**The Metaphysical Poets**

The term “metaphysical poets” was coined by **Samuel Johnson**, the famous 18th century critic – **metaphysics** – speculations on the basic principles governing the

realms of knowledge and being – according to Johnson, metaphysical poets were

fond of displaying obscure and specialized learning in their poems.

Basic Characteristics

- metaphysical poets wrote both love poems and religious or meditative lyrics

- they make extensive use of **paradox** – an apparent contradiction which turns out on

close inspection to yield a valuable perception.

- their poems tend to be written in lines of unequal or varying length and in rhythms

that reflect the irregular and unpredictable movements of an active mind and of an

informal speaking voice.

- they tend to apply religious images and ideas to human love, and, vice versa – the

application of language normally associated with human love to religious experience.

- metaphysical poets show an intense spirituality as well as a concern for individual

moral responsibility.