

Trace metaphysical qualities in Donne's poetry

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Mention and analyze metaphysical traits in Donne's poetry.

Or, Trace metaphysical qualities in Donne's poetry.

Or, Evaluate Donne as a metaphysical love and religious poet.

Or, Write about how Donne's treatment of love in his poems is metaphysical. [NU. 2018, 2017, 2016]

The word "meta" means beyond/after. So, metaphysical means "beyond the physical." This means metaphysical poetry deals with spiritual themes like love, death, God, religion, etc. Metaphysical poems are full of wit, conceits, passion/emotion, and logical arguments.

John Donne (1572-1631) is considered to be the pioneer and most prominent metaphysical poet. Here we will see the main features (traits) of metaphysical poetry and how Donne uses them in his poems.

Spiritual Themes: Metaphysical poetry deals with spiritual themes like love, God, death, religion, etc. Donne's most famous metaphysical poems are about love. For example, Donne celebrates the spiritual love between him and his beloved in "*A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*." Here, he compares the two lovers to the two feet of a drawing compass. This is to show that their souls are always connected. "*Batter My Heart*" is another metaphysical poem. This poem deals with God and religion. In this poem, Donne expresses how much he wants to return to God. He says,

"I, like an usurp'd town to another due"

This means his soul is like a town taken by the enemy (Satan), and he needs God to rescue him. Moreover, in

"Death, Be Not Proud,"

Donne compares Death to a short sleep. So, Donne is a metaphysical love and religious poet for these spiritual themes.

Use of Conceit: One of the main traits of metaphysical poetry is the use of conceit. A conceit is a strange and far-fetched comparison between two very different things. These clever comparisons make Donne's poems surprising and interesting. We find a famous example in his poem *"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."* In this poem, Donne compares the two lovers to the two feet of a drawing compass. He writes:

*"If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;"*

One foot of the compass stands still, and the other moves, but they stay connected. This conceit shows that even when lovers are far, their souls are still united.

Blend of Passion and Thought: Metaphysical poems are full of deep passion and logical thought/arguments. We can find this in Donne's love poem *"The Sun Rising."* Here, the speaker is angry and scolds the sun for disturbing him and his lover early in the morning. He says:

"Busy old fool, unruly sun."

He does this to express his strong passion for his beloved. At the same time, he uses argument and logic. He says that lovers can enjoy their time whenever they want. They do not have to follow the sun or maintain a routine. He writes:

"Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime"

This means things like seasons or climate are not important in love. Thus, this becomes a beautiful blend of passion and thought.

Use of Wit: Metaphysical poems are full of witty remarks. Wit is the ability to say or write things that are clever and usually funny. Donne's wit makes his poems entertaining. In *"Death, Be Not Proud,"* he says Death should not be proud because it is not powerful. Death is like a peaceful sleep. Our souls wake eternally after this short sleep.

"One short sleep past, we wake eternally"

This is a very witty remark. Donne ends the poem even more funnily, by telling Death to die:

“Death, thou shalt die.”

Language and Form: Metaphysical poetry has a direct tone, colloquial language, and varied verse forms. We find all these qualities in Donne’s poems. He often uses everyday language and a casual, argumentative tone. For example, he begins *“The Canonization”* with this line:

“For God’s sake hold your tongue, and let me love”

This is like an everyday conversation in an argumentative tone. Here, the speaker is an aged lover. He is trying to say people should not disturb or insult him for loving.

In fine, John Donne’s poetry is rich with metaphysical qualities. His poems are famous and entertaining for his use of conceit, wit, passion, and logical thoughts. Donne’s metaphysical style leads the way for many great metaphysical poets.