“Judith Wright’s Poetry explores both love and loss”. Discuss.

In Judith Wright’s anthology “A Human Pattern” the concepts of both love and loss are explored through her relationships and through the destruction of both nature and Aboriginal culture. Wright also explores the loss of identity in her poetry through her own image and loss of cultural identity.

Wright’s poetry depicts the strength of her relationships between herself and her unborn child, and her fear of losing their physical connection. In Wright’s femininity poems she illustrates her connection to her child through the umbilical cord, and her fear of losing their profound connection after birth. In “Woman to Man”, she suggests that her baby “is no child with a child’s face”. Although her unborn baby is yet to create its identity, Wright has “known it well” and loves it dearly. She is “afraid” of their separation, as she does not want to risk losing their connection. She recognises that the child has “the precise crystals of [her] eyes”, and they will always remain connected through DNA. Although after birth, the child is no longer “hung upon [her] dreaming blood” and connected to the umbilical cord, Wright says “you shall escape and not escape”, suggesting that whilst the child physically escapes, an invisible bond will always remain between them, holding them together. Although this connection may be through DNA, it is their unconditional love that binds them.

Wright’s poetry explores the concepts of lost culture due to the destruction of human kind. In “Bora Ring”, Wright suggests the Aboriginals have lost their culture as their “song is gone”. Wright describes their “tribal story” as “lost in an alien tale”. The “aliens” represent the European settlers who invaded the land and committed a savage crime, leaving a “curse as old as Cain”. The Europeans betrayed humanity, as they murdered many aboriginals, and left them a “sightless shadow” with their spear “splintered underground”. Although the Europeans tried to hide what they did and “bury the spear”, the aboriginals remained a lingering presence in the land, lost without a culture or identity, but unable to be forgotten. Similarly, in “At Cooloola”, Wright describes the loss of aboriginal identity when her grandfather was “beckoned by a ghost” of a “black accoutred warrior armed for fighting”. This suggests that although the aboriginals are no longer present in the land, their memory still haunts Wright through the guilt of her ancestors.

Loss is also shown through the destruction of nature due to humanity and industrialisation. In “Sanctuary”, Wright describes the “flat skins pinned to the road” and the “old gnome tree cut down by some axe-new boy”. Wright is conscious of the destruction humanity has had upon the environment and the loss of natures identity. Wright says that “only the road has meaning here”, to suggest that nature has lost its significance in today’s society and has been overcome by industrialisation and technology. Wright has become a conscience for the future, and is hopeful that humanity can look back on the sanctuary and nature with love and appreciation, rather than keeping their eyes fixed on the road that “leads into the world’s cities”. “Sanctuary” ends on a note of hope when she notes “doves upon a power line” and suggests that “meaning love, perhaps they are a prayer”. This implies that Wright believes nature and humanity can co-exist together in harmony on the basis that nature is not forgotten and humanity can see its significance amongst industrialisation within today’s society. Similar to “Sanctuary”, in “Australia 1970”, Wright commands the land to “die” in order to ease its suffering and prevent humanities “torturing mind”. She is conscious of the destruction humanity has had upon nature and would rather it “die like the eagle hawk” rather than continue to be tortured by humanity. Wright is tied between her love of nature, and humanity’s
destruction upon the land, and is hopeful that in the future there will be a balance between the two as they learn to co-exist together in harmony.

Judith Wright’s poetry is consistent in exploring the ideals of love and loss through her femininity poems, through loss of Aboriginal culture, and the destruction of humanity upon the environment. Wright carries on the guilt of her ancestors for their treatment of the Aboriginals and she ‘feels’ the weight of their loss. Similarly, Wright’s love for nature is shadowed by her guilt for humanities damage upon the land, and she is hopeful for the future that nature can “stand up” against industrialisation. Her femininity poems illustrate her love for her unborn child and her fear of losing their connection after their physical separation at birth. Wright comes to the realisation that the profoundness of their love and their connection through DNA is strong enough to bind them after birth, and hence they will never lose their connection.