

TO THE VIRGINS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME

ROBERT HERRICK (1591-1634)

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

5 The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
6 The higher he's a-getting;
7 The sooner will his race be run,
8 And nearer he's to setting.

9 That age is best which is the first,
10 When youth and blood are warmer;
11 But being spent, the worse, and worst
12 Times still succeed the former.

13 Then be not coy, but use your time,
14 And while ye may, go marry;
15 For having lost but once your prime,
16 You may for ever tarry.

TO HIS COY MISTRESS

ANDREW MARVELL (1621-1678)

1 Had we but world enough, and time,
2 This coyness, lady, were no crime.
3 We would sit down and think which way
4 To walk, and pass our long love's day.
5 Thou by the Indian Ganges'° side
6 Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
7 Of Humber¹ would complain. I would
8 Love you ten years before the Flood;
9 And you should, if you please, refuse
10 Till the conversion of the Jews.²
11 My vegetable³ love should grow
12 Vaster than empires, and more slow;

Ganges River

¹ The Humber River which flows through Marvell's home town Hull, thus on the far side of the world from the Ganges.

² Tradition held that all the Jews would convert to Christianity just before the end of the world.

³ The *vegetable* soul was characterized only by growth, in contrast to the *sensitive*, which could feel, and the *rational*, which could think and reason.

13 An hundred years should go to praise
14 Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
15 Two hundred to adore each breast,
16 But thirty thousand to the rest:
17 An age at least to every part,
18 And the last age should show your heart.
19 For, lady, you deserve this state,^o *dignity*
20 Nor would I love at lower rate.

21 But at my back I always hear
22 Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
23 And yonder all before us lie
24 Deserts of vast eternity.
25 Thy beauty shall no more be found,
26 Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
27 My echoing song; then worms shall try
28 That long preserved virginity,
29 And your quaint⁴ honor turn to dust,
30 And into ashes all my lust:
31 The grave's a fine and private place,
32 But none, I think, do there embrace.

33 Now therefore, while the youthful hue
34 Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
35 And while thy willing soul transpires^o *breathes out*
36 At every pore with instant fires,
37 Now let us sport us while we may,
38 And now, like am'rous birds of prey,
39 Rather at once our time devour
40 Than languish in his slow-chapped^o power. *slowly devouring*
41 Let us roll all our strength and all
42 Our sweetness up into one ball,
43 And tear our pleasures with rough strife
44 Thorough^o the iron gates of life: *through*
45 Thus, though we cannot make our sun
46 Stand still⁵, yet we will make him run.

⁴ *quaint*: fine, elegant, fastidious, old fashioned; with a pun on the Middle English *queynte*, (female genitals).

⁵ In Joshua 10:12–13, God stops the sun from setting to give the children of Israel time to defeat the Amorites in battle.