The term "metaphysical" can be interpreted as beyond (meta) physical nature (physical). Dryden was the first to use the term in connection with Donne by saying that he "affects the metaphysics". Dr. Johnson later described Donne and his followers as the metaphysical poets. The term metaphysical poetry implies the characteristics of complexity, intellectual tone, abundance of subtle wit, fusion of intellect and emotion, colloquial argumentative tone, conceits (which are always witty and sometimes fantastic) scholarly allusions, dramatic tone, and philosophic or reflective element.

Concentration is an important quality of metaphysical poetry in general and Donne's poetry in particular. In all his poems, the reader is held to one idea or line of argument. His poems are brief and closely woven. In 'The Ecstasy' for instance, the principal argument is ~~be~~ through the different acts of love the function of man as man is being worthily performed. The poet develops the theme without digression.

Fondness for conceits is a major characteristic of metaphysical poetry. Of course, all comparisons discover likeness in things unlike: but in a conceit we are made to concede the likeness even while being strongly conscious of the unlikeness. Donne often employs fantastic comparisons. The most famous and striking one is the comparison of a man who travels and his beloved who stays at home to a pair of compasses, in A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning. A clever, though

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obviously frivolous concept is employed in 'The Flea' where the insect is called the marriage-bed and the marriage-temple of the lovers, because it has bitten them and sucked their blood. In his religious poetry, too, Donne uses far-fetched conceits. In the holy Sonnet If poisonous minerals, there is an image of the poet's tears mingling with Christ's blood and taking the form of a learned conceit of the sphere and its intelligence with its "correspondence" between microcosm and macrocosm. While these conceits evoked Dr. Johnson's displeasure, they are fairly well enjoyed by modern readers.

Wit striking and subtle marks metaphysical poetry. Indeed, the concepts especially display a formidable wit. So do the various allusions and images relating to practically all areas of nature and art and learning. Allusions to medicine, cosmology, ancient myth, contemporary discoveries, history, law and art abound in Donne's poetry. The hard core of logic is undeniable in The Flea, for instance, though the poem is obviously light-hearted. Donne's wit assumes different moods and attitudes reflecting his perception of the complexity of life. Wit makes itself evident in the paradoxes employed in the poem. In The Legacy the lover is his own "executor and legacy". Such paradoxical statements are to be found in several poems. In Death be not proud, he says: "Death thou shalt die". Batter my heart is also full of such paradoxical statements.

Combination of passion and thought is a peculiar characteristic of metaphysical poetry, and is another form of

wit. Thus there is a "unification of sensibility", to use T.S. Eliot's phrase, in metaphysical poetry. There is in Donne's poems an intellectual analysis of emotion. Every lyric arises out of some emotional situation, but the emotion is not merely expressed; it is analysed. A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning proves that lovers need not mourn at parting; The Canonization establishes that lovers are saints of love; The Good Morrow asserts that lovers are the best possible hemispheres who make up a complete world.

Argumentation and reasoning balance the passion in Donne's poems. No one can deny the passion in The Sun Rising, but there is also plenty of argumentation to prove that the sun has no power over the lovers, as love knows no season or clime. Similarly, in The Canonization, there is passion expressed through beautiful metaphors:

"Call us what you will, we are made such by love
Call her one, me another fly
We are tapers too, and our own cost die.

But at the same time, the tone of the poem is intellectual and there is plenty of complexity involved in the concepts and allusions, such as phoenix riddle.

Donne's love poems are especially entitled to be called metaphysical in the true sense. poems such as The Good morrow, The Anniversary, The Canonization and The Ecstasy raise, even though they do not explicitly discuss, the great metaphysical question of the relation of the spirit and the senses. They raise it

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not as an abstract problem, but in the effort to make the experience of the union of two human powers in love and the union of two human beings in love, apprehensible. Often Donne speaks of the soul and of spiritual love. The Ecstasy speaks of the souls of the lovers which come out of their bodies to negotiate with one another.

Thus, Intellect and wit blending with emotion and feeling marks metaphysical poetry, especially that of Donne. Indeed Donne represents very well the school of poetry somewhat vaguely called "metaphysical". He brought the whole of his experience into his poetry. He is erudite, "the monarch of wit", colloquial, rhetorical or familiar.