

NOTES

1. "Cavalier Poets," in *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Prminger, Princeton, N.J., 1965; George Sampson, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, 1957, p.344. See also "Cavalier Poets," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger, et. al. Princeton, N. J., 1993; Earl Miner, *The Cavalier Mode from Jonson to Cotton*, Princeton, N. J.; 1971.
2. Douglas Bush, *Oxford History of English Literature: English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century (1600 - 1660)*, 2nd edition, 1962, pp. 114 - 5.
3. Herbert Grierson and J. C. Smith, *A Critical History of English Poetry*, Harmondsworth, 1966, pp. 145 and 143.
4. Emile Legouis, *A History of English Literature: The Middle Ages and the Renaissance (650 - 1660)*, tr. Helen Douglas Irvine, N.Y., 1929, p.567
5. Bush, *Op. Cit.*, p. 115.
6. Tucker Brooke and Matthias A. Shaaber. *A Literary History of England*, ed. A. C. Baugh, London, 1967, p. 662.
7. Geoffrey Walton, "The Cavalier Poets,," in *From Donne to Marvel*, ed. Boris Ford, Harmondsworth, 1956, pp. 164-5.
8. Legouis, *Op.Cit.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 565. Leo Spitzer has an illuminating discussion of this notion. See "Herrick's Delight in Disorder" in his *Essays on English and American Literature*, Princeton, N.J., 1962, pp. 132-9.
10. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Revised edition, Vol. 1, ed. M. H. Abrams, et. al., N. Y., 1968, p.943.
11. Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry*, N. Y., 1963, pp. 231-2.
12. Walton, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 164-5.
13. In his *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*, N. Y., 1947, pp. 67-80.
14. Quotations from the works of Herrick are from L. C. Martin, ed., *Herrick: Poems*, Oxford, 1971.
15. Brooks, *Op. Cit.*, p. 79.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

for the poet has made the little globule of moisture come to stand for the brief beauty of youth.¹⁷ One should also add the contribution made in the same direction by the reference to the sun and the inevitable remembrance of the god unshorn and Titan.

The three references to the sun in this poem constitute as many perceptions of time: time normal; time slowed-down; and time speeded-up. In the first stanza, despite the note of urgency perceivable in the speaker's words, the presentation of the god unshorn does not convey anything in this particular respect. Here we have time normal. At the end of the second stanza and at the height of the development of the motif of nature being specifically sympathetic to Corinna, it is suggested that the sun either "retires himself, or else stands still/Till you come forth." This represents the notion of time slowed-down. And finally, in the context of the delineation of the transitoriness of life and the swift passage of time in the final stanza, the fast-running sun represents the notion of time speeded-up. The contrast between time slowed-down and time speeded-up is the subject of the last couplet of the poem.

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

As Brooks says: "While time serves" means loosely while there is yet time, but in the full context of the poem it also means while time is still servant, not master--before we are mastered by time.¹⁸ Everything in this world is subject to the caprices of time, but while this rule is not subject to exceptions, there is also a short period of time when we are also masters of time, time serves us, in the same way that Titan may also await us. The speaker's urgent advice to Corinna is to take advantage of this, because the unvarying rule is that "we are but decaying".

Unlike the views of some scholars quoted at the beginning of this paper, we have seen how Herrick has marshalled the conventional stock material in such a way that true poetic meaning has been generated. The outcome is not a traditional treatment of a "hackneyed" theme, and Herrick, at least so far as "Corinna" is concerned, is not a "libertine" or a "pagan" poet. The various elements in the poem have been organically related to each other and, through a masterful reconciliation of pagan and Christian ideas, a new, dynamic view of the motif of *carpe diem* has been presented.

means laziness, sluggishness, but it is also one of the seven deadly sins. Herrick, for sure, did not mean to imply such an ominous consequence for Corinna's reluctance, but the reader who by now has seen the word *sin* used twice, cannot fail to make a mental note of this possibility. Incidentally, this dimension of the word *sloth* helps actualize the more serious potentialities latent in the word *shame* used in the first line of the poem. Although the reader is, at first, apt to take the phrase "for shame" simply as a friendly rebuke, it also gradually becomes charged with moral implications.

The reference to the couple's sluggishness, significantly, leads to a description of the amorous games played by their peers and the sexually-charged jests about the many "Keyes betraying/This night, and Locks pickt, "obviously meaning those who have chosen their priests and are to be married, contrasted to the couple's own condition coming at the end of the stanza: "yet w'are not a Maying." This contrast should remove any remaining doubt concerning the nature of "going a - Maying," which is repeated at the end of every stanza. Furthermore, the games and jests provide a smooth transition to the final stanza.

The motif of *carpe diem*, which is the explicit subject of the final stanza, should be viewed in the context of the foregoing discussion of the first four stanzas of the poem. We have seen that the poem, so far, is built on a unified structure. It begins with a description of the rites of nature, but as it progresses, Christian ideas are increasingly introduced and fused with it. Furthermore, Herrick, through a deft handling of his conventional material, modulates the poetic meaning in such a manner that a reconciliation is reached between the pagan and Christian elements. It is on this basis that going a-Maying becomes the "harmlesse follie" of the final stanza. The stock components of the motif--such as the shortness of life and the swift passage of time - are introduced one after another.

We shall grow old apace, and die
 Before we know our liberty.
 Our life is short; and our dayes run
 As fast away as do's the Sunne:
 And as a vapour, or a drop of raine
 Once lost, can ne'r be found againe....

The transitory nature of our life is likened to a vapour or a drop of rain that is easily and quickly lost, "Why does the rain-drop metaphor, "asks Brooks, "work so powerfully?... Surely one important reason for its power is the fact that the poet has filled the first two stanzas of his poem with references to the dew. And the drops of dew have come to stand as a symbol of the spring and early dawn and of the youth of the lovers themselves.... When the symbol is revived at the end of the poem, even though in somewhat different guise, the effect is powerful;

primary surface meanings. "To fetch in May" is no longer just whitethorn branches as part of an old, obsolete pagan ritual, but, rather, "to fetch in May," especially as it is a task attributed to the Virgins, has also to do with that kind of duty of a human being the neglecting of which is considered to be a "sin." The notion of marriage as the basis for the authorization of going a-Maying is also the only interpretation that explains the use of "once" at the end of the second stanza. "May" in its meaning of one's bloom and prime, attributed to the virgins who can but once go a-Maying, also supports this reading. A reference to the shorter poem by Herrick quoted above could be enlightening. The poem's title is "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time." The poem begins with the verse, "Gather ye Rose-buds while ye may," an obvious corollary of going a-Maying. But, more significantly, in the final stanza he advises the virgins to "goe marry:/For having lost but once your prime,/ You may for ever tarry." The accumulation of Christian elements has by now reached a point that it is no longer possible to read the "Proclamation made for May" simply in pagan terms, because as we have seen May does not just signify the pagan worldview; nor can we take it simply as a reference to the royal proclamation authorizing participation in such celebrations, because such authorization did not make it incumbent upon every one to, as it were, go a-Maying.

Nature, therefore, as it has been presented in "Corinna's *going a Maying*", is not just the external nature, the sun, and the birds and the flowers, it is rather also the internal nature and the demands that it makes upon the individual. To ignore these demands, to neglect these natural needs is "sin,/Nay, profanation," -- profanation in the sense of treating what is sacred with irreverence or contempt, to desecrate or defile something. As the poem develops and the expansive dimension of nature and its bounties are stressed, one inevitably gets an ever-increasing sense of the claustrophobic aspects of Corinna's cloister-like bedroom and her implied hermetic views concerning the joys of this world. While it is true that Herrick may have the Catholic church and its advocacy of celibate life in mind and may intend to satirize it, but this does not make him "a pagan clergyman." His approval of going a-Maying is clearly given in the framework of the religion-ordained institution of marriage.

The fourth stanza represents a continuation of the all-important developments contained in the third. Corinna's peers, described as "budding" at the beginning of the stanza and thus related to the luxurious world of nature as Corinna herself was so related in the first two stanzas, have, without an exception, gone out "to bring in May" (with the implications noted in our discussion of "to fetch in May"). A lot of them have already returned home, laden with whitethorn. The use of whitethorn here is significant. If all Herrick meant by May was whitethorn, the repetition would represent a redundancy unbecoming him. The whitethorn, as a symbol of marriage, foreshadows the weeping and wooing and promising to be married. "And chose their priest" obviously refers to the priest who is to officiate at their marriage ceremonies. All of these, the speaker is saying to Corinna, are happening while "we" have not yet been able to "cast off sloth." Sloth, of course,

there.¹⁶ In other words, since Christianity first established itself in the cities while the country-dwellers were still following their old religious beliefs, the word pagan, i.e., country-dweller, also acquired its present meaning of a heathen.

The third stanza opens with "Come, my *Corinna*, come ...". The first thing one notices is the somewhat softened tone of the imperative. From the "Get up, get up for shame" of the first, to the "Rise" of the second, to the present "Come, my *Corinna*, come." In literary works, the division of the work into parts, for instance poems into stanzas, could mark, among other things, the passage of time and the occurrence of certain events. These changes are usually communicated to the reader or the audience through the context. In the case of this poem, the reader can assume that *Corinna* has in fact gotten out of bed and is dressed by this time. This is partly communicated through what the speaker invites *Corinna* to observe. We should also note that here *Corinna*'s name is mentioned in the text of the poem for the first time; furthermore, the speaker addresses her as "my *Corinna*," stressing a kind of intimacy which was also hinted at in the use of "for shame" and "sweet-Slug-a-bed" in the first stanza. *Corinna* is asked to come and see how, as it were, nature has invaded the city. What was earlier intimated on a personal level concerning the sympathetic attitude of nature toward *Corinna* is here expanded into the suggestion of the existence of a mutual attraction between the fields and the streets. The mutual attraction is given an aspect of universality and, significantly, includes the religious aspect which, through a deft handling of the image of worshipful trees, presented in the context of such Judaeo-Christian religious icons as the "Arke" and "Tabernacle," fuses not only the country with the city life but also pagan with Christian worship: houses decorated with tree branches are seen as the object of the "devotion" of boughs and branches, and what used to be porches and doors have now assumed a sanctified aspect and turned into arks and tabernacles. Springtime's invasion of the city has turned the city dwellings not only into natural abodes of love but also into Christian places of worship receiving devotion from the natural elements.

It was remarked earlier that the language of poetry is one of indirection, and that poetic meaning is generated through suggestion, through a gradual process of accretion. This process can be seen at work in the first two stanzas of the poem, in which a whole web of relationships is gradually established. Although the sympathetic attitude of nature -- including the sun god -- toward *Corinna* is variously hinted at, the poet does not openly assert it; even the last statement concerning this matter is equivocal: "And *Titan* on the Eastern hill/Retires himselfe, or else stands still/Till you come forth." The sun tarrying for *Corinna*'s sake is merely suggested as a possibility, but that is all that is required: the suggestion of a possibility conveyed to the reader's mind. The notion of marriage, underlying Herrick's reinterpretation of the motif of *carpe diem*, is likewise brought out, realized poetically, through a process of accretion. From this vantage point, looking back at the earlier parts of the poem, we notice that a lot of seemingly simple, conventional descriptions are charged with the kind of crucial secondary significations that override their

invitation extended to Corinna to present herself like "the Spring-time fresh and Greene" and sweet as *Flora* suggests the existence of sympathy on the part of nature towards Corinna. This sympathy is further stressed in this stanza in two other ways. The first is the section leading to "Besides, the childhood of the Day has kept,/ Against you come, some *Orient Peals* unwept." *Orient* signifies both eastern, as well as, more importantly, glowing like the rising sun. The sympathetic relationship implied in sun god/*Flora*/*Corinna* is made more explicit in the reference to the early morning's keeping of some dew drops specifically for Corinna. (It may be noted here that a traditional belief held that May-dew, that is the dew gathered in the month of May, and especially on May day, has medicinal and cosmetic properties.) The second instance in which the said sympathetic relationship is stressed comes immediately after the first. The speaker urges Corinna to come and partake of nature's bounty while there is still time, and "Titan on the Eastern hill/Retires himselfe, or else stands still/Till you come fort". The suggestion that the sun stands still so that Corinna can join the celebration completes the process of the sympathetic relationship we have been tracing in the first two stanzas.

This stanza also concludes with a phrase of equal significance for our interpretation of the poem: "When once we goe a Maying" also works on two levels. Maying means gathering flowers. But why does the speaker use the word "once"? "May and spring are part of the cycle of nature and automatically come every year; therefore, one may go gather flowers as often as one pleases. The answer to this curious point, which is also related to the concluding phrase of the first stanza, "to fetch in May," is to be found in the third and fourth stanzas; it is not unlike the more explicit statement found at the beginning of the shorter poem: "Gather ye Rose-buds while ye may ..."

But, before moving on, we should also note another feature which contributes to the structural unity and thematic cohesion of the first two stanzas and the poem as a whole. In the first two stanzas, the dew drops were equated with "Gemms" and "*Orient Pearls*". In the last line of the second stanza, the speaker asking Corinna to "be briefe in praying:/Few Beads are best, when once we goe a Maying," the word "beads," with its dual meaning of a rosary used in prayers, as well as, a drop of moisture (as in a dew drop), relates the natural elements and their worship with a graphic symbol of Christian prayer. The process of the fusion of Christian elements into a primarily pagan context is completed in the third stanza.

If the first two stanzas were devoted to the establishment of a natural context and its sympathetic attitude toward Corinna, in the third and fourth stanzas this attitude is universalized. In Renaissance and seventeenth-century poetry, close attention is paid to the formal arrangement of poems. Usually the central stanza is considered the heart of the poem, the hub, the axis on which the poem turns and generates poetic meaning. Our poem's third and central stanza also follows this pattern. The fusion and interpenetration of the world of nature and city life is one of its accomplishments. It is important to note here, as Brooks has remarked, that the original sense of pagan was country-dweller because the worship of old gods and goddesses persisted longest

nature worshipping it. The poem begins on a note of urgency: "Get up, get up for shame! "The imperative, which is repeated in line 5 of the first stanza, is also repeated at the beginning of three of the four remaining stanzas. The whole world has come to life and is doing its duty to the sun, but Corinna is still in bed. But, of course, this paraphrase, like all other attempts at paraphrasing a poem, does not do justice to the poem. In it, for instance, the sun is "the god unshorne," and the epithet "unshorne," as Brooks also points out, is a symbol of virility and masculine potency: "In Herrick's 'poem, the god unshorn' is obviously the prepotent bridegroom of nature. the fertility god himself..."¹⁵ We shall have occasion to come back to this aspect of the sun god and the contribution it makes to the poem. The ritual of nature worship is presented through the personification of the flowers and birds who, respectively, have "bow'd toward the East" and "have Mattens seyed." Mattens, the Christian morning prayer, introduces the first Christian element into this poem which is centered around the pagan motif of *carp diem*. This is further emphasized by the use of sin in describing Corinna's tardiness. It occurs in the contrast that the speaker provides between Corinna and the multitude of her peers: what is sinful is the fact that, "When as a thousand Virgins on this day/Spring, sooner than the Lark, to fatch in May," she is still tarrying in bed. Use of the lark, a migratory bird whose appearance in any region brings the tidings of the coming of the Spring, coupled with the phrase "to fetch in May," demonstrates that the urgent invitation extended to Corinna is to participate in the May-day celebrations, the rites of the beginning of the year, the rejuvenation of the cycle of life. Furthermore, "to fetch in May" has a wealth of associations. May means, among other things, the whitethorn of stanzas three and four, as well as, one's bloom and prime. The phrase, on one level, refers to the custom of gathering whitethorn blossoms on May-day and trimming the house with them, but, on a different level, it also marks the process of internalization which was mentioned earlier and we shall come to later. The characterization of the human participants as "virgins" is also an important factor contributing to this development.

Whereas in the first stanza the speaker has used the device of personification and gradually led from the plants and birds to the humans, in the second stanza the process is reversed and Corinna is described in a manner suggesting her being naturally attuned with nature: "Rise; and put on your foliage," an image which is further emphasized in stanza four when the boys and girls are referred to as "budding." The word "foliage," the leaves covering a plant collectively, used in reference to Corinna's dress, naturally leads to the introduction of the figure of Flora. Corinna is urged "To come forth, like the Spring-time, fresh and greene,/And sweet as *Flora*." The association of Corinna with the freshness and greenness of the springtime and the sweetness of Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers and fertility, who had her festival in the spring, is very important in that it relates Corinna to the sun god as well. As it was remarked earlier, the use of the epithet "unshorne" for the sun god signifies virility and masculine potency. Flora, as the goddess of flowers and fertility, stands in direct association with this aspect of the sun god. The

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 goe a Maying.

There's not a budding Boy, or Girle, this day,
But is got up, and gone to bring in May.
A deale of Youth, ere this, is come
Back, and with *White-thorn* laden home.
Some have dispatcht their Cakes and Creame,
Before that we have left to dreame:
And some have wept, and woo'd, and plighted Troth,
And chose their Priest, ere we can cast off sloth:
Many a green-gown has been given;
Many a kisse, both odde and even:
Many a glance too has been sent
From out the eye, Loves Firmament:
Many a jest told of the Keyes betraying
This night, and Locks pickt, yet w'are not a Maying.

Come, let us goe, while we are in our prime;
And take the harmlesse follie of the time.
We shall grow old apace, and die
Before we know our liberty.
Our life is short; and our dayes run
As fast away as do's the Sunne:
And as a vapour, or a drop of raine
Once lost, can ne'r be found againe:
So when or you or I are made
A fable, song, or fleeting shade;
All love, all liking, all delight
Lies drown'd with us in endlesse night.
Then while time serves, and we are but decaying;
Come, my *Corinna*, come, let's goe a Maying.

The first two stanzas represent a conventional dawn poem, containing a celebration of the beginning of a new day with the impending rising of the sun and the pagan ritual of the whole

Fresh-quilted colours through the aire:
 Get up, sweet-Slug-a-bed, and see
 The Dew-bespangling Herbe and Tree.
 Each Flower has wept, and bow'd toward the East,
 Above an houre since; yet you not drest,
 Nay! not so much as out of bed?
 When all the Birds have Mattens seyde,
 And sung their thankfull Hymnes: 'tis sin,
 Nay, profanation to keep in,
 When as athousand Virgins on this day,
 Spring, sooner than the Lark, to fetch in May.

Rise; and put on your Foliage, and be seene
 To come forth, like the Spring-time, fresh and greene;
 And sweet as Flora. Take no care
 For Jewels for your Gowne, or Haire:
 Feare not: the leaves will strew
 Gemms 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 himselfe, or else stands still
 Till you come forth. Wash, dresse, be briefe in praying:
 Few Beads are best, when once we goe a Maying.

Come, my *Corinna*, come; and comming, marke
 How each field turns a street; each street a Parke
 Made green, and trimm'd with trees: see how
 Devotion gives each House a Bough,
 Or Branch: each Porch, each doore, ere this,
 An Ark a Tabernacle is
 Made up of white-thorn neatly enterwove;
 As if here were those cooler shades of love.
 Can such delights be in the street,
 And open fields, and we not see't?

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, goe marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.

Within four short stanzas, Herrick first establishes the dialectical process that whatever rises of necessity eventually falls. This process forms the foundation for the advice he offers to the virgins to "use your time" and "go marry" because once one loses one's prime one "may forever tarry." For our purposes, the most important concept introduced in this poem is that of marriage. Herrick, the Anglican parson, cannot advocate unbridled enjoyment of life; although he looks at these pleasures approvingly, he attaches a condition to such enjoyments: it has to be within the confines of the church-ordained institution of marriage.

Herrick obviously wrote "To the Virgins" first and, the consummate artist that he was, the abrupt, prescriptive nature of the advice did not satisfy him. Therefore, he wrote "Corinna's going a-Maying" and so fused the notion of marriage with the motif of *carpe diem* that it arose naturally out of the texture of the poem. As we shall see, all the major elements present in the shorter poem -- nature, time, the sun, youth -- and much more have been organically incorporated in "Corinna" and placed within the context of a sophisticated contrast between pagan and Christian worldviews -- a contrast which is eventually internalized and resolved. Our analysis shall demonstrate that in "Corinna" we are not dealing with a statement of the hackneyed motif of *carpe diem*.

Corinna's going a Maying

Get up, get up for shame, the Blooming Morne
Upon her wings presents the god unshorne.
See how *Aurora* throws her faire

its very lack of discipline."¹²

The upshot of the foregoing is that Herrick is a hedonistic poet of great charm and poise, who combines the classical allusion with the best of the native tradition, but the light-headed charm of his poetry is informed by a poetic principle described, borrowing a phrase from one of his own poems, as "sweet disorder," that he lacks moral fiber and that in fact his poems are the "haphazard" grouping of "contradictions of his spirit" and "his fleeting feelings," that in "Corinna's going a-Maying" we have a poem in which Christian ideas are "perverted," that it is nothing more than the richness of ornament" plus the hackneyed" theme of *carpe diem*, and that, finally, this poem's "virtue is in its very lack of discipline."

The purpose of this paper is to show that, far from following the concept of "sweet disorder" and lacking discipline, "Corinna's going a-Maying" has a closely-knit structure, that all the at-times seemingly discordant elements in the poem are arrayed masterfully in such a way that they contribute towards the poetic realization of a theme which is no longer hackneyed because it constitutes a creative reinterpretation of the pagan concept of *carpe diem* in the context of Christian doctrine. To my knowledge, the only critic who has pointed out this organic unity is Cleianth Brooks, who, in his "What Does Poetry Communicate?"¹³, has treated the poem's structural unity in some detail. Although the present work is indebted to him so far as the general approach is concerned, but, on the whole, it stresses elements neglected by him and leads to a novel interpretation. To be fair to Brooks, however, it must be pointed out that his concern with the poem goes so far as it enables him to make a general critical point on what is it that a poem communicates; his aim is not necessarily to provide a full analysis of the poem.

Herrick has another poem, "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time," in which he also handles the theme of *carpe diem*. This poem, better known by its first verse, "Gather ye Rose-buds while ye may," contains the important stock images of the motif, images such as the sun rising and setting and, more significantly, the rose which from the medieval period, came to symbolize, in its brief life, the transitory nature of life, virginity and its loss.

*To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time*¹⁴

Gather ye Rose-buds while ye may,
 Old Time is still a flying:
 And this same flower that smiles today,
 To morrow will be dying.

Creative Use of Convention in Herrick's "Corinna's going a-Maying"

By: Saeed Arbab-Shirani

Robert Herrick (1591-1674) is one of the Cavalier poets associated with Ben Jonson. The poetry of Jonson and of this group, known as "the tribe of Ben", or "the sons of Ben," is characterized by a great deal of classical allusion combined with a profusion of nature imagery. "Lightness, grace, and polish" is the chief quality of their verse. Foresaking the "fantastic idealism" of Petrarchan poetry, they have returned "to the franker emotions of Anacreon, Catullus and Horace."¹

As "Jonson's chief disciple,"² Herrick has been variously described as "a libertine" and "the most pagan of English poets,"³ "a pagan clergyman,"⁴ someone in whom "Renaissance neo-pagan and belated Elizabethan united to form a pure artist, ... whose poetic creed is to love beauty, live merrily, and trust to good verses, and who in a troubled age is largely content to create a timeless Arcadia."⁵ He "is the poet of strawberries and cream, of fairy lore and rustic customs, of girls delineated like flowers and flowers mythologized into girls,"⁶ "a poet of charmingly fanciful but simple sensibility,"⁷ who "seems to sing spontaneously" and "was without moral sense, ... the most epicurean of the moderns."⁸ Herrick is said to have adopted "sweet disorder" as "an aesthetic principle" and "every contradiction of his spirit, all his fleeting feelings and thoughts, are grouped haphazard."⁹

Scholarly and critical opinion is agreed that "Corinna's going a-Maying" is one of Herrick's best poems: "One can see [the] playful delicacy [of Herrick's wit] in a poem like the invitation to Corinna to go a-Maying, where the ideas of church and sin are joyously perverted, and then happily rearranged. And, generally, Herrick brings a richness of ornament to the handlings of the modest and hackneyed themes, which marks him as one of the great lyric artists--a goldsmith and jeweller of language, beyond all comparison in English."¹⁰ "Corinna" is a "pagan-Christian masterpiece,"¹¹ a "naive medley of classical allusions and colloquial phrases" whose "virtue is in