COURTLY LOVE

Courtly love is a conventionalized code that prescribed the behaviour of ladies and their lovers. It began with the troubadour as poetry of Aquitaine and Provence in southern France toward the end of the 11th century. It constituted a revolution in thought and feeling. The courtly love existed to serve his lady. His love was invariably adulterous, marriage at that time being usually the result of business interest or the seal of a power alliance. Faithlessness was the mortal sin. There were strict rules of courtly love and the art of courtly love was practised by the members of the courts across Europe during the Middle Ages. This allowed knights and ladies to show their admiration regardless of the marital state. An example is given in the Legend of King Arthur, where his Queen Guinevere fell in love with Sir Lancelot.

SOME RULES OF COURTLY LOVE are:

- Marriage is no real excuse for not loving.
- He who is not jealous, cannot love.
- It is well known that love is always increasing or decreasing.
- Boys do not love until they arrive at the age of maturity.
- When one lover dies, a widowhood of two years is required of the survivor.
- When made public love rarely endures.
- A new love puts to flight an old one.
- When a lover suddenly catches sight of his beloved, his heart palpitates.
- A man in love is always apprehensive.
- Love can deny nothing to love.
- Nothing forbids one woman being loved by two men or one man by two women...

COURTLY LOVE POEMS AND SONGS

Geoffrey Chaucer wrote Canterbury Tales. The Miller’s Tales describes the art of courtly love. Troubadours and minstrels memorized and sang ballads about courtly love. The most famous ones are those of the Dark Ages myths of Arthurian Legend (King Arthur, Camelot, Knights of the Round Table).

DOLCE STIL NOVO

- Italian “sweet new style”.
- The most important literary movement of the 13th century in Italy.
- Influenced by the Sicilian School and Tuscan poetry. Its main theme is Love. Noble-mindedness (gentilezza) is also found.
- Authors: Guinizzelli, Cavalcanti and Dante.
- Refined poetry, superior in quality and more intellectual than the previous courtly love. Use of metaphors and symbolism, double meanings.
- The adoration of the female beauty. Deep introspection. Vivid descriptions of female beauty. The woman is described as an angel or as a bridge to God, a sort of Divine Love.
- This movement is the first true literary tradition in Italy and the precursor of Petrarch’s Renaissance.
- Dante Alighieri (Italy, 1308-1321) wrote one of the greatest works of world literature: Divine Comedy. The poem’s imaginative and allegorical vision of the afterlife is a culmination of the medieval world-view. It is divided into three parts: Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso. Plot: Dante’s travels through Hell and Purgatory.
guided by the Latin poet Virgil and through Heaven by his beloved Beatriz. In fact, it represents allegorically
the soul’s journey towards God. Its *Vita nuova* (inside *dolce stil nuovo*) is an autobiography which includes its
poems and explanations in prose. At 9 years-old, Dante met Beatriz; 9 years later, they met again and Dante
fell completely in love with Beatriz; after Beatriz’s death, Dante draws on the love to the woman as the best
way to be close to God.

**RENAISSANCE**

It began in Italy because of the rediscovery of the classical past of ancient Rome (from 500 B.C. to A.D. 300) with its
noble buildings and sculptures (ex. *Laocoon*), super plays and poetry (*The Aeneid*), important writings on
government, politics, and law (*senatus consultum*). They were known in the Middle Ages (1300) and studied and
reinterpreted or even imitated. In fact, Renaissance means *rebirth*. There was a revival of interest in the classical
works of Greece and Rome, which inspired a new way of looking at the world. Thinkers turned away from the
medieval preoccupation with saving souls and avoiding temptation, and began instead to explore people’s
individuality and to educate them in their duties to society. This movement is known as humanism. At the same
time, artists celebrated the beauty of the human body in more lifelike paintings and sculptures. Books were scarce
and precious. Each one was copied out by hand by a professional scribe or a monk producing manuscripts of
religious texts, beautifully decorated or illuminated with coloured inks. They were locked and guarded in
monasteries, convents and cathedrals. This monastic monopoly gave the Catholic Church a great deal of power and
reinforced its position at the centre of medieval life in Europe.

Some important features of the Renaissance:

- Renaissance authors, like the characters they invent, inhabited a world of such widespread revolutionary
  change that they could not passively receive the traditional wisdom of previous ages (Pasinetti and James
  2465)

- Influencing the nature of the flowering of the arts, great changes were occurring during the Renaissance in
  the areas of religion, technology and science, world exploration and discovery, bureaucratic and institutional
  power, economic and social power. All of them were highly interrelated.

- THE HUMAN BODY

For 1000 years, the science of the body, anatomy, had remained virtually unchanged. Medieval doctors relied on
textbooks and tradition. In the 16th century, revolution in anatomy took place, led by artists (most notably Leonardo
da Vinci and Michelangelo) as well as doctors. This revolution made both doctors and artists begin to dissect bodies
and describe the results with accuracy. An example of that work can be found in Michelangelo’s massive statue
David, known as the perfecto body, which showed an intimate knowledge of bone structure, muscles, sinews and
veins to express the body’s grace and nobility. In the same way of searching, (and in spite of the Church’s opposition,
some artists made discreet use of public bath-houses to observer the naked human body.

Medicine evolved highly because medical students were taught from books based on practice of human dissection.

- THE RENAISSANCE LEGACY

Renaissance Humanism spreads across Europe during the 16th century. People felt free to look at the world in fresh
ways, to express individual thoughts, and to question traditional views. Its influences went on in the following
century in Western Europe. Painters and sculptors were no more craftsmen but fine artists; writers such as
Shakespeare used languages with a new exuberance and beauty; scientists such as Newton examined how the universe functioned; the philosophers Pascal or Descartes looked rationally at the relationship between human beings and God. Other examples:

- The Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes created two immortal comic characters, the country gentleman don Quixote and his squire Sancho Panza. The best-selling adventures of don Quixote make fun of Renaissance chivalry and model a new kind of anti-heroic fiction.
- Over 40 years, the great Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-69) produced a series of self-portraits. These made an honest record of the artist’s life, from youthful success, through loss and bankruptcy, to the old age. The series embodies the humanist theme that each person’s experience is unique and tells an individual story.
- Cambridge University, in England, became a centre of learning. The famous Dutch scholar Erasmus was, for a time, professor of Greek there.
- The theatre was an stage and surrounding galleries like Shakespeare’s The Globe where many plays (The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet) were performed. he set his plays in Renaissance Italy.

- **RENAISSANCE MEN**

Leonardo da Vinci is referred as the “universal man” (Jacob Burckhardt, 1860) because he had cultivated every branch of study, from painting and sculpture to botany and mathematics. Today he seems that essential example of a Renaissance man: an all-rounder whose talents combined the arts and sciences. In the 16th century, the “universal man” was a scholar and artist, a fine swordsman and horseman, a witty talker, a graceful orator, a skilled musician, and a responsible citizen. Examples: King Henry VIII, when he was young, was tall and handsome; he could ride all day, win jousts, speak four languages, play the lute, and talked learnedly about religion. Another example was Michelangelo who designed tombs, fortifications, and cathedral domes; and, of course, painted the biblical scenes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

**LYRIC POETRY**

Important forms of lyric poetry are sonnets (which themselves come in different forms), odes and elegies. The sonnet tradition is perhaps most central to the development of lyric poetry in the Renaissance.

Francis Petrarch (see below), an Italian poet often called the “Father of Humanism”, popularized the **sonnet** form with his Rime Sparse (or “scattered rhymes”; also called Fragments in the Vernacular), a sequence of lyric poems mingling spiritual love with earthly love in which the **poetic speaker** praises his **beloved** Laura. Petrarch’s sonnets tried to represent human love in human terms—using spiritual **themes**, but in the service of explaining or examining something earthly.

He is often celebrated for his use of lyric realism. “Realistic” only insofar as it contrasts with the highly conventional and often clichéd language frequently used by courtly poets and troubadours, which depended on traditional and formulaic expressions (and variations from them) in order to convey meaning. By Shakespeare’s time, though, even Petrarch would seem clichéd. Petrarch is highly influential, and his innovations became hallmarks of Renaissance humanism.

Less absolute in its conventions, Renaissance lyric poetry depends for its meaning on evocative and unexpected associations between **images**, words, and ideas. Such poetry cultivates an **intimate** relationship between the poem, the poet, and the reader. Often uses the first person (me, the self). Petrarchan motifs and themes:
Love that burns, love that destroys;
The uncertain self, the self at odds with himself;
Beloved is idealized, more than human, angelic;
Earthly love is spiritualized, spiritual love is embodied.

Francesco Petrarca (PETRARCH, Italy 1304-1374)

- Contemporary of Dante and Boccacio (late Medieval period)
- Considered the first modern poet and the “Father of Humanism”.
- Most famous for his lyric poetry in the vernacular (Italian, rather than Latin, important because more people could read and understand, not just educated and scholastic elite)
- Set the standard for Renaissance lyric poetry, which is primarily characterized by a desire to interrogate and understand the self, the human (also in his letters and essays)
- “Petrarch bequeathed t later humanists the hope that scholar-poets might one day be recognized as shaping forces of the nation-state” (Pasinetti and James 2479)
- Works: Triumphs- allegorical and moral poem written in terza rima (tercetos encadenados) to describe de several steeps human being must climbs to get divinity. The Canzoniere- mostly sonnets and the main theme is love. Two parts: Rime in vita when his beloved Laura is alive, and Rime in morte, when dead. Several aesthetic figures such as antithesis, metaphors, words-plays...to describe grief for his beloved Laura, sorrow for wasting time in a non-corresponding love rather than in God...

PETRARCH’S FEATURES

- Themes of medieval courtly love: beloved lady, heartbreak...
- Influenced by the Greek and Roman culture.
- Physical description of the lady using metaphors: blond hair as gold...
- Sensibility for the nature.
- Neoplatonism: philosophical idea according to which the world/life is beautiful because it shows God’s beauty.
- A lot of aesthetic figures: antithesis, paradoxes, metaphors... Rhyme schemes: sonnet and hendecasyllabic ones.
- A big influence on the later literature.

BOCCACIO

- Italian poet, 1313-1375. He began writing stories in verse and prose; later, prose tales, pastorals and poems. His beloved lady was Fiammetta.
- His best work is Decameron which is a set of stories /fabliaux (satiric narratives about daily matters) narrated by seven ladies and three gentlemen during the plague at Florence. Features: narrative skill, rich poetical sentiments, melting two tendencies of European literature-the classical and the romantic.
- Great influenced in the ulterior literature: Chaucer (Canterbury’s Tales), Shakespeare (mention any), Keats (Poems), Tennyson (The Lady of Shallot, Maud), George Eliot (The Mill on the Floss)...