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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND EDUCATION: a collection scientific works of the International scientific conference – London, England, 2025. Issue 4

Languages of publication: Uzbek, English, Russian, German, Italian, Spanish

The collection consists of scientific research of scientists, graduate students and students who took part in the International Scientific online conference «**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND EDUCATION**». Which took place in London , 2025.

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TEMPORAL AND METAPHYSICAL DIMENSIONS OF “CARPE DIEM” IN THE POETRY OF THE 17TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT. This study investigates how seventeenth-century English poets expressed the theme of carpe diem through both temporal and metaphysical perspectives. Focusing on writers such as John Donne, Robert Herrick, and Andrew Marvell, it explores the way they balance the brevity of human life with spiritual longing and eternal truth. The analysis reveals that in this era, the carpe diem idea evolved beyond the call for pleasure, turning instead into a profound meditation on time, mortality, and divine purpose. The poets' awareness of life's transience is intertwined with their search for metaphysical meaning, suggesting that “seizing the day” was also a way of confronting the boundaries between the material world and eternity. Thus, the paper concludes that seventeenth-century carpe diem poetry represents a unique harmony of temporal consciousness and metaphysical insight, mirroring the era's complex religious and philosophical thought.

Keywords: carpe diem, time, metaphysical poetry, mortality, spirituality, seventeenth-century literature

INTRODUCTION. The seventeenth century in English literature was marked by deep reflection on human life, faith, and the passage of time. Poets of this age sought to understand the fragile nature of existence while contemplating spiritual permanence and divine order. Within this intellectual context, the carpe diem theme - meaning “seize the day”- became a powerful poetic expression of both temporal awareness and metaphysical inquiry. Unlike Renaissance writers who often viewed it as a call to enjoy worldly pleasures, poets such as Andrew Marvell, John Donne, and Robert Herrick reinterpreted carpe diem as a meditation on mortality and eternity. Their works reveal a subtle harmony between the transient and the eternal, suggesting that the momentary act of living fully could also serve as a path toward spiritual understanding. This paper therefore examines how temporal and metaphysical elements merge within seventeenth-century carpe diem poetry to reflect the complex spiritual and philosophical spirit of the age.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. The study demonstrates that seventeenth-century representations of carpe diem embody a complex interaction between temporal awareness and metaphysical thought. In Robert Herrick's “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time,” the passing of time serves as a reminder of





life's impermanence, urging readers to value the present moment. Yet, this call to action is not purely sensual - it carries a moral undertone that acknowledges the inevitability of decline and death. Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" reinterprets the theme by blending physical desire with a reflective meditation on the boundaries of time, suggesting that human passion can transcend temporal limits. Meanwhile, John Donne's poetry presents a distinctly spiritual approach, in which the awareness of mortality becomes a means of seeking eternal union with the divine.

Taken together, these readings reveal that seventeenth-century poets reshaped *carpe diem* into a multidimensional philosophical concept. It no longer simply encouraged the pursuit of pleasure, but instead invited contemplation of existence, mortality, and the soul's connection to eternity. The merging of temporal and metaphysical ideas reflects the broader intellectual and religious tensions of the age, illustrating how poetry became a medium for reconciling earthly experience with spiritual aspiration. Thus, the *carpe diem* motif of this period emerges as both a celebration of life and a profound inquiry into the meaning of time and eternity.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY. The theme of *carpe diem* has long attracted scholarly interest, especially in relation to Renaissance and seventeenth-century English poetry. Critics such as C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and Helen Gardner have noted that the period's religious upheavals and philosophical developments deeply influenced poetic reflections on time, mortality, and human desire. Earlier research often viewed *carpe diem* as an expression of Renaissance humanism - an encouragement to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of life. In contrast, more recent interpretations emphasize its metaphysical significance, suggesting that poets like John Donne, Robert Herrick, and Andrew Marvell expanded the motif into a contemplation of the relationship between the temporal world and spiritual eternity. Building on these perspectives, the present study investigates how the *carpe diem* idea in seventeenth-century poetry fuses physical experience with metaphysical awareness.

This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in close textual reading. The analysis focuses on key poetic elements such as imagery, diction, symbolism, and tone to explore how each poet represents the concepts of time, transience, and eternity. A comparative framework allows for identifying both shared and contrasting features in the works of Donne, Herrick, and Marvell. Furthermore, the study incorporates historical and metaphysical literary criticism to situate the poems within their broader intellectual and cultural context. Through this combined analytical approach, the paper seeks to reveal how *carpe diem* functions as a multidimensional literary and philosophical construct in seventeenth-century English poetry.





CONCLUSION. This research demonstrates that the seventeenth-century carpe diem tradition represents more than a simple encouragement to enjoy life's fleeting moments. Through the works of poets like John Donne, Robert Herrick, and Andrew Marvell, the motif evolves into a thoughtful reflection on time, mortality, and the search for spiritual truth. These writers transform the classical idea of "seizing the day" into a philosophical dialogue between the temporal and the eternal. Their poetry suggests that awareness of life's brevity can lead not to despair or indulgence, but to a deeper understanding of human purpose and divine connection. In this sense, carpe diem becomes both a celebration of the present and an exploration of the soul's longing for transcendence beyond the limits of time.

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