

PARODY

Katherine Anne Porter

(1890-1980)

Variation 1001: To the Foolish Virgins

Who Aren't Gathering Roses (1922)

Ladies why idle you there
Wasting the cool of the morning?
I've come to sing you a song
And bring you a warning.

Let me sell you a rhyme
For a bright penny—
Now is a better time
To love, than any!

Loving is not for long
The bright day is flying—
Ladies, there's only a breath
Between living and dying!

ANALYSIS

“Porter had a love affair with [the handsome young Nicaraguan poet Salomon de la Selva]... Her prayer to Diana to protect her from the seduction of romantic love may have been related to her love affair with De la Selva.... She wrote at least two parodies of De la Selva's poetry... There is the expected element of malice...a clear intent on Porter's part to deflate and make comic De la Selva's pretentiousness and also his habit of preying on hapless females.... She had developed a considerable contempt for its author as a person.... [Her first is] a parody of De la Selva's 'style, his rhyme scheme, and philosophy.' A more polished version...is the parody Porter called 'Variation 1001: To the Foolish Virgins Who Aren't Gathering Roses.' In 1957 she described it as her 'parody of Salomon de la Selva's sentimental little poems' and dated it spring 1922. In an allusion to Herrick, she takes double aim at De la Selva, forcing an unequal comparison between him and one of the Cavalier poets, whom she had long admired.”

Darlene Harbour Unrue
Katherine Anne Porter's Poetry
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