

Carpe diem



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Carpe Diem Poetry is a powerful aphrodisiac. Women throughout the ages are eternally swayed by the wit and power of words. Seventeenth century poets discovered a way of making their words even more effective by using the underlying theme of 'Carpe diem', which means 'seize the day', to add an urgency to their poetry by stressing on the ephemeral nature of time. The seduction poems of Herrick and Marvell (17th century), and Wilbur (20th century) are superb examples of the persuasive power of poetry, though the three poets express themselves very differently, each poem reflecting a different kind of relationship.

Robert Herrick, in his poem, *To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time* captures the fleeting nature of time in a beautifully evocative way:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may
Old time is still a-flying;
And the same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

He uses rosebuds as a metaphor for youth and beauty, and unlike the other two poets, does not seem to be talking to one particular lady love, but seems to be directing the advice of 'seize the day' to all in possession of the short-lived splendors of youth and beauty. The stress is less on seduction, and more on the need to celebrate youth and make the most of it, while there is still time.

On the other hand, both Andrew Marvell, in *To His Coy Mistress*, and Richard Wilbur, in *A Late Aubade* are clearly using their talents to persuade their lady loves to succumb to their baser desires. Marvell's poem starts off by leisurely, languidly enumerating all the romantic things he would do, "Had we but world enough, and time". Then he picks up speed and urgency, as he <https://assignbuster.com/carpe-diem/>

goes on to say that there is no time to waste since " Time's winged chariot (is) hurrying near". Reason enough not to dally, but to get on with life and love. As he puts it, " Now let us sport us while we may," before " your quaint honor turn to dust,/ And into ashes all my lust." The incredible beauty of his poem barely conceals his agenda, which is very clear and focused - seduction.

Richard Wilbur, a contemporary poet, has a completely different approach. Having already spent time with his lady love, he is partially satiated, and seeks to seduce her into staying longer. This is reflected in the gentle, laid-back style of his aubade - a form of poetry in which a lover bemoans the rising of the sun, a sign that they must part. The tone and manner of his poem is more modern, but the content is similar, that is, seize the moment while you can. Unlike the earlier poets Wilbur in deference to the women of today, takes a moment to flatter her mind, rather than her body (as in Marvell's oeuvre):

" Think of all the time you are not
Wasting, and would not care to waste,
Such things, thank God, not being to your taste."

It is difficult to say which of this delightful trio of poems is most persuasive, considering their goals differ. All three poems seduce through clever wordplay and flattering allusions to the obvious beauty of the object of their desire. But for the sheer power of seduction, if Marvell's ode to his coy mistress could not sweep her off her feet, nothing would!