**جامعة ديالى\ كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية**

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**Second Stage/ Poetry**

**Poetry of the 17th Century**

**Introduction:**

**Some of the main events of the 17th century:**

1603 - Union of the Crowns (James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England).

1605 - Gunpowder Plot.

1620 - Pilgrims' voyage on the Mayflower to America.

1625 - Charles I becomes king.

1642-1651 - English Civil War.

1649 - Execution of Charles I and establishment of the Commonwealth.

1653 - Oliver Cromwell becomes Lord Protector.

1660 - Restoration of Charles II.

1665 - Great Plague of London.

1666- Great Fire of London.

1685 - James II ascends to the throne.

1688 - Glorious Revolution.

1689 - Bill of Rights established.

In English literature the 17th century is categorized into the Jacobean Period (1603–1625), the Late Renaissance (1625–1660), and the Restoration Age (1660–1700).

-William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were prominent literary figures of the Jacobean period, with Shakespeare excelling in drama and Jonson in poetry and masques.

-During the Late Renaissance, Metaphysical poets gained prominence. John Donne and George Herbert pioneered this genre, exploring complex themes with intellectual depth and intricate metaphors. The latter half of the century saw the rise of John Milton, whose epic Paradise Lost became one of the greatest works in English literature.

-In the Restoration Age, John Dryden emerged as the leading poet, dramatist, and critic. This period is a treasure trove of English literature, marked by a remarkable diversity of styles and themes.

There are two major schools of poetry: **Metaphysical** and **Cavalier** Poetry. In the early 17th century poetics, the style of the poets used changed, and a revolution in form and content resulted in freer poems than the sonnets. The poets preferred to write using ordinary language. The duality in the themes also was important, and both secular and religious poems were penned.

**Metaphysical Poetry**

The era of metaphysical poetry is considered to be between 1610 and 1680s. Dr. Samuel Johnson invented the term “metaphysical poetry” in the 18th century. However, T.S. Eliot and his essay The Metaphysical Poets helped to the rebirth of metaphysical poetry. The word “metaphysical” is a combination of the words meta, which means beyond in Greek, and physical, which means worldly.

**Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry (104-107)**

-The most obvious characteristic is the intellectual power of this poetry which appears in both love and religious poems. It is through this power that the metaphysical poet expresses his feelings, and the result is a fusion of mind and heart. The poet's critical intelligence keeps a sense of proportion and clarity, while the extremes of emotions are controlled by a sense of humor or wit.

-Another important characteristic of metaphysical poetry is the conceit.

Metaphysical conceits is the hallmark of this style, are intricate comparisons between seemingly unrelated objects, showcasing the poets' analytical and creative

prowess.

For example: John Donne compares his soul and

the soul of his beloved to a draftsman’s compass,

a twin compass has two legs, one that stays fixed

and one that moves.

- Metaphysical poets were also fond of paradox. The paradox appears in. association with the image or in the witty argument of love poetry. It reveals, more than any other element, the metaphysical poets' fondness for showing off.

-The best metaphysical poems are characterised by epigrammatic conciseness. In few words, lines, or sentences they say a great deal, although most of the words are simple, and the sentence structure is that of ordinary speech.

-An element of drama can also be felt in metaphysical poetry.

**The Cavalier Poets**

**After the death of Queen Elizabeth I, James I (1603–1625)** inherited the throne.

His belief in the divine right of kings caused

friction with Parliament.

The divine right of kings: a political doctrine

in defense of monarchical absolutism,

which asserted that kings derived their authority

from God and could not therefore nobody

( like the parliament) should question that right.

James I was succeeded by his son Charles I (1625–1649).

-Like his father, Charles I believed in the Divine Rights

of Kings so he sought to rule alone without the

inference of the parliament.

-In the first 4 years of his reign, he dissolved

the parliament four or three times.

-The parliament was divided into two parties: those on the side of the king (The Royalist

s) and (Parliamentarians also known as Roundheads) who supported the parliament.

**The divide between the two led to the English Civil Wars (1642–1651)** between Royalists (supporters of the king) and Parliamentarians. The wars ended with the trial and execution of Charles I in 1649

**The Cavalier Poets:17th century Royalist Poets**

The term (Cavalier poets), refers to the poets who supported King Charles I during the English Civil War (1642–1651) against the Parliamentarians.

Their writing was quite different from that of previous and later movements. Instead of tackling issues like religion, philosophy, and the arts, cavalier poetry aims to express the feelings of gratification and joy in life’s simple, celebratory moments. They often spoke about political issues, used classical allusions, and aimed to express that writing was created to please Charles I over almost everything else.

Some of the common themes of cavalier poetry are love, nature, drinking, honor, politics, and beauty. Seizing the day was another important part of their work. They wanted to celebrate the importance of working every day to become the best possible version of themselves.

Prominent Cavalier poets include:

Robert Herrick

Richard Lovelace

Thomas Carew and Sir John Suckling