

Topics for discussion:

1. Some of the poetry we have been reading has been about itself, in the sense that it declares the adequacy or inadequacy of its metaphors. Shakespeare's *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day*? Was the first of these. Another was Herbert's *The Forerunners*. Marvell's *The Coronet* is an instance of this kind: the poet is, in effect, denouncing his own poem. Or is he? Comparison reveals that this poem is unusual in Marvell's oeuvre—it is syntactically difficult to make out. What is the point of the difficulties that it poses to a first reading? Can it be easily paraphrased—that is, are the difficulties merely syntactical or do the lines puzzle in another way? The ending is a paradox, or at least, an oxymoron: you cannot literally crown a foot. How would you resolve it?

2. Compare *To His Coy Mistress* with Herrick's *To the Virgins* or *Corinna*. How odd is the phrase "World enough, and time"? How much time is there in the world? The poem is divided into three paragraphs. What is the point of this division? What is the meaning of the phrase *Worms shall try/ That long-preserved virginity*? What is the force of *worms trying* and *long-preserved* in this context? Has the tone of the poem altered at this point or earlier? What is the effect of the poet calling himself and his mistress *amorous birds of prey*? Why is the sun *our sun*? There seems to be a confusion about *the iron gates of life*. What are they? How can you tear pleasures through them? Since the lovers are racing against Time, what is the good of making the sun run here? What has happened to the lack of *world enough* at the end of the poem, which seems to be only about time?

3. *The Mower against Gardens* and *The Garden* seem to be on opposite sides of a fence. Considering the distinction between vehicle and tenor, how can the opposition be reduced? The word "garden" in the poem does not appear until the eighth stanza—is there a point to the delay? Stanza's five, six, and seven are about the body, mind, and soul, respectively. Are they differently treated? How are they each related to the general theme and to each other? Does this mark a progression or do we have to do merely with a series? What is a "green thought"? How can you "annihilate something to"? (Is the line simply ungrammatical?) How can anything be created by annihilating "everything that's made"? The poem seems to say in the eighth stanza that Adam was happier to be alone than to have a helpmate. How serious is the poem about this?

4. There would seem to be a pointed contrast between Marvell's *The Definition of Love* and Donne's *A Valediction forbidding Mourning*. How would you draw the contrast?

5. Compare Jonson's *To Penshurst* and Marvell's *On Appleton House*. Both are humorous texts, with fanciful or fairy-tale elements which modulate into moments of seriousness from time to time. How would you define the nature of the fancies? How would you identify the points of seriousness? *Appleton* is by far the more ambitious poem—it encompasses a journey through the estate and over the course of one day which is worthy of comparison with the journey of Dorothy through Oz. Describe the course of the journey—does it mark a progression or merely a survey? Jonson's poem has a defined conclusion in its last line—Other lords have *built* but Penshurst's lord *dwells*. What is the point of this opposition? *Appleton* does not have such a defined conclusion and its presiding spirit is not "the Lord" but "Maria"—that is, Mary, which hints also at a religious connection. How would you elaborate upon this connection?