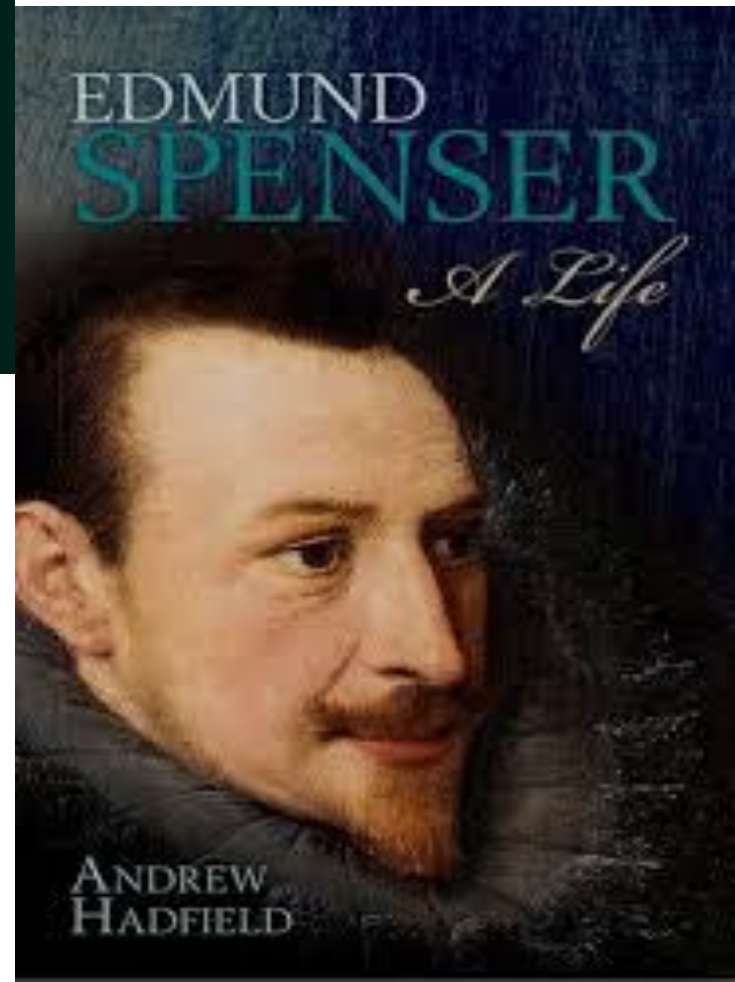




*"The poets' scrolls will
outlive the monuments
of stone. Genius
survives; all else is
claimed by death."*

Edmund Spenser



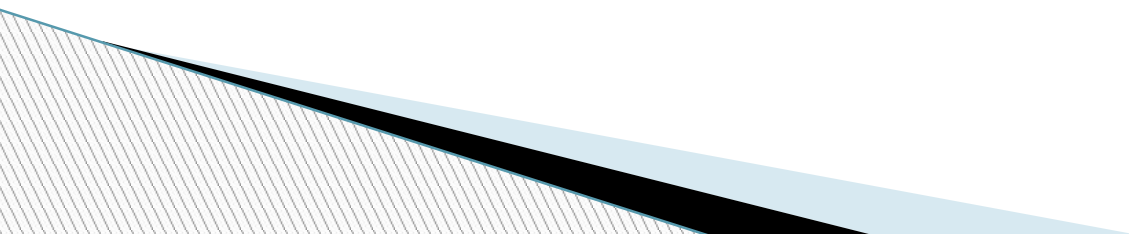
Spenser lived and wrote **during the early years of the English Renaissance, and he heavily influenced other Renaissance writers.**

Milton alludes to him in much of his work, including his two most important works: "**Lycidas**" and **Paradise Lost**.

he worked in various government posts in Ireland.

But, ultimately, he **sought a place at court through his poetry.**

What better way to try and do that than by courting the queen's favour?



remains **one of the most celebrated poets in English history.**

His influence lasted far beyond the reaches of the Renaissance.

You can find him popping up in **Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison"** during the Romantic period

and T.S. Eliot's modernist work, **The Waste Land.**

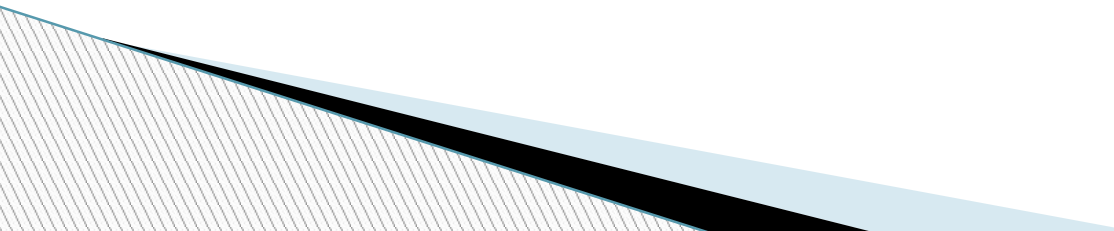
The ***Fairie Queene*** takes themes and values from Medieval literature and to create a fantasy journey through magic lands.

Fairie Queene, six separate books - one of the best allegorical pieces from the era of renaissance until now

.

The concept of Fairie Queene, in deeper sense reveals the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism.

Spenser, a protestant himself was always against the two-facedness of Catholic Papacy.



"Epithalamion"

The title of this work is the Greek word for celebrating a couple on their wedding.

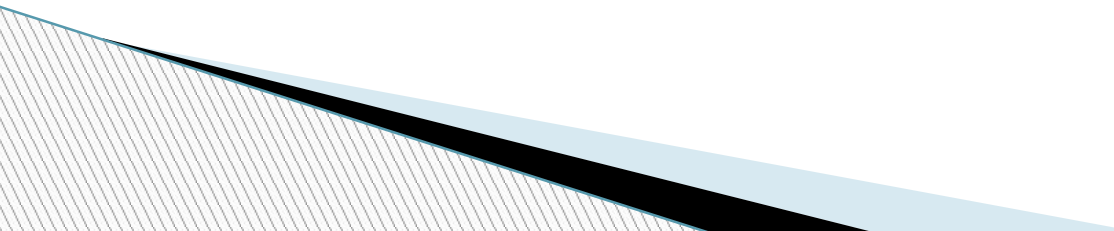
Spenser wrote his "**Epithalamion**" in honour of his marriage to his second wife, **Elizabeth Boyle**.

Epithalamion and *Prothalamion* are eminent pieces of love poems.



Spenser penned the *Shepherd's calendar*, which is essentially a verse of careful combination of rustic and archaic words, a project that was **wholly dedicated to Sir. Phillip Sidney.**

The poem covered 12 pastoral verses or eclogues each corresponding to a month of the year.

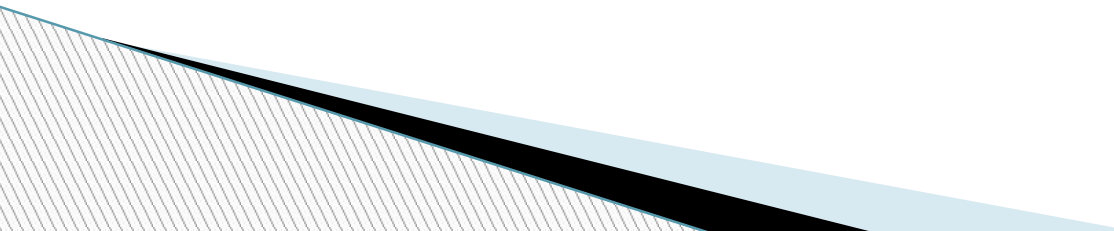
- ▶ Edmund Spenser's "Prothalamion" -
 - ▶ **most respected** poems in English literature
 - ▶ **loveliest wedding odes**
- 

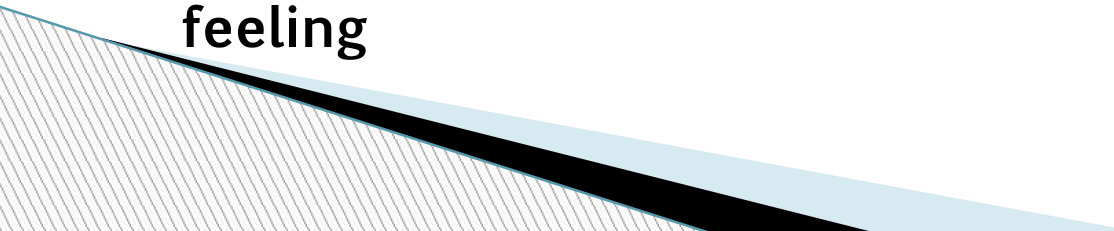
- ▶ tone- piece of poetry designated for a celebratory event
- ▶ the double wedding of the two daughters of Edward Somerset.

- ▶ The verse is essentially the **wedlock of twin sisters**;
- ▶ A Spousal verse ...
- ▶ in honour of the double marriage of the two honourable and virtuous ladies –



▶ the Lady Elizabeth and the Lady Katherine Somerset -with Henry Gilford and William Peter



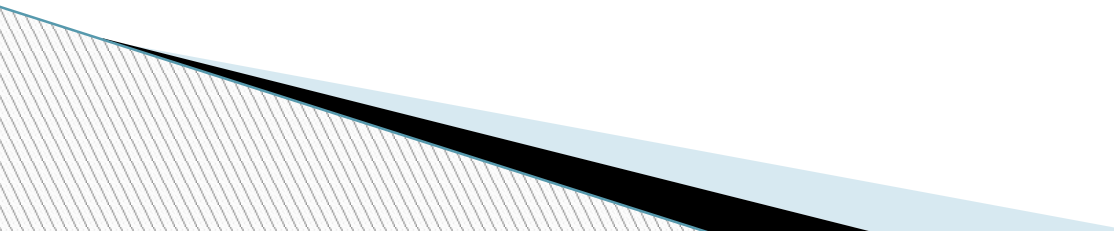
- ▶ *Prothalamion* is Spenser's **second wedding song-**
 - ▶ the poem is modelled - *Epithalamion*.
 - ▶ but most readers rank it somewhat below the magnificent “*Epithalamion*,”
 - ▶ some find it **rather formal** and **lacking in warmth of feeling**
- 

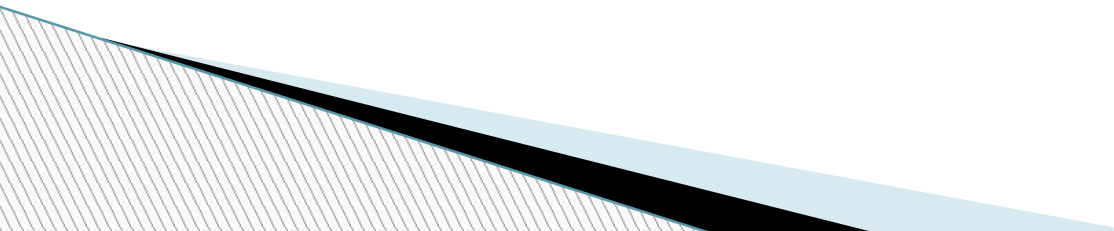
- ▶ Prothalamion – wedding poem

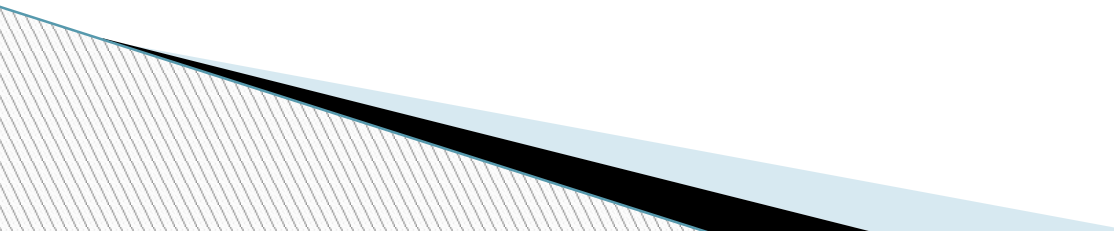
- ▶

- ▶ Prothalamion- song or poem **in honour of a bride and bridegroom** before their wedding


- ▶
- ▶ Epithalamium (or Epithalamion) is a **wedding poem written in honour of a bride and bridegroom**

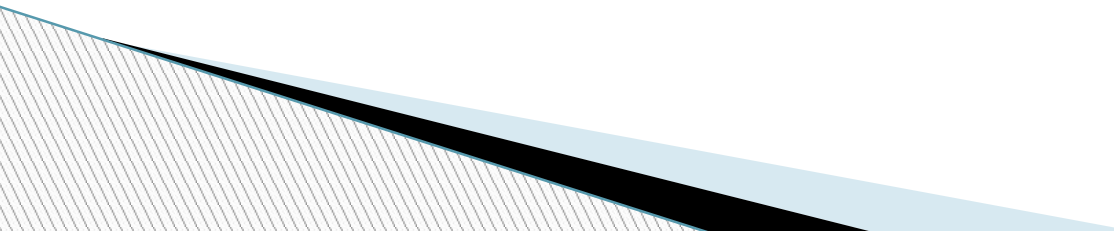
- ▶ he celebrates the occasion of the marriage of the daughters of Earl of Worcester.
 - ▶ the poet attempts to win a patronage and the favour of the Queen
- 

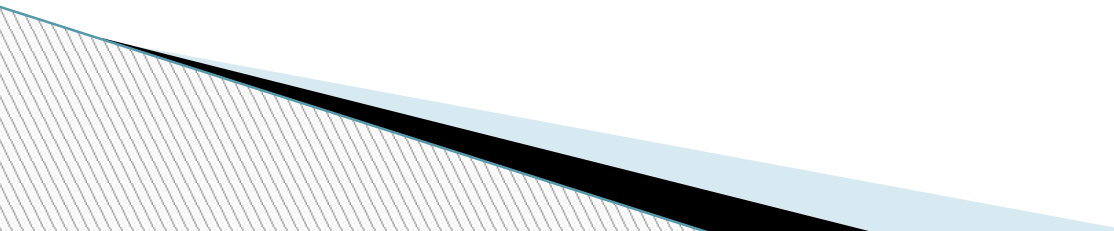
- ▶ *Prothalamion* (1596) –
 - ▶ at a time of disappointment and trouble
 - ▶ he is a passive observer
 - ▶
 - ▶ hence it naturally does not voice the ecstasy of passion
- 

- ▶ poem fails to achieve unity because its "intention" is divided between –
 - ▶ occasion the poem – the celebration of the forthcoming nuptials –
 - ▶ and a frustrated bid for patronage
- 

- ▶ the poem contains many references to **issues the people of England** dealt with during that time period-

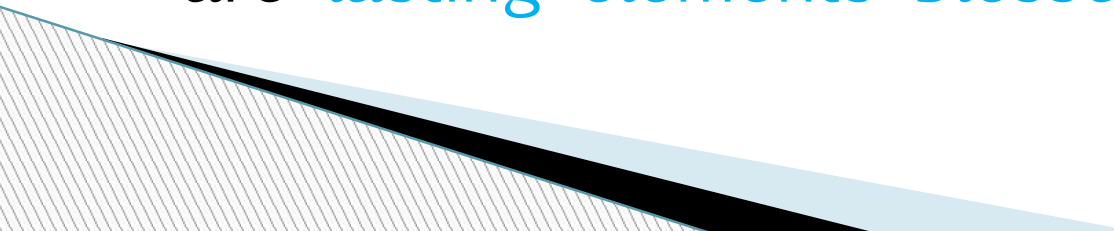
- ▶ such as a burgeoning (flourish) nationalism –
 - ▶
 - ▶ imperialism
 - ▶ and a patriarchal view of sexual dominance over women.
- 

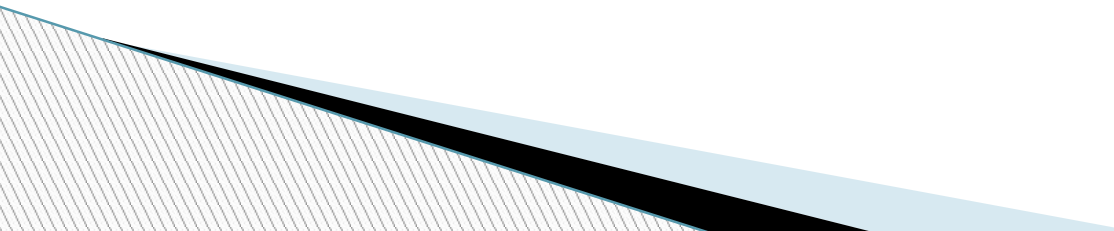
- ▶ Refrain - “Sweet Themmes runne softly till I end my song,”
 - ▶ Spencer **invokes and appeals** to the **sense of nationalism** among those in attendance at the wedding
- 

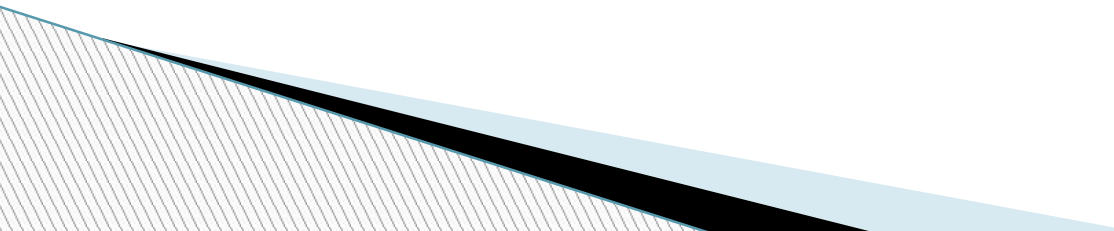
- ▶ calling forth **one of the symbols** of his country
 - ▶ Spenser's **role as poet laureate**, and pontificator of all things officially poetic
- 

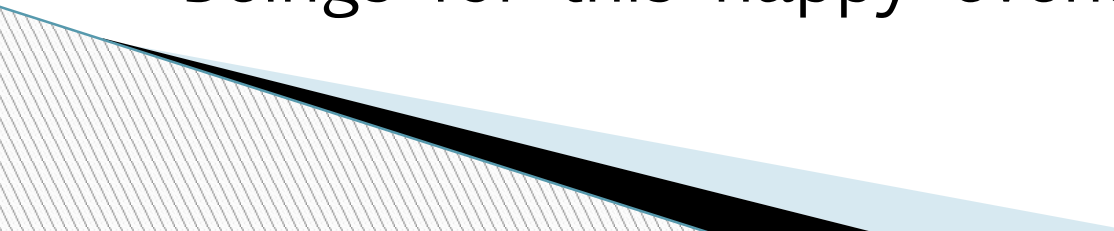


- ▶ Not only of appeal to national identity
- ▶ a symbol of permanence – in wedding
- ▶

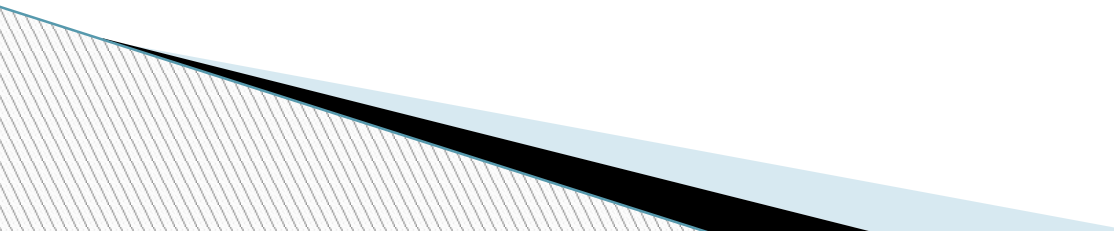
- ▶ Like their country, its national watery symbol
 - ▶ and the marriage vow
 - ▶ there is a sense among the reader that these are lasting elements blessed by the Gods
- 

- ▶ The entreaties of numerous Greek gods and goddesses –
 - ▶ intentional invocation or blessing for these unions from the highest authority
- 

- ▶ tinge of mythological figures like Venus, (IV -10)
 - ▶ Cynthia (VII – 14)
 - ▶
 - ▶ Titan (I – 4)
- 

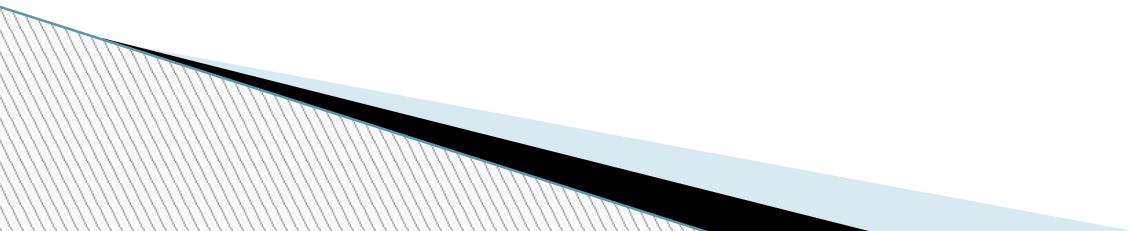
- ▶ various elements –
 - ▶ appeal to nationalism
 - ▶ the permanence of the softly running Themes
 - ▶ blessings from among the highest divine beings for this happy event
- 

- ▶ on comparison with Epithalamion, the verse is considered less realistic and unappealing
- ▶ Spenser **incorporates classical imagery** strongly with a beautiful atmosphere in the poem.
- ▶

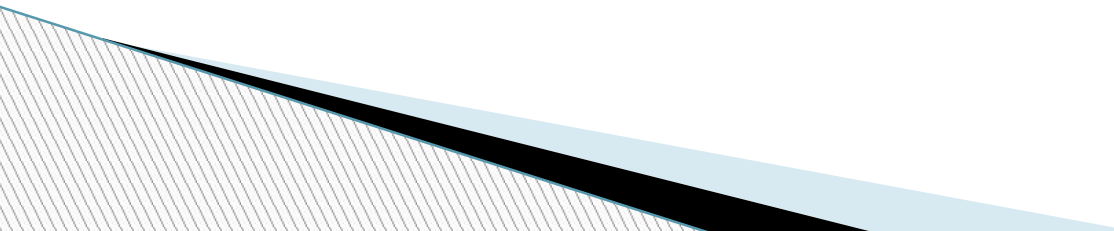
- ▶ Sense of completeness is the motif of pairing
 - ▶ mortal man is paired with the supernatural-
 - ▶ "And let fair Venus, that is Queen of Love,/
With her Heart-quelling Son upon you smile—
- 

- ▶ Nature is paired with the supernatural—
- ▶ Them [the swans] heavenly born, or to be that same Pair
- ▶ Which through the Sky draw Venus' silver Teem:

- ▶ Christian symbols are included with pagan imagery-

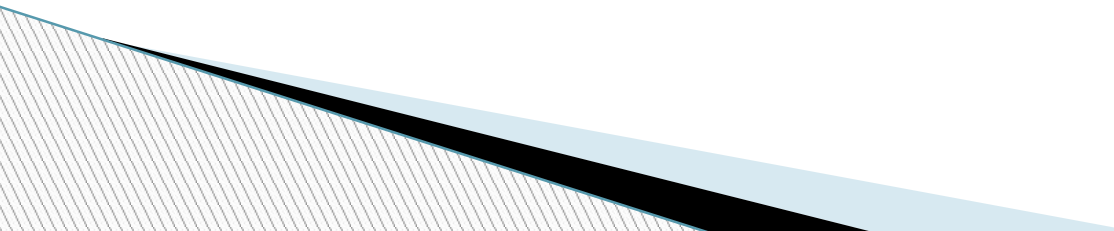
- ▶ In Spenser's verse - there are several themes:
 - ▶ The Pastoral and the Sea
 - ▶ Rivers, and Streams
 - ▶ Love and marriage
- 

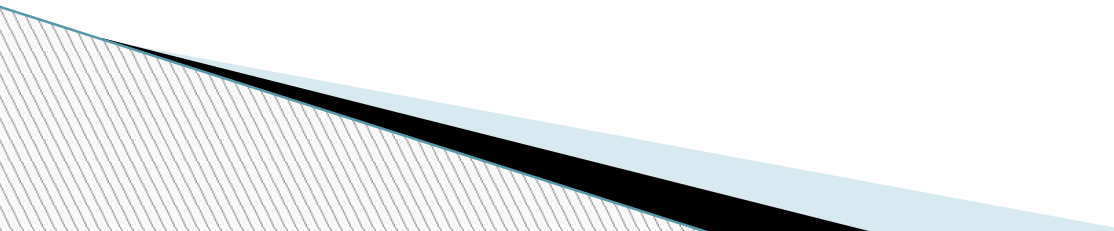
- ▶ Several lines are devoted to the beauty of nature –
- ▶ Walk'd forth to ease my pain
- ▶ Along the shore of silver-streaming Thames;
- ▶ Whose ruddy bank, the which his river hems,
- ▶ Was painted all with variable flowers
- ▶ the pastoralized location is quite simply the earthen banks of the Thames.

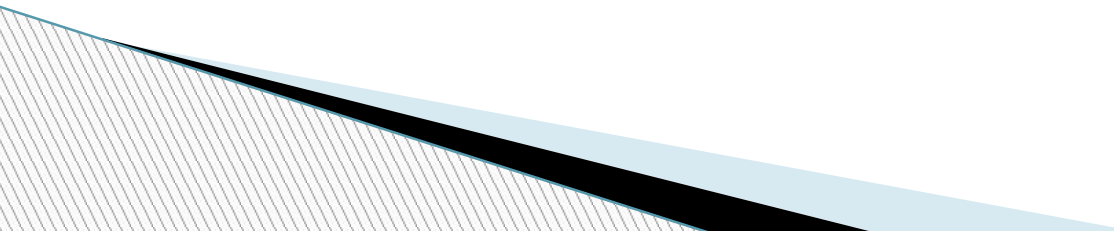
- ▶ Marriage and Companionship:
 - ▶ Received those two fair Birds, their Love's delight;
 - ▶ Which, at the appointed tide,
 - ▶ Each one did make his bride
- 

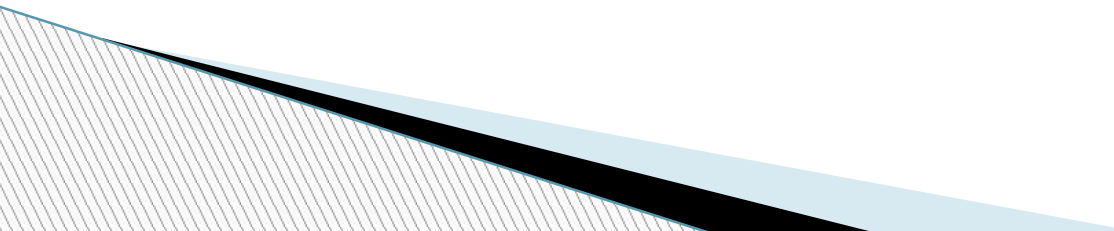
- ▶ Mythology and Christian Folklore:
- ▶ "Nor Jove himself when he a Swan would be"


- ▶ The Political –
- ▶ Spenser alludes to his fall from the graces of the Earl of Leicaster and corruption in the court:



- ▶ “In Princes Courts, and Expectations vain
 - ▶ Of idle Hopes, which still do fly away,”
 - ▶ He describes himself in the *Prothalamion* as a disappointed suitor at court.
- 


- ▶ We know from the *Prothalamion* that London was his birthplace.
 - ▶ "Merry London, my most kindly nurse, That to me gave this life's first native source."
- 

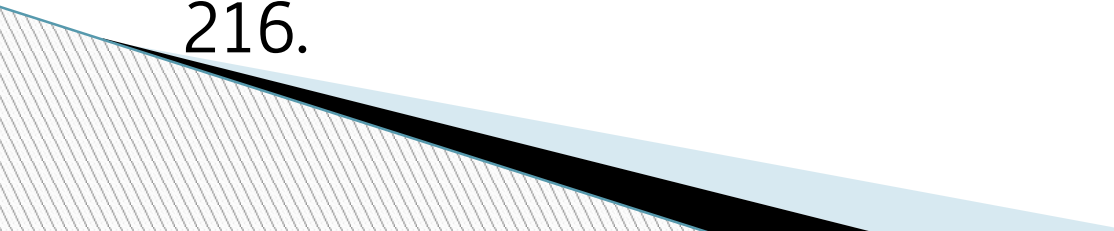
- ▶ **Quality - characteristics**
 - ▶ Spenser's mellifluous (pleasingly smooth) verse
 - ▶ its balance and lyricism as well as his splendid ability to summon resplendent images of gods -
- 

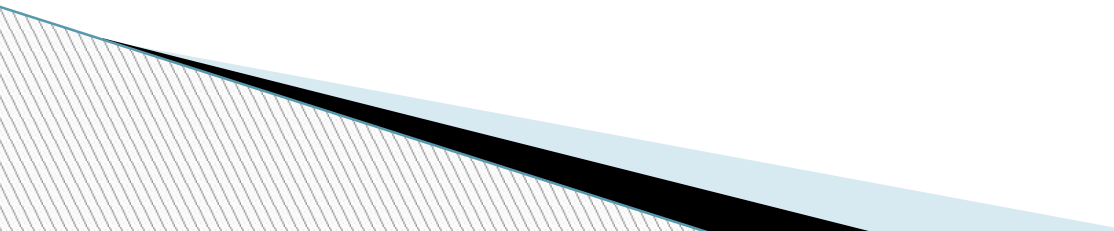
- ▶ natural beauty and grace-
 - ▶ astronomical being -
 - ▶ prevailing love throughout the lines makes "Prothalamion" not just a beautiful wedding poem-
 - ▶ but also a celebration of the resplendent images of joy.
- 

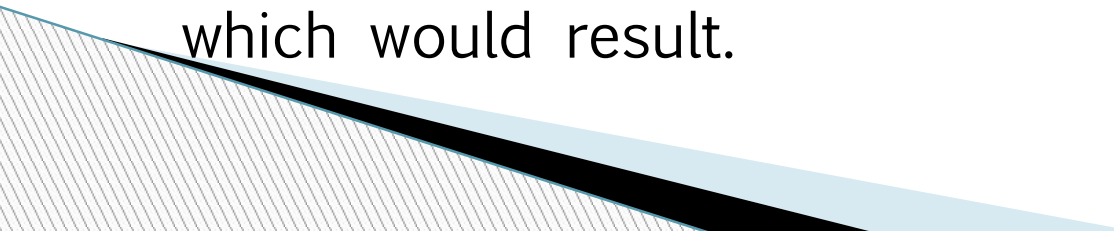
- ▶ Sir Sidney Lee-
- ▶ Refrain - “Sweet Themmes runne softly till I end my song,” -
- ▶ "Its far famed refrain . . . It leaves an ineffaceable impression of **musical grace and simplicity**. It was Spenser's fit farewell to his Muse.

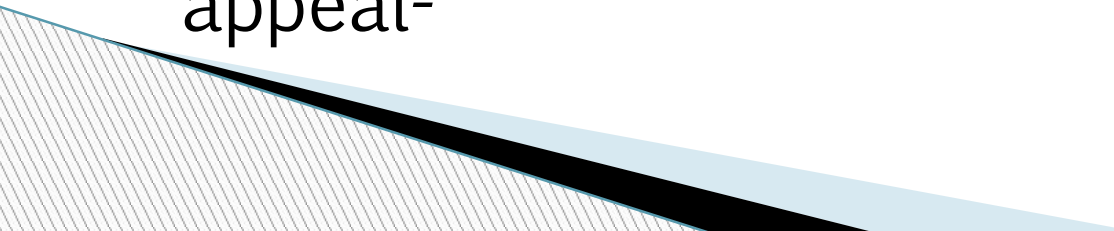
- ▶ The Prothalamion was Spenser's last published poem during his lifetime.

- ▶ Saintsbury:
 - ▶ Prothalamion was "even more beautiful than the Epithalamion itself in the gravity and delicate management of the refrain."
 - ▶ **George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody* (London, 1923), I, 362.**
- 

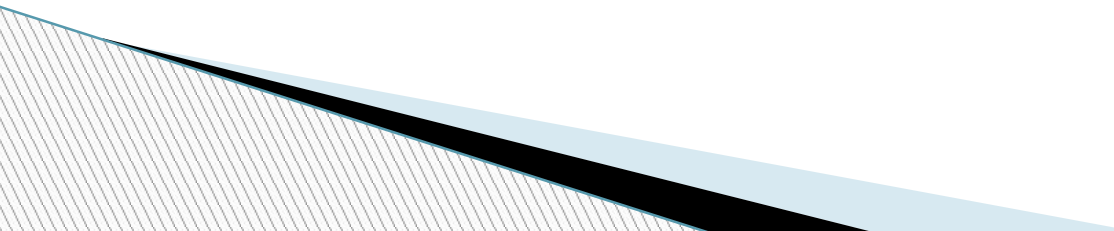
- ▶ Miss Ieng, calling attention to the function of the refrain –
 - ▶ "of persistently reminding the reader of the idea of singing," describes "Sweete Themmes runne softly, till I end my Song" as "unchangingly beautiful."
 - ▶ Catherin Ieng, Elizabethan Lyrics (London, 1951), p. 216.
- 

- ▶ Criticism –
 - ▶ though probably not deaf to the "musical grace and simplicity" of the line, have felt, not without reason, that the **entire refrain** at times **forced Spenser** into creating
 - ▶ some **strangely incongruous and awkward stanzas.**
- 

- ▶ Edward Marsh:
 - ▶ "Spenser has so little control over the refrain which
 - ▶ ends every stanza that he lets it force him into wishing his
 - ▶ two young couples 'fruitful issue upon their Brydale day,'
 - ▶ regardless of the inconvenience and even scandal which would result.
- 

- ▶ No one would deny the sheer musical appeal of the refrain;
 - ▶ effect of the refrain in every stanza-
 - ▶ and this may be one of the reasons for its appeal-
- 

- ▶ the second line of the refrain evidently implies some contrast.
- ▶ The poet seems to be coaxing (persuade), even praying to, "sweete Themmes" to "runne softly" till he ends his song

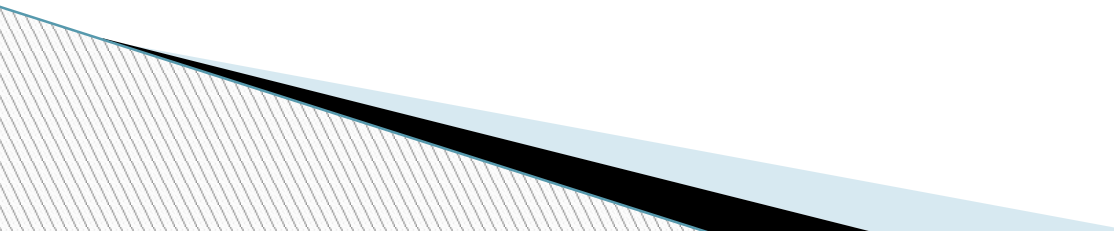
- ▶ What will happen when he does end his song?
 - ▶ Are we to assume the poet is addressing something extraordinary for the moment?
- 

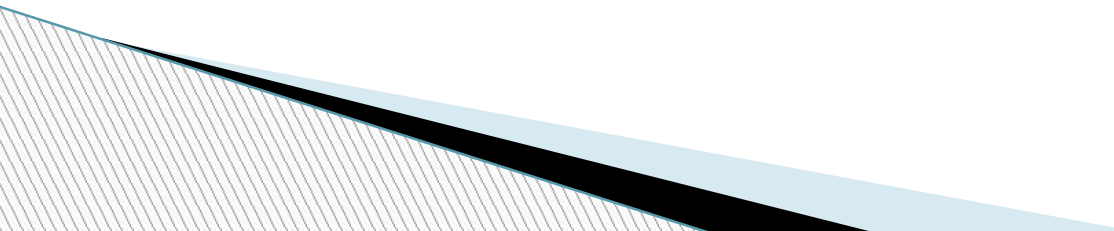
- ▶ The first word of the poem immediately suggests - that this was a special day-

- ▶ As in the refrain, the forces of nature are personified;
- ▶ the gentle west wind, Zephyrus, softly (like the river) delays hot Titan's beams

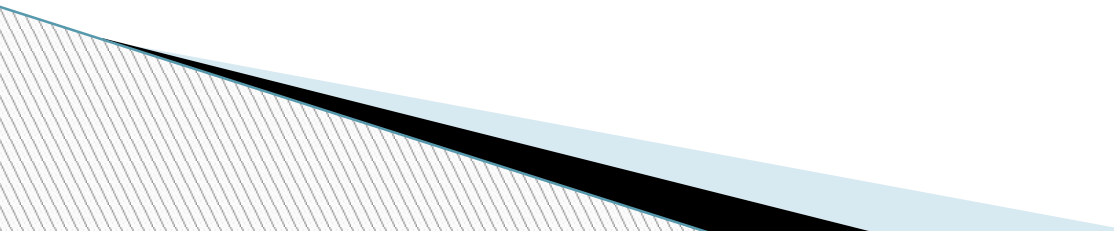
- ▶ Prothalamion is unified by plot and allegory-
- ▶ The **unity of plot** is provided by the **progression of the bridal party** from Somerset House to Essex House.

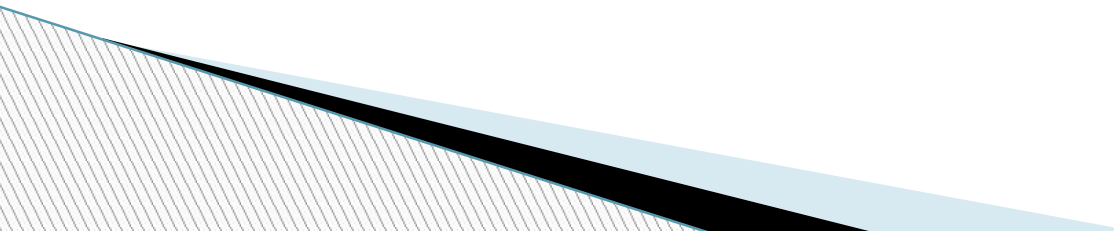


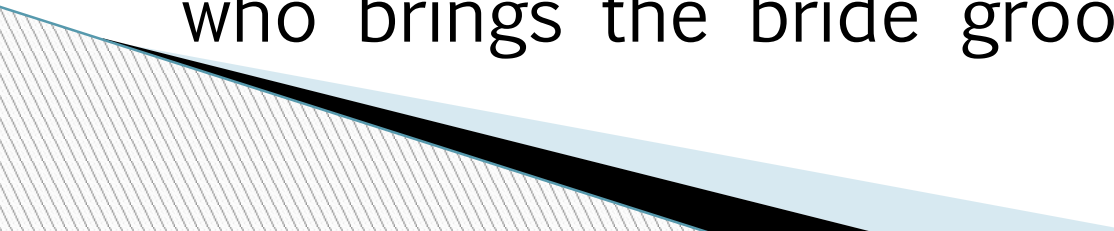
- ▶ The allegorical unity lies in the similitude of the brides to –
 - ▶ two swans swimming down the Thames attended by water-nymphs who are performing their summer observance on the banks
- 

- ▶ The poem ends with the meeting of the brides and bridegrooms, presided over by their protector, Essex.
 - ▶ The bridegrooms, compared to the stellified Castor and Pollux, are led almost to the river by Essex, who is compared to Hesperus.
- 

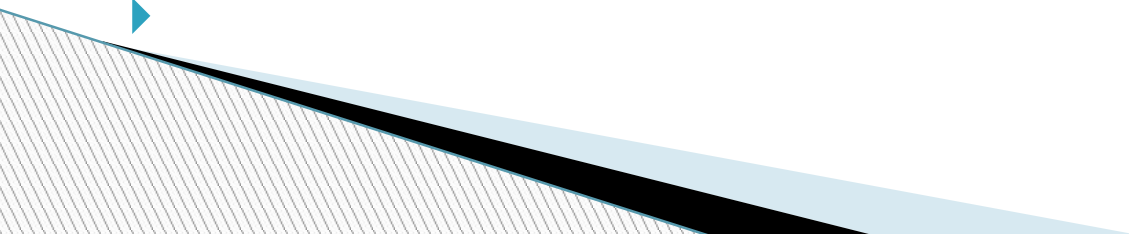
- ▶ The comparison is imitated from Virgil, Aeneid, viii. 589 ff., in which Pallas is compared to the Morning Star rising

- ▶ In Virgil, Pallas, the type of noble young warrior, is compared to the Morning Star (Lucifer);
 - ▶ Spenser's conceit turns on the fact that the Morning Star and the Evening Star are one.
- 

- ▶ In the simile Essex is described as the Morning Star but in the narrative action he descends to the river.
 - ▶ That is, he is the Evening Star.
- 

- ▶ Essex is the Morning Star in virtue of his warrior nobility-
 - ▶ and the Evening Star in respect of his role as protector of the brides, and the person who brings the bride grooms to the brides
- 

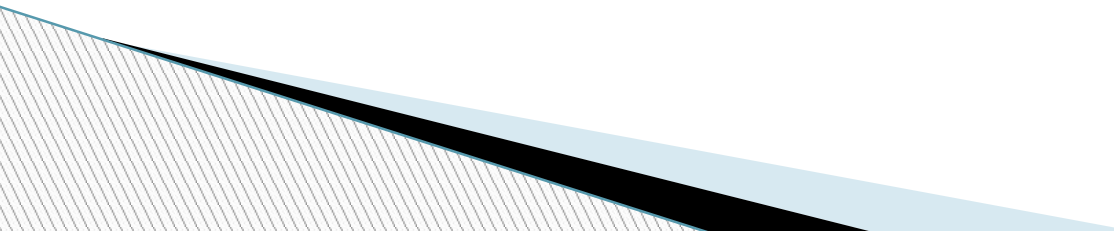
- ▶ David Daiches:
- ▶ " The poem ends with just a tinge of abruptness. It might have been better to conclude with the two bridegrooms welcoming their brides -



- ▶ -a picture of arrested movement, a tableau on which the curtain could be rung down-instead of moving on to give a very summary account of the wedding ('Which at th' appointed tide/ Each one did make his bride' 10-15).
- ▶
- ▶ But the refrain restores calm evenness of pace at the end."

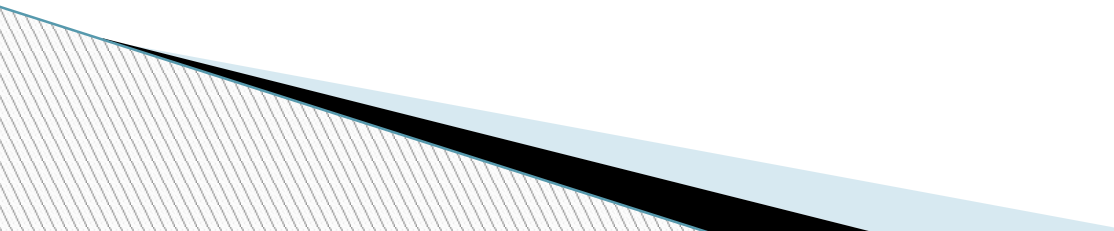
- ▶ Are the four lovers the main figures in this "spousal" or betrothal poem, ?

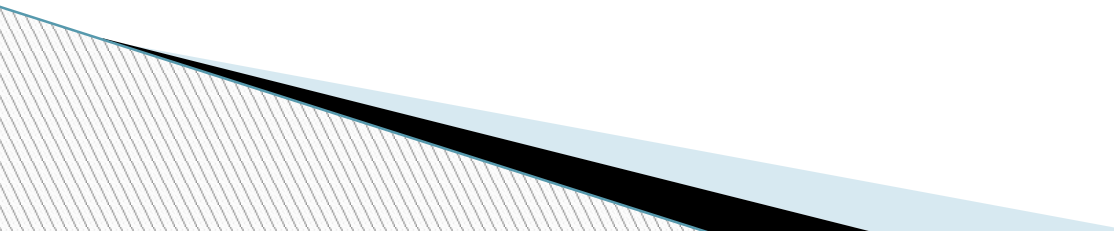
- ▶ The two bride grooms do not appear until the last stanza of the poem.

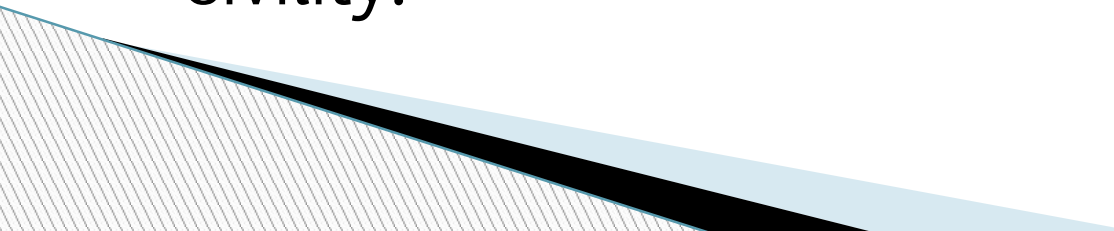
- ▶ The **two swans** who are the center of attention
 - ▶ in much of the poem presumably undergo a
before the last stanza; **mysterious metamorphosis**
 - ▶ They are seen no more after the seventh stanza.
- 

- ▶ Then there are those **greenish nymphs** and the one among them who makes a serious speech commanding every one's attention.

- ▶ The noble and heroic figure of the **Earl of Essex** emerges in the last stanzas.
- ▶ The allusions to Cynthia and "an
Queene" - suggest Elizabeth

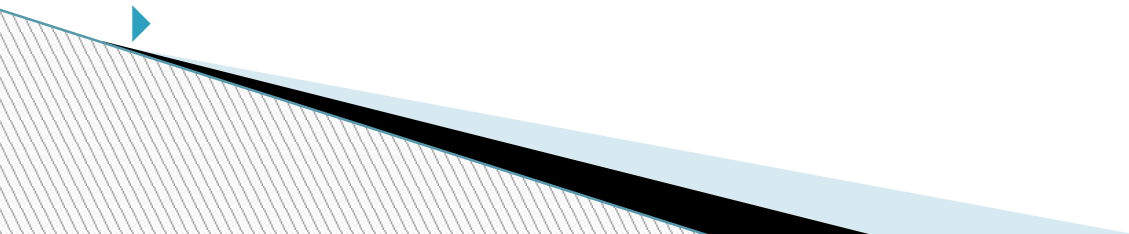
- ▶ Finally, - the poet-observer whose personal problems continue to obtrude in the poem.
 - ▶ In respect of these figures, and of the fact that the "Prothalamion" is one of the works of a very allusive mind –
 - ▶ one must at least consider the idea that the poem is about **much more than a double betrothal ceremony**
- 

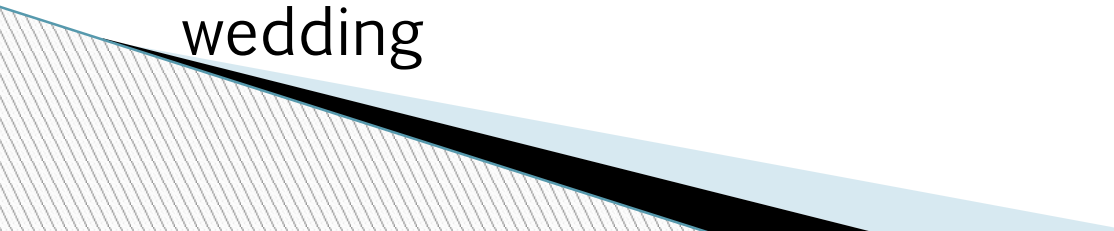
- ▶ A conventional account of the poem by B. E. C. Davis
 - ▶ and a brief - but provocative study by Dan S. Norton – suggest a way of satisfying
- 

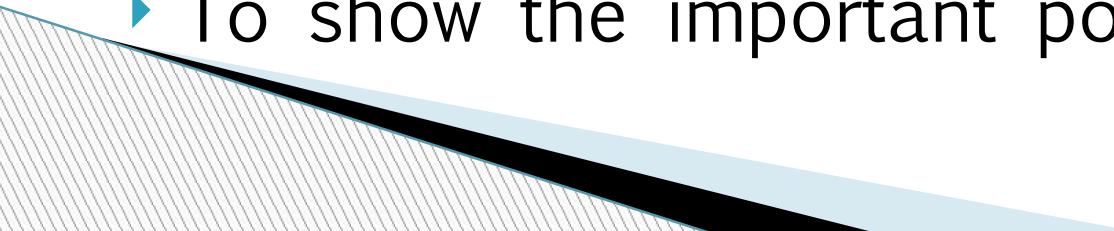
- ▶ “...Prothalamion is the proud and glowing
 - ▶ Eulogy of the Londoner to his native city,
 - ▶ Cleopolis - the fair and venerable home of civility.”
- 

- ▶ Professor Norton:
- ▶ sees the poem as commissioned by Spenser's patron Essex, and as being, in part a compliment to Queen Elizabeth, married to "the Kingdome of England," whose Accession Day, November 17, was "not long" after the date set for the double wedding

- ▶ "Prothalamion" is Spenser's tribute
- ▶ to Essex - in Spenser's opinion England's fair hope
- ▶ to Queen Elizabeth - the virgin queen devoted only to Church and State



- ▶
 - ▶ the tribute dependent on the symbolic wedding of Elizabeth and Essex
 - ▶ treated only in a veiled and allusive manner –
 - ▶ the poet explores the various meanings of a wedding
- 


- ▶ In the first stanza " Hot Titans beames " are delayed by "Sweete breathing Zephyrus" on a " calme" day. "
 - ▶ Calme," emphasized by the unusual stress of the first syllable of the first line-
 - ▶ To show the important point of temperance:
- 

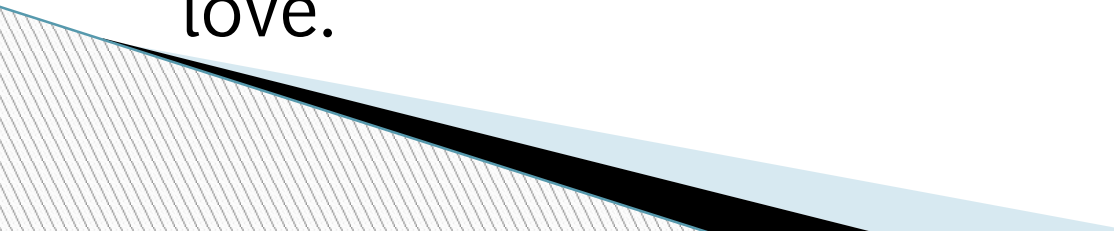
▶ :

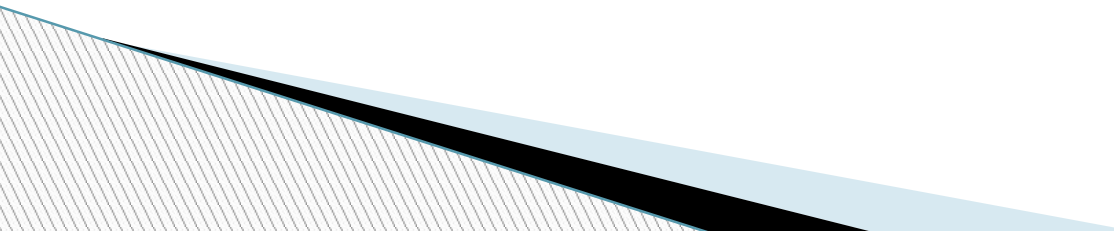
▶ the lovers' passions must be controlled and ordered in marriage -

▶ .

- ▶ If in the first stanza one finds the
bridegroom
- ▶ and his passion associated with the sun and
his " beames, which then did glister fair,"

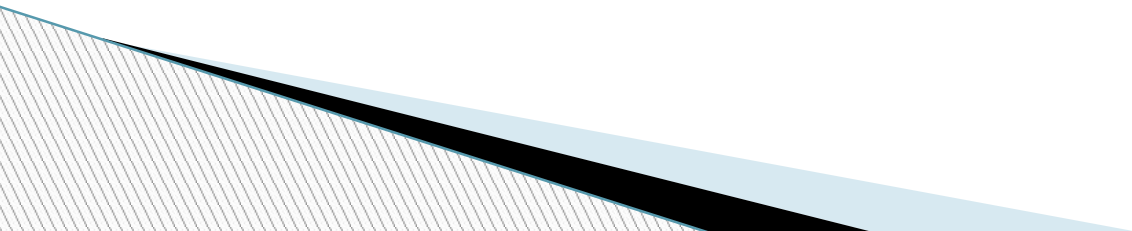
- ▶ in the tenth stanza one may find a parallel when Essex is compared to Hesperus.
 - ▶ when his golden hayre
 - ▶ In th' Ocean billowes he hath Bathed fayre,
 - ▶ Descended to the Riuers open vewing,
 - ▶ With a great train ensuing
- 

- ▶ The appearance of such imagery –
 - ▶ especially that of hair and bathing –
 - ▶ almost at the end of the ceremony of betrothal, suggests the consummation of love.
- 

- ▶ In the ninth and tenth stanzas of the poem Spenser details the conquest of virginity by the two grooms over their prospective brides.
 - ▶ In writing of the grooms “Hercules two pillors,” Spenser calls to mind intentionally phallic imagery.
- 

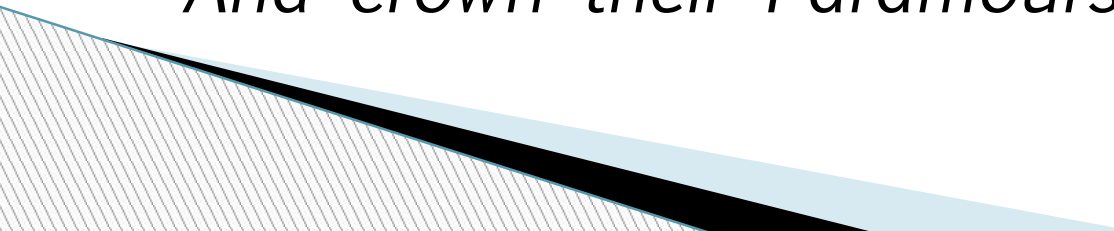
- ▶ In his line, “Whose dreadfull name, late through all Spaine did thunder,”
- ▶ Spenser writes of the **beginning – the British Empire**, - comparing it to sexual conquest.
- ▶ “Joy have though of they noble victorie,” seems to refer to the almost **violent taking of virginity by the two grooms**.

- ▶ Essex, of course, is not to be married to either
 - ▶ of the two swan-brides-

 - ▶ But **his dominant position** at the end of the poem and certain **allusions to Queen Elizabeth** strongly suggest a **third couple** in the poem -
 - ▶ on a **symbolic level** perhaps the most important
 - ▶ pair
- 

- ▶ The meaning of Hesperus' bathing in the ocean is anticipated in the poet-speaker's
 - ▶ Description of the **river** in the firsts stanza.

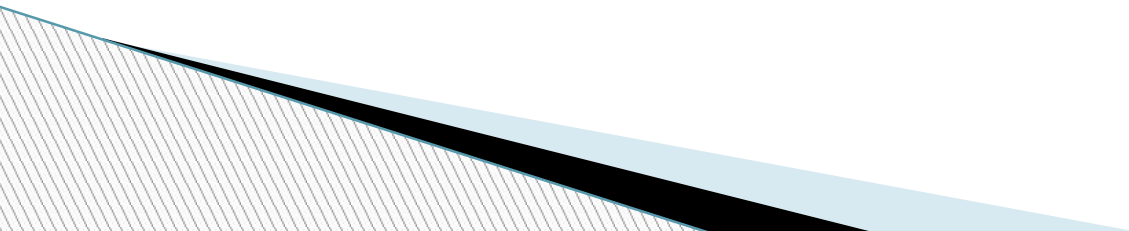
 - ▶ The " ruddy Bank " of the Thames (ruddy meaning " Ruddy")

 - ▶ *“Was painted all with variable flowers,*
 - ▶ *And all the meads adorned with dainty games,*
 - ▶ *Fit to deck maydens flowres,*
 - ▶ *And crown their Paramours....”*
- 

- ▶ The river is seen as a source of life and as nourishment for growth
- ▶ and as the fair weather of " Sweete breathing Zephyrus" helps temper the sun's heat




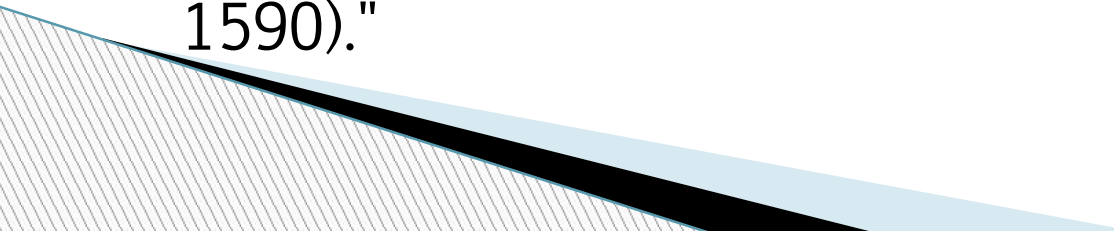
- ▶ the river represents a means and end of success in the marriages: Sweet Thames run softly, till I end my Song.

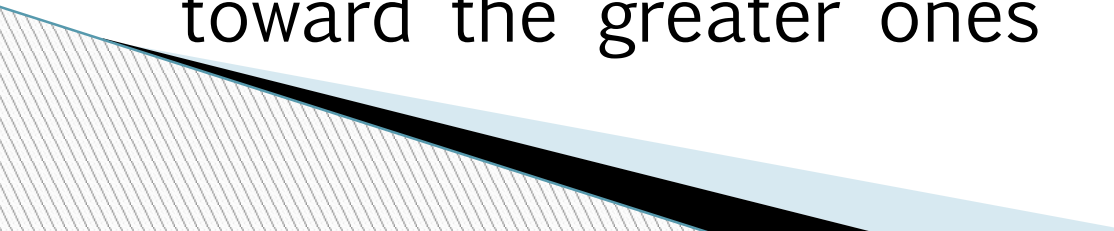


- ▶ The flowers of the meadow, products of the plants on the bank nourished by the river, are gathered by a "Flocke" of nymphs in the second stanza, significantly a so "all lovely Daughters of the Flood."

- ▶ The nymphs are associated with the swans who are soon to appear, and their “goodly greenish locks all loose vnytde,” some what startling to the visual imagination, are justified by the importance of the fertility imagery

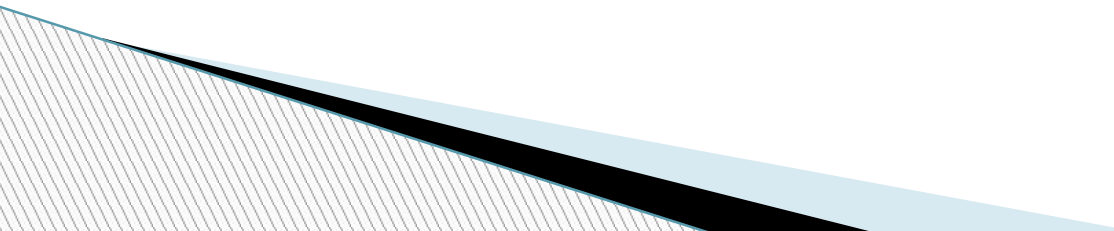
- ▶ **plant, and fruit** become fused as nature and society provide analogues to the human marriages anticipated in the poem.
 - ▶ The symbolic values of the **flowers** themselves, in the second stanza, help support the poet-speaker's **idealistic view of the marriages**.
- 


- ▶ In the third stanza the **two swans** appear, " swimming downe along the Lee."
 - ▶ Lee could mean " meadow,"
 - ▶ the swans swim downstream on the River Lee, which appears in one of Spenser's chief sources for the poem
 - ▶ (William Vallans' A Tale of Two Swannes (London, 1590)."
- 

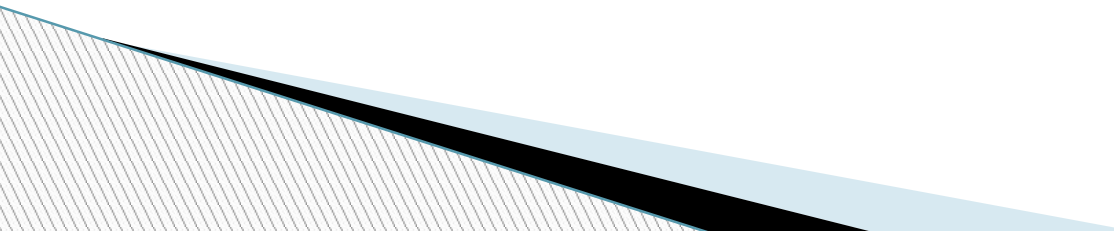
- ▶ The union of the Thames and the Lee is not very important in the poem;
 - ▶ only to suggest the approach of the minor river toward the great one-
 - ▶ of the country toward the town, of the brides toward the bridegrooms
 - ▶ perhaps even of the lesser characters toward the greater ones
- 

- ▶ The poet-speaker in the third stanza describes with extravagance the **whiteness of the swans**.
- ▶ White is repeated three times
- ▶ whiter twice
- ▶ snow is used once
- ▶ even as the speaker alludes to the myth of Leda and the swan – ‘ *Two fairer Birds I yet did never see:*
 - ▶ ...
 - ▶ ...

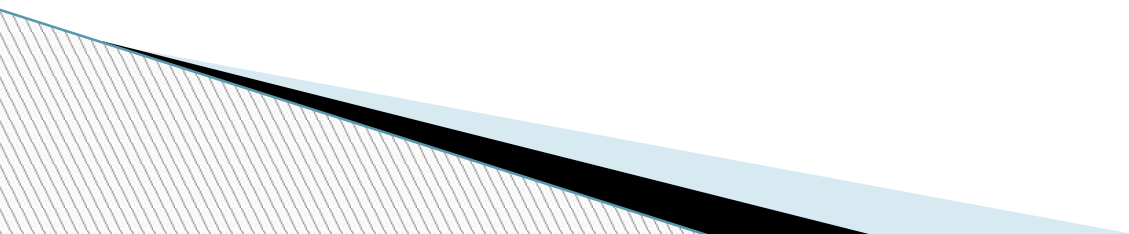
- ▶ The **violent contrast** between the **purity of the swans** and the **impurity** of the water reveals the speaker's attitude toward the marriages:



- ▶ he is aware of the spiritual and physical aspects of love
 - ▶ and his idealism and social observations are brought together in a unified view of the significance of the whole ritual.
- 

- ▶ The paradox thus appears again:
 - ▶ the swans look like angels, indeed have some of the qualities of angels, yet are also human, products of human passion .
 - ▶ The association of flowers and weeds, of fruition and lust, is also significant.
 - ▶ In short, his passage of the poem seems to point out once more that fruitful love is not only a controlled outgrowth of lust, but also a natural one.
- 

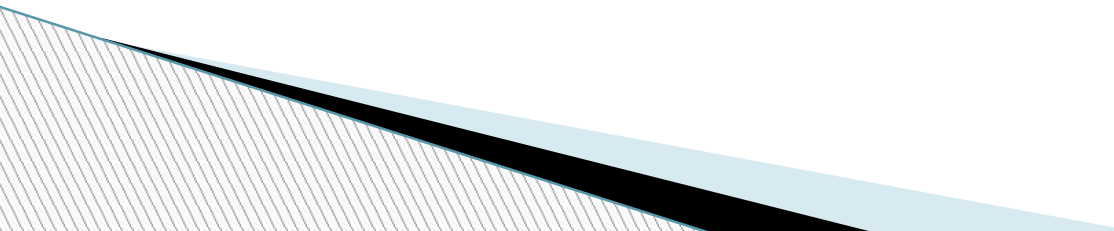
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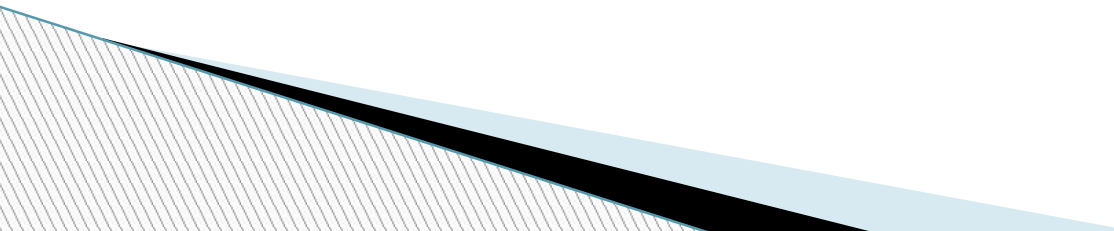
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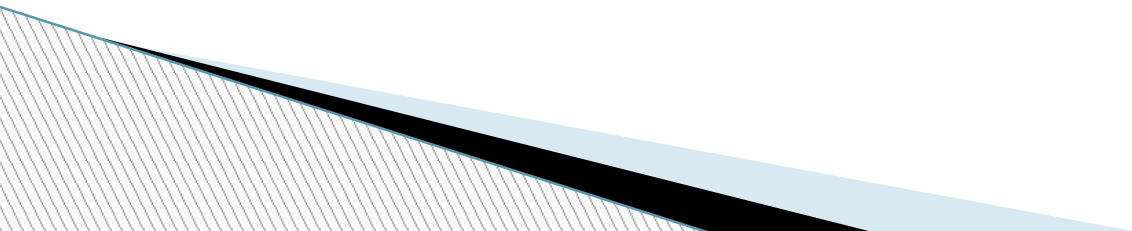
The penning of the verse essentially must have begun from the Latin poems namely W. Vallan's "A tale of two swanes" & Leland's "cygment cantio" as models. However, Spenser brought in conventional imagery such as flowers, birds, rivers and woods. Two swans, represented as the daughters of Somerset, the brides. The swans embody purity, eternal bliss and contentment. With more classical imagery, Spenser adds the fights at the Spanish Armada by the Earl of Essex, Spenser's birth and livelihood in London. The moon (Cynthia), Venus, Nymphs, Cupid and Twins of Jove, Jupiter and Leda are other classical images which Spenser uses as metaphors. He also talks about the Muse (Goddess of Poetry) here meaning Spenser himself, to author a verse of merit to the Earl of Essex.



Dr. Johnson says that Prothalamion holds autobiographical lines of Spenser which is a conventionality. As a Renaissance poet, Spenser shouldn't have done that and historical references do not always prove fruitful and enjoyable when it comes to poetry. Moreover, Spenser fails to bring the actual scene of marriage and instead concentrates more on the descriptive verse. Eventually, the content becomes less factual and dreamier with absence of the real brides. Contrarily, Epithalamion revolves around the lovely wedlock of Spenser himself, thus making it more realistic and appealing.

Prothalamion, an epitome of soothing musical verses and a portrayal of elegance is embroidered with bliss and purity. The artistic imagery, sweet music and lyrical power make Prothalamion an unparalleled product of non dramatic renaissance






□ Stanza 1:

The poet walks along the banks of River Thames to forget the worries of his personal life.

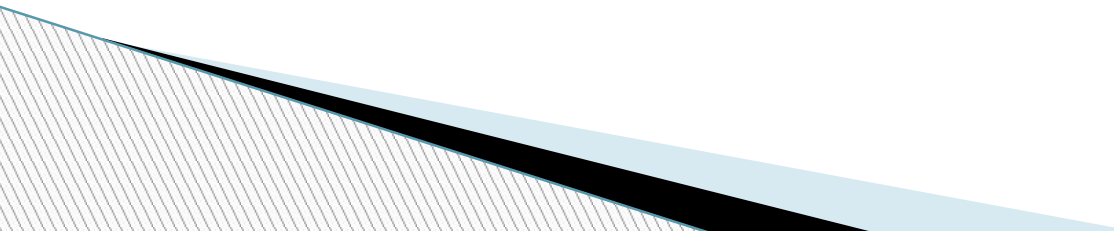
- **He was completely frustrated with the Job at the court and all he wanted is some mental peace.**
-
- **The cool breeze covered the heat of the sun by reflecting a shade of tender warmth.**

- **There are flowers everywhere and the birds chirp happily.**

- **The poet as a refrain requests the river to flow softly until he ends his song.**


- ▶ Stanza 2:
 - ▶ The poet happens to see a group of nymphs along the banks of the river.
 - ▶ Here the poet makes use of first Mythological figure, the nymphs which are supernatural maidens known for their purity.
- 

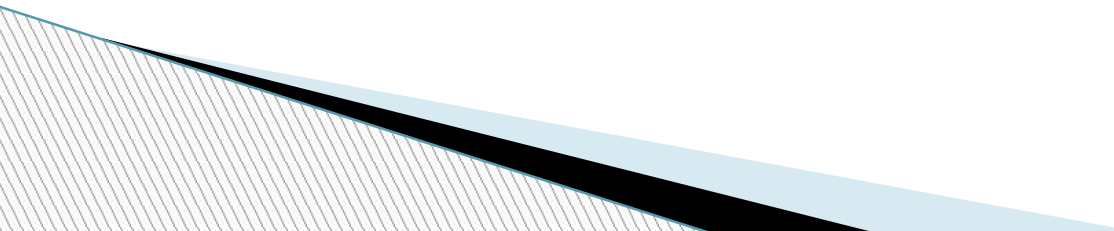
▶ Stanza 2:

- ▶ Every nymph looked stunning and had loose strands of hair falling to the shoulders.
 - ▶ Nymphs together prepared bouquets of flowers with primroses, white lilies, red roses, tulips, violets and daisies.
- 

▶ Stanza 3:

As the second mystic entity, Spenser introduces the swans.

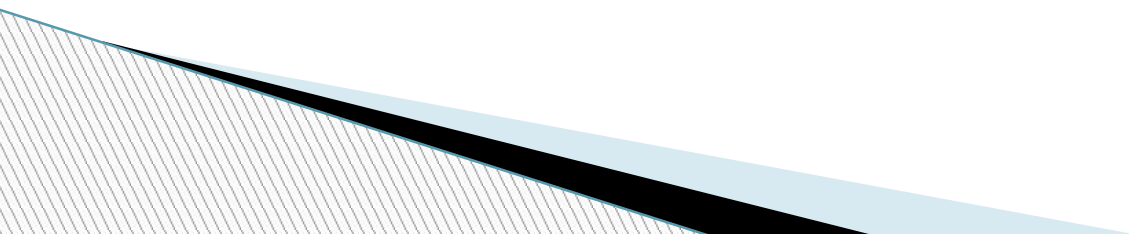
- ▶ Swans that swam across the river looked holy and whiter than Jupiter who disguised as a swan to win his love, Leda. But, yes, what Spenser says next is that these swans are shinier than Leda herself.
 - ▶ The River Thames requests its waters not to dirty the sacred wings of the swan
- 

- ▶ Stanza 4:
 - ▶
 - ▶ The nymphs were all dumb struck watching the swans swim across the river.
 - ▶ Swans are usually assigned to drawing the chariot of Venus, the goddess of love.
 - ▶ The white lilies are matched to the purity or virginity of the nymphs.
- 

- ▶ Stanza 5:

As the next step, the nymphs prepare poises and a basket of flowers which look like bridal chamber adorned with flowers.

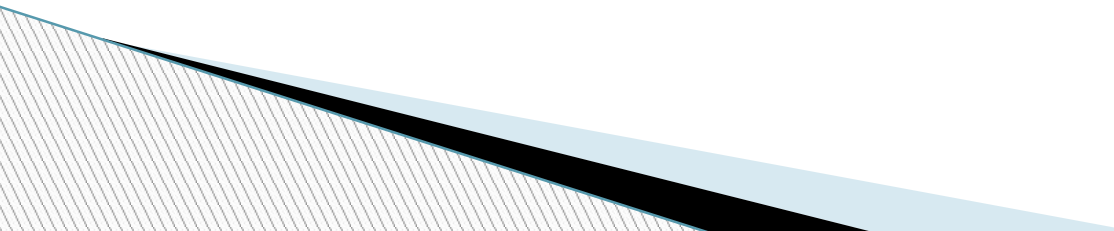
- ▶ The nymphs on excitement of the upcoming wedding throw the flowers over the River Thames and birds.



- ▶ Stanza 5:

The nymphs also prepare a wedding song.

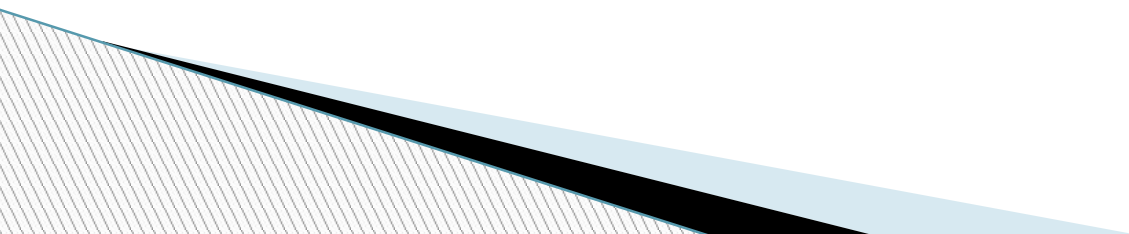
- ▶ With all the fragrance of flowers, Thames exactly looked like the Peneus, the river of ancient fame flowing along the Tempe and the Thessalian valley.

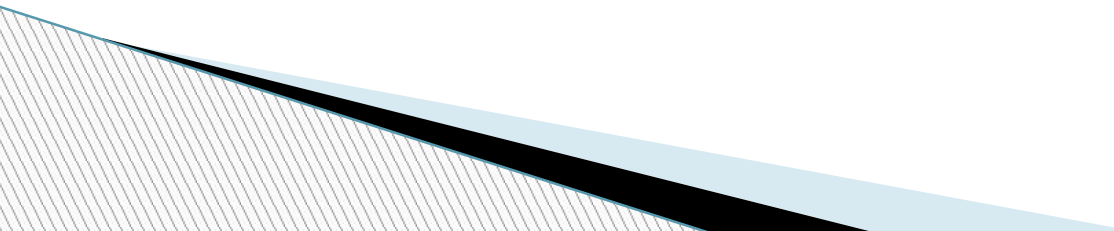


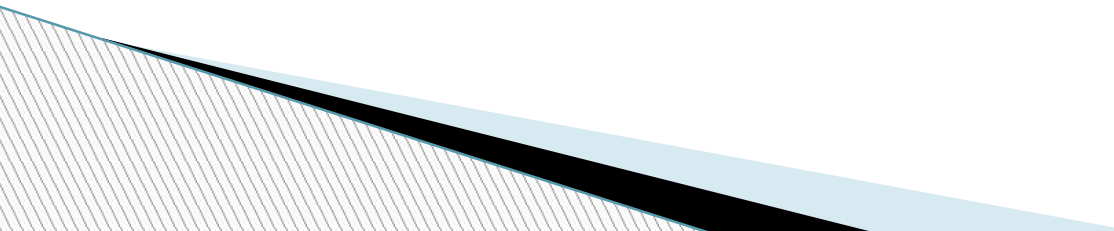
- ▶ Stanza 6:

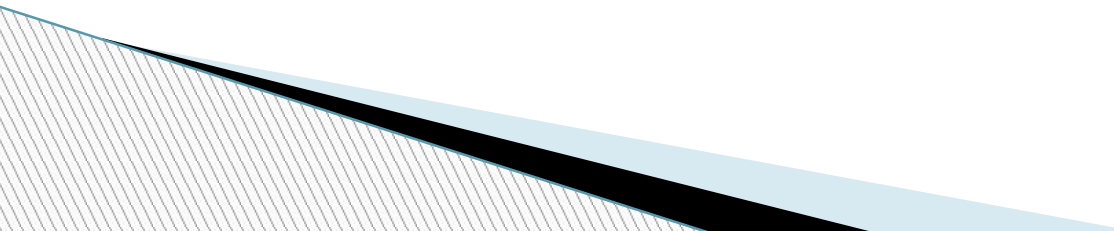
The song of the nymph mesmerizes with an enchanting musical effect.

- ▶ Here Spenser wishes the couple live forever with swans' contented heart and eternal bliss as these birds are the wonder of heaven.



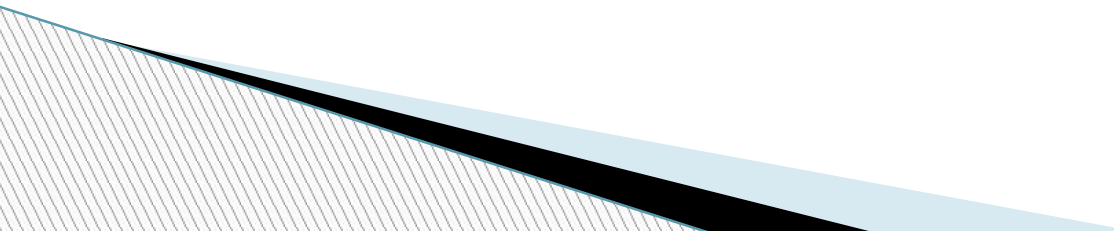
- ▶ Stanza 6:
 - ▶ He also prays to Cupid and Venus to bless the couple with love and care lest they be safe from deceit and dislike.
 - ▶ With endless affluence and happiness, their kids must be a sign of dignity and a threat to immoral people.
- 

- ▶ Stanza 7:
 - ▶ The river Lee, with headquarters at Kent, flows with happiness on such an occasion.
 - ▶ As the birds flew above the swans, the sight looked like moon (Cynthia) shining above the stars.
- 

- ▶ Stanza 8:
 - ▶ Once the wedding starts at London, the poet begins to recollect his encounters at the mansion and the building where the wedding occurs.
- 

▶ Stanza 9:

The Earl of Essex lived in the mighty castle which actually was the venue of the wedding.

- ▶ He was so chivalrous that he served as a danger to foreign countries.
 - ▶ His brave attack on Spain shot him to fame and entire Spain shook at his very name.
 - ▶ Queen Elizabeth was so proud of him and he deserves to be celebrated with a poem.
- 

▶ Stanza 10:

The Earl of Sussex walked towards the river and he looked fresh with his lovely golden hair.

- ▶ He was accompanied by two young men who were brave, handsome and glorious.
 - ▶ They resembled the Twins of Jupiter namely, Castor and Pollux.
 - ▶ The men held the hands of the brides and their wedlock begun thereby.
- 