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Reframing romantic consciousness in John Donne and D. H. Lawrence's perception of the woman in metaphysical and modern poetry

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Abstract

This paper examines the place of the woman in Romantic thought with focus on the poetry of John Donne and D. H. Lawrence. Given that Donne and Lawrence are not "Romantic" poets in the real sense of the word but have written Romantic poems, the paper focuses on how their attitude towards the woman is Romantic in nature. Though from the Renaissance and the Modern periods respectively, their poetry articulates the rich quality of human sensibilities with the woman at the centre of this artistic experience. The reframing of Romantic consciousness in Donne and Lawrence's poetry manifests in the poets' conceited diction as opposed to the Romanticists' whose imagination prized the aesthetic experience and the sublimity of untamed nature in all its ramification. Wit, conceit, syllogisms, passionate intensity, and absurd deviances are the poets' conscious attempt in the search for unity of being. Comparative representations of the woman are drawn from the works of key Romantic figures like William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, and John Keats. The Romantic theory and Ecofeminism guide the analyses, and the discussions reveal their sensibilities towards the woman. It further unfolds how both poets' quest for ethereal values permit them to advocate peace and spiritual growth in societies where man is regularly disconnected from his/her spiritual essence.

Keywords: love, nature, place, poetry, renaissance, role, romantic, woman

Public Interest Statement

This paper is inspired by some controversies that often arise in romantic discourses especially when limited to the great romantic poets like Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Byron. The paper focuses on Donne and Lawrence, not as “Romantic” poets per se, but as Renaissance and the Modern poets who wrote romantic poetry and articulated the rich quality of human sensibilities with the woman at the centre of their artistic experience. Therefore, the reframing of Romantic consciousness in Donne and Lawrence’s poetry manifests in the poets’ conceited diction as opposed to the Romantics’ whose imagination prized the aesthetic experience and the sublimity of untamed nature in all its ramification.

Introduction

The term “romantic poetry”, according to Wellek (1994), was used first of Ariosto and Tasso and the mediaeval romances from which their themes and “machinery” were derived (p.3). It occurs in this sense in France in 1669, in England in 1674. In Warton’s writings and those of several of his contemporaries, Wellek (ibid) says a contrast is implied between this “romantic” literature, both mediaeval and Renaissance, and the whole tradition of literary art as it came down from classical antiquity. The Romantic Movement in the 19th century, therefore, revived most of the renaissance principles like the love for nature, which had simply hibernated because of emphasis on reason in the renaissance period. Romanticism ended before the mid nineteenth century but its principles did not end with the period from 1500-1600. Although the period prized reason over imagination, metaphysical poets like John Donne of the later part of the period used conceit to extol nature and imagination relating individuals and the whole of humanity to land through metaphysical conceit. In the twentieth century, David H. Lawrence is perceived as one of the modern poets whose poetry handles the spiritual yearning of modern man in connection to the environment and his/her internal spiritual wrangling as a result of wars and catastrophes in the twentieth century. This continuous flow of Romantic values from the Renaissance right up to the Modern period shows that the desire to preserve a cordial relationship between man and his environment; man and God, and man and his fellow man is not coincidental. The Classics, as well as the Romantics, had advocated man’s protection of the environment because of the innumerable values it possesses. Janik (1983) in “D.H. Lawrence and Environmental Consciousness” observes man’s superiority to all unnatural elements and calls on humans to manipulate nature to their advantage. According to him,

There exist within that tradition, the beginnings of an alternative worldview that acknowledges environmental realities and questions or contradicts the prevailing belief in the rightness of man’s attempts to dominate nature[...] it was evident in the embryonic form in the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century; but although the romantics valued- sometimes even “worshipped” external nature[...] Lawrence looks at the human species as a part of a larger living whole, valuing that whole in its complexity and integrity. Post humanism values all living things and the inorganic environment on which they depend, recognizing that all life and the conditions that sustain life are interrelated. (p. 359)

Janik in this preceding quote posits that it is a tradition to acknowledge the environment but puts to question man’s desire to dominate nature. By mentioning post-humanism the critic draws a link between humans (as nature) and other parts of nature within the environment. This goes in line with the idea that the environment is interconnected and constitutes an important factor in romantic consciousness as demonstrated in the poetry of Donne and Lawrence.

Williams (1990) examines Donne and his inner link between the love of God and the love of man and Woman in what he calls “Romantic theology” (p. 1). According to the critic, God is experienced in Romantic love, “God, as love has been in the romantic experience from the beginning, and the more we learn about it, the more we learn about him” (p. 61). The critic further ascertains that the first person to present spirituality in love is Dante. He compares him to Donne whom he believes writes poetry that explores the two sides: love poetry and religious poetry. Unlike Williams, Frayne (2017) brings to lamplight the role of the woman in Donne’s poetry. Here Donne’s poetry, particularly, “To His Mistress Going to Bed”, is situated within the larger early modern conversation about women’s reproductive power and artificial birth (p. 58). This repositioning aligns with the idea of situating the woman in the context of her role and contribution in building romantic consciousness which was not negligible even from the Renaissance as demonstrated on this paper.

According to Burke (1947) quotes Monroe who states that Donne “does not fit into classifications, and so personal is his attitude toward any subject that we cannot associate him with specific and well-defined currents of opinion or schools of thought” (p. 294). This view of Donne’s uniqueness is deconstructionist. It reveals Donne as a poet who breaks off from Renaissance ideals and adopts a philosophy of his own which on this paper is considered reframing of Romantic consciousness.

While some critics have preoccupied themselves with D.H. Lawrence’s experimentation in poetry and in the novel, Ishikawa (2005) re-evaluates Lawrence’s poems, using a new interpretative approach: a meta-poetic reading to note that Lawrence owes a lot to his predecessors, the English Romantics. This is so as the literary value of Lawrence’s poems can be understood more clearly by comparing his work with the works of poets who come before him. Ishikawa examines Lawrence’s poems in a three-dimensional critical space, stressing on the fact that Lawrence, like the Romantics tend to privilege inspiration as the absolute origin of poetry, which reflects the poet’s careful intent to avoid blindly following his precursors, while still drawing influence from them. Ishikawa, however notes that Lawrence, unlike many Romantics who take the act of perceiving an object for granted and give it little attention, is acutely aware of the limitations of the rational and analytical act of perception, and struggles with how to overcome the limitations of the dichotomous world view which has dominated European thought for centuries, and how he struggles to overcome it.

In a similar manner, Rehan (2004) in *Rationalism and D. H. Lawrence: A 21st Century Perspective*, paints Lawrence as a poet who rejects rationalism over emotions and feelings. The work traces the development of rationalism in the Western tradition and relates Lawrence’s resistance towards it, as opposed to other romantics. It also examines modern theoretical developments and notes their convergence with Lawrence’s ideas. Rehan concludes by claiming that the postmodern intellectual climate in the West tends towards a critique of rationalism, much like Lawrence. To Rehan, the challenge of the rule of reason by the Romantics, stands as the primary inspiration for Lawrence’s attack on the rationalist tradition, arguing for a valuing of feeling and instinct, a position for which he took much abuse from the proponents of rationalism.

Both Ishikawa and Rehan underline the fact that Lawrence’s poetry reflects a rejection of the rationalism in favour of imagination and feelings. To them, the limitations of rationalized poetry acted as a source of Lawrence’s inspiration. This goes in line with Gray et al. (2011) who explore the dialectic between reason and imagination in Romantic and post-Romantic philosophy and literature. They stress on the fact that by the end of the eighteenth century, an insistence on reason as the major human faculty had run its course, and imagination had emerged as another force whose contributions to human intellectual existence and efficiency had to be newly measured. Thus, modernism from the end of the eighteenth century to present day, according to them, is an attempt to establish a general form of reason along a plurality of imaginative capacities. A range of German and British philosophers and poets like Kant, Hegel, Schiller, Blake, Keats, and Goethe demonstrate that there can be a universal and monolithic form of reason that tolerates the flexibility, and unpredictability

of imaginative creativity. It is this argument that enhances the notion of the reframing of Romantic consciousness in this paper. While Donne is distinctively personal as the Romantic poets, Lawrence too is personal, yet uses his personal experiences to objectify the modern world and the need for man to value the environment in order to instil progress, peace and stability in human existence.

The Conceptual Discourse

It is important to state that Romanticism was an intellectual and artistic movement that originated in the second half of the 18th century. It was a diehard response against the scientific rationalisation of nature during the Enlightenment and also a reaction against the material changes in society, which accompanied the up-and-coming industrial capitalism in the late eighteenth century. The birth of this movement came with the publication of Wordsworth and *Lyrical Ballads*. In the "Preface", Coleridge calls on mankind to return to the imagination, and ordinariness in terms of poetic diction. He refers to the poet as "prophet" and not "the transcriber of other men's truth. The poet was the initiator of truth itself" (Gill, p. 216).

In Romantic theory and criticism, emphasis on the individual led to an incomparable focus on poetry as the private expression of the poet. Romanticism was thus a development that aimed at countering the traditionalism of neoclassicism. Writers who felt the need of a release from the classical imprisonment include William Wordsworth, William Blake, Samuel Coleridge, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Their art was intimately bound up with their personal impressions, moods, feelings, and sentiments that portrayed their love for and adoration of nature. Donne and Lawrence in the Renaissance and Modern societies respectively though not under stifled constraints, have explored such qualities.

A significant trait of Romantic theory was emphasis on historical stages of development. The changing social, political, and economic conditions around them incited many thinkers to brood over literary and cultural history. According to Shelley, this literary spirit is the accompaniment of political and social revolution probably the French and American Revolutions. The Population movement from the land, and cogent search for economically efficient production methods during the industrial revolution led, according to the Romantic Movement, to spiritual estrangement of the masses from the land and nature. This was regarded as adverse for humans and this led to a turn in the trend of activities as the Romantics, advocated a back to nature solution because nature was seen as pure and a spiritual source of renewal. Lawrence's poetry is analysed in the light of "a back to nature" revolution against the urbanization of his twentieth century society. Abercrombie (1963) in *Romanticism* states that the Romantic theory is a set of principles which can be valued at any period to greater or lesser degrees. He continues that:

In dealing with [the term Romantic] I shall concern myself with the essential nature of the thing thus named by an accident throughout its whole expansion, rather than with the historic bearing of the name; with the uses of an intelligible word which criticism has found not only intelligible but necessary[...] romanticism is a withdrawal from an outer experience in order to concentrate on inner experience... it is when inner experience assumes the first importance, still more when it assumes the only importance in the composite fact of life, that Romanticism appears. (p. 8)

Abercrombie in the foregoing quotation notes that Romantic theory is a particular set of ideas to be plucked from different historical situations with the possibility of being valued at any particular time. Also, these ideas have to focus first primarily on our inner experiences before the outer ones. Abercrombie situates his idea by quoting Percy Shelley, the English Romantic poet but however notes that Shelley exhibits a different aspect of this same inward movement. In fact, to him, Shelley's Romanticism is:

a priori, an original refulgence for the outer necessities of life in this world, for the gross embodiment enclosing a spirit longing for freedom ... it was Shelley's nature to advocate a journey inward in order to find poetry and counter the outer necessities of a lost world. (p. 113)

In *The Nature of Love: Courtly and Romantic*, Singer (1987) provides the origin for much of the Romantic concept of love. She quotes how Hegel attacked Kant in ways that reveal the ontological bases of romanticism as it developed in the nineteenth century. She presents the controversies relating to the concept of the Romantic, as it has been argued that the term "romantic" holds so many meanings. According to her, for the last sixty years, no one school of thought or model of thinking can accurately define or represent what has been referred to as Romantic. What has passed as Romanticism in one European country has had little in common with romanticism in another, resulting in a "plurality of Romanticisms" that has led to romanticisms which are antithetical to one another.

Romanticism, according to Barzun (1943) in *Romanticism and the Modern Ego* is "a great revolution which drew the intellect of Europe [...] from the expectation and desire of fixity into desire and expectation of change" (p.32). He goes on to reinstate that Romantic Theory is:

A return to the Middle Ages, a love of the exotic, the revolt from reason, a vindication of the individual, a liberation of the unconscious, a reaction against scientific method, a revival of pantheism, a revival of idealism, a revival of Catholicism, a rejection of artistic conventions, a return to emotionalism, a return to nature. (p. 32)

Barzun's definition captures what Romantic Theory embodies. It is a revolt against, liberation from, revival of aesthetic values of the classical era in a bid to accentuate the love of nature, the individual and collective liberty. This nature often constructed by a divine imagination, in emblematic language meant many things to the Romantics. While perspectives with regard to nature varied considerably - nature as a healing power, nature as a source of subject and image, nature as a refuge from the artificial constructs of civilization, - the prevailing views accorded nature the status of an organically unified whole.

Ecofeminism, a branch of eco-criticism, helps to establish the link between women in relation to nature. In Eco-feminist culture a communal interdependency replaces the hierarchies of supremacy as the model of relationships between men and women; and between humans and other living things. It is concerned with those aspects of women's social and natural lives and their connections to the non-human world. According to Plumwood (1993), Ecofeminism has the potential to bring feminist insights to environmental ethics. Also, Collard, as Seager (1993) notes, states:

The identity and destiny of women and nature are merged. Accordingly, feminist values and principles directed towards ending the oppression of women are inextricably linked to ecological values and principles directed towards ending the oppression of nature. It is ultimately the affirmation of our kinship with nature, of our common life with her, which will prove the source of our mutual well-being. (p. 8)

From the forgoing quotation, we observe the eco-feminist view that the efforts towards ending female oppression should be directed linked to those towards ending the oppression of nature. Seager continues that work, culture, nature and daily life were interwoven into a flawless web, and a nurturing, female-identified earth was considered to be the root of all life (p. 87).

The Woman in Romantic Consciousness

Even though Donne and Lawrence are from the Renaissance and the Modern periods respectively, their poetry articulate the rich quality of human sensibilities with the woman at the centre of this artistic experience. That said, reframing Romantic consciousness in Donne and Lawrence's poetry manifests in the poets' conceited diction as opposed to the Romantics in the nineteenth century whose imagination prized the aesthetic experience and the sublimity of untamed nature in all its ramification. Wit, conceit, syllogisms, passionate intensity and absurd deviances are the poets' conscious attempt in the search for unity of being with woman figure at the centre. Donne's perception of the woman is guided by Renaissance ideals given that he wrote at a time when the woman was not accorded much importance, and when several justifications for women's inferiority were drawn even from the Bible.

Before Romanticism, men and women were thought of as possessing fundamentally different qualities and virtues. While men, as the stronger sex, were perceived as intelligent, courageous, and determined, women, on the other hand, were ruled by their emotions, and their virtues were expected to be chastity, modesty, compassion, and piety. In fact, women's sins were viewed as the result of their tendency to be governed by their bodies and their emotions, notably lust, excessive passion, and laziness. Commenting upon the devaluation of women in the English Augustan period, Richardson (1998) in "Romanticism and the Colonization of the feminine" notes that "women, considered sensible but not reasonable, were all but denied status as human, that is, as rational beings" (p.12). However, the advent of Romanticism, in the late eighteenth century brought the commencement of the British Cultural Revolution. With the increasing power of the new middle class, women's roles began to evolve. The economic changes brought by the new middle class provided women with the opportunity to be more directly involved in assisting their husbands in work outside the home. This brought about different images for women as reflected in the works of great romantic figures like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron.

In the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* and in some of the ballads themselves, Wordsworth criticizes traditional notions of gender and envisions a radical union of "masculine" and "feminine" (Gill, 4). Wordsworth acknowledges the important role women play in society, noting that reciprocal relationships among men and women in nature will improve human existence in "Tintern Abbey". In this poem he notes that his sister can contribute to the practice of the principle of life in human society and the discipline of love in the natural world. Ross (1986) observes in "Naturalizing Gender: Women's Place in Wordsworth's Ideological Landscape" that "the male naturalizes the female's social role by asserting the intimacy between femininity and nature" (p.14). Ross also suggests that even though superficially, Wordsworth appears to promote a proper "feminine" education. This shows that Wordsworth's interest in the relationship between men and nature adds importance to rather than devalues the women.

The images of women in Wordsworth's poetry are closely linked to his study of nature. He examines the absence of a feminized natural world by juxtaposing the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. Since Romantic poetry heralds the spirit of freedom, Wordsworth infuses his poetry with the theme of feminine and natural liberation from domination and violence and anticipates the establishment of symbiosis in which there is no male oppression or human exploitation. In *The Prelude*, he creates a positive space for the feminine. His view of the feminine is associated to values such as nurturing, community, and beauty. In effect, *The Prelude* is an interesting text for studying the origins of Wordsworth's understanding of aesthetic categories in terms of conventions of femininity. This positive feminine space glaring in the poetry of both Donne and Lawrence takes the form of adoration of the female sex as an embodiment of love and as a link to nature.

Donne's "Canonization" advocates a radical union of the "masculine" and "feminine". The poem opens with the absolute statement "For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love" (Helen 30). This sets the pitch for the rest of the poem and introduces the reader to the poem's subject matter:

love. The persona suggests to his friend not to mingle in his relationship, so that he might love in peace. The speaker goes on to say that his friend should "Call us what you will, we are made such by love" (Helen 30) meaning it does not matter what he calls them because they are who they are because they love one another. The persona goes on to state that he and his lover are now one, a gender neutral being, who are completely equal in their standing which is suggestive of the symbiotic relation between males and females advocated by Wordsworth in his poetry. Stanza three introduces Donne's conceit as he compares these lovers to flies, candles (which will burn out), eagles and doves. These metaphors go to emphasize Donne's exaltation of wit and his use of a psychological realism when describing the tensions of love (something particular with metaphysical poets). In using this style to express the Romantic ideal of freedom of expression of feelings and emotions, Donne stands different from the Modernist style of Lawrence. Donne's vision for the society is therefore that, since it is natural for love to exist in every society, love like other aspects of nature (flies, eagles, doves) should not be disturbed. This is so as a disturbance of love will break the peace and harmony that comes with it which may lead to war.

In "After Many Days", Lawrence presents a similar positive feminine space. The poem opens with the speaker inquiring about the nature of his lover's love for him. He expresses his love and appreciates her through a series of similes. He states that "if with you, as it is with me/ about you as a garment" (p.16) to show how much he wants a symbiotic relationship between the two of them. This parallels Wordsworth's idea of "a positive feminine image" earlier discussed. The female lover is perceived by the persona as an embodiment of love and her freedom is expressed when he wishes she can return this love by even hurting him when he says "if only you would repulse me, a wound would be/ Good; it will let the ache come through" (p.16). All these go to emphasize the fact that Lawrence like other Romantics perceives the woman from a positive feminine perspective. To him, a woman is a symbol of unity of being and souls. The persona's desire for his lover's love parallels the search for peace and harmony by humans in the environment. Donne and Lawrence present the woman in a gentle, gendered-free, and respectful manner. It holds still that, to some extent, there are negative views about the woman in Romantic thought where she is perceived as nature incarnate, an embodiment of love, and as a destructive force.

The Woman in the traditional society was valued for her role as a mother. As Kristeva (1986) in "Staba Mater" notes, "[w]e live in a civilization where the consecrated (religious or secular) representation of femininity is absorbed by motherhood" (p.161). While we stress the limitations of women as maternal beings, their identity as sovereign human beings was celebrated during the Romantic period. In fact, the mother figure brought forth and nurtured the child. Since the child and its innocence were greatly celebrated by Romantics, women were related to nature as through them, nature could incarnate. Consequently, "Mother Nature" and "Mother Earth" are common expressions in Romantic poetry which capture the woman as nature incarnate probably because humans emanated from dust and the woman does an extra role in bringing forth other humans. In addition, Paglia (1990) in *Sexual Personae* suggests that the connection of women with nature results from their similar procreative power. According to eco-feminists, this metaphorical link between nature and mother seems to stress and praise the motherly characteristics of natural environments.

Donne's "The Good Morrow" explores the fact that a woman's presence brings life to the persona and evokes a new vision, a vision which makes him ask several rhetorical questions concerning their existence like "I wonder...what thou and I did, till we loved" (Helen 26). By alluding to "the seven sleepers den", he emphasizes the importance of his birth to a new world through the woman. He further elaborates on this through the phrase "Good morrow our waking souls" as he uses it to describe the days to come. Donne uses conceit to relate this natural world he finds through the woman, to new worlds to be discovered by "sea discoverers", thus making the woman and the sea synonymous. Donne's vision here is that through the woman, nature can be perceived and that

there is a deep interfusion between the woman and nature.

In the "Sunne Rising", Donne handles a similar idea through the use of a metaphor where the woman is likened to the sun. In making natural his woman, the persona debases the sun referring to it as "Busie old foole, unruly Sunne". To him, his lover's eyes can serve as a better sun as he says to the sun "if her eyes have not blinded thine,/looke, and tomorrow late, tell me"(Helen 29). The incarnation of nature here is seen through the woman's eyes, which according to the persona, are capable of giving birth to nature. If the poet through the woman's eyes can see the sun and feel the effects then the woman's eyes are a source of energy which cannot only come from the sun. Through the woman's eyes, the poet sees unity of being, love, peace and harmony. The role the woman's eyes play is the same role, water, trees, fire, and other natural resources can play in human life. Donne (Helen 29) also likens his persona's lover to other aspects of nature through the images of Indian spices and mines, suggesting that all the beautiful things nature can offer have been brought close to him, thanks to the woman lying on the bed with him.

Lawrence's "A Baby Running Barefoot" explores the natural and innocent nature of a baby, a woman's offspring. In treating the child's innocence and splendour as the subject matter, Lawrence seems to be valorising the woman's ability to incarnate nature. The persona states that he longs "for the baby to wander hither to [him]" (p.9) like a wind-shadow over the water. In using images like "bare feet across the grass", "white feet nod like flowers in the wind", "run like ripples[...] across the water", "as two white butterflies in[...] one flower", and "firm and silken like pink young peony flowers" (p.9), Lawrence portrays the cosmic unity that exists between this child and other elements of nature. The rhythm, dominated by the iambic metre, which is slow, suggests the child's slow pace across the grass as the persona longs for her to "wander hither to him"(p.9). It is worth stating here that Lawrence's view of the woman as nature in this poem parallels Wordsworth's constant perception of nature as female. Wordsworth makes use of the female pronoun "she" to depict nature and in "Expostulation and Reply" where he presents "Mother Earth" to mean the natural environment. Moreover, in "The Immortality Ode", the concept that nature and the mother are synonymous in caring for men is clearly presented. In Lawrence's opinion, there is a maternal bond between humans and nature. If nature is destroyed the harmony between humans that comes with this bond will also be broken as the destruction of nature here is synonymous to the destruction of the woman and vice versa. In the same light, the woman can be seen as nature incarnate when Wordsworth opines that, "The Child is the father of Man" in his poem "My Heart Leaps Up" because the child's innocence is closely linked to the splendour and freshness which grown-ups lack.

In "Brooding Grief", Lawrence takes on a similar perspective where he projects the woman as nature incarnate through the persona's grieving. The persona through a rhetorical question describes his situation as hopeless because his mother is on her death bed. He then stresses his mother's importance by stating that "I was watching the woman that bore me/ stretched in the brindled darkness [...] a quick leaf tore [me]" (p.31). Through images like "tore me", "yellow leaf from the darkness", and "traffic mingled before me" (p.31), a picture of the persona's feelings is captured when he realizes that his mother might die. If the thought of a mother's absence cuts a son off himself, then she is definitely a form of nature that humans cannot do without. This notion of the mother is a universal one. No mother in the world should be treated any differently.

In "Elegy", Lawrence portrays the woman as nature dwelling among other elements of nature at death. The speaker starts by acknowledging how "the sky has come near", "the small sharp stars are quite near" (p.51) because his lover, the woman is in them. In linking the woman to other aspects of nature through a series of metaphors, the poet shows the cosmic harmony present in the persona's environment. The speaker cannot live further without her as man cannot live without nature and so he wishes he could be with her for he is tired of "the dome of the earth"(p.51). He personifies the wind, referring to it as "breathing wind", and the moon as "going moon" to relate them to his lover

who dwells in the sky with them (p. 51). In giving these human qualities to nature, Lawrence allies with the Romantic view that nature is alive and so should be adored. As much as we respect life, so should we respect nature because even the carcass of buried humans resides in nature.

A similar picture of the woman is painted in Lawrence's "The Virgin Mother" through his speaker who adores his mother for blessing him twice. "Once from your womb, sweet mother,/ once from myself" (p. 122). In alluding biblically to her as "virgin mother", Lawrence stresses the purity of this woman and her importance in her son's life. Through the repetition of "life" in relation to his mother, this persona reiterates the woman as human creator or a giver of life. When she dies, he calls her "a seed in the night time" to show how she will sprout up like a plant to take a place in his memory. The idea of human rejuvenation in nature is revisited here to show how Lawrence as a modernist poet pays great attention to the fact that the woman is synonymous to nature. If we respect the woman, we are in turn respecting nature and vice versa. This suggests that Donne and Lawrence, like Romantics and Eco-feminists, relate the woman to nature or perceive them in like manner. Even though Donne does this from a metaphysical perspective through the use of wit and conceit, and Lawrence from a modernist point of view, in many ways, they seem to be suggesting that the love and respect shown to the woman for her role as giver of life should be equal to the love and respect shown towards nature for its revitalizing value to humans.

Powell (2014) in "Romantic Feminism" examines the Romantic Period from a feminist perspective as one that laid so much emphasis on the feelings and emotions of both sexes. Her article focuses on gender equality during the Romantic Period stating that it called for a shift in values which encouraged humans to interact with each other. She states that "the Romantic atmosphere, vibrating with ideas about individual liberty, and freedom of expression of feelings and emotions seemed ideal for recognizing women as deserving equals" (p.1). Such an atmosphere thus encouraged the portrayal of women in poetry as possessing love. It is worth stating here that, in the early nineteenth century, the Romantic poets, remarkably Samuel Taylor Coleridge, were struck by how Donne's poetry exhibited love at play. In "On Donne's Poetry", Coleridge wrote:

With Donne, whose muse on dromedary trots,
Wreath iron pokers into true-love knots;
Rhyme's sturdy cripple, fancy's maze and clue.
Wit's forge and fire-blast, meaning's press and screw. (p.1)

From this we perceive that Donne in his poetry can turn the most impossible situations into true/ amazing love stories. In fact, his enormous use of conceit, wit, and other metaphysical styles really make this possible. Majerhold (2022) in "History of Love" identifies four types of love: agape, eros, philia and storge. Agape refers to the love of God for man and of man for God; eros to intimate love that can also apply to dating relationships as well as marriage; storge is natural affection, like that felt by parents for offspring; and philia is affectionate regard in friendship usually between equals. Our focus in this section is on eros and storge as the feelings of love in this analysis are portrayed by male personae to their female lovers and to a lesser extent, their mothers. We note that in valorising the woman's worth, these poets portray the woman as capable of evoking the feelings of love embedded in the man which is supposed to be natural.

Donne's "The Extasie" is a nineteen stanza poem which explores the woman in the light of erotic love. The persona professes the love he feels owing to his union with his lover. This is glaring through Donne's use of conceit, an aspect of style characteristic of his poetry. Indeed, through the persona he compares the lover's union to "a pillow on the bed", "sepulchral statues" and cemented hands, to emphasize the extent of their love (p. 44). The fact that the speaker's lover keeps him occupied all day, further portrays her as possessing love. The images of "love refin'd", "good love",

extasie, and “a new connection”, stress the quality of love this couple shares. The optimism that Donne expresses is captured when he states:

A single violet transplant,
The strength, the colour, and the size,
(all which before was poore, and scant,)
redoubles still, and multiplies.

when love, with one another so
Interinanimates two soules,
That abler soule, which thence doth flow,
Defects of lonelinesse controules. (p. 45)

Donne compares this new love in terms of strength, colour, and size which to him has multiplied. To him, when love is reciprocated, it merges two souls to one. Donne here is encouraging the harmony between humans as seen when he states that the mingling of two sends off loneliness. This harmony will encourage a peaceful environment which is needed by all humans. Correspondingly, Donne’s “The Flea” praises the woman’s loving ability. Through the symbol of the flea, (which is seen as a unifying factor between the two lovers) Donne’s subject matter of love is reflected in his rhyme which is continuous (aabbccddeeff). This lyrical note is suggestive of the smoothness of the love affair, which the persona realizes as a result of his union with his woman (p. 25). It is important to note here that this type of love is necessary for the unity of being in the environment Romantics advocate. The tiniest element of nature as nature and love go hand in glove should not be ignore here. No doubt a rose flower symbolizes love.

Lawrence, on his part, is not any different as he portrays the woman as possessing love. In “Drunk”, his persona longs for a lover who will fill his days with love. He wishes for a lover to save him “from this haunted road”/ “of life for love and love for life,/Of hunger for little food,/ Of kissing, lost for want of a wife (p. 49). His longing for his lover in these ways symbolize the longing for peace, harmony and unity among humans without which they will be “haunted” by war. The speakers longing is almost satisfied when he meets “an erect small girl” but she is too small for him. Yet another comes who he describes through the simile, “A lilac like a lady” which goes to express the lady’s beauty. By comparing the lady to a flower, Lawrence seems aligns with the view of the ecocritic, Ruther in Gotlieb’s (1996) *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, who states “We need to think of human consciousness not as separating us as a higher species from the rest of nature but rather as a gift to enable us to learn how to harmonise our needs with the natural system around us, of which we are a dependent part” (p. 15).

Moreover, Lawrence’s “Excursion” explores the woman as an embodiment of love as the persona addresses his lover as “dear love” and longs for their going home so she can “strip[him] naked, touch [him]light” as he longs for her touch (p. 53). In “Piano”, the woman’s love for the persona is revealed through the use of a song. Her singing takes him to the days when his mother sang to him. Thus, we find aspects of both storge and erotic love here. At this point, the lover’s love serves as a link to the memories of his mother and “the old Sunday evenings at home” (p. 86). All these aspects go a long way to show that respecting the woman should be a priority as our mothers are our first loves. If every man thinks of the love showered on him by his mother, he will treat all women better.

However, in “Silence”, the persona describes his life as silent since he lost his lover. In contrasting his life to those of “the people in the streets”, he states, “since I lost you, I am silence haunted [...] I feel the silence waiting” (p. 93). It is worth noting here that, the absence of the woman will strip humanity of love, unity of being, happiness and peace. More so, in “The End” the speaker

regrets not reciprocating the love a woman showed him. He describes the situation as:

If I could have put you in my heart,
If but I could have wrapped you in myself,
How glad I should have been!
And now the chart
Of memory unrolls again to me
The course of our journey here, before we had to part. (p. 106)

Here, we see that this woman had much to offer but the persona was blind to it. His waiting for her again in the last stanza of the poem symbolizes his yearning for true love through a woman. Given that Eco-feminist consider the identity and destiny of women and nature as merged, the woman's value to the persona parallels nature's value to man. Feminist ideals in this discourse portray Donne and Lawrence's romantic consciousness towards the woman. They are against the woman's oppression while portraying her as one an embodiment of love which can bring about peace, harmony and unity needed for cordial human relationships. The woman in romantic consciousness does not only reveal pleasurable and the sublime. She is also seen as an embodiment of a destructive force and seen in the poets under study.

The Woman as 'Femme Fatale' in Romantic Consciousness

The Romantic, Keats, sees the world as a place where joy and pain are unavoidably and inextricably tied. Most often than not, the woman is blamed for the pain caused in love relationships. In <http://www.bartleby.com/126/36.html> "Lamia", Keats presents the woman through the image of a magic female snake which falls in love with a young man and leads him through deception. Also, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" portrays the woman as wild-looking, merciless, flirtatious, and disastrous to the man. Through his persona, we see that she left men with "their starved lips in the gloam,/ with horrid warning gaped wide/ Alone and palely loitering" (p. 23).

As earlier discussed, Romantic poets like Wordsworth give a very positive vision about the women, nevertheless, Wordsworth's diction tend to contradict his intentions in "She was a phantom of Delight" where the woman is described negatively comparing her to a spirit or a ghost: "Phantom", "Spirit" "Appari-tion" (p. 6). He treats the woman, like she was a ghost, or a figure in the middle between life and death. Conger (2014) in *Wordsworth's Women* furthers the idea of Wordsworth's ill treatment of women in another poem by stating that "although he is writing about the relationship between a mother and her infant, Wordsworth emphasizes the mother's dependence upon the male child rather than the infant's dependence upon his mother" (p. 13) which goes to show that Wordsworth to some extent saw females as incomplete beings whose happiness was dependent on the males.

On a similar note, some feminists and ecologists argue, with some justification, that Wordsworth's poetry portrays signs of sustaining patriarchy. The Eco-feminist, Warren (2000) in *Ecological Feminist Philosophy* lists the value hierarchy common in Western culture, which Wordsworth seems to uphold. These include reason/emotion, mind/body, and man/woman dichotomies. Anything associated with emotion, body, and women is regarded as inferior to that which is associated with reason, mind, culture, human (i.e., male), and men. In the same vein, Donne, most often than not, depicts self-other dynamics in ways that seem to suggest his encounters with women were negative. In "Loves Alchymie", the persona expresses his disgust at love relationships by refusing to "love, get, tell, till I were old" (p. 39) because his lover has failed him. He continues that he does not want to find the hidden mysteries in love as the little he has experienced is "imposture" (p. 39). He thus describes lovers as "dreame a rich and long delight but get a winter-seeming summers night" (p.39).

Such negative images go to paint a picture of the persona's view of the woman/women who led him down. In an allegorical tone, Donne seems to be advising other men to "hope not for minde in women" (p.39) for they are possessive of deadly qualities. Halsey (2015) is of the same opinion when she observes that Donne hardly concentrates on the physical appearance of the woman as he lets his reader assume she is an obscure figure. She states that:

Though Donne wrote profusely about women, overwhelming Renaissance era ideals bewildered his subconscious. When Donne did fall into such a mentality, critics were led to christen Donne a misogynist. These ideals were set forth primarily by medieval and early-modern Christians, who found several justifications for women's inferiority in the stories of Genesis and the New Testament: 1) woman was created after man, and therefore man must be more perfect; 2) Eve's role in the fall suggests pride, that she was governed by passions, and that women's beauty and sexuality made them potential corrupters. (p. 4)

Hasley holds that, Donne relies on the ideals of his era to classify the women in his poetry. These women were an essential part of man and "though not wholly revered in the 16th and 17th centuries, were believed to carry just as much truth – and secrecy – as men. Women were vessels that could be filled with anything" (p.5).

Another image of the woman in Donne's poetry, is the image of promiscuity. "The Apparition" presents the persona's urge to come like a ghost to his lover's bed if he dies from her scorn. The image of the winking candle suggests the anger and force his ghost is likely to come with. In fact the persona paints the woman as flirtatious and cheap as he says:

And he, whose thou art then, being tyr'd before,
Will, if thou stirre, or pinch to wake him, thinke
Thou call'st for more,
And in false sleepe will from thee shrinke,
And then poore Aspen wretch, neglected thou
Bath'd in a cold quickshiver sweat wilt lye
A veryer ghost than I. (p.42)

Here, the speaker describes the other man as more clever as he would be wise enough not to rush to this woman's aid every time she calls on him. The poem ends with the speaker's plea for the woman to avoid his ghost by repenting. Donne expresses similar feelings towards the woman in "Loves Deitie" by painting her love as false. Also, his persona wishes for an encounter with "some old lovers ghost" (p. 46) who did not get to meet the god of love as love was honest and pure then unlike the one he finds himself in. His regret comes in when he states "I must love her, that loves not mee" and when he continues that "why murmur I /as though I felt the worst that love could doe?" (p. 46) This means there is worst a woman can do. The persona's love encounter is a failure due to his lover's attitude, which can make him "leave loving" for "falsehood is worse than hate" (p. 46). We see Donne's disgruntled tone towards the woman which parallels Keats' in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" as discussed above.

Lawrence takes on a similar approach in his poems "Intimates" and "Liaison" by painting the woman from a negative perspective. "Intimates" opens with a rhetorical question by the persona's woman expressing a failed love affair which provokes him to show her a mirror. Here we see the persona blaming the woman for being the architect of the failure of their relationship which is buttressed by the fact that this woman's reflection, is frightening even to her, as he states "I showed her the mirror [...]and that held her spellbound for two seconds" (p. 63). Feminist would argue that

the woman's attitude and reaction is determined that way a man treats her. In "Liaison" the woman is painted as a waster and a pain causer. Here, the persona begs this woman to restore him to his former state and so urges her to "kiss but the dust from off" his lips, "draw the turgid pain" and "eclipse his soul again". He wishes to taste the core of delight again (which he lost since he met her) as it will unite him again with aspects of nature like the stars which he personifies as spies, to emphasize his desire.

Conclusion

Donne and Lawrence's poetry reveal a continuous flow of Romantic consciousness in the way they perceive the woman with emphasis on values from the Renaissance right up to the Modern period. Though from the Renaissance and the Modern periods respectively, their poetry captures Romantic ideals and their interest in the woman project man's constant search for unity of being in a world in constant flux. Their quest for ethereal values permit them to advocate peace, love, progress, justice, and spiritual growth in societies where man is completely disconnected from the self and the soul in which God resides. Even though their poetry highlight instances relegating the woman to the periphery, emphasis harmonious relationship between man and nature creates a sacred bond that connects both the spiritual and the social worlds. A relationship which does not only idolize the woman but elevates her to a position of power where only comparable to that which nature embodies. Romanticism sought to revitalize these feminine qualities through the power of the imagination, sentimentalism, natural spiritualism, and pastoralism. It can therefore be concluded that in Romantic consciousness, the victimization of the woman is tantamount to the subjugation and destruction of nature which the romantics shone against. It this vision which both Donne and Lawrence, though metaphysical and modern poets, respectively, uphold in their poetry.

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