

Pastoral Poetry Notes

Notes for "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love."

Pastoral lyric: Poetry that expresses emotions in an idyllic setting. It is related to the term "pasture," and is associated with shepherds writing music to their flocks. The tradition goes back to David in the Bible and Hesiod the Greek poet.

The themes of the poem - *carpe diem* and the immediate gratification of their sexual passions.

Love in the May countryside will be like a return to the Garden of Eden. There is a tradition that our problems are caused by having too many restrictions, by society. If we could get away from these rules, we could return to a pristine condition of happiness. The "free love" movement of the 1960's was a recent manifestation of this utopian belief. If the nymph would go a-maying with the shepherd, they would have a perfect life. The shepherd invites his beloved to experience the joys of nature.

He hopes to return with the nymph to an Edenic life of free love in nature.

Notes for "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd."

Raleigh argues that it is not society that taints sexual love. We are already tainted before we enter society. Raleigh combines *carpe diem* with *tempus fugit* in an unusual way. Normally we should seize the day because time flies. Raleigh argues that because time flies, we should NOT seize the day. There will be consequences to their roll in the grass. Time does not stand still; winter inevitably follows the spring; therefore, we cannot act on impulses until we have examined the consequences.

The world is NOT young--we are not in Eden, but in this old fallen world - a world in which shepherds have actually been known to lie to their nymphs.

This poem by Sir Walter Raleigh uses the same meter and references to present "mirror images" of Marlowe's poem. The feminine persona (the nymph) of the poem sets up a hypothetical set of questions that undermine the intelligence of the man's offer because all that he offers is transitory. She reverses his images into negative ones:

- rocks grow cold
- fields yield to the harvest
- the flocks are driven to fold in winter
- rivers rage
- birds complain of winter (a reference to the story of Philomela who was raped and turned into a nightingale).

We live in a fallen world. Free love in the grass is impossible now because the world is not in some eternal spring. The seasons pass, as does time. Nymphs grow old, and shepherds grow cold.