The article under consideration focuses on the study of the poetic heritage by one of the prominent representatives of the English literary tradition of the XVIIth century, a leading Cavalier-poet Thomas Carew with special emphasis on the stylistic peculiarity of his erotic discourse. Being restricted by the social norms and behavioral patterns of the court poet still found his own manner of seduction which won him a reputation of the wit of his time and a real libertine. In order to make a sexual appeal less overt the narrator using his erudition and sense of humor tries to demonstrate the naturalness of sexual intercourse, depicting the pleasures of flesh as an integral constituent of the circle of life, the law of Nature. Seducing a lady the narrator appears to contradict the Platonic tradition, being quite tough and stating that courting and complimenting a Lady in a traditional knight manner does not make any sense and a man should not feel inferior to a woman, instead threatening her that her beauty is not for long and thus the lovers are to use their time following the motto of the epoch “carpe diem”. Even the biblical allusions are to prove the naturalness of sexuality being only the frightening background for the lovers who follow their instincts and thus find their own paradise.

Key words: poetry, Cavalier, erotic discourse, sexuality, seduction.

Thomas Carew (1594–1640) a well-known Cavalier poet has been the focus of the scientific interest for quite a while now, but still remains one of the underrated representatives of the English literary tradition of the XVIIth century. Once labeled as one of the “minor poets”, he stills seems not to be taken seriously. Despite the range of
foreign researchers who have done a lot to rehabilitate one of the most well-known literary figures of his troubled times [1] (among which one should specially mention R. Parfitt [2], R. Skelton [3], S. Nixon [4], B. King [5], L. Martz [6], Renée Hannaford [7], C. Neaves [8], J. Scodel [9]), the domestic critique and the general readership still seems to underestimate, to say the least, the poetic heritage of the prominent Cavalier.

Thus, the purpose of the paper under consideration is to analyse the chosen love poems by Thomas Carew with the special emphasis on the verbalization of eroticism and sexuality in them.

The topicality of the given research is obvious due to the fact that the erotic mood of the love lyric by Thomas Carew has not been enlightened to a degree in the Ukrainian literary studies and the sexual component of this “Oracle of love” is still to be studied more closely.

It should be mentioned that the author under consideration had to skate on the thin ice motivating the addressee of his poetic works to respond to the impulse of the narrator and forget about the behavioral norms and patterns enjoying the pleasures of sexual intercourse. Thomas Carew was elaborate in choosing techniques to motivate the lady to do it. Among them one can mention the emphasis he laid on the pleasures of the flesh, sexuality itself being treated as an integral constituent of Nature, universe and the circle of life.

The motif of unnatural coldness of the beloved lady, which, according to the lyrical hero, does not fit into the harmonious picture of the universe, is the key one in the poem "Divine Mistress". Paradoxically, a woman, in the opinion of the narrator, is sinful as she is proud of her own excessive holiness, thus making the man, who adores her, suffer. He is upset that his beloved "is not molded in his image":

\[
\text{IN Nature's pieces still I see} \\
\text{Some error that might mended be;} \\
\text{Something my wish could still remove,} \\
\text{Alter or add; but my fair love} \\
\text{Was framed by hands far more divine,} \\
\text{For she hath every beauteous line.}
\]

More than once in his poetic narration Thomas Carew concentrates on the opposition between a man and a woman who perceive physical love differently.
Moreover, according to Thomas Carew, a man is more natural:

Yet I had been far happier,
Had Nature, that made me, made her.
Then likeness might (that love creates)
Have made her love what now she hates;

It should be noted that the poet believes that nature is more precious than all other substances and ideas. For him, true humanity equals being natural, not artificial which, in its turn, is false. This idea, declared in the final lines of the poem, which are essentially a request from the lyrical hero, who appeals to the gods to teach his beloved to be human (natural):

Yet, I confess, I cannot spare
From her just shape the smallest hair;
Nor need I beg from all the store
Of heaven for her one beauty more.
She hath too much divinity for me:
You gods, teach her some more humanity.

Thomas Carew seems to find it difficult to come to terms with the state of affairs that he witnesses in the circle of his closest friends: people are forced to hide their true feelings and emotions under a variety of conventions, to obey the prescriptions of courtly etiquette, literary clichés, and other social norms. He himself seems to prefer a different type of relationship - a sincere relationship between a man and a woman who are able to freely express their feelings and emotions. Though, it may be just a role-play, he is famous for, to seduce a lady, to make her forget about norms of behaviour and try the forbidden fruit of physical love. Thus, sexual intercourse is justified by being absolutely natural and the gods of ancient times (unlike the saints of Christianity) are to prove it.

In the poem "Complement", written in a humorous manner, the author appears to be polemicizing with numerous literary clichés used by poets of the time when describing their lovers. T. Carew creates a kind of parodic baroque catalog of women's virtues and charms, which were replicated in poetic texts and turned into trite metaphors that were often used by courtiers in their courtships. The lyrical hero lists all the feminine charms that could ignite his feelings for a woman, but at the same time concludes that the nature of his own love is immense:
I love not for those eyes, nor haire,
Nor cheekes, nor lips, nor teeth so rare;
Nor for thy speech, thy necke, nor breast,
Nor for thy belly, nor the rest:
Nor for thy hand, nor foote so small,
But wouldst thou know (deere sweet) for all.

One of the most famous and extravagant poetic works of Thomas Carew is the scandalous poem “Rapture”, which, according to many researchers, resonates with J. Donne's “Ecstasy”.

The title of the work itself can be interpreted in different ways: "rapture" can stand for “ecstasy” or as well may be a derivative of the verb “rape”. It is not surprising, given all the growing pressure from the Puritans and the flourishing of the cult of platonic love at court, that this work must have caused numerous gossips and rumors among his contemporaries. The theme of "natural" love, irony and play, implied in the work of Thomas Carew, found its vivid representation in this poem.

The plot of this work, the textual volume of which is quite unusual for the poetry of Thomas Carew, grounds on a skillful play on a number of popular literary conventions (allegorism of religious lyrics, frank eroticism of the poetry of the French libertines of the XVIIth century, pastoral topos, the code of chivalry, as it was disseminated in the chivalric novel), as well as on the polemical negation of the axiological semantics of established literary clichés (Lucretia, Penelope, Daphne, Laura).

In the first lines, the author addresses his beloved lady, inviting her to Elysium, a strange land of erotic pleasures where lovers fully surrender to sensual passion and thus achieve heavenly bliss. At the entrance to this paradise, Thomas Carew places a bulky allegorical figure of a giant Colossus, a kind of man-made idol - Honour, which prevents the free entry of lovers into the land of bliss:

The giant, Honour, that keeps cowards out,
Is but a masquer, and the servile rout
Of baser subjects only bend in vain
To the vast idol;...

This image-symbol personifies social morality, which, under the guise of religious precepts, stands in the way of human happiness on earth. The poet uses emotionally coloured
evaluative metaphors (“masquer idol”, “the grim Swiss”, “tame fools”) that manifest his extremely negative attitude towards a stupid idol that can be defeated with the help of courage and determination:

...whilst the nobler train  
Of valiant lovers daily sail between  
The huge Colossus' legs, and pass unseen  
Unto the blissful shore. Be bold and wise,  
And we shall enter: the grim Swiss denies  
Only to tame fools a passage, that not know  
He is but form and only frights in show  
The duller eyes that look from far; draw near  
And thou shalt scorn what we were wont to fear.

Thomas Carew emphasizes that the idol called “Honour” has nothing to do with the divine spark, as it owes its existence not to the laws of nature or the divine will, but to human envy:

We shall see how the stalking pageant goes  
With borrow'd legs, a heavy load to those  
That made and bear him; nor, as we once thought,  
The seed of gods, but a weak model wrought  
By greedy men, that seek to enclose the common,  
And within private arms empale free woman.

The author plays on the conflict between socially accepted norms of behavior that limit the free expression of human sexuality and the natural needs of young lovers. The leitmotif of the poem is the apologetics of sensual pleasure, which is masterfully portrayed by the “cavalier”-poet and thus makes a brilliant example of erotic lyrics.

Before unfolding a large-scale and even provocative picture of erotic pleasures in the bosom of untouched nature, Thomas Carew sets certain axiological accents. He insists that there is nothing shameful or sinful about carnal love, because it is the manifestation of nature itself:

There shall the queens of love and innocence,  
Beauty and Nature, banish all offence  
From our close ivy-twines; there I'll behold  
Thy bared snow and thy unbraided gold;  
There my enfranchised hand on every side
Shall o'er thy naked polish'd ivory slide.

The very strategy of describing sexual pleasures developed by Thomas Carew is noteworthy. He resorts to a frank representation of corporeality, describing individual parts of naked bodies, and to the manifestation of a sequence of bodily poses, and metaphor, which combines a cultural component with implicit eroticism:

there I'll behold
Thy bared snow and thy unbraided gold;
There my enfranchised hand on every side
Shall o'er thy naked polish'd ivory slide.
No curtain there, though of transparent lawn,
Shall be before thy virgin-treasure drawn;
But the rich mine, to the enquiring eye
Exposed, shall ready still for mintage lie,
And we will coin young Cupids. There a bed
Of roses and fresh myrtles shall be spread,
Under the cooler shade of cypress groves;
Our pillows of the down of Venus' doves,
Whereon our panting limbs we'll gently lay,
In the faint respites of our active play:

Appealing to the reader's imagination, the poet metaphorically reproduces the very trajectory of the lover's gaze, which enthusiastically contemplates the naked body of a young woman

So will I rifle all the sweets that dwell
In my delicious paradise, and swell
My bag with honey, drawn forth by the power
Of fervent kisses from each spicy flower.
I'll seize the rose-buds in their perfumed bed,
The violet knots, like curious mazes spread
O'er all the garden, taste the ripen'd cherry,
The warm firm apple, tipp'd with coral berry:
Then will I visit with a wand'ring kiss
The vale of lilies and the bower of bliss;
And where the beauteous region both divide
Into two milky ways, my lips shall slide
Down those smooth alleys, wearing as they go
A tract for lovers on the printed snow;
Thence climbing o’er the swelling Apennine,
Retire into thy grove of eglantine,
Where I will all those ravish’d sweets distil
Through Love’s alembic, and with chemic skill
From the mix’d mass one sovereign balm derive,
Then bring that great elixir to thy hive.

It goes without saying, that Thomas Carew can be named a real master of erotic metaphor. His imagery organically combines the natural and the cultural, so the reader’s mind can create a wide range of different associations that appeal to both the sensual and intellectual elements. Thus, the central passage of the poem, with allusions to mythological imagery performing a meaning-forming function, is the most characteristic:

Now in more subtle wreaths I will entwine
My sinewy thighs, my legs and arms with thine;
Thou like a sea of milk shalt lie display’d,
Whilst I the smooth calm ocean invade
With such a tempest, as when Jove of old
Fell down on Danaë in a storm of gold;
Yet my tall pine shall in the Cyprian strait
Ride safe at anchor and unlade her freight:
My rudder with thy bold hand, like a tried
And skilful pilot, thou shalt steer, and guide
My bark into love’s channel, where it shall
Dance, as the bounding waves do rise or fall.
Then shall thy circling arms embrace and clip
My willing body, and thy balmy lip
Bathe me in juice of kisses, whose perfume
Like a religious incense shall consume,
And send up holy vapours to those powers
That bless our loves and crown our sportful hours,
That with such halcyon calmness fix our souls
In steadfast peace, as no affright controls.
There, no rude sounds shake us with sudden starts;
No jealous ears, when we unrip our hearts,
Suck our discourse in; no observing spies
This blush, that glance traduce; no envious eyes
Watch our close meetings; nor are we betray'd
To rivals by the bribed chambermaid.

The allusions of the Olympians – Jupiter and Venus – are aimed, on the one hand, at rehabilitating the sensuality (for the gods themselves were unable to resist the power of love passion), and, on the other hand, actualizing in the minds of elite readers mythological stories in which the earthly nature of love was not yet constrained by any religious precepts or taboos.

It should be noted that Thomas Carew seems to be polemicizing with Robert Herrick, who recognized only those physical pleasures that are sanctified by church marriage as non-sinful. On the contrary, T. Carew glorifies “free love”, which is nourished by nature itself, not by duty or law:

No wedlock bonds unwreath our twisted loves,
We seek no midnight arbour, no dark groves
To hide our kisses: there, the hated name
Of husband, wife, lust, modest, chaste or shame,
Are vain and empty words, whose very sound
Was never heard in the Elysian ground.
All things are lawful there, that may delight
Nature or unrestrained appetite;
Like and enjoy, to will and act is one:
We only sin when Love’s rites are not done.
Thomas Carew appears to support the Rococo imperative: there can be no restrictions in love, as it is the manifestation of human nature. Therefore, the uncomplicated Baroque metaphoricity that created the effect of a darkened and, at the same time, a philosophical aura of the concept of love, but rather a purely Rococo apologetics of naturalness is the defining characteristic of this poem by T. Carew.

In the following passage T. Carew essentially responds to all his future critics who will accuse him of excessive frivolity and promiscuity. As if foreshadowing the thunder that would fall on his head from the English Parliament, the poet draws the attention of all his opponents to the fact that their hypocrisy is only an empty fiction. It's just a bunch of worthless words that stand in the way of the free will of human nature, whose rights are more significant and sacred to T. Carew than any fictions, regulations, or norms for which there is no place in paradise:

...there, the hated name
Of husband, wife, lust, modest, chaste or shame,
Are vain and empty words, whose very sound
Was never heard in the Elysian ground.

It goes without saying, that Thomas Carew uses a wide cultural erudition as a solid argument when presenting to the reader his own worldview position - the position of a libertine poet. Within the framework of the given poetic narration the poet resorts to reinterpreting the established literary clichés. Those female images, which have been considered a symbol of female virtue (Lucretia, Penelope, Daphne, Laura) for a long time, acquire a diametrically opposite semantics under Thomas Carew's pen. For instance, Lucretia, who, according to Titus Livius, committed suicide because she was dishonored by Sextus Tarquinius, in the poetic works by Thomas Carew is reading the erotic poetry by the Italian Renaissance poet Pietro Aritino and enjoying the dreams of love; and Penelope, leaving her famous work (a well-known fact that she wove a bedspread during the day, which she let down at night, as she had promised to choose a groom only after the bedspread was ready), indulges in fun with young suitors. Daphne is gladly accepting Apollo's love, and Laura generously rewards Petrarch with mutual love.

The final lines of the poem contain subtle sarcasm: Thomas Carew criticizes social ideas about how relationships of the representatives of the opposite sex should be. In order to seduce a lady he condemns the public morality according to which a
woman has no right to manifest her own sensuality. He openly ridicules the notion, established by the chivalric novel, that a man must fight for his right to a woman's affection by engaging in endless battles with rivals and senselessly glorifying her unearthly beauty. Such ideas about honour, which have become generally accepted in his society, are distorted, so his final verdict is a rhetorical question designed to make readers think about the absurdity of established conventions:

\[
\begin{align*}
And \text{ yet religion bids from blood shed fly, } \\
And \text{ damns me for that act. Then tell me why } \\
This \text{ goblin Honour, which the world adores, } \\
\text{Should make men atheists, and not women whores?}
\end{align*}
\]

Thus, whereas the teacher of T. Carew J. Donne in his well-known poem “Ecstasy” poetizes the organic union of spiritual and sensual principles in the earthly love, the author of “Rapture” pays much more attention to the descriptions of the sensual-erotic aspect. In J. Donne's poetry, which is baroque in its semantics and spirit, the harmony of antinomic principles is emphasized, and Thomas Carew in his poem rehabilitates corporeality: firstly, corporeality is a manifestation of naturalness, secondly, it represents the divine beauty of the earthly man, and thirdly, it is devoid of sinfulness, because sinfulness itself appears as a kind of fiction, a series of words that limit human freedom and the right to enjoyment.

So, it can be concluded that poetic narration studied in the article represents the characteristic worldview and aesthetic paradigm of the Cavalier poets in terms of its problematic and thematic orientation, the semantics of artistic imagery, and the erotic coloring of the leitmotif. Here we can find key concepts (eroticism, hedonism, voyeurism), and such typical artistic strategies as the aesthetics of nuances and hints, the dominance of the playful element, which manifests itself at the level of plot, metaphor, and imagery, emphasized elitism, and heightened intellectualism, the erotic and sexual components seem to play the key role there.

References


10. [https://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/carew/carewbib.htm](https://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/carew/carewbib.htm)