its initial spark and excitement over time

Criticizing the passage of time for hindering the development of emotional significance

# Shakespeare's *Richard II*



## Plot Synopsis

Written circa 1595, *Richard II* is one of Shakespeare's history plays, the first of a tetralogy.

It dramatizes the life of Richard II, who exiles his cousin Henry Bolingbroke and is then accused of tyranny by the nobility. When Bolingbroke returns to England, he claims the throne as Henry IV and has Richard II imprisoned and poisoned. The play finishes with Henry IV planning a trip to Jerusalem to cleanse himself of his sins.

ca. 1595- *Richard II*

ca. 1597- *Henry IV pt. 1*

ca. 1596-99- *Henry IV pt. 2*

ca. 1599- *Henry V*

# *Richard II: Act V, Scene 5*

## **Summary**

"My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,  
My soul the father, and these two beget  
A generation of still-breeding thoughts,  
And these same thoughts people this world [...]"

(ll. 6-9)

-Alone in his cell in Pomfret castle, Richard uses metaphors and metaphysics to understand how he might populate the empty cell that is now his world.



# *Richard II: Act V, Scene 5*

## **Summary**

"[...] Music do I hear.

Ha, ha; keep time! How sour sweet music is  
When time is broke, and no proportion kept.  
So is it in the music of men's lives;  
And here have I the daintiness of ear  
To check time broke in a disordered string,  
But for the concord of my state and time,  
Had not an ear to hear my true time broke."

(ll. 41-48)

-Richard hears music playing, and then starts to contemplate how unfortunate disproportionate music is, that is, music not kept in proper time.

# *Richard II: Act V, Scene 5*

## **Time in V, 5**

### **Keeping Time in Music**

-Richard is haunted by the music that starts playing. It is "broke," the player does not keep proportionate time, which analogizes Richard's experience in prison.

-Due to his imprisoned "state and time", Richard is prevented from having a "an ear" to hear if the music is proportionate, or to tell how quickly his life is passing, if at all.

- "I wasted time, and now doth time waste me"

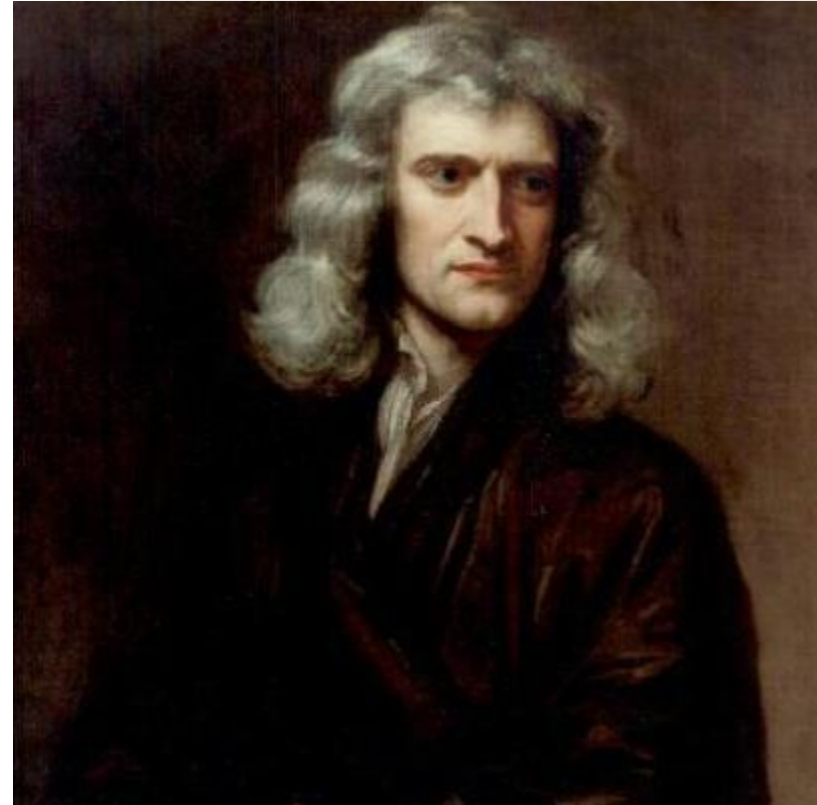
### **Richard Becomes a Clock**

-His sense of time broken, Richard compares himself to a clock: his thoughts are minutes, his eyes are the dials, and his groans are the striking of the hours.

# Sir Issac Newton

- Absolute time
- Determining the future
- Development of calculus
- Measurement vs. Meaning

"Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external, and by another name is called duration; relative, apparent, and common, is some sensible and external (whether accurate or unequable) measure of duration by means of notion, which is commonly used instead of true time; such as an hour, a day, a month, a year."



**1642-1727**

# Discussion Questions

-Given Richard II's lack of children, and Henry Bolingbroke's line of progeny, is time a destructive force for both of the characters or just Richard II?

-Shakespeare suggests that time is a destructive force we must do our best to protect ourselves against. How can we fortify ourselves against time? Are there ways to combat time besides keeping written records and forming memories?

-Do literary works complicate and/or enhance our understanding of time as a form of measurement and identity?

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