

History of English Language and Literature
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Lecture No 8b
The Age of Milton: Prose and Poetry

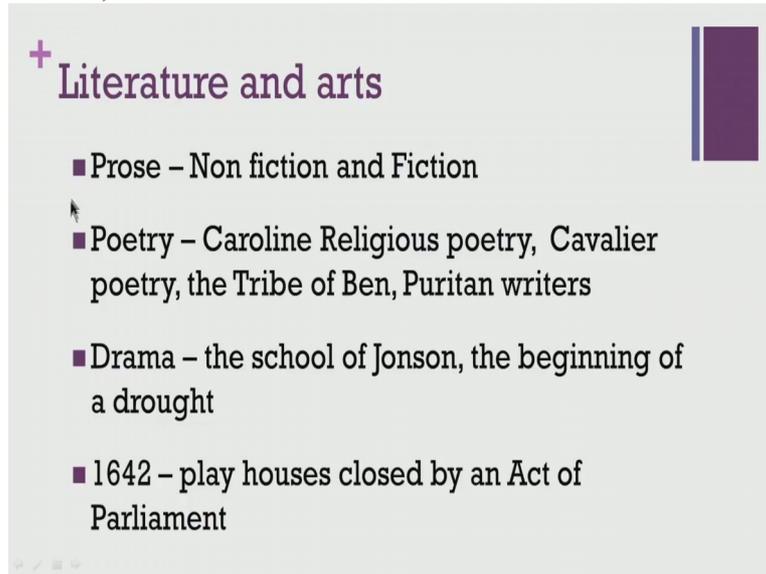
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Hello everyone. I am very pleased to welcome you to yet another session of the NPTEL course The History of English Language and Literature. In today's lecture we should be taking a look at the Age of Milton and the literary product of the period. In the previous section we took a look at how the Age had been featured in terms of socio-political background and today we should be focusing more on the literary products of the time and based on which the tendencies began to shift from one Age to the other.

The literature and arts of this period known as The Age of Milton, it could be classified in these ways.

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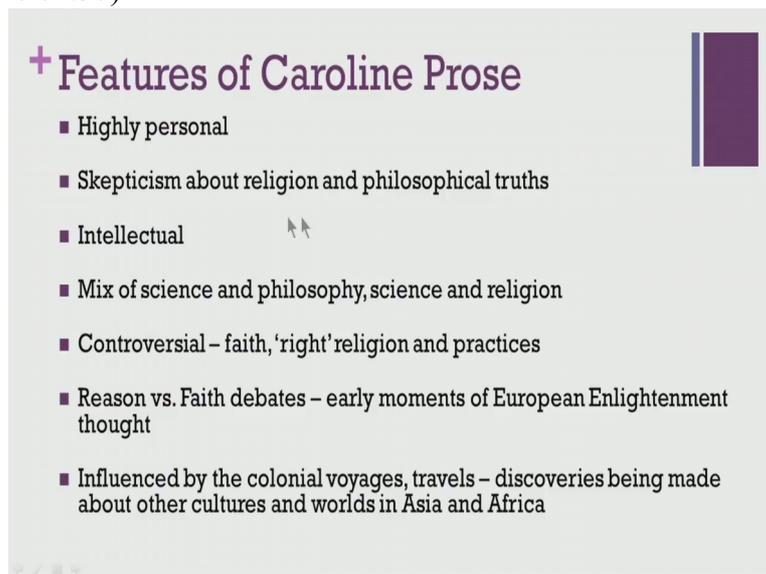


+ Literature and arts

- Prose – Non fiction and Fiction
- Poetry – Caroline Religious poetry, Cavalier poetry, the Tribe of Ben, Puritan writers
- Drama – the school of Jonson, the beginning of a drought
- 1642 – play houses closed by an Act of Parliament

There was prose which included non-fiction and bit of fiction which was more like a prototype of fiction. The poetry was of different kinds depending on who wrote the poetry. There was Caroline religious poetry, Cavalier poetry, a group of poets classified as a Tribe of Ben and also the Puritan writers. In terms of drama it was not a very fruitful period. There was a certain set of dramatists who flourished under this term, the School of Johnson and also in terms of drama it was, it could be noted that it was a beginning of a period of drought. By 1642 the playhouses were closed by an Act of Parliament so that made it almost impossible to even conceive a drama during that period. So in that sense we should be focusing more on prose and poetry of the Period.

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+ Features of Caroline Prose

- Highly personal
- Skepticism about religion and philosophical truths
- Intellectual
- Mix of science and philosophy, science and religion
- Controversial – faith, 'right' religion and practices
- Reason vs. Faith debates – early moments of European Enlightenment thought
- Influenced by the colonial voyages, travels – discoveries being made about other cultures and worlds in Asia and Africa

So let us begin by taking the look at the features of Caroline prose or the features of the prose written during this Age of Milton. The prose was highly personal in nature and there was a predominant skepticism about religion and philosophical truth. It was also intellectual in nature. In that sense prose marks a very different turn from this point onwards where it begins to engage with a lot of socio-political events, the socio-political background or also it features as a medium which could

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think and even analyze the situation

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of the times.

And we also find the mix of science and philosophy and also a mix of science and religion during this period because we

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noted in the previous section that the turbulence of the period was primarily characterized by the problems between the parliament, the royalty and also in between the features of religion also had crept in. So in that sense it becomes, the prose in that period also becomes a breeding ground for a lot of controversial

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articulations in terms of faith and also about the right kind of religious practices to be followed. And we also found that these debates between reason and faith, they also marked the early moments in European enlightenment thought in England.

And we also find that colonialism is at its high even during this time and we find its reflections in the writings of the times and we find the writings being influenced by the colonial voyagers and travelers and also many of them, they write about the discoveries being made about other cultures and worlds in Asia and Africa. These writings are also hugely popular because people wanted to know and, because people wanted to know more about these distant lands

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which were getting colonized by England.

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+ Thomas Browne

- A physician
- Religio Medici, A Doctor's Religion – 1642
 - An attempt to combine Christian theology and ethics with scientific precepts
 - Extremely popular – 9 editions before 1660
 - 5 editions in Latin translation
- Pseudodoxia Epidemica – 1646 – discusses the various errors in our ideas about minerals, vegetables, diseases, animals etc
 - Refutes superstitions – warning against dangerous acceptance of uninformed opinions
- Hydrotaphia or Urn Burial – 1658 – a detailed scientific report on the various funeral urns discovered near Norwich
 - concludes with a magnificent essay on death – an eg of the greatness of 17th century prose style

Perhaps the most important prose writer of this period was Thomas Browne. He was basically a physician and his most famous work was Religio Medici which could be translated as a doctor's religion. This came out in 1642. This work was an attempt to combine Christian

theology and ethics with scientific perception and in that sense it was a hitherto unknown, hitherto unknown kind of work and treatment that began with Religio Medici. Work was extremely popular because people were beginning to develop a scientific temper.

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They also had a lot of interest to understand the scientific basis of religion and also try, also had a lot of interest in probing into the depths of medicine, science, religion, faith and such related but apparently dissimilar factors.

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So the work was extremely popular. It ran into a nine editions even before 1660. Also five editions came out in Latin translation as well talking a lot about the kind of popularity and the kind of translation works that had been happening during that period. The other significant work of Thomas Browne was Pseudodoxia Epidemica. This was published in 1646 and it

addressed the various errors committed in the popular ideas about minerals, vegetables, diseases, animals etc. In that sense again a scientific temperament was being, a scientific kind of

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intervention was being made into the superstitious beliefs that existed during the time and he also refuted many of these popular opinions and warned people

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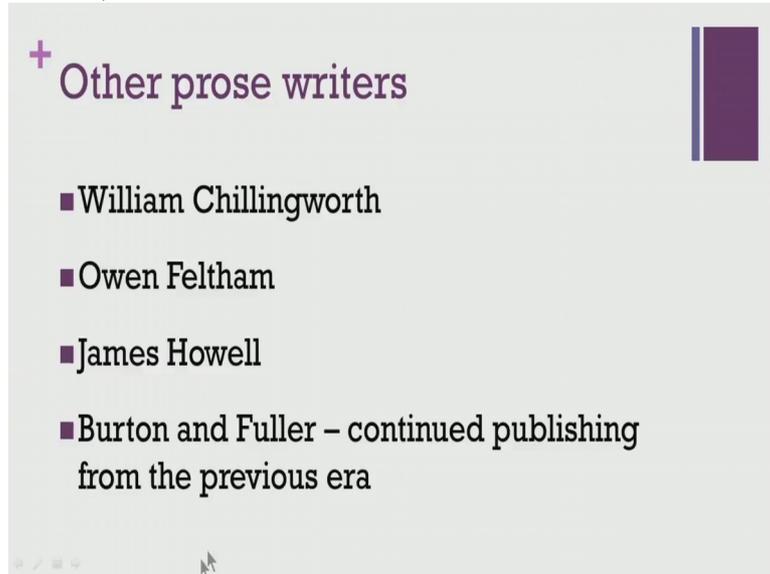
A presentation slide with a light grey background and a purple vertical bar on the right. The title is '+ Thomas Browne' in purple. Below the title is a list of bullet points in purple. The first bullet point is 'A physician'. The second is 'Religio Medici, A Doctor's Religion - 1642', with sub-bullets: 'An attempt to combine Christian theology and ethics with scientific precepts', 'Extremely popular - 9 editions before 1660', and '5 editions in Latin translation'. The third is 'Pseudodoxia Epidemica - 1646 - discusses the various errors in our ideas about minerals, vegetables, diseases, animals etc', with a sub-bullet: 'Refutes superstitions - warning against dangerous acceptance of uninformed opinions'. The fourth is 'Hydrotaphia or Urn Burial - 1658 - a detailed scientific report on the various funeral urns discovered near Norwich', with a sub-bullet: 'concludes with a magnificent essay on death - an eg of the greatness of 17th century prose style'. There are small navigation icons at the bottom left of the slide.

against the dangerous practices of accepting uninformed opinions in the name of science.

The other important work which came out in 1658 was Hydriotaphia or Urn Burial. This was a mix of history and science. He gave a detailed scientific report on the various funeral urns which were discovered near Norwich. Norwich incidentally was the place in which Thomas Browne practiced his, Thomas Browne carried out his medical practice. And he also

concluded this piece with a magnificent essay on death. So Thomas Browne was not just a physician or a scientist. He was also a person with a philosophical bent of mind. This work by Thomas Browne is often quoted as an example of the greatness of seventeenth century prose style in English.

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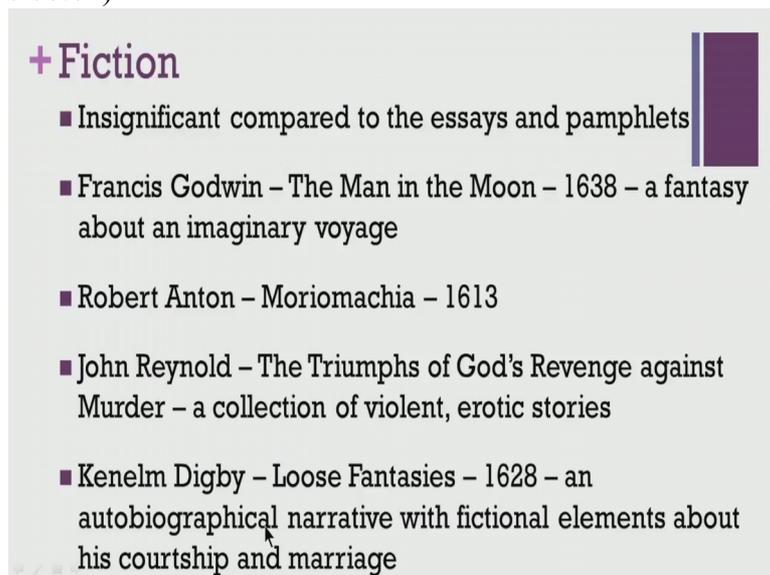


+ Other prose writers

- William Chillingworth
- Owen Feltham
- James Howell
- Burton and Fuller – continued publishing from the previous era

The other major prose writers of the period include William Chillingworth, Owen Feltham, James Howell and also there was Burton and Fuller who started writing in the previous age itself. So there is a certain sense of overlap with writers such as Burton and Fuller who continued publishing even in the Age of Milton.

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+ Fiction

- Insignificant compared to the essays and pamphlets
- Francis Godwin – The Man in the Moon – 1638 – a fantasy about an imaginary voyage
- Robert Anton – Moriomachia – 1613
- John Reynold – The Triumphs of God's Revenge against Murder – a collection of violent, erotic stories
- Kenelm Digby – Loose Fantasies – 1628 – an autobiographical narrative with fictional elements about his courtship and marriage

When we come to fiction it is important to know that the output was fairly insignificant compared to the essays and pamphlets which were produced during the time. And also it was not a proper kind of fiction. It was only a prototype of fiction which was to emerge at a later century. The major writers included Francis Godwin; his work *Man in the Moon* was hugely popular because it spoke about a fantasy about an imaginary voyage to moon. And there was Robert Anton's *Moriomachia* which came out in 1613. John Reynolds' *Triumphs of God's Revenge against Murder*, it was a collection of violent and erotic stories which also indicated that all kinds of genres were becoming popular in the seventeenth century. There was also this writer named Kenelm Digby whose *Loose Fantasies* which was published in 1628, it was an autobiographical narrative with fictional elements and this was also the Age in which people could experiment the lot in terms of prose writings.

So there was a way in which all of these

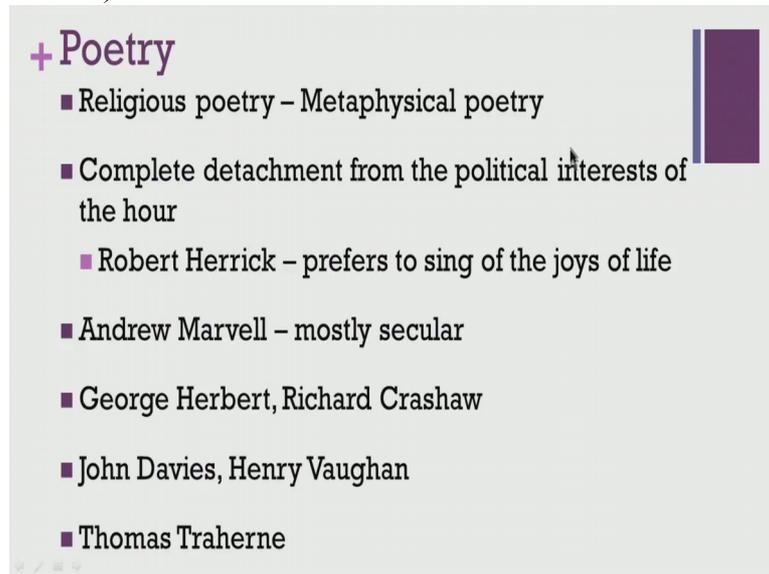
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different disciplines came together. One could write about faith and science, faith and religion, about science and religion, about fiction and autobiography, about imaginary writings, about real writings, a lot of experiment was happening during this time and this could be noted in the many works which got produced during those times. But unfortunately many of them were not worthy enough to survive into the posterity but they merely serve as historical and intellectual artifacts to indicate the kind of variety and the kind of versatility that existed during the time.

And in terms of poetry we have already taken a look at some of the

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+ Poetry

- Religious poetry – Metaphysical poetry
- Complete detachment from the political interests of the hour
 - Robert Herrick – prefers to sing of the joys of life
- Andrew Marvell – mostly secular
- George Herbert, Richard Crashaw
- John Davies, Henry Vaughan
- Thomas Traherne

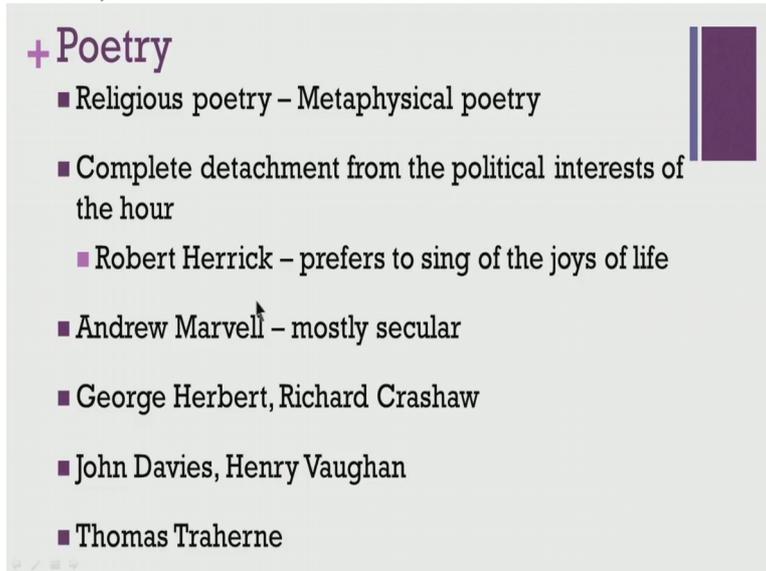
poetic output of the times in terms of metaphysical poetry. And a particular kind of poetry which could be loosely classified as religious poetry dominated these times. And they also displayed the complete detachment from the political interest of the hour. In the previous session we also saw how turbulent the times were, how the political

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scenario was not, was not peaceful at all. We saw how England had fallen into a Civil War. We saw the political and, political uncertainty which had led to a lot of violence but we find the group of poets under who were writing religious poetry maintaining silence about all these

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+ Poetry

- Religious poetry – Metaphysical poetry
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 - Robert Herrick – prefers to sing of the joys of life
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- John Davies, Henry Vaughan
- Thomas Traherne

activities and remaining quite detached from the reality of those times.

For instance there is this poet Robert Herrick who preferred to sing of the joys of life when there was hardly anything joyful happening in England during that time. Andrew Marvell among the Metaphysicals, he remained mostly secular and one of his poems we had taken a brief look at in of the previous sessions. The other writers included George Herbert and Richard Crawshaw, John Davis and Henry Vaughan and also Thomas Traherne. So religious poetry was particularly important because it played to the sentiments of the Puritans and had also tried to bring about a kind of, it also tried to bring about a kind of peace among these, amidst these turbulent times. But however in terms of its literary merit, apart from the metaphysical poetry we do not

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find many of them being mentioned by the later critics or by the later historians.

There was another kind of poetry known as Cavalier poetry which dominated the times. It was mostly courtly

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+ Cavalier Poetry - features

- Gallantry and chivalry – courtly poetry
- Full of wit, smart responses, clever complimentary remarks
- Flattery and high praise of the lover's beauty and wisdom
- Complaints about the lover's indifference, agony of separation
- A lot of erotic elements
- Did not engage in serious debates, simpler than the metaphysicals
- Short and precise – but exaggerated images

poetry and it featured elements of gallantry and chivalry. It was also quite witty. It included smart responses and clever repartees. It was also characterized by a lot of complimentary remarks paid to either a lover or friend who was getting mentioned in these poems. It included flattery and exaggerated praise of lovers' beauty and wisdom and we also find it complaining about lover's indifference of the agony of separation. So in that sense it was mostly about love and courtly affairs. And we also find a lot of erotic elements getting built into these poems at least by some of the writers.

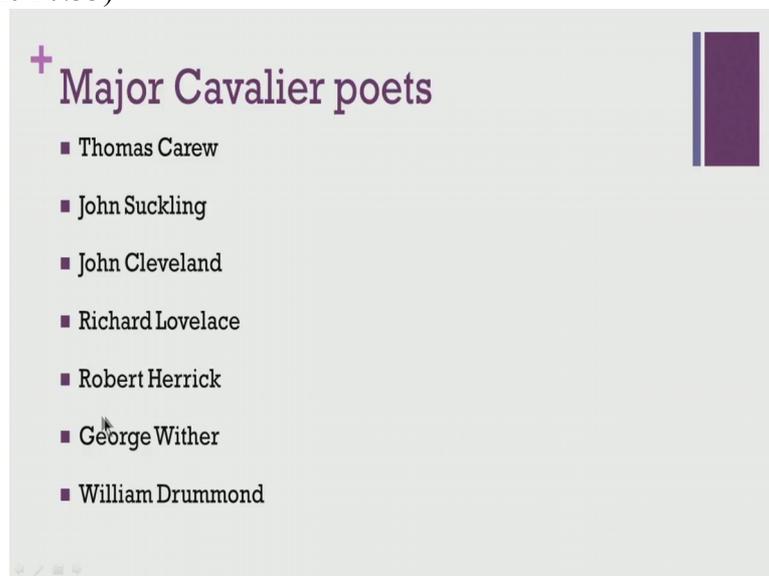
Though they were slightly different from the religious poetry of those times, we do not find them either engaging in serious debates and in that sense their poetic diction was much simpler than that of the metaphysicals. They used short and precise lines for their poetry but nevertheless looking back from

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the contemporary times, their emergence may seem

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a little exaggerated.

And the major Cavalier poets included Thomas Carew, John Suckling, John Cleveland, Richard Lovelace, Robert Herrick, George Wither and William Drummond. Some of their

poems, especially Carew, Suckling, Cleveland, Lovelace they all were huge popular during those times. But nevertheless this detachment from the

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turbulent times of the period and this detachment from, the silence that they maintained during those times by not (()) or not articulating certain voices of those times made them a little unpopular with the later critics and historians.

But there was nevertheless

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- Plea for freedom
- influenced by the harsh Puritan government under Oliver Cromwell
- Eg: 'To Alithea, From Prison' by Lovelace
 - "Stone walls do not a prison make / Nor iron walls a cage"

couple of writers who did respond to the times and particularly we need to talk about the poem by Lovelace titled To Althea, from Prison. And this was mostly a plea for freedom but we also find similar kind of articulation though subtly some other poets. They were

influenced by the harsh Puritan government rule under Oliver Cromwell. When Oliver Cromwell took charge of England there was

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initially this hope that he was going to be the savior of democracy and the savior of England from the absolutist monarchy. But he proved to be a dictator nevertheless and we do find England falling in terrible times during those, during the decade old rule of Oliver Cromwell. There was also instances of violence and instances of hitherto unseen kind of cruelty getting inflicted to the other Commonwealth nations such as Ireland and Scotland. So we find Lovelace writing this poem

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+ Responding to the times

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- influenced by the harsh Puritan government under Oliver Cromwell
- Eg: 'To Alithea, From Prison' by Lovelace
 - "Stone walls do not a prison make / Nor iron walls a cage"

with this oft-quoted line, Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage. So in spite of these minor articulations, we do not find much engagement with the society

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+ The Tribe of Ben

- The cavalier poets influenced by Ben Jonson
- Thomas Randolph, William Cartright
- Also, Herrick, Lovelace and Suckling
- Satires and pastoral poetry – naughty wit, elaborate conceits
- Social commentary with a polished style
- Highly stylized, like the Mannerist paintings – emphasis on style and artifice, Not naturalism

during those times.

There was another set of poets known as the Tribe of Ben. They were mostly Cavalier poets mostly influenced by the playwright and the satirist Ben Jonson. So these writers include Thomas Randolph and William Cartwright. And Herrick, Lovelace and Suckling who were part of the Cavalier poets primarily, they also belonged to the Tribe of Ben because they show certain traits of satire and pastoral poetry. They also had lot of naughty wit and elaborate conceits in their writing style.

And what made them distinct from the other set of poets during the time was their ability to give a social commentary in a polished style so that they never got into loggerheads with the,

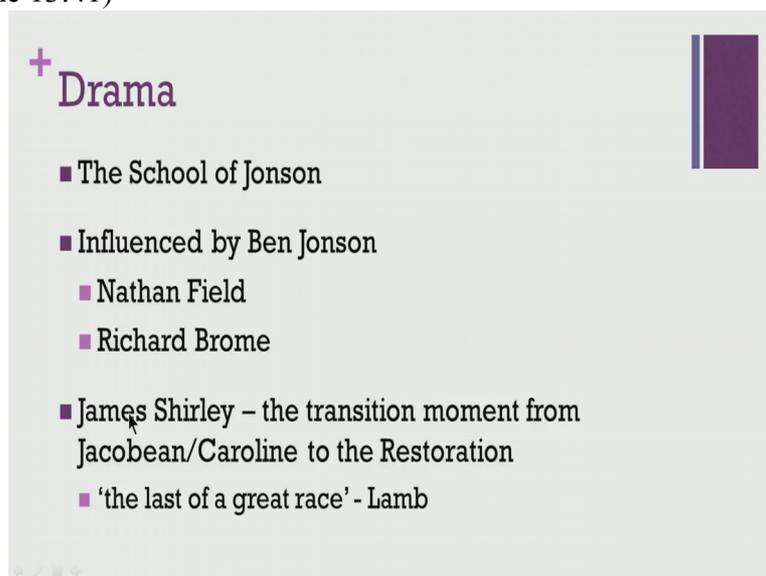
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with the authority or the rulers of those times. And their work was also highly stylized. So in that sense they were considered as the imitators of the Mannerist paintings of those times in a sense that they emphasized not the naturalist mode of depiction but they focused more on the style and artifice rather than natural kind of depiction.

And moving on, it is time to take a look at drama which really flourished in the Elizabethan and Jacobean times. We find a steady decline from the Caroline times onwards and with;

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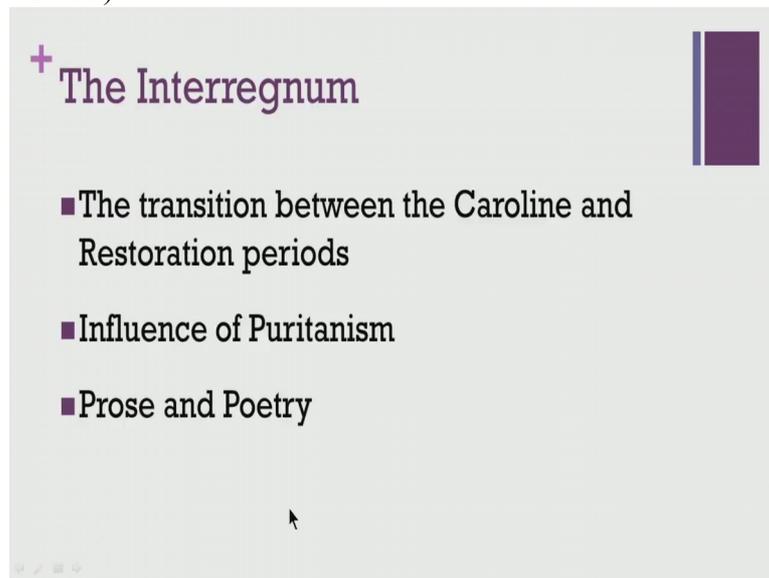


by 1642 we do find that the playhouses get closed. But however there were traces of this before the closure of theaters in 1642 and this drama was primarily comprised by a set of dramatists who were influenced by Ben Jonson. So later they were together known as

influenced by this School of Jonson though there was no particular school of thought during those times.

So two major dramatists include Nathan Field and Richard Brome; and also James Shirley whom we discussed in one of the earlier sessions, he was the one who marked the transition moment from the Jacobean Caroline times to the Restoration period. And as we noted in one of the earlier sessions, Charles Lamb also spoke about James Shirley as last of a great race.

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So now we move on to this period known as the Interregnum and the kind of poetry that existed during this time. Now we move on to this period known as the Interregnum and the kind of writings that existed during this time. The influence of Puritanism was quite dominant during these times and the ruler was Oliver Cromwell and we do find many of the writers either getting crushed under his rule or resorting to a

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different kind of poetry which would also cater to the dominant interest of the times. And it was only prose and poetry that flourished during this time and we do not find any trace of drama in any form during this period of Interregnum.

But at the same time it is important, useful to note at this point that drama does make in the Restoration times by 1660. It is only a silence of little more than a decade that completely phased out drama from England for a short time.

When we talk

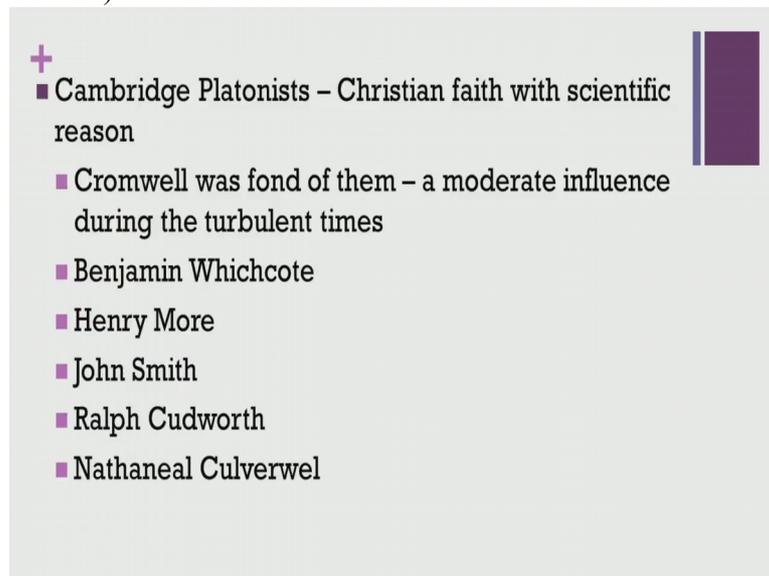
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- Dwelt excessively on moral issues, themes of virtue, duties and ethics
- Jeremy Taylor – ‘The Shakespeare of the Divines’
- Izaak Walton – *The Complete Angler, Life of John Donne*
- a self-educated shopkeeper from London
- Richard Baxter – a more moderate Puritan

about prose in the Interregnum period which is also predominantly a Puritan period, we find that prose writers wrote excessively on moral issues, on themes of virtue, duties and ethics.

Some of the important writers of this period are Jeremy Taylor who was described as the Shakespeare of the Divines and Izaak Walton who wrote *The Compleat Angler* and *Life of John Donne*. Izaak Walton's *Life of John Donne* continued to be a reference text kind of a work for a very long time. And Izaak Walton's life was very interesting because he was a self-educated shopkeeper from London. He never went to any university. And Richard Baxter, though he had a Puritan bent of mind, he was considered as a relatively more moderate compared to many other writers.

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- Cambridge Platonists – Christian faith with scientific reason
 - Cromwell was fond of them – a moderate influence during the turbulent times
 - Benjamin Whichcote
 - Henry More
 - John Smith
 - Ralph Cudworth
 - Nathaneal Culverwel

There was a set of writers known as Cambridge Platonists who knew how to blend Christian faith with scientific reason. Cromwell was also quite fond of them because they seem to induce a moderate influence during those turbulent times. Some of the prominent Cambridge Platonists were Benjamin Whichcote, Henry More, John Smith, Ralph Cudworth and Nathaniel Culverwell. So we do find that though this period was quite stifling in terms of drama, in terms of prose there were worthy things being written.

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There was a scope of discussion as long as it fell within the limits permitted by the Puritan government.

The most important writer who was

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- Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)
- *Leviathan* – the idea of absolutism
- Influenced many generations of social and political thinkers
- Influenced by Descartes (16th century French philosopher, dubbed as the Father of modern Western philosophy)
 - “I think, therefore I am”

also later renowned as philosopher was perhaps Thomas Hobbes who lived from 1588 to 1679. His work of *Leviathan* is of supreme importance and continued to be referred by philosophers and critics even today. It is about the idea of absolutism that he critiqued. And he was, he set his influence on many generations of social and political thinkers not just in England but also in the other parts of the world.

Hobbes was heavily influenced by Descartes. He was a sixteenth century French philosopher who was also dubbed as the Father of Modern Western philosophy. In that sense Hobbes began to make an English contribution to western philosophy and Descartes incidentally is more famous for this quote which continues to be quoted and misquoted "I think, therefore I am." So Hobbes was quite a significant writer of that period who

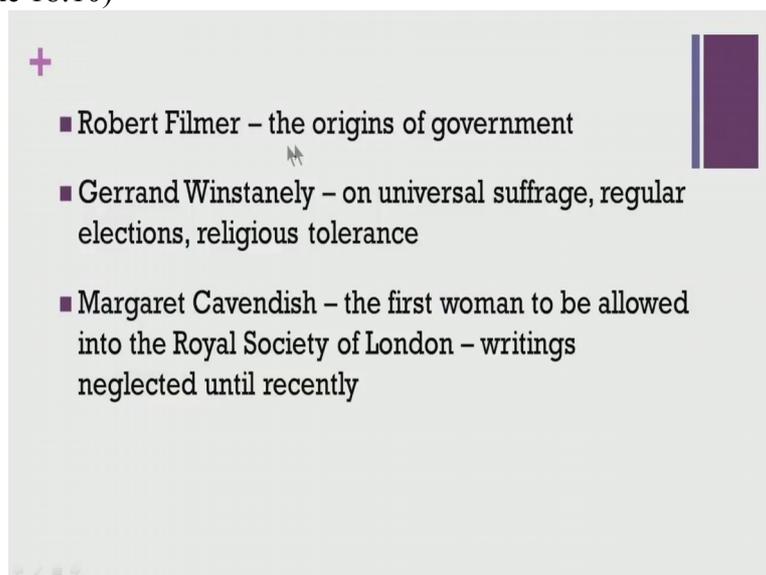
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rose to prominence beyond the times and began to define the ways in which English philosophy itself got shaped in the later period.

There was also these writers such as Robert Filmer who wrote

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a treatise on the origins of the Government, Gerrard Winstanley who, he wrote on Universal suffrage and regular elections and also about the need for religious intolerance but we, and also about the need for religious tolerance but we do not find his work becoming quite controversial or

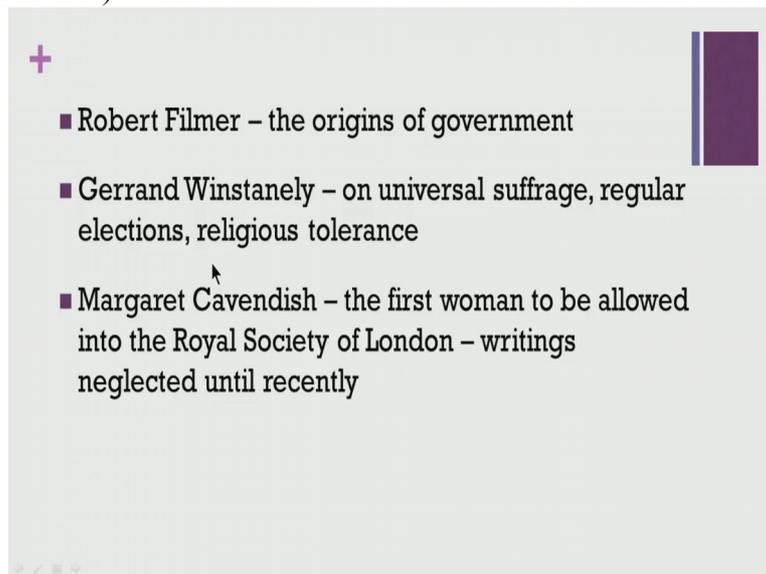
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quite significant in the, in the sense that it did not change the ways in which things were going on during that time.

And significant woman writer of this

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time was Margaret Cavendish. She incidentally was the first woman to be allowed into the Royal Society of London which gets formed in England at a later point during the rule of Charles the Second.

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Her writings which began to be published during the age of Milton were quite neglected and forgotten until about recently. May be at a later point we will also take a look at the women writers of the Renaissance period who were forgotten and who were forced to go into oblivion until recent times when there was a, there was a rewriting of literary histories and revisioning of literary histories which swept the western world from the later 1980s and early 1990s onwards.

Now we come to look at John Milton who was perhaps the greatest product of this period, the age itself gets named

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+ John Milton (1608-1674)

- The greatest product of Puritanism
- Birth – four years before Shakespeare’s retirement to Stratford – in Bread Street
 - The greatest after Shakespeare – outside Drama
- The moral and religious influences of Puritanism + the generous culture of the Renaissance
- “A lonely and dedicated figure in the 17th century English literature” – David Daiches
- “the greatest English author” – William Hayley
- Milton’s critical reception has oscillated – on account of his Republicanism

as we know as the Age of Milton. He lived from 1608 to 1674. He is considered as a greatest product of Puritanism. His birth happened to be 4 years before Shakespeare retirement to Stratford. He was born in Bread Street and he is considered as the greatest after Shakespeare outside drama. In him we find a very fine blend of the moral and religious influences of Puritanism along with the generous culture of Renaissance.

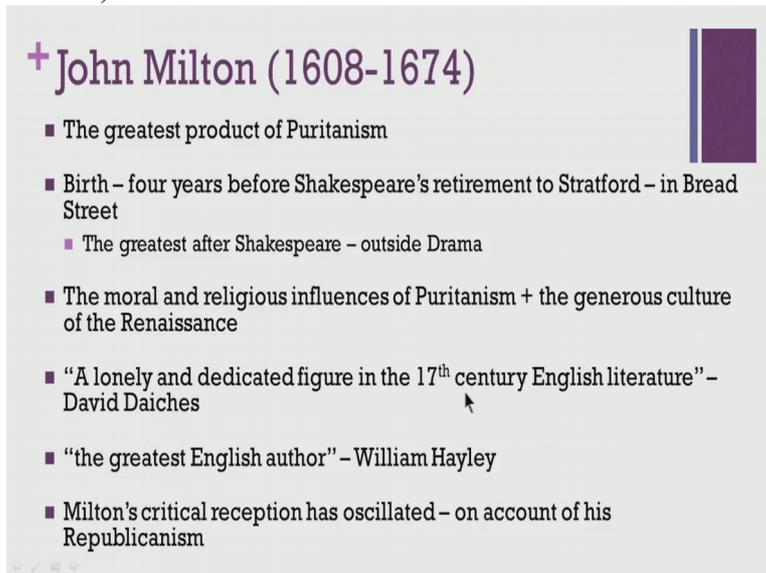
And also he is often seen as the historical surprise because one could not imagine this kind of literary genius getting produced in an Age of Puritanism which did not actively

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promote any kind of finer arts or literature.

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+ John Milton (1608-1674)

- The greatest product of Puritanism
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- “the greatest English author” – William Hayley
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And in that sense, David Daiches also refers to him as a lonely and dedicated figure in the seventeenth century English Literature. Later biographer William Hayley also talks about him as the greatest English author.

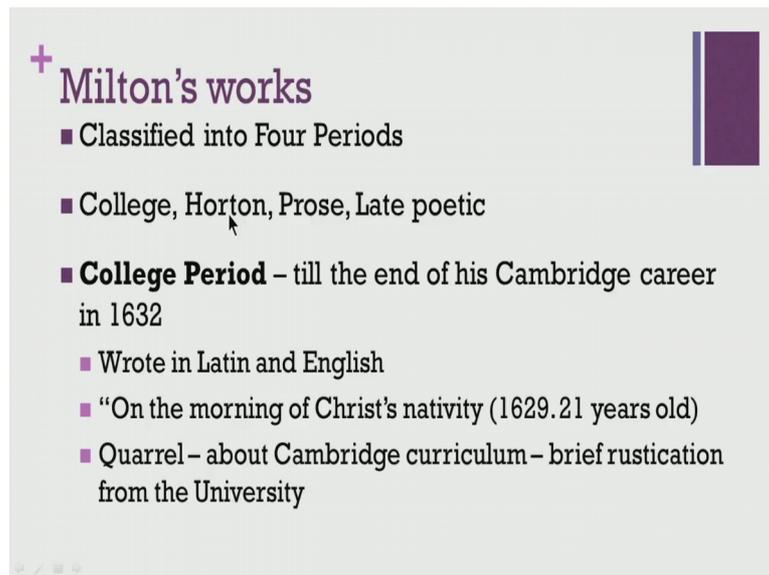
However Milton's critical literary reception has oscillated from time to time. This was because of the

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political affiliation that he had. He was predominantly a Republican. Milton's

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+ Milton's works

- Classified into Four Periods
- College, Horton, Prose, Late poetic
- **College Period** – till the end of his Cambridge career in 1632
 - Wrote in Latin and English
 - “On the morning of Christ's nativity (1629. 21 years old)
 - Quarrel – about Cambridge curriculum – brief rustication from the University

works can be classified into four periods, the College Period, the Horton period, the period of his prose writings and his Late poetic period. The College period was till the end of his Cambridge career in 1632. During this time he wrote mostly in Latin and in English. And we also find him publishing his one of his most famous poems, On the Morning of Christ's Nativity in 1629 when he was barely 21 years old.

And he was not a, he was quite an iconoclast though he was a Puritan himself. We find him quarreling with the Cambridge authorities because of certain

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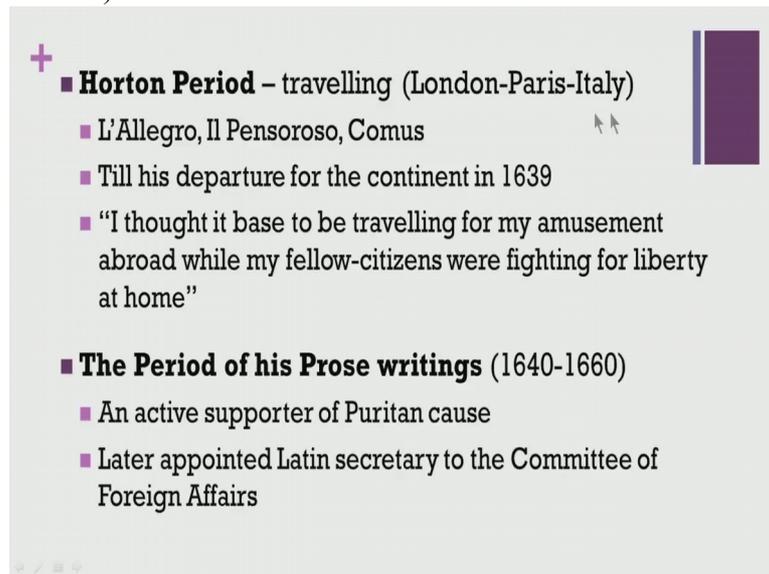


differences in curriculum and we also find him facing a brief period of rustication and he was later being reinstated as well. So right from beginning we find that there was an

unconventional personality in the making who eventually becomes the, perhaps the greatest kind of genius that the Age of Puritanism produced.

The second period was the Horton period. During this time, he was mostly travelling. We find him taking off from London and going to Paris and Italy. And he also had plans to visit Rome via Sicily

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- **Horton Period – travelling (London-Paris-Italy)**
 - L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus
 - Till his departure for the continent in 1639
 - “I thought it base to be travelling for my amusement abroad while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home”
- **The Period of his Prose writings (1640-1660)**
 - An active supporter of Puritan cause
 - Later appointed Latin secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs

and this is the time when he wrote some of his greater poems such as L'Allegro, Il Penseroso and Comus but (()) in 1639 when he decided to go to Sicily and Rome he comes to know about the kind of mishappenings back in London and he decides to come back to England. In his own words, I thought it base to be travelling for my amusement abroad while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home. So he comes back and continues to live in England till the end of his life.

And the third period was the period of his prose writing from 1640 to 1660 and this was also the time when he remained as an active supporter of the Puritan cause and later he was also appointed as the Latin Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs. So we do find him rising to a prominent position

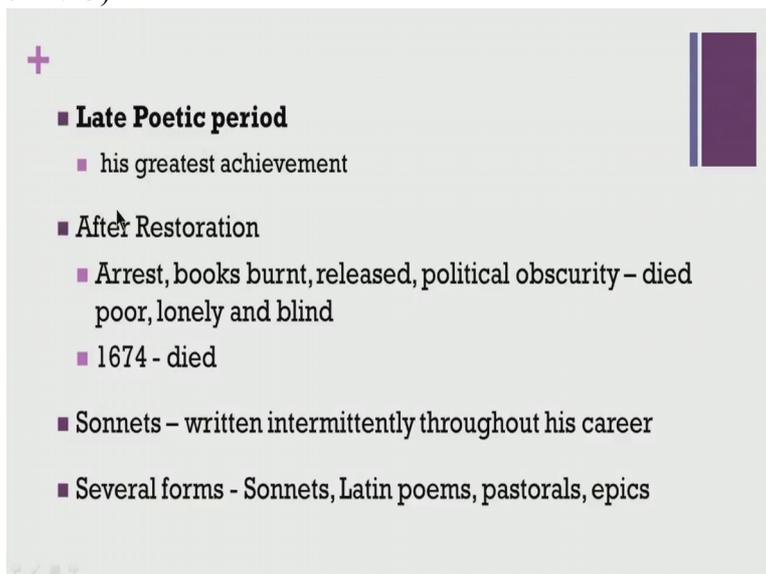
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and continuing to write during this time.

And there was this final

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period of his late, which is often known as the Late poetic period this is considered as the period of his greatest achievement when he wrote his Magnum Opus as well. And we shall come back to take a look of his works in detail. And after Restoration it was not a happy time for him.

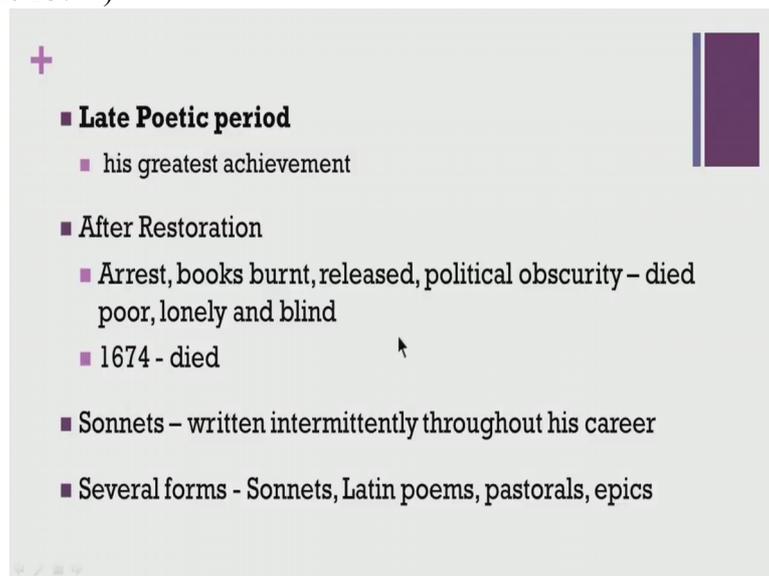
After the Restoration of monarchy in 1660 we do find the Puritans getting haunted in England and we find an impending arrest, he eventually

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gets arrested as well. His books were burnt publicly.

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He was eventually released but he was forced to move into political obscurity. We do not hear much about him but at the same time, significantly this is the time when he wrote and published

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prolifically. And some of his greatest works, such as Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained were written during this time. He is said to have died poor, lonely and blind.

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- **Late Poetic period**
 - his greatest achievement
- **After Restoration**
 - Arrest, books burnt, released, political obscurity – died poor, lonely and blind
 - 1674 - died
- **Sonnets – written intermittently throughout his career**
- **Several forms - Sonnets, Latin poems, pastorals, epics**

He died in 1674.

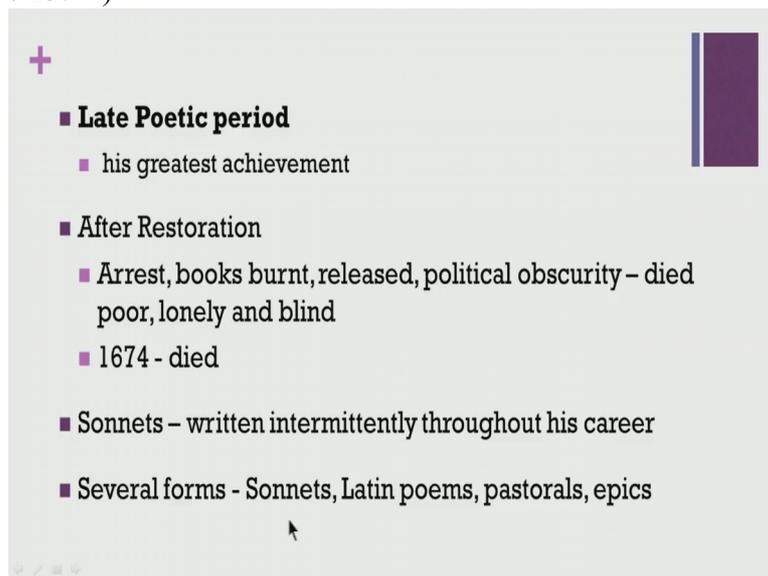
There were also sonnets that he wrote intermittently

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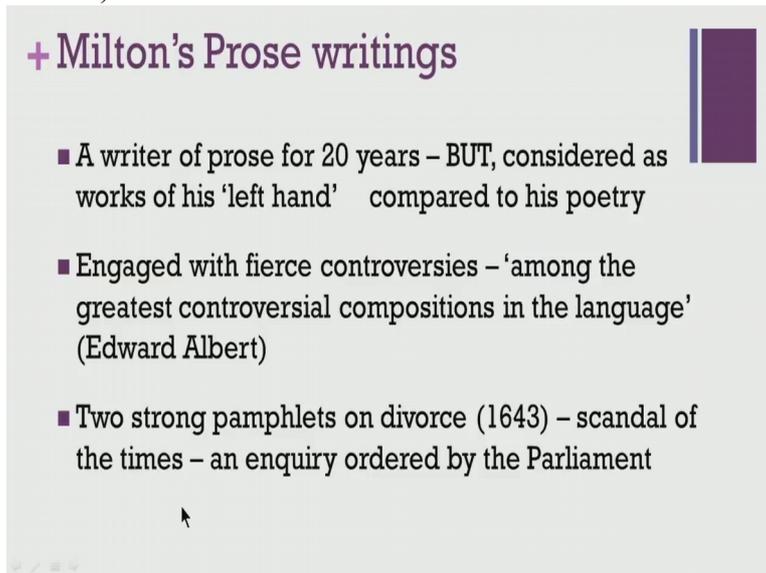
throughout his writing career. There is no particular kind of

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phase dedicated to them. He experimented with various forms, sonnets, Latin poems, pastorals and epics and he was quite successful in almost all of them.

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+ Milton's Prose writings

- A writer of prose for 20 years – BUT, considered as works of his 'left hand' compared to his poetry
- Engaged with fierce controversies – 'among the greatest controversial compositions in the language' (Edward Albert)
- Two strong pamphlets on divorce (1643) – scandal of the times – an enquiry ordered by the Parliament

Let's take a look at Milton's prose writings of the period. Milton wrote prose for about twenty years during his writing career. But these works were considered as the works of his left hand compared to his supreme genius of his poetry.

Though he was a Puritan himself, like many other poets of the time, he did not remain silent or uncontroversial during this time. We find him engaging with fierce controversies through his writings. And Edward Albert, the literary historian talks about him, classifies him among the greatest controversial compositions in the language. So in his prose writing we find him engaging with a range of things which were considered taboo and unacceptable during that time. He published two very strong pamphlets on topic of divorce. This was in 1643. These publications in form pamphlets, it because quite a controversy

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during those times and we do find the Parliament ordering an inquiry into this. However Milton remains quite unfazed and he publishes

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- *Areopagitica* (1644) - argumentative prose directed against an order of the Parliament - on pre-publication censorship
- A plea for intellectual liberty and liberty of the press - new and strange ideas for the 17th century - "he who kills a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye"
- History of Britain - 1670
- A treatise on Educational Reform (1644)
- Of Christian Doctrine - Milton's own interpretation of Christianity (pub. 1825)

Areopagitica in 1644. This is an argumentative prose directed against the order of the Parliament. Parliament had imposed a certain kind of pre-publication censorship on the writers of the times and he does oppose it quite staunchly. This work was generally considered as a plea for intellectual liberty and also for the liberty of the press. In that sense these sort of ideas against censorship, or these sort of ideas for liberty,

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these ideas about press freedom, these sort of things were quite unknown in the seventeenth century. So it became quite a normal thing and even a strange thing

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- ✦ ■ *Areopagitica* (1644) - argumentative prose directed against an order of the Parliament – on pre-publication censorship
- A plea for intellectual liberty and liberty of the press – new and strange ideas for the 17th century – “he who kills a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye”
- History of Britain – 1670
- A treatise on Educational Reform (1644)
- Of Christian Doctrine – Milton’s own interpretation of Christianity (pub. 1825)

to do in the seventeenth century.

And he had this prominent thing to say in *Areopagitica* which is oft-quoted even today, he who kills a book, he who kills a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God as it were in the eye. So we do see that Milton was a visionary and revolutionary of different kind who lived during Puritan times. He had a lot of interest in historical documents. He published the *History of Britain* in 1670. There was also a treatise on educational reforms that he published and his Christian works were also of supreme importance. There was this particular

work of Christian doctrine in which Milton wrote about his own interpretation of Christianity but however due to various

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socio-political and religious reasons and also the turbulence of the times, the work was not published until much later in 1825.

Let us take a look at Milton's greatest period ever. In this greatest period, period after Restoration when he wrote, when he was personally facing a lot of trials and difficulties,

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+ Milton's greatest period

- The Puritan in Milton had not killed the humanist in him
- The complex nature of his Christian humanist mentality
- Paradise Lost (1667 / Rev ed. 1674) – 12 book structure
 - The central purpose – to show how man's first disobedience brought sin and death – and then the divine work of redemption
 - A philosophical debate between free human will and chance – the moral consequences of disobedience – the 'fall' of Adam from a divine to a human condition

in this period we note that the Puritan in Milton had not killed the humanist in him. So we do find him articulating the complex nature of his Christian humanist mentality. And one of his best works, Paradise Lost was published during his time. One of his best works, The Paradise

Lost was published during this time, of his Late poetic period. The work was first published in 1667 and the revised edition was published in 1674. This is a compilation of two, this has a structure of, this is composed of 12 books and the central purpose of this work is to show how man's first disobedience brought sin and death to the world. And also he talks about the active divine work of Redemption in detail in Paradise Lost. And this work is also considered as the philosophical debate between free human will and chance and he also engages through the Biblical storyline the moral consequences of disobedience and also he dramatizes the fall of Adam from a divine to the human condition. The work was hugely popular then and it continues to be

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a much taught work even in the contemporary.

The second most important work of this period was

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- Paradise Regained (1671)
 - The devil's attempted temptation of Jesus Christ – an unusual move for the Puritannical age
- Samson Agonistes
 - An element of divine revenge
 - Death – as triumph and redemption
 - Christ and Samson – as examples of what humanity ought to be
 - “And calm of mind, all passion spent” – the last line

Paradise Regained which could also be considered as the continuation of Paradise Lost. This was published in 1671. So in this work he tries to dramatize and he tries to poetically present the devil's attempt to temptation of Jesus Christ. This was quite an unusual move for the, for the Puritanical age, especially for the age. This was quite an unusual move for the Puritanical age and the age that followed. We do find him rendering his own interpretation to Biblical events and that was

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hugely popular then. And even today it continues to be considered as one of the greatest works by Milton.

The third important work of this period was

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- Paradise Regained (1671)
 - The devil's attempted temptation of Jesus Christ – an unusual move for the Puritannical age
- Samson Agonistes
 - An element of divine revenge
 - Death – as triumph and redemption
 - Christ and Samson – as examples of what humanity ought to be
 - “And calm of mind, all passion spent” – the last line

Samson Agonistes. This in certain way poetically articulated the element of divine revenge and it also spoke about death in terms of triumph and also a redemption. We find him using Christ and Samson as examples of what humanity ought to be. And this is the last line of Samson Agonistes which is oft-quoted. And calm of mind all passion spent and this is perhaps the ideal kind of way in which Milton wanted to spend his life given that in the couple of years he moves to the end of his life.

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- Miltonic sublimity
- Master of 'grand style' – according to Matthew Arnold
- Blank verse – adopted for non-dramatic form of poetry – 'English heroic verse without rime'
- Intensity of Individuality – “in the presence of one whose soul was like a star, and dwelt apart”
- “Of this measure he remains our greatest master” - Hudson

Milton's work even today is much discussed and much quoted and is regarded as much worth primarily because of the sublimity of his work possessed. Not just his poetic work but also his prose had this particular quality which is now referred as Miltonic sublimity. He was a master of grand style, thus thought Mathew Arnold, a later critic and poet. And he was also

someone who experimented with blank verse and he adopted them for non-dramatic form of poetry. So he is in that sense a pioneer of English heroic verse without rhyme. There was an intensity of individuality that we find in John Milton and this is all the more evident in the fact that he lived during a very turbulent time. He lived under a Puritanical rule. He himself was a believer of the Puritanism

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but we do not find that shadowing his work in any way. In fact he knows how to make use of all those influences and then convert them into a perfect literary genius.

Hudson talks about him in a particularly complimentary way. He says

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 - Miltonic sublimity
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 - Blank verse – adopted for non-dramatic form of poetry – 'English heroic verse without rime'
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 - “Of this measure he remains our greatest master” - Hudson

in the presence of one whose soul was like a star and dwelt apart. This is what many historians also later agreed when they talked about John Milton. So we wind up today's lecture with this assertion and we agree with Hudson that of this measure, he remains our greatest Master. So we come to an end of

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our discussion of the various literary forms and the various artistic forms of the Age of Milton and we also come to an end of a particular phase in English Literary period, the end of English Renaissance altogether. And we also find that though the period had begun with much pomp and show with the Elizabethan time, towards the end of this period just before Restoration England had gone through a lot of turbulence, a lot of political uncertainty and violence and it was merely a shadow of what it had begun with. And in that sense Milton also offers a ray of hope, a sense of continuity that English Literature could not be, that English Literature could not be forgotten but it would continue to live even into the posterity in spite of the political and social changes that overtook England. So with this we come to an end of this lecture. Thank you for listening and we look forward to seeing you in the next session.