

WARTON LECTURE ON ENGLISH POETRY

# The Poetry of the Caroline Court

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## I

MY SUBJECT IS THE WORK of those writers who have generally been called ‘Cavalier poets’. It is a term that I resist, because it encourages the unhelpful practice of reading the literature of the late 1620s and the 1630s as it were backwards, from points of retrospection in 1642 or later. Paradoxically, it is a perspective which was encouraged among readers of the Civil War period as a positive recommendation of such poetry, while among later critics hindsight has supported an ethical criticism of a negative kind. Although in the seventeenth century it added a purposefulness and a heroism to the poets, since Dr Johnson it serves to incorporate them into the crises of the 1640s, not as witnesses but as accomplices in the early Stuart political disaster. The approach reached extreme expression in C. V. Wedgwood’s influential *Poetry and Politics under the Stuarts*,<sup>1</sup> which directly or indirectly did something to set the agenda for even the best of recent accounts of these poets. Thus, Warren Chernaik finds himself drawn into an ethical discussion of Waller: ‘This study . . . is an attempt not to rehabilitate Waller but to do him simple justice . . .’<sup>2</sup> Again, Kevin Sharpe’s ground-breaking account of Carew, Davenant, and Townshend vindicates them (and simultaneously the Caroline court) by seeking to demonstrate that they did indeed whisper critical advice to their political masters, and that their masters were open to respectful dissent. He concludes, ‘The equation of the court with sycophancy cannot stand; criticism, we have

<sup>1</sup> C. V. Wedgwood, *Poetry and Politics under the Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> Warren L. Chernaik, *The Poetry of Limitation: A Study of Edmund Waller* (New Haven and London, 1968), p. 14.

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now seen, was articulated insistently from *within* the court as well as from outside.<sup>3</sup> Though he confutes the received position, he does so in terms which concede the primacy of the exculpation of the poetry of the 1620s and 1630s from the catastrophes of the 1640s. The fullest and most sensitive study, that of Earl Miner, in its periodisation has the work of Charles Cotton (d. 1687) as its *terminus ad quem*, and in so doing necessarily reads the poetry of the 1630s as ideologically and ethically continuous with that of the 1640s and after. Thus, Miner sets himself the agenda of describing ‘conceptions of the self, of life, and the world . . . which one group, the Cavaliers, tended to set forth in terms of certain styles, certain recurring subjects, certain recurring approaches, and certain cultural assumptions’.<sup>4</sup>

That word ‘Cavalier’ certainly compounds the problem, and it ties twentieth-century misperceptions to those of the Civil War period. Before 1641, it had currency as a fashionable term for a fashionable phenomenon, ‘a courtly gentleman, a gallant’,<sup>5</sup> sometimes, I suspect, already with a pejorative edge. Sir John Suckling uses the word in that sense in the *Dramatis Personae* of *The Goblins* (?1637–1641).<sup>6</sup> But after 1641 it rapidly becomes the name for the stereotypical representation of the royalist activist, initially as a pejorative, thereafter as a word current with both sides. Thus William Lilly, writing in 1651 of what he had witnessed in 1641–2, ‘all that took part or appeared for his Majestie [were termed] Cavaliers, few of the vulgar knowing the sence of the word *Cavalier*’. Indeed, with the word came, in parliamentary propaganda, a wealth of association with hard-drinking, hard-living, rakehell womanising.<sup>7</sup> The hostile representation contains much that can be with facility nudged into a positive and rather gratifying self-fashioning. After the fiasco of the Bishops’ Wars, an anonymous lampoon counselled Suckling:

Since under *Mars* thou wert not borne,  
To *Venus* fly and thinke no scorne,  
Let it be my advice . . . .<sup>8</sup>

But after the Army Plot of 1641, in which he played a leading role, parliamentary propaganda demonises him in altogether more attractive ways, as in the broadside *The Sucklington Faction, or Suckling’s Roaring Boys*,<sup>9</sup> in which

<sup>3</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The politics of literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 291.

<sup>4</sup> Earl Miner, *The Cavalier Mode from Jonson to Cotton* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1971), p. vii.

<sup>5</sup> *OED* s.v. ‘Cavalier’ sb. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *The Works of Sir John Suckling: The Plays*, edited by L. A. Beaurline (Oxford, 1971), p. 124: on the possible dating, see p. 274.

<sup>7</sup> See Thomas N. Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue: English Political Literature 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 3–7.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Upon Sir John Suckling’s hundred horse’, lines 37–9, in *The Works of Sir John Suckling: the Non-dramatic Works*, edited by Thomas Clayton (Oxford, 1971), p. 205.

<sup>9</sup> Anon., *The Sucklington Faction, or Sucklings roaring boys* (London, 1641).

the 'cavalier' life seems not without its discreet charm. By the time of his death, in exile and in uncertain circumstances, the negative associations of cavalierism are set aside by Suckling's apologists, and he emerges as the epitome of all that is best in that cultural phenomenon:

Thinke on a schollar without pride,  
 A Souldier with much bloud un-dyed,  
 A Statesman, yet noe whit ambitious,  
 A Libertine, and yet not vitious,  
 Thinke to the heigth, if man could bee,  
 Or ere was perfect, this was hee . . .<sup>10</sup>

The dead Suckling could scarcely be responsible for how he was represented. But court poets of the 1630s saw in the 1640s the advantages of appropriating elements of the stereotype into the deflection of their own self-representation in more heroic directions. Thus, Herrick offers his blessing to 'His Cavalier,' 'the virtuous man' who can 'Saile against Rocks, and split them too; | I! and a world of Pikes passe through'.<sup>11</sup> Edmund Waller's 1645 collection, when he was already in exile for his part in the 'Waller Plot', concludes with a significant variant on the love lyric that characterises much of the volume, 'To Chloris upon a favour received':

*Chloris*, since first our calme of peace  
 Was frighted hence, this good we finde.  
 Your favours with your feares increase,  
 And growing mischiefs make you kinde:  
 So the fayre tree which still preserves  
 Her fruit and state whilst no wind blows,  
 In stormes from that uprightnesse swerves,  
 And the glad earth about her strowes  
 With treasure from her yielding boughs.<sup>12</sup>

Waller as always is decorous, but the 'yielding boughs' approach explicitness; evidently times of war reverse the game of love, and his characteristic sighing and frustrated devotion give way to the soldier's rewards. In this he anticipates Richard Lovelace's characteristic posture in his first *Lucasta* (1649), in which an eroticised notion of warfare relates sexual value and achievement to die-hard royalism: 'I could not love thee (Deare) so much, | Lov'd I not Honour more.'<sup>13</sup>

Plainly most of the Lovelace oeuvre postdates 1640, and with Herrick's only volume, *Hesperides* (1648), it is difficult or impossible to determine when

<sup>10</sup> 'An Epitaph upon Sir John Suckling', tentatively attributed by Clayton to James Paulin, *Non-dramatic Works*, pp. 191–2, 341.

<sup>11</sup> 'His Cavalier', lines 7–9, *The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick*, edited by L. C. Martin (Oxford, 1956), p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Edmund Waller, *Poems 1645* (Menston, 1971), p. 96.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Lovelace, 'To Lucasta, Going to the Warres', *Lucasta* (London, 1649), p. 3.

some of the poems were written, and all his pre-1640 material printed in *Hesperides* necessarily assumes a rather changed ideological value in changed circumstances; simple poems of celebration, for example, are suffused with defiant nostalgia and a poignant sense of loss.

But in the case of Waller's poems, published while in exile, and in the case of the dead poets Suckling (d. probably 1642) and Thomas Carew (d. 1640), booksellers—most actively Thomas Walkley and the redoubtable Humphrey Moseley—saw advantages in incorporating works produced during the personal rule into a movement, a royalist and indeed cavalier culture, displaced from manuscript and performance into print by the diaspora of the royal court. (Among the poets who concern me today, only William Davenant, with his *Madagascar* collection of 1637, had published a volume before 1640.) Thus, the printed collections bear a striking resemblance to each other, and increasingly their title-pages tie them to the royalist cause, incorporating them into the rather desperate die-hard loyalism that, at the time of their writing, would simply have been inappropriate. Thus, Moseley's edition of Waller has a title-page alluding to his political life and, in his connections with Henry Lawes, to his place in the royal court; Moseley's preface describes the poems 'going abroad . . . and like the present condition of the Author himselfe, they are expos'd to the wide world, to travell, and try their fortunes'.<sup>14</sup> The title-page of Walkley's first and second editions of Carew has his by-line 'One of the Gentlemen of the Privie-Chamber, and Sewer in Ordinary to His Majesty'.<sup>15</sup> Moseley's edition of 1651 styles him 'Sewer in Ordinary to His late Majesty' and connects him with Henry Lawes, 'one of his late Majesties Private Musick'.<sup>16</sup> Moseley (I presume) called his posthumous first edition of Suckling's works *Fragmenta Aurea*, the golden fragments of a life broken in the cause of the king. As Moseley tells the reader, Suckling 'liv'd only long enough to see the Sun-set of that Majesty from whose auspicious beams he derived his lustre, and with whose declining state his own loyal Fortunes were obscured'.<sup>17</sup> Kevin Sharpe has sagely observed that from the early months of the Long Parliament 'we can begin to trace the myths that have obscured the story of the 1630s'.<sup>18</sup> Indeed so, and potently among them is the rewriting of literary history that effects spurious continuities between the defiant and at times rather mindless nostalgia of the 1640s and the poise, precision, and optimism of the verse of the 1630s.

<sup>14</sup> 'An advertisement to the Reader', Waller, sig. A4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> *The Poems of Thomas Carew with his Masque Coelum Britannicum*, edited by Rhodes Dunlap (1949; Oxford, 1964), pp. 1, 111.

<sup>16</sup> Carew, pp. 118–19.

<sup>17</sup> 'The Stationer to the Reader', *Non-dramatic Works*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven and London, 1992), p. 950.

## II

Have you seen but a white lily grow,  
 Before rude hands have touch'd it?  
 Have you marked but the fall o' the snow,  
 Before the earth hath smutched it?  
 Have you felt the wool o' the beaver?  
 Or swan's down ever?  
 Or have smelled o' the bud o' the briar?  
 Or the nard i' the fire?  
 Or have tasted the bag o' the bee?  
 O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!<sup>19</sup>

The words are by Ben Jonson, the music is usually attributed to Robert Johnson, and the song was performed first on the public stage, as part of Wittipol's enticement of Mistress Fitzdottrel in *The Devil is an Ass*.<sup>20</sup> The text of the song recurs in the fourth part of 'A Celebration of Charis in Ten Lyric Pieces', with a new stanza at the beginning, first printed in the posthumously published *Underwood*.<sup>21</sup> Of itself, the poem illustrates a vital point about early Stuart literary culture: that the boundaries between literary contexts are porous; that lyric poetry and print culture negotiate a complex interrelationship with uncourtly, non-print, performance literary forms, like the theatre. The point is made again in Suckling's appropriation of the song, which also originates as a song in a play,<sup>22</sup> but it reappears in print, alongside his many other lyrics, undistinguished formally from them:

A Song to a Lute

Hast thou seen the Doun ith'air  
 when wanton blasts have tost it;  
 Or the Ship on the sea,  
 when ruder winds have crost it?  
 Hast thou markt the Crocodiles weeping.  
 or the Foxes sleeping?  
 Or hast view'd the Peacock in his pride,  
 or the Dove by his Bride,  
 when he courts for his leachery?  
 Oh so fickle, oh so vain, oh so false, so false is she!<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Ben Jonson*, edited by Ian Donaldson (Oxford and New York, 1985), pp. 314–15. Appendix A, below, contains a transcription by John Harper based on New York MS Drexel 4175, number 49. I am indebted to Professor Harper for his transcription, and to Dr Peter Flinn for preparing this and the other transcriptions in camera-ready form. I gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Music Division, the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations to publish this transcription. For a performance, Tragicomedia, *Orpheus I am*, EMI Classics CDC 7 543112 (1991), track 17, John Potter (tenor), Stephen Stubbs (archlute).

<sup>20</sup> Ben Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, edited by Peter Happé (Manchester and New York, 1994), II. vi. 104–13, pp. 121–2.

<sup>21</sup> Ben Jonson, pp. 310–19.

<sup>22</sup> *The Sad One*, IV. iv. 22–31, Suckling, *The Plays*, pp. 25, 250–1.

<sup>23</sup> Suckling, *Non-dramatic Works*, pp. 29–30. Appendix A shows the verse set against the music of MS Drexel 4175, a setting of Jonson's song.

The juxtaposition supports a number of points which can be generalised to much of the poetry of the Caroline court.

The poem is very dependent on its musical setting. In this case, almost certainly the poem is written to fit an extant song, and the work of the composer is antecedent to that of the poet. Moreover, the poem, which appears scarcely worth notice on the printed page, has a new charm and vitality in performance; the song moves towards a musical closure that matches the closure of its argument. Again, on the printed page, the poem seems metrically highly eccentric; the setting explains that eccentricity.

Secondly, like many other poems of the 1630s it actively seeks out and responds to another poem. Analogues are numerous. Thus, Suckling's 'Against Fruition I' is 'answered', *inter alios*, by Waller, in a detailed refutation which prints Suckling's points 'Con' against sex with his own points 'Pro'. It's hard to believe that either argument is seriously entertained. Suckling claims that sex can't be much good because it's a bit like ploughing and while, yes, the world needs workers, why should gentlemen toil to beget them when the lower classes can take of that 'homely' business: 'since there are enough | Born to the drudgery, what need we plough?'<sup>24</sup> Waller deconstructs the metaphor: literally, indeed, 'I need not plough since what the stooping Hinde | Gets of my pregnant Land, must all be mine', but the metaphorical ploughing, 'this nobler tillage', historically certainly falls to a gentleman's role.<sup>25</sup> Of course, in terms of cultural and social values Waller and Suckling can scarcely be separated. Sometimes even commendatory poems take argument with or respond to the works they commend. Davenant's 'Madagascar. A Poem written to Prince Rupert' has the potential to seem a shrewd criticism of Charles I's refusal to support the imperial venture; Suckling's 'To My Friend Will. Davenant; upon his Poem of *Madagascar*', congratulates him on his literary achievement while pointing up its remoteness from an external political reality:

*Dav'nant's* come

From *Madagascar*, Fraught with Laurell home,  
And welcome (*Will*) for the first time, but prithee  
In thy next Voyage, bring the Gold too with thee.<sup>26</sup>

Sometimes the 'pro et contra' derive from the same poet, as in Carew's matched songs 'To my Mistris, I burning in love' and 'To her againe, she burning in a Feaver', and Milton's 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' perhaps

<sup>24</sup> Suckling, 'Against Fruition [I]', lines 17–18, *Non-dramatic Works*, p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> Waller, *Poems 1645*, p. 87.

<sup>26</sup> 'To My Friend Will. Davenant; upon his Poem of *Madagascar*', in Sir William Davenant, *The Shorter Poems, and Songs from the Plays and Masques*, edited by A. M. Gibbs (Oxford, 1972), p. 7.

suggest themselves as further analogues.<sup>27</sup> We shall meet this dialogic mode again when we turn to consider poems of state. In the larger context, the 'debates' between contemporaries render the literary community of the Caroline court cohesive; they close the coterie; and they reflect a cultural milieu tolerant of civilised disagreement—within limitations.

But Suckling's response to Jonson is not within a generation but between generations, and—my third point—it reflects a larger concern among court poets of the 1630s to define their relationship to their great Jacobean precursors, Donne and more especially Jonson. Chernaik has written well on the later generation's qualified praise of their 'masculine strength',<sup>28</sup> and what the later poets carry forward is a narrow subset of their total repertoire. From Donne comes a plurality of lovers' voices and a range of situations; from Jonson comes the exquisite lyricism of his songs—songs like 'Have you seen but a white lily grow?'—and perhaps, too, some of the colloquial directness of his dramatic verse. What does not go forward to the court poetry of the 1630s is the opacity and concision of Jonson's epigrams (only Herrick writes a significant number of epigrams, and they are generally much more straightforward, syntactically, than Jonson's), and lost, too, is Donne's range of allusion. This narrowing down reflects, in part, a sense of audience—many court poems are socially functional addresses to powerful individuals; Davenant's New Year's Day gift poems to Henrietta Maria, out of simple politeness, must operate below a fairly low horizon of lexical and syntactical difficulty, for example. But clarity often is a prerequisite for performance poetry; song requires to be comprehensible to an aural reception.

Nor would the court poets of the 1630s have acknowledged much validity in Jonson's asseveration of the supremacy of the word in collaborative performance, his claim that 'the pen is more noble than the pencil'.<sup>29</sup> Just as Townshend, Carew, and Davenant could work with Jones, when Jonson could not, and accept his magisterial role as designer of court masque, so too the poets of the 1630s acknowledge their own, sometimes junior part, in the glittering accomplishments of the Caroline court culture. Richard Helgerson has described Caroline poets' sense of 'generational belatedness',<sup>30</sup> their sense of debt and inferiority to Donne and Jonson. But they have in ways that more than compensate a vivid awareness of their participation in a larger cultural formation which is characterised by its modernity, its innovation, its opulence, its royal sanction and its manifold accomplishments, in the vast Whitehall paintings of Rubens and

<sup>27</sup> Carew, pp. 34–5; *The Poems of John Milton*, edited by John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London and Harlow, 1968), pp. 130–46.

<sup>28</sup> Chernaik, *Waller*, p. 221.

<sup>29</sup> *Timber, or Discoveries*, in Donaldson, ed., *Ben Jonson*, p. 561.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1983), p. 190.

the portraits of Van Dyck as well as in achievements of Inigo Jones—and court composers. They are part of a more than merely literary system.

Sir Roy Strong and Stephen Orgel have long since convinced cultural historians of the early Stuart period of the domination of the visual imagination in the realisation of images and representations of regal power.<sup>31</sup> But if masque constituted the defining genre of the epoch, the dominant cultural form on an everyday basis was surely music, perhaps pre-eminently music for dance and music for song. Both, of course, are important constituents of masque, but both have a daily role in the Jacobean and Caroline court. Charles played the viol; he had a large musical retinue as Prince of Wales and increased the musical complement of the king's household on his accession by merging his previous ensembles with James I's; he may well have composed music; and, most significantly perhaps, he advanced the finest composers of the 1620s and 1630s, among them Nicholas Lanier, who became Master of King's Musick in 1626, and Henry Lawes, who became a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in the same year, and he rewarded them richly.<sup>32</sup> Lawes and Lanier, besides providing music for masques, produced and no doubt performed a copious amount of music for quotidian entertainment. Over 430 of Lawes's songs survive, and he set over forty poems by Carew and at least fourteen by Herrick, as well as poems by Suckling, Waller, and Lovelace.<sup>33</sup> Lanier and Lawes consolidated a transformation of English song, characterised by less obtrusive instrumentalism and a more declamatory singing style, approaching recitative. That renegotiation of the relationship of song to the rhythms of normal speech, begun by Thomas Campion, continued in ways that permitted the setting of poems while retaining the directness and clarity that characterises Caroline court poetry. Milton claimed in his sonnet to Lawes that he 'taught our English music how to span | Words with just note and accent . . .'.<sup>34</sup>

The revolution in English song permitted some singular achievements in the dialogue genre. Consider the following poem by Carew, set by Henry Lawes, 'A Pastorall Dialogue':

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court* (London and Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1973); Roy Strong, *Van Dyck: Charles I on Horseback* (London, 1972); Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965).

<sup>32</sup> Ian Spink, *English Song: Dowland to Purcell* (1974; London, 1986), p. 75; my discussion of Caroline song owes much to Spink, pp. 38–127. On the increase in the complement of the King's Musick and musicians' and composers' incomes, see Walter L. Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society from Elizabeth to Charles I* (New York, 1969), pp. 179–82; on Charles's household as Prince of Wales and on the mergers contingent on his accession, see Peter Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court 1540–1690* (Oxford, 1993), especially chapters nine and ten.

<sup>33</sup> Spink, *English Song*, pp. 76, 94.

<sup>34</sup> John Milton, 'Sonnet XIII. To Mr H. Lawses, on his Airs,' line 2–3, in *Poems of John Milton*, p. 292; Spink, *English Song*, p. 76. It should be noted, however, that Campion explicitly sets himself a similar objective in the 'Preface' to his *Two Books of Ayres* (London, c.1614). I am indebted to Professor Harper for alerting me to the role of Campion in the transformation of English song.

## A Pastorall Dialogue.

*Shepherd, Nymph. Chorus.*

*Shep.* This mossie bank they prest. *Ny.* That aged Oak  
Did canopie the happy payre  
All night from the dampe ayre.

*Cho.* Here let us sit and sing the words they spoke,  
Till the day breaking, their embraces broke.

*Shep.*

See love, the blushes of the morne appeare,  
And now she hangs her pearlie store  
(Rob'd from the Easterne shore)  
I'th' Couslips bell, and Roses eare:  
Sweet, I must stay no longe here.

*Nymph.*

Those streakes of doubtfull light, usher not day,  
But shew my sunne must set; no Morne  
Shall shine till thou returne,  
The yellow Planets, and the gray  
Dawne, shall attend thee on thy way.

*Shep.*

If thine eyes guild my pathes, they may forbear  
Their useless shine. *Nymph.* My teares will quite  
Extinguish their faint light.

*She.* Those drops will make their beames more cleare,  
Loves flames will shine in every teare.

*Cho.*

They kist, and wept, and from their lips, and eyes,  
In a mixt dew, of brinie sweet,  
Their joyes, and sorrowes meet,  
But she cryes out. *Nymp.* Shepherd arise,  
The Sun betrayes us else to spies.

*Shep.*

The winged houres flye fast, whilst we embrace,  
But when we want their help to meet,  
They move with leaden feet.

*Nym.* Then let us pinion *Time*, and chase  
The day for ever from this place.

*Shep.*

Harke! *Ny.* Aye me stay! *She.* For ever.

*Ny.* No, arise,

Wee must be gone. *Shep.* My nest of spice.

*Nymph.* My soule. *Shep.* My Paradise.

*Cho.* Neither could say farewell, but through their eyes  
Griefe, interrupted speach with teares supplies.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Carew, *Poems*, pp. 45–6. Appendix B, below, contains a transcription by Sally Harper of *The Treasury of Musick: containing Ayres and Dialogues . . . composed by Mr Henry Lawes . . . and other Excellent Masters* (London, 1669), pp. 114–17. I am indebted to Dr Harper for her transcription. For a performance, Henry Lawes, *Sitting by the Streams*, The Consort of Musicke, director Anthony Rooley; track 5, Emma Kirkby and Mary Nichols (sopranos), Anthony Rooley (lute) (Hyperion CDA66135).

On the printed page, the poem seems merely to document the influence of French pastoralism in the Caroline court; in performance, its considerable structural ingenuity is apparent. The poem begins as if *in medias res*, as nymph and shepherd visit the scene of a lovers' tryst. Singing together, they frame a dialogue within the dialogue, in which they act out the roles of the unknown lovers whose lives they parallel and whose sensibility they assume. The narrative component of the embedded scene is carried by the second choric section, and the framing is completed by the third, which offers a musical closure to match the dramatic closure. The poem ends with grief's interruption of the lovers' speech, which chronologically anticipates the opening lines.

### III

Carew's pastoral dialogue offers a useful transition into a consideration of gender-political implications of Caroline court poetry. Love poetry and especially love songs are very numerous in the oeuvres of court poets, and since many no doubt found their way into the repertoire of court musicians they must have been a major feature of the literary experience of the royal milieu. Carew's dialogue is typical of much of this material in its evasiveness about the nature of the relationship between the lovers and in its absence of any representation of a plausible external reality. In Donne's *Songs and Sonets*, there is often a sort of low-mimetic subject; lover speaks to lover in bedrooms and in bed; lovers sleep together; they sweat, they wake each other up, they feign sleep; they even pick fleas off each other.<sup>36</sup> But Charles I's decorous court is one purged of obtrusive sexual scandal. Sharpe well demonstrates that 'though it was almost impossible to enforce on the hundreds of individuals who made up the court the king's own strict codes of behaviour, Charles reacted firmly to public breaches of morality and decorum'.<sup>37</sup> Those who wanted to be part of his household at the least adopted, chameleon-like, a suitable coloration. As one male courtier observed: 'We keep all our virginities at court still, at least we lose them not avowedly.'<sup>38</sup>

I recall a sense of surprise when turning from Sharpe's account to reread Milton's *Defensio pro populo Anglicano* (1651), and his asseveration there that 'even in the theatre [Charles] kisses women wantonly, enfolds their waists and, to mention no more openly, plays with the breasts of maids and mothers'.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, 'The good-morrow', 'The sunne rising', 'The apparition', 'The flea', in *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, edited by C. A. Patrides (London and Melbourne, 1985), pp. 48–9, 53–4, 94–5, 47–8.

<sup>37</sup> Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, p. 212.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Reade, quoted by Sharpe, *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, edited by Don M. Wolfe *et al.* (New Haven and London, 1953–82), IV. i, 408.

Milton is characteristically very careful about accusations laid against Charles, so I wondered what he could have been thinking of. However, a glance at the typical female masquing costumes of the 1620s and 1630s and their extraordinary décolletage, explains how easily Milton may have been mistaken. Consider Inigo Jones's design for Henrietta Maria's costume as Chloris in Ben Jonson's *Chloridia* (1631); though it does mark some slight loss of confidence from Jones's earlier sketches.<sup>40</sup>

But Caroline masque defines the profoundly and explicitly eroticised version of married chastity which is at the centre of Caroline court culture. *Chloridia* ends with Chloris-Henrietta Maria commended to Charles in a song which celebrates her as,

the queen of flowers,  
The sweetness of all showers,  
The ornament of bowers,  
The top of paramours.<sup>41</sup>

'Paramour' had long since developed its rather dubious connotations, and the *OED* cites this as its last occurrence in the sense of 'the object of chivalric admiration and attachment';<sup>42</sup> no doubt Jonson knew exactly how he was redefining sexual love in Caroline terms. Indeed, the closing gesture of *Chloridia* recurs frequently in the masques of the 1630s. Closing songs virtually tuck Charles and his queen up in bed, as in the closing lines of Carew's *Coelum Britannicum* (1634)<sup>43</sup> or William Davenant's *Temple of Love* (1638)<sup>44</sup> or his *Britannia Triumphans* (1638), in which the bedding of the royal pair offers a paradigm for the behaviour of 'each lady' and her 'lawful lover': 'Then all will haste to bed, but none to rise!'<sup>45</sup>

Of course court masque and court ritual are celebrations of royal power; but in the Caroline court that power is equated with sexual potency, and courtly ritual is redefined as fertility rite. Among the poems of state of the late 1620s and the 1630s royal panegyrics abound, and the royal pair are habitually celebrated as good breeders, as in Carew's 'New-yeares gift. To the King',<sup>46</sup> or Aurelian Townshend's 'Verse Epistle to Charles I',<sup>47</sup> or Waller's 'Of the Queen'.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Catalogued as items 181 and 180 in Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones*, pp. 439, 444, 445.

<sup>41</sup> Ben Jonson, *Chloridia*, lines 269–72, in Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones*, p. 270.

<sup>42</sup> *OED*, s.v. 'Paramour' sb. 2.c. and 3.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, lines 1126–38, in Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones*, p. 580.

<sup>44</sup> William Davenant, *The Temple of Love*, lines 511–19, in Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones*, p. 604.

<sup>45</sup> William Davenant, *Britannia Triumphans*, lines 627–44, in Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones*, p. 667.

<sup>46</sup> Carew, 'A New-yeares gift. To the King', especially lines 17–26, *Poems*, p. 90.

<sup>47</sup> Aurelian Townshend, 'Verse Epistle to Charles I: "'Tis but a while"', passim, in *The poems and masques of Aurelian Townshend*, edited by Cedric C. Brown (Reading, 1983), p. 50.

<sup>48</sup> Waller, 'Of the Queen', especially the penultimate verse paragraph, in *Poems 1645*, pp. 46–8.

The symbolic economy of the court postulates a polarity between regal sexuality and sexual anarchy. Though between the two terms there is tension, the latter only briefly and provisionally threatens the former. As the descent of masquers scatters the anti-masque, so too the libertine component in court poetry is made to lose to the royal alternative. Persistently, the status of obscene verse is that of a transient, unsustainable reverie. Herrick's 'Vine' ends as 'with the fancie I awook' and its status as a dream is explicitly acknowledged.<sup>49</sup> Many of his poems rehearse a sort of voyeuristic sexual sensibility of looking but not touching,<sup>50</sup> while he reiterates the status of his verse as separate from his life—perhaps from all decent life.<sup>51</sup> The gentry-class figures who people some of his pages act out in less opulent ways the married chastity of the royal pair; thus, he tells his brother, 'still thy wife, by chaste intentions led, | Gives to thee each night a Maidenhead'.<sup>52</sup> Consummated licentiousness remains the province of the managerie of proletarians which inhabits the world of his epigrams, the Scobbles,<sup>53</sup> Luggses,<sup>54</sup> Groyneses,<sup>55</sup> and Dolls.<sup>56</sup> Again, Carew's 'A Rapture' is a fantasy set in 'Loves Elizium' that is remote from the values and imperatives of 'the world',<sup>57</sup> and it is balanced by poems moralising on the importance of sexual continence among women, warning against 'Snaring Poems . . . spread, | All to catch thy maidenhead'.<sup>58</sup> Carew makes the symbolic distinction clearest in 'To the Queene', which opposes 'wilde lust', whose only rule is '*What ever pleaseth lawfull is*', with the 'sacred Lore' of Henrietta Maria, 'Which makes the rude Male satisfied | With one faire Female by his side', and forms 'loves pure Hermophradite'. Thus and only thus may bad sexuality be driven out by good, and 'the wilde | Satyr' reconciled to virtue.<sup>59</sup> It is in this context that those hundreds of court poems celebrating and advocating sexual love should be placed as reiterations of the highly charged eroticism of Caroline wedded chastity.

But the cult of Charles and Henrietta Maria also established the positive pole in that other binary opposition that finds expression in Caroline court

<sup>49</sup> Robert Herrick, 'The Vine', in *The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick*, edited by L. C. Martin (Oxford, 1956), pp. 16–17.

<sup>50</sup> For example, 'Delight in Disorder', 'Julia's Petticoat', 'Upon Julia's unlacing her self', 'Upon the Nipples of Julia's Breast', *Poetical Works*, pp. 28, 66, 157, 164.

<sup>51</sup> As in 'To his Book's end', *Poetical Works*, p. 335.

<sup>52</sup> Herrick, 'A Country life: To his Brother, M. Tho. Herrick', lines 41–2, *Poetical Works*, p. 35.

<sup>53</sup> Herrick, 'Upon Scobble. Epig.', *Poetical Works*, p. 44.

<sup>54</sup> Herrick, 'Upon Luggs. Epig.', *Poetical Works*, p. 79.

<sup>55</sup> Herrick, 'Upon Groynes. Epig.', *Poetical Works*, p. 106.

<sup>56</sup> Herrick, 'Upon Doll. Epig.', *Poetical Works*, p. 149.

<sup>57</sup> Carew, 'A Rapture', lines 2, 165, *Poems*, pp. 51–3.

<sup>58</sup> Carew, 'Good counsel to a young Maid', lines 11–12, *Poems*, p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> Carew, 'To the Queene', *Poems*, pp. 90–1.

poetry, the opposition between royal rule and its critics. Significantly, the positive values embrace not only the royal couple but also the culture that celebrates them. Again, Carew makes the point most clearly, both briefly in 'A New-yeares gift. To the King' and more extensively in 'In answer of an Elegiacall Letter upon the death of the King of Sweden from Aurelian Townshend, inviting me to write on that subject', which responds to Townshend's 'Elegy on the death of the King of Sweden: sent to Thomas Carew'.

The exchange, one of those civilised poetic dialogues we considered earlier, taken as a whole is in argument roughly homologous with Jonson's Jacobean entertainment, *Prince Henry's Barriers* (1610), which suggests that, indeed, Prince Henry can revive British chivalry, but for the time being there's much to be said in favour of James I's irenic policies:

Nay, stay your valour; 'tis a wisdom high  
In princes to use fortune reverently.  
He that in deed of arms obeys his blood  
Doth often tempt his destiny beyond good.  
Look on this throne . . .<sup>60</sup>

Townshend's poem, which scarcely merits Carew's term 'shrill accents',<sup>61</sup> argues that Gustavus Adolphus's death in triumph leaves a role and an opportunity for other 'Princes ambitious of renowne' to pick up 'His glorious gauntlets'.<sup>62</sup> Carew takes no issue with whether or not Charles I could assume that role. Rather, to a grim list of bloody triumphs in continental Europe he opposes a vision of the regal pair and the culture that celebrates them, of an England enjoying its '*Halcyon dayes*' under 'the blessed hand | Of our good King' and 'the Queene of Beautie'.

#### IV

The last poem I shall consider is another Carew song:

*Boldness in love.*  
Marke how the bashfull morne, in vaine  
Courts the amorous Marigold,  
With sighing blasts, and weeping raine;  
Yet she refuses to unfold.  
But when the Planet of the day,  
Approacheth with his powerfull ray,

<sup>60</sup> Ben Jonson, '*The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers*', lines 396–400, in Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones*, p. 163.

<sup>61</sup> Carew, 'In answer of an Elegiacall Letter upon the death of the King of Sweden from Aurelian Townsend, inviting me to write on that subject', line 2, *Poems*, p. 74.

<sup>62</sup> Townshend, 'Elegy on the death of the King of Sweden: sent to Thomas Carew', lines 33, 35, *Poems and masques*, p. 48.

Then she spreads, then she receives  
 His warmer beames into her virgin leaves.  
 So shalt thou thrive in love, fond Boy;  
 If thy teares, and sighes discover  
 Thy griefe, thou never shalt enjoy  
 The just reward of a bold lover:  
 But when with moving accents, thou  
 Shalt constant faith, and service, vow,  
 Thy *Celia* shall receive those charmes  
 With open eares, and with unfolded armes.<sup>63</sup>

The poem illustrates well a number of the themes I have sought to develop. Most obviously, what seems trivial in print has a charm and a substance in performance. It rehearses, too, the cleaned-up sensuality of the Caroline court. The marigold ‘spreads’ herself to ‘receive’ the sun’s beams, as *Celia* shall ‘unfold’ her arms. This is, obliquely, another celebration of married chastity—boldness wins the lady, but it is boldness in the assertion of vows of constancy and service. Again, there is a political dimension. The image of the sun-king abounds in early Stuart panegyric. Carew variously speaks of Charles’s ‘ruddie beame of Majestie’,<sup>64</sup> while Prince of Wales, and his own sons are represented as growing ‘From budding starres to Suns full blowne’.<sup>65</sup> Examples could with facility be multiplied. The regal connection points to word-play, on ‘marigold’ (often written ‘marygold’ in the early modern period<sup>66</sup>) and the royal Mary, Henrietta Maria. The sun’s congress with the flower parallels the royal sun’s congress with his queen, which once more is offered as a paradigm for the conduct of ordinary lovers, the ‘fond Boy’ and his *Celia*. Fittingly, one manuscript of the setting seems to attribute it to Charles I himself.<sup>67</sup>

After the outbreak of the First Civil War, when the masquing hall had fallen silent, the queen had gone to France, the royal art collections had been appropriated, soon to be dispersed, and what remained of the King’s Musicke was but an echo of its former glory, the printed editions of the court poets were almost all that remained of the Caroline court, perhaps the first Renaissance English court to achieve a splendour to match Paris or Madrid. Those printed forms appeared as poignant documents to a recent past. But to appreciate them

<sup>63</sup> Carew, *Poems*, p. 42. Appendix C contains a transcription by John Harper of the setting in British Library, Additional MS 11608 f. 28. I am indebted to Professor Harper for the transcription. This transcription is published by permission of the British Library, which I gratefully acknowledge. For a performance, *Madrigals and Wedding Songs for Diana*, The Consort of Musicke, director Anthony Rooley; track 19, Emma Kirkby (soprano), Anthony Rooley (lute) (Hyperion CDA 66019).

<sup>64</sup> Carew, ‘Upon the Kings sicknesse’, line 30, *Poems*, p. 35.

<sup>65</sup> Carew, ‘A New-yeares gift. To the king’, line 26, *Poems*, p. 90.

<sup>66</sup> *OED*, ‘s.v. ‘Marigold’, Forms; see also ‘mary-bud’, s.v. ‘Mary’, 1.c.

<sup>67</sup> See Carew, *Poems*, pp. 291–2; BL Add. MS 11608 f. 28.

properly, we need to relocate them in the age of their creation, to see them as constituents of a larger formation which incorporated the purely literary into their larger context, a culture confident in and aware of its own accomplishment and modernity. They belong, not in the silent, monochrome world of 1640s print, but in the vivid, singing world of the 1630s, the world of Inigo Jones, Lawes and Lanier, Rubens and Van Dyck—and Carew and Suckling.

*Note.* This lecture was delivered at the British Academy on 29 April 1997. I am indebted to Gordon Campbell and John Harper for comment and advice on an earlier version.

## Appendix A

## Have you Seen the Bright Lily Grow?

Moderate Speed

Robert Johnson

Jonson Have you seen the bright li - ly grow, Be -  
Suckling [*Hast thou seen the Down i' th' air, When*

fore rude hands have touch'd it? Have you mark'd the \_\_\_\_\_ fall of the  
wan-ton blasts have tost it? Or the Ship, the \_\_\_\_\_ ship on the

snow, Be - fore the \_\_\_\_\_ earth hath smutch'd it? Have you  
sea, When ru - der \_\_\_\_\_ winds have crost it? Hast thou

10  
felt the wool of bea - ver? Or swan's down  
markt the cro-co-diles weep - ing, or the Fox - es

e - ver? Or have smelt o' the bud of the  
*sleep - ing? Or hast view'd the Pea - cock in his*

15  
 bri-er? Or the nard in the fire? Or have ta - sted the bag of the  
*pride, or the Dove by his Bride, When he courts for his lea - che -*

20  
 bee? Oh, so white, Oh, so soft, Oh, so  
*ry? Oh so fick - le, oh so vain, oh so*

sweet is she, so — sweet is she!  
*false is she, so — false is she.]*

## Appendix B

## A Dialogue

## Shepherd and Nymph (two trebles or tenors)

Henry Lawes

*Shepherd*

This Mos-sy -Bank they prest.

*Nymph*

That Ag-ed Oke did ca-no-py the hap-py Pair all

*CHORUS*

Here let us sit and sing the words they spoke, when the Day

*Chorus*

Night from the dark— Air. Here let us sit and sing the words they spoke, when the Day

*Shepherd*

break -ing their Em - bra - ces broke. See Love the blush - es of the Morn ap - pear, and

break -ing their Em - bra - ces broke.

now she hangs her pear-ly store robb'd from the East -em Shore, i'th Cow-slips - bell and Ro - ses

ear: Sweet, I must stay no lon-ger here.

*Nymph*  
Those streaks of doubt-ful light ush-er not.

Day, but show my Sun must set, no Morn' shall shine till thy re-turn, the yel-low

*Shepherd*  
If thine Eyes gild my paths,  
Pla-net, and the grey Dawn shall at-tend thee on thy way.

they may for-bear their use-less shine.

*Nymph*  
My tears will quite ex-tin-guish their faint light.

*Shepherd*  
Those drops will make their beams more clear: Loves flames will shine on ev'ry tear.

*CHORUS* 50

They wept and kist, and from their Lips and Eyes in a mixt dew—

*Chorus*

They wept and kist, and from their Lips and Eyes in a mixt dew—

— of bri-ny Sweet their Joys and Sor-rows meet: But she cryes out,

— of bri-ny Sweet their Joys—their Joys and Sor-rows meet: But she cryes out,

55 *Shepherd*

The wing-ed hours fly—

*Nymph*

Shep-herd a-rise, the Sun be-trays— us else to Spies.

60

fast whilst we em-brace; but when we want their help to meet, they move— with lea-den

65 *Shepherd*

feet. Heark!

*Nymph*

Then let us pin-ion Time, and chace the day for e-ver from this— place.

70 *Shepherd* For e-ver. *Shepherd* 75 My Nest of

*Nymph* Ah me! Stay, *Nymph* No no, a - rise, we must be gone.

*CHORUS* 80

Spice. My Pa-ra - dice. Nei - ther could say Fare - well, but through their

*Nymph* My Soul. *Chorus* Nei - ther could say Fare - well, but through their

*Chorus*

Eyes Grief in - ter - rup - - ted Speech, Grief

Eyes Grief in - ter - rup - - ted Speech, Grief

85

in - ter - rup - ted Speech, with Tears sup - plies.

in - ter - rup - ted Speech, with Tears sup - plies.

## Appendix C

## The Marigold

Mark how the blush - ful morn\_\_\_\_\_ in vain  
So may'st thou thrive in love,\_\_\_\_\_ fond boy:

The first system of the musical score for 'The Marigold'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature (C). The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a half note D5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note D5, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note B4. The bass staff begins with a bass clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. It starts with a whole note G3, followed by a quarter note F3, a quarter note E3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note C3, and a whole note B2.

Courts the am - 'rous ma - ri - gold With sigh - ing  
If si - lent tears and sighs dis - co ver- Thy grief, thou

The second system of the musical score. The treble staff continues the melody from the first system, starting with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a half note D5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note D5, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note B4. The bass staff continues the bass line from the first system, starting with a whole note G3, followed by a quarter note F3, a quarter note E3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note C3, and a whole note B2.

blush and weep - ing rain, Yet she re - fu - ses to un - fold; But  
ne - ver shalt en - joy The just re - ward of a bold lo - ver; But

The third system of the musical score. The treble staff continues the melody from the second system, starting with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a half note D5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note D5, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note B4. The bass staff continues the bass line from the second system, starting with a whole note G3, followed by a quarter note F3, a quarter note E3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note C3, and a whole note B2.

when the Pla - net of the day Ap - proach - eth with his  
when the mo - ving ac - cent (thou) Shalt con - stant faith and

15  
pow'r - ful ray, Then she spreads, then she re - ceives  
ser - vice vow, Thy Ce - lia shall re - ceive those charms,

His warm - er beams in - to her vir - gin leaves.  
With o - pen ears, and with un - fold - ed arms.

