

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Central Department of English**  
**Thesis Proposal**

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**Proposed Title of the Thesis:**

Donne's Attitude to Women: A Psycho-Political Study of His Poetry

**Statement of the Problem:**

Despite New Critics' admiration for Donne's all pervading wit, irony, paradox and ambiguity, we find his political purpose behind these poetical devices. The exploitation of these tropes in his poetry that degrades women at the level of imposture beast, when linked to his opportunistic careerism, reveals his fear of women poets rumoured to be patronized by the Royal Court under the monarchy of Queen Elizabeth. My dissertation, therefore, seeks to study Donne's fear psychosis and his politics underlying especially the poems relating love, sex and women.

**Hypothesis:**

It is hypothesized that Donne's poetry is politicized by the danger that the poet, like other citizens of England's patriarchal society, saw women poets coming to the fore at the cost of masculine superiority that he never wanted.

### Literature Review:

John Donne, a prominent seventeenth century poet has been critically tested under different critical apparatus. Many critics passed fascinating criticism on his poetry. Mainly, his handling of wit, irony, satire, pun and metaphysical conceits are greatly admired. Similarly, his distinct view on love also got positive light. However, some notable feminist critics criticized him as a misogynist. Despite these, Some cultural and political theories have given due concern on his poetic career.

In *Elizabethan Love Convention*, Donne's attitude towards love and women is discussed in detail. Emily Lu Pearson admires his distinct view of love which is far more different than Petrarchan and Elizabethan love convention. She states:

He was not interested in love as an idealizing passion. Rather, he was interested in love as a natural passion of body and mind. Woman entered into his analysis simply because she was necessary to complete the emotional experience by love between the sexes. Whether she were dark or fair, beautiful or ugly, did not matters. His interest in her depended entirely upon two things: first, she was the stimulus to the sensations of passionate love, and second, she was necessary to his interpretation of he results of that emotional experience. (223)

John Carey studies Donne's searching after power through the exercise of his eloquence. He writes: "Self empowering wit is rightly seen as a feature of Donne's careers as a love and as a priest (John Donne: Life Mind, and Art 129)." This study gives us a slight contemptuous view of Donne who is represented as a disingenuous creature of obstructed ambition.

Discussing Donne's controversial nature towards religion Evelyn M Simpson illustrates:

[. . .] the ecclesiastical authorities must have found much that was disconcerting in Donne's work. He preached toleration in an age which demanded rigid conformity, and his controversial sermons lacked the bitterness which was demanded of a zealous defender of the faith. The puritans suspected him of an inclination to Popery, while Laud's party at one time thought him in league with the puritans. His theology was too medieval in some respect and too modern in others. (Elizabethan Love Convention 74)

In addition to these, Stevie Davies, a prominent feminist critic of twentieth century draws attention to the frequency of unpleasant voyeurism in Donne's love poems. Indicating the dismissive attitude toward women Davies gives the impression that Donne's poetry "is less an expression of love than a record of rape (13)." Her study of Donne tries to prove him as a misogynist. She further writes: "there is a greatly heightened awareness of his predatory nature and of his fantasies of power and domination over women's bodies (29)."

Donne's structural aspect also examined by many critics. Among them CA Patrides, in his introductory note of *John Donne: The Complete English Poems* asserts: "the theatrical language encompasses the conceits that is to say elaborate comparisons, extended analogies, or distended metaphors and similes (22)."

Despite all these critical surgery on Donne, my proposed title seek to understand Donne's poetry in the light of New-Historicism which provides knowledge

about his fear psychosis and his political motive in his love poems. I hope my research will be one more way for better understanding of Donne.

### **Methodology**

Since my research is library research, the proposed dissertation derives its methodological framework from its New Historicist studies of John Donne's life such as John Carey's *John Donne: Life, Mind, and Art* and Thomas Docherty's biography of Donne entitled as *John Donne Undone*. Apart from this, my research will incorporate the ideas of the feminist re-reading of the Renaissance and the early Seventeenth Century. The research will be carried out with the support of different writers and critics from the concerned domain. Moreover, guidance of department teachers and internet search will also assist my research. "The research will approximately take three months for its completion. The chapter division of the research is given below:

Chapter I : Introduction

Chapter II : Tool discussion

Chapter III: Textual analysis

Chapter IV: Conclusion

## **Bibliography**

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