



Caroline or Cavalier Poets

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Abstract

Caroline poets are also called Cavalier poets. The term *Caroline* is derived from the Latin word "*Carolus*", meaning Charles. This period is named after King Charles I, who reigned from 1625 to 1659. During this time in England, there was religious, political, and social discord between the king and his supporters and the Parliamentarians. The king's supporters were called the Royalists.

Despite this conflict, there was progress in the fields of arts and sciences. This was a period of adventure, journey, and trade. Most Cavalier poets were courtiers of King Charles I. They supported the King and opposed the Parliamentarians. Their poetry differs from traditional poetry in its themes, focusing more on pleasing the King rather than on religion, philosophy, or the arts.

As this was a flourishing literary period, poets like Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace, John Suckling, Edmund Waller, and John Denham rose to prominence. Cavalier poets were influenced by Ben Jonson and metaphysical poet John Donne and are sometimes called "Sons of Ben."

Key Words: royalist, religion, politics, parliamentarian, philosophy, justice, peace, love.

The term Caroline is derived from Latin word "*carolus*" which means Charles. This period is named after King Charles I. He reigned from 1625 to 1659. In this period in England, there was religious, political and social discord between the king and his supporters and the parliamentarian. King's supporters were called the Royalist. Despite the conflict between the

royalist and parliamentarian there were progress in the field of arts and sciences. This was the period of adventure and journey and trade. Britishers established their colonies in North America in the period of 1629 to 1636." King Charles I, a connoisseur of the fine arts, supported poets who created the art he craved. These poets in turn grouped in themselves with

King and his service, thus becoming Cavalier poets".(1). Most of the Cavalier poets were the courtiers of King Charles I. They supported King and opposed the Parliamentarian. Their poetry is different from traditional poetry in its theme. Their basic intent to write poetry was to please the king. They ignored the topics like religion, philosophy and the arts. A common characteristic of Cavalier poetry is "Their most poems celebrate beauty, love, nature, sensuality, drinking, good fellowship, honour and social life".(2) Cavalier poets appreciated women in their poetry as they were divine. "Platonic love was also another characteristic of Cavalier poetry, where the man would show his divine love to a woman, where she would be worshipped as a creature of perfection".(3) As this was the period of progress in the field of literature, poet Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace, John Suckling, Edmund Waller and John Denham flourished. Cavalier or Caroline poets were influenced by Ben Jonson and metaphysical poet John Donne. Cavalier poets are called 'Sons of Ben'.

Robert Herrick: - Robert Herrick was a 17th century English poet and Anglican Cleric. He accepted the Vicarship (the religious institution under the authority of a vicar) of dean Prior in Devonshire in 1629. He was born on 24 August 1591 in Cheapside, London in the family of Julia Stone and Nicholas Herrick a prosperous goldsmith, and died in October 15, 1674. He was the student of Cambridge and spent his time in the company of poets and wits "the son of Ben". Most of his poetry is influenced by Ben Jonson. He was the member of the group Sons of Ben. He dedicated his five poems to Ben Jonson. Herrick was influenced by classical Greek and Latin poet and wrote on theme of nature and the country life and village tradition and custom. He sings about the beauties of nature such as flowers, rivers and brooks etc. it is said about him "For expressions as accurately cut as jewels and for melody as clearly articulated as a peal of bells, Herrick is unrivalled. He is the perfect artist in slight verse, as Milton is in grander

poetry".(4). Herrick is known for his masterpiece Hesperides (nymph of the evening in Greek mythology) or the works both Human and Divine' is a collection of 1200 lyrical poems published in 1648. This collection is called Herrick's magnum opus. His poem "To the Virgins to Make Much of Time" is based on the idea of "Carpe Diem" (a Latin aphorism which means seize the day or enjoy the moment) philosophy that means young girls or women should make the most of their youth and loveliness because youth and beauty won't last long. Life is short so enjoy to it. Gather ye rosebuds while we may Old Time is still a - flying;

And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying. (Lines from To
the Virgins, to Make Much of Time)

Herrick's poems are very simple and easy to understand. It is said about his style: - "his directness of speech with clear and simple presentation of thought, a fine working with conscious knowledge of his art, of an England of his youth in which he lives and moves and loves, clearly assigns him to the first place as a lyrical poet in the strict and pure sense of the phrase". (5) Swinburne has declared Robert Herrick as "the greatest song writer ever born of English race". (6) His poetry of later period is spiritual and philosophical. Robert Herrick in his lifetime has composed over 2500 poems. With the restoration of King Charles II in 1660 Robert Herrick was also restored after obtaining the favour of Charles II by writing verses. He was appointed Vicar of Dean Prior in 1662. Herrick remained unmarried, although in his many poems he mentioned many women's name but they are fictional.

Richard Lovelace: - Richard Lovelace, born on 9 December 1617 and died in 1657, was a British poet who fought on behalf of Charles I during the Civil War. He was son of William Lovelace and Anne Lovelace. Richard Lovelace belongs to a distinguished family of England. Richard was the student of Oxford University. He was a very

dynamic and attractive person. His friend and contemporary Anthony Wood praised him "the most amiable and beautiful person that ever eye beheld; a person also of innate modesty, virtue and courtly deportment, which made him then, but especially after, when he retired to the great city, much admired and adored by the female sex". (7). At the age of 18 he got the master degree of Arts from Oxford University and entered into politics in 1639. Richard joined the regiments of Lord Goring. His poems *To Lucasta, Going to Warres* and *The Tragedy, The Soldier* are based on his experience of war. After coming home in Kent from war in 1640, he served his country as a justice of the peace, when there was civil turmoil over religion and politics. In his enthusiasm for the royalist cause he impoverished himself and twice, in 1641 and 1648, suffered imprisonment during which he wrote *Lucasta, Going to Warres* and some of his famous lyrics, 'To Althea, from Prison' in which he expressed his noble and paradoxical nature. He wrote "To Althea, from Prison" in 1642. The first two lines of last stanza are frequently quoted. These lines expressed his feeling for liberty:

Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor
iron bar a cage.'

At the age of forty he died in the war and buried in St. Bride's Church in London. His poems are influenced by his experience with politics and association with important personalities of his time. Most of his poems are based on his military experiences. In many poems he celebrated his military action and the war in which he participated. As he expressed chivalry in the following lines from his poem *To Lucasta, On Going to The Warres*:

I could not love thee, dear, so much
loved not Honour more.

Richard Lovelace also wrote on the poems about nature's object and on animal life - *The Ant, The Grass - hopper, The Falcon and the Toad and Spyder*. William Winstanley highly think about Lovelace and compared him with to an idol " I

can compare no man so like this Colonel Lovelace as Sir Philip Sydney of which it is in an Epitaph made of him;

Nor is it fit that more I should acquaint
Lest Men adore in one A scholar,
soldier, lover and a saint"

Thomas Carew: - (1595 - 1640) was the English Caroline poet. He was the son of Sir Matthew Carew, master in chancery. He studied in at Merton College, Oxford and Middle Temple. He was the courtier of Charles I. He made friendship with Sir John Suckling, Ben Jonson and Edward Hyde. John Donne and Ben Jonson have a great influence over the genius of Thomas Carew. His major poetical works are - *The Poems* (1640), is a collection of lyrics, songs, pastorals, elegies etc. Most of his poems are short. Love, love making and women's beauty are the subject of his poems. 'An elegy upon the death of John Donne' is a tribute to him. This poem shows the place of John Donne in English poetry. This poem is a masterpiece of criticism and analysis of metaphysical qualities of Donne's literary work. 'To Celia' is a love poem, addressed to a woman, who was Carew's lover for years. 'A Rapture' is also a poem on loves courtship. His other works are: *Ask me no more, When Thou, Poor Excommunicate, Read in these Roses the sad story.* in his poems there is Elizabethan glow of imagination.

John Suckling: - John Suckling was born on 10th February 1609 in Whitton, London, England in a prosperous family and died at the age of 32 in May 1641 in Paris, France. He was a British poet, courtier and dramatist. Many historians described him as Cavalier playboy or Fop. At the age of 18 King Charles I sent him abroad as an ambassador. He did military service at home and abroad. He was the inventor of Cribbage, a card game." He was so fond of cards that he spent his most of time with card pack. He studied and worked on the subtleties of his favourite game and became the skilful player of cards. He played cards with the aristocratic people of England and won around 20000

pound". (8) His father was secretary of state under James I and Comptroller of the household of Charles I. He was educated in Trinity College, Cambridge and Gray's Inn. His friends were Ben Jonson, Thomas Carew and Richard Lovelace. John Suckling wrote four plays in his literary career. " Aglaura" a tragic play staged in 1637 and published in 1638. " The Goblins" a comic play published in 1638. " The Discontented Colonel" published in 1639, is a satirical play on the Scots. " The Sad One" left incomplete due the outbreak of the Civil War. His plays were not of great success. His poetic works are - A Session of the Poets, A Ballad Upon Wedding (a poetic masterpiece), A Doubt upon Martyrdom, I Prithee Send me Back my Heart, Love Turned to Hatred, The Constant Lover, Why So Pale and Wan, etc. His best known poem is Why so Pale and Wan, Fond Lover?

Why so pale and wan fond lover
Prythee, why so pale? Will it looking
well can't move her, Looking ill prevail?
Prythee, why so pale?

His poetic style was very charming and favoured at the Royal Court. He became very popular courtier and king gave him the title of Knight at the age of 21. In 1639, John Suckling helped King Charles I in First Scottish war. He raised a troop of hundred horses at his own expenses, and accompanied Charles in Scottish war. He was forced to leave the country during the Civil war as he was involved in the army plot to restore the power of King over Parliament.

Edmund Waller: Edmund Waller was an English poet, Fellow of the Royal Society, politician, amusing orator, and parliamentarian, and one of the longest-serving members of the House of Commons. He was born on 3rd March 1606 in Coleshill, Buckinghamshire, England, into a wealthy family – his parents were Robert Waller and Anne Hampden. He passed away on 21st October 1687 in St. James, London, England.

Waller was a Royalist and, in 1643, was accused of participating in a conspiracy to capture London for King Charles I. As a result, he was banished from the country. During his exile, he lived a comfortable life in France and Switzerland. He returned to England in 1651, during the reign of Oliver Cromwell. With the Restoration, when Charles II ascended the throne, Waller returned to Parliament.

His Literary Work: Waller was a major British poet. His best-known poem is *Go, Lovely Rose*, which celebrates the event when Charles escaped from a shipwreck at Santander in 1625. The poem is written in **heroic couplets** – a poetic form that Waller was the first British poet to use extensively. This technique was later perfected by Alexander Pope.

Although Waller was once regarded as a leading poet of his time, his literary reputation declined over the years. He came to be viewed as a "Fairweather Royalist, an expedient Republican, and a mercenary bridegroom." (9)

After returning to England from exile, Waller tried to establish good relations with Oliver Cromwell. In 1655, he wrote a *Panegyrick* praising Cromwell and supported a proposal to make him King. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada, Waller suggested: "Let the rich ore be forthwith melted down and the state fixed by making him a crown." (10)

Hyde remarked of Waller: "He became a poet at the age of thirty, when other men give over writing verses." (11) When Charles II returned to the throne, Waller marked the occasion with the poem *To the King, Upon His Majesty's Happy Return*. When questioned by the King about his earlier support for Cromwell, Waller famously replied: "Poets, sir, succeed better at fiction than in truth."

His biography was written by Samuel Johnson, who stated: "It showed a prostituted mind may retain the glitter of wit, but has lost the dignity of virtue." (12)

Waller was seen as a supporter of the court, yet he earned a reputation as one of the best speakers in the House of Commons. His contemporaries, including John Dryden and Gerard Langbaine, praised his political contributions. Although most of Waller's literary work lauded the royal family and members of the court, his legacy as a poet diminished over time. Edmund Gosse, who wrote Waller's biography, remarked: "Waller's lyrics were at one time admired to excess, but with the exception of *Go, Lovely Rose* and one or two others, they have greatly lost their charm." (13)

Sir John Denham – Sir John Denham was an Anglo Irish poet, courtier, Fellow of Royal Society, Parliamentarian and a surveyor of the King's work. He was born in 1614 in Dublin and died in 1669. He got his education from Trinity College, Oxford and at Lincoln's Inn in London. He married in 1634, to Ann Cotton, of a wealthy family and second time he married to Margaret Brooks in 1665. He was in habit of gambling and lost thousands of pounds in gambling. John Aubrey said about him "in the time of the civil war, George Withers, the poet, begged Sir John Denham's estate at Egham of the parliament, in whose cause he was a captain of horse. It happened that G.W. was taken prisoner and was in danger of his life, having written severely against the King & C. Sir John Denham went to the king and desired his majesty not to hang him, for that whilst G.W lived he should be the worst poet in England".(14)

Denham became the Member of Parliament in 1661. He was appointed surveyor of the King's works for his earlier political services and not by any proficiency in architecture. John Webb who was a skilled person in architecture, complained about John Denham's appointment as a surveyor "though Mr. Denham may, as most gentry, have some knowledge of the theory of architecture, he can have none of the practice and must employ another".(15) John Denham has the theoretical knowledge of architecture. He has not designed

personally any buildings. Later John Webb worked as a deputy of John Denham and has done his work.

His Works - John Denham started his literary career with a tragic play 'The Sophy' in 1641. He is remembered not for this tragedy but for his poem 'Cooper's Hill' in 1642. He wrote many versions of this poem. The poem is about the locality, where John Denham lived. He depicted in poem the Thames valley and Egham in Surrey. Gilfillan wrote about Denham and Edmund Waller "Neither Denham nor Waller were great poets; but they have produced lines and verses so good, and have, besides, exerted an influence so considerable on modern versification, and the style of poetical utterance that they are entitled to a highly respectable place amidst the sons of British song".(16)

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