

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

In this chapter, I want to explain the background of the study, the statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study. I also mention the significance of the study, the scope and limitation, and the methodology used in analyzing the poems. Then, I explain about the organization of the study.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literature, as an expression of feelings and thoughts, has many different forms, which are beautiful in their own way. There are many kinds of literary works depending on its literary genres. Novel, for instance, tends to explore “the intricate relationship between individuals and society” (Peak, John & Coyle, Martin, 1984, p. 75). Drama, which is acted on a public stage usually “focuses on public questions of the social and political organization of society” (p. 75). In a poem, “readers usually encounter their personal feelings and the poet’s personal feelings as he or she faces life’s problems” (p. 75). A poem has a lot of different meanings depending on the reader’s interpretation. Since “poetry is determined by the effect upon the reader, it is considered as an individual opinion and defined by the collected (individual) reactions.” (Larson, John, 2001, ¶. 2). Poetry is “the feeling that comes when a person sees something that strikes a chord in their chest with a different rhythm” (¶. 10). According to Wordsworth in *Literary terms and criticism*, poetry is “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Peak, John & Coyle, Martin, 1984, p. 11). It is primarily “an expression of the poet’s emotions because it more concerns with the mind and personality behind the poem than the text itself” (p. 11). Therefore, I choose to discuss about poetry since I like to explore expressions of feelings in literature.

There are a lot of people who read poetry frequently and derive a great deal of pleasure from it. According to Perrine and ARP in *Sound and sense: An introduction to poetry*, poetry is “as universal as language and almost as ancient” (1992, p. 3). People have read it or listened to it or recited it because they liked it and it gives them pleasure and enjoyment. Yet, “poetry in all ages has been

regarded as important, not simply as one of several alternative forms of amusement” (p. 3).

The other reason why I choose to discuss poetry is because poetry has “a deeper awareness and understanding that brings a different and unique nuance of life than other literary works such as drama or prose” (Kirkpatrick, Laurence A. & William W., 1965, p. 11). It has “distinct qualities when the poets interpret their ideas into the words with a deeper meaning and imagination” (p. 12). Poetic language can “stimulate a reader’s mind enormously” (p. 12). It is “simple, sensuous, and passionate since the function of poetry is to present emotions or feelings” (p. 13-14). The poet’s ability in displaying the power of imagination and the beauty of thought in poetic language may greatly appeal to the reader. Whatever the reasons are, “poetry can bring about some good effects on the readers” (p. 15-16). When readers use their sensitivity to understand the awareness of life, they can enjoy poetry. It proves that “poetry can produce a strong response in the readers as they learn to understand it” (p. 17).

In this study I choose English seventeenth century poems including the Metaphysical and Cavalier poems that reveal the Carpe Diem concept. The word “Carpe Diem” is taken from the Latin phrase which means to “seize the day and make good use of the little time that is granted” (Ransom, Karen, 2001, ¶. 1). To seize the day is “a powerful expression that applies in certain aspects in life to all. Making the most out of life that possibly can is the predominant goal for most people” (¶. 1). This draws my interest to study more about Carpe Diem since it can be the goal for many people.

In *A handbook to literature*, Harmon and Holman state that Carpe Diem or “Seize the day” was used by Horace and has been applied generally to literature, especially to Lyric Poems, which reveal the spirit of “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die” (1986, p. 74). This theme was very common “in the sixteenth and seventeenth century English Love Poetry” (p. 74). Later “lover poets continually were exhorting their mistresses to yield to love while they still had their youth and beauty” (p. 74).

Carpe Diem became “a style of poetry formulated during the English Civil War in the 17<sup>th</sup> century” (Faust, Judith, 2002, ¶. 21). It describes “the passion of

the society and how morality worked in life” (¶. 21). This phrase also asserts, “if one does not live life to the fullest, one does not live life at all” (¶. 22). It means that, “life should be lived to the fullest everyday, just like it was going to be the last” (¶. 22).

The idea of living for the moment or *Carpe Diem* was applied in some works of literature in the seventeenth century because it was “a time of great social problems and disturbances due to political instability and religion” (Morris, Suzanne, 2001, ¶. 1). Politically, there were “regicide, civil war, and a change from Monarchy to Republic and then back to Monarchy” (Fjelkner, Annika, 2001, ¶. 1). Besides, religion strongly influenced people in every day’s life. “Theology fashioned social life in its most details and Monastery governed a throne and its subjects as a rigid master that made the people refrain from the world” (¶. 2). Since religion was such an integral part of daily life, the people had to follow the traditional religious order. They lived in “a complexity of attitude in which everything was modified by Christian life” (¶. 2).

This period was often called “the beginning of the modern age” and the first “age of anxiety” (Morris, Suzanne, 2001, ¶. 1). The condition in that period made some poets expressed their thought in the poems they made with the idea of enjoying life to its fullest. *Carpe Diem* poetry is used “to describe and examine temporary human pleasure against the backdrop of eternity” (Effen, 2001, ¶. 1). Also it concerns with “the shortness of life and the need to act in or enjoy the present” (¶. 1). Since *Carpe Diem* offers a theme or motif in lyrical poetry that presents the shortness of youth life, it urges the pursuit of pleasure. That is why the idea of *Carpe Diem* in the poet’s work of art and how that idea is revealed in the poems become interesting to discuss. It challenges me to do a research on poetry and encourages me to take *Carpe Diem* poems as the object of my study.

In the seventeenth century, there were two groups of poets who delivered the concept of *Carpe Diem*. They were the Metaphysical and Cavalier poets. Those *Carpe Diem* poets were all great poets in their time. Most of their poems were “written gracefully and with the civilized lyrics reflecting a philosophy in human life. Their lyrics are “elegant, euphonious, and precise” (Herford, 1987, p. 210). Even though they belong to different schools of poets, they all show the

Carpe Diem concept in some of their works. Their subject matter tends to “emphasize gallant virtues and aristocratic values. The style and tone are witty and light, and frequently there is a connection with the thematic poems of erotic seduction” (p. 210). Moreover, the common factors that bind all the poets together are “the use of direct and colloquial expressive language of a highly individual personality, and their enjoyment of writing the casual, the amateur, the affectionate poem in that way” (p. 210).

According to Harmon and Holman in *A handbook to literature*, the chief characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry are:

...the startling rhythm and diction and the variety of tone. The poets speak in their own persona or create dramatically different characters or in other words the poets use self-dramatization more than self-expression, showing internal dramatic conflicts. The meter and stanzas are used to enact emotions that emphasize on action, tension and conflict. They also use argumentation, logic and dialectical expression. The metaphors and similes, which are often extended into metaphysical conceits, are original and startling. Its content shows sensuousness, directness, and immediacy and is often religious (1986, pp. 316 – 318).

Meanwhile, Cavalier Poetry is:

...courtly, off-hand, and loyal to the monarchy. Its chief characteristics are graceful, and melodious. It has polished diction and meter; shows elegant display of Latin classical influences. Sometimes it is licentious and cynical, but often epigrammatic and witty. Carpe Diem is a frequent theme; the persona often in guise of military swashbuckler or aristocratic courtier; and the poems are often occasional (1986, p. 83).

Therefore, for my study I choose to analyze several of the seventeenth century Metaphysical and Cavalier poets who applied the concept of Carpe Diem in their poems. From the Metaphysical poems, I choose John Donne’s “The Anniversary” and Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress”, and from the Cavalier poems, I choose Ben Jonson’s “Song: To Celia I (Come, my Celia, let us

prove)” and Robert Herrick’s “To the Virgins to Make Much of Time” and “Corinna’s Going A-Maying”.

All of those poems show a “conceited effort to convince the reader that time is precious, and therefore, not something to be wasted” (Holman, C. Hugh & Harmon, William, 1986, p. 2). They deliver “a straightforward message to the reader to make the most out of time” (p. 2). In expressing their love in the poems, it seems that they are affected by the concept of Carpe Diem. By using this concept, “the form of poetry is used to express the love, desires and sexual wants of narrating poets in limited time” (p. 3).

Due to the condition of the seventeenth century society, it was more socially acceptable for a man to openly express his loves, desires, and sexual wants. For this reason, the Carpe Diem style was particularly well suited to male poets. Both the poetry and the prose of English literature in the seventeenth century came largely from men who wrote because “they had something to say which but for them would go unsaid, not because it was fashionable to write, or to satisfy external demands and requirements” (Witherspoon, Alexander M., 1951, p. 304). However, the attitude in expressing the Carpe Diem concept of each poet is different from the other. Thus, I choose as my topic in this thesis, the poets’ ways of expressing the idea of Carpe Diem through their poems.

As a priest John Donne is a religious Metaphysical poet. He was born in Bread Street, London in 1572 to a prosperous Roman Catholic family, a precarious thing at a time when anti-Catholic sentiment was rife in England (“The Life of John Donne”, 2002, ¶. 1). His first book of poems, *Satires*, written during this period of residence in London, is considered one of Donne's most important literary efforts. Although not immediately published, the volume had a fairly wide readership through private circulation of the manuscript. Same with the case of his love poems, *Songs and Sonnets*, also assumed to be written at about the same time as the *Satires* (¶. 3). Donne's style is full of elaborate metaphors and religious symbolism. His flair for drama, his wide learning and his quick wit soon established him as one of the greatest preachers of the era. Fully 160 of his sermons survive. He was described as a very charming and companionable person (¶. 7).

Donne's poetry is "too simple to satisfy. Its complexity is all on the surface. It is an intellectual and fully conscious complexity that we soon come to the end of" (Mackenzie, Donald, 1990, pp. 31-32). He explores "the basic Elizabethan image of the little world of man." It is "epitomizing the great world and proves to it by some version of his peculiar truth" (Wilbur, Richard, 1962, p. 19). Donne's language is "essentially the language of prose and by his use of homely and colloquial diction he brought back the virtues of prose to English poetry at a time when it needed to be revived and purged of too poetic and artificial phrases" (Witherspoon, Alexander M., 1951, p. 307). As an example is *The Anniversary*, where Donne sets "the mutual world of the two lovers against the dazzling world of kings and countries" (Loewenstein, David, 1993, p. 7).

Andrew Marvell is considered to be "one of the best secular Metaphysical poets." During his lifetime, however, "he was known for his political verse satires than his other poetry. Marvell supported Cromwell and during the Republic he worked as an assistant to John Milton as Latin secretary in the foreign office" (Fjelkner, Annika, 2001, ¶. 1). Today Marvell is recognized as "a lyric poet of the first rank" (Magill, Frank N., 1982, pp. 1908-1909). Marvell's best and famous poem, *To His Coy Mistress* is a beautiful and passionate poem that delivers the main idea of "Carpe Diem" or "Seize the Day". It shows "a spirit of Carpe Diem by exhorting the mistress to yield to love while she still has her beauty" (Holman, C. Hugh & Harmon, William, 1986, p. 74).

Ben Jonson was born in June 11<sup>th</sup> 1572, the posthumous son of a clergyman ("The Life of Ben Jonson", 2002, ¶. 1). He was educated at Westminster School and joined the theatrical company of Philip Henslowe in London as an actor and playwright (¶. 1-2). His plays, *Every Man Out Of His Humour* (1598) and *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) were satirical comedies displaying classical learning and his interest in formal experiment (¶. 3). Yet, Jonson's reputation also was that of a great poet.

Jonson's great period, both artistically and financially, began in 1606 with the production of *Volpone*. This was followed by his three other comic masterpieces, *Epicoene* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). Jonson became a favorite of James I and wrote many excellent masques

for the court. He was the author of two Roman tragedies, *Sejanus* (1603) and *Catiline* (1611). With the unsuccessful production of *The Devil Is an Ass* in 1616 Jonson's good fortune declined rapidly. His final plays were failures, and with the accession of Charles I in 1625 his value at court was less appreciated. Jonson's non-dramatic poetry includes *Epigrams* (1616); *The Forrest* (1616), which is notable for the two beautiful songs: *Come, my Celia, let us prove* (Song: To Celia I) and *Drink to me only with thine eyes* (Song: To Celia II), and *Underwoods* (1640). His principal prose work *Timber or Discoveries* (1640) is a collection of notes and reflections on miscellaneous subjects. Jonson exerted a strong influence over his contemporaries. Although arrogant and contentious, he was a boon companion, and his followers, sometimes called the "Sons of Ben," loved to gather with him in the London taverns (The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2003, ¶. 3). With Jonson and the "Sons of Ben", "the lyric poem could talk as well as sing, and, whether talking or singing, approached more nearly the sureness of the Latin line than English verse had ever done before. No single influence in the poetry of the century is strongly marked as that of Jonson" (Witherspon, Alexander M., 1951, p. 307).

Also a preacher, Robert Herrick is a Cavalier poet. He wrote *Noble Numbers*, a collection of divine poems, and *Hesperides*, a collection of 1200 human poems, published in 1648. He wrote in the tradition of Ben Johnson, although with a somewhat lighter, more gracious style. His poems are reminiscent of classical Latin lyrics in the clarity, simplicity, and light, mischievous tone. His love poems are gallant. They are dexterous variation on the old conflict between love and lover, chastity and possession, and, in particular, the cruel swiftness of time. His famous poems among others are: *To the Virgins to Make Much of Time*, *To Daffodils*, *The Argument of His Book*, and *Corinna's Going A-Maying*. His famous religious poems are *A Thanksgiving to God for His Houses*, and *His Litany to the Holy Spirit* (Magill, Frank N., 1982, p. 1306).

Herrick is "the foremost English poet that has the recurrent theme of *Carpe Diem*, meaning to take the advantage of the time" (p. 1315). Herrick is also "a poet of numerous modes and moods, whose poetic pleasure appears to present his readers with a world of abundance and variety" (p. 1309). The qualities that make

Herrick so delightful as a lyricist make him one of the major English poets. As a disciple of Ben Jonson, “his lyrics show considerable classical influence, but his greatness rests on his simplicity, his sensuousness, his care for design and detail, and his management of words and rhythms” (Witherspon, Alexander M., 1951, p. 349).

I believe that those poets and the five poems I choose are worthy enough to be analyzed as the subject of my thesis since they reveal the Carpe Diem concept in each of their poems. Their specific era and their historical background while they wrote those poems influenced their way in expressing the Carpe Diem concept in their poems.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

I am curious to know how the Carpe Diem concept is expressed in some of the Metaphysical and Cavalier poems.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to find out in the way the Carpe Diem concept is expressed in some of the Metaphysical and Cavalier poems.

## **1.4 Importance of the Study**

I hope that after reading this thesis, the readers will be encouraged to know more about Carpe Diem poems and the concept of Carpe Diem in each of the poem. By learning the Carpe Diem concept in each poem, I hope it will raise appreciation toward that kind of literary works. Carpe Diem poems show some important ideas of life and the most important is about the limit of time. Hopefully the readers could appreciate the importance of time in their life. The readers will realize that time limits human life in the world. Therefore they can learn how to be wise in their life and not to take time and life for granted because once they are gone; all is lost and gone forever.



### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

The scope of this study is the Carpe Diem concept that is expressed in some of the Metaphysical and Cavalier poems. I limit my study on five Carpe Diem poems: John Donne's "The Anniversary", Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" (Metaphysical Poems), Ben Jonson's "Song: To Celia I (Come, my Celia, let us prove)", Robert Herrick's "To the Virgins to Make Much of Time" and "Corinna's Going A-Maying" (Cavalier Poems).

### **1.6 Methodology**

I collect the data for writing this thesis by using a library research. I use poems that I choose as my primary data. Then, the data are enriched with some criticisms that are closely related to the poems, the data about the author and the theories to analyze these poems. Besides, I use literary approach and some literary devices to analyze the poems such as diction or the choice of words, imagery, allusion, irony, metaphor, simile, personification, symbol, hyperbole, understatement, synecdoche, metonymy and tone. They are employed to find out the way the Carpe Diem concept is expressed in the Metaphysical and Cavalier poems.

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

I divide this thesis into four chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction that consists of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation, the methodology, and the organization of the study. In Chapter 2, I present the review of related literature consisting of literary theories and the Carpe Diem concept. The analysis will be presented in Chapter 3. Finally, in Chapter 4, I write the conclusion of the analysis.