

Carpe diem poetry

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ENG. 1102 Paper 1 Carpe Diem Poetry “ To The Virgins, To Make Much of Time” by Robert Herrick and “ To His Coy Mistress” by Andrew Marvell are two great examples of Carpe Diem poetry. Their vivid imagery, symbolism, and usage of simile and metaphor are what make these poems memorable. Their usage of these terms also makes the poems more inviting and makes the usage of the Carpe Diem tradition more apparent. Likely risqué for their times, I find both poems somewhat romantic and tame for our time period.

The primary metaphor of “ To The Virgins, To Make Much Of Time” is “ Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, old time is still a-flying; and this same flower that smiles today, tomorrow will be dying”(961). This opening metaphor makes it clear that the theme of this poem is Carpe Diem. From my understanding and also from my introductory Latin class Carpe Diem is popularly known as “ Seize the Day” though this is not the literal translation. Roses are fresh and supple like youth; they are fragile, beautiful, and pure. These are characteristics also associated with virgins. I have found in many literary works that virginity is compared to a rose.

Herrick is urging the young to enjoy their youth before it evades them. “ The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun, the higher he’s a getting, the sooner will his race be run, and nearer he’s to setting” is another metaphor using the personification of the sun to show the passage of time (916). The sun is an example of life; the more time that passes, or the rather the farther the race is run, is the closer life is to come to an end or the closer to the sun setting. The sun and it’s rising and setting is something that is very commonly used on obituaries to mark the birth and death of a person. That age is best which is the first, when youth and blood are warmer; but being spent, the worse,

and worst times still succeed the former” (916). The previous passage is the speaker saying that everything is better when you are young. You are livelier and more warm blooded when you’re young; and everything after that gets worse and worse. This is true from a physiological standpoint; as you age the way your hormones work change and the process that build up substances needed in your body slow and at times stop, an example of this medically is osteoporosis.

The last stanza of the poem reads, “ Then be not coy, but use your time; and while ye may, go marry: For having lost but once your prime, you may for ever tarry” (916). I believe the speaker is saying to the reader don’t be shy, don’t waste your youth, marry now while your young and beauty; and while you are filled with life and vigor. Once your beauty is gone it may be harder or it may be something that you may never do. Due to this poem being in the love and hate section of our book and also with it being about virgins, I can’t help, but think that this also has some subtle sexual connotations as well.

I think this because the speaker is urging virgins and not just people in general to make the most of life. The speaker also uses the symbolism of the rose as a comparison for youth, but a woman transitioning for a virgin is also compared to a flower blooming. Between “ To The Virgins, To Make Much Of Time” and “ To His Coy Mistress” I find that “ To His Coy Mistress” uses the most imagery; and because of that it is my favorite of the two poems. “ Had we but world enough, and time, this coyness, lady, were no crime. We would sit down, and think which way to walk, and pass our long love’s day.

Though by the Indian Ganges' side shouldst rubies find; I by the side of Humber would complain" (951). I found this opening stanza important, because it set the stage for the Carpe Diem theme. The speaker has compare the ladies coyness to a crime because they don't have enough time. This automatically says to me as he reader that he wants her to give up her shyness and give into him because they may never get the chance. He spends telling him mistress all the time he would spend praising her body, but saves her heart last.

Though he suggest that he would take his time loving his mistress he then states, " For, lady, you deserve this state, nor would I love at a lower rate. But at my back I always hear time's winged chariot hurrying near" (951). This is the speaker again stating that there is not enough time for them to wait any longer because time is quickly approaching. The speaker also states that his lust for her will turn to ash soon if they continue to wait and that her long preserved virginity and honor will also turn to dust. He is urging his mistress to be with him by constantly referencing death, " The graves a fine and private lace, but none, I think, do there embrace" (951). I have found that of the two poems that " To His Coy Mistress does not put as much emphasis of seizing the day in general, but more so of seizing the moment now sexually. Though there were some references from the speaker about is mistress heart most of the references were in regards to his sexual desires. He references love several times, but warps it with his immediate cause for action. It seems that this speaker is using his love for her or saying that he has love for his mistress as a way to bring about her deflowering.

This must be something that is a recurring trend across time periods as this can also be found much more apparent and much more frequently in our time period. Works Cited Herrick, Robert. "To The Virgins, To Make Much Of Time." Abcarian, Richard, Marvin Klotz, and Samuel Cohen. *Literature: The Human Experience*. 10th. Boston: Bedford/st Martins, 2010. 916 Marvell, Andrew. "To His Coy Mistress." Abcarian, Richard, Marvin Klotz, and Samuel Cohen. *Literature: The Human Experience*. 10th. Boston: Bedford/st Martins, 2010. 950-951