

Eros as a Life-Affirming Force in Dorothy Livesay's - Selected Love Poems

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ABSTRACT

In Livesay's love poetry, the notion of love can be distinguished, referring to social relationships, as Eros is represented as a force of rupture and emancipation of the self, as well as the genuine existence of an individual. The study of love in Livesay's poems can be deemed a deep philosophical study of both interpersonal relations and key existential issues. Livesay's philosophy of love as a facet of Eros is explained to be multilayered in substantially implicating love in change and unity. The originality of her philosophy of love is based on the existential and phenomenological paradigms. This paper aims to explore the concept of love in selected poems by Livesay in light of Nietzsche's will to power and Martin Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world.

Keywords

Dorothy Livesay ;
Nietzsche, Heidegger ;
modern Canadian poetry;
philosophy of love .

The methodology in this research tackles the concern that Livesay's philosophy of love goes far beyond any of the common attachments associated with sexuality and recklessness. It transcends into the existential and cultural realms. Such an orientation indicates that for Livesay, love is much more like an existential force bringing together in a spatial domain the poet, her vocation, and the other people involved. The philosophical turn is made on these concepts from Nietzsche's idea of will to power and Heidegger's idea of being-in-the-world (Dasein). They represent tools which are wielded to elicit how Livesay denotes one's loving as a dialectic mediation between a person's actualized self and the relations that are taken in conjunction with the time-space contexts within which they are borne. The study reveals the existential and relational elements behind Livesay's philosophy of love through examining her poetry against these two philosophical concepts.

Love in Livesay's poetry can be explicated in light of Nietzschean will to power, asserting itself as an active and creative force. Heidegger's being-in-the-world also comes into play in her reading of love as an ontological basis for human existence and its relational modes within a temporal and spatial context. Through her poetry, Livesay probes into the self-revelation and confrontations that one has to face with his or her own reality. She depicts love as a unifying yet fragile force, intrinsic to human life, capable of binding individuals while exposing their vulnerabilities.

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Introduction

Livesay is a celebrated Canadian poet who writes poems focusing on the elation of Eros and how it pervades life. This reflects her deep involvement in the power of human feelings and love in the dimension man lives in. In her oeuvre, Eros not only shows the lover's longing but also acts as a vital force that creates social cohesion, enables the emergence of talent, and leads to personal transformation. Livesay examines how this force can be a life-renewing and refreshing agent even when confronted by individual and social conflicts. Love for her is man's foremost needs in an age where consumerism and technology seem to dominate every aspect of life.

In Plato's Symposium, Eros is defined not as a wanton sensual desire but holds a deep stage of connotation. It is the force of a person's search for what is beautiful, what is true, and, of course, what is wise. Throughout the dialogues made by different characters in the context of the banquets, Eros shifts from the physical desire for somebody to something more of a philosophical or holy desire. Another great



sources on Eros are attributed to Socrates' conversation with Diotima who is a historical figure whom he claims to have been taught about Eros. Diotima claims that Eros is not the love of beauty but a step of love that begins with the love of physical beauty and progresses up to the love of all beauty, the physical and the intellectual. At its zenith, Eros becomes the kind of love in which the beloved is an embodiment of pure eternal beauty which is one with truth and wisdom or the form of the good as per Plato (Plato, 1998, pp. 179-180). Eros comes out as a merging between flesh and soul in the poems by Livesay expressing great admiration for existence itself through physical love.

At its very essence, Eros is viewed as a physical need and a physical passion in Plato's Symposium (p. 180), but presented in an elevated, noble status and an element of philosophy in the same piece. This dialogue reinstates the figure of Eros outside sexual desire. A striking feature of Livesay's poetry is that her poems of love bear a high degree of philosophical tendentiousness and an explicitly developed abstract level, which is by far close to the plot of Platonic story for transformation from sensible or physical to spiritual or existential love. Livesay incorporates Eros that denotes what she points out such the sensual is in some way similar to the intellectual as noted by her as the similar to the transcendent level.

Livesay's discussion of Eros moves beyond the usual romantic ideas about love as, in her love poems, "insists that woman is involved in the natural cycle of growth" (Stevens, 1971, p. 27). She meditates upon love in its widest sense as a healing force that holds together the individual persons within society. In moments when one's emotions are high, Eros emerges as a universal experience that validates the significance of interconnection, compassion, and the appreciation of life's array of beauty and intricacies. During her lifetime, Livesay is recognized as "the original earth-mother of modern Canadian poetry" (Marshall, 1979, p. 51). Her study of modern languages and literature at the University of Toronto, and later at the Sorbonne in Paris, also laid the foundations for her literary career as a poet by exposing her to the broad cultural, philosophical, and intellectual currents of the modern and postmodern eras. (Thompson, Dorothy Livesay, 1987, p. 24)

Livesay emphasizes love as a process of human development, a force that can produce individual and collective positive change, and a possible means of identification with others, as well as with the world. She does not simply hold a romantic or sentimental notion about love. It is perhaps for this reason that Livesay's poetry implies elements of both the Eros and the Agape. As Nygren points out, Agape is an unselfish love that expects nothing in return. In Christian theology, it is best exemplified by God's steadfast, loving, patient and self-sacrificing attitude to people. Unlike Eros where one is attracted by the other, and where two parties feel a mutual attraction, agape is unmerited favor. It is universal and spiritual love for humanity without necessarily having any acquaintance with the people you are caring for; it can even have negative feelings towards man. While Eros is concerned with self-interests, Agape is concerned with the betterment of, and even the suffering and death for, the loved one. Most people describe it as the ultimate form of love because the actions taken bear no egoistic motives, rather reflects moral and ethical aspects (1969, pp. 91-92). Here, love is described as being spiritual, unconditional, and despite everything. Inertly, it is either love for mankind or divine love, which accredits no space for individualism and leans more on compassion and goodwill for everybody. It takes place when a man or woman loves someone unconditionally and goes out of the way for that love to happen, Eros on the other hand is all about the need to have, want, and get a pleasurable benefit from someone.

Eros in the Aristotelian's view is the type of love filled by desire, yearning, and creation as contrasted to the physical and sensual sense of the disgraceful love. It plays a key role in the model presented in metaphysics Lambda, where the highest being serves as the ultimate source of all motion in the universe by being an object of love. Aristotle's poetic depiction suggests that the cosmos is moved by the love for



this highest being, which itself is purely the self-contained activity (energeia) of thinking. In developing this cosmological account, Aristotle reflects the history of philosophy, he outlines in *Metaphysics Alpha*, where Eros and mind first emerge (Burger, 2019, p.7). Eros for Livesay is a very fundamental existential category of being in existence. It is about the perceptual, engaging the individual with the self and others and the environment in the first person.

To embrace and defend Eros, Livesay brings out her general concern with life. Eros, as needed to be remembered here, is a love that acknowledges life and all of its wants, fights, and pleasures. While in her poetry love is not the absolute, idealized, and spiritualized Agape, it is a very personal and realistic emotion. Eros helps Livesay examine how people's passions lead them to obsess over relationships, imagination, and determination. She portrays Eros as the force that overcomes the conditions of alienation, loneliness, as well as dehumanization facilitated by modernity. It is a relationship that makes friends, people close as the sun and moon, powerful, and full of life.

The purpose of this research is to discuss Dorothy Livesay's conceptualization of love as a major social and humanistic dialectic in her poetry. More specifically, it examines how Livesay converts love from a personal or romantic to that of compassion, solidarity, and collective consideration which challenges the individualism and alienation of modernity. Through discussing selected major love poems, the study aims at revealing how love in Livesay's poetic vision binds together issues of solitude, division, and fragmentation of selfhood in the contemporary world. It illuminates how Livesay's poetry advances a humanistic perspective that engenders connection, empathy, and collective endurance.

Methods

The paper explicates select love poems of Livesay that offer a grimly convincing example for her exploration of the themes of love. A philosophical reading of these poems is required since the poems' emotional intensity and thematic complexity provides deep insight into how Livesay perceives and expresses love. This selection will stake the grounds for further analysis to ensure that the poems chosen truly express the poet's engagement with the complexities of love.

Moreover, the poems are placed in context by establishing all relevant information, especially data related to the historical moment of their composition and the personal situation of the poet herself. An understanding of Livesay's inspirations and influences further provides interpretive signs as to how love becomes manifest in her work amid the varying cultural and personal environment she negotiated.

Livesay's love poems take the exploration of love into the ethical realm where love becomes a powerful agent for social change. The depiction of love as personal and political indicates its mobilizing potential in creating solidarity against oppressive structures. Livesay conjoins existential, phenomenological, and ethical frameworks to produce a conception of love that is philosophically deep and fundamentally human. Livesay's poetry thus redefines love as a life-affirming force, inviting us, the readers, to reconsider it.

6. Results

A - Livesay's Philosophy of Love

Among the poignant points in Livesay's love poems is that she intends to turn the muse poem into a piece of philosophical allegory where the poem is an intentional statement of its subject. In



addition, Livesay tackles feeling, affection, as well as social life as means of shaping human emotions and relationships with one another. In this respect, Livesay states:

The hippie celebration of love, peace, and self-expression, the interest in artifacts of native peoples and natural lifestyles, and the experiments in the expansion of consciousness and language were all intensely compatible with the new openness to life that she felt and wished to embody in her art. (Thompson, Dorothy Livesay, 1987, p. 8)

Livesay's poetry provokes people's perceptions of love. Her poetic voice embodies her views of love as nonconformist and in defiance of social norms, on restriction of freedom, and on freedom itself. Livesay also deals with the subjective perception of reality, individual emotion, and the concept of love, defying the way she interacted with the environment. Love in Livesay's poems is a rebellion against social norms of conduct that narrow the space of affectionate expression. Her rebellion challenges the patriarchal social norm. Whereas sexuality can be easily categorizable in terms of power, a force that is dictated through social tensions and rules. Love escapes such definitions since it is an organic force, free from such limitations. Its erasure of typical views of love as something confining indicates her nonconformity to the urbanized and patriarchal social conditions.

Livesay's cultural and social environment governs relations between people, especially in terms of love, the role of genders, and the possibility of freedom. Her poetry issues some deep subjective conflicts between self-desire and societal expectations in a person's life. Resistance to how she navigates this social environment is Livesay's statement on emotional liberty, the relativity of the world, and the significance of the individual and direct experience. This is a revolt against the world that defines the spheres of personality, love, and true self by permanent roles and norms.

One of Livesay's concerns is the natural world through which she tackles the emotional and spiritual human landscapes. She negates the need for those personal bifurcations between the self and nature. In her love poems, Livesay's poetic voice creates a great confusion due to the dissection of the self and its relation to the social and physical worlds. It focuses on 'the being' in creating a symbiotic experience of the physical world and personal experience.

Livesay rebels both against the social and natural environments whereby. They have to conform themselves to social norms as far as love, freedom, and civil liberties are concerned. At the same time, her poetry defies norms of a poetic imagination and the traditional ways of tackling the natural world that exists independently of humans. The social aspect of her poetry is an environment that she defies. In Livesay's work, the directions of alienation and restraint inherent in the social environment correspond to the spiritual estrangement of people from nature.

The interactions with society and nature are posed in Livesay's poetry so as to offer a creative depiction of love and freedom. It is this overlapping between society and nature that enables a more identification of the self and embrace of love together with its interconnections with subjectivity. Her rebellion is an effort to correct the definition of humans in the social and even



the natural world presenting a life that is far more involving, a life that is in harmony with the earth and man's principal being.

Livesay's poetry can be associated with Heidegger's view of love as she articulates her life experiences and relationships in her early poems. While love, for her, has certain aspects of a personal relationship or as a romantic feeling, it is far more than that – it is an appreciation of, and concern for that other, with whom he or she exists and interacts. This concept of love is interpreted as the way people are existentially related within the world and has an impact on their sense of empathy, communication, and care, as philosophically rendered in her love poems.

Livesay's poetry endeavors to grasp people's existence and the way they establish interactions not only with others but also with the environment. She quests for an understanding of what love is and how it can be defined in all its types – from the familial to the platonic and the universal. She expands the theme of love as a life-affirming force, particularly as a form of redemption and an agent constitutive of man's consciousness of self and existence.

Many cultures traditionally view the concept of Eros as being connected to passionate/romantic love. According to her vision of love, Eros transforms (what?) and thus becomes integral to human life's creativity and unity. She interpreted Eros in the sense of being a single complex thing that can be perceived from several perspectives, revealing how it manifests itself in human life. This differs from typical ideas about romantic love; hers is such a broad recognition that it includes all kinds of human relationships or emotions. Such an explanation draws parallels with the ancient Greek conception of Eros as the major universal principle of love between people, as well as all other entities with attraction to a universe beyond the merely physical into the spiritual and/or intellectual realms. Love, for her, means fulfillment and a renewal of self (Vijayamohan, 2000, pp. 39-38).

In her love poems, Livesay investigates the complicated human relations and their attendant existential questions. In this venture, her approach coincides well with Heidegger's notion of phenomenological Eros, according to which love is not confined to romanticism but regarded as a powerful means of exposing deep truths about man's existence. In *Being and Time* (2001), Heidegger defines the term *Dasein* which is a German term meaning 'being-there,' as follows:

Dasein is an entity that, in its very Being, comports itself understandingly towards that Being. In saying this, we are calling attention to the formal concept of existence. *Dasein* exists. Furthermore, *Dasein* is an entity which in each case I myself am. Mineness belongs to any existent *Dasein* and belongs to it as the condition which makes authenticity and inauthenticity possible. In each case, *Dasein* exists in one or the other of these two modes, or else it is modally undifferentiated. (p.78)

Heidegger's phenomenology deals with *Dasein* or the essential structure of existence, concentrating on how people relate to one another, and indeed their environment, within the world when the "world" is not a way of characterizing those entities which *Dasein* essentially is not; it is rather a characteristic of *Dasein* itself" (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 92). Love, based on



Livesay's poetic philosophy, discusses how individuals, as entities, can connect themselves with existences different from their own through desire.

Eros embodies intense passionate existential bonds that in turn move beyond the mere attraction to bodies, for no one can fully incorporate themselves entirely without losing some part of what makes them unique, thereby becoming a part of others. Here, an individual's being-in-the-world discloses itself through this passionate network of relationships that informs all aspects of existence. Within Eros, man becomes more aware of oneself and one's surroundings, while simultaneously evincing interconnectedness between these entities/individuals. In Livesay's poems, Eros is depicted as a potent drive that confers significance on ordinary things. Without love, people have no purpose or direction in their lives, because love gives life and meaning to their actions in nature. These small acts, performed every day, touch the deep familial bonds that exist between two kin who are in love.

B - Love as an Aletheia

Since one must open up to his/her own fears or defensiveness to be able to have any kind of intimacy, those who fall in love with each other become friends who trust one another, even though they may harm each other. Livesay takes love not just as a physical relation but also warns that there is a dark side behind it because people are prone to suffer when they start feeling such sentiments. Livesay's representation of Eros as a life instinct is a response to the feeling of alienation and emptiness typical to the contemporary world.

Livesay's poetry is imbued with the quest for authenticity and has an ethical tone. Her poetry is devoted to treating ethics and social aspects of such phenomena as love. From a philosophical perspective, love is a way of searching for personal truth the call for the unity of people, and the need for concern in social justice. From this perspective, love reflects an appreciation of the world and human existence in which love is personal and ethical, an elevated entity that transforms society.

Heidegger and Livesay deal with the theme of love and share the same view: love is the key to an authentic existence. It can reveal the self among other people as they are in the face of facticity; for Livesay, love is a charitable thing that enables people to be ethical and social to bring about a better world. He appreciates love in the context of Dasein a concept he uses to describe human existence and involvement in the world. For him, existence is the path of individualism where a person has to face his or her own death and free himself or herself from the mundane of the world. According to Heidegger, existence is always a Being with another "Mitdasein" (Being and Time, 2001, p.149). It means that man is in relation or with other people. Love in this way is perceived as an ontological modality that does not only embody reality but also contain elements of knowing and revealing truths about the self and the other, and in so doing, helping set the conditions for an authentic existence.

Heidegger also has a view on love that is closely linked to his Being-in-the-World. Existence is centered on attaining an authentic existence about both the world and others, and love can thus be viewed as a way of "Being" that uncovers man's existence. Heidegger reminds us of the



ontological nature of existence. In this context, Livesay's poetry accentuates the ethical significance of compassion. Her work insists on looking at love in the context of social justice and posits love as a way to bring about change in the world. This section argues that love is related to a basic ontology of Being-in-the-World, a fundamental way in which human beings exist in the world and are connected. Love for him is not simply a feeling or a pair bond; it is a way of being that opens up the truth of Being. According to Heidegger's work *Being and Time*, the nature of human Being is without doubt the existence of Being-with (*Mitdasein*). In this sense, in Livesay's philosophy, love is a mode of Being-with-Another in which man's subjectivity is invested in the world through participation in the ensemble of co-belongers.

Livesay invites the readers to experience love through nature's landscape through her poem "Sunfast," which was published in her collected poems in 1972, in which the reader is given a sense of Eros. The poem illustrates that man is attracted to the world in a very intense, intimate manner, thus, emphasizing human beings' interconnectedness with their world. As for the title's significance, it signifies "uncovering the hidden correspondences between different sensory phenomena, allowing the speaker to break free from self-imposed intellectual restrictions that prevent one from seeing the complex and multifaceted nature of things" (Lohöfer, 2013, p. 76). When speculating the poem, it is evident from the outset that the speaker, physically and viscerally, engages with nature as she writes:

I lurch

into the sun

fasten on green

leaves dripping

in golden butter (Livesay, 1972,CP, p. 286)

This graphic description captures an instance of profound connectivity with nature, thus underscoring the sensory encounter and complete engrossment with outward beauty. It is consistent with Heidegger, who views Eros as a way of Being-in-the-World that tunes deeply into man's environment and feels the world. So, "in "Sunfast," she sees herself as part of the whole life force symbolized by the sun. She takes in the sun like food; the sun refreshes and re-orders the world, just as human beings try to establish patterns" (Stevens, "Love Poetry", 1971, p. 27). When Livesay writes "shout it out loud/ into the sun's mouth" (Livesay, p. 286), it can be seen how much she longed for unrestricted expression, thereby bringing out the notion of truthfulness and unconcealment in human life. The poet's cry for communication with the sun goes beyond words and reason as she attempts to reach for an innermost openness.

Besides, the theme of love and interconnectivity between people on the one hand and their intimate relation with the environment on the other is best accentuated in the final stanza, where reference is made to the sounds of a lawnmower coming from a neighbor's garden reaching the speaker's ears. The way, in the poem, that grass gets rubbed gently by the motor's hum confers



an impression of intimacy or oneness with which man exists within his surroundings. This constitutes an erosion that characterizes the poet's ecological awareness, and a putting of man's existence in the context of being.

Love is a way of world-disclosing and revealing the meaning and significance of the being of man and woman. This explanation is illustrated philosophically in the poem:

Lawnmower's purr

caressing grass

in my next-door-neighbor's

garden

probes me

as if I stroked

cat's fur

played with

green claws (Livesay, 1972, p. 287)

Livesay elevates Eros by depicting love in the context of hedonic experience and revelatory of the world. Where the speaker has a sensual relationship with objects and things such as the purring sound of a lawnmower and the act of caressing grass in her next-door neighbor's yard. The act of probing me shows that this dialogue is not merely about the physical; it has an affinity to the emotional the metaphysical or the spiritual as it is. In these cases, the act of love brings the world into being and makes the mundane job of mowing the lawn also contain affection, tenderness, and other virtues. Livesay makes a simple act within an act greatly charged with Eros which is the force that gives life its meaning and significance.

The soft hum of a lawnmower is likened to a caress, invoking feelings of gentleness and closeness. The mower is not merely being observed but probes the observer as if reaching out to them. Stroking a cat's fur comes easily to mind when one considers the act of probing as an example of a tender touch. More intriguingly, the phrase "green claws" appears to link nature with a personal bodily experience. In this sense, the idea that love destroys boundaries between an individual and others becomes obvious.

The final stanza further hints that the speaker is now unified with the animal life moving across the surface of the earth like waves. The phrase "legs in air" (Livesay, 1972, p. 287) is very playful and simultaneously conveys a sense of freedom and joy. The final lines, "green blades scissoring/ the sun" (Livesay, 1972, p. 287) are particularly striking. Lawnmower blades cease to



mow just grass; rather, they are now cutting through the sun itself as though they are scissors. That is to say, love makes things disappear to man's eyes only because they are ordinary, while they are not mundane at all. This metaphor is powerful since it reflects that love can transform something familiar into something completely new. In terms of love, this poem uses an example of individuals entangled in the world. They can see beauty and mystery everywhere, not as mere strangers or bystanders but as part of the whole. Livesay "connects her experience of love and her recovery from it, together with a general reassessment of the situation of her life as she found it at that time" (Stevens, *Love Poetry*, 1971, p. 41).

Livesay's "The Operation" subtly interlaces love into the narrative fabric offering fertile ground for an abundant exploration:

The poem deserves a closer look being an intersection of two autobiographical lines involving the flesh: Livesay's five-year love affair and the lung cancer that struck her shortly, thereafter, in 1968. (Thompson, Dorothy Livesay, 1987, pp. 102-3)

Situated in assorted shapes in this case, love engenders many questions concerning humanity, empathy, and care. The kind of love typified in this poem is perceived as the empathy and compassion possessed by the doctor who is the speaker's lover. Debbie Foulks (1977) remarks that in this poem, love is initially portrayed as a healing process, with the speaker's partner depicted as the physician, evaluating how to construct from bone and flesh that woman. Once his task is completed, she is liberated from his attention; the affection that once renewed her is now depicted as an ailment (p. 73). Humanistic love is indispensable during the patient's need for solace and reassurance, much the task may require professionalism, which is why there remains an inherent romantic agape.

Heidegger believes that love persists, which is how one can identify an individual who loves another. Love means a form of continuous being. It is, therefore, to say that, here, love is; a moment's finitude can only be related to being here amidst its intimacy. This complete intimacy ultimately becomes a disappearance of the meanwhile and makes a man become the moment itself. When a man enters a relationship with this kind of emotional connection, the idea that there is an individual who loves him/her and whom he/she loves is no longer certain. The "who" of love is seen, in love, as how love persists, which is the persistence of love in itself. In the meantime – while one loves someone else – involves a kind of possessing oneself that goes beyond one's awareness. By contrast, in this way loving reveals the ecstatic temporality of Dasein. It is not just a reference to human existence but a term that designates the most authentic way of being human, a sense that only breaks forth when the ordinary understanding of being as subjectivity ceases to exist. Thus, when in love, when inside the meanwhile entirely – which is true human existence –, existence as Dasein occurs (Schuback, 2012, pp. 136-137).

Heidegger's view of love as a continuous being is quite like the concentrated personal observation and immediacy that is illustrated in this poem. In this instance, the poet is acutely aware of herself during surgery; the most intimate intrusion in terms of the body, an invasion that is likened to what love truly means. This poem implies the idea of love that is idealistic, whereby there is no meantime because it unites the lover with the present, just like the other poem does.



The poet becomes so absorbed in the surgery that other moments do not exist outside of this particular moment as time stops there – at this point, erasure moves toward a merger between selves, as found in romance. In the medical environment portrayed in Livesay's poem, death, and mortality present themselves to force the speaker to face them in a state of heightened existential awareness. This is Heidegger's Dasein in the sense that it strips down ordinary identity as lived throughout ever-present human existence. It indicates love as self-revelation before the other, while in operation shows fragility and the necessity for dependence on others.

Livesay's powerful statement about the ambiguity of love and its errant relationship is most apparent. The speaker implies that the surgeon, who is the lover, operates under a patriarchal authority through which one could interpret his treatment as an attempt to make his female patient conform to some socially accepted concept of health. This ideal contradicts the expression of disinterested compassion for the victim of love depicted within the lines as a form of illness and remains a question unanswered (Cook, 1998, p. 160). Livesay presents the image of the patient's isolation in contrast with the connection the individual could seek from doctors. There is a philosophical tension between isolation and connection; this is evident from the antiseptic mechanical hospital environment and the yearning for understanding and solace on the part of the patient. Love is an essential element for this scenario when considered within the ambit of existential philosophy, where the patient's aloneness serves as another name for suffering that takes the form of solicitude.

Solicitude, according to Heidegger, is a state of Dasein's Being. It is inseparably linked to Being-towards-the-World in its various possibilities and authentic Being-towards-Itself. Being with one another is intrinsically determined by aspects of the structure of Being-With. When some people do something together, it is nothing more than proceeding within limits and adopting an attitude of distance between each other. Mutual mistrust is often the only thing that allows those engaged in the same act to understand one another. If they engage in something, this is because their respective Dasein has caught them in different ways of existence. In this way, they are genuinely united, thereby allowing an appropriate form of objectivity to prevail (Heidegger, 2001, p. 159). Likewise, the doctor offers some sort of connection even if he is detached from his surroundings, portraying how love can bridge isolation and solidarity, creating some form of authenticity:

I victim

grateful to be saved

and he appraising

how to create from bone and flesh

a new woman?

The needle shot into my arm (Livesay, 1972, p. 328)



Love functions as a motivational factor that is made obvious in the form of the patient being torn within herself and feeling so afraid. This is the love for life that keeps them going through an operation that seems impossible or unbearable; waiting eagerly for recovery. In resonance with certain forms of existentialist philosophy, caring about existence itself becomes an emotion that gives meaning to suffering or problems due to others. Thus, it becomes a beacon of hope and endurance:

for now the he the you are one

and gone

and I must measure me

O let me grow

And push upright! (Livesay, 1972, p. 331)

The poem invokes certain reflections about love from a professional perspective. Love seems absent from medical professional conduct, yet doctors show it through their duty toward patient's well-being by displaying affection combined with respect for patients' needs. Love is then interpreted as an action whose aim is to reduce people's distress and promote their well-being according to its nature since it does not make sense without action.

The speaker conveys a fierce struggle for her identity that as an individual, makes decisions on her own, while in a relationship the conflict is between a doctor and a patient. This contradiction entraps her, making it impossible not to recognize her selfhood, as well as the powerful bond of dependence on a doctor-lover at the same time. In the poem Speed, 2011) writes:

The speaker is unable to both assert her independent identity while experiencing dependence and unity with her lover, as well as accept the roles her lover demands of her. Her lack of an identity the speaker can accept as her own causes her to enter a liminal space. The speaker's uncertain identity in liminality provokes renewal of self by developing and expressing her autonomy, thereby transcending liminality. However, love must end for her individuality to be expressed. (pp. 12-13)

The lover's roles and expectations do not conform with the speaker's perception of whom she is – at least, that is what she claims. Thus, the outcome is an unstable identity crisis that throws the speaker into a liminal space characterized by ambiguity and disorientation, where clear-cut traditional dichotomies are no longer available. It is in this transitional stage that she bares her soul – uncertain and fluid, like a flower bud waiting for metamorphosis.

C – Love as a Will to Power



Love has been tackled by many thinkers in different modes and from different perspectives, but the following analysis of the conception of love is courtesy of the well-known philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, a thinker who is generally associated with nihilism and his critique of conventional morality. Nietzsche's concept of love can be said to be existentialist and self-affirming. Analyzing Nietzschean's philosophy, it should be noted that he introduced the conception of the will to power. In this sense, for Nietzsche, love is not pitiful self-sacrifice, as per individuals with hunger and desperation, but a type of will to power. He speaks for a kind of love that represents a life-affirming urge to overcome the self. Love, as construed by Nietzsche, can thus be argued to be less communal when compared to Livesay's conception of such. As for Livesay, love subsumes a process by which people are tied to one another and thus create social unity; for Nietzsche, love is a way of exercising power in the face of the difficulties of existence. Yet, both are committed to the idea of affirmation of life, even though they are at odds in depicting how love contributes to survival.

As far as the themes of perception, self-expression, and the nature of art are concerned, Livesay's poem "Blindness" resounds with Nietzsche's philosophy of art, music, and love. What Nietzsche believes, more than anything else, is that genuine art comes from a place of honesty in a person, and emotions are deeply expressed therein by the artists themselves. In the poem, the speaker is "shyly glad that her dancing goes unnoticed ... there is an antithetical longing, not for self-concealment but for self-revelation" (Thompson, Dorothy Livesay, 1987, p. 27). Nietzsche posits that real art stems from perceived emotions rather than performed ones for the sake of recognition or approval. The poem depicts art as something personal, rather than an object of entertainment. Externally recognized forms of art are mostly given priority over artists' true expressions. This then gives rise to deep personal reflection and social consciousness and does not conform to established forms of thought.

Thompson's remark about the poem fails to appreciate other aspects of the Dionysian element in art in terms of ecstasy, a primitive expression that goes further to discuss the theme of self-creation via dance. Explicating the poem as either an affirmation of existence or rebellion against established norms helps to expose the assertion in this poem that personal worth emerges through hidden self-expression.

Livesay also reflects on a private moment of artistic creation that is unknown to others. The refrain "You did not see me dancing" (Livesay, 1972, p. 29) implies a lack of external affirmation or recognition, which can be considered a form of criticism of art that is intended to please crowds. In its place is a self-affirmation in her own act of dancing instead of doing so to be seen, as if saying that dancing for herself alone makes her feel good when she does so in secret; this resembles Nietzsche's idea of solitary nature within aesthetic context:

No:

I did not dance for eyes to see.

Only a fluttering breath of me



Flashed with the sunlight on the wall,

sang —and grew tall,

taller than my own ecstasy. (Livesay, 1972, p. 29)

In these lines, Livesay used the act of dancing as representative of an image of rapture, yet at the same time, she implied fear within the context of the poem, that she would feel precarious if seen by her partner. This leads to the destruction of individuality by keeping everything to a higher authority. Possibly, the poet is even trying to convey the message that blindness is caused by love and therefore the potency of love to govern is negated or, perhaps, deprived of that potency because of the rapture of love itself (Stevens, *Love Poetry*, 1971, p. 30). The idea that blindness results from love is a paradox. Love is perceived as a sturdy feeling that can overpower the senses; it also appears to deny this similar quality. It is under this extreme of passions that a person can forget about his/her borders or selfhood and fail to see anything beyond the here and now. The implied meaning of ecstasy turns away the power of love, which invokes the fragile aspects related to this emotion through which man experiences its mightiness, and its ability to obscure understanding or limit vision while transforming everything in its path.

Metaphorically speaking, blindness refers to others' inability to see her dance, protecting her authenticity from being lost through their eyes, triggering the idea that artists should break loose from social norms and transform individuals above common existence through art and love. The poem unravels issues concerning genuineness, individuality in the arts as well as the need to assert herself amidst social constraints through artistic works. The poem serves as a venue where creativity enables self-discovery and liberation while rejecting Nietzsche's plea for a fresh evaluation of values where artistry is not constrained by extraneous approval but exists as a confirmation of the artist's vision of the world. In essence, Livesay's inquiry into "Blindness" asks one to consider love, through the art of dancing, as possessing both the potential for rhapsody and emancipation on the one hand, as well as the closely linked characteristics of masking and complicating individuality and perception on the other.

As a title poem, Livesay's "The Unquiet Bed" (1967) signified that there were inherent powers at play in male-female relationships in terms of love; it is appreciated as "Livesay's love poetry is a declaration of independence" (Kelly, 1999, p.19). In her essay "Song and Dance," (1969) (Livesay writes about the creative moment behind this notable poem:

The next year I fell deeply in love and poems "sprang from my loins," as it were. All the yearning to sing and dance revived again, but this time I did so with more confidence. This time I spoke out of immediate experience. I disguised nothing. The result was the book, *The Unquiet Bed*. Song and dance. (47)

Livesay's creativity was profoundly influenced by the focal role that personal experience and emotional authenticity had in her life, as evidenced by the above-quoted lines. Hence, in *The Unquiet Bed*, Livesay's art shows what truly constitutes womanhood on the one hand and serves as a good way to find oneself on a personal level.



The title poem is important since it links the whole series of love poems with the use of paradox, obsession with identity, and the final declaration of the self. The liminal self is unstable, and the first stanza hints at the necessity of establishing a stable identity that is more than skin-deep. The speaker asserts that there are other factors to her individuality beyond physical appearance; however, the second part of her statement demonstrates her concern that her real self cannot be discerned. Additionally, negations as to who she is underscore her understanding that other people may misjudge her identity (Speed, 2011, p. 20).

Thus, the poem embodies how the unquiet love relation can result in ongoing tension, with each partner asserting their dominance, which will eventually lead to a fragile relationship:

The woman I am

is not what you see

I'm not just bones

and crockery

the woman I am

knew love and hate

hating the chains

that parents make (Livesay, 1972, p. 292)

To appreciate Livesay's poem philosophically, it is important to have an acquaintance with the depth and dynamism of the philosophy of love that she intended to portray in this poem. Certain kinds of love are perpetual trouble, for they never leave one at rest; they are the source of struggle and self-knowledge. This infers that conventional moral judgments should be avoided so that people can insightfully appreciate love relations between individuals. Each partner may build up self-centeredness at the expense of their partner which could result in discord between them. The poem reflects how "Livesay begins to explore how a woman finds her authentic voice" (McInnis, 1994, p. 58). A critical consideration of the poem reveals how unapproachable women are when they wish not only to elicit sympathy but also to control others because they cannot handle their own fears, as internal suppression from the male's side leads to them being superficial in all relationships. Livesay's "The Unquiet Bed" conveys love as complex and often tumultuous. Conventional moral bases are transcended by the poem's imagery. The significance of this title poem lies in its deep philosophical meaning, which makes the reader think about, through tackling the theme of love, what personal growth means:

longing that love

might set men free



yet hold them fast

in loyalty (Livesay, 1972, p. 292)

In these lines, Livesay tackles the theme of autonomy and the struggle for a sense of self as portrayed through wanting a love that generates freedom and spatial uniqueness. There is a desire for this love that would “set men free” (Livesay, 1972, p. 292), through which individuals can follow their own paths. The lines also express the speaker’s longing for discovering oneself and finding someone whose love makes spatial and relational room for her. The call to “move over love/ make room for me” (Livesay, 1972, p. 292) reveals the necessity for self-assertion within any given relationship, thus attaining authenticity. The poem elaborates more on love and independence within relationships, with care for liberty, originality, and self-recognition:

the woman I am

is not what you see

move over love

make room for me (Livesay, 1972, p. 292)

Concerning the conventional notion of love characterizing this view, Livesay critiques the idea of love as a wholly optimally integrated couple. She describes love as a synthesis or unity. People are different and have different objectives and ways of achieving personal longing. The poem's idea is closest to both existential concept of liberty and the pursuit of personal fulfillment. In this sense, love is not about giving oneself to the extent of negating one’s own existence, or striving after a love that is a blending of identities, but acceptance of the other tempered by an understanding that each brings his or her individual journey into a mutual relationship.

Livesay maintains that genuine love cannot be found without having sufficient courage to help endure unpredictability and disorderliness, rather than attempting to systemize or regulate it. In this respect, Cook states “the narrator extends the cliché that love is blind by asserting that it is only true love that reveals beyond what is seen” (1998, p. 145), suggesting that her experience of love is marked by a tension between the desire for affection and the need for independence. This tension can be seen as a manifestation of the Apollonian and Dionysian forces that Nietzsche believes are at play in all creative endeavors.

The Apollonian refers to “the urge to perfect self-sufficiency, to the typical “individual,” to all that simplifies, distinguishes, makes strong, clear, unambiguous, typical: freedom under the law” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 539). It is a force associated with reason, order, and control. This desire is embodied in the image of the unquiet bed, which suggests a longing for a peaceful, serene space where love can flourish. While the Dionysian, for Nietzsche, refers to “an urge to unity, a reaching out beyond personality, the everyday, society, reality, across the abyss of transitoriness: a passionate-painful overflowing into darker, fuller, more floating states; an ecstatic affirmation



of the total character of life” (1968, p. 539). In other words, it is a force that connects desire, disorder, and inspiration. It is also present in the poem, which interferes with the speaker’s efforts to hold or dominate her sentiments. Livesay’s perception of love exposes the essential antithesis in human life concerning unity and separateness, stability, and liberty. Just as the image of the unquiet bed illustrates a relationship bedeviled by its own contradictions, so is true to the portrayal of love.

Discussion

A reading of Livesay’s love poems reveals the philosophical depth of poetry and the meaning of love when viewed through the lenses of Nietzsche’s will to power, and Heidegger’s concept of Being-in-the-World. Love is philosophically viewed as an aspect of the will to grow that lies at the base of human existence. In her love poetry, Livesay renders two opposing drives: the freedom of choice and concrete interpersonal ties. Unlike other male writers who write love as sacrifice or woman surrender, she depicts love in form where both partners struggle to pronounce their independence. Love becomes a work of creativity, an arena of human subjectivity at which man can freely will his own power through mutual interaction.

Heideggerean Being-in-the world means that Dasein is always involved in relations and experience in or with some world and others. Love in this respect is best argued as a core form of Being-with-others, in which persons confront the issues of life, temporality and authenticity. The poet goes beyond conventional ideals by integrating love with existentialist and phenomenological thought with platonic projections about romantic love.

Livesay’s representation of love is like a self-overcoming and delivering drive which corresponds with Nietzsche’s notion love, which goes beyond man’s immediate sight and power. It is an exercise of the individual’s power of existence, a process of self-surpassing over the mundane. Nietzschean love agrees with existentialism given that it pins self-assertion, thus discussing life-altering love. Hence, love does not seek individual empowerment but unites people, hence, it expands Livesay’s philosophical notion of love that combines self-affirmation from Nietzsche with more of its communal aspect.

The complexity of Livesay’s concept of love stands at the confluence of Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s ideas. Nietzsche’s philosophy of love can be adopted as a way of thinking about how love relates to power and self-assertiveness, though for Heidegger it means Being- in-the-World at all times. This implies that her poetry suggests love as an instrument that can be used to alter injustice because, according to her, love is not only an individual affair but an avenue for change within society. In proposing a vision of love that is simultaneously deeply personal and political in nature, she challenges man all regarding what his personal relationships should mimic accordingly.

Conclusion

Since the poetically conceived loving character is depicted by Livesay’s poems not only in the romantic sense, but in one that approaches all desire in a manner closer to the views of Heidegger and Nietzsche. Her poetry remains embedded in love as a consideration of varied shades and meanings for greater insight into love in general, a protagonist deserving of an audience with something very peculiar and extremely complex.



By adopting existential consideration, Love, in Livesay's poems, becomes not an appetite but a force engaging any number of worlds. The poems uphold that love becomes the only valid engagement to give meaning and combat the nihilism and indifference of contemporary life. Resonating Nietzschean themes, Livesay goes further to proclaim love as the act of becoming and as a type of art. Love becomes the exploration of a phenomenon that is both emotional and existential, ontological and aesthetic. The philosophical view on love by Livesay is intrinsic and quite deep. This is the formulation of a poetic philosophy pregnant with the capacity of crossing the social and moral boundaries that have been set.

To Livesay, love is a positive value, an existence of relatedness between people that links everyone to others and an understanding of the world and one's existence. It is an orientation to being that sustains and nourishes life, which sees difference as a basis for identification and solidarity. This is in line with Heidegger's view of love as a mode of Being-in-the-World; the act of loving becomes a means of discovering the relationships between things and the meaning of existence.

In Livesay's poems, there is the existential notion of love as not just being an appetite but also as a force that interacts with the world. Her poems argue that love is the only meaningful commitment for one to find purpose and a way to overcome the modern milieu of loneliness and nihilism. By resonating Nietzschean themes, Livesay discusses love as the act of becoming and as a form of art. Love is presented as an exploration of a phenomenon that is simultaneously emotional and existential, ontological and aesthetic.

Livesay's philosophical concept of love as a concept is valuable and quite profound. She formulates a poetic philosophy that mimics the possibility of crossing social and moral borders which have been set up in philosophy, presenting the force associated with love as a significant characteristic of people's lives. Attempting to make her readers seriously mindful of the presence and essence of love, Livesay inspires them to reflect on the place and role of love in individual life, as well as how love is capable of implementing unity in the world.

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