Dr. Vibhas Ranjan
Assistant professor,
Department of English
Patna College, Patna University
Contact details:
+91- 7319932414
vibhas123go@gmail.com
The cavalier or Caroline (adjective from Charles) poets, called Royalists, was a school of aristocratic English poets of the 17th century, who supported King Charles I (1625–49), who was later executed as a result of a English civil war (1642–1651). Charles, a connoisseur of the fine arts, supported poets who created the art he craved. These poets in turn grouped themselves with the King and his service, thus becoming Cavalier Poets. Cavalier poetry is straightforward, yet refined. Many of the poems centered around sensual, romantic love and also the idea of carpe diem, which means to 'seize the day.' To the Cavalier poet, enjoying life was far more important than following moral codes. They lived for the moment. Cavalier poetry mirrored the attitudes of courtiers. The meaning of cavalier is showing arrogant or offhand disregard; dismissive or carefree and nonchalant; jaunty. This describes the attitude of Cavalier poets.
CAVALIER POETRY

Both Ben Jonson and John Donne were their role models. These two foremost poets of the Jacobean era, are regarded as the originators of two diverse poetic traditions—the Cavalier and the metaphysical styles. The best known of the cavalier poets are Edmund Waller, Robert Herrick, Richard Lovelace, Thomas Carew, and Sir John Suckling. They emulated Ben Jonson, a contemporary of Shakespeare, and may properly be called the 'Sons of Ben' or ‘Tribe of Ben’. These poets opposed metaphysical poetry, such as that of John Donne, who wrote with a spiritual, scientific, and moral focus. Some of Caroline poets, wrote elegant verse, more light than serious, so that the term ‘cavalier poetry’ came to refer to a kind of light lyric, often advocating a Carpe diem (seize the day) attitude. To “seize the day” means to disregard the future so that one might expect the poets of this theme to ignore religion. However, Robert Herrick wrote both religious and secular poetry.
CAVALIER POETRY

According to Skelton, others associated with the Cavalier tradition, include Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Aurelian Townshend, William Cartwright, Thomas Randolph, William Habington, Sir Richard Fanshawe, Edmund Waller, and James Graham, 1st Marquess of Montrose.
The Caroline lyric is the result of conscious effort. It is artificial. It is a work of art characterized by finish, polish and elegance of language, but lacking the spontaneity and absence of effort which characterized the Elizabethan lyric. It has a formal finish and perfection, but is wanting in natural care and warmth of emotion.

It mirrors the mood and temper of the age. It is often coarse, licentious and indecent, thus reflecting the coarseness and indecency of the courtly circles to which most of the poets of this school belonged. The poets of this school again and again find the various beauties of nature united in their beauty of their respective beloved.

The cavalier poets are great lovers of nature. They observe nature minutely and describe it with feelings. Concrete, visual images drawn from the homelier and simpler objects and forces of nature abound in their lyrics. The lyric is charming, but there is something trivial and unsubstantial about it. In this respect again, it reflects the triviality and frivolity of the life of the times.
Characteristics of Cavalier Poetry

Cavalier poetry is different from traditional poetry in its subject matter. Instead of tackling issues like religion, philosophy, and the arts, cavalier poetry aims to express the joy and simple gratification of celebratory things much livelier than the traditional works of their predecessors.

The intent of their works was often to promote the crown (particularly Charles I), and cavalier poets spoke outwardly against the Roundheads who supported the rebellion of Parliament against the crown.

Most cavalier works had allegorical and/or classical references. They drew upon the knowledge of Horace, Cicero, and Ovid.[3] By using these resources they were able to produce poetry that impressed King Charles I.

The Cavalier Poets strove to create poetry where both pleasure and virtue thrived. They were rich in reference to the ancients as well as pleasing. Commonly held traits certainly exist in cavalier poetry in that most poems “celebrate beauty, love, nature, sensuality, drinking, good fellowship, honor, and social life.”

In many ways, this poetry embodies an attitude that mirrors “carpe diem.”
CHARACTERISTICS OF CAVALIER POETRY

Cavalier poets certainly wrote to promote Loyalist principles in favor of the crown, but their themes ran deeper than that. Cavalier poets wrote in a way that promoted seizing the day and the opportunities presented to them and their kinsmen. They wanted to revel in society and come to be the best that they possibly could within the bounds of that society. This endorsement of living life to the fullest, for Cavalier writers, often included gaining material wealth and having sex with women. These themes contributed to the triumphant and boisterous tone and attitude of the poetry.

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. As such it was common to hear praise of womanly virtues as though they were divine.

Cavalier poetry is closely linked to the Royalist cause in that the main intent of their poetry was to glorify the crown. In this way, cavalier poetry is often grouped in a political category of poetry.
Characteristics of Cavalier Poetry

- Cavalier poetry began to be recognized as its own genre with the beginning of the English Civil War in 1642 when men began to write in defense of the crown. However, authors like Thomas Carew and Sir John Suckling died years before the war began, yet are still classified as cavalier poets for the political nature of their poetry.

- They avoided the subject of religion and discovering the depth of soul.
MAJOR CAVALIER POETS

SEVENTEENTH - CENTURY
THE CAVALIER POETS

Who are called Cavalier and Caroline poets?

The Cavalier or the Caroline poets were a group of poets of the mid-seventeenth century who sided with King Charles I, against the parliament.

Major Cavalier poets and works
- Robert Herrick: To Anthea, To Julia and Cherry Ripe
- Thomas Carew: ask me no more, Lips and eyes
- Sir John Suckling: Love turned to hatred
- Richard Lovelace: from prison.
Robert Herrick (1591 – 1674)

He was a 17th-century English lyric poet and cleric. He is best known for Hesperides, a book of poems. This includes the carpe diem poem "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time", with the first line "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may".

Herrick wrote over 2,500 poems, about half of which appear in his major work, Hesperides. Hesperides also includes the much shorter Noble Numbers, his first book, of spiritual works, first published in 1648. He is well known for his style and, in his earlier works, for frequent references to lovemaking and the female body.

However, his later poetry was of a more spiritual and philosophical nature. Among his most famous short poetical sayings are the unique monometers, such as number 475, "Thus I / Pass by / And die,/ As one / Unknown / And gone."

Herrick sets out his subject-matter in the poem he printed at the beginning of his collection, The Argument of his Book. He dealt with English country life and its seasons, village customs, complimentary poems to various ladies and his friends, themes taken from classical writings and a solid bedrock of Christian faith, not intellectualized but underpinning the rest.
It has been said of Herrick's style 'his directness of speech with clear and simple presentation of thought, a fine artist 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'.

The over-riding message of Herrick's work is that life is short, the world is beautiful, love is splendid, and we must use the short time we have to make the most of it. This message can be seen clearly in To the Virgins, to make much of Time; To Daffodils; To Blossoms; and Corinna's Going A Maying, where the warmth and exuberance of what seems to have been a kindly and jovial personality comes over strongly.

His poems were not widely popular at the time they were published. His style was strongly influenced by Ben Jonson, by the classical Roman writers, and by the poems of the late Elizabethan era. This must have seemed quite old-fashioned to an audience whose tastes were tuned to the complexities of the metaphysical poets such as John Donne and Andrew Marvell. His works were rediscovered in the early nineteenth century, and have been regularly printed ever since.
Robert Herrick (1591 – 1674)

The Victorian poet Swinburne described Herrick as "the greatest song writer ever born of English race". Despite his use of classical allusions and names, Herrick's poems are easier for modern readers to understand than those of many of his contemporaries.
Richard Lovelace
(1617 – 1657)

He was an English poet in the seventeenth century. He was a cavalier poet who fought on behalf of the king during the Civil War. His best known works are "To Althea, from Prison", and "To Lucasta, Going to the Warres".

His most quoted excerpts are from the beginning of the last stanza of "To Althea, From Prison":

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage

and the end of "To Lucasta. Going to the Warres":
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Lov'd I not Honour more.
Richard Lovelace (1617 – 1657)

Lovelace's poetry was often influenced by his experiences with politics and association with important figures of his time. He wrote "Sonnet. To Generall Goring", the poem "To Lucasta, Going to the Warres" and the tragedy The Soldier.

His first experience of imprisonment brought him to write one of his best known lyrics, "To Althea, from Prison", in which he illustrates his noble and paradoxical nature. Lovelace did everything he could to remain in the king's favor despite his inability to participate in the war.

During the political chaos of 1648 he was again imprisoned, this time for nearly a year. When he was released in April 1649, the king had been executed and Lovelace's cause seemed lost. As in his previous incarceration, this experience led to creative production—this time in the cause of spiritual freedom, as reflected in the release of his first volume of poetry, Lucasta.
Thomas Carew (1595 – 1640)

- He was an English poet, among the 'Cavalier' group of Caroline poets.

- Carew's poems are sensuous lyrics. They open to us, in his own phrase, "a mine of rich and pregnant fancy."

- His metrical style was influenced by Jonson and his imagery by Donne, for whom he had an almost servile admiration. Carew had a lucidity and directness of lyrical utterance unknown to Donne. It is perhaps his greatest distinction that he is the earliest of the Cavalier song-writers.

- The longest of Carew's poems, "A Rapture," would be more widely appreciated if the rich flow of its imagination were restrained by greater reticence of taste.

- Esquire is a collection of lyrics, songs, pastorals, poetic dialogues, elegies, addresses, and occasional poems. Most of the pieces are fairly short—the longest, "A Rapture," is 166 lines, and well over half are under 50 lines.
Thomas Carew (1595 – 1640)

The subjects are various: a number of poems treat love, lovemaking, and feminine beauty. Several of the poems, including "An Elegie upon the death of the Deane of Pauls, Dr. John Donne" are memorial tributes; others, notably "To Saxham," celebrate country-house life; and a few record such events as the successful production of a play ("To my worthy Friend, M. D’Avenant, upon his Excellent Play, The Lust Italian") or the marriage of friends ("On the Marriage of T. K. and C. C. the Morning Stormie").

Many of the songs and love poems are addressed to the still-unidentified "Celia," a woman who was evidently Carew's lover for years. The poems to Celia treat the urgency of courtship, making much of the carpe diem theme.

A number of Carew's poems are concerned with the nature of poetry itself. His elegy on John Donne has been praised as a masterpiece of criticism.
He was an English poet, prominent among those renowned for careless gaiety and wit – the accomplishments of a Cavalier poet.

He is best known for his poem "Ballad upon a Wedding".

His notable minor pieces include the "Ballade upon a Wedding", for the marriage of Roger Boyle, afterwards Earl of Orrery, and Lady Margaret Howard, "I prithee, send me back my heart," "Out upon it, I have loved three whole days together," and "Why so pale and wan, fond lover?" from Aglaura. "A Sessions of the Poets", describing a meeting of contemporary versifiers under the presidency of Apollo to decide who should wear the laurel wreath, is the prototype of many later satires.

A collection of Suckling's poems first appeared in 1646 as Fragmenta aurea.
CONCLUSION

- They lived for the moment.

- The most common format used by cavalier poets was “Roses are red, violets are blue” in their poems.

- In their poems, they reflected the attitude of many courtiers, that love need not be more than a little joy.

- The Cavalier lyric does not, by any means, enjoy an inconsiderable position in the history of English literature. It is customary to compare the Cavalier poets with Elizabethan lyricists.

- According to Swinburne, the lyric, starting with Wyatt and Surrey, developed slowly, reached a high point in the Elizabethan age, but went on rising still higher and reached its apex in the work of the Cavalier poets, and started declining only after them. Most critics do not accept this placement of the Cavalier poets above Elizabethan lyricists.
CONCLUSION

The Cavaliers have certainly more of polish and even ingenuity, but they lack the spontaneity and emotional intensity of the Elizabethans. The “wood notes wild” of Shakespearean song are not to be heard in their efforts, even though they have quite a few attractive substitutes to offer.
THANK YOU