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George Herbert (1593-1633) is one of the most celebrated Metaphysical poets. Metaphysical poets, such as John Donne, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell, are known for their intellectual depth, use of wit, and blending of the physical and spiritual worlds in their poetry. These poets are distinguished by their ability to explore complex themes—love, faith, life, and death—using striking imagery, paradoxes, and extended metaphors (conceits). Herbert's poetry reflects these traits beautifully.

Intellectual Depth and Religious Themes: One of the hallmarks of Metaphysical poetry is its intellectual exploration of profound themes. Herbert's poems often focus on religious devotion and inner conflict. In *"The Collar,"* Herbert questions the burden of faith, writing:

*I struck the board, and cried, 'No more;
I will abroad!'*

Here, the speaker expresses rebellion against the constraints/burden of faith, but the poem ends with a quiet surrender to God:

*"Child!"
And I replied, "My Lord."*

This emotional and intellectual journey from doubt to submission is characteristic of Metaphysical poets, who often probe deeply into human and divine relationships.

Use of Conceits: A defining feature of Metaphysical poetry is the use of conceits. Conceits are elaborate extended metaphors that connect seemingly unrelated ideas. In *"The Pulley,"* Herbert uses the image of a pulley to describe humanity's restlessness as a divine mechanism to draw people closer to God:

*Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast.*

This metaphor emphasizes the connection between human restlessness and spiritual fulfillment. Such creative and thought-provoking conceits are central to Metaphysical poetry.

Fusion of Physical and Spiritual: Metaphysical poets often blend the physical and spiritual worlds in their work. They make abstract ideas tangible through vivid imagery. In “*Easter Wings*,” Herbert’s use of the visual shape of the poem as wings reflects the theme of spiritual ascent. Herbert uses the image of wings to symbolize rising above suffering. He prays to God to let him rise above suffering. He desires closeness to God. As seen in the following lines:

*With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,*

Here, the poet suggests that through devotion to God, one can overcome suffering and find spiritual freedom and redemption.

Wit and Paradoxes: Herbert’s poetry also contains the wit and paradoxes typical of Metaphysical poets. In “*The Pulley*,” God withholds the gift of “**rest**” to ensure humanity remains connected to Him. This idea creates a paradox: restlessness, a seeming flaw, becomes a divine blessing. Similarly, in “*The Collar*,” Herbert turns rebellion into an act of faith, as the speaker’s defiance ultimately leads to submission. Herbert ends this poem with the following lines of submission to God:

*Methought I heard one calling, Child!
And I replied My Lord.*

Emotional Intensity:

Metaphysical poetry often carries an intense emotional weight. Their works reflect the poet’s personal struggles. Herbert’s works are deeply reflective of his life as a priest and his spiritual challenges. In

"The Collar,"

the speaker feels the weight/burden of priestly duties and laments his lack of worldly pleasures:

Sure there was wine

Before my sighs did dry it; there was corn

Before my tears did drown it.

Yet, this personal lament transitions into a realization of divine love.

In conclusion, George Herbert embodies the qualities of a Metaphysical poet through his intellectual exploration of religious themes, use of conceits, blending of physical and spiritual worlds, and personal reflections. Works like *"Easter Wings," "The Collar,"* and *"The Pulley"* highlight his mastery of this style, making Herbert a defining figure in the Metaphysical tradition.