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Synchrony of sensual fervor and love desire in Donne and Marvell with reference to their major poems: Spiritual perspective

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Abstract

Metaphysical poetry deals with the intact understanding of human, but the poets' aptitude, erudition and earnestness means that the poetry is about the insightful vicinity of comprehending quixotic and sensual love. It also deals with man's liaison with God- the eternal perception, and, to a less degree, about pleasure, learning and art. Though metaphysical means something beyond physical, but most of the metaphysical poets depict their sensual fervor in disguise of spiritual sex desire. John Donne and Andrew Marvell are two great poets who also wrote about physical love in concealment. They expose their intense corporeal desire through some spiritual words in several poems. A strong sensual passion and sacred desire of physical love are simultaneously depicted in the poems of these two major metaphysical poets. As these two poets are considered the forerunners of the metaphysical era so, this manuscript deals with the subject matters in reference to their celebrated poems.

Keywords: Sexual Ecstasy, Strong Sensual Zeal, Metaphysical Camouflage, Carpe Diem theme, Commonness

1. Introduction

The word 'metaphysical' was first initiated by John Dryden and Samuel Johnson to describe Donne and his followers in a derogatory sense. (china-papers.com). As the predecessor of this field, John Donne and Andrew Marvell significantly transformed the traditional and ornamental poetic style and opened up a new way for poetry writing. Their originality lies in mysticism, spiritualism and straightforwardness of content and fantasticality of structure. Metaphysical poetry, a term coined by Samuel Johnson, has its roots in 17th-century England. This type of poetry is witty, ingenious, and highly philosophical. Its topics included love, life and existence. It used literary elements of similes, metaphors, imagery, paradoxes, conceit, and far-fetched views of reality.

John Donne is regarded as the 'leading poet' of this highly intellectual form of poetry. Donne was influenced by the belief that the precision of beauty in the adored (loved one) behaved as a commemoration of ideal beauty in the everlasting kingdom (heaven). He also used unconventional and colloquial rhythm and tone, which was highly contrary to the Elizabethan poetry style.

Marvell's poem is far more than the sum of previous knowledge and ideas of metaphysical poets. Its outstanding quality is its energy, the fabulous force and surge of it, the splendidly controlled tempo, the assortment of images, the wit and humor. Perhaps more than any other poem of the seventeenth century it combines varied qualities of the metaphysical style with panache.

2. Objectives

Inspired by Eliot's appraisal of Donne, this paper has explored how the metaphysical ideas of Donne and Marvell depict the strong sensual desire and spiritual fervor in the same time. This paper firstly presents the term 'Metaphysical poets', pointing out it is a disputed school in English literary history. Then it shows the metaphysical camouflage of the two poets John Donne and Andrew Marvell how they show their sacred sensual desire in disguise of some spiritual thoughts and ideas.

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3. Methodology and Literature Review

To develop this hypothesis, the primary idea is found from the poems of John Donne and Andrew Marvell. In fact, the only helpful method was 'Observation Method' for this research job. By using this method, the researcher has gone through different literary articles, critical compositions, books, and websites to find related study materials, in order to be acknowledged in the related topics and will also collect some critical journals from different libraries to have specialized information on both the writers and compose the work in a more credible way. The Greek word 'metaphysics' is concerned primarily with inquiry or expression that goes beyond the physical world. (enotes.com) The Metaphysical Poets refer to the group of the 17th century poets who acted in response of the ornamental and extravagant quality in Elizabethan eras.

4. Discussions

4.1. Short biography of the Poets

Donne (1572–1631) was the most influential metaphysical poet. His personal relationship with spirituality is at the center of most of his work, and the psychological analysis and sexual realism of his work marked a dramatic departure from traditional, genteel verse. His early work, collected in *Satires* and in *Songs and Sonnets*, was released in an era of religious oppression. His *Holy Sonnets*, which contains many of Donne's most enduring poems, was released shortly after his wife died in childbirth. The intensity with which Donne grapples with concepts of divinity and mortality in the *Holy Sonnets* is exemplified in "Sonnet X [Death, be not proud," "Sonnet XIV [Batter my heart, three person'd God," and "Sonnet XVII [Since she whom I loved hath paid her last debt]." John Donne, along with similar but distinct poets such as George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, and Henry Vaughn, developed a poetic style in which philosophical and spiritual subject matters were approached with reason and often concluded in paradox.

Due to the inconsistencies and ambiguities within his work and the scarcity of information about his personal life, Andrew Marvell has been a source of fascination for scholars and readers since his work found recognition in the early decades of the twentieth century. Born on March 31, 1621, Marvell grew up in the Yorkshire town of Hull, England, where his father, Rev. Andrew Marvell, was a lecturer at Holy Trinity Church and master of the Charterhouse.

4.2. Sense and Sensibility

T.S. Eliot interprets this term in an appreciating way, and it has become a synonym of 'unified sensibility' ever since. By analyzing his notions of love, religion and cosmology respectively, the second chapter is devoted to the study of how 'unified sensibility' is embodied in Donne's thematic pursuit. (Eliot, 1924) In metaphysical poetry, the poet generally depict love in an objective and analytical way, and points out that true love is the fusion of both spiritual and physical affiliation. Their unconventional understanding of the relationship between original sin and salvation, death and resurrection reflects his maturation in religious relief. By using seemingly incompatible conceit, contradictory but persuasive paradox, and loose yet energetic colloquialism, Donne and Marvell managed to express his feeling in an indirect, analytical way. For Donne, they are, rather than mere devices, appropriate and organic parts of his poetry, without which his poetry would be incomplete and

handicapped. In sum, the fusion of sense and sensibility is an insightful assessment of metaphysical poetry. The poetic innovation of Marvell and Donne has elicited off changes of modern English poetry thematically and formally. Close reading of Donne and Marvell's poetry can render us a profound and comprehensive understanding of the seventeenth century English poetry and its links to modern English poetry.

4.3. Major themes

Metaphysical poetry is concerned with the whole experience of man, but the intelligence, learning and seriousness of the poets means that the poetry is about the profound areas of experience especially - about love, romantic and sensual; about man's relationship with God - the eternal perspective, and, to a less extent, about pleasure, learning and art. (Spark Notes Editors)

5. Findings

5.1. Sexual Ecstasy of John Donne in *Holy Sonnet 14*

Donne imagines religious enlightenment as a form of sexual ecstasy throughout his poetry. He parallels the sense of fulfillment is derived from religious worship to the pleasure derived from sexual activity—a shocking, revolutionary comparison, for his time. In *Holy Sonnet 14* (1633), for example, the speaker asks God to rape him, thereby freeing the speaker from worldly concerns. Through the act of rape, paradoxically, the speaker will be rendered chaste. In *Holy Sonnet 18* (1899), the speaker draws an analogy between entering the one true church and entering a woman during intercourse. Here, the speaker explains that Christ will be pleased if the speaker sleeps with Christ's wife, who is "embraced and open to most men" (14). Although these poems seem profane, their religious fervor saves them from profanity or indignity. Filled with religious passion, people have the potential to be as pleasurably sated as they are after sexual activity.

5.2. The Second Anniversary

It is indeed possible that the union of the sensual, intellectual, poetical and religious temperaments is not so rare; but it is very rarely voiced. That it existed in Donne preeminently and that it found voice in him as it never has done before or since, no one who knows his life and works can doubt. That the greatest of this singular group of poems is *The Second Anniversary*, will hardly can be contested. Here are the famous lines which have been constantly quoted, praised and imitated. (Gardener, 1962)

"Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks and so distinctly wrought,
That one might almost say her body thought,"

5.3. Donne: An Emotional Individual

Donne was an exceptionally emotional personality. His moods range from the sharp justification of promiscuity to sober argument for the interrelations of soul and body or for love as a self-sufficient good, the supreme good. As a young man, he was a curious explorer of the relations of body and soul - his own body and soul, since he has little interest in women's feelings except as they affect his. He composed mostly about love and lust, his desire for the opposite sex. Love was the center of the world to Donne. In *The Sun Rising*, the bed is the "center of the real world" and in *The*

Canonization, "ideal lovers are invoked as saints."

5.4. The Extasie

Love's mysteries are nurtured in the soul and the body is love's 'booke', the source from which all mysteries of love are revealed. Donne clearly has exposed this matter in his mostly celebrated poem *The Extasie*.

'Extasie' refers austere to the supreme mystical experience in which the soul transcending the body attains the vision of God. The Donne's poem opens with the two lovers, "one another's best," sitting on a river bank their hands joined by a 'balme' that suggests an anointment of religious, magical properties, and looking into one another's eyes. Their souls, however, have gone out of their bodies and are compared to two armies going forth to meet upon a battle field, while their physical bodies, made pure by love lie still upon the bank. This 'extasie' shows them the true source of their love as making one soul out of the mixture of the disparate elements in both of them. Love brings them together and, as a transplanted violet, causes the one new soul, comprised of both their former ones, to overcome loneliness.

Yet, the poet continues, this one new soul knows of what it is made; that is that it must descend to the body for affections. Their bodies, while not the sum total of the lovers, are nonetheless their 'spheres', as they themselves identify with the 'intelligences' or souls. They owe their bodies thanks, for that is how they were first drawn to each other and consider them alloy rather than 'drosese'. Heaven's influence on man operates in such a way that body must first encounter body before their souls can merge. Spirit holds together both man's body and his soul and pure lovers' souls must descend to their sense and their faculties. (Coles, 2002)

5.5. Strong Sensual Zeal in *The Flea*

The Flea is a witty attempt of a lover to convince his lady to be his in body as well as spirit. For further saying, the poet uses the image of flea that has taken blood from both the poet and his lady. Their two bloods now mingled within the flea, have become 'one blood made of two', and the poet laments that he and his beloved have not reached the similar state yet. Donne in fact uses the flea in this poem to convince his hesitating companion "How little that which thou deny'st me is."

5.6. Donne's Parallelism with Love Poetry and Holy Sonnets

There is a great similarity of thought and treatment between the love poems and holy sonnets of Donne, though the theme is different. The spirit behind the two categories of poems is the same. There is the same subtle spirit which analyses the inner experiences like the experiences of love. The same kind of learned and shocking imagery is found in the love poems:

Is the Pacific sea my home? or are
The Eastern riches? Is Jerusalem?
Anyan, and Magellan, and Gibraltar.
All straits (and none but straits) are ways to them.
Whether where Japhet dwelt, or Ham, or Shem.

Similarly in his treatment of divine love, the poet uses sexual images in holy situations. As for example:

"Betray kind husband thy spouse to cur sights,
And let mine amorous soul court thy mild Dove

Who is most true, and pleasing to thee then
When she's embraced and open to most men."

6. Spiritual Desires in Andrew Marvell

6.1. Attracted to adult sexuality

Some of Andrew Marvell's poems are marked by the presence of powerful and attractive nymphets and threatening adult women. They are the manifestation of a disturbance in Marvell's thought concerning adult sexuality. According to Marvell, attraction to young virgins betrays a desire to avoid adult sexuality. Continuities in the use of language and the valuation of women suggest that, despite the change of speakers, several poems can be read as a kind of confession and justification by Marvell, raising some questions about the poet's sexuality.

6.2. Metaphysical Camouflage in *To His Coy Mistress*

The poem itself is sex fervor. When the mistress denies having physical love then Marvell opens his magic words. Marvell himself perhaps didn't even realize what he has created. The eternal love depicted vividly in the poem is of course, universal and platonic. Here also we find a metaphysical camouflage. The poem all through discusses about the spiritual sex, more specifically we can say unending physical love. If the world were large enough and time long enough then the modesty of poet's beloved would not be a crime. But as there is a short-term world and the time is diminutive for a life, so the lovers should make the love as early as possible. Marvell's sex desire is quite reflected in the poem. The readers are astonished seeing and reading the style of Marvell. What he wants is to worship his beloved's every part before making the pure love. It's an ideal, amazing, awe-inspiring and beyond imaginable theme which Marvell imagines four hundred years ago. The line "Two hundred years to adore each breast"- proves his thinking capability and his power of love. It's also a kind of devotion to his beloved. According to his own language,

"An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate." (13-20)

6.3. Marvell's Carpe diem theme

The mannish assault upon the reluctance of the 'coy' woman lies at the core of Marvell's best-known love poem - perhaps the most famous "persuasion to love" or carpe diem poem in English - *To his Coy Mistress*. Marvell has chosen carpe diem theme which means take hold of the day or to celebrate the present. The Greek writer Aesclepiades wrote of the same theme, telling the reluctant girl:

"You would keep your virginity? What will it profit you?
You will find no lover in Hades, girl." (Translated by E. M. Parsons)

The statement mentioned above is completely a sensual argument to a girl. That means to celebrate the present is to make love at present according to the carpe diem theme. Marvell believes in this theme that consequently proves his

sensual fervor in making love.

With logical lucidity, Marvell details his word 'desert' which indicates the girl's beauty will go away, poet's love song will be no more, her body will be deflowered not by the heat of love but by worms. Her chastity will be dust. And J. V. Emden (2005) says that 'quaint Honor' also means the female sexual organ. His desire for his beloved will end by death. The final couplet of this section is terrifying in its assertion of time as the ending of human love.

6.4. The Definition of Love

The poem *The Definition of Love* depicts the despondency and depression of love in geometric terms. The lovers are like opposite poles of the globe, enviously separated by Fate's "Decrees of Steel"; to consummate this love would require the destruction of the world: "And, us to joyn, the World should all / be cramp'd into a *Planisphere*." (poetryfoundation.org)

It is the very perfection of such love that renders impossible its temporal and physical realization:

As Lines so Loves *obliquely* may well
Themselves in every Angle greet:
But ours so truly *Paralel*,
Though infinite can never meet.

This poem has a strongly logical and intellectual pattern. The title exposes that the poem is defining love. Marvell knows the situation about the impossibility of fulfillment of his love, and he feels despair. The rightness of despair is shown, the inevitable futility of hope, the quality within the love itself which in an imperfect world makes a perfect love impossible and in conclusion, the union which exists only because the lovers are apart. Marvell stands back from the emotion of love to discuss the qualities and the destiny of this particular kind of love.

6.5. The Dialogue between Soul and Body

The dialogue is a form of poetry which is not frequently used. However, Marvell used in several poems one of which *The Dialogue between Soul and Body*. Marvell, though clearly favoring the Soul, does not give either side the winning argument.

The image of the soul being incarcerated is classically Platonic. Its move is to flight through the death of the body. The body is not too well pleased with this onslaught, and accuses the soul of driving it around, when all it wants is a quiet life. Then the soul replies to enlarge on the 'double Heart'. It has its own grief through being trapped in the body and has to bear the body's grief as well. We might say in modern terms, the soul here is both the psychology and the spirituality of human existence: the psychology derives from the body; the spirituality, from its heavenly origins. Body, at the end, lists the psychological suffering the soul forces on it through hope, fear, love, hatred and so on. The list goes on through the whole stanza. It climaxes with the paradox:

What but a Soul could have the wit
To build me up for Sin so fit?

Again only the soul has given it the consciousness of sin. Left to itself, it would live like the animals in instinctive, undifferentiated being. The final image is one that Marvell was to take up several times in his 'Mower' poems: the body

is like an undifferentiated tree growing naturally; the soul like an architect, which spruces and snips it into all kinds of eccentric and deviant contours.

7. Commonness between John Donne and Andrew Marvell

Of all Marvell's poems, this is one that most clearly reminds the reader of Donne; the resemblance to the *Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* is strong both in poetic form and in theme. The common theme of these two poems is the absence of beloved. The poets are quite occupied with the memories of their own beloved in all places in every second. Donne's poem is about a personal love. On the other hand Marvell, as his title tells us, is defining love. He presents the practical situation. He knows the impossibility of the fulfillment of his love. The rightness of despair is shown here, the inevitable futility of hope, the quality within the love itself which in an imperfect world makes a perfect love unfeasible, in conclusion that exists only because the lovers are apart and that was the reason of his despair at the beginning of the poem. (Emden, 2005)

Whatever the subject, Donne's poems reveal the same characteristics that typified the work of the metaphysical poets: Dazzling wordplay, often explicitly sexual; paradox; subtle argumentation; surprising contrasts; intricate psychological analysis; and striking imagery selected from nontraditional areas such as law, physiology, scholastic philosophy, and mathematics.

The seventeenth century was an epoch of beautiful poetry. Two poets in particular, Andrew Marvell and John Donne, wrote *carpe diem* poetry full of vivid imagery and metaphysical conceits. Each conveyed the message of 'living for the now'. This message can be clearly seen in the poems *To his Coy Mistress* by Marvell and Donne's *Flea*. By using clever metaphors and meter, the poems not only are symbolic, but have almost a physical aspect to them. Though both poems take a similar approach, it is Marvell that writes the more persuasive one, reaching deep into the soul to win his object of affection.

The main theme of Marvell's poem is to 'seize the day'. The speaker is trying to convince the woman that it is much better to have sex now than to save her virginity for the future. The man wants to experience the pleasure now, while the woman would rather save herself until they are married. Marvell's message here seems to be that we shouldn't be worrying so much about exactly when and where to do things, but just to take things as they come and enjoy them. This theme relates to all aspects of life, not just sex.

8. Conclusion

To sum up, we can undoubtedly say that these two chief metaphysical poets were enough interested in physical love. But they would like to have considered this love as sacred love. They tried to revive the ancient means of spiritual reunion through sex activity what the great modern poet T S Eliot also believes. Marvell and Donne had strong belief in spirituality. Their spiritual sex desire and mystic zeal make the readers astonished to some extent. Sometimes the readers find nothing to think about their love. Their love zeal, in fact, is just beyond the utmost bound of readers' thoughts. They both were known as the great lovers in English literature. Being the metaphysical poets their love increases more than others. Their sensual fervor for getting the ultimate peace is a journey to reach the eternity, to get the loveable, affectionate

and sacred sexual state of mind.

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