

English literature the metaphysical poets assignment

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This paper is composed of three sections and a conclusion that brings about the endings of the study. Section One: is introductory to metaphysical poetry in general. Its major features, major representatives in addition to some critics' viewpoints concerning it. Section Two: sheds light on the deep roots of the conceit in the history of the classical and English literature. Section Three: tackles the metaphysical conceit in English literature with reference to certain poetic examples that are still in mind up-to-date. Conclusion : sums-up the findings of the study

1. : Introduction Metaphysical poetry is a poetic mode, which appeared during the seventeenth century led by John Donne and succeeded by several other poets as George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan and Richard Crashaw. Those poets shared a philosophical point of view and strongly opposed the mode of the idealized human nature and of physical love which was a tradition in Elizabethan poetry (Abrams: 1999, up 58) At the beginning the name of this school was intended to be derogatory expressing the opposition and hard criticism that it received.

Ben Jonson said: " Donne deserved hanging because he had run roughshod over the conventional rhythm and imagery smoothness of the Elizabethan poetry". ([http://spider, Geochronology/www. Metaphysical. Com, p. Off](http://spider.geochronology/www.metaphysical.com)) The Metaphysical poets were more interested in the ideas of things rather than their observations. Their poetry was a rebellion against the conventions of style. It sought depth in thinking in addressing the intellect of the reader.

Dryden thinks that" Donne perplexes the mind of the fair sex with nice philosophic speculations when he should engage their hearts and entertain them with softness". (Enriching: 1962, p. 50) Samuel Johnson, on the other <https://assignbuster.com/english-literature-the-metaphysical-poets-assignment/>

hand, adopted a criticizing and antagonistic attitude Metaphysical poetry that he even never named it but only referred to it as “ the strong-lined” school of Done. (Ibid).

In his poem “ An Essay on Criticism” Alexander Pope attacks deeply the Metaphysic poets of the seventeenth century because they ignore the rules of the forefathers; spite of that, it is difficult to neglect the proficiency of this poetic form which linked between matter and Metaphysical poetry is characterized by its thorough use of puns, allegories and conceits mixed-up with the ordinary speech It is characterized by its exaltation of wit which meant “ nimbleness of thought” at that time. (Ibid: pop).

The terminologies used by those poets were drawn from barrio fields of knowledge because they exposed their high education and wide range of information in the poems which revealed their deep faith or in the love poems that glorified the Neo-Platonic concept of ideal love that overcomes sensuousness and physical beauty, implying a psychology of realism in depicting the tension of love. In his essay on the Metaphysical poets, T. S. Eliot asserts that they used the conceit a prominent tool to challenge imagery, in order to stimulate both emotions and intellects.

They aimed at expressing their highly passionate sensitivity in a frame o pep thinking (All: 2010, p 238). In their poetry there is a noticeable unity among body, mind and spirit which interprets the concept of wholeness in their poetry. Dry. Marguerite Cocoon- an English literature professor- asserts that wit is the imagination of a fantastic or whimsical nature and originality in figures of speech. (Charters: 2001 , IPPP) Done and his followers were too

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smart in their use of wit because they used it through intellect and sensed it through emotion.

They used it to interpret man's existence in the universe, his relationship with God and with other human beings and to prove their sense of time.

Metaphysical poetry is characterized by its lively spirit and its thorough use of the conceit which has been used long before to mean "a kind of a simile or may be a metaphor, involving a comparison between two dissimilar things". (24). The conceit has an immediate striking effect. The conceit is an instrument to undertake argument and persuasion.

A source of energy and activation inside the poem wherein the conceit is born out of ingenuity, giving it vividness and concreteness. (Baldric: 2001, 48)

The metaphysical conceit is more conceptual, since the reader is made to concede likeness while being much aware of unlikeness striking a spark of recognition through wit, symbolism, analytical tone and logical reasoning. Genuinely, the conceit was elaborated long before Metaphysical poetry. It was a characteristic of Petrarch's 14th century, Italian love-poems, yet found its imitators during the Elizabethan age.

The Petrarchate conceit is often described as "a set of comparative images describing despairing Petrarch. Marguerite Cannon; to a tannest through intellect and wit and to prove their sense of time; the conceit; the metaphor, the simile. The conceit has an argumentative persuasive herein the conceit is born. The metaphysical conceit is a likeness which is being made by wit. Softballs. Nana Overlays. The conceit is born: vs., yet found its imitators Petrarchate conceit

lover unpinning mistress” The Metaphysical conceit differs from the proceeding types mainly comparative.

It also differs in its illumination to a cert. Chaucer was the first to use the conceit which meant “ an did we understand nowadays as “ a concept”. It was used in non by the philosophers to enrich the folktales, until the sixteen meaning of this term was transformed from a mere idea into Accordingly, wit has become a principal feature to understand The Metaphysical poems, in general, tends to be brief, Howe looking like a frame on which thoughts and words are comps intermingled with a sense of humor in order to mix serious helps to evoke creative imagination and enable to comprehend comparison between two dissimilar 1. : The Conceit in English Poetry In elaborating a conceit, a poet is interested in a certain idea compare it to other things that are intellectually and passion However, the distinction between the conceit and the meta problematic matter since many believed that the two are only This had put some in a slight ambiguity. Romances of English poetry which flourished during the An originally simple stories, loosely woven in verse with emphasis on religious faith .

There were use of metaphorical images in the poetry of that age; however were depicted only for ornamenting and embroidering purr the Renaissance, the poets tried to follow the conventional r They portrayed their beloveds through ornamenting conceit images. In Elizabethan poetry, a conceit is employed for areas p roof. Although William Shakespeare wrote and published his sonnets long before Donna’s Metaphysical poems, there are many evidences of what could be realized as typically conceits. In sonnet XII.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) urges the young man to marry and have children before the rapid passage of time: When lofty trees seen barren of leaves Which rest from heats did canopy the herd and summer's green all girded up In sheaves (Quoted in: Corrode, p. 1149) Man in these lines is depicted as a girdle about his waist, being carried to his grave. The sheaves here is a conceit that refers to death. In sonnet 18 Shakespeare acknowledges the fact that time robs us of everything especially life, beauty and youth.

Time is like marble destroys everything but never stode. In his play "Romeo and Juliet" Shakespeare draws the conceit to present likeness or comparison: This previous book of love, this unbound lover To beautify him, only lacks a cover scene V) (Included: 1976, act III, Lady Couplet, in these lines, compares a bachelor to an uncovered book in order to convince Juliet to wed count Paris. 1. 3: The Metaphysical Conceit The metaphysical conceit is an instrument of definition in a logical argument. It is an unusual or elaborate metaphor or simile presenting a surprisingly apt parallel between two apparently dissimilar things or feelings" , 47) The age that witnessed the appearance of metaphysical poetry was an age of reason; therefore Metaphysical poetry was a literary movement that came as an ultimate consequence of the political, social, religious and economical conditions during that age. Grievous calls the poet a " philosopher" (Grievous, 1969, p. 3), since his concern is in thought and feeling.

He employs his worldly and religious experiences in his poetry. Aristotle, on the other hand, calls a poet who employs a conceit a " genius". (Charters:

2001 454) John Donne is a main representative of the Metaphysical movement. His poetry is raked by deep thinking in depicting highly emotional love. He was a master in elaborating fantastic conceits which was a fashion of Europe at that time. T. S Eliot says “ some of Donna’s most successful and characteristic effects are secured by brief words and sudden contrasts. Is poem “ A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning “, Done succeeds to portray a careful logical and intellectual image that satisfies much the emotions and appeals to imagination when he compares the unity between lovers to the legs of the compass: If they be two, they are two so as stiff twin compasses are two thy soul the fixed foot makes no show o move, but doth, if the other do In “ The Connotation” Done experiments with the conceit in a mystical way referring to life’s circular movement of death and renewal: We are tapers too, and at our own cost die —————The phoenix riddle hath more wit By us; we two, being one, are it. So to one neutral thing both sexes fit We die and rise the same, and prove Mysterious by this love.

The two lovers are compared to tapers consumed by fire, they are, similarly consumed by the heat of their passion, yet their love will rise from their ashes and it ill be renewed, like the mythical phoenix. The conceit in this poem gives the impression that love is regarded as “ sanctifying” and that “ extravagant connotation” expresses at least emotional truth. (Lawrence& et al: 1985, 233) Donna’s poetry reveals a powerful spirit and a poignant thought. It is the poetry of a transplanted wit. In most of his love poems, he derives the concept of Platonic love, consolidating it through intelligent conceits. The two lovers in his poem” The Good Morrow” are compared to

two hemispheres gazing at each others: My face in thing eye, thing in mine appears,

And true plain hearts do in the face rest, Where can we find two better hemispheres There love is a balanced proportion needed for their continual existence(Charters& Charters: 2001, IPPP) ‘ Each lover is a hemisphere. Their unity in love makes a one whole world. The critic Alice King(1839-94) describes the poetry of Donne as profound and full of over strained conceits that are too stiff to suit the modern reader’s taste. (ibid) Donne’s conceits are mixtures of physical, intellectual, mystical and poetical experiences ruled by thought and imagination ; weighed by symbolism. In comparison with other typically poets, John Donne’s diction is direct and colloquial both in his language and conceits. (Enders, 1979, up 51).

In his poem “ Hymn to God, my God in my sickness” written in 1623 during a heavy illness; depressed with no hope to recover, Donne portrays the image of the doctors who gather attentively around his body as if they are geographers plotting a map: (whilst my physicians their love are grown / seismographers, and I their map who lie). George Herbert(1593-1633) employs the content or the structure of the poem to present a single conceit. In his poem “ Easter-wings”, the conceit is depicted through the print shape upon the page. In his poem “ The Pulley”, the conceit is presented through the content of the poem. Herbert leads an argumentative tone to express the relationship among God, the whimsical man and the logical power.

The conceit here is denoted in the image of the pulley moving in a groovy way, carrying heavy loads to signify the worried and restless state of man in

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his life: When God at first made man, Having a glass of blessings standing by, " Let us," said he, " pour on him all we can: Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie, Contract into a span" These poems as most of his poetic output reveal Herbert as a devotional preacher who was burdened by a spiritual inner conflict between his worldly desires and the commitment towards his religious duties as a priest. His poems also reveal the fact that he considered mortal life " worthless" and " unprofitable"(All: 2010, 41) In his poem " Vanities", Herbert concentrates on the importance of neglecting scientific and material goals in order to reach the level of spiritual enlightenment.

The whole third stanza of this poem is a metaphysical conceit on which the chemical laboratory is given the image of a bedroom, wherein a chemist is examining the substances of trials in their undressed shape to reconstruct them and make them ready for ordinary researchers: The subtle gimmicky can divest And strip the creature naked, till he find The callow principles within their nest There he imparts to them his minded, Admitted to their bed-chamber, before They appear trim and dress To ordinaries suitors at the adore (ll. 15-21) In the same sense, man is supposed to seek God and find His glory in His graces and wonders. Such a search will grant man an everlasting spiritual life. In his poem " On a Drop of Dew" Andrew Marvel (1621-1678), presents an amazing example of a social extended conceit: See how the orient Dew, Shed from the Bosom of the morn Into the blowing Roses Yet careless of its mansion new. He resembles the dewdrop to the soul of a religious man, restless in the rose petal waiting for its evaporation by

the heat of the sun. The soul, similarly, is eagerly waiting for its ascent back to God.

In “ The Definition of Love”, Marvel successfully employs the metaphysical conceit to describe his love as unattainable, rare and perfect resulting from the marriage of despair and impossibility; however it is wonderfully woven at the last stanza for the poet employs both geometrical and astronomical images: Therefore the love which us doth bind But Fate so enviously debars, Is the conjunction of the mind And opposition of the stars The word “ conjunction” suggests union; whereas the word “ opposition” hinders all possibilities of unity; implying the idea that their love is a spiritual union but a physical separation: But fate so enviously debars Another conceit occurs on the seventh line where Marvel compares hope to a bird with feeble wings , giving futile promises to attain fulfillment in love(All: 2005, IPPP) Richard Crash energize his conceits through the belief that the soul can be released throughout “ the intensification of the concrete realms of – body”(Ended, 1972, p. 78). In his poem “ The Weeper” published in 1646, Caracas builds-up an interesting conceit, portraying the image of incarnated love: Oh thou, thy Lord’s fair love! In thy so rich and rare expenses, Even when he showed most poor, He might provoke the wealth of princes; —Wash with silver, wipe with gold The poem has a religious background, telling the reader the story of weeping at the feet of Jesus asking for repentance.

Henry Vaughan (1622-1695) was the last one of the metaphysical poets who had excessive ingenuity, emotional intensity and close observation of nature. Canon H. C. Comments that Vaughan had an imaginative outlook on nature.

Childhood, eternity, the mysterious world as well as nature are touchstones in his poetic. Vaughan's sentimentality for nature was for its own sake. He tried to observe its moods, seeking intoxication amid its scenery. Nature had a vital role in forming his religious and mystical outlook. Vaughan felt the grace of God's presence and greatness even in the natural scenes, phenomena and creatures. Vaughan sensed happiness in solitude. He believed that the physical life is a veil of the immortal spirit.

In his poem "The World", he brilliantly employs the metaphysical conceit with much wit and ingenuity to depict time and eternity: I saw Eternity the other night Like a great ring of pure and endless light All calm as it was bright And down beneath it, time in hours, days, years Driven by the spheres. Eternity has the shape of a huge circle of endless light. Time, paradoxically symbolizes the darkness of mortality. Physical love, ambition and money are all eaters of the material world that will fade away in the shadow of mortality. Eternity is a bridegroom offering a ring of marriage to its bride which is the enlivened and devotional spirit: This Ring the Bridegroom did for none provide But for this bride There are few people who prefer the spiritual life and "soar upwards to the ring of Eternity". (Dickson)

Metaphysical poetry is the son of mind and heart.

The soul and the brain work together in the process of producing the poem as well as producing ingenious conceits, which bring vitality to the poem. The metaphysical poets were highly learned and educated people. They employed their education to depict certain paradoxical images; nevertheless, many critics condemned them for the exaggerated reflection of their

educational background in the poetic art, writing as beholders rather than partakers of the human nature. Conclusion The conceit, which originally meant a concept, broke the conventions since the flourished of metaphysical poetry and became the peak of a highly emotional attitude based upon reasonable thinking. The metaphysical poets were analytic .