

Chapter 1 : Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry

"Metaphysical Poets" is a term coined by poet & critic Samuel Johnson, who describes a loose group of English lyric poets of the 17th century. Read this article to know about the meaning of Metaphysical Poetry, its main characteristics and the Metaphysical Poets, John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Herbert.

This does not necessarily imply that he intended metaphysical to be used in its true sense, in that he was probably referring to a witticism of John Dryden, who said of John Donne: He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love. Cowley has copied him to a fault. The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and, to show their learning was their whole endeavour; but, unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry, they only wrote verses, and, very often, such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtilty surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased. Cowley himself, John Donne and John Cleveland, which is hardly sufficient for such a blanket condemnation. John Dryden had already satirised the Baroque taste for them in his *Mac Flecknoe* and Joseph Addison, in quoting him, singled out the poetry of George Herbert as providing a flagrant example. For him it begins with a break with the formerly artificial style of their antecedents to one free from poetic diction or conventions. It was from the use of conceits particularly that the writing of these European counterparts was known, *Concettismo* in Italian, *Conceptismo* in Spanish. The European dimension of the Catholic poets Crashaw and Southwell has been commented on by others. The use of conceits was common not only across the Continent, but also elsewhere in England among the Cavalier poets, including such elegists of Donne as Carew and Godolphin. Another striking example occurs in Baroque poems celebrating "black beauty", built on the opposition between the norm of feminine beauty and instances that challenge that commonplace. But English writing goes further by employing ideas and images derived from contemporary scientific or geographical discoveries to examine religious and moral questions, often with an element of casuistry. Stylistic echoes [edit] Long before it was so-named, the Metaphysical poetic approach was an available model for others outside the interlinking networks of 17th century writers, especially young men who had yet to settle for a particular voice. The poems written by John Milton while still at university are a case in point and include some that were among his earliest published work, well before their inclusion in his *Poems*. He had yet to enter university when he contributed a poem on the death of Henry Lord Hastings to the many other tributes published in *Lachrymae Musarum*. The choice of style by the young Milton and the young Dryden can therefore be explained in part as contextual. Both went on to develop radically different ways of writing; neither could be counted as potentially Metaphysical poets. Nor could Alexander Pope, yet his early poetry evidences an interest in his Metaphysical forebears. Among his juvenilia appear imitations of Cowley. While comprehensive, her selection, as Burrow remarks, so dilutes the style as to make it "virtually coextensive with seventeenth-century poetry". Eliot did much to establish the importance of the school, both through his critical writing and by applying their method in his own work. Alvarez was commenting that "it may perhaps be a little late in the day to be writing about the Metaphysicals. The great vogue for Donne passed with the passing of the Anglo-American experimental movement in modern poetry. Since the 1930s, therefore, it has been argued that gathering all of these under the heading of Baroque poets would be more helpfully inclusive. In Alvarez proposed an alternative approach in a series of lectures eventually published as *The School of Donne*. This was to look at the practice and self-definition of the circle of friends about Donne, who were the recipients of many of his verse letters. They were a group of some fifteen young professionals with an interest in poetry, many of them poets themselves although, like Donne for much of his life, few of them published their work. Uncertain ascriptions resulted in some poems from their fraternity being ascribed to Donne by later editors.

Among them were Lord Herbert of Cherbury and his brother George, whose mother Magdalen was another recipient of verse letters by Donne. Eventually George Herbert, Henry Vaughan and Richard Crashaw, all of whom knew each other, took up the religious life and extended their formerly secular approach into this new area. A later generation of Metaphysical poets, writing during the Commonwealth, became increasingly more formulaic and lacking in vitality. What all had in common, according to Alvarez, was esteem, not for metaphysics but for intelligence. It begins with the rough versification of the satires written by Donne and others in his circle such as Everard Gilpin and John Roe. Later it modulates into the thoughtful religious poems of the next generation with their exclamatory or conversational openings and their sense of the mind playing over the subject and examining it from all sides. On the death of Donne, it is natural that his friend Edward Herbert should write him an elegy full of high-flown and exaggerated Metaphysical logic. Henry Wotton, on the other hand, is not remembered as a writer at all, but instead for his public career. Though the poems were often cast in a suitably Metaphysical style, half were written by fellow clergymen, few of whom are remembered for their poetry. Among those who were were Henry King and Jasper Mayne, who was soon to quit authorship for clerical orders. They also served as courtiers, as did another contributor, Endymion Porter. In addition, Carew had been in the service of Edward Herbert. He had friends within the Great Tew Circle but at the time of his elegy was working as a researcher for Henry Wotton, who intended writing a life of the poet. A life of George Herbert followed them in. And once the poetic style had been launched, its tone and approach remained available as a model for later writers who might not necessarily commit themselves so wholly to it. Later additions[edit] Late additions to the Metaphysical canon have included sacred poets of both England and America who had been virtually unknown for centuries. John Norris was better known as a Platonist philosopher. The work of Edward Taylor, who is now counted as the outstanding English-language poet of North America, was only discovered in

Chapter 2 : Characteristics Of Metaphysical Poetry

Metaphysical poetry was a product of the popularisation of the study of mental phenomena. Ethics having been eclipsed by psychology, we accept the belief that any state of mind is extremely complex, and chiefly composed of odds and ends in constant flux manipulated by desire and fear.

Metaphysical poetry is concerned with the whole experience of man. Metaphysical poems are lyric poems characterised by use of wit, irony and wordplay. Wit and conceit were both aspects of a mental set shared by writers looking for connections between things. As well as manipulation of ideas, wit could be displayed in verbal expression. Conceit is a poetic idea, usually a metaphor. There can be conventional ideas, where there are expected metaphors. It is an idea or concept expressed in a unusual way. Typical metaphysical conceits come from a wide variety of areas of knowledge: The Metaphysical Poets are known for their ability to surprise or frighten the reader and show new perspective through paradoxical images, not very strong arguments, inventive syntax and descriptions art, philosophy and religion using a metaphor known as a conceit. John Donne was known as the founder of the Metaphysical Poets. He was born in London. Donne focused his work around highly concentrated images which often involved a dramatic contrast or it is noticeable for its hard intellectualism. Donne liked to twist and to change not only images and ideas, but also traditional rhythmic and stanzaic patterns. Although later sonneters like William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson play with the Petrarchian tradition, the first significant change in the genre occurred at the end of 16th century, when religion gradually displaced love as the main theme of the sonnet. John Donne was the first to express and develop the expression of religious faith. In his Holy Sonnets he explores his obsessions with death and salvation. These poems are marked by the same intensity, the same combination of passion and argument that can be found in Songs and Sonnets, but the object of the passion has changed now. In his Holy Sonnets Donne investigates issues of eternity but also sin, repentance and death are things that have always forced people to examine their faith. In fact Donne is unusual, if not unique, for him courtly love hardly appears in his poetry at all. The courtly love poet always express the same experience of love, the range of situations and motions who deal with being very limited. In contrast Donne expresses an enormously wide range of feelings in his Songs and Sonnets, all relating to the experience of real love. In these poems we are also confronted by the war between the body and soul. The metaphysical style expresses a sense of the tensions between matter and spirit, faith and reason. However he also saw the necessity of realising that love is personal not merely spiritual relationship. A closer look at the poem tells us that this suitor is actually arguing with his lady. The poet ask his mistress to notice only this flea and to forget everything else. The flea has bitten them both, and their bloods mix within its body: The attention paid to the qualities of blood may be noted here and later in the poem. The mixing of bloods is something like offence to the lady, if she is of royal blood and he is not. The flea becomes a symbol of the world in which the lovers wishes are realized. If the flea is pregnant with their blood child, then the lady may as well be pregnant too. Now that this has been established between the blood of the woman and the flea and if the lady would kill the flea, it would be a kind of suicide. So to kill this flea, the woman would have to commit murder. By killing the flea whom the poet gave such strange metaphors, the lady destroys the symbolic world the poet has built and brought them both back to reality. So she has committed the sin that destroy the union of their blood. So the act could only be committed symbolically, within the body of a flea. If such a union of the poet to his lady can be realized in the flea, then let the flea become the entire world, so that their love can be reality. The Good-Morrow details his feelings about one of his loves. It is about love in the highest order. He starts the poem by saying that anything they think, they love before was just an illusion. This love is the real thing and makes all other loves insignificant. In the second stanza, Donne says that the room that he and his love share is everything, and everywhere. There is no life beyond the walls of their room, because they are the only two things that matter in the entire world. What Donne sees is his own image reflected in her eyes, just as she sees her image in his eyes. Where can we find two better hemispheres Without sharp North, without declining West? Their world is better than the world outside of where they are. Donne then goes to say that if they love each other equally, then their love will

never die.

Chapter 3 : A Brief Guide to Metaphysical Poets | Academy of American Poets

» THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE METAPHYSICAL POETRY ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN DONNE The term "metaphysical poetry" is used to describe a certain type of 17th century poetry.

Jacobean Poetry Cavalier Poetry They were the members of the aristocracy. They got their name from the supporters of King Charles-I in the 17th century, who was later executed as a result of civil war. They were known as Royalists. The other poets of this group lived at the court of Charles-I. They favored the king and the court party as against the Puritans and the Parliament but they did not use their poetry, as a means of propaganda against the foes of the king. They kept their royalism away from their poetry. They were lyrical poets and chiefly dealt with love, beauty, and war. With the exception of Robert Herrick, who wrote both religious and secular poems, the other Cavalier poets dealt only with secular themes. They derived from Ben Jonson, the clarity and lucidity of expression, control of emotions and sophistication of tone. Under the influence of Donne, they used a conversational tone, metaphysical conceits etc. Thus both Ben Jonson and John Donne were their role models. Cavalier lyricists did not write as professionals for publicity. They wrote carelessly and their poetry was immature. They used direct language in the poetry which expressed a highly individualistic personality. In more detail, the Cavaliers, while writing, accepted the idea of the Renaissance Read more about Renaissance Poetry. They avoided the subject of religion , apart from making one or two graceful speeches. They avoided discovering the depths of the soul. Many poems favour living in moments and are often erotic in nature. Moreover, as Cavalier poets were aristocrats, Cavalier poetry focuses on the cultural life that aristocrats led. The tone of Cavalier poetry is light. It focuses on eroticism and matters of culture. Cavalier poetry is often written from the perspective of a military or aristocratic person, giving it a graceful flair. You may also like:

Chapter 4 : One of the Main Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry Essay “ Free Papers and Essays Ex

Metaphysical Poetry: Much More Than Wit The two main views of metaphysical poetry, as composed by poets A.E. Housman and T.S. Eliot, are vastly different. Eliot's view of metaphysical poetry is a very positive and respectful one.

November 11, What is Metaphysical Poetry? The term metaphysical or metaphysics in poetry is the fruit of renaissance tree, becoming over ripe and approaching pure science. Metaphysical poetry means poetry that goes beyond the physical world of the senses and explores the spiritual world. Metaphysical poetry began early in the Jacobean age in the last stage of the age of Shakespeare. John Donne was the leader and founder of the metaphysical school of poetry. Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry 1 Dramatic manner and direct tone of speech is one of the main characteristics of metaphysical poetry. In his all poems, the reader is held to one idea or line of argument. He continues with the theme without digression. Nothing is described in detail nor is any word wasted. There is a wiry strength in the style. Though the verse forms are usually simple, they are always suitable in enforcing the sense of the poem. Donne often uses fantastic comparisons. So, here we find various allusions and images relating to practicality all areas of nature and art and learning-- to medicine, cosmology, contemporary discoveries, ancient myth, history, law and art. Though every lyric arises out of some emotional situation, the emotion is not merely expressed, rather it is analyzed. Often Donne speaks of the soul and of spiritual love. Donne also uses this in his poems. This is especially apparent in the abrupt, dramatic and conversational opening of many of his poems. These poems reacted against the cloying sweetness and harmony of the Elizabethan Poetry. They deliberately avoided conventional poetic expression. They employed very prosaic words, if they were scientists or shopkeepers. Thus, we find, in their poetic works, rugged and unpoetic words. Their versification and their dictions are usually coarse and jerky. It is often hard to find natural grace in metaphysical writing, abounding in artificiality of thought and hyperbolic expression. Therefore, so far we discussed the salient features of metaphysical poetry, it is proved that John Donne is a great metaphysical poet. You may also like:

Chapter 5 : Metaphysical Poetry Characteristics | English Summary

The term "metaphysical poetry" was not a term used by Donne or by his contemporaries when referring to poems by him or other poets of his time. The term was first used, when referring to Donne.

Obscurity in Metaphysical Poetry Metaphysical poetry is considered highly ambiguous and obscure due to high intellect and knowledge of the metaphysical poets. Their poetry is greatly challenging to understand at first reading. It needs deep concentration and full attention to get to the roots of the matter. Ben Jonson was of the view about the future of John Donne that his popularity would not live longer because of his inability to reveal himself to the reader openly.

Brevity in Metaphysical Poetry Metaphysical poetry is considered to be highly terse and concise in the history of poetry. These poems are very brief and short in length. Every line conveys a lot of meaning in very few words. There is no waste of words. Every word is adjusted in every line like a brick in a wall. Nothing is superfluous and spare. Every word has its own function and conveys the message of the author. Metaphysical poetry is like the essays of Bacon in brevity and conciseness in the history of English literature.

*I am two fools, I know, For loving, and for saying
In whining poetry. Their poetry is a vast collection of maxims and sayings. His poetry is replete with numerous maxims. Look at the following lines from his poetry and conclude yourself how epigrammatic these are:*

*And swear Lives a woman true, and fair.
Go and catch a falling star
By John Donne
As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
The breath goes now, and some say no.*

Source Metaphysical Conceits A significant feature of Metaphysical Poetry is the use of metaphysical conceits. It is a unique quality of Metaphysical Poetry. Conceit is a far-fetched comparison of two dissimilar things, which have very little in common. Metaphysical poetry is brimming with metaphysical conceits. According to him, Unified Sensibility implies fusion of thoughts and feelings together. In the history of English Literature, either poets laid great emphasis on intellect, reason, thinking or feelings and emotions. This separation of reason and feeling is called Dissociation of Sensibility. We are all aware of the fact that in the Age of Pope, poets tried to set aside their emotions and wrote poetry purely a product of their reason and intellect. On the other hand, fusion of thoughts and feelings is called unification of sensibility. Unification of Sensibility is the most imperative feature of Metaphysical Poetry. They tried their best to fuse them together. Their poetry indicates an amazing amalgam spiritual and physical, ethereal and earthly, abstract and concrete, thoughts and emotions. This feature is also called juxtaposition of opposite things. That is why their poetry is difficult to understand. Their love for philosophy has a prodigious impact on their poetry. Metaphysical poets reacted against the traditional diction of the poets. They employed their own diction in their poetry. They mostly used informal language instead of formal, dignified and sublime language like Milton in their poetry. They tried to use colloquial language.

The Canonization by John Donne Poll What differentiates metaphysical poetry from other kinds of poetry:

Chapter 6 : The main features of the metaphysical poetry illustrated by john donne Essay Example | Gradu

The main features of the metaphysical poetry illustrated by john donne Essay. The term "metaphysical poetry" is used to describe a certain type of 17th century poetry - The main features of the metaphysical poetry illustrated by john donne Essay introduction.

Courtly Love A name later ascribed to poets who dealt with subjects concerning the abstract in concrete terms. They use logic to explain the inexplicable. Literally, metaphysical means to transcend above or beyond the physical or concrete. The age objects to the heroic and sublime, and it objects to the simplification and separation of the mental faculties. Metaphysical poetry was a product of the popularisation of the study of mental phenomena. Ethics having been eclipsed by psychology, we accept the belief that any state of mind is extremely complex, and chiefly composed of odds and ends in constant flux manipulated by desire and fear. The range of his feeling was great, but no more remarkable than its unity. He was altogether present in every thought and in every feeling. What is true of his mind is true, in different terms, of his language and versification. A style, a rhythm, to be significant, must embody a significant mind, must be produced by the necessity of a new form for a new content. May just be a bit of meaningless literary jargon. Argumentative using logic, syllogisms or paradox in persuasion. Concentrated complex and difficult thought Dramatic, with abrupt aggressive opening but modulating tones. All metaphysical poets attempt to transcend the physical sphere in order to gain perspective or vision. Metaphysical poets attempt to explain the emotional and spiritual elements of life in concrete, rational and logical terms. They attempt to define our sentiments by logical syllogisms or in scientific terms. In *The Canonisation*, Donne compares the relationship between lovers to: Insects, candles, the eagle and the dove, and to the Phoenix. Puns, quibbles and double meanings were favorites of all Elizabethans. Antithesis is also popular. Donne used a great deal of specialized knowledge in his poetry. He, like Hamlet was an eclectic Renaissance scholar.

Chapter 7 : Metaphysical Poet Essay Example | Graduateway

Metaphysical poetry is a little bit different. The poems classified in this group do share common characteristics: they are all highly intellectualized, use rather strange imagery, use frequent paradox and contain extremely complicated thought.

It is also called unification of sensibility. Usually, we find only passion and feelings in most of the poetry in the history of English literature. There is no one, except John Donne and metaphysical poets, who has combined passion and thoughts in his poetry. This unique blending of passion and reason can be found in every poem of John Donne. For example, in A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning, he convinces his wife not to mourn at their temporary separation as they are just like the legs of a compass. He compares his wife to the standing leg of the compass, while he is just like the rotating leg, which will ultimately come close to the standing leg. He wants to convey that ultimately he will come to her. In this beautiful conceit, an idea, though having no emotional bearing in this context, has been expounded to show his love for his wife. Thus, there is a fusion of thought and feelings in this poem. Most of the poems of John Donne show usage of colloquial language. He uses direct and common phrases to startle his reader. Though, he is famous for ambiguity of his thoughts, yet in some cases, he is very simple and does not use any complicated language. Look at the beginning lines of The Canonization, which shows how beautifully he has used colloquial language: Metaphysical conceit is a conceit What is a conceit? Definition of a conceit? He is widely known for using complicated conceits and images in his poetry. And though it in the center sit, Yet, when the other far doth roam, It leans, and hearkens after it, And grows erect, as that comes home. John Donne is considered as the Monarch of Wit in the history of English literature. His wit not only pleases us but also startles us how he handles the words to convey his ideas. John Donne was gifted with such a command of language that he could say a lot in very few words unlike other poets of his age. Many of his lines have become sayings of the day. Look at the following lines, which show how he has conveyed an idea into very few words: And swear Lives a woman true, and fair. This obscurity and ambiguity has led him to be regarded as the most difficult poet to be understood. Frequent reading of his poems is required to get to the root of the poem. How shall we approach him? In many of his poems, he considers love as a spiritual entity not a lust. But he who loveliness within Hath found, all outward loathes, For he who color loves, and skin, Loves but their oldest clothes.

Chapter 8 : Features Of Metaphysical Poetry

Metaphysical poetry is a little bit different. The poems classified in this group do share common characteristics: they are all highly intellectualized, use rather strange imagery, use frequent.

Chapter 9 : Characteristics of John Donne's Poetry | HubPages

A significant feature of Metaphysical Poetry is the use of metaphysical conceits. It is a unique quality of Metaphysical Poetry. Conceit is a far-fetched comparison of two dissimilar things, which have very little in common.