

Carpe Diem Poems

“The Flea” (1633)

By John Donne

- Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
- (5) 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.
- (10) Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, w’are met,
- (15) 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
(20) 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 thy self, nor me the weaker now;
- (25) ’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.

“To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” (1648)

By Robert Herrick

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

- (5) 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,
(10) 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;
(15) For having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry.

“Upon the Nipples of Julia's Breast” (1648)

By Robert Herrick

- Have ye beheld (with much delight)
A red rose peeping through a white ?
Or else a cherry, double grac'd,
Within a lily centre plac'd ?
(5) Or ever mark'd the pretty beam
A strawberry shows half-drown'd in cream ?
Or seen rich rubies blushing through
A pure smooth pearl and orient too ?
So like to this, nay all the rest,
(10) Is each neat niplet of her breast.

“To His Coy Mistress” (1681)

By Andrew Marvell

- 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.
- (5) Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
- (10) Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze;
- (15) Two hundred to adore each breast;
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart;
For, Lady, you deserve this state,
- (20) Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
- (25) Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song: then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
- (30) And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
- (35) And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
- (40) Than languish in his slow-chapt power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life:
- (45) Thus, though we cannot make our sun

Stand still, yet we will make him run.