

Elizabethan Era

1560-1603

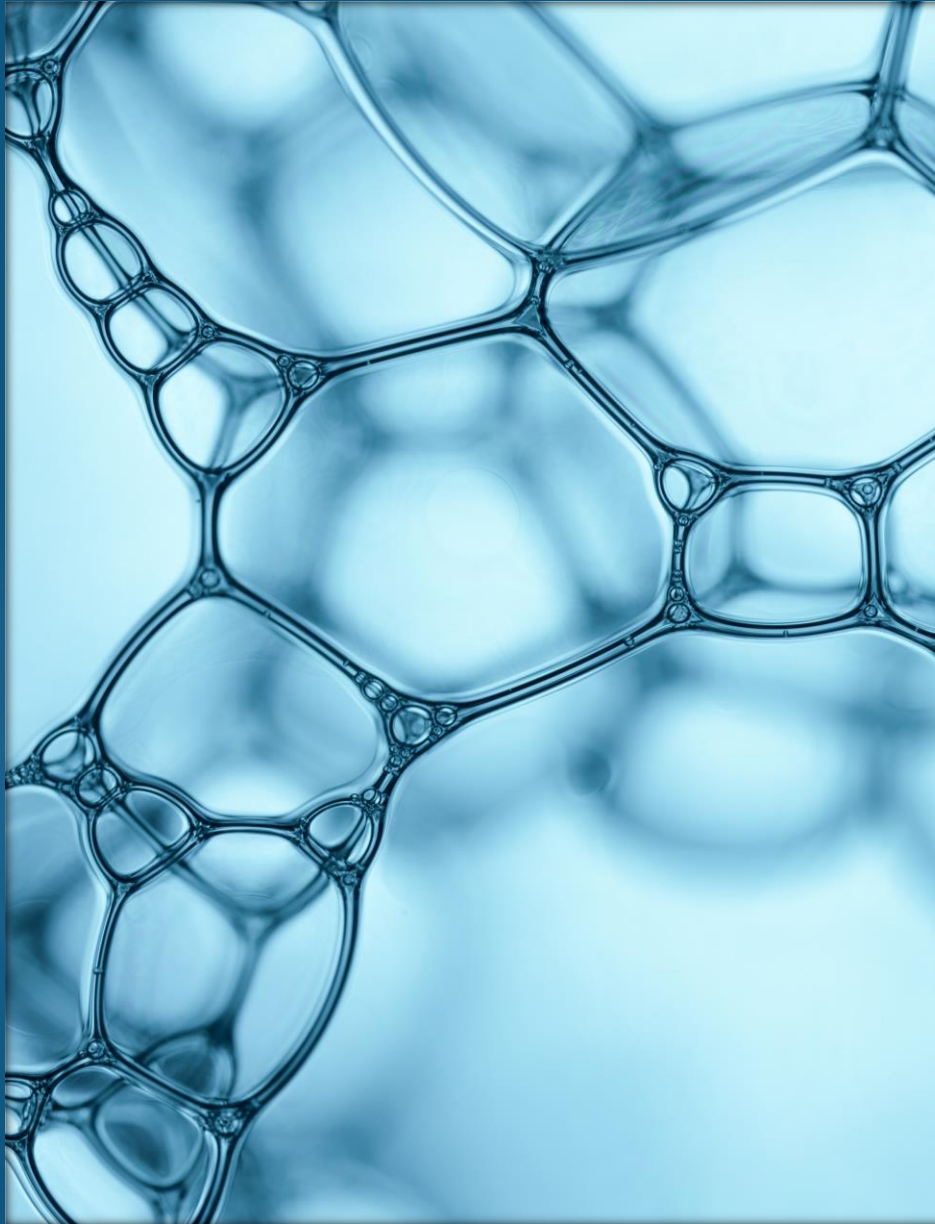


and



Shakespeare

1564-1616



The Elizabethan Age – A Glance

- ❖ **A Golden Age** : Renaissance, Religion, Society, Politics etc.
- ❖ **An Age of Peace and Prosperity** : England: centre of foreign trade - controversy b/w Roman Catholicism & Anglicanism settled
- ❖ **Age of High Adventure and Energy** : voyages & discoveries of new countries & islands
- ❖ **Age of National Victories** : England defeated France & subdued Spain in the historic Battle of Armada
- ❖ **Age of Literary Achievement** : Art & Lit. flourished – all spheres
“men lived intensely, thought intensely, and wrote intensely”
 - Univ. Wits, Shak.(Drama) Spenser, Sidney(Poetry), Bacon(Father of English Essays - Prose)



Young Lady Elizabeth (école anglaise, XVIIe s., huile sur toile), Musée national du château de Pau, Inv. DP. 53-2-59.

Salient Features



- ▶ **Elizabethan Age** : from Historical perspective
- ▶ **Shakespearean Age** : from Literature aspect
- ▶ **Age of Renaissance** – ‘rebirth / revival’ of **classical Greek & Latin Lit.**
(Spheres of Art, Literature, Culture & Architecture)
 - **Homer** as model for Epics; **Plato & Aristotle** for Philosophy & Lit.Crit.
 - **Sophocles, Euripides & Aeschylus** for Tragedies, **Virgil** for Pastorals
- ▶ **Age of Reformation** – revolution in Religion (**Martin Luther King**)
 - to rescue **religion** from age-old superstitions & meaningless rituals/practices
- ▶ **Age of new Discoveries & Explorations** – **Columbus, Vasco de Gama**
- ▶ **Age of intense Patriotism** – **Chivalric / Heroic Spirit**
- ▶ Literature flourished in both Poetic and non-poetic genres(Drama&Poetry)

Early Drama – Before Shakespeare

- ❖ **MYSTERY PLAYS** – Drama had religious origin
 - deal with themes taken from the Bible(Old & New Testament)
 - **chronological order of major events followed:**
Creation of the World, Fall of man, Nativity, Crucifixion, Resurrection of Christ & Last Judgement Day
- ❖ **MIRACLE PLAYS** – later adopted by Town Guilds
 - basically religious plays (FOUR Cycles)
 - deal with **lives of saints and their miracles**
 - their life & martyrdom of saints – central theme
- ❖ **MORALITY PLAYS** – Didactic & Secular Themes
 - **Allegorical plays – personified Virtues & Vices**
 - Abstract qualities as Humans, Everyman as Hero, Satan as Vice, God/Christ as Virtue, Death as reward of Sin

Influence of Medieval Theatre



- ❖ Eager audience
- ❖ Established tradition of theatre and actors
- ❖ **MYSTERY AND MORALITY PLAYS:**
 - ❖ Mixing of high seriousness and low comedy
- ❖ **FOLK PLAYS:**
 - ❖ Pagan remnants: fairies and sprites
 - ❖ Feast of Fools
- ❖ **INTERLUDES:**
 - ❖ Humanistic debates

Transition : Religious to Secular Themes

THE INTERLUDES

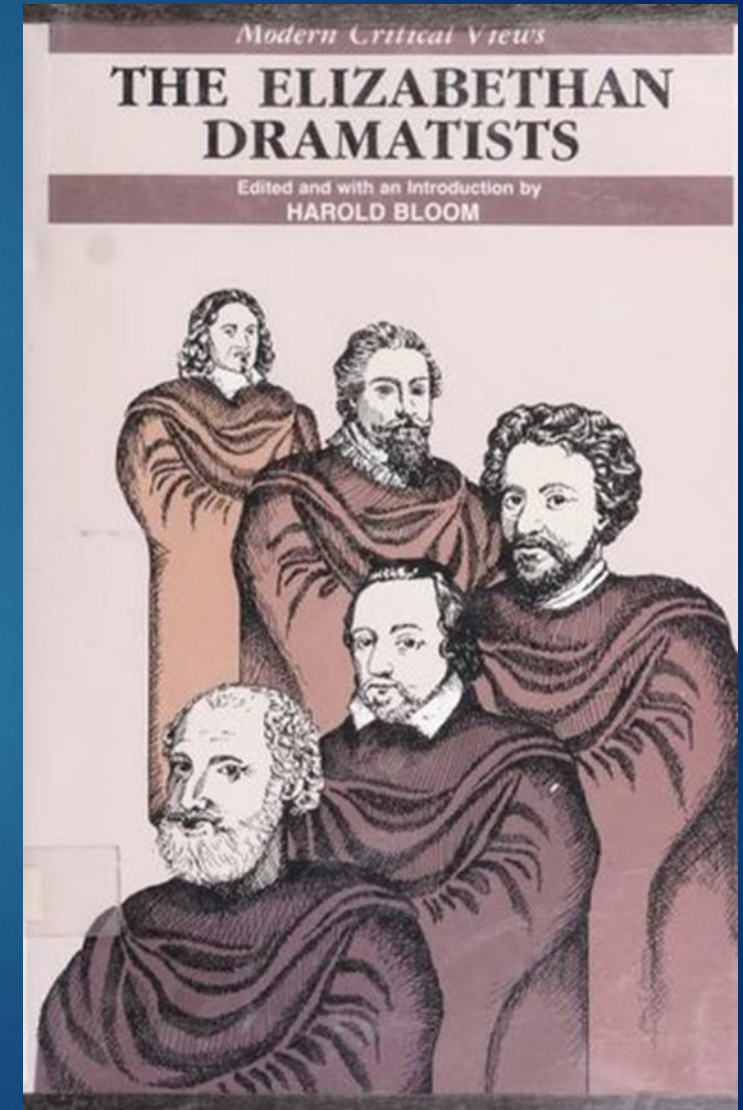
- Means “a play between”
- Bridge btw. Morality and Renaissance drama
- Secularisation of drama begins with Interludes
- Short plays, intended for entertainment (something new in the aim of drama)
- Themes are vanity of the world (morality) and the importance of learning (Renaissance)
- Chrs. not taken from bible, nor are allegorical
- Performed by household troupes, belonging to the houses of the nobility
- Place of performance: Lords’ houses and sometimes on tours with permission of their masters

THE INTERLUDES

- Following interludes we have the appearance of first English comedy (Nicholas Udall’s *Ralph Roister Doister* (c. 1530)) and first English tragedy, Sackville and Norton’s *Gorboduc* (1564).
- Udall, influenced by Roman comedy writers Terence and Plautus, (5 acts, stock characters, middle class)
- *Gorboduc* written under influence of Seneca (Roman tragedy writer)
- Has all characteristics of classical drama

The University Wits

- ✓ A Group Of Late 16th C Playwrights **educated at Oxford / Cambridge Universities**
- ✓ Term not used then, **later coined by George Saintsbury in 19th C**
- ✓ The Literary Elites of the Time / Significant Contribution in Various Forms : **Melodrama, Romantic Comedy, Revenge Tragedy, Historical Plays, Tragi-comedy etc.,**
- ✓ Began as actors, Revised old Plays, then became Independent writers – **They knew both Stage & Audience**
- ✓ Shared some Common Features – each contributed in own way for the growth of English Drama
- ✓ They upheld the Classical Ideals, **Not observed Three Unities for Real Life Incidents,** Not Plot / Character but on Language
- ✓ Shakespeare greatly indebted to these writers as **‘Predecessors’**



John Lyly

John Lyly was an English writer, poet, dramatist, playwright, and politician, best known for his books *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* and *Euphues and His England*. Lyly's mannered literary style, originating in his first books, is known as euphuism.



Born: 1553, Canterbury, United Kingdom

Died: November 1606, London, UK.

Education: Magdalen College, University of Cambridge, University of Oxford

John Lyly

- ▶ Considered as **the Leader** among others
- ▶ **Themes chosen** from Classical deities, Love – principal theme, touch of country life & behaviour
- ▶ **Refined language** suitable for drama – full of puns, conceits, witty dialogues
- ▶ Added **feminine qualities** of delicacy, grace, charm & subtlety to drama
- ▶ Profuse use of **lyrical songs** in dramas, improved art of plot construction
- ▶ Known for his prose romance, **Eupheus (1579)** – developed a literary style called ‘euphuism’
- ▶ Best Comedies – **Endimion, Gallathea, Midas Compaspe** – Shak’s first master for comedies

Christopher Marlowe

- ▶ Most outstanding dramatist, Prime creative force in English Lit., Representative of Renaissance
- ▶ **Dramatic techniques** : **Theory of tragedy**, refined **Blank Verse**, **Concept of Tragic Hero**-his spiritual conflict from Doctor Faustus & Edward II
- ▶ **Impo. plays**: **The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus**, **Tamburlaine**, **Jew of Malta**, **Edward II**, **The Massacre at Paris**, **Dido Queen of Carthage** - **Only Tragedies**
- ▶ **Poetry** : **Hero and Leander**, **The Passionate Shepherd to his Love** (lyric)
- ▶ **Edward II** - model for Shak's Historical plays,
Dr. Faustus – blend of Morality play & Spiritual tragedy
- ▶ Marlowe laid strong foundation for English drama

Christopher Marlowe

Christopher Marlowe, also known as Kit Marlowe, was an English playwright, poet and translator of the Elizabethan era. Marlowe was the foremost Elizabethan tragedian of his day.



Born: February 6, 1564, Canterbury, UK.
Died: May 30, 1593, London, United Kingdom
Education: University of Cambridge, The King's School, Canterbury, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Thomas Kyd

Thomas Kyd was an English playwright, the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*, and one of the most important figures in the development of Elizabethan drama.



Born: November 6, 1558, London, UK.
Died: August 15, 1594, London, UK.
Education: Merchant Taylors' School,
Northwood

Thomas Kyd

- ▶ Very important member of Uni. Wits
- ▶ His contribution- intrinsically & historically
- ▶ **The Spanish Tragedy** – famous play, melodrama of passion, revenge play modelled after Senecan tragedy
- ▶ **The Tragedy of Soylomon & Perseda**
- ▶ **Jeronimo, Apology for Actors**
- ▶ But, important next only to Marlowe
- ▶ Influenced Shakespeare for Revenge Tragedies

Robert Greene

- ▶ A scholar of both Universities, travelled widely over Europe
- ▶ Influenced by Italian Writers – important for developing Romantic Comedy
- ▶ His Works – **The Comical History of Alphonus, King of Aragon** – imitates Marlowe’s ‘Tamburlaine, the great’
- ▶ **A Looking Glass for London and England** – in collaboration with Thomas Lodge
- ▶ **The History of Orlando Furioso** – Lyrical poems
- ▶ **The Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bongay**
- ▶ **The History of James IV** – not a Chronicle Play but a fictional story of a king
- ▶ Developed regular plot expressing deep human feelings – commendable

Thomas Lodge

Thomas Lodge was an English physician and author during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Elizabethan poet, dramatist, satirist, pamphlet, treatise, and prose writer.



Born: 1558, London, United Kingdom

Died: 1625, London, United Kingdom

Education: Trinity College Merchant Taylors' School

Thomas Nashe

- ▶ A Pamphleteer & Story writer
 - Wanted to try every form of writing
- ▶ *Summer's Last Will and Testament*
- ▶ *The Unfortunate Traveller*
 - Yet, his contribution is very limited

George Peele

- Very short dramatic career
 - Works – shows variety of forms
- *Araygnment of Paris* - a pastoral-masque
- *King Edward I* – chronicle-history play
- *King David* – a miracle play
- *The Old Wive's Tale* – a satirical drama - First dramatic literary satire in English

To Summarise...

- ▶ **John Lyly** – Refined Language as dramatic medium of expression, improved the art of ‘plot construction’, blend of tragic & comic plot-‘life as it is’ – inspired Shak’s **Tragic-comedies**
 - ▶ **Thomas Kyd** – introduced ‘**Revenge Tragedy**’ – imitated by Shak.
 - ▶ **Marlowe** – introduced ‘**concept of tragedy**’ – not of noble birth, but anybody
 - Tragic Heroes – not born great, but with super-human will-power
 - Fall of Hero – not as cruelty of fate, but due to human weakness – conflict
 - perfected ‘**blank verse**’ – known as Marlowe’s ‘**mighty lines**’
- ‘Each of them in their own way, carried the English drama a step further towards perfection, Shak. is greatly indebted to all 7 for his fame’**

Ben Jonson – 1573 - 1637

- A Classicist, Moralist & Reformer of Eng. Drama
- Wrote **Comedies, Tragedies, Masques & Lyrics**
- Like **John Donne**, Jonson revolted against artistic principles (for beauty's sake)
- Turned from the romantic exuberance to Classics – a **Conscious artist** – of all genres of writing
- **Chief function of Lit:** “to instruct /not to please”
- Strictly observed “**Three unities**” – as classicist : Time, Place & Action (unlike Shak.)
- Characters – important, represent ‘types’ than individual, **Introduced : “Comedy of Humours”**
- **Post-Shak.an – Dramatist, Poet & an Actor**

- **BEN JONSON**
contemporary of William Shakespeare, he is best known for his satirical plays, particularly Volpone, The Alchemist, and Bartholomew Fair, which are considered his best, and his lyric poem



Ben Jonson's Works

Early Comedies – vivacity & fun

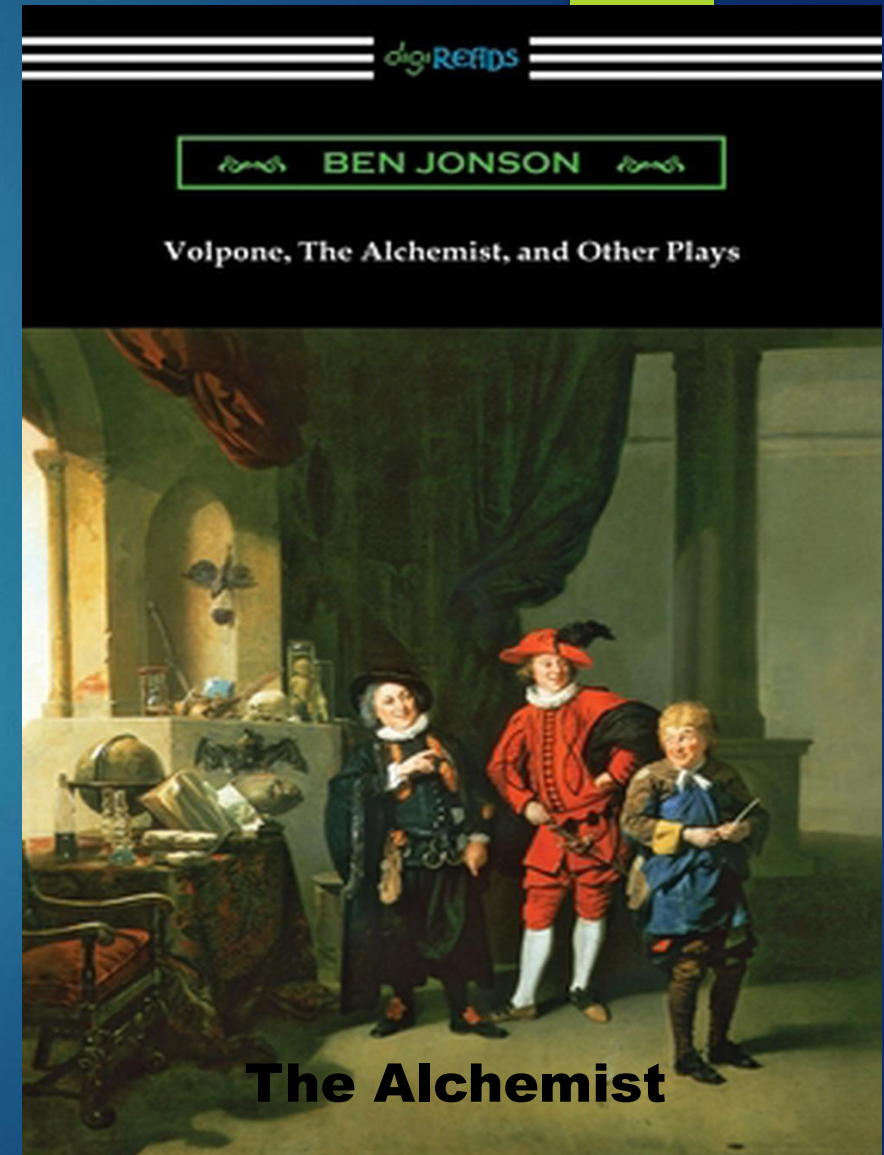
- ❖ **Everyman in His Humour (1598) – Greatest work**
- ❖ **Everyman out of His Humour (1599)**
- ❖ **Cynthia's Revels (1600)**
- ❖ **The Poetaster**

Comedies of Middle Age – Mature & Best

- ❖ **Volpone or the Fox (1605)**
- ❖ **Epicene or the Silent Woman (1609)**
- ❖ **The Alchemist (1610)**
- ❖ **Bartholomew Fair (1614)**

Historical Tragedies – on Classical models

- ❖ **Sejanus his fall**
- ❖ **Latiline**



Comedy of Humours

Every Man in His Humour

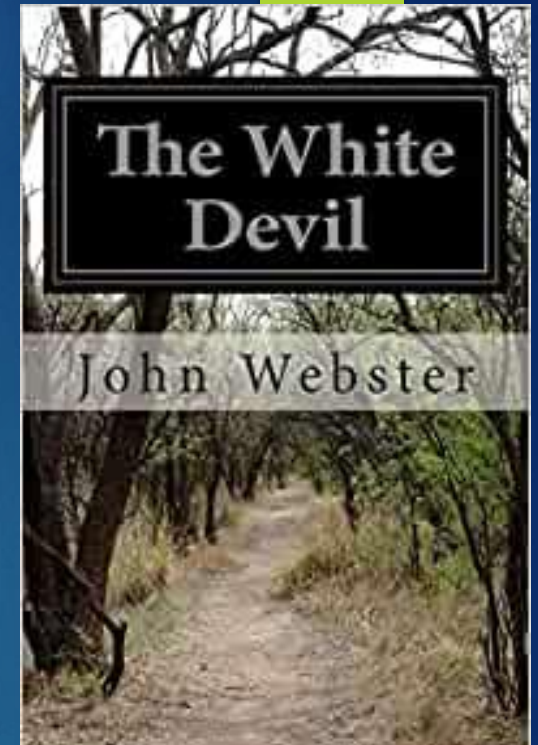
- ▣ *Every Man in His Humour* is a 1598 play by the English playwright Ben Jonson. The play belongs to the subgenre of the "humours comedy," in which each major character is dominated by an overriding humour or obsession.



- ▶ Everyman has 4 humours or fluids in body – **Sanguine, Choler, Phlegm, Melancholy** represent air, water, fire and earth
- ▶ The Predominance of one of these lead to the char's dispositions (eg) **Choler** made him irresistible, **Melancholy** – pessimistic, **Phlegm** – slow & sluggish, **Sanguine** – lively & optimistic
- ▶ Excessive of one humour means an **idiosyncrasy, eccentricity / oddity of character** - exaggerates it to the point of absurdity
- ▶ **Everyman in...** - I Comedy - key to all his plays
- ▶ **Everyman out of...** - a conceptual sequel to first
- ▶ Through satiric comedies - brings the manners & weakness to correct their characters
- ▶ **Volpone** – the Climax of all his satires

Other Dramatists

- ✓ **John Webster** -Biography – not known much
 - Perfected the '**Revenge Tragedy**', fashioned by Thomas Kyd
 - ▶ **Major Works** – The White Devil, The Duchess of Malfi
 - full of lust & crime, hatred & vengeance depicted, Employs ghosts & spirits to create horror & terror
 - ▶ Saintsbury – calls him “**A limb of Shakespeare**”
- ✓ **Francis Beaumont & John Fletcher**
 - **Roughly 52 plays** written in collaboration – **Tragic Comedies**
 - ▶ **Works** – The Maid's Tragedy, Philaster, A King and No King
 - Plays – a study of jealousy, occasional flashes of honour
 - Depicted **weakness & corruption of upper class society** – high morality
 - ▶ Limitations – lack of complication of plots & good characterisation
 - ▶ **B & F** – **influenced Shak** in his last stage of life – theme & Characterization
- ✓ **Sir Philip Sidney** – **also a poet**
 - ▶ **Arcadia** – a prose romance, **An Apology for Poetry** – the best critical essay



The Selected Works of Francis
Beaumont and John Fletcher
Francis Beaumont & John Fletcher



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S. Valarmathi

TIME TO DISCUSS...