
The Caroline Age: A Historical Overview

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to elucidate the historical background of the Caroline Age. It explores the political climate that led to the Civil War and the literary history of this era.

Keywords: Caroline Age; Royalists; Roundheads; Cavalier Poets; John Milton.**Introduction:**

The Caroline age is named after the king Charles I, who ruled England from 1625 to 1649. The term Caroline is derived from *Carolus*, which is the Latin form of Charles. The era of Charles I was marked by a shift from King's absolute rule to the eruption of civil war.

II. Political History:

There was a major conflict of ideologies between two primary factions. The first one was the Royalists (Cavaliers), who believed in and supported the King and the Divine Right of Kings. The Divine Right of Kings referred to the belief that monarchs were above everyone and didn't need to answer to or be challenged by any earthly authorities. They were the direct agent of God's power on earth.

The second one was the Parliamentarians or Roundheads. They sought to limit the King's power and argued for more authority to Parliament. These conflicting ideologies resulted in the outbreak of the civil war in 1642. The conflict finally ended in 1649 with the execution of King Charles I, which marked the end of the Caroline Age and the beginning of the Commonwealth period. The Commonwealth period is also known as the *Interregnum*, a Latin word meaning "between reigns." The *Interregnum* refers to a period in English history where there was no monarchical rule in England.

III. Literary History:**The Cavalier Poets**

The Cavalier poets were a group of courtiers who were in support of King Charles I. Their works revolved around the themes of *carpe diem* ("seize the day"), courtly love and loyalty toward the court. Major cavalier poets include:

- **Robert Herrick**, who is famous for *Hesperides* and the poem "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time."
- **Richard Lovelace**, known for "To Althea, from Prison."
- **Sir John Suckling**, famous for "Ballad Upon a Wedding."
- **Thomas Carew**, a main figure who bridged the gap between the Metaphysical and the Cavalier styles of writing.

John Milton

While John Milton's major influence can be seen in the Commonwealth and Restoration ages, he produced several works during this period like companion poems "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," and a pastoral elegy "Lycidas."

Decadent Drama

The drama of this period is referred to as the "Decadent Drama." It was characterized by sensational and violent themes. Major figures include John Ford (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*) and James Shirley.

In 1642, the theatres were closed by the English Parliament and remained so until the Restoration in 1660.

Prose

Sir Thomas Browne's masterpiece, *Religio Medici* ("The Religion of a Physician"), belongs to and is considered as one of the greatest works of this period. Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, although originally published in 1621, was highly expanded during this period.

IV. Conclusion:

The Caroline Age is a period of intense religious and political tension that culminated in the Civil War. Consequently, the literature of this period is filled with the friction born of this strife.

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