

Richard Lovelace

SAMPLER

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The Collected Poems

of

Richard Lovelace

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Introduction

Richard Lovelace – whose name was pronounced *Lóveless*, a fact with which he played at times in his poetry – was born in Woolwich in 1618 into a long-established Kentish family of substantial means, and holders of the manor of Bethersden since 1367. His father Sir William Lovelace was knighted by James I and, like many others of the gentry at that time, had served in the Netherlandish wars, and was to lose his life in action in 1627.

Young Richard was educated at Charterhouse School and at Gloucester Hall, Oxford. His wit and good looks earned him much attention, and his comedy, *The Scholar*, was performed at Oxford in 1636. King Charles I and Queen Henrietta took to him so much that they had him made an M.A. during the royal visit to Oxford that same year. Richard moved on to the Inns of Court in London – a typical right of passage for up-and-coming young men of the day, for whom it was a mixture of postgraduate study and finishing school – and then took up a junior position in the Caroline court. He was taken under the wing of George, Lord Goring, later the Earl of Norwich, and took part in the latter's unsuccessful military campaigns in Scotland in 1639 and 1640. Those campaigns having come to naught, he withdrew to his Kentish estates, where he was to stay until 1642.

In 1642, Lovelace presented a petition to Parliament – at the request of the Kentish supporters of the King, some 500 of whom, bearing arms, accompanied him – in support of the full restoration of the King's rights. By so doing he thus ranked himself with other significant Royalists, and made himself a marked man. Lovelace was imprisoned in Westminster Gatehouse from April 30 to June 21, 1642, and, while behind bars, wrote 'To Althea. From Prison' which includes the words that will forever bear his name: "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." 'To Althea' made his literary name and kept it alive long past his natural span of years. His release was on bail of £10,000 – a huge sum – under the surety of two Kentish landowners Thomas Flood and William Clarke.

Upon his release, Lovelace stayed for a while in London, moving in literary and artistic circles, where he became friendly with William Lawes, who was to set a number of poems to music, as well as Sir John Suckling, and then moved abroad, first to the Netherlands and then to France, most likely with Goring, until after King Charles' arrest in 1646.

Lovelace was wounded at the Battle of Dunkirk, and then returned to interregnum England in 1647. He was arrested again by order of Parliament and confined to Peterhouse Prison, Aldersgate, in October 1648, most likely because of his activities against the new regime. After his release in April 1649, Lovelace published his first book of poems, *Lucasta*. The eponymous *Lucasta* was Lucy Sacherevell, whom Lovelace gave the pet appellation, *Lux casta* [Chaste Light]. Sadly for Richard, Lucy had believed him dead of his wounds at Dunkirk, and had gone on to marry another man.

Lovelace was driven to financial ruin by his support of the King and the Royalist cause, and subsequently depended on the charity of others, only to die in poverty in 1657 at the age of only 39, having been lodging in Gunpowder Lane, an area of poor reputation, off Fleet Street. He was buried at St. Bride's, London – the church was later destroyed in the Great Fire of London. A year after his death, his friends saw to the publication of his remaining poems under the title *Lucasta: Posthume Poems*, the editing of the volume having been carried out by Lovelace's youngest brother, Dudley.

So, Lovelace was a man of talent, socially adept, and well-educated in the manner of his time and class. Under another King he might not have had such quick preferment, but he would also have kept his health, fortune and, indeed, his life. What we have of him now is a solid corpus of poems, typical of the Caroline poets whom one would rank a level below earlier figures such as Jonson and Donne, or contemporaries such as Milton (ten years his senior, and his political opposite) and Marvell (three years his junior, and likewise more attuned to the political currents of the day).

More in line with Lovelace was Sir John Suckling, nine years his senior, a similar witty Royalist with a fine ear and a talent for verse, who perished in France, an apparent suicide, in 1641. A volume of Suckling's *Collected Poems* are being published in tandem with this volume. Suckling would have been one of his comrades during the undistinguished Scottish campaign.

There is no really up-to-date edition of Lovelace's poems – the last major survey came from Oxford University Press, in their Oxford English Texts series, published in two volumes in 1925, and then in a handier one-volume format in 1930. The latter was reprinted in corrected versions several times, the most recent in 1968, as far as I am able to ascertain. The text here follows that edition in cases of doubt. Facsimiles of the first editions

of *Lucasta* and *Lucasta: Posthume Poems* were also consulted during the preparation of this volume. The text here has not been modernised – our standard practice where a good edition is no longer in print. The only exceptions to this rule have been to abandon the old “long S” in favour of its modern iteration, the replacement of VV with modern W, and to expand period abbreviations, such as wth for *with*.

Tony Frazer
June 2020

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THE DEDICATION

To the Right Honourable, my Lady

ANNE LOVELACE

To the Richest TREASURY
That e'er fill'd Ambitious Eye;
To the faire bright MAGAZIN
Hath impoverisht Love's Queen;
To th' EXCHEQUER of all honour
(All take Pensions but from her);
To the TAPER of the Thore
Which the god himselfe but bore;
To the SEA of Chast Delight;
Let me cast the DROP I write.
And as at LORETTO's shrine
CÆSAR shovels in his Mine,
Th' Empres spreads her Cankanets,
The lords submit their Coronets,
Knights their Chased Armes hang by,
Maids Diamond Ruby Fancies tye;
Whilst from the PILGRIM she wears
One poore false Pearl, but ten true tears:
So among the Orient Prize,
(Saphyr-Onyx Eulogies)
Offer'd up unto your fame,
Take my GARNET-DUBLET Name,
And vouchsafe 'midst those rich joyes
(With Devotion) these TOYES.

Richard Lovelace.

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Song.

Set by *Mr. Henry Lawes.*

TO LUCASTA,
Going beyond the Seas

I.

If to be absent were to be
Away from thee;
Or that when I am gone,
You or I were alone;
Then my *Lucasta* might I crave
Pity from blustering winde, or swallowing wave.

II.

But I'll not sigh one blast or gale
To swell my sail;
Or pay a teare to swage
The foaming blew-Gods rage;
For whether he will let me passe
Or no, I'm still as happy as I was.

III.

Though Seas and Land betwixt us both,
Our Faith and Troth,
Like separated soules,
All time and space controules:
Above the highest sphere wee meet
Unseene, unknowne, and greet as Angels greet.

IV.

So then we doe anticipate
Our after-fate,
And are alive i' th' skies,
If thus our lips and eyes
Can speake like spirits unconfin'd
In Heav'n, their earthy bodies left behind.

Song.

Set by Mr. *John Lanier*.

TO LUCASTA,

Going to the Warres.

I.

Tell me not (Sweet) I am unkinde,
That from the Nunnerie
Of thy chaste breast, and quiet minde,
To Warre and Armes I flie.

II.

True; a new Mistresse now I chase,
The first Foe in the Field;
And with a stronger Faith imbrace
A Sword, a Horse, a Shield.

III.

Yet this Inconstancy is such,
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee (Deare) so much,
Lov'd I not Honour more.

A Paradox

I.

Th'is true the beauteous Starre
To which I first did bow
Burnt quicker, brighter far
Then that which leads me now;
Which shines with more delight:
For gazing on that light
So long, neere lost my sight.

II.

Through foule, we follow
For had the World one face
And Earth been bright as Ayre,
We had knowne neither place;
Indians smell not their Neast:
A *Swisse* or *Finne* tastes best,
The Spices of the East.

III.

So from the glorious Sunne,
Who to his height hath got,
With what delight we runne
To some black Cave, or Grot!
And Heav'nly *Sydney* you
Twice read, had rather view
Some odde *Romance*, so new.

IV.

The God that constant keepes
Unto his Dietes,
Is poore in Joyes, and sleepes
Imprison'd in the skies:
This knew the wisest, who
From *Juno* stole, below
To love a Beare, or Cow.

Song

Set by Mr. *Henry Lawes*

TO AMARANTHA,
That she would dishevell her haire

I

A *marantha* sweet and faire,
Ah brade no more that shining haire!
As my curious hand or eye,
Hovering round thee let it flye.

II

Let it flye as unconfin'd
As its calme Ravisher, the winde;
Who hath left his darling th' East,
To wanton o're that spicie Neast.

III

Ev'ry Tresse must be confest;
But neatly tangled at the best;
Like a Clue of golden thread,
Most excellently ravelled.

IV

Doe not then winde up that light
In Ribands, and o're-cloud in Night;
Like the Sun in's early ray,
But shake your head and scatter day.

V

See 'tis broke! Within this Grove
The Bower, and the walkes of Love,
Weary lye we downe and rest,
And fanne each others panting breast.

VI

Heere wee'l strippe and coole our fire
 In Creame below, in milke-baths higher:
 And when all Well's are drawne dry,
 I'le drink a tear out of thine eye.

VII

Which our very Joyes shall leave
 That sorrowes thus we can deceive;
 Or our very sorrowes weepe,
That joyes so ripe, so little keepe.

To CHLOE,
Courting her for his Friend.

I

Chloe behold! againe I bowe,
 Againe possest, againe I woe;
 From my heat hath taken fire,
Damas, noble youth, and fries:
 Gazing with one of mine eyes
Damas, halfe of me expires:
Chloe, behold! Our Fate's the same,
 Or make me Cinders too, or quench his Flame.

II

I'd not be King, unlesse there sate
 Lesse Lords that shar'd with me in State;
 Who by their cheaper Coronets know
 What glories from my Diadem flow:
 It's use and rate values the Gem,
 Pearles in their shells have no esteem;
 And I being Sun within thy Sphere,
 'Tis my chiefe beauty thinner lights shine there.

III

The Us'rer heaps unto his store,
By seeing others praise it more;
 Who not for gaine, or want doth covet,
 But 'cause another loves, doth love it:
 Thus gluttons cloy'd afresh invite
 Their Gusts, from some new appetite;
And after cloth remov'd, and meate,
Fall too againe by seeing others eate.

Sonnet

Set by Mr. *Hudson*

I.

Depose your finger of that Ring,
 And Crowne mine with't awhile
Now I restor't—Pray, do's it bring
 Back with it more of soile?
Or shines it not as innocent,
 As honest, as before 'twas lent.

II.

So then inrich me with that Treasure,
 Will but increase your store,
And please me (faire one) with that pleasure
 Must please you still the more:
Not to save others is a curse
The blackest, when y'are ne're the worse.