**‘The Garden’- Andrew Marvell**

The speaker of “The Garden” finds that his deepest moments of delight and understanding come when he withdraws from the bustle of civilization to lie in the grass of a lovely garden. The natural world, in this poem, offers the end-all and be-all of earthly pleasures, providing everything a person could possibly need—and in a perfectly wholesome and innocent form, unlike the often corrupt or dangerous wider world. Sitting alone in a garden is as close to heaven as this speaker can imagine getting on earth.

The pleasure a person can find in nature, the speaker says, is the highest there is. His garden’s “lovely green” is more “amorous” (more attractive, loving, and lovable) than the prettiest lady: nature offers an overwhelming aesthetic satisfaction that outclasses all human beauty. Nature also offers an innocent, simple response to the complex and sometimes dangerous pleasures of love. In this garden, the speaker can enjoy the sensuality of sweet, abundant fruits and cool shade without worrying about sex, sin, and heartache. Pleasure, in the garden, comes without pain.

Alongside that physical delight, the garden is the perfect environment for imagination, insight, and spiritual wisdom. As he sits dreaming under a tree, the speaker’s mind becomes as calmly present as the tree is, until he thinks nothing but “a green thought in a green shade”—a thought in perfect harmony with the world around him. Such thoughts are as fertile as the garden itself. In his “happy garden-state,” the speaker is able to “transcend[]” the everyday world and dream up “far other worlds and other seas”; his soul can even take flight from his body like a bird, in a preview of his “longer journey” to heaven.

What’s more, the physical, mental, and spiritual pleasures the garden offers are all innocent and enduring, as human civilization rarely is. The speaker rejects both romantic love and the pursuit of “the palm, the oak, or bays” (the leafy crowns that traditionally symbolize military, civic, and poetic triumph, respectively). Scrambling after these kinds of success, he feels, means giving up on nature’s “Innocence” and “Quiet” in favor of victories that can only ever be “short and narrow.” The garden, on the other hand, offers lasting pleasure and wisdom uncompromised by “toils” and striving. The speaker’s retreat to the garden is thus rather like a return to the Garden of Eden itself, a place where all delight is innocent.

Resting in the garden, then, is the speaker’s idea of an utterly fulfilling life. A thoughtful and happy person doesn’t need to achieve big worldly success, this poem suggests, and perhaps should even avoid trying: they only need to take part in nature’s innocent pleasure and wisdom.

**“To His Coy Mistress”- Andrew Marvell**

If we had all the time in the world, your prudishness wouldn't be a problem. We would sit together and decide how to spend the day. You would walk by the river Ganges in India and find rubies; I would walk by the river Humber in England and write my poems. I would love you from the very start of time, even before the Biblical Flood; you could refuse to consummate our relationship all the way until the apocalypse. My slow-growing love would gradually become bigger than the largest empires. I would spend a hundred years praising your eyes and gazing at your forehead and two hundred years on each of your breasts. I would dedicate thirty thousand years to the rest of your body and give an era of human history to each part of you. In the final age, your heart would reveal itself. Lady, you deserve this kind of dedication—and I don't want to accept any lesser kind of love.

But I am always aware of time, the way it flies by. For us, the future will be a vast, unending desert for all of time. Your beauty will be lost. In the grave, my songs in praise of you will no longer be heard. And worms will take the virginity you so carefully protected during life. Your honor will turn to dust and my desire will turn to ashes. The grave may be a quiet, private place—but no one has sex there.

Therefore, while your beauty sits right at the surface of your skin, and every pore of your body exudes erotic passion, let's have sex while we can. Let's devour time like lovesick birds of prey instead of lying about letting time eat away at us. Let's put together our strength and our sweetness and use it as a weapon against the iron gates of life. We may not be able to defeat time in this way, but at least we can make it work hard to take us.

**“The Sun Rising”- John Donne**

Hey sun, you old, disruptive busybody, why are you shining past the windows and closed curtains to pay an uninvited visit to me and my girlfriend? Do lovers really have to structure their schedules around your movements across the sky? You rude, inflexible, and insensitive jerk, go scold boys who are late to school and apprentices who are sulky about their early morning. Go tell the king's hunting party that the king is about to ride out on a hunt, and urge lowly farm workers to start their harvesting duties. Love, in all its forms, is above the influence of seasons and weather. It is also above the influence of hours, days, and months, which, unlike love, wear out like old rags as time passes.

Why should you think your beams are so worshipped and strong? I could block them out by closing my eyes, except that I wouldn't want to stop looking at my lover that long. Assuming that her eyes aren't so bright that they've blinded yours, go check, and tomorrow evening tell me whether both the East Indies and West Indies are where you left them, or whether they are right here next to me. Ask to see the kings you saw yesterday, and you will hear that they are all lying here in this bed.

My lover is every country, and I am every prince. Nothing else exists. Princes only pretend to be us; compared to our love, all honor is a cheap copy, and all wealth is a futile attempt to attain riches. You, sun, should be half as glad as we are that the whole world fits here in the bedroom. Your old age demands that you take it easy. Because your job is to keep the world warm, you can do your job by keeping us warm. By shining here on us, you can shine everywhere; this bed is your center, and the bedroom walls are the outside boundaries of the solar system.

**“The Canonization”** - **John Donne**

“The Canonization” suggests that love isn’t just a silly game for young people to play, but a serious, lasting, and even holy force. The poem’s speaker, a middle-aged man, has fallen deeply in love, and he spends the first stanzas of the poem telling a friend of his to stop making fun of him for his later-in-life romance and just let him be in love, already. Love, he insists, is much more than an emotional storm that silly kids get caught up in. It’s a power so strong, transformative, and purifying that true lovers are “canonized” by their love. In other words, love can make people into saints, wholeheartedly devoted to a sacred task.

Love, the poem’s speaker suggests, is often wrongly considered the purview of the young, starry-eyed, and foolish. When the speaker’s friend makes fun of him for falling in love at an age when he has “gray hairs” and creaky joints, the speaker replies that his love doesn’t do anybody any harm—and in doing so, he reveals that he’s got a pretty level-headed sense of what love is actually like. He mocks the kind of clichéd love poetry that suggests love changes the whole world, observing that his “sighs” haven’t sunk a single ship and his “tears” haven’t “overflowed” one field (and that his friend should therefore leave him alone—his love isn’t causing problems for anyone!). The speaker’s rejection of over-the-top cliché suggests he knows love well and understands what it isn’t as well as what it is.

In fact, this mature lover knows that his love can do something much more powerful than whip up storms: it has a huge internal effect on him and his beloved. Love makes them so wrapped up in each other that they see the whole world in the magic “glasses” (or mirrors) of each other’s eyes. They’re so deeply in love that they seem to become one being: when they have sex, the speaker feels that they fuse into a “phoenix,” an immortal mythical creature that burns up, dies, and is reborn from its own ashes. (Readers might understand this allusion better if they know that “dying” is Renaissance-era slang for “having an orgasm.”) In other words, love makes them everything to each other—and even makes them into each other, turning them into a single immortal being that can “die” over and over again and still live!

These images are passionate, but they’re also sacred. Both the idea of fusing with a beloved and the idea of death and resurrection fit right into Donne’s Christianity: the first image echoes the biblical notion that Christ literally becomes part of Christians, and the second echoes the tale of Christ’s death and resurrection. By adoring each other so completely, then, the lovers play out the Christian story in their own lives, mirroring what the passionately religious Donne saw as the order of the universe itself. In fact, they become holy through their love, treating each other’s very bodies as “hermitage[s]” (that is, private chapels for solitary holy men).

To this speaker, then, love is a “canonization”: it makes true lovers into saints, devoted to (and made greater by) adoration. By mirroring the Christian story, the poem suggests, deep love takes people very close to the divine indeed. And if that’s true, he and his beloved aren’t twitterpated fools: they’re veritable saints, whose “pattern” later lovers should strive to follow.