

"the picture of little tc
in a prospect of
flowers" in the context
of marvell's m...



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The Journal of English Literary History indicates that “ The picture of little T. C. in a prospect of Flowers’ is characteristic of Marvell’s poetry both in its complexity and in its subtle use of superficially ‘ romantic’ or decorative detail’. The degree in which Marvell uses detail and figurative poetic symbols to portray common concerns throughout his poetry is what has elevated him to legendary status. These concerns that are discussed, and particularly highlighted within ‘ The picture of little T. C. in a prospect of Flowers’ are; the loss of innocence, and the fall of man from prelapsarian world. Moreover, to portray these ideas, Marvell uses the poetic method of floral imagery in order for readers to gain a sense of natural wonder and hopelessness.

To begin ‘ The Picture of Little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers’, Marvell uses the metaphor of the a ‘ nymph’ to describe a little girl, believed to be Theophilia Cornewell. This introduces the theme of innocence from the outset as within the phrase ‘ This nymph begins’, the imagery of an ancient tree creature is created, and T. C. is given a certain godliness. Moreover, the use of the word ‘ nymph’ implies virginity and purity as the beautiful nature that these creatures inhabit has been left untouched by the evil Gods. The use of ‘ nymph’ imagery is particularly fitting in the ‘ green grass she loves to lie’, as not only does Marvell create the sense of a pure being, roaming a garden with little to care about. He also uses alliteration of the euphonious ‘ g’ to lull the reader into a sense of calm. This theme harks back to one of Marvell’s original beliefs, that of the Platonic view of an untouched soul. Little T. C. in stanza one represents the soul that exists in the world of the forms, in the Christian case, heaven. We will soon realise, that as Barbara Everett

suggests, the length of the title is perhaps ' grander than the little girl to whom the poem devotes itself'

We learn, the evils of the world force the soul to lose it's purity, much like the Platonic soul that becomes deformed when entering the world of the ' Nouminas' (humanity). Ian Ousby suggest that we are dealing with ' a complicated contemplation of innocence' and this is exemplified in the line ' green grass she loves to lie', as the inverted syntax of the sentence places ' green' as the subject. This could well refer to the snake that deceived Adam in the Garden of Eden, much like sexual desires are to deceive little T. C. into a world of dominance and impurity. Moreover, the sibilance throughout the line, further suggests the imminent loss of innocence to external desires. Finally, the ambiguity of the word ' lie' leads the reader to believe that this early innocence that is portrayed could well be a front, exemplified by ' Let me be laid' in Stanza 3.

This idea, loss of innocence is seen portrayed in ' The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun' through similar depictions. In this poem, the speaker is a nymph lamenting the death of her fawn. It begins similarly, with the nymph crying out that a band of ' wanton troopers' have shot her fawn ' and it will die.' She notes that the fawn never did these men any harm. Much like in '...little T. C...' the fawn is described as a ' pretty skipping grace' in the garden, an image that creates the sense of a little child, galloping through a forrest clearing. Moreover, Marvell associates the nymph and her fawn with white, supposedly the colour of purity. This further depiction of innocence causes us to further regret this loss of innocence when it is harshly trampled by the intrusion of men. This overall concern of innocence <https://assignbuster.com/the-picture-of-little-tc-in-a-prospect-of-flowers-in-the-context-of-marvells-methods-and-motifs/>

that is discussed so frequently in Marvell's poetry, and exemplified by the nymph's description of the fawn's calmness and innocence in her garden could well resonate with his views on Charles I as he faced his executioner, a man, facing the ultimate loss of innocence.

Marvell's concern with innocence is heavily tied to his concern of the fall of man from prelapsarian world. Joseph H Summers indicated that ' The picture of little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers is not a graceful trifle which somehow got wrong. It is a fine poem and it elucidates Marvell's central vision of man and nature'. This can be vividly seen in two distinct pieces of imagery.

Firstly, the idea that ' her golden days' were before the outward interruptions of hedonistic pleasures such as the quest for ' triumph over hearts'. This picture seems to allude heavily to life before the fall of man. The Garden of Eden was indeed free from desire and devilish pleasures that are consistently depicted throughout Marvell's poetry, particularly in ' A dialogue between the resolved soul and created pleasures'. This prelapsarian world view is further depicted through ' gives them names', where T. C. is going through the garden naming the ' wilder flowers'. This is much like the taxonomy that Adam gifted through the naming of all the flowers in the Garden of Eden, a symbol of the immense knowledge that God gifted to him before the fall, as opposed to the weak epistemology that we are afforded now. The overall effect of the imagery of prelapsarian life is to suggest the immense struggles of hedonism, and lack of purpose that we must deal with today in a world where in reality, deontology, and the following of the ' word of God' should reign supreme.

Further references to the fall of man are found throughout Marvell's poetry, particularly in 'The Garden' and 'Bermudas'. As Frank Kermode suggests, the title of 'The Garden' - alludes to 'the earthly paradise', more commonly, the Garden of Eden. From this, Marvell continues by painting the image of abundance and opulence that can be found through the pastoral poetry in stanza 5. Namely, through descriptions of 'Ripe apples' that 'drop about my head'. This not only exemplifies the beauty and perfection of 'ripe' apples, but the 'drop' that follows when we try to take advantage of the lords perfection. Moreover, in 'Bermudas', the small island exemplifies paradise on earth, that could only be reached during the prelapsarian era. The notion that the island 'throws the melons at our feet' further suggests the opulence perfection of the Garden of Eden before the apple of knowledge was stolen. The overall effect being the anguish of humans at our inability to achieve the 'heaven on earth' that was once felt in the time of Adam.

Finally, a common poetic theme used throughout Marvell's work is metaphors, portrayed through various flowers. In "The Picture of Little TC in a Prospect of Flowers", we are told that it is 'only with the roses' that T. C. 'plays'. The significance of the rose is that it symbolises love, affection and beauty. For example, in Emily Bronte's "A Little Budding Rose," the poet compares the rose to love. It is a common poetic technique that has the effect in this poem of suggesting that soon T. C. will be playing with the hearts of men, much like she plays with the roses. Moreover, the metaphors drawn from flowers is seen in 'The Mower Against The Gardens' where 'The tulip white did for complexion seek. Here the tulip is an unnecessary accessory, this is because tulips are pretty but without a scent. Whereas

Corinthians 2: 15 suggests that we need a scent, ' an aroma of life', thus, it is an analogy for life's needless desires. Therefore, the effect of the reference is to add significant metaphorical depth to Marvell's poetry.

" The Picture of Little TC in a Prospect of Flowers" provides an excellent reference to many of Marvell's key concerns throughout his poetic career. Most notably is his concern for the loss of innocence, particularly in children such as Theophilia Cornewell. Moreover, the idea of a prelapsarian world is discussed throughout Marvell's work, and '... Little TC ...' is no exception as it contributes through imagery of a ' golden age'. Finally, Marvell's poetic method of the depiction of flowers is exemplified through the ' roses' in which T. C. is personified.