

CARPE DIEM* IN ANDREW MARVELL'S POEM *TO HIS COY MISTRES

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Received: 2022/05/17

Accepted: 2022/05/26

Published: 2022/05/30

Abstract

Carpe Diem derives from Latin which, in English, means seize the opportunity by enjoying the present time and trusting the least possible to the future. The future is formed through the present. *Carpe Diem* is the main theme in Andrew Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress* and is the object of this research. The poet's view of the transience of the world is clearly illustrated referring to the limitations of time and space for humans; Thus, every available moment must be utilized. This research is conducted using descriptive qualitative method related to social phenomena and based on the *Carpe Diem* terminology and supported by the concept of taking advantage of existing opportunities. These two concepts basically refer to a single notion which states that opportunities will not come repeatedly. The results show that there are two forms of *Carpe Diem* in this poem, namely in matters of love and sex and both are conveyed by the male lover to his lady by using the arguments that they are mortal and everything they have is limited. Relationships of love and sex must be carried out immediately because only then can they see, feel and enjoy the beauty of love and the pleasures of sex.

Keywords: *Carpe Diem*, social phenomena, existing opportunities, love, sex, relationship

1. Introduction

The term *Carpe Diem* was first issued by Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Horace), a poet during the emperor August 65-68 BC. Horace writes an ode in which he inserts the phrase *carpe diem*, specifically in series 1. The phrase is taken from the full sentence *carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero*, which means 'pick for today and believe the least possible to the future. In this poem, *carpe diem* is defined as enjoying, maximizing, living, and using the things existing (Wang, 2020).

The phrase gives recommendation to people to make optimal use of today and not to postpone something for tomorrow so that we can make better use of the time given optimally. Procrastination is something risky because something that has been postponed can probably no longer be carried out; besides procrastination can also be a picture of laziness, and laziness is never fruitful.

Today we have to make something concrete in life. This is when we have to act real in our lives. Today we should think carefully. This is when we should think critically. Right now we should ask a lot of questions about everything around and in our lives.

From the description above, it is illustrated that *Carpe Diem* can be used as a concept, ideology, principle and also motivation in all spheres of human, social, cultural and political realms. *Carpe Diem* which is closely related to opportunity is universal with the understanding that everyone gets, enjoys, uses, and also expects opportunities, both positive and negative.

The research is focused on the *Carpe Diem* theme in the poem *To His Coy Mistress* written by Andrew Marvell. Andrew Marvell (1621 – 1678) was an English poet of the 17th century and later became very well known in the 20th century. His poetry is generally sensual and elegant with nuances that are full of the excitement of life, especially the excitement that exists in romantic relationships. All of these make Marvell declared a metaphysical poet. His poetry contains metaphors, conceits and allusions. The metaphysical traits in Marvell's work are ambiguity in words, complex metaphors, contradictions, allegorical interpretations, twists and turns of the opinion and argument, scientific vocabulary, and subtle style of the language (Veloz, 2018).

A stark ambiguity in meaning and language is the feature of Marvell's way of writing to express his feelings and thoughts hidden in his sensibility of human condition. Historical aspects also play important roles in his poems, showing that he constantly ties the themes with the current issues of his age. The philosophy of body and soul contradiction are expressed through contradiction and opposite propositions, making Marvell a great metaphysical poet, dividing the human soul into three parts, the nutritive soul in humans, plants, and animals, the sensitive soul in emotional beings and in those creatures that sense things and the rational soul as a unique property of human beings. He is straightforward and blunt when it comes to expressing the exact point of view. In the production of his poems, especially the ones with metaphysical aspects, Marvell all the time refers to various allusions taken from history or classical myths (Thompson, 2019). The metaphysical poets are men of learning, and to show their learning is their whole endeavour. They neither copy nature nor life, neither paint the forms of matter nor represent the operations of intellect. Their thoughts are often new but seldom natural. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked together by violence; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety surprises (Dutta, 2013).

To His Coy Mistress, a poem that tells the story of two lovers, and these two lovers do not have specific names or identity. The male lover tries to reassure his

female beloved by saying that basically her shyness is acceptable and not a bad thing; however as they do not have enough time, then the lady should be willing to sleep with him. "Time's winged chariot" (line 21) is a statement used to describe that time moves very fast. They are mortal beings, which means that their time and place are limited; thus their relationship is an important moment and they should take advantage of the moment; or they simply do not have the opportunity to be able to have sex together. Sex should be done whenever the opportunity arises and should not be delayed.

Furthermore, the gentleman says that by delaying sex, her virginity which she has guarded for so long would be in vain because it would only become food for worms. While they are still alive they must hasten to have sex. There is no point in adhering to a principle of intact virginity. The man also assures the lady that he loves her so much that he even goes on to say that he will wait for her until the end of the world, using elaborate conceit, "until the conversion of the Jews" (line 10). This refers to New Testament's Book of Revelations (Ibanez and Gomez, 2015)

2. Literature Review

2.1 Carpe Diem

The concept of Carpe diem can be seen in lots of the literature before and after Horace, and is also found in ancient Greek literature, especially lyric poetry, and intersects with the teachings of the Greek philosopher Epicurus and what comes to be known as Epicureanism (Wang, 2020). Epicureanism is a philosophical system that emerged in the fourth century BC. C. in Athens, proposed by Epicuro de Samos, who taught his doctrine at a school called El Jardín. The main basis of his philosophy is the pursuit of happiness.

For Epicurus, every element is made up of atoms and humans can perceive their forms and qualities using their senses. His followers are called Epicureans and must avoid pain and distraction (Clackson, 2011).

The philosophical goals for Epicurus are ataraxia (absence of fear, restlessness or anxiety), aponia (absence of pain), and friendship. He argues, the greatest source of human suffering is the fear of death. Humans tend to imagine pain and fear death. In the concept of eucupurusism, anxiety is something that does not need to be taken into account and is not something to be afraid of. For him death is the end of the body as well as the soul. Through the concept of *Carpe Diem*, anxiety, whatever its form, can be overcome with the principle of *Carpe Diem*, namely picking the day. Anxiety is a situation where a person is afraid of things that have not yet happened, while in the *Carpe Diem* concept, every moment, which is devoted to the present or today's moment, must be pursued, must be achieved and thus anxiety, at a minimum, can be reduced (Oyson, 2016).

In general, the meaning of this terminology is that we are recommended to use today optimally, not to delay anything for tomorrow, so that we can make optimal use of time. Horace has his own opinion on the meaning of his phrase; he conveys that the future is something unpredictable and we cannot make a choice to escape from it, just

by doing it today we can make our future better. The point is we should not waste anything for today, if we do our best today then we will reap success in the following days (Pongweni, 2015; Bryson, 2018).

The concept of *Carpe Diem* is basically in line with the old adage that says 'Strike while the iron is hot', take advantage of the opportunity while it is still there. In life we are always competing to be able to face life's competition that is getting tougher. It is not easy to get something without going through a struggle that is not light. In the life that is lived every human being must have the opportunity to easily achieve a desired goal.

2.2 Opportunity

Opportunity does not come twice; very trivial indeed but sometimes if we ignore an opportunity, we shall usually regret later; so all opportunities require decisions, wise decisions of course, because decisions determine fate. So an opportunity depends on how humans make decisions. There are three types of people related to opportunity:

1. Weak people, waiting for opportunities.
2. Strong people, creating opportunities.
3. Wise people, taking advantage of opportunities.

For the weak, if the opportunity has not come they will wait and wait patiently until the opportunity comes. And if the opportunity has not come for so long, then they will decide that it is already a way of life, which means that there is an element of despair. Meanwhile, for the strong, if the opportunity has not yet come, they will use various methods and techniques, with all their creativity, connectivity, and all their abilities to create the opportunity that comes to them. This type of people has the principle that opportunity does not just come, but opportunity must be sought or created. And for the intelligent, they will take advantage of the opportunity as well as possible, because they realize that opportunity is a very valuable gift and not necessarily that opportunity will come again and again. In fact, under certain conditions, the emergence of opportunities may take time to mature. We need to wait a moment, but not passively. Instead, we wait for the opportunity with an alert, proactive and ready attitude (Kuada, 2016).

Opportunity is one of the factors that must be owned by anyone who wants to develop themselves. Without the available opportunities, it is impossible for us to be successful. Therefore, if the opportunity has not yet come, we must try to create it, even in adversity, if we have the tenacity to keep trying, one day, the opportunity will come (Oyson, 2016).

3. Research Method

This study is a descriptive qualitative research method as it gives pictures of the concept of *Carpe Diem* without using any numerical data. The work is completely theoretical. The source of data is the poem *To His Coy Mistress* by Andrew Marvell and

the data are taken from the lines of the poem referring to the points of discussion concerning Carpe Diem.

Descriptive qualitative method is used in the study having mechanism of research design, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures. In qualitative research method, the data are taken from texts and are then explored and analyzed using descriptive qualitative method since it intends to identify lines of the poem and will be interpreted into the form of words rather than numbers. By this the various forms of data taken from poem as the primary source, are oriented to types of carpe diem (Cresswell in Hidayati, 2019).

4. Discussion

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) is an English poet, and a member of parliament after the Restoration in 1660. His most anthologized poem is *To His Coy Mistress*, published in *Miscellaneous Poems* (1681). It is a poem traditional in topic and form that using metaphysical and argumentative elements. Metaphysical poetry is highly intellectual, makes use of strange imagery (such as the references to worms gaining his mistress' virginity) and frequent paradox. They also contain complicated thought and are often witty and elaborate in style.

To his Coy Mistress is said to be a 'carpe diem' metaphysical poem. The phrase 'carpe diem' in Latin, means 'seize the day', focusing on the poem's allusion to living in the moment. Marvell uses this poetic form as a way of asking and persuading the mistress that time is short and she should partake in worldly enjoyment. Nobody knows what tomorrow brings. We are not supposed to keep waiting, but we have to keep trying to reach the goal.

4.1 Carpe Diem in love

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
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 (Sackville-West, 2013)

The quotation refers to the opportunity to love each other while still young because at a young age, the turmoil of feelings and thoughts is very high and with the high spirit possessed, affectionate relationships can be truly enjoyed. Everyone when asked about love, will give a different answer. Everyone will definitely answer according to what he thinks and feels when experiencing it. Love can be interpreted as a form of our love for someone and want to always see him or her happy, even though sometimes we do stupid things to make the person we care about smile happily.

Here the man tells the lady that they are young and thus they should do everything optimally. Adolescence should be filled with beauty. Next he tells the lady that her skin is as smooth as the morning dew and her soul also lit up like coals, meaning that she has a high zeal to do anything. Love in adolescence makes our hearts flutter, we admire someone very quickly, our heart beats fast when we see someone we admire pass by, and quickly make a decision related to romance. This happens because in adolescence we have not had complicated problems and are still in our comfort zone. Teenagers are also very fun because we never think about what the future holds; what is important is that we are happy today.

The man goes on to say that the two of them are now like predatory birds who are always ready to do anything. Here Marvell uses an argumentative statement, 'amorous birds of prey', predatory bird that has the nature of affection. Predator and affection are two opposite concepts. Violent creatures usually lack compassion; but this is the hallmark of metaphysical poetry. Predatory birds here are a symbol of the high excitement possessed by teenagers, especially in love. So before the end of adolescence, the pleasure of love must be achieved, felt and enjoyed. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song (Sackville-West, 2013)

Here it is clearly illustrated that if the opportunity is ignored, while they are still young, then this affectionate relationship can no longer be enjoyed. Once the teenage years pass, the beauty will also disappear and the strings of words of love can no longer be heard. In short, the man says that before it is too late, or before she dies, he invited his lady to feel the sensation of the love affair. Everything is meaningless in the grave.

4.2 Carpe Diem in Sex

Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime (Sackville-West, 2013)

The man convinces the lady to sleep with him, having sex and it is not a crime. Having sex on the basis of love is a natural thing according to him; on the contrary, the shyness that the lady has and shows is acceptable. The man says that the feeling of shyness owned by the lady is normal and he believes that behind the feeling of shyness there is a great desire to have sex.

He continues to persuade the lady to have sex because they are human, mortal, so while they have the opportunity, they should be able to feel the pleasures of the sensual embodiment.

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,
And into ashes all my lust;
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace (Sackville-West, 2013)

Then, the man says that the beauty of the lady will soon disappear; at this time the lady is beautiful because she is young, but once she dies, all that beauty could not be enjoyed anymore. Maintaining chastity is futile, just as once she dies, her virginity will become food for worms in the grave while she herself cannot enjoy it anymore because she certainly will no longer have lust. The opportunity that exists must be used immediately, the opportunity to have sex is currently wide open, so the man continues to persuade the lady to have sex. No one has sex in the vault.

5. Conclusion

Love is a person's tendency to other people who are considered to have a good impact and make him happy. Love can be formed because there are people who love and are loved. To love is the duty of the heart. The heart cannot be forced to love, but the heart is free to love anyone because the heart is not limited by space and time, not only one love that grows but can be more. As love grows in the heart, then no one knows which heart to love or be loved. But human life is limited by space and time. Everything is ephemeral; so while we have the opportunity, make the most of it.

Philosophically the phrase *Carpe Diem* means to bring joy and happiness in every moment of life and Marvel prominently uses this phrase in this poem. Time is the eternal and unchanging substance of existence. It is very important for basic humanity to live their life as if it were the only thing they have, hence the concept of seizing the day or *carpe diem*. In Marvell's poem, 'To His Coy Mistress', the speaker of the poem commits *Carpe Diem*, an affair to try and sleep with a young girl who protects herself in order to marry.

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