

different moment in the process of recognizing and understanding a metaphor, or is adapted to the perspective of a distinctive worldview.

Mark Johnson, ed., *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor* (1981) includes, among others, the writings on metaphor (mentioned above) by Richards, Black, Davidson, and Searle; Sheldon Sacks, ed., *On Metaphor* (1987) contains essays by both philosophers and literary critics; and Andrew Ortony, ed., *Metaphor and Thought* (second ed., 1993) includes an essay by George Lakoff that summarizes the cognitive treatments of metaphor. On the cognitive view, see also George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), and Mark Turner, *Death Is the Mother of Beauty* (1987). For earlier analyses of the cognitive function of metaphors, see Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses* (1942), on the "root metaphors" that generate the major philosophical worldviews; and M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), on the "constitutive metaphors" that provide the structure and categories of diverse theories of literature and the other arts. See also Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (1977), and for an influential essay on metaphor by a deconstructive theorist, Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology," in *Margins of Discourse* (1982).

Metaphysical Poets. John Dryden said in his *Discourse Concerning Satire* (1693) that John Donne in his poetry "affects the metaphysics," meaning that Donne employs the terminology and abstruse arguments of the medieval Scholastic philosophers. In 1779 Samuel Johnson extended the term "metaphysical" from Donne to a school of poets, in the acute and balanced critique which he incorporated in his "Life of Cowley." The name is now applied to a group of seventeenth-century poets who, whether or not directly influenced by Donne, employ similar poetic procedures and imagery, both in secular poetry (Cleveland, Marvell, Cowley) and in religious poetry (Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, and Traherne).

Attempts have been made to demonstrate that these poets had in common a philosophical worldview. The term "metaphysical," however, fits these very diverse writers only if it is used, as Johnson used it, to indicate a common poetic style, use of figurative language, and way of organizing the meditative process or the poetic argument. Donne set the metaphysical mode by writing poems which are sharply opposed to the rich mellifluousness and the idealized view of human nature and of sexual love which had constituted a central tradition in Elizabethan poetry, especially in Spenser and the writers of *Petrarchan sonnets*; Donne's poems are opposed also to the fluid, regular verification of Donne's contemporaries, the *Cavalier poets*. Instead, Donne wrote in a diction and meter modeled on the rough give-and-take of actual speech, and often organized his poems in the form of an urgent or heated argument—with a reluctant mistress, or an intruding friend, or God, or death, or with himself. He employed a subtle and often deliberately outrageous logic; he was realistic, ironic, and sometimes cynical in his treatment of the complexity of human motives, especially in the sexual relation; and whether playful or serious, and

whether writing the poetry of love or of intense religious experience, he was above all “witty,” making ingenious use of *paradox*, *pun*, and startling parallels in simile and metaphor (see *metaphysical conceit* and *wit*). The beginnings of four of Donne’s poems will illustrate the shock tactic, the dramatic form of direct address, the rough idiom, and the rhythms of the living voice that are characteristic of his metaphysical style:

Go and catch a falling star,
 Get with child a mandrake root . . .
 For God’s sake hold your tongue, and let me love.
 Busy old fool, unruly sun . . .
 Batter my heart, three-personed God . . .

Some, not all, of Donne’s poetic procedures have parallels in each of his contemporaries and successors whom literary historians usually group as metaphysical poets.

These poets have had admirers in every age, but beginning with the *Neo-classic Period* of the later seventeenth century, they were by most critics and readers regarded as interesting but perversely ingenious and obscure exponents of *false wit*, until a drastic revaluation after World War I elevated Donne, and to a lesser extent Herbert and Marvell, high in the hierarchy of English poets (see *canon of literature*). This reversal owed much to H. J. C. Grierson’s *Introduction to Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century* (1912), was given strong impetus by T. S. Eliot’s essays “The Metaphysical Poets” and “Andrew Marvell” (1921), and was continued by a great number of commentators, including F. R. Leavis in England and especially the American New Critics, who tended to elevate the metaphysical style into the model of their ideal poetry of irony, paradox, and “unified sensibility.” (See *dissociation of sensibility*.) More recently, Donne has lost his exemplary status, but continues to occupy a firm position as a prominent poet in the English canon.

See George Williamson, *The Donne Tradition* (1930); F. R. Leavis, *Revaluation* (1936); Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939); Rosemund Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (1947); J. E. Duncan, *The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry* (1959); Helen Gardner, ed., *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1962). F. J. Warnke, *European Metaphysical Poetry* (1961), treats the continental vogue of this style.

Meter is the recurrence, in regular units, of a prominent feature in the sequence of speech-sounds of a language. There are four main types of meter in European languages: (1) In classical Greek and Latin, the meter was **quantitative**; that is, it was established by the relative duration of the utterance of a syllable, and consisted of a recurrent pattern of long and short syllables. (2) In French and many other Romance languages, the meter is **syllabic**, depending on the number of syllables within a line of verse, without regard to the fall of the stresses. (3) In the older Germanic languages, including Old English, the meter is **accentual**, depending on the number of stressed syllables within a line, without regard to the number of intervening unstressed syllables. (4) The