The Seventeenth Century and the Metaphysical School of Poetry:

A century after the dominance of the Elizabethan era, a refined, a more provocative lyric poetry movement swept England with greater depth in its verse. Learning, oddity and overabundance define the poetic character of the age. The Metaphysical School of Poetry of the 17th century which immediately followed the wane of Elizabethan is a departure from the primarily religious poetry. The poetry of the era was marked by excess, exuberance and a relishing of conceit. The term ‘metaphysical’ came from Dryden who described the poetry of John Donne as ‘affecting the metaphysics’. However, the term ‘metaphysical poets’ was coined by Dr. Johnson who applied the term to describe a loose group of English lyric poets of the 17th century. Metaphysical poetry is a term applied to the poetry written by Donne, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan and other 17th century English poets, who are distinguished by ingenuity, intellectuality and sometimes obscurity. The metaphysical poetry is characterized by its intellectual and unconventional use of language. The Metaphysical poets wrote both secular and religious poetry. While the secular poetry deals with the experience of contemporary voyages and discoveries, theories of humanists and scientists the religious verse deals with the contemporary religious debate, questions of faith and spiritual allegiance. The Metaphysical poetry is a combination of two diverse elements—intellect and emotion. The themes occupying the Metaphysical poetry range from serious philosophical issues to common ones as love and death. Metaphysical poetry of the 17th century is characterized by a strong dependence on irony and paradox. Metaphysical poets worked on the Elizabethan symbols and developed a tested device called conceit. Conceit, which is known as a complex and interesting metaphor, was used to draw comparisons between two elements, which could not be conventionally associated together. The 17th century saw a group of poets who were greatly influenced by Ben Jonson. In older term, they were known as ‘Tribe of Ben’ or ‘Sons of Ben’. Ben Jonson left the Elizabethan sonnet and started new genres like epigram and satire, which were cultivated by the Cavalier poets. etc.