

JUXTAPOSITION OF AMATORY ELEMENTS WITH TELLURIC FORCES IN SELECTED POEMS OF NERUDA

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ABSTRACT- Chilean literature refers to all literary works, which produced in Chile. From the very beginning of history, Chilean literature has great reverence for poetry and known as a “nation of poets.” It has been home to two literary gems, Gabriel Mistral, and we know the second one who got nourishment in the soil of Chile and from a bud turned into a flower, as Pablo Neruda. Most of the literature of Chile was written in Spanish language. Pablo Neruda, a famous Latin American poet is known as a poet of love, loss, and longing. He is also famous as political poet and the poet of Nature. His fame was not limited only for the readers of Chile, it spread everywhere, and he got the readers from the every corner of the world. Once Harold Pinter said about Pablo Neruda-

“I quote Neruda because nowhere in contemporary poetry have I read such a powerful visceral description of the bombing of civilians.” (Harold Pinter, Nobel lecture, ‘Art, Truth and Politics’)

He wrote his first poem at the tender age of 10. He touched the hearts of youth by his second poetic collection, “Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair.” At that time, he was only 19 years old. The aim of the present paper is to show that how he uses Nature as a metaphor for woman in his twenty verses. It also aims at bringing to surface that how he juxtaposes amatory elements with telluric forces.

KEYWORDS- Amatory elements, Telluric forces, Juxtaposition, Love, Longing.

Pablo Neruda, the greatest and most controversial poet was born in Parral, Chile on July 12, 1904. He is famous as a poet of people because he gave the voice to voiceless people. In his acceptance speech as the Chilean Communist party candidate for the presidency, he said-

“.....who has taken part in each sorrow and joy of the people. I am not stranger to them, I came from them, I am part of the people.....I have lived singing and defending them.”

He is a poet with multidimensional personality and a poet of Chile in true sense. He has great love for the landscape of Chile. As he once said in his Memoirs-

“I came from the other end of the republic. I was born in a green country with huge, thickly, wooded forests. I had a childhood filled with rain and snow.”(P.167)

His mother died just two months after his birth. After it, family moved to Temuco. In Temuco, Neruda began to spend his time by gazing the lush green beauty of Nature. He spent little time with family and most of the time he spent in the lap of Nature. We find the impact of this observation in his twenty love poems. In twenty verses, he used the natural imagery on grand scale. Through Nature, he expressed the beauty of woman. He also tried to identify himself with natural elements as- sea, ocean, drop of rain etc. In 1920, he published his first poem under the pseudonym, Pablo Neruda. He chose this name from a Czech poet Jan Neruda. An interview which was held in 1970 by Ritu Guibert, a question was asked to Neruda that why did he change his name. Neruda replied:

“I don’t remember. I was only thirteen or fourteen years old. I remember that it bothered my father very much that I wanted to write. With the best of intentions, he thought that writing would bring destruction to the family and me and, especially, that it would lead me to a life of complete uselessness. He had domestic reasons for

thinking so, reasons which did not weigh heavily on me. It was one of the first defensive measures that adopted changing my name.”

He wrote a number of works as; *Crepusculario*(Book of Twilights,1923), *Veinte poemas de amor y una cancion desesperada*(Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair), *Residence on Earth*, *The Height of Macchu Picchu*, *Canto General* and *The Captain Verses*. In 1971, he won Nobel Prize.

His second Poetic collection made him a world famous poet and it was translated into many languages. It touched the heart of the readers and they began to identify themselves with the speaker of these verses. In an interview, a question was asked to Neruda regarding the popularity of twenty love poems, he answered with wonder:

“I really don’t understand what it’s all about- why this book, a book of love-sadness, of love-pain, continues to be read by so many people. Truly I don’t understand it. Perhaps this book represents the youthful posing of many enigmas; perhaps it represents the answer to those enigmas. It is a mournful book, but its achievement has not worn off.” (Guibert 2015)

In *Twenty Love Poems*, he expressed the common feelings of love and loss. The love presented in these verses is erotic love, that is presented with fiery of passion. However, he did not present this passion or erotic feelings of love on surface. He juxtaposed it with natural elements or forces and used it as a metaphor. As we, all know that he was writing this type of poem in conservative Chile. That is why it was not possible to depict erotic feelings on surface level. He had to write with care. The very first poem of this collection entitled “*Body of a Woman*” begins with these lines:

Body of a woman, white hills, white thighs,
you look like a world, lying in surrender
My rough peasant body digs in you
and make the son leap from the depth of the earth(*Body of Woman*)

These lines clearly show his passion for his beloved Albertina. Through Nature, he depicts the white body of his beloved. He refers it white for white color symbolizes purity. Woman is ‘like a world’; it refers as if she lies in front of him. In contrast, of his beloved, he refers his body as ugly and unattractive. The word ‘dig’ refers to the union of rough body and white body that is the union of man and woman. When man and woman intermingle, the birth is inevitable. ‘I was alone like a tunnel’ refers to the poet’s sense of alienation. His beloved is not with him so the time of night that is taken, as a common symbol of union, does not make him happy. He says as people for their own benefit exploited Nature, in the same way he exploited his own beloved for his own benefit. The last lines of the poem show his unsatisfied passion and he craves passionately for the body of his beloved. He shares his feelings with audience, but exertion and woe would follow him continuously;

Body of my woman, I will persist in your grace
My thirst, my boundless desire, my shifting road!
Dark river-beds where the eternal thirst flows
and weariness follows, and the infinite ache.(*Body of Woman*)

The next verse, ‘*The Light Wraps You*’ also depicts the silhouette of a female. In the title ‘you’ refers to his beloved and ‘light’ refers to the time of sunset or evening. At the time of evening, his craving becomes more intense for all the barriers between physical and spiritual world seems to melt away at the time of evening, and a unique intimacy establishes between lovers.

Speechless, my friend,
alone in the loneliness of this hour of the dead
and filled with the lives of fire,
pure heir of the ruined day.(*The Light Wraps You*)

The woman is mute. She is not uttering even a single word. ‘hour of the dead’ refers to the suffering of the poet which he has to bear at the time of night. The line ‘a bough of fruit falls from the sun on your dark garments’

metaphorically refers to the pregnancy of a woman where a newborn comes out from the womb of the mother. He is also talking about the time of night, which is different from daytime.

The great roots of night
grow suddenly from your soul
and the things that hide in you come out again
so that a blue and pallid people,
your newly born takes nourishment.(The Light Wraps You)

Through these lines, he is trying to say that many things grow and changes take place at the time of night. Therefore, nighttime is mysterious. By the use of the word 'grow' and 'changes', he is indicating towards love moment where the seed of the newly born is kept in the womb of a female.

In his another verse, 'Ah Vastness of Pines', he addresses Albertina. In Neruda's Twenty Love Poems, Albertina and Teresa were two dominant muses. In this verse, he presents woman as the medium of Nature on which she plays her own music. Through the unstoppable force of Nature, he is trying to show the power of his lover. By using the words 'waves breaking', 'twilight falling' the poet gives the melancholic background to the poem. 'Twilight falling' refers to the end of his relationship. He presents his beloved as powerful that she can even control the rivers. 'In a frenzy I will free my flock of arrows' is used as a metaphor for the intimacy and refers to the complete surrender of speaker in front of his beloved. The next stanza of this poem shows his complete devotion for his beloved:

On all sides I see your waist of fog,
and your silence hunts down my afflicted hours;
my kisses anchor, and my moist desire nests
in you with your arms of transparent stone.(Ah Vastness of Pines)

Whenever he looks around himself, he sees his beloved. Even in the foggy weather where nothing is clear, he feels her presence. 'waist of fog' can be taken in two ways; first it may be related to the body of his lover where his attraction lies and secondly it may be used that he wants to have a central place in the life of his beloved. His desires, which were cold since last days, all are nurtured and attached to her. In the last stanza he uses a word 'dark' and it refers to the inner gloomy of poet's heart which he feels because of the separation of his beloved. The very last line of the poem can be taken as most erotic line:

Thus in deep hours I have seen, over the fields,
The ears of wheat tolling in the mouth of the wind. (Ah Vastness of Pines)

These two lines can be interpreted in two ways. In one way, it can be said that at the time of night, the poet stands hopelessly and his shoulders are overburdened by the weight of her departure. He has bent down in the same manner as the wind bends down the wheat when it blows fastly. Secondly it may be said that the 'deep hours' refers to their intimate moments where the poet is holding his lover beneath him in the same manner as wind bends down the wheat beneath itself.

The next verse 'The Morning is full' can be read from two different perspectives. At first reading, it seems a pure picture of Nature decorated with natural elements or imagery. However, when we peep inside the second meaning of the poem comes on the surface and on the bases of this perspective; it can be read as an erotic poem.

The morning is full of storm
in the heart of summer. (The Morning is Full)

The word 'morning' refers to the beloved of the poet and the 'storm' refers to the physical storm or the storm of love-making. In the next two lines, he gives another indication when he says;

The numberless heart of the wind
beating above our loving silence. (The Morning is Full)

The use of the word 'loving silence' refers to those moments when they both are engaged in lovemaking and there is a pin drop silence. Only the voice of their heart beats and breathes can be heard. The poet mentions 'wind' many times in this poem. As he says:

Wind that topples her in a wave without spray
And substance without weight, and leaning fires. (The Morning is Full)

In these lines, he talks about the touch of wind when wind touches the body of someone with its gentle touch, a kind of shivering runs in the body. In these lines he uses wind as a metaphor, says that when he touches the body of his beloved at the time of love-making she shivers, and rises like the waves. The 'hot winds' refers to their breath of love-making and 'fire' can be taken as the fire of their passion or love.

In his next verse, 'I Remember you as you were' the poet talks about the season of autumn, this refers to the loss, as poet has lost his beloved. The poet feels nostalgia for his past when he was with his beloved. He recalls every memories of past. In second stanza of this poem, he says:

Clasping my arms like a climbing plant
The leaves garnered your voice, that was slow and at peace.
Before of awe in which my thirst was burning.
Sweet blue hyacinth twisted over my soul. (I Remember You As You Were)

From the very first line of above stanza, he is trying to show that moment when his beloved embraces him. As she embraces him, his feeling arises. However, she is not aware, she is calm, and there is no yearning desires in her eyes. On the other hand, the poet is burning in the fire of love. The woman is still calm and cool like jasmine. In the last stanza of the poem, he uses the image of 'dry autumn' that refers to the past memories of his beloved.

Thus, at last it can be said that Neruda's Twenty Love Poems are suffused with frank eroticism but he never portrayed erotic feelings on surface level. Neruda's poetry can be taken like a boat whose one part is visible on the surface while another part remains submerge in the water. He never tried to represent any part independently. Every time he combined both parts together and mixed up them with each other to maintain a balance. Neruda maintained this balance by juxtaposing the amatory or erotic elements with natural or telluric forces, whenever he portrayed the relationship between a man and a woman in his verses. In spite of it, many critics criticized him because in Twenty Love Poems, he portrayed love in its naked form. Readers of that time did not accept him. However, through the lens of modern time his poetry can be justified. In modern times, themes of love, loss and passion are very common and near to the heart of the readers.

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