

## THE DIFFERENT POEMS, TO FLEA BY JOHN DONNE AND SONG BY SIR JOHN SUCKLING

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### UPON RECONNOITRING BY BENEFITTING FROM CONCEIT, THEME AND LANGUAGE

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**Abstract:** The seventeenth century includes an appearing two poetic styles which are Metaphysical and Cavalier Poetry. These two poetic styles involves in the different aspects yet a similar usage of literary devices. This paper argues that the differences between two poems refer to the similarities in terms of theme, language and conceit. The paper introduces a contrastive study of *To Flea* (1633) by John Donne in which the poet represents the flea and his mental agility to convince the opposite sex rather than *Song* by Sir John Suckling who sets up a conversation by way of presenting the friend a suggestion. The poems also represent *Carpe Diem*, John Donne's wit, Sir John Suckling's attitude toward women, theme, conceit and language in their different use of a style.

**Keywords:** *Carpe Diem*, *John Donne*, *Sir John Suckling*, *Theme*, *Conceit*.

**Öz:** 17. yüzyıl iki şiirsel tiplerin oluşumunu kapsar ki bunlar Metafizik ve Cavalier şiiridir. Bu iki şiirsel tür edebi araçların benzer bir kullanımı olsa da farklı bakış açılarını kapsar. Bu makale iki şiir arasındaki farklılıkları tema, dil ve conceit bakımından benzerliklere başvurur. Makale bir tavsiye sunma aracılığıyla sohbet kuran Sir John Suckling'in *Song*'undan ziyade karşı cinsi etkilemek için yazarın piyeyi ve kıvrak zekasını sunduğu John Donne 'ın *To Flea*' yi bir zıtlık çalışmasını tanıtır. Şiirler ayrıca farklı bir stil kullanımında *Carpe Diem*'i, John Donne'ın ince zekasını, Sir John Suckling'in kadınlara karşı tutumunu, temayı, conceit ve dili sunar.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Carpe Diem*, *John Donne*, *Sir John Suckling*, *Tema*, *Conceit*.

#### Introduction

17th century is full of conflicts reverberating on literature.. Tudor period has been ended in view of the fact that Elizabeth I has had no child, and Charles I has been beheaded by Oliver Cromwell who is the one of the strugglers of the Civil War that he has a dissolving problem about parliament when he attains the authority, but it remains a dissolved problem after his death. Charles II returns from France that he renovates the parliament and the system after Oliver Cromwell. The Revolution Age brings on such a political and social conflict as result in the Civil War, and the parliament under the control of Oliver Cromwell are represented in the poem as sided. In this period, people having the opportunity to think liberally start to learn anything and question to correct it. It is the revival of classical times' perspectives that thanks to philosophy, people and artists are

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much more enlightened. Such an interest in science and philosophy as conflicts with a lyrical sense in the period. 17th century includes some historical matters reflecting to the poems through the poets' perspectives. Important groups of the Revolution Age are Metaphysical and Cavalier Poetry. On the one hand there is a group, Cavalier Poets, saying "Carpe Diem, seize the day", but on the other hand the another group, Metaphysical Poets, are looking for finding a new one, surpassing their mind in terms of their studies and their understanding of the aim why they see the light of day. Similarly, these two poetic styles appear in the same historical time showing their rival writing much more topical. However, Metaphysical Poetry makes use of metaphors and similes. For example, John Donne is the famous poet among Metaphysical poets, and his major subject is love as it is a perfect way to making humankind absolute. Inversely, Cavalier poets write by means of a sense of elegance and in a style laying stress on wit and the playful words. The Revolution Age is involved in the dissociated religious and political arguments which lead to Civil Wars. The struggle between the king and the parliament are conflicted to no longer falling in with *the Divine Right of Kings* which is believed to be given the right of throne by God. On the one hand Cavalier poets hold to the king as Charles I's soldiers, but on the other hand they are interested in discovering an interaction between the physical and spiritual world holding to the side of Roundhead. While Metaphysical Poetry represents the differences about handling the poem harboring the qualities sternly, Cavalier Poetry treats the matters differently although they attribute to the same points together.

## THEMES BETWEEN TWO POEMS, TO FLEA AND SONG

### 1. The Historical Context of Carpe Diem

Carpe Diem is referred to an aphorism which is a brief principle about something. Carpe Diem is derived from *Odes* which is a poem including in a long series by Horace, the Roman poet, mentioning it,

*Scale back your long hopes*

*To a short period. While we speak, time is envious and*

*is running away from us.*

*Seize the day, trusting*

*little in the future.*

Horace lays stress on ignoring the future yet preparing herself or himself for the future today. Carpe Diem, *quam minimum credula postero*, is privatized as a rhetorical device in poetry in the 17th century owing to the fact that it expresses the sensation embracing the flexibility of meaning through suggesting not only a probability and an inanity. The sentiment brings about in ancient Greek literature as in a lyrical poetry. There is also a text from *Odes* 1.11:

...

*Better far to bear the future, my Leuconoe, like the past,  
Whether Jove has many winters yet to give, or this our last;  
This, that makes the Tyrrhene billows spend their strength against the shore.*

...

*Seize the present; trust tomorrow e'en as little as you may.*

### 1.1. To Flea By John Donne, Carpe Diem

Metaphysical Poetry delves into the humanity of life while Cavalier Poetry focuses on living for the moment through enjoying by the pleasure. *To Flea* is a Metaphysical poem written by John Donne who is both a monk and a poet. In the poem, there is a man who loves a woman. She also loves him. He convinces her to make love, but she is not convinced throughout the poem. John Donne uses the technique of picturing a different image with the flea. The flea is something that is insect feeding on the blood of mammals and birds. Mr. Donne convinces her by way of this insect. They are in the same room, the flea has bitten them, and he says to her that their blood is mixed inside it. He tries to tell her that there is not a shameful thing or a sin of mixed bloods. She wants to kill the flea, but he tries to persuade her. The joining of their blood represents their marriage and temple as the flea's body. So, If she kills it, she commits a sacrilege against their marriage. The technique picturing a different image refers to the persuasion of his opposite sex.

*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?*

....

*Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.” ( lines, 19-27)*

For example, in the poem, *To Flea* by John Donne uses the theme, Carpe Diem, to express his intelligent mind to persuade the woman in terms of the importance of the time. He uses the time limited that he uses her with the convincing way to make love. That is exactly exhibiting the theme of a limited time. He then gives the message of Carpe Diem which means seizing the days. Time will consume them, and he emphasizes that they should become together exact now for this reason, so they can consume the time.

#### 1.1.1 Death and Freedom

Consuming time leads to the theme of death. If they do not use the time in a good way as a fast way by seizing the days, death will come and separate each other. In an other

explanation of the theme of death, it is about her beauty. In the grave, he mentions about her that her body will spoil, and the insects under the grave will eat her body and spoil her virginity. Before they spoil it, he is in convincing her to make love with him. That is why, he emphasizes that they must be fast.

*My echoing song: then worms shall try  
That long preserved virginity,  
And your quaint turn to dust,  
And into ashes all my lust: (lines, 27-30)*

Readers imagine and portray showing the contrast between his love and the bad side of the tomb that shows a clever way to express. To mention, her body will be decaying and worms divide her into parts, and there will be a spoiled virginity decaying there, too. Worms will make love with her. Her honor will be dust. He emphasizes that his lust will be like ashes. Nothing will appear. His sexual wishes will be meaningless.

He wants to get rid of iron gates of life meaning that he wants to be free. That is the theme of freedom. He wants to get rid of the shallow opinions' punishments which are the rules for becoming together. To mention about time again, he emphasizes not to postpone the time. Death is used by him in a witty way. Time is limited, and they are going to die. He tells her what will happen when she dies. His explanation through the poem is in his hands. He can move the sun or he can stop the time, as well. He questions that time consumes them or they consume the time.

He tries to convince her and it is used with a strong wit in a persuading way. He wants to convince of the ideas using the words in a wise way. *Carpe Diem* is used by John Donne subtly in order to persuade her. Making time run will take them to death. He can take control the time, and sex is the compromise for that. He mentions about the time, his love, and expressing it by way of *Carpe Diem*.

## 1.2. Song by Sir John Suckling, *Carpe Diem*

A man advises his friend due to him being a misfortune lover to seize the day. What does it mean seizing the day then? The poem, *Song* written by John Suckling refers to a successful lyrical poem, which is the way of expressing the feelings and emphasizing an important detail in his period. The poet is born on February 10, 1609, in Middlesex, and he is a Cavalier poet whose inspirations are at his own expense. The title of the poem is also accepted as *Why So Pale and Wan* that it is a lyrical poem including in three-five-line stanzas. It is a song which is performed in a play, *Aglaura*, and is represented in the second scene of the forth act of Suckling's play in London in 1637.

It is a very poem in terms of those who become suspicious of the essentialness of *Courtly Love* or *Petrarchan lover* which refer the way how the knight or a man performs his missions due to their lovers. Thus, the poet refuses all circumstances of *Petrarchanism* by way of dissimulating the debate if he can not attract her though he does his best, the



speaker points that doing nothing should refer to something which is laid stress on harvesting the day at the end.

The poem, *Song* is a *Carpe Diem* poem which is briefly necessary to say that the speaker tells his friend to go through with it by means of moving on, and he does not need to think about the girl who does not love him urging on her attitude's being useless by the medium of changing nothing in her feelings referring to the poem as an epigram example which it ends with a surprising and satirical way by favour of laying stress on becoming her problem such as the lines 14-15, "Nothing can make her/ The devil take her!". Sir John Suckling develops tone, theme, and genre of the poem to reveal how *Carpe Diem* refers to the women right in the period when the poem is written and to reveal the poet's opinion about women by way of expressing the qualities of Cavalier Poetry, as well.

The theme of the poem draws attention to a point interrogating the speaker through responding the unrequited love at this very moment why his friend is still in love with her even though she does not like him. In addition, he strengthens the question applying repetitions as a significant picture, "Why so pale..? " and "why so mute...?", creating a rhythm, " Will, when looking well.." ( line-3), using rhetorical questions, "Why so pale..., why so mute?". It is a well known fact that it is not a romantic poem although it includes so many qualities of Cavalier Poetry referring to love and sensual feelings. Suckling thinks that she is less important than him whose feelings are nothing if it is not mutual showing his feelings about women again.

As a conclusion, the theme refers to the confused feelings of the speaker even though it does not grow into a mutual passion with both sexes. Thus, he interrogates the question asking him in terms of his attitudes on himself through loving her that he understands that it is the unrequited love making him so pale and wan that the term, sinner is the referred to his opinion about the woman falling him into the hands of her.

The genre of the poem dedicates to the suggestion for the rest life of him. The speaker advises him to keep going through no worries about the woman whose feelings are not returned to him mutually. He then accentuates that nothing will change in her mind in terms of the feelings about him. Therefore, he suggests he keep going and live for the moment. The poem touches on the significance of moving on through the literary term, *Carpe Diem*.

### 1.1.2. Women and Suckling Through *Carpe Diem*

Suckling inserts his main idea and his purpose in the poem forming a conversation with the speaker and his friend who loves a woman although she does not like him. His way of expressing his feelings through a dismissive and tolerant way refers to his caring intention to him not to be so pale and so wan. The unrequited love of him will not change because if she is decided to something, there is no remedy for him. Therefore, he suggests he live for the moment and do not need to be subject to a woman.

Suckling as a Cavalier poet is interested in womanising that his attitudes can be considered as his way of perspective upon women. The three lines of the poem refer to the attitudes toward women in his time. The point is the man who suffers from unrequited

love is unordinary action in the period because there is no passion and interest for women who do not have any right to say or do. The main point is to ignore of the code of ethics, whereupon Suckling abnegates the poetic style, Petrarchism and Petrarchan love. The entertainment is aimed by women vis â vis men in addition to being able to see Suckling's opinion about them and his attitudes in the poem, and it can be understood in the poem through tone, theme, Carpe Diem.

## 2. TO FLEA AND SONG

The major distinction in the same theme that on the one hand Metaphysical Poetry searches for human mortality using Carpe Diem as a tool of persuading women, but on the other hand Cavalier Poetry aims for being in the moment because their only desire is to get the pleasure from life.

To be similar with Metaphysical Poetry, Cavalier Poetry also uses the theme of Carpe Diem. The poem, *Song* by Sir John Suckling is a Carpe Diem poem which is briefly necessary to say that the speaker tells his friend to go through with it by means of moving on and not to think about the girl who does not love him, and the speaker emphasizes on her attitude's being useless by the medium of changing nothing in her feelings. Suckling thinks that it will be her problem if she rejects him, and it is not his fault expressing his speech much more through Carpe Diem that this kind of genre becomes the device of poets to use it through their poems to present one of the Cavalier Poetry messages which is the only way to enjoy life and live for the moment.

*Quit, quit for the shame... / The devil take her! (lines, 11-15)*

## CONCEIT BETWEEN SONG AND TO FLEA

### 1. Donne's Conceit

*Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,*

*Where we almost, nay more than married are. (Lines, 10-11)*

As an unlike contrasting between two things, *To Flea* includes a comparison between a flea living in it although it is impossible to live in it physically that it shows the parallelism owing to the fact that the poetry aims for revealing a likely sense between two things.

The flea example is not rare in this century. In the Renaissance England, there are a lot of fleas, and they are everywhere. The flea is not extraordinary thing. The title of the poem refers to exactly a flea as a real thing not as an symbolic way. He uses it for an excuse to attract the lady. The poem is completely included an argument and conceit.

Metaphysical conceit is a broad metaphor along with complicated logic setting up a parallelism between a spiritual one with its qualities and an object with physical entities. The use of conceit by Donne is speacialized by way of his witty and surprising style that it is called *Metaphysical Conceit* which is much more logical and extended metaphor.

The conceit is included in two versions which are *Petrarchan Conceit* and *Metaphysical Conceit*. Petrarchan Conceit is a metaphor type used in the love poems as a cold and the sufferer who is rejected by a woman described as her beautiful qualities by the sufferer.

The joining of their blood represents their marriage and temple as the flea's body. So, If she kills it, she commits a sacrilege against their marriage. The flea is characterized as the holy place representing their marriage there. He uses the wit of the marriage's pure reason with this flea that is the mixed bloods of themselves together in the flea representing their a marriage temple and a marriage bed. He surpasses the limited usage of the minds. He creates an idea that the temple is in everywhere if both love each other. In the metaphysical poems, poets question about God, the creation and an afterlife. It is against the rules that physical life concerns on people. He develops his conceit by way of wit.

## 2. Conceit in the Poem, Song

The poem includes an epigram which is an interesting and a surprising statement due to the ending a witty end which is also referring to the entertainment of Cavalier Poetry qualities. It leads to the idea of him using his mind against her that it is her problem now.

Suckling's conceit is included in a conversation making a surprising ending. Suckling forms a conversation with the speaker and his friend who loves a woman although she does not like him. The unrequited love of him will not change because if she is decided to something, there is no remedy for him. The conversation then returns to a playful one delivering a logical situation, "forget her!" through giving him a calm feeling.

## THE USE OF LANGUAGE BETWEEN TO FLEA AND SONG

### 1. To Flea and Language

Metaphysical Poetry represents the difference about handling the poem containing the qualifications of the poetic style favourably as a paradoxical and an ironical way. In the poem, the flea is represented as an insect mixing bloods in it, the temple which symbolizes their marriage, and sheltering three spirits inside it. Metaphysical Poetry also represents the figurative language typifying an exalted language marking by a witty, acrimonious, paradoxical and arrogant language. In the poem, *To Flea*, Donne uses the flea as a metaphor, and the flea is also a personification example in the eighth line as a person flatters,

*And pampered swells with one blood made of two. ( Line,8)*

### 2. Song and Language

In the poem, the speaker asks the question to persuade him to move on his life. It includes the repetition to reveal the image of keynoting on an essential point which is to seize the day. His tone is dismissive yet tolerant. His feelings are ignored by the speaker for the sake of cheering him up and helping him to cut loose from the desperate feelings which

are caused by a woman who does not like him. The poem shows that a man loves a woman. The delight and being in the moment are the only purposes which are away from the code of ethics.

Unlike *To Flea, Song* by Sir John Suckling refers to the use of language simply that there includes no wit, no paradox and no irony yet a simple, short lines expressing the words directly,

*Why so pale and wan fond lover?*

*Prithee why so pale?*

*Will, when looking well can't move her,*

*Looking ill prevail?*

*Prithee why so pale? (Lines,1-5)*

## Conclusion

To conclude, the seventeenth century is full of conflicts sheltering different points which can be differentiated by both poems. Generally, Carpe Diem is the major theme of both poems both to persuade the opposite sex as a witty way and to give a message similar to the principle idea of Horace.

In the poem, *Song*, the conceit is processed in a physical entity which is the mirror of Carpe Diem. The only difference between *To Flea* and *Song* is substantial due to the fact that Cavalier Poetry is not interested in making a sense of the two different matters yet to delight and to teach. Although there appears a difference, there is also a common point of the conceit which is the sentiment and tie because the common object is the way how Metaphysical Poetry investigates of feelings, pays attention to a spiritual connection, and the way how Cavalier Poetry focuses on them in terms of the voluptuous and romantic aspirations which are also similar with Metaphysical Poetry.

The major distinction between them is the use of language in terms of the simplicity that Cavalier Poetry is much more prejudiced about that unlike the use of language as a paradoxical and an ironical way by Metaphysical Poetry. For example, the flea is the ironical object to deceive both the reader and the woman,

*A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead (Line,6)*

The theme, Carpe Diem, the conceit, and the use of language represent both resemblances and discrepancies in both poetic styles. It may be concluded that the reason behind it is the interaction of those poetic styles in the same historical time in which they are appeared. The interactive relation provides them for being influenced from each other, as well. In addition, the reason composing their style differently is the political and religious issues that they hold to. It shows that the principle, Carpe Diem, from Horace's time to the 17<sup>th</sup> century is accepted as the motivation of the period in terms of the presentation of the wit and the pleasure. For example, In the poem, *To Flea*, there is a opposition idea about Christianity that the temple is flea, and it is the place that it symbolizes their marriage, so it shows the upholding Oliver Cromwell.



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