

**THE METAPHYSICAL CONCEIT
A STUDY OF JOHN DONNE AND GEORGE HERBERT**

**By
Prof. Hamdi Hameed Yousif (Ph. D.)
Tikrit University**

ABSTRACT

The conceit, as a literary device, had been used a long time before the metaphysical poets. However, at the hands of the metaphysical poets, especially John Donne and George Herbert, it reached its climax of maturity and sophistication that it became the main characteristic feature of the Metaphysical tradition.

This paper tries to explore the richness, the sophistication and the depth of the Metaphysical conceit by examining selected poems of both John Donne and George Herbert trying at the same time to show the differences between Donne's and Herbert's conceits. The study is divided into four main part: Part One introduces the Metaphysical conceit as an extended metaphor having different levels of meaning. Part Two examines selected poems of John Done to explore the significance of Donne's particular use of the conceit. Part Three is devoted to George Herbert's particular use of the conceit as a visual image or by making the whole poem a conceit. The last part is the Conclusion which sums up the results of the study.

I. THE CONCEIT AND THE METAPHYSICAL CONCEIT

Linguistically speaking, the "conceit" --according to K. K. Ruthven-- was originally derived from the Italian word "conchetto" which had a variety of meanings in Italian (Ruthven: 4). By the seventeenth century, Cuddon says, it became synonymous with "thought", "concept", "idea", and "conception" and "it might also then denote a fanciful supposition, an ingenious act of deception or a witty or clever remark or idea." He adds that the conceit as a literary term "has come to denote a fairly elaborate figurative device of a fanciful kind which often incorporates metaphor, simile, hyperbole or oxymoron... and which intends to surprise and delight by its wit and ingenuity" (Cuddon:165). M. H. Abrams calls one type of the conceit "the Petrarchan conceit" after the Italian poet Petrarch (1304-1374) believing that Petrarch had invented this device and like the Petrarchan sonnet, it was introduced into English poetry by Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and other Elizabethan poets. He defines the Petrarchan conceit as

a type of figure used in love poems that had been novel and effective in the Italian poet Petrarch, but became hackneyed in some of his imitators among the Elizabethan sonneteers. The figure consists of detailed, ingenious, and often exaggerated comparisons applied to the disdainful mistress, as cold and cruel as she is beautiful, and to the distress and despair of her worshipful lover. (Abrams: 42).

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines the "conceit" as "an artistic effect or device, especially one that is very clever but does not succeed" (Wehmeier et al eds.: art. "conceit").

However, the conceit can easily be understood when it is seen against the "metaphor" which is "a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another.... A comparison is usually implicit" (Cuddon: 507). The metaphor, therefore, is an indirect, implicit comparison between two dissimilar things such as a beautiful

woman and a rose or a brave fighter and a lion which suggests one level of meaning. The conceit can simply be defined as an extended or elaborate metaphor making striking syntheses of apparently unrelated objects or ideas suggesting more than one level of meaning like John Donne's conceit of the two legs of the compasses for the two lovers which will be the concern of the following part of the study.

The metaphysical conceit is a reference to the type of conceit used by John Donne (1572-1631) and the other poets of the Metaphysical school. If the Elizabethan conceit is "ornamental or superficial as when the poet compares his mistress's eyes to stars and her teeth to pearls... the metaphysical conceit is functional... it is an intrinsic medium to the poet's intent" (Hameed: 14). This means that a radical change concerning the conceit had taken place at the hands of the metaphysical poets. According to Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), the metaphysical conceit is "a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike....The more heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together" (qtd. in Abrams: 42).

The sophistication of the metaphysical conceit is mainly due to the use of far-fetched imagery drawn from different fields of knowledge such as geometry, astronomy, chemistry, geography, philosophy and other sciences that were alien to poetry prior to the metaphysical school. they are the product of the witty mind and therefore, they may amaze the reader rather than delight him.

In his essay "The nature of Metaphysical Wit", S. L. Bethell argues that metaphysical wit is found in the metaphor (including the conceit because it is an extended metaphor), and he agrees with Emanuele Tesauro who distinguishes "three ascending grades of the conceit": metaphor, allegory and the "perfect conceit" which "must necessarily take an argumentative form" (Bethell: 89). This means that a conceit without logical argument is an imperfect one and this can easily be detected in metaphysical poetry where the conceit and the logical argument can, almost always, be found together.

II. JOHN DONNE'S CONCEITS

John Donne (1572-1631), English poet, prose writer, and clergyman, is considered the greatest of the metaphysical poets and one of the greatest writers of love poetry. His appeal as a poet lies mostly in his particular handling of the Metaphysical conceit, which has come to be perceived as the hallmark of the Metaphysical tradition. The poetry of Donne is characterized by his frequent use of the *conceit*, making striking syntheses of apparently unrelated objects or ideas but always uniquely precise in meaning and connotation. The content of his love poetry, often both cynical and sensuous, represents a reaction against the sentimental Elizabethan sonnet, and this work influenced the attitudes of the Cavalier poets.

Donne's poetry was almost neglected during the seventeenth century and forgotten during the eighteenth mainly because of the sophistication of his far-fetched conceits and images but interest in his work developed during the 19th century, and his popularity reached its climax in the early decades of the twentieth century and after. T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) in his essay "The Metaphysical Poets" expressed his great admiration of what he termed as "unification of sensibility" in John Donne's

metaphysical poems (Eliot: 309) by which he meant the use of the mind to express the heart, i. e. the use of intellectual images and conceits.

Donne's most famous poem of this kind which frequently anthologized and quoted is "A Valediction, Forbidding Mourning". John Donne fell secretly in love with Anne More "while he was living and employed as a secretary in her uncle's house" (Hayward: 8) and after eloping with her they got married. This poem was first published posthumously in 1633. It is a lyric poem written in nine four-line stanzas. The meter is iambic tetrameter and each stanza has the rhyme scheme of an alternating a-b-a-b. The poem uses ingenious metaphysical conceits to caution against mourning due to lovers' separation as their love is more of a spiritual one than a physical one.

This poem was written specifically for Donne's wife, Anne More Donne, as the two were to experience a geographical separation when the poet travelled to France on government business and his wife remained in England (Cummings, n.d., para. 3) to convince her not to grieve over his departure. Izaak Walton, Donne's contemporary, in his biographical book on John Donne writes: "the author gave these lines to his wife in 1611" (Rosenblum, 2002, para. 1). The imagery and the conceits of the poem are drawn from a variety of fields: religion, geometry, philosophy, astronomy and medicine.

The poem opens with the conceit of a virtuous man on his death-bed surrounded by his loving friends. The soul of this virtuous man passes peacefully to heaven unnoticed by his friends. The hissing sounds in the stanza suggest the quietness and the peacefulness of the atmosphere of his soul's departure:

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends doe say,
The breath goes now, and some say, no;¹
(ll. 1-4)

The first implication of this conceit is that his wife to him is like the soul to the body. The second is that the lovers should part without any outward show of grief like the virtuous man whose soul leaves his body without pain. The third is that spiritual love is sacred. The fourth is that the virtuous man's friends never show grief because they do not wish to annoy the virtuous man and therefore, she should not show grief in order not to hurt him. This is suggested by the second stanza "so let us melt and make no noise" (l. 5). The second stanza is a continuation of the first in which the equation of the two lovers with the dying man and his soul is still there. Being saint-like the two lovers shouldn't show their love to laity "layetie", the followers of religion who are not clergy:

T'were prophanation of our joys
To tell the layetie our love
(ll. 7-8)

As usual, Donne uses the religious language to express his sensual love. In almost all his love songs and sonnets, love is sublimated and made into a doctrine of oneness between the lover and the beloved on the one hand, and between body and soul on the other hand. Lovers are often described as saints in the shrine of love as in "The canonization", "The Extasie", "The Anniversaries" and many other poems.

The contrast between physical love and spiritual love is tackled in the next conceit describing physical love as "dull sublunary" love which means earthly love. Hence, the

movement of the spheres (such as the movement of the earth round the sun) is regular and not harmful while the movement of the earth in earthquakes is dangerous and harmful. The first one stands for spiritual love like that of Donne and his wife and the second stands for physical love in which absence is disastrous and destructive

Moving of th'earth brings harmes and feares,
Men reckon what it did and meant,
But trepidation of spheares,
Though greater farre, is innocent.

(ll. 9-12)

The poet, then, uses the conceit of gold which is as striking as that of the compasses. The pure spiritual love is likened to pure gold to suggest that the two lovers, though they will be physically apart, spiritually they will be one

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.

(ll. 21-24)

The significance of this conceit lies in the fact that it says much in a few words. One can detect in it three levels of meaning:

- Gold is a rare and very precious metal and so is spiritual love.
- Gold never takes rust and never changes with time and so is spiritual love, it does not change with the physical change of the body.
- Gold can be beaten (with a hammer) into thin leaves without being broken and spiritual bears the physical separation or parting of the two lovers without being destroyed.

The thin leaf of hammered gold stands for the oneness of the two lovers' souls that can extend spatially (between London and Paris in the poem) and thus, though the lovers are physically separated, spiritually they are still one.

However, the most striking conceit, not only in this poem, but in metaphysical poetry as a whole is that of the compasses where Donne goes to the extremes of using scientific imagery. The compasses had never been associated with the subject of romantic love before; they are used for drawing regular circles in geometry and have nothing to do with poetry or with lovers:

If they be two, they are two so
As stiffe twin compasses are two,
Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the'other doe.

and though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth rime,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And growes erect, as that comes home.

(ll. 25-32)

This is an image which addresses the reader's mind to find associations between the two lovers and the two legs of the compasses. Therefore, this Metaphysical conceit does not merely yoke unrelated things together, but rather seeks to represent the intangible ties that, in reality, bind physically distant elements. This conceit has several levels of meaning:

- The compasses consist of two feet joined together at the top and the two lovers are two bodies united by spiritual endless love, or to put it in different words, one soul in two bodies, i. e. the oneness of the two lovers.
- If the fixed foot does not shake while the second one moves round it the circle will be regular and the it will end at the same point from which it starts. Consequently, if his beloved remains strong and firm when he goes abroad, his circle will be regular; He'll come back to her.
- The fixed foot will bend towards the moving one as it moves far away from the centre and the beloved will have all her attention focused on her absent husband. Her firmness will make his circle regular and complete .
- The circle is often described as without a beginning and without an end and their love is as perfect as a circle and is endless.

In this conceit two dissimilar elements are compelled into unity and held together by an incredible show of ingenuity on the part of the poet. However, These conceits are reminiscent of tesauro's emphasis on the necessity of argument in the metaphysical conceit (p. 3 above) because through this logical argument, the conceit addresses and appeals to the mind of the reader.

A good example of using argument in the conceit is Donne's conceit of the sun in his "song" which was written on the same situation: The poet tries to convince his wife not to weep for his departure to france:

Yesternight the Sunne went hence,
And yet is here to day,
He hath no desire nor sense,
Nor half so short a way:
Then feare not mee,
But beleeve that i shall make
Speedier journeyes, since i take
More wings and spurres than hee.

(ll. 9-16)

Again an image from cosmology is used for the two lovers: the sun (being masculine) stands for the husband and the earth stands for his wife. The sun's journey round the earth is longer than his journey to France. The sun has set in the west yesternight and no he shines in the east. The poet's journey is shorter than the sun's and he has wings and spurs, i. e. his love and desires which will make him come back faster than the sun. What makes this conceit an outstanding one is the witty argument he uses as well as the hyperbolic language.

"The Flea" is another striking example of the ingenuity, logic and wit of Donne. The conceit is taken from the idea of a woman killing a flea. The flea sucks the poet's blood and then it sucks his mistress' blood. This event is exploited by the poet attempting to seduce her after preventing her from killing the flea on the pretext that it has become a sacred shrine of love after sucking their blood; they are united and made one in the flea.

On the other hand, all his mistress is going to lose when she surrenders to him is a drop of blood, as much as that sucked by the flea:

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where wee almost, yea more than maryed are,
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
(ll. 10-13)

In "The Canonization", the poet expresses the profane love in terms of divine love, as the title of the poem suggests, for the two lovers are going to be canonized as saints. The basic conceit "which underlies the poem" argues Cleanth Brooks, "involves a sort of paradox.... the canonization is not that of a pair of anchorites who have renounced the world and the flesh. The hermitage of each is the other's body". Thus the poem is "a parody of Christian sainthood" (Brooks: 101). The two lovers, the canonized saints of love, give up the world as mystics and anchorites do, when they die to the world to win a better life.

Donne's religious poems are also provide good examples of the metaphysical conceit. take for instance "Sonnet X" of the "Holy Sonnets" in which the poet compares death to sleep, and this time the conceit is strongly argumentative. In his attempt to sort out the fear of death, the poet tries to belittle death:

From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,
Rest of their bones, and soules deliverie.
(ll. 5-8)

Logically speaking death is a long sleep. People get much rest, joy and pleasure from the normal short sleep and therefore, they should get much more pleasure if this sleep is longer (death). Rest and sleep are just picture of death (no true death), therefore, one must get greater pleasure from the real death. Furthermore, when people wake up from death at Doomsday, death will be no more; death will die.

In "Sonnet xix", Donne again has an unconventional approach to divine poetry where the relation between man and God is expressed in sensual imagery. In the first quatrain of the sonnet we have the conceit of the blacksmith; the poet pleads to God to "break, blowe, and burn" him like a blacksmith, and to make him new, to mend his fallen nature as a blacksmith mends a broken vessel. then in the second quatrain, he uses the conceit of a town captured by force; he is occupied by the devil, powerless, trying to admit God into his soul:

I, like an usurpt towne, to'another due
Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end,
reason your viceroy in mee, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and prove weake or untrue.
(ll. 5-8)

In the third quatrain, he asks God to divorce him from Satan because he loves God. He concludes his sonnet with the mystical idea of absolute surrender to God without which he will never be free and again he uses a the language of paradox in a strange conceit, that of rape, he addresses God to ravish his soul in order to be chaste and to imprison him in order to be free

Divorce mee, 'untie , or breake that knot againe,
Take me to you, imprison mee, for I
except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee.

(11-14)

Though John Donne was a priest, His best poems are his love poems. However, he uses religious language in his profane love and he almost always uses far-fetched images and conceits. His wit lies in his success to yoke together heterogeneous ideas and images in his conceits and his use of logical argument to serve his purpose.

III. GEORGE HERBER'S CONCEITS

George Herbert (1593-1633) is the master of a special sort of the metaphysical conceit. In his poetry abstract ideas are frequently made concrete and vivid by dramatizing them as it was common in the morality plays. Herbert's skill lies in his ability to express the relation between the soul and God in parables, to use T. S. Eliot's words, he "has recourse to diverse and even mutually contradictory metaphors and images to express the inexpressible" (Eliot: 20).

One of the major influences on Herbert was the Emblem books which played a significant part in developing Herbert's interest in visual (or emblematic) conceits. Emblem books are "picture books made of emblematic pictures and explanatory words" (Freeman: 9). These explanatory words were usually lines of verse or complete poems and the "emblematic verses sometimes also took the form of verses themselves shaped in various forms such as crosses, alters, bottles, etc..." (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature*: 186). These books became popular in England and Europe in the seventeenth century though the first emblem book, namely Wintley's *A Choice of Emblems* appeared in England as early as 1586 (Freeman: 32).

Herbert devotes all his poems to devotional love of God and the soul's relation with God. In this regard, four persons, says T. S. Eliot, have left their influence on him: his mother, John Donne, Bishop Lancelot Andrews (d. 1626) and his dear friend Nicholas Ferrar (1592-1637) of Little Gidding (Eliot: 9). Herbert was the only one of the school of Donne, adds Eliot, whose "whole source of inspiration was his religious faith...it was only in Faith, in hunger and thirst after godliness, in his self-questioning and his religious meditation that he was inspired as a poet" (18-19). In a letter to his mother for the New Year's day (1610), he tells her that "his poor abilities in poetry, shall be all and ever consecrated to God's glory" (Bennet: 60) that in the last year of his life (1633) his volume *The Temple* was published and it contained one hundred and twenty nine devotional poems recording his spiritual experience. However, the poet feels that his extreme love of God is inexpressible with conventional means and that's why he resorts to his special kind of conceit to express the inexpressible as he says in "The Temper I":

How should I Praise the, Lord! How should my rymes
Gladly engrave thy love in steel,
If what my soul doth feel sometimes,
My soul might ever feel!²
(Herbert: 55)

In "Easter Wings" Herbert uses the visual conceit by patterning the poem in the shape of a bird falling down and flying upwards at the same time. Herbert went so far in his two outstanding concrete poems "to arrange a pattern for the eye as well as for the ear... the subject is represented by the shape of the print upon the page" (Bennett: 72). Thus the poem may have a double effect on the reader: aural and visual. "The shape of "the wing on the page", argues Joan Bennett, the diminuendo and crescendo that bring it about are expressive both of the rise and fall of the lark's song and flight (Herbert's image) and also of the fall of man and his resurrection in Christ" (Ibid.: 74), which is represented by the fall of the bird, especially when the poem is typed vertically as in Bennett's book.

LOrd, who createdst man in wealth and store,
 Though foolishly he lost the same,
 Decaying more and more,
 Till he became
 Most poore:
 With thee
 O let me rise
 As larks, harmoniously,
 And sing this day thy victories:
 Then shall the fall further the flight in me.
 My tender age in sorrow did beginne:
 And still with sicknesses and shame
 Thou didst so punish sinne,
 That I became
 Most thine.
 With thee
 Let me combine
 And feel this day thy victorie:
 For, if I imp my wing on thine,
 Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

"The Altar" is another example of Herbert's visual (or typological) conceits written under the influence of emblem books. He patterned the poem in print as an altar to create a relation, as in "Eastern Wings", between concrete visible things and moral ideas; the whole poem, becomes a visual conceit.

Another visual (typological) conceit is found in his poem "Coloss. 3.3: Our Life is Hide with Christ in God" in which the shape of the poem in print is the conceit:

My words and thoughts do both expresse this notion
 That **L**ife hath the sun a double motion.
 The first **I**s straight, and our diurnall friend,
 The other **H**id and doth obliquely bend.
 One life is wrapt **I**n flesh, and tends to earth:
 The other winds towards **H**im whose happie birth
 Taught me to live here so, **T**hat still one eye
 should aim and shoot at that which **I**s on high;
 Quitting with daily labour all **M**y pleasure,
 To gain at harvest an eternall **T**reasure.
 (Herbert: 84-85)

The visual conceit in this poem is embodied in the hidden line printed in bold which is likened to man's soul hidden by the flesh of the body that lives on earth. The hidden line can be read as "My life is hid in him that is my treasure" which should be considered one of the lines of the poem; in fact, the most important line. This also suggests the importance of the soul to the body. However, as the title of the poem shows the words of this line are the words of God in (Coloss. 3:3): "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God". The second meaning of the conceit, therefore, is that our life is hidden in God with Christ. The "double motion" of the second line means that man is bound to earth by his physical body and bound to Heaven by his soul, which is the breath of god hidden in his body.

Unlike John Donne, Herbert's conceits and images are not far-fetched; most of his images are taken from nature, from the church and church furniture. Sometimes his fancy leads him to embody a conceit in the title of his poem like "The Collar" and "The Pulley". "The Collar" is a highly dramatic poem recording a period of conflict and revolt in the poet's life. It is a dramatic monologue written at a moment of rebellion against the church and its regulations:

I struck the board, and cry'd No more.

I will abroad.

What/ shall I ever sigh and pine?

My lines and life are free; free as the roe,

Loose as the winde.as large as store.

Shall I be still in suit?

Have i no harvest but a thorn

To let me blood and not restore.

(Herbert: 153-154, ll.1-8)

The main conceit in the poem is that of the collar (of the title) which may have two meanings: the priestly collar and the ring which is put round the neck of a wild dog to be tied with a rope. Both meanings are related to each other because the poet feels that he is chained to the church with a "rope of sands" and has wasted his youth while other young men are enjoying the pleasures of life outside. Though the word "collar" is never mentioned in the poem, it is the main conceit. The other conceit is embodied in the form of the poem. Though Herbert is well known for his sense of music and the regularity of his verse, this poem is irregular and mostly without regular rhyme-scheme to suggest the anger and the rebellion of the speaker. However, the last four lines take the form of a quatrain rhyming a-b-a-b- suggesting that the poet, after hearing the voice of God calling him "Child", submits himself to the will of God and remained in the church: "And I replied: My Lord" and by submitting himself to the will of God, order and harmony are restored to his life and to his poem.

In "The Pulley", (sometimes printed as "The Gifts of God") also, there is no mention of a pulley though the pulley is the main conceit in the poem. The reason behind changing the title into "The Pulley", as it seems, is to make it suitable to the main theme of the poem, that is the relationship between man and God. The conceit, therefore, is suggested by the title and made explicit throughout the poem.

When God created man, He gave him many gifts and blessings, such as strength, beauty, wisdom, honour and pleasure but he does not give him "rest" in order to be always in need of God:

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.
So strength first made a way;
The beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure:
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all his treasure
Rest in the bottom lay.

(ll. 1-10)

Rest, according to this poem, is the most valuable gift, compared to a treasure and suggesting peace of mind and by depriving man of it God intends not to lose him. If man is given rest, he will be content with nature rather than the god of nature and both man and god will be losers; they will lose each other.

The most important stanza in this poem is the last one; it embodies the conceit of the pulley. The speaker is God saying that he gives man all the gifts except "rest" to let him enjoy the other gifts but restlessly that if these gifts do not remind him of his Creator, restlessness will do by tossing him up to God like a pulley

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness:
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast.

(ll. 16-20)

However, the conceit this time is auditory or aural rather than emblematic or visual, though the visual element is also evident in this poem as elsewhere in Herbert's poetry. The onomatopoeia of the hissing sounds such as "rest", "restlessness", "least", "goodness", "weariness", "toss" and "breast" suggests man's restlessness which will toss him upwards to God like a pulley.

Herbert's poem are mainly concerned with religion and the relationship between man and God. His conceits are homely rather than far-fetched. He is a careful artist as well as a careful poet in the sense that he uses his wit to create visual patterns that enable him to express the inexpressible. His experience is unique that no other poet after him had done the same.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The metaphysical conceit as a term refers to a special kind of conceit used by the Metaphysical poets and was perfected at the hands of John Donne and George Herbert. It is completely different from Elizabethan conceit; the first was ornamental and superficial while the second was functional and multidimensional in the sense that it has several levels of meaning.

John Donne's conceits were highly intellectual, argumentative and far-fetched unlike those of George Herbert which were homely, emblematic, visual and sometimes auditory. However, the difference between Donne and Herbert is that the first uses

strange means to arrive at unorthodox ends while the second uses simple means employed in unorthodox ways to reach at orthodox ends.

The researcher recommends further extensive studies to be done on the other poems of John Donne, George Herbert and the other Metaphysical poets such as Andrew Marvell, Richard Crashaw, Thomas Carew, Abraham Cowley, Henry King and others to explore the intensity of their experience.

NOTES

1. John Hayward, ed. *John Donne: A Selection of his Poetry*. London: Penguin Books, 1973. (All subsequent references are to this edition and will be sited within parentheses by line number).
2. Herbert, George. *The Works of George Herbert* (ed.) F. E. Hutchinson. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964. (All subsequent references are to this edition and will be sited within parentheses by line number).

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جامعة تكريت

مستخلص

كان المجاز الذهني كوسيلة بلاغية معروفا قبل ظهور شعراء المدرسة الميتافيزيقية بفترة طويلة ولكنه وصل ذروة التطور والعمق على يد كل من جون دن وجورج هربرت بحيث أصبح واحدا من أهم السمات المميزة للشعر الميتافيزيقي.

تحاول هذه الدراسة الكشف عن غنى وتعقيد وعمق المجاز الذهني لدى شعراء المدرسة الميتافيزيقية من خلال تحليل قصائد منتقاة لكل من جون دن وجورج هربرت محاولة في الوقت ذاته بيان الفرق بين المجاز الذهني عند دن عن نظيره لدى هربرت. تقع الدراسة في أربعة أقسام : يقدم القسم الأول للمجاز الذهني الميتافيزيقي باعتباره استعارة موسعة ذات مستويات مختلفة من المعنى –ويتناول القسم الثاني بعض قصائد جون دن المختارة ليبين أهمية استخدامه المجاز الذهني. ويكرس القسم الثالث لاستخدام هربرت الخاص للمجاز الذهني وذلك باستخدام الصور المرئية أو جعل القصيدة كلها مجازا ذهنيا. أما القسم الأخير فهو الخاتمة والتوصيات التي تلخص ما توصلت إليه الدراسة من نتائج وتوصيات الباحث بإجراء دراسات أخرى في هذا الموضوع.

