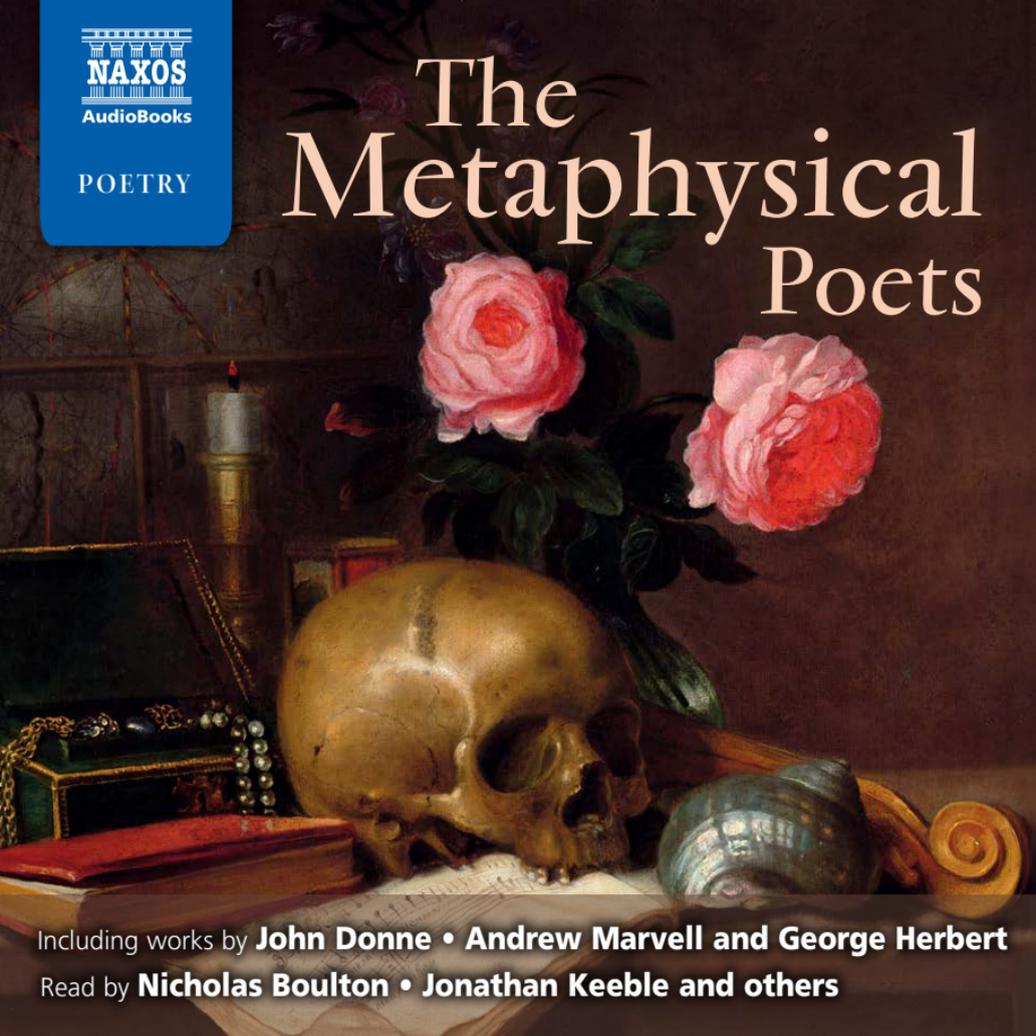


The logo for NAXOS AudioBooks, featuring the word "NAXOS" in a bold, serif font above the word "AudioBooks" in a smaller, sans-serif font, all contained within a blue rectangular box with a decorative border.

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POETRY

The background is a detailed still life painting. In the center, a human skull rests on an open book. To the left, a lit candle in a brass holder stands next to a green velvet cushion with gold trim and a string of pearls. To the right, a vase holds two large, vibrant pink roses. In the foreground, a blue ceramic bowl and a wooden scroll are visible. The scene is set against a dark, textured wall.

The Metaphysical Poets

Including works by **John Donne • Andrew Marvell and George Herbert**

Read by **Nicholas Boulton • Jonathan Keeble and others**

John Donne (1572–1631)

Read by Geoffrey Whitehead and Will Keen

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | The Anniversary * | 2:01 |
| 2 | The Good Morrow * | 1:30 |
| 3 | The Sun Rising + | 1:56 |
| 4 | The Canonisation + | 2:33 |
| 5 | A Valediction Forbidding Mourning * | 2:01 |
| 6 | A Nocturnal Upon St Lucy's Day * | 2:51 |
| 7 | The Flea + | 1:57 |
| 8 | The Relic + | |

George Herbert (1593–1633)

Read by Jonathan Keeble

| | | |
|----|------------|------|
| 9 | The Collar | 1:51 |
| 10 | Redemption | 0:53 |
| 11 | Love I | 1:01 |
| 12 | Love II | 1:02 |
| 13 | Love III | 1:06 |
| 14 | Jordan I | 1:01 |
| 15 | Jordan II | 1:14 |
| 16 | The Pearl | 2:40 |
| 17 | The Flower | 2:36 |

* *Read by Geoffrey Whitehead*

+ *Read by Will Keen*

Andrew Marvell (1621–1678)

Read by Nicholas Boulton

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|------|
| 18 | To His Coy Mistress | 2:49 |
| 19 | The Coronet | 1:39 |
| 20 | The Definition of Love | 1:51 |
| 21 | The Garden | 4:06 |
| 22 | On a Drop of Dew | 2:12 |

Henry Vaughan (1621–1695)

Read by Roy McMillan

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------------|------|
| 23 | The Retreat | 1:50 |
| 24 | The World | 3:27 |
| 25 | They Are All Gone Into the World of Light | 2:19 |

Richard Crashaw (1613–1649)

Read by Nicholas Boulton

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|------|
| 26 | To His (Supposed) Mistress | 5:32 |
| 27 | To Our Lord, Upon the Water Made Wine | |

Thomas Carew (1595–1640)

Read by Nicholas Boulton

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------------|------|
| 28 | Mediocrity in Love Rejected – | 1:00 |
| 29 | To a Lady That Desired I Would Love Her | 1:59 |
| 30 | The Spring | 1:41 |

Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648)

Read by Roy McMillan

- 31 Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury – To His Watch... 0:57

Francis Quarles (1592–1644)

Read by Jonathan Keeble

- 32 Hoc Ego Versiculos 1:26
33 On Time 0:48
34 On the World 0:26

Katherine Philips (1632–1664)

Read by Laura Paton

- 35 Against Love 0:59

John Hall (1627–1656)

Read by Nicholas Boulton

- 36 John Hall – On an Hourglass 3:26

Thomas Traherne (1636–1674)

Read by Jonathan Keeble

- 37 Thomas Traherne – Shadows in the Water 3:42

Richard Lovelace (1618–1657)

Read by Nicholas Boulton

- 38 To Lucasta, Going to the Wars 0:44
39 The Scrutiny 1:08

Sir William Davenant (1606–1668)

Read by Nicholas Boulton

- [40] Aubade The Lark Now Leaves... 0:55

Sir John Suckling (1609–1642)

Read by Nicholas Boulton

- [41] Sir John Suckling – Of Thee, Kind Boy, I Ask No Red and White 1:21
[42] Out Upon It, I Have Lov'd 0:49

Edmund Waller (1606–1687)

Read by Jonathan Keeble

- [43] Edmund Waller – Of the Last Verses in the Book 1:21

Total time: 79:31

Credits

Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London

Edited and mastered by Sarah Butcher

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Cover picture: *Still Life with a Skull* by Letellier (fl.1668–94); courtesy of the Bridgeman Art Library.

The Metaphysical Poets

About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets ... who were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour ... The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs and their subtlety surprises; but the reader, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.

So wrote the great Doctor Johnson in 1779, and his words are still a valid summary of what we understand by 'the metaphysical poets', led by John Donne, and including George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Thomas Carew, and Andrew Marvell. Johnson was using the word metaphysical not in any strict philosophical sense, but to indicate that these poets explored subtle and complex ideas and imagery. What has changed since Johnson is his final judgement that readers were not pleased by these poets: at the time he was undoubtedly correct, and for the next century and more, Donne and his school were seen as difficult, cold, unemotional writers. All that changed

in the early twentieth century, when the Metaphysicals came to be recognised as daring, experimental poets, who blended thought and feeling in an exciting way, a way that was new to its own time, and new once again in the modern age. In the romantic era, Coleridge had complained that Donne had 'Wreathed iron pokers into true-love knots.'

Donne's poetry laid the ground rules for Metaphysical verse, and the essence of what he was trying to do was to find an intellectual language that would link the physical world with the abstract or spiritual world. The method that he devised was to force radically dissimilar ideas and images together. A classic example is the poem

'The Flea', where the writer complains that his beloved will not consummate their love; and yet, he argues, they are already married, made one flesh, through a flea which has bitten them both and sucked their blood and thus mingled their beings within his tiny body. The flea is not an image in any normal poetic sense, but a vehicle for subtle, intellectual argument. It is as though Donne had decided to rewrite the conventional love poetry of the Elizabethan songbird-poets, with their emotive, rhetorical praise of feminine beauty. Donne's poetry was of two distinct types: the carnal, intellectualised love poetry written as a young man, and the profound devotional verse, composed after he had taken holy orders; yet here too he employed intellectual imagery, conceits, and paradox, as when he proclaims that he can never be free until God enthrals him, never chaste until God ravishes him.

Carnal love and religious faith are the two great themes of all metaphysical verse, although usually they come from different writers, not from one writer with two distinct voices like Donne. The

other characteristic of this verse is that it usually remained unpublished in the writer's lifetime. Sometimes the poems were circulated informally in manuscripts, but for most of these writers poetry remained a purely private activity, a private exploration of their true inner world, perhaps to be shared with friends, then gathered and published after their deaths. Donne's poetry was published by his son in 1633, two years after the poet's death. In the same year George Herbert, who was also a priest, died and left his manuscripts to a friend, with instructions to burn them or publish as he thought fit. Herbert described his poetry as 'A picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed between God and my soul.' The carnality of Donne is absent, but Herbert employs radically new images to record the stages of his relationship to his God, a relationship ranging from despair to devotion, from rebellion to bliss. Henry Vaughan wrote secular verse before undergoing a religious conversion and turning to devotional poetry full of images of dawn, light, spring and regeneration. Unusually, Vaughan's work was published

in his own lifetime, while that of another devotional poet, Thomas Traherne, remained entirely unknown for two centuries. When they were discovered, his writings, radiant with visionary innocence and intensity, were at first attributed to Vaughan.

The carnality of Donne was taken to extreme, sensual heights by Thomas Carew, who wrote an elaborate and adoring elegy on Donne, saying that he had been 'First Apollo's priest then God's.' Carew was a scholar and diplomat, a royalist and a great favourite in the court of Charles I. His verse, published posthumously, is witty, but less cerebral than Donne's, and full of polished eroticism. Sir John Suckling and Richard Lovelace were men of action: soldiers, lovers, and poets who both blended something of Donne's intellectual wit with the heroic sentiments of the Cavalier, and with more conventional praises of the beloved. Both had rather lurid reputations as libertines.

Richard Crashaw was a unique figure: born of a Puritan family, but became a Roman Catholic, and lived in self-imposed

exile in Rome, becoming the only English poet of the European Baroque school. He wrote highly-coloured and crafted, sumptuous, devotional poetry, evoking the spiritual love of God through carnal imagery. One of his contemporaries called Crashaw 'a very bird of paradise.' Women who wished to be taken seriously as poets had a hard time in the seventeenth century, but Katherine Philips succeeded in establishing a reputation for wit and learning in the metaphysical style, combined with poetic grace. Known at first only to a private circle of friends, her works were published shortly before her death in 1664. Francis Quarles added a new dimension to poetry by illustrating his work with 'emblems' – symbolic pictures which drove home the message of each poem through the use of visual codes. His poetry is not exactly exalted, but through these emblems he created for himself a permanent niche in the history of English verse.

The last Metaphysical was Andrew Marvell, born only a few years after Shakespeare's death, and living well into the Reformation era. He was a scholar,

diplomat and politician, and another who wrote only for his private pleasure. After his death his poems were published by a woman who claimed to be his wife, but whom everyone believed to be his housekeeper and his mistress. In all of his output there is just one perfect poem, 'To his Coy Mistress', a love-persuasion poem on the theme of *carpe diem* – 'seize the time' or 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.'. One of the most famous poems in the language, it is an irresistible blend of music and thought, of sensuousness and wit, of frivolity and seriousness. In 'A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body,' Marvell wrote as Donne's true heir, and the culmination of the metaphysical tradition; elsewhere he wrote gracefully and with candid humour of the love he felt for a twelve-year-old girl.

Marvell died in 1678, in the age of Dryden and neo-classicism; spiritual passion or reflection, dialogues between soul and body, the application of the intellect to love or to religious devotion, were all now unwanted. The metaphysical style had seen the flowering of half a dozen poets of genius who had in their

different ways explored the boundaries of the physical and the spiritual; but now their works were condemned to sleep and darkness, waiting to be awakened more than two centuries later by a new age that was ready for their subtlety and power.

Notes by Peter Whitfield



Nicholas Boulton studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, winning the BBC Carleton Hobbs Award for Radio in 1993. Since then he has been heard in numerous productions for BBC Radio 4 and the World Service. Work for Naxos AudioBooks includes Cecil in *Lady Windermere's Fan* and most recently *David Copperfield* and *Ancient Egypt – The Glory of the Pharaohs*. Film work includes *Shakespeare in Love* and *Topsy Turvy*. Theatre credits include *Platonov* for the Almeida, *Henry V* for the RSC and *Arcadia* for the Theatre Royal Haymarket.



Jonathan Keeble combines his audio work with a busy theatre and TV career. He has featured in over 500 radio plays for the BBC, from Shakespeare to Sherlock Holmes. He also played the evil Owen in *The Archers*. Much in demand for his voicework, this ranges from the audio guide for the Sistine Chapel to voicing the Angel of Death in the film *Hellboy 2*. An award-winning reader, Jonathan has recorded over 100 audiobooks.



Will Keen's theatre credits include *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Tempest*, *Antigone* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, as well as playing the title role in *Macbeth* and De Flores in *The Changeling*, both directed by Declan Donnellan. His television credits include *Foyle's War*, *Wired*, *Casualty 1907*, *The Colour of Magic*, *Holby City*, *Murphy's Law* and *The Bill*.



Roy McMillan is a director, writer, actor and abridger. For Naxos AudioBooks he has read *The Body Snatcher and Other Stories*, *Bulldog Drummond*, *The French Revolution – In a Nutshell*, *Cathedrals – In a Nutshell* and the introductions to works by Nietzsche and the Ancient Greeks. He has directed readings of Hardy, Hopkins, Kipling, Milton and Blake; Austen, Murakami, Conrad and Bulgakov, among many others; and has written podcasts and sleevenotes, as well as biographies of Milton and Poe. He has also directed plays for BBC Radio 3 and 4.



Laura Paton trained at LAMDA where she won the St. Phillip's Prize for Poetry and the Michael Warre Award. She has toured the UK extensively in productions as varied as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. Other recordings for Naxos AudioBooks include *Orlando*, *Anna Karenina* and *Grimms' Fairy Tales*.



Geoffrey Whitehead trained at RADA. His theatre credits include Alan Ayckbourn's *Three Men in a Boat*, the role of Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, Ivor Fish in Tom Stoppard's *Rough Crossing*, Polonius in *Hamlet* at the Norwich Playhouse, as well as appearing in *Henry V*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Othello* and *King Lear* in Stratford and London. His television credits include *Z Cars*, *Upstairs Downstairs*, *The Sweeney*, *Poirot*, *Young Indiana Jones*, *Midsommer Murders* and *Little Britain*.

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POETRY
UNABRIDGED

Including works by **John Donne • Andrew Marvell
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Read by **Nicholas Boulton • Jonathan Keeble and others**

John Donne, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, Thomas Carew and Henry Vaughan: these were some of the seventeenth-century writers who devised a new form of poetry full of wit, intellect and grace, which we now call Metaphysical poetry. They wrote about their deepest religious feelings and their carnal pleasures in a way that was radically new and challenging to their readers. Their work was largely misunderstood or ignored for two centuries, until twentieth-century critics rediscovered it, finding in it a deep originality and a willingness to experiment that made much conventional poetry look merely decorative. This collection provides the perfect introduction to this diverse group of fascinating poets.

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