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BLASÉ SPEAKERS: THE TONES OF SPEAKERS IN CARPE DIEM POETRY

by

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Blasé Speakers: The Tones of Speakers in Carpe Diem Poetry

“Care less, eyes, lips and hands to miss,” writes John Donne in “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning.” Poets John Donne and Robert Herrick approach the carpe diem tradition with copulation in mind and through it explore possible attitudes or moods in carpe diem poetry of the early 17th century. Poems such as “The Flea,” “The Apparition,” “To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time,” “Corinna’s Going A-Maying,” and “A Sweet Disorder in the Dress” capture the essence of this sub-genre, “carpe diem” made popular by the Roman poets Ovid and Catullus, deriving from Latin meaning to seize the day, which is exactly what these poems are about. Herrick and Donne vary the ways they implement conceits, metaphor and meter. Both poets vary the ways they draw strength from the tradition of carpe diem.

It is important to evaluate why these judgments come up short by examining some of the works written by these poets. I have stepped outside of the genre by considering two poems that are not technically carpe diem, but I have done this for reasons that will quickly become apparent. My reading of three poems by Herrick and two of Donne’s will allow me to explore the limited nature of this sub-genre. For example, one of the limitations is that women cannot execute this form the same way men can. The comedic, grotesque and pastoral imagery some of the carpe diem poems employ demonstrates the elasticity of

language because it is not simply about how convincing these speakers are, but about the framework they create to make their case. In “The Flea” the speaker uses religious and grotesque imagery to woo the woman. The images of the flea, blood and the marriage bed complicate the tone of the poem. In “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” the speaker uses flowery imagery to woo the woman. The images of the rosebuds and the sun while appearing positive actually have double meaning. The speaker uses these images to express urgency. In “The Apparition” the speaker attempts to use fear as a tool to manipulate the woman into giving into his demands. In “Corinna’s Going A-Maying” the speaker uses a mixture of flowery imagery, going so far as to suggest marriage to appear genuine in his affections. Meanwhile in “A Sweet Disorder in the Dress” the speaker fixates on the woman’s articles of clothing, which is a departure from the approaches we have seen thus far. We are left with ambiguous endings because these poems are not about the speakers achieving their goals, but how well these poets format and execute these poems.

In this thesis, I focus on the tone of these five poems because tone is not explored as much as it could be as a topic of discourse. Furthermore, I believe these poems to be the most exemplary poems in regards to both the flexibility and limited nature of this sub-genre. I alternate between the works of these two poets to better compare and contrast their styles. The poems included in this thesis have been chosen because they each offer a different view of both the genre and the

poet that composed it. Through these poems we observe the effectiveness of the different approaches taken. The speakers of carpe diem poems are extremely crafty. Many poets of the early 17th century composed carpe diem. But even if attention is limited to just Donne and Herrick, a certain astonishment provokes many questions. For example, how many different ways are there of composing a carpe diem poem? How many different kinds of messages can a carpe diem convey? The message remains the same in each of the poems I will discuss, but the flair used by the poet shows us what he has learned since the last time he has written a carpe diem poem. The development of this sub-genre can be followed by analyzing these poems and this progression has permanently affected the creation of speakers urging us to seize the day.

The scholarship on carpe diem poetry focuses on different aspects of individual poems - from the way meter affects the words chosen by the poem to the things that are absent from the poem and how we are meant to interpret that. Readers and critics of both Donne and Herrick notice the progression of their craft and the strides made in that time frame. An analysis of carpe diem poetry reveals one challenge facing poets: finding new ways to approach this category, not only through the scenes themselves, but by the attitudes adopted by the speakers. By refining the tried and true ways already established these poets are increasing their potency. I intend on focusing on the speakers' attitudes.

Throughout this thesis speakers will be compared to one another. It is important to remember that this is a game for both poets and their speakers. How much of what we are presented are we meant to believe? For each poem analyzed I intend on answering some of the following questions: how extravagant can these speakers be in their wooing? Where are the boundaries of these poems? How far can they go before crossing a line? If they do cross a line, what is it and who decides that? These speakers are testing the boundaries of not only language, but seduction itself. The idea of seizing the day shaped these particular poems and to advance it the speakers instill fear, guilt and shame, but also to compete, succeed and surpass previous examples of the sub-genre. All of the Petrarchan love conventions we have previously been exposed to, pave the way for this dramatic seizing of woman. Donne made his reputation as an anti-Petrarchan poet by aligning himself with the pagan pre-Christian Roman poets while Herrick, though keeping his distance from the lady, has departed in other ways from the Petrarchan conventions.

Section 1: The Speaker of “The Flea” and Grotesque Imagery

Let us begin with “The Flea” by John Donne. Analysis of this poem will focus on the conceits used throughout by Donne. Tone plays an important role in the effectiveness of the piece by influencing the speaker’s willingness to partake

and perpetuate the idea of women as silent. The immorality mentioned within causes us to wonder about the religious connotations of this poem. The speaker distracts the woman from his wooing, but by the same token attempts to reel in her even faster.

The Flea

Mark but this flea, and mark in this
How little that which thou deny'st me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
Thou know'st that this cannot be said
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pampered swells with one blood made of two,
And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, yea more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, we're met

And cloistered in these living walls of jet.

Though use make you apt to kill me,

Let not to that, self-murder added be,

And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since

Purpled thy nail in blood of innocence?

Wherein could this flea guilty be,

Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?

Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou

Find'st not thyself, nor me, the weaker now;

'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be;

Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,

Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

The poem opens with a metaphor and the speaker carries it throughout the entire poem. This is the method he has chosen to address the woman. He says, "Mark, but this flea, and mark in this, / How little that which thou deniest me is; / It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee, / And in this flea our two bloods mingled be (1-4). The speaker places importance on the flea's action by bringing attention to it from the beginning. He needs to draw a parallel between the flea's act of drawing blood from her and his desire for her. At this point in this poem it is

unclear whether or not he has attempted to seduce her before and failed. All we know based on the poem is that he is trying to seduce her at this point in time.

When he says “in this flea our two bloods mingled be” it is meant to hint suggests sexual activity. They are together as one entity within the flea through their joined blood and he implies the same will occur if they have sex. He trivializes the act of sex because he thinks that will persuade her to give in to his advances. The flea is an insignificant creature. The act of drawing blood is insignificant and might have possibly gone unnoticed by the woman had the speaker not mentioned anything. Therefore, he hopes the woman concludes that engaging in sexual activity with him will also be insignificant and not as damaging as she deems it to be. This logic attempts to trivialize everything, but he fails to realize that merely suggesting something is insignificant does not make it so. In fact, the woman can clearly point out the fact this is important to him.

As the poem continues the arguments presented by the speaker become more precise and convincing. In the next stanza of “The Flea” the speaker extends the metaphor to say, “Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare, / Where we almost, yea more than married are” (10-11). It is humorous to suggest that their blood mingled in the flea’s belly is as good as the two of them being joined in holy matrimony. He asks the woman to spare the flea’s life on the grounds that the flea contains more than one life. Furthermore, the words “stay” and “spare” can be

considered synonyms. He is not only requesting she remain by his side, but also keep the flea alive because doing so keeps them together. She will not be accused of murder, suicide and sacrilege if she spares the flea. The speaker considers the act of killing the flea the first domino that tips over the rest hence the three crimes she is accused of.

The speaker goes on to say, “though parents grudge, and you, we’re met / And cloistered in these living walls of jet” (14-15). The speaker employs reverse psychology by mentioning the woman’s parents. Their relationship is not a good one and he thinks that opposition from her parents will motivate her to give into his advances even quicker. Another implication is that the belly of the flea is their home since that is where their blood resides. The speaker conjures this image when he says, “cloistered in these living walls of jet.” The word cloistered hints at living in a monastery and has religious implications, which should spare the flea from death but it does not. The walls are also alive giving this line a macabre feel.

The flea contains the life of all three of them and because of this the flea’s life is more precious than that of the average flea. He infers that he and the woman are more than married. What does it mean to be more than married? The speaker claims this to further his argument and with this advancement convince the woman to have sex. It is as though the flea is pregnant. The image of the flea having a belly full of blood hints at pregnancy, but he does not elaborate on this

aspect of the metaphor – possibly for fear he would intimidate the woman. I believe he is addressing it by saying they are more than married. The problem with that is that people do not typically consider shared children anything other than a shared responsibility. If the flea is pregnant then the child it is carrying represents what the speaker and this woman can be – their future and he does not want that future to be killed before it has had a chance to grow.

The speaker mentions blood as an image because of the shock value behind it. Blood represents the union of the two lovers, but even on a more basic level it represents the actual blood sucked by the flea that bit them. The mixture of their blood created this union and made the flea become bloated, providing the image of the flea being pregnant. The speaker is direct and blunt when he talks about blood in the poem. The flea's demise is grotesque and has religious connotations because of the way the speaker talks about its demise and its significance to him. Unfortunately, the flea's death does not affect the woman as much as he initially thought. Since he cannot prey on her sympathies, he quickly learns how to twist his logic around. The woman "find'st not thyself, nor me, the weaker now; / 'Tis true; then how false, fears be" (24-25). Since the woman was so unaffected by the flea's death then this means she does not value the flea's life, making her a murderer. This proves that her fears of being tainted are unfounded because the flea's death did not change her and since this is case the woman's fears about having sex with the speaker are unfounded too. He does not threaten

her anymore at this point. The speaker projects a lot of assumptions onto the woman, especially when it comes to what she values and the type of person she considers herself to be. These assumptions lead to more assumptions.

In the final stanza the word “honor” intrigues me. The speaker claims that “just so much honor, when thou yield’st to me, / Will waste, as this flea’s death took life from thee” (26-27). Instead of continuing to convince the woman that what he is suggesting is not sinful, he is trying to tell her that the honor she is trying to hold onto by rejecting him will go to waste. This statement builds on what he has been telling her before, but it also makes the opposite argument. This sentence can also be taken to mean that honor does not last long and it too will die in the way the flea died. Therefore, what is the point of holding onto it when it is as fleeting as life? This is not the only thing this ending is saying; it is also implying that honor is not important. What is important? Everything this woman is believed to value is being torn apart by the speaker.

In John Donne A Collection of Critical Essays edited by Helen Gardner, the introduction expresses what I believe to be one of Donne’s strengths and the reason I connected him to Robert Herrick. The “psychological veracity of Donne’s love poetry, his power to render ‘the infinite passion,’ and the striking brilliance of isolated lines make Donne, if not ‘an accomplished poetical artist,’ an ‘inspired poetical creator’” (5). The “psychological veracity” is an important

aspect of Donne's poetry because it is one of the qualities that allows us not only discern the truth in his work and experience it ourselves. For example, in "The Flea" the speaker's use of conceit and metaphors to woo the woman mesmerizes readers. There is truth to the conceit and the distance he creates between his feelings and his expectations about his conquest fuels his blasé attitude. There are no doubts as to what his intentions are and we are never quite clear how he feels about this conquest since that is never addressed by him directly.

An essay in John Donne A Collection of Critical Essays titled, "The Language of Paradox: 'The Canonization'", Cleanth Brooks explores the way Donne creates paradox – in this particular case the focus is on "The Canonization" and I believe that some of the statements made apply to some of his other work as well. One notable example is the idea that "Donne accomplishes the modulation of tone by what may be called an analysis of love-metaphor. Here, as in many of his poems, he shows that he is that he is thoroughly self-conscious about what he is doing" (103). I think that "an analysis of love-metaphor" can definitely be seen in "The Flea" because the speaker takes it upon himself to explain how the flea signifies his consummated relationship with the silent woman. The speaker hopes to demonstrate that fear needs to be removed from her consciousness since their relationship is already on the verge of becoming a reality. It exists in a metaphorical sense and now it's a matter of existing in reality. Donne's self-consciousness parallels the speaker's awareness of the fine

line between a metaphorical existence and a literal one. Through modulation Donne is able to imbue his speaker with this awareness.

In “Explicating Donne: “The Apparition” and “The Flea” Laurence Perrine posits that “The Flea” has “resemblance to a miniature play. It has two characters, dramatic conflict, implied dialogue (though we hear only one speaker), and stage action” (5). Certain elements in Donne’s poetry are exaggerated to the point of becoming caricatures. This feature creates the miniature play within the poem. The two characters in “The Flea” are the speaker and the silent woman. The dramatic conflict consists of the speaker wooing and being subsequently rejected. The dialogue belongs to the speaker and the stage action is seen within the dialogue, never directly shown. Donne takes a literal approach by seizing the metaphor literally and he constructs the miniature play within as a result.

This literalness increases the hilarity of their game. Perrine amends his statement that, “this poem is ‘not to be taken too seriously as a reflection of human life, but to be enjoyed for what it is – a virtuoso display of ingenuity and wit’” and goes on to say that, “the woman by all indications enjoys his company...if we see the seduction attempt as a “game” which neither of its two players takes very seriously, it becomes quite believable” (7). He draws this conclusion from the fact she has not asked him to depart and instead engages him in conversation through her actions. The speaker’s blasé attitude coupled with the

woman's dismissive attitude creates the perfect background to this "game" mentioned by Perrine. The individuals involved do not take this seduction seriously; therefore we should not do so either. We are meant to enjoy the poem more for what it is – humor. I believe that is what this comes down to – poets like John Donne and Robert Herrick are playing a game, one in which they are trying to one up each other. The blasé attitude of their speakers is a significant aspect because it demonstrates the poet's desire to have fun and show off his wit.

Section 2: The Speaker of "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" and Flowery Imagery

In this section I will discuss Robert Herrick's poem "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time." It is one of the quintessential poems in the carpe diem tradition and a prime example of what this sub-genre conveys thus giving us a framework to work from. The frivolity expressed by the speaker comes from the attitude provided by Herrick. This attitude creates the tone that is firmly rooted in the tradition. Another aspect to consider is the compact structure of this poem.

To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,

Old time is still a-flying;

And this same flower that smiles today

Tomorrow will be dying.

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.

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.

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.

Throughout the poem the speaker decides to use the very human fear of death to woo the woman. It is natural to not think about death until something happens such as the loss of a loved one – people remember their mortality soon

after. The poem begins, “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, / Old time is still a-flying; / And this same flower that smiles today, / Tomorrow will be dying” (1-4). The beginning brings the woman’s mortality to the forefront and makes it a significant aspect of the poem. By reminding her how much she values her life, he hopes to reduce the amount of importance she places on her virginity. He says that “tomorrow will be dying” and while he hopes the woman focuses on the word dying, I noticed the word will. He speaks with authority about a future occurrence, partly because he knows it is true but also to increase his credibility. Time passes and there is no way to stop that from happening. Furthermore, stating facts to the woman he is pursuing will ground his wooing in reality and make it easier to turn his desires into reality.

The idea of gathering “ye rosebuds while ye may” is similar to the idea of “sowing your wild oats.” The speaker encourages the woman to do this not for him and the pleasure he will surely receive from succeeding, but for herself because it is important to get this out of your system while you are still young. Youth is a time to have fun and enjoy every day like it is your last, but the same cannot be said about ones later years due to the responsibilities that accompany adulthood. People settle down as they get older and give up some of the more frivolous activities youth engage in. The speaker needs to deflect as much attention off his logic as possible. If he places any attention on his feelings of desire or fear of rejection then surely she will see through his advances and deny

him outright, but if he focuses on her fears and discusses her desires then he hopes this will convince her. It is important to make the woman central in his address.

The speaker in “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” utilizes a less tangible approach by employing abstract ideas about time, and uses a matter a fact tone to offset that. This approach is dissimilar to the metaphor used by the speaker in “The Flea.” Metaphors can be easily misinterpreted while reminding someone of their fears hit closer to home. It is easier to manipulate someone by preying on their fears rather than using sophisticated language to confuse them into agreeing to your terms. The idea of reading the fine print comes to mind when someone employs sophisticated language against someone who lacks the vocabulary to understand its complete meaning. Herrick’s speaker appears to be practical in comparison to Donne’s speaker because he uses fear as a tactic instead of absurd metaphors. On the other hand, Herrick’s speaker uses flowery language and as a result exaggerates his sentiments. It is unlikely that someone would seriously compare sex to a flea biting two people and mixing their blood in its belly. This imagery is not romantic; it is grotesque but the lines are being blurred and this mixture makes things confusing for readers.

In the next stanza of “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” the speaker conjures an important image: the sun. This image helps demonstrate that they do not have time to waste and for this reason sex should happen soon because “the

glorious lamp of heaven, the sun, / The higher he's a-getting, / The sooner will his race be run" (5-7). The speaker places himself and the woman he is wooing in opposition to the passage of time when stating that "the sooner will his race be run." The sun is used to convey that everything has its time and place. There's a time to grow crops, there's a time to pick them, there's a time to wake up, there's a time to go to sleep and the sun plays a role in all of these events. The speaker provides the sun a place within his seduction and hopes that he and the object of his affections beat the sun to bed, if we are to believe the sun truly goes away when it sets. They are racing against the sun, but what is the prize? Is it sex? If they are racing against the sun, what is there to gain? Also, you cannot ignore the fact that sun rhymes with son and hints at pregnancy. This can only happen if they consummate the non-existing relationship they do not have.

Blood represents youth in the poem. In the third quatrain of the poem the speaker says, "That age is best which is the first, / When youth and blood are warmer" (9-10). In both this poem and "The Flea" blood symbolizes youth, life and it has spiritual connotations. The word differs here in tone because the speaker is not talking about murder, suicide and sacrilege. The speaker conjures images of rosebuds, heaven and youth instead. As previously stated the sun plays an important part in our everyday lives and it provides the speaker with a metaphorical ally in the poem. Unfortunately, he is unable to bring out the woman's competitive side. The speaker prefers youth and does not want to waste

time by waiting around. That is the reason “but being spent, the worse, and worst” because it means time is passing, wasting away and for what? He hopes she will seize the day and allow blood and hormones to inspire her to give into him.

The speaker’s subtlety is demonstrated in the end when he says, “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” (13-16). The importance of time, not fear, is stressed and emphasis is placed on marriage. The word coy suggests that the woman is being provocative in some way and this is the reason she has his attention. He wants her to use her time and encourages her to become the wooer. He’s turning the tables on her in this final stanza and by doing so hopes to convince her through distraction. He acknowledges that she has time to marry, but if she does not do it fast that opportunity will also pass her by. He presents her with a few options and tells her that if she does not pick from them that she will end up an old maid and be forever waiting for the right guy to come along. That is the message we are left with in the end. The speaker in Donne’s poem is more abrasive than this speaker. This is demonstrated by the silent women’s fates in the end – one becomes a murderer while the other remains in wait.

Herrick and Donne’s speakers address desire both directly and indirectly. In “‘But Do Not So’: Herrick's Ravishment and Lyric Address” by Darrell Hinchliffe it is mentioned that “in many of the poems, though, desire is frequently

manifested as a fearsome demand to possess and dominate, to extend the sovereignty of the ego over the Other” (305). The speakers in carpe diem poetry want to possess and dominate the silent women. The desire presented by them is really a demand. The poets use their wit to elaborate on the emotion they hope to evoke. This “fearsome demand” is demeaning and tactless, especially if viewed through a feminist lens. One of the limitations of this demand is that a woman cannot stake similar claims. It is socially unacceptable for a woman to do so. If we were to read any of Lady Mary Wroth’s poetry this would demonstrate the ways in which a woman falls short when attempting to make a demand in the carpe diem tradition. The speaker skillfully chooses his rhetoric and he cannot allow for a woman to surpass his language skills, which is the reason he wants “sovereignty of the ego over the Other” – the “other” referring to the woman being pursued. This is my interpretation of Hinchliffe’s comment. Carpe diem poems are not about subtlety, they are about the need “to possess and dominate” and it is obvious that the way women are treated by these speakers has some bearing on the condition of women at the time. These women are silent because the poet knows that it would not only change the dynamic of the poem, but also the entire tone.

In Paul R. Jenkins’ essay titled, “Rethinking what Moderation Means to Robert Herrick,” the author claims that, “Moderation is invoked, not for ethical reasons, but for its partial role in an aesthetic formula- careful carelessness-which

Herrick believes will produce the most satisfying sensations” (54). Jenkins’ insight explains why Herrick’s speakers approach their unattainable women in thoughtfulness and gentle ways. The moderation the poet desires can only be achieved by a speaker using language that is just right, meaning not too extreme in either way. The speaker cannot charge at her at full speed and also cannot ignore her outright. The middle ground is considered a moderate one.

Additionally, the “careful carelessness” that Herrick and to some extent Donne implement increases the sensations they want to heighten for the speaker and reader. Passions run wild in *carpe diem* poems – crafting these types of poems means learning how to harness the power that can be found within the genre. Sometimes the poets make their speakers pursue the women in these poems in obscene and frightful ways. An example of Herrick doing this is “The Vine.” Extravagance is a hallmark of this tradition and contributes to the competition between poets and frivolity they attempt to capture in their craft.

In Donne’s poetry, the speaker often finds himself fighting with the object of his affection due to her objections and reservations. The same does not appear to be true for Herrick’s speakers due to their softer approach. They are still rejected, but the harshness of that rejection is dulled by the gentle approach. Furthermore, I believe that Donne’s speakers have a harder time making “the active present of the voice of restraint” known, but this does not appear to be a struggle for Herrick’s speakers as evident to some extent, “To the Virgins, to

Make Much of Time.” This is evident by the mere fact they use guilt, shame and fear as a means to an end. Herrick’s speakers do not appear to have as much backlash from the women, but perhaps it is due to the fact he is not verbalizing it, not necessarily the absence of it. It is easy to believe something is not happening or does not exist, if it is not acknowledged in some way. It was wise of Herrick to omit such aspects to his carpe diem poetry because they create a persona for that specific speaker that makes him more approachable and welcoming. As a contemporary of Donne’s, it is easy for Herrick to realize that conjuring negative feelings in carpe diem provokes a harsh reaction that might not be wanted and he is curious to see what other reactions there are.

Donne and Herrick consider the importance time allotted in their poems during the composition process. How can there be moderation in carpe diem poetry when there is a sense of urgency and expediency? How can these poets balance these two forces, especially when it is obvious they are both present? I believe that the more rushed the speaker sounds, the more brusque and grotesque their methods of seduction are. This means that Donne’s speakers are more in a hurry than Herrick’s speakers, but this does not take away from their method of approach. On the contrary, these differences show not only the different tones that can be implemented, but also the elasticity of the genre. The speakers have to be mindful of the words used to seduce these women and bear in mind they only have a small window of opportunity to present their best arguments – their

rhetoric has to be effective, persuasive and compact. The importance placed on success for the speaker pales in comparison to the importance of being effective – the two are not always connected.

Another assertion Paul R. Jenkins' makes in his essay is "the notion of being tasteful in art and amorous matters is central to Herrick's poems, with the metaphor's literal source in appetite clearly understood" (55). Some critics have argued that Donne does not care about being tasteful and as a result have called him crude because he uses absurd rhetoric and grotesque images. I do not agree with the critics that say he does not care about being tasteful. I believe that both Donne and Herrick attempt to figure out the boundaries of language and seduction through their poems. They head in different directions when composing them, but this does not mean that they are concerned with different things during the process. They handle similar topic differently due to their influences and their opinions regarding what makes an effective poem successful. So while Donne is busy trying realistically to present his supernatural and religious claims, Herrick is flattering the woman and flaunting the graceful images he chooses to fill his poem with. Herrick has allowed pastoral images to influence him and inform his poetry more so than Donne, even though both have dabbled in poetry with images drawn from nature.

Section 3: The Speaker of “The Apparition” and the Ghostly Presence in the Poem

Death is a fascinating topic that is addressed in carpe diem poetry. It fuels the speaker’s arguments by providing him with something to threaten the woman with. Death is not only used as a threat, but also as a reality that must be faced by both parties. On one hand, the men are trying to take advantage of the women, but on the other, they are trying to help. This paradox manifests itself in various ways in all of these poems, but this is especially true in the next two sections of this paper, which discusses two different poems.

The Apparition

When by thy scorn, O murd'ress, I am dead,
And that thou thinkst thee free
From all solicitation from me,
Then shall my ghost come to thy bed,
And thee, feigned vestal, in worse arms shall see;
Then thy sick taper will begin to wink,
And he, whose thou art then, being tired before,
Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think
Thou call'st for more,
And in false sleep will from thee shrink,

And then, poor aspen wretch, neglected thou
Bathed in a cold quicksilver sweat wilt lie,
A verier ghost than I;
What I will say, I will not tell thee now,
Lest that preserve thee; and since my love is spent,
I had rather thou shouldst painfully repent,
Than by my threat'nings rest still innocent.

The speaker brings up death by claiming he is being killed by the woman he is wooing. In the aforementioned poem above he says, "When by thy scorn, O murd'ress, I am dead, / And that thou thinkst thee free / From all solicitation from me" (1-3). This speaker uses fear in different ways. First, the speaker attempts to frighten her into his arms and instead of telling her how much he loves he says, "I am dead" not I will be dead or I will die. The implication is that her scorn has killed him. He continues his claims until he informs her that his love "is spent" in the finale. The speaker in "The Flea" uses the same technique except for the fact that there is no allusion to love. There is only sex, which as previously stated does not imply love. Next, the speaker uses fear by telling the woman she cannot escape him and his advances, even in death as evidenced by the line, "though thinkst thee free from all solicitation from me." He hopes she will feel bad about his death, guilty about rejecting his advances and scared by his ghost, who will not rest in peace, nor allow her to for everything she has put him through.

However, if he is dead then how is she supposed to give into his advances? The speaker's use of the word "solicitation" acknowledges that what he wants is sinful by making the readers think of a prostitute. There is some freedom to be claimed through his acknowledgment because the implication incriminates them both, not just her and this makes them equals. He adopts an accusatory tone to express that freedom is fleeting and that it does not last long. Death will not free her from him.

The speaker goes out of his way to degrade this woman, the mention of solicitation being the beginning. Many of his words imply that she is impure, but we cannot forget that he is teasing her. The tone of this speaker differs from the previous two because the other two did not directly attack the woman's reputation and good name. "The Apparition" is as light and playful as is "The Flea," but I believe that past speakers' tones are more fearful of the passing time while the speaker of "The Apparition" sounds rather frustrated and angry, to the point of hostility as evidence by the name calling. Also, it is obvious from his language that this speaker is passionate about this conquest, and he presents it differently than the passion seen in "The Flea." Passion was indirectly focused on the woman in the latter poem while it was focused more directly in the first poem. The central focus was on the religious imagery in "The Flea" since he was trying to use it repeatedly to make his points throughout the poem. Donne uses variations in tones to address the same topic; the variation being the level of fear present, though both remain playful to different degrees.

The speaker goes on to say, “Then shall my ghost come to thy bed, / And thee, feigned vestal, in worse arms shall see; / Then thy sick taper will begin to wink” (4-6). When the ghost comes to haunt her, she will be in the arms of another – a guy who is worse than him. He calls her a “feigned vestal” meaning pretend virgin. This is yet another stab at her reputation. He is implying that she is impure by calling her a fake virgin then unclean using the words “sick taper.” The taper refers to a candle wick, but the reference to her genitals is there. Throughout the poem he has been mentioning solicitation, fake virginity and in my mind the next step would be directly invoking an image to stand in for her genitals – this is the reason I believe taper is mentioned. The taper will begin to “wink” because of disease and also to demonstrate she is running out of time. Wink means it will begin to flicker and the only time candles do that is when they are going to go out – die. These are all possible outcomes to the way things can be, if we are to believe there is any truth to his words, now that she has decided to reject him. There is no going back. She is going to die and it will not be his fault. He will already be dead and his ghost will be the only witness to this turn of events.

In the aforementioned poems Donne’s speakers ensure they mention the regret the women will feel for turning them down and the above paragraph details examples of that. That is the reason he mentions all the crimes the woman in “The Flea” will commit by killing the flea that symbolizes their union. The speaker of “The Apparition” claims she will be haunted by his ghost, but does not elaborate

further. As Laurence Perrine states in his essay, the speaker “wants her to “painfully repent” her mistreatment of him, and if she knew now what it would say, that knowledge would "preserve" her and keep her ‘innocent’” (3). The speakers of both poems are trying to preserve the woman’s innocence. In one poem the woman is being directly accused of being guilty, but in the other the woman is indirectly accused of being guilty. Why would he want to preserve her innocence? Both of these women are being accused of crimes they did not commit by the men that are pursuing them. These comments are not effectively seductive, but they will add to the absurdity of not only their claims but the language used – hopefully by now we have suspended our disbelief and understand this is a game being played. It is this type of absurdity and liberties taken with language that first planted the idea of caricatures in mind. We are torn between giving the speakers the benefit of the doubt and taking it seriously or enjoying their wooing for what it is – a sales pitch.

As the poem continues the speaker states, “And he, whose thou art then, being tired before, / Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think / Thou call’st for more, / And in false sleep will from thee shrink” (7-10). In this section of the poem he is presenting a scene he believes will occur between the woman and her chosen lover. He outlines the scene. When her lover is finished he will pretend to be tired and fall asleep because he thinks she wants to continue their rendezvous.

Later in the aforementioned essay it claims that the speaker, “wants her to remain "innocent" of the crime of "killing" him. He wants her to fulfill his unspent desires” (3) and the same can be said about the speaker in “The Flea.” These statements are an oxymoron because they want the woman to remain innocent, but also give into their advances. The problem is that giving into someone’s advances is not considered innocent; in fact it is often frowned upon due to the religious belief that one should wait until marriage to have sex with someone and the social norms attached to that sentiment. Religion comes into play in both of the poems, but to different degrees and they are handled differently. Religion is quite obvious in “The Flea” but more subtle in “The Apparition.” In an essay entitled, “Donne’s Love-Poetry,” Herbert J.C. Grierson argues that:

In the high philosophy of the Tuscan poets of the “sweet new style” that dualism was apparently transcended, but it was by making love identical with religion, by emptying it of earthly passion, making woman an Angel, a pure Intelligence, love of whom is the first awakening of the love of God (24).

Even though Donne is considered an anti-Tuscan poet there’s dualism present some of his poetry. It should be noted that Donne wrote three different types of love poems: some follow the Petrarchan convention of courtly love and

are devoted to unattainable ladies, some are pagan and sexually predatory, and some are about mutual love.

The speaker is not the only one who is in danger of becoming a ghost, so is the woman. In the middle of the poem he says, “And then, poor aspen wretch, neglected thou /Bathed in a cold quicksilver sweat wilt lie, / A verier ghost than I” (11-13). The aspen represents disease, not just the shaking of the leaves off the tree itself which hints at sex. Through some research I learned that aspen trees do not have very long lifespans because they are threatened by various environmental factors. Many of these can be considered diseases. All this sex she is having with these men will kill her because she is not taking care of herself the way she should be. He notes that she would be a truer ghost than him, but what does that mean? Does this mean she would make a better ghost than him? Or is he implying that he will die as himself whereas she will lose her character if she does not change her actions?

Carpe diem poems are not about love. The topic of love gives the woman power because of her ability to accept or reject her suitor. These poems are not about making the woman the center of attention, but to show the speaker’s control and the ways he is attempting to dominate her. Carpe diems are about the chase, not the woman. If they were about the woman then she would be given a voice rather than bearing unwanted flattery, threats and attentions from suitors.

Women have no voice in *carpe diem*. Other types of poetry exist for this purpose, but the sub-genre of *carpe diem* is not one of them. The purpose of *carpe diem* is to execute extravagant language while remaining true to the sentiment of wooing, to cross the boundaries of what is considered decent and proper or at least stretch words to their furthest extent and still succeed in one's quest. There are many questions they ask when they do this, among them are: what does it mean to succeed at seducing someone? Does sexual intercourse truly signify the desired goal or is there something beyond that? As Herrick will show us stopping short of consummation can be more effective than the act itself.

In an essay titled, "Donne's Love-Poetry" by Herbert J.C. Grierson makes an interesting observation about Donne's poetry. He claims that Donne's love poetry has:

Two dominant strains in it [which] are these: the strain of dialectic, subtle play of argument and wit, erudite and fantastic; and the strain of vivid realism, the record of a passion which is not ideal nor conventional, neither recollected in tranquility nor a pure product of literary fashion, but love as an actual, immediate experience in all its moods, gay and angry, scornful and rapturous with joy, touched with tenderness and darkened with sorrow—though these last two moods, the commonest in love-poetry, are with Donne the rarest (23).

I do not agree with Grierson's idea that "the strain of vivid realism" is connected to "love as an actual, immediate experience." I think that is not always the case in Donne's poetry. For example, in both "The Flea" and "The Apparition" the exaggeration he implements for the two different speakers in question make the poem less realistic. I agree that love can produce intense emotions like the ones he listed above, but concurrently I think that he does not only attempt to capture those emotions in poetry, but also the sense of urgency. This urgency does not come from the intensity of emotions, but from the argument he is creating, which has nothing to do with the immediate experience. The rush built into his poems is meant to be persuasive and prey on what he perceives to be the silent woman's fears. Since the women addressed in these poems are not given actual voices, we can neither confirm nor deny their experiences.

The use of fear is much more pervasive in "The Apparition" than it is in "The Flea." I question the reason for this difference. What is the contrast between the speakers of these two poems? They employ similar methods. They have similar goals. They are enamored with the object of their seduction to some degree - otherwise why even bother her with such elaborate arguments? I believe that the speaker of "The Apparition" has more insight into the woman he is seducing than the previous speaker. There is something about the poem that

denotes a certain level of intimacy or at least some important knowledge shared between the two characters. This was not something we saw in the previous poem. There is a sense of history between them. They have a past whereas in previous poems we cannot tell one way or the other what has transpired between the two. This sense of intimacy gives the poem much more weight and could be the reason the fear is more palpable and refined. It is based on salient features within, not on wild assumptions. That is the feeling we get when we read “The Apparition” versus “The Flea.”

Section 4: The Speaker of “Delight in Disorder” and His Attention to Detail

Although “Delight in Disorder” by Robert Herrick is not considered a *carpe diem* poem, I have included it because it deals with desire and provides a different approach and perspective to seduction and the pursuit of women. It can be considered an indirect approach to wooing because women are not present in the poem itself, have no voice and still the speaker is focusing all his attention in his pursuit or at least in the fascination he expresses towards the clothing. The clothing is only a stand in for his desire towards the woman. No indication is given that a woman is physically present. She is only present in the poem itself, but even then it’s not a static presence since her clothing take center stage. The poem itself functions as clothing, in this respect. Both clothing and poem are

garments enclosing an absent object. Something about clinging to an absent center proves to be highly erotic.

Delight in Disorder

A sweet disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness:
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction;
An erring lace, which here and there
Enthralls the crimson stomacher;
A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbons to flow confusedly;
A winning wave (deserving note)
In the tempestuous petticoat;
A careless shoestring, in whose tie
I see a wild civility:
Do more bewitch me than when art
Is too precise in every part.

The poem begins, “A sweet disorder in the dress / Kindles in clothes a wantonness: / A lawn about the shoulders thrown / Into a fine distraction” (1-4). The dress the speaker is looking at is messy, probably strewn about and this is causing him to be distracted by this display. The most important word in this

section of the poem is “wantonness” – meaning immoral, unchaste and lewd. The clothing is evoking these feelings in the speaker, which is not much different from the absent woman doing so. This word draws us in and we are hooked, this is similar to what previous speakers have done to get the attention of the object of their affections. It is important to mention wantonness because it is part of the *carpe diem* tradition. Embrace the day because there are no guarantees in life. This inspires the speaker to do anything required to fulfill his wantonness. However, in this case the speaker is content to just look, admiring from afar fulfills his desire as much, maybe more so than actual penetration ever could.

These opening words immediately indicate desire. The word “kindles” builds to the “wantonness” the speaker feels. Kindles means something is ignited or set on fire. Sexual desire and passion are always discussed in terms of fire and warmth. When a woman is not interested or giving someone their attention it is referred to as “giving someone the cold shoulder.” The description in these first four sentences offers us a clear visual of material draping off the woman’s shoulders, which furthers the evocative tone. L.E. Semler claims that Herrick “succeeds in achieving his characteristic *grazia* of frozen movement and seductive eroticism in the complete absence of the female body itself” (117). Herrick’s speaker is seducing the woman through her clothing. He appears to be using her clothing as a means to an end upon first reading, but upon closer inspection he is pleased with enjoying her using sight alone. Her clothes turn him on. He does not

appear to be as direct or are pushy as the speakers in Donne's carpe diem poetry. He is very subtle and succeeds where others have failed in that he receives gratification.

The next few stanzas of the poem says, "An erring lace, which here and there / Enthralls the crimson stomacher; / A cuff neglectful, and thereby / Ribbons to flow confusedly" (5-8). The speaker continues to personify the clothing as evident by phrases such as "erring lace" and "ribbons...confusedly" – clothing does not have personhood and cannot truly do things. The enthrallment the speaker feels sounds genuine, look at the precision of his words and attention to detail. He mentions stomacher, which is an ornamental item of a dress worn under the lacings of the bodice. There is not a single article of clothing that does not grab this speaker's attention. Everything in his eyes is deserving of this attention.

L.E. Semler wrote in his essay, "Robert Herrick, the Human Figure, and the English Mannerist Aesthetic" that Herrick personifies articles of clothing and doing so encourages desire – "these desires have arisen as a result of the poet's careful observation of the apparently artless, graceful moment of the clothes" (117). Careful observation and focus is placed upon the clothing, instead of the woman herself. The poem is addressing the clothing, not the woman and this makes it a slight departure from the tradition. Furthermore, it can be argued that the clothing is what makes the woman appealing. The clothes absorb the attention given through compliments so that it is not directly placed on the woman; there is

less of a chance for rejection since he is merely complimenting not suggesting anything remotely lewd to her. There are insinuations that are hinted at, but nothing that would cause disgust.

The speaker leads us through his wonderment and fascination throughout the poem. "A winning wave (deserving note) / In the tempestuous petticoat; / A careless shoe-string, in whose tie / I see a wild civility: / Do more bewitch me than when art / Is too precise in every part" (9-14). The personification continues until the very end. This speaker is creatively, compactly and effectively demonstrating his affections. The qualities he is imbuing the clothing with may be applied to the woman. The speaker brings up witchcraft when he uses the word "bewitch" to show how smitten he is by the displays before him. This is a departure from previous speakers who evoked religion in a variety of ways. The ambiguous ending does not provide us with a resolution or ending to the scene presentation. All we are left with are the feeling evoked.

Semler addresses an aspect of the ending of "Delight in Disorder" in his essay as well. He states that:

Third, the sexually inviting nature of the personified clothes is heightened and enhanced by way of oxymora (such as "wilde civility") that perpetually enliven the coyness with a quality of prolonged titillation and seduction. Fourth, this principle of prolonged titillation perfectly harmo-nizes with the frozen

moments of the clothes. They share a halt-ing, paradoxical pleasure. The accomplished result is the erotic and graceful representation of the female figure” (117).

This section addresses the most interesting part of the ending the idea of “wild civility.” This man’s passion has been front and center throughout the poem, but it is encompassed in these two words. These opposites address both sides of him in a poetic way. These words strike a balance; something was lacking throughout the poem. The sentiments shared throughout the poem are not extravagant or unusual, but they are a bit obsessive. This obsession is what gives the speaker the power to express himself with precision and detail. The representation of the female figure is evident, but as readers we are not aware of it consciously. The words bewitch us the same way the speaker is bewitched by the clothing.

Herrick’s speaker is calmer due to his indirect and pensive nature. He sounds complimentary, not threatening. His focus is on the clothing, not on time running out. This appears a more genuine approach to seduction, even though it does not fully encapsulate the emotions passions and love can inspire in someone. L.E. Semler goes on to say that:

An endless cycle of desire is initiated as artifact and observer (and artist), overruled by the creative mind, continually refuel each other's passions. The reader cannot interpret the motion of the

clothes as simple action because they are not depicted objectively. Instead, the depicted clothes function as a mirror of the poet's interpretation of the real clothes (119).

This cycle can be seen in various *carpe diem* poems. I believe that women in seduction poems are treated as artifacts, in the same way Herrick's speakers are treating clothing as an artifact. The observers are the speakers themselves because they are the only eyes we have in the situation being presented. They are wooing these women and taking into consideration their actions throughout the poem. We as readers cannot see these women because they are invisible – this allows us to focus only on what Herrick intended to show us when he composed this. The only way we are made aware of their actions is when the speaker addresses it. At the very end the speaker mentions art and by doing so blurs the lines between speaker and poet. The claim is that the wild civility seen in the shoestring bewitches him more than art that is too precise. What is referring to when he says art? The clothing is not depicted objectively because they are viewed through Herrick's eyes and mirror his interpretation.

Another point made by Paul R. Jenkins' essay is that, "the art of "Delight in Disorder" is to make order and disorder flatter each other, not fight" and that "in cataloguing the way an alluring woman should clothe herself (at the rate of one item of dress per couplet) discloses the active presence of the voice of restraint: orderliness is a pre- condition for toying with variety" (53). Jenkins

claims that the aforementioned poem by Herrick is an example of bringing opposites together, only to leave their tension unresolved. He is successful in creating a late-Renaissance aesthetic. How does this aesthetic affect the *carpe diem* tradition? I believe it compliments it by adding another layer of complexity. On the one hand, we have Donne's anti-Petrarchan sentiments expressed in his work and this is juxtaposed to Herrick's compliance with the late-Renaissance aesthetic, which rounds out his work. This demonstrates the degree to which opposing forces are present in the genre. The only way to lessen this tension is by showing order and disorder the ways in which they complement each other; as the saying goes, "one cannot exist without the other."

Another essay that addresses "Delight in Disorder" is titled, "Herrick's 'Delight in Disorder'" by Leo Spitzer. In it Spitzer argues that previous commentary made on this poem made false assumptions and from these they based their arguments on. He poignantly states that, "I would say, not that the clothes are, but that the clothes behave like a woman (they are wanton, distracted, erring, neglectful, tempestuous, wild, bewitching), they have temperament, whims, caprices of their own and it is that motive power" (210). I previously mentioned some of these words that signified personification and this supports that. This essay gives me the opportunity to connect this poem to "The Apparition" by providing me insight into the details I previously missed. Clothing cannot speak to the poet-speaker any more than the woman of "The Apparition."

We must treat the clothing as we treat the women when we analyze them and notice that yet again there is silence. The silence is due to clothing's being inanimate objects. What does this say about women?

Herrick is playing with the idea of innocence and wantonness. In “‘Upon Julia's Clothes’: Herrick, Ovid, and the Celebration of Innocence,” John Roe, though he does not actually address “Delight in Disorder” at length says, “Herrick exploits paradox in a straightforward, recognizable manner, while sustaining a high and individual degree of ingenuity” (354). What is the paradox that can be found in “Delight in Disorder?” The only paradox that comes to mind is order and disorder. Herrick organizes this poem in a specific way, which is meant to mimic disorder, or at least led us to visualize what a mess everything is. Roe continues, “When it comes to sex in the seventeenth century it is notoriously impossible to separate puritan from cavalier; there is as much of the one as the other in Herrick” (356). Herrick achieves a balance of cavalier and puritan in his work due to careful consideration of his word choice. The gentleness speakers take on coupled with pastoral images demonstrates this balance in effect.

“Delight in Disorder” has proven that it has a place in the *carpe diem* tradition. The speaker is not blasé, but invested to a certain degree. This is due to the fact his attention are on clothing rather than an actual unattainable woman. This shift from person to clothing allows the speaker to express himself more

precisely without fear of rejection for he is not seeking validation, he is expressing passion. In “Kiss Fancies in Robert Herrick” by William Kerrigan the challenge of balancing paradoxes within Herrick’s work is discussed. He maintains that Herrick’s major subject as an erotic poet is “his peculiar version of the conflict between ideal and debased love –a war between the would-be innocence of sexual fantasy and the insistence of embarrassment” (855). I never considered Herrick’s fetishizing of clothing would lead to embarrassment and that it’s something he would have to contend with as a result. Debased love refers to consummation while the ideal is foreplay. Herrick effectively expresses what he prefers as evident by the way the speakers in his poems treat and address the silent women. He chooses the ideal, which keeps him “suspended between the oral and genital” (860). This suspension is important because it shows that Herrick is not interested in consummation and prefers the ambivalence associated with remaining in between foreplay and coitus.

Section 5: The Speaker of “Corrina’s Going A-Maying”, Seduction in a Pastoral Setting

The jovial tone of the next poem brings us full circle in our discourse of carpe diem poetry and the tones speakers implement. “Corrina’s Going A-Maying,” is darker than others analyzed due to its allusions to death and decay.

The focus the speaker places on nature distracts us from the sentiments expressed in its final stanza. The threats provided in this poem are not as powerful as the ones that appear in “The Flea” and “The Apparation” due to their mild nature and as a result the words do not strike us as dominating. This poem shows us that you do not have to be forceful when wooing someone.

Corrina’s Going A-Maying

Get up, get up for shame; the blooming morn
Upon her wings presents the god unshorn.

See how Aurora throws her fair

Fresh-quilted colors through the air:

Get up, sweet slug-a-bed, and see

The dew bespangling herb and tree.

Each flower has wept and bowed toward the east

Above an hour since; yet you not dressed,

Nay! not so much as out of bed?

When all the birds have matins said,

And sung their thankful hymns, 'tis sin,

Nay, profanation to keep in,

Whereas a thousand virgins on this day

Spring, sooner than the lark, to fetch in May.

Rise, and put on your foliage, and be seen
To come forth, like the springtime, fresh and green,
And sweet as Flora. Take no care
For jewels for your gown or hair:
Fear not; the leaves will strew
Gems in abundance upon you;
Besides, the childhood of the day has kept,
Against you come, some orient pearls unwept;
Come, and receive them while the light
Hangs on the dew-locks of the night,
And Titan on the eastern hill
Retires himself, or else stands still
Till you come forth. Wash, dress, be brief in praying:
Few beads are best when once we go a-Maying.

Come, my Corinna, come; and, coming, mark
How each field turns a street, each street a park
Made green, and trimmed with trees; see how
Devotion gives each house a bough
Or branch; each porch, each door ere this,

An ark, a tabernacle is,
Made up of white-thorn neatly interwove,
As if here were those cooler shades of love.

Can such delights be in the street
And open fields, and we not see't ?
Come, we'll abroad; and let's obey
The proclamation made for May,
And sin no more, as we have done, by staying;
But, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying.

There's not a budding boy or girl this day
But is got up, and gone to bring in May.

A deal of youth, ere this, is come
Back, and with white-thorn laden home.
Some have dispatched their cakes and cream,
Before that we have left to dream;
And some have wept, and wooed, and plighted troth,
And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth.

Many a green-gown has been given;
Many a kiss, both odd and even;
Many a glance too has been sent

From out the eye, love's firmament;
Many a jest told of the keys betraying
This night, and locks picked, yet we're not a-Maying.

Come, let us go, while we are in our prime,
And take the harmless folly of the time.

We shall grow old apace, and die
Before we know our liberty.
Our life is short; and our days run
As fast away as does the sun;
And, as a vapor or a drop of rain
Once lost, can ne'er be found again,
So when or you or I are made
A fable, song, or fleeting shade,
All love, all liking, all delight
Lies drowned with us in endless night.

Then while time serves, and we are but decaying,
Come, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying.

“Corrina’s Going A-Maying,” completes the discourse I address regarding possible tones in carpe diem poetry. This carpe diem poem begins, “Get up, get up for shame; the blooming morn / Upon her wings presents the god unshorn.

/ See how Aurora throws her fair / Fresh-quilted colours through the air” (1-4).

The opening sets the following scene: the speaker is trying to rouse a woman from sleep so she can catch a glimpse of the sun rising. This serene beginning uses beautiful images to draw us in. The first image is “her wings” which conjures up thoughts of angels and nature. The wings belong to Aurora, the goddess of dawn, and this means the day is going to begin soon, but he does not want the woman to miss any moments. There is a lot of beauty to be enjoyed before everyone’s bustling about in the morning. The next image is “her fair, fresh-quilted colours” signifying the change of colors in the sky. The verb throw demonstrates the suddenness of Aurora’s action. Sunrise is coming fast and soon Apollo will take the reins from Aurora since her time is quickly passing.

This stanza ends with, “When all the birds have matins said / And sung their thankful hymns, 'tis sin, / Nay, profanation to keep in, / Whereas a thousand virgins on this day / Spring, sooner than the lark, to fetch in May” (10-14). He continues to focus on the things she will miss if she stays in bed. This time he uses more forceful language, hoping this will cause her to become mobile. The birds are singing amazing songs, and it is sinful to miss out on them, blasphemous even. This is a strong accusation to use against someone who does not want to get out of bed early to witness all these changes in nature. The speaker gains confidence in his rhetoric. This confidence changes the tone in the first stanza as it unfolds. He starts off with kindness and ends with a veiled threat. He is hoping

to prey on her religious feelings. The flowers weeping in the previous lines could be hinting at the profanation he mentions. The question is: will he be successful in getting her out of bed? Instead of trying to get the unattainable woman into bed, he is trying to get her out of bed, which departs from previous scenes we have read. What is the reason for this switch and what does this say about the speaker?

In the next stanza he continues, “Rise and put on your foliage, and be seen / To come forth, like the spring-time, fresh and green, / And sweet as Flora. Take no care / For jewels for your gown or hair: / Fear not ; the leaves will strew / Gems in abundance upon you” (15-20). At this point he is encouraging the woman to get dressed yet again, but this time he is complimenting her in the process. The repetition helps create the structure of the poem. He compares her presence to the spring time and doing so emphasizing how important her appearance is to him and to nature itself. She is part of nature and as such must make an appearance. He tells her that it is unnecessary for her to comb her hair or put on jewelry. He suggests she allow herself to be decorated by nature. This incorporation will make her a part of nature completely. He compares her to Flora, the goodness of flowers and spring, which completes the idea of her belonging in nature.

The pastoral images continue in the next part of this stanza, “Besides, the childhood of the day has kept, / Against you come, some orient pearls unwept ; /

Come and receive them while the light / Hangs on the dew-locks of the night” (21-24). He is suggesting that the day is still young since it has not begun and he wants her to welcome it, enjoy it before it grows older and people catch a glimpse of it. This request is turning into a race in the same way that “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” did and the challenger yet again is the sun. He informs her that the day is waiting for her. So now not only will she disappoint the speaker by not getting out of her bed, but she will also disappoint nature itself with her negligence. He insists that this transition from night to dawn to morning is worth seeing firsthand. The beauty of nature is a nice distraction from the agenda he has beneath it; this is a *carpe diem* poem after all and certain twists are expected.

The stanza ends with, “And Titan on the eastern hill / Retires himself, or else stands still / Till you come forth. Wash, dress, be brief in praying: / Few beads are best when once we go a-Maying” (25-28). He introduces yet another figure that is awaiting her arrival. The figure of the Titan is very imposing and is a reference to the sun yet again. He is making it clear that this is a date, not only a race. He continues to change tactics mid-stanza in hopes of figuring out what words to say. He is trying to guilt trip her into agreeing to give into his request at this point in the poem since past attempts have been futile. The implication that the sun will go away before she has a chance to see it or worse wait around for her thus freezing time for everyone gives her great power, but this is meant to conjure up feelings of guilt and a little bit of shame.

The next stanza builds on what the previous two stanzas have established by saying, “Come, my Corinna, come; and coming, mark / How each field turns a street, each street a park / Made green and trimmed with trees; see how / Devotion gives each house a bough / Or branch; each porch, each door ere this” (29-33). He is outlining the way man has changed nature. Man created streets and parks. Among these places are homes in which people reside. He points out that the materials needed to create these places came from nature. She cannot observe this if she is stuck in bed. At this point he is trying to pique her curiosity by pointing out all the things that are changing around her. All she has to do is take the time to get dressed and take a look. Other people are enjoying these sights, so why isn't she? What is stopping her from enjoying the day the way others have? He is providing her with plenty of reasons to seize the day.

The speaker is crafty, changing his tone constantly throughout the poem. He is becoming more and more detailed and precise like the speaker from “Delight in Disorder,” but instead of focusing on articles of clothing, he is focusing on his surroundings. So the next few lines of this stanza say, “An ark, a tabernacle is, / Made up of white-thorn neatly interwove, / As if here were those cooler shades of love. / Can such delights be in the street / And open fields and we not see't ?” (34-38). He expresses the same thought as before but this time he is asking her a question. He hopes that he can enjoy her in conversation. The mention of “tabernacle” is another religious nod. The speaker has been naming

Roman gods this whole time, but now there are hints of Christianity appearing. This hints at future mentions of religion later on in the poem, but for now we are left with the slow build up.

The third stanza ends with, “Come, we'll abroad; and let's obey / The proclamation made for May, / And sin no more, as we have done, by staying ; / But, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying” (39-42). What is the significance of May? The realization dawned on me that May typically has good weather. The weather is usually not too hot or cold; it remains mild due to it being Spring in certain countries. The flowers have finished growing thanks to all the rain from the previous months and this gives nature beautiful energy that can be felt. Another observation about the ending of this stanza was something noticed previously – the speaker is preoccupied with stopping the woman from sinning. He says, “sin no more” which suggest she has not moved from her bed and she is probably still ignoring him. Nothing he has said has affected her so her neglect of nature is a sin.

The penultimate stanza begins, “There's not a budding boy or girl this day / But is got up, and gone to bring in May. / A deal of youth, ere this, is come / Back, and with white-thorn laden home” (43-46). Since the woman has not budged from place, he has decided to employ the “but everyone else is doing it” argument. The evidence that the speaker is using this argument is the phrasing of

this entire stanza and the word “deal” – meaning a great number. The “budding” boy and girl refers to people that have reached maturity. It also conjures up the image of flowers blossoming in May, which ironically enough has been mentioned numerous times in the poem. The repetition of the word May demonstrates the importance it has to the poem. Spring usually begins in March, but May is where it is all at because everything is maturing.

The speaker goes on to say, “Some have dispatched their cakes and cream, / Before that we have left to dream; /And some have wept, and wooed, and plighted troth, /And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth” (47-50). People are already getting ready for their weddings, but there is no chance the speaker and this woman will ever reach that point because she will not get out of bed. This woman though silent is obviously very stubborn. This is the first time the speaker mentions wooing and seduction. He has introduced these ideas at the same time he presented marriage because he wants to show the woman what their options are: either marriage or a quick romp in the hay. Sin remains as prominent as ever with the appearance of the word “sloth” to liven things up.

The ending of this stanza prepares us for the final stanza that follows it, which is the speaker’s final opportunity to convince the woman to get out of bed. It goes, “ Many a green-gown has been given ; / Many a kiss, both odd and even; / Many a glance too has been sent / From out the eye, love's firmament ; / Many a

jest told of the keys betraying / This night, and locks picked, yet we're not a-Maying” (51-56). He is aware that people have been indulging in sin; that is the reason people have green-gowns – from rolling around in it. He goes from hinting at sexual activity to something as chaste as a kiss to something even more innocent as a glance. Yes, glances can be penetrating and lustful but the lowering of intensity in the action does not suggest this. He says that “night and locks picked” which tells her that he has gone out of his way to accommodate her needs. He thinks she owes him something and does not understand why she will not go “a-Maying” with him. No reasons have been presented.

In the final stanza we finally get the punch line. It boils down to, “Come, let us go, while we are in our prime,...we shall grow old apace, and die” (1,3). There is no doubt that he wants to live in the moment. The words that strike me most in the ending are: liberty, sun, fable. The first word has not been used before by other speakers. Yes, there has been mention of being free from sin, but not freedom on its own. What does freedom mean to the speaker? If he is trying to dominate the woman like many other speakers have attempted to in the past then what kind of freedom can she enjoy? This entire proposition is his idea and there has not been an instance in this poem where he acts like she came up with it. He flattered her; he guilt-tripped her. How will this act give her freedom? She is not lacking freedom since she is making the conscious choice to stay in bed and not watch the dawn become daylight.

Herrick's speakers provide insight into the way he constructs gender. In "Robert Herrick and the Ambiguities of Gender," David Landrum claims that, "the stance Herrick takes in relation to gender issues is rooted in the double-coding of female presence that already existed...Female submission was considered essential to an ordered, stable society" (181). This explains why order and disorder are pitted against each other in "Delight in Disorder." If the woman is already considered, "subordinate to men" and "morally evil, intellectually inferior" then there is no reason for the woman to reject his suggestions. Yet, in every single poem I have analyzed that is exactly what happens. Does this suggest that the view of women was wrong at the time or was poet deliberately writing the woman in this way to defy convention? Yes, this includes Herrick who sticks more closely to tradition than Donne. The woman does not behave in the manner expected, but that further fuels the speaker's quest for dominance. It is more challenging to try to seize someone who is difficult than someone who will easily surrender. It is all about the chase because it is a game.

At this time there were many paradoxes at play, similar to the ones exemplified in Herrick's poetry. It is reasonable to assume that is where the inspiration came from and if not the inspiration then the experience. Roe claims that:

Within this universally held set of notions about the nature and role of women, hinges, flaws, and contradictions abounded.

Neoplatonic thought exalted woman. The cult of the Virgin, Petrarchan love conventions, and the cult of Elizabeth all grew out of this belief in the transcendence of womanhood (181).

The education and devaluation of women gives a precedent to the speakers we have been reading. Every detail handpicked to fit the experience of the world in which Herrick and Donne lived in. The carpe diem tradition infused these particular poems with the power to instill fear, guilt and shame, but was also used to compete, succeed and surpass previous examples of the sub-genre. All the Petrarchan love conventions we have previously been exposed to have provided the foundation necessary to interpret the last five poems discussed herein. I believe that Petrarchan courtly love poems combine with carpe diem poems and the relationship between these two types of poems provide poets with the tools necessary to successfully execute either form or create their own. Were Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets games in the same way carpe diem poems can be considered thus? The intent behind Petrarchan and Shakespearean differs from what Donne and Herrick are doing here by virtue of approach. The seduction in Petrarchan courtly love poems is not the same because of the unavailability of the woman, which reduces some of the tension present in carpe diem poetry.

Petrarchan women are completely unavailable, except to be worshiped from afar by the lover.

“Thy firmness makes my circle just, / And makes me end where I begun” is the finale of “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning.” The scholarship on Donne and Herrick has allowed me to “make my circle just,” which in this instance I implement to mean helping me explore the tones of the various speakers encountered within the context of the genre. The criticism included here clarified some of the misunderstandings critics have had when approaching these poems. Also, they helped me demonstrate the importance of tone and how easily meaning can change when we tinker with the attitudes of the speakers. Much of the scholarship focused on similarities among these poems in terms of themes and the importance of carrying on or subverting certain traditions. This thesis is a survey of the possible attitudes or moods in carpe diem poetry of the early 17th century. I focus on the various tones of the speakers because doing so best highlights the attitudes and moods present within and help me compare and contrast John Donne and Robert Herrick’s approaches.

Donne is a metaphysical, anti-Petrarchan poet. Herrick, on the other hand, is a cavalier poet. These designations help us understand the influences both men drew from in their work. I understand that all of the aforementioned poems were part of a poetic game the poets were involved in, never an actual attempt at

seduction involving real people. These men and others like them were competing amongst each other to see who could be the most outrageous with language, cross the boundaries of seduction and still remain true to the carpe diem tradition. The main finding of my research was the repeated use of paradoxes within poems and analyzing how they helped create the effectiveness of the poem. The contribution I make is analyzing the connection between tone, attitude and expression – all evident in the words chosen and the mood this choice reflects. Donne and Herrick both wrote about courtly themes such as beauty and love. Donne was willing to bring grotesque images into his work while Herrick remained on the more cheery side of the tradition, clinging to primal innocence.

More can be said about the limitations of this genre, especially since I did not fully explore women's inability to implement the tradition owing to the laser focus I had on the words and structures of the poems included. I approached my master's thesis in this way because I believed it would be the best way to capture carpe diem sentiment without veering off topic. I successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of these poems, regardless of approach and went a step further by showing that a simple-minded and often sexist premise, the wish of a man to sleep with a woman, can in fact generate poems of near-infinite variety and subtlety, not only of wit and wordplay, but of psychology, philosophy, interiority and emotional depth.

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