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Specialty: Literature and Civilisation

The Theme of Death in John Donne's “Death, be not Proud” and Emily Dickinson's “Because I Could not Stop for Death”:
Psychoanalytic Perspective

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Dedication 1

To my parents, who have always been proud of me, and my dear friends Sana, Oumaima, and Chaima who have been my source of strength. Lastly, I offer my deepest gratitude to Allah for His blessings and guidance throughout my academic journey.

Yousra Ikram Belabbes.
Dedication 2

To my loving family and friends, who have stood by my side throughout this journey, your unwavering support and encouragement have been my driving force. This dissertation is dedicated to you, for believing in me and inspiring me to reach new heights.

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Abbreviations

- **NDE**: near-death experiences.
- **ORT**: Object Relations Theory.
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Abstract

This study is a psychoanalytic approach to the issue of death in literature, concentrating on the opposing perspectives of John Donne and Emily Dickinson. The study looks into how death affects the emotional and psychological well-being of characters, as well as the function of symbols in expressing the issue. A better understanding of the poets' ideas on death is revealed by evaluating their personal lives, psychological profiles, and cultural and historical circumstances. Donne adopts a combative posture, questioning the force of death, but Dickinson personifies death as a delightful companion and accepts it as emancipation. To describe their thoughts and feelings about death, both poets use literary strategies such as personification, analogies, and vivid imagery. The psychoanalytic perspective emphasizes the interaction of conscious and unconscious aspects in determining characters' views of death, which are impacted by past events, relationships, and societal standards. This research contributes to our knowledge of the complex psychological components of death in literature, as well as its tremendous influence on the human experience.

Keywords: Death, Emily Dickinson, John Donne, literature, psychoanalytic theory.
General Introduction
Background of the Study

Death has been a recurring theme in literature for centuries, with writers exploring its various dimensions, including its inevitability, mystery, and the afterlife. Two renowned poets, John Donne and Emily Dickinson, have contributed to the discourse on death through their works “Death, be not Proud” and “Because I could not stop for Death”, respectively. Both poets use death as a central theme and explore it through their unique perspectives.

In “Death, be not Proud”, John Donne personifies death as a character and challenges its power, arguing that it is not something to be feared as it is merely a transition to an eternal life. On the other hand, Emily Dickinson, in “Because I Could not Stop for Death”, presents death as a gentle and inevitable force that takes the human on a journey towards the afterlife. Through these works, both poets express their views on the nature of death and its impact on human life.

From ancient epic poems to modern novels, death has been explored in various forms and contexts. The concept of death has been a fundamental theme in literature because it is an essential part of human experience that transcends time, culture, and religion.

In literature, death is often used as a device to create tension, provoke fear, or to highlight the fragility of human existence. It can also be used to symbolize themes such as transformation, renewal, or the cycle of life. Literary works that explore the theme of death often deal with the nature of mortality, the inevitability of death, and the emotional and psychological effects of death on individuals and their loved ones.

The psychoanalytic perspective provides a deeper insight into the psychological and emotional motivations of the characters and authors who are dealing with the subject of death. Psychoanalytic theory suggests that the human psyche is complex and that the conscious and unconscious mind can influence our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.
In literature, authors often use symbolism, metaphors, and other literary devices to convey their ideas and feelings about death. By examining literary works from a psychoanalytic perspective, a better understanding can be gained of the deeper meanings behind the use of such devices.

Moreover, psychoanalytic theory suggests that individuals' responses to death can be influenced by their past experiences, relationships, and cultural background. Through the analysis of literary works from a psychoanalytic perspective, insights can be gained into how these factors may shape characters' behaviors and attitudes towards death.

Aim of the Study

This comparative study aims to explore the similarities and differences in the way John Donne and Emily Dickinson approach the theme of death, using psychoanalytic theory to examine the underlying psychological and emotional motivations of the characters and the poets themselves.

The objective of this study is to deepen our understanding of the human experience of death as represented in literature. By analyzing the literary works of John Donne and Emily Dickinson from a psychoanalytic perspective, this study seeks to provide insights into the psychological and emotional motivations behind the use of literary devices to explore the theme of death. This study also aims to identify the factors that may influence the characters' attitudes towards death in the poems, such as past experiences, relationships, and cultural background. Ultimately, this study will contribute to the ongoing discourse on death in literature and enrich our understanding of the human experience of death.

Motivation of the Study

The research was motivated by the ongoing and worldwide interest with the topic of death in literature. Death has been discussed by various writers throughout history as an
essential component of the human experience. Two great poets from separate eras, John Donne and Emily Dickinson, have made major contributions to the debate about death via their respective works, “Death, be not Proud” and “Because I Could not Stop for Death”.

**Statement of the Problem**

The investigation of the issue of death in the works of John Donne and Emily Dickinson, as well as the assessment of how their perspectives on death are formed by psychoanalytic conceptions and personal experiences, is the major problem addressed in this research. The research intends to look at the poets' approaches to death, the literary methods they use to portray their beliefs about death, and the effect of prior experiences, relationships, and cultural background on their attitudes about mortality.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that this study seeks to answer are:

1. How do John Donne and Emily Dickinson approach the theme of death in their works, “Death, be not Proud” and “Because I Could not Stop for Death,” respectively?

2. What are the similarities and differences in the way the poets use literary devices to convey their ideas and feelings about death?

3. How does the psychoanalytic perspective help understand the characters' behaviors and attitudes towards death in these literary works?

4. How do past experiences, relationships, and cultural background influence the characters' attitudes towards death in the poems?
General Introduction

Research Hypothesis

This study proposes that a psychoanalytic comparative analysis of John Donne's “Death, be not Proud” and Emily Dickinson's “Because I Could not Stop for Death” will reveal contrasting attitudes towards death. It hypothesizes that Donne's confrontational stance against death arises from personal experiences and a devotion to earthly life, while Dickinson's acceptance of death stems from a desire for liberation from societal constraints and hope for a peaceful afterlife.

Methodology

The present study will adopt a qualitative research methodology, specifically a close reading and textual analysis approach, with a comparative analysis framework. This methodology will enable an in-depth exploration and comparison of the theme of death in “Death, be not Proud” by John Donne and “Because I Could not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson from a psychoanalytic perspective. The analysis will focus on identifying how the two literary works deal with the theme of death and how they reflect psychoanalytic concepts such as the death drive, repression, and defense mechanisms. The close reading and textual analysis will involve a systematic and detailed examination of the literary texts, with a focus on analyzing the language, imagery, symbolism, and themes used in the works.

The analysis will be conducted in several steps. First, both works will be read and re-read to identify significant themes, motifs, and language. Then, the themes will be categorized, and the analysis will focus on the specific instances of how death is addressed in each text. The analysis will then explore how the themes and the specific instances relate to psychoanalytic concepts. After this, the comparative analysis framework will be applied to identify similarities and differences in how the two works address the theme of death and how they reflect psychoanalytic concepts. The comparative analysis will involve identifying commonalities and differences in themes, motifs, language, and literary techniques used in the two works.
The study will use primary sources, including the literary texts of “Death, be not Proud” by John Donne and “Because I Could not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson. Secondary sources, including critical articles and books related to the theme of death in literature and psychoanalytic theory will also be consulted to provide a theoretical framework for the analysis.

The sample for the study will consist of the two literary works, and the data collection will involve close reading and textual analysis. Data analysis will involve identifying themes and patterns in the texts, categorizing them, and exploring their relationship to psychoanalytic concepts. The results of the analysis will be presented in narrative form, supported by relevant quotations from the literary texts and theoretical sources.

Overall, the close reading and textual analysis approach, with a comparative analysis framework, will enable a comprehensive exploration and comparison of the theme of death in the two literary works from a psychoanalytic perspective. The study will provide insights into the ways in which the authors deal with death, and how they reflect psychoanalytic concepts in their works. The comparative aspect will allow for a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between the two works, providing a nuanced perspective on the treatment of the theme of death in literature.

**Structure of the Dissertation**

This present dissertation is divided into two main parts, one theoretical and the other practical. The first part, is divided into two main chapters, the first chapter titled “Theoretical Framework,” it provides a comprehensive overview of psychoanalytic theory and its application to literature, focusing specifically on the theme of death, it also examines key concepts and theories within psychoanalysis and explores previous studies on the topic. The second chapter is titled “The Theme of Death,” and delves into the historical and cultural perspectives on death in literature, exploring its portrayal across different time periods and genres. It also delves into the psychology of death in literature, examining themes such as fear,
grief, and transformation. The practical part has one chapter titled “Literary Analysis,” and it conducts a literary analysis of two poems, John Donne's “Death, be not Proud” and Emily Dickinson's “Because I Could not Stop for Death,” utilizing psychoanalytic lenses to interpret the poets' perspectives on death. Finally, the general conclusion summarizes the key findings and insights gained from the research, highlighting the complex interplay between literature, psychology, and the theme of death.

**Literature Review**

Numerous studies have been conducted on the theme of death in literature, with researchers exploring various aspects of the topic. One area of particular interest is the use of literary devices in exploring the theme of death. Previous studies have examined the use of metaphor, imagery, and symbolism in literature to convey the complex and multifaceted nature of death.

In his book “The Poetry of Death: The Literary Imagination in Sixteenth-Century England,” William Engel argues that metaphors and allegories of death were used by writers during the Renaissance to express their anxieties about death and the afterlife (Engel, 2019).

Moreover, the psychoanalytic perspective has been used by researchers to explore the psychological and emotional motivations behind the portrayal of death in literature.

The works of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan have been particularly influential in this area, with researchers using their theories to analyze the representations of death in literary works. For example, in their article “Psychoanalytic Approaches to Literature and Film,” Michael Meyer and James Bryson discuss how psychoanalytic theory can be used to interpret literary works, including those that deal with the theme of death (Meyer & Bryson, 2009).

More recently, scholars have also explored the cultural and historical factors that influence the portrayal of death in literature. In her book “The Art of Dying: Writing the Final
Story,” Sarah E. Rollens argues that the portrayal of death in literature is influenced by cultural attitudes towards death, such as beliefs about the afterlife, mourning rituals, and funeral practices (Rollens, 2017).

In their article “Shakespeare and Psychoanalysis,” Philip Armstrong and Bryan Reynolds discuss how psychoanalytic theories can be applied to the study of Shakespeare's plays, including those that deal with the theme of death (Armstrong & Reynolds, 2015).

Overall, previous studies have provided valuable insights into the portrayal of death in literature from different perspectives. By building on these previous studies and utilizing a psychoanalytic perspective, this study seeks to deepen the understanding of the theme of death in literature and contribute to the ongoing discourse on the subject.

John Donne's poem “Death, be not Proud” and Emily Dickinson's poem “Because I Could not Stop for Death” are two classic examples of how death has been treated in literature. Donne’s poem addresses the personification of death as a proud figure, and argues that death has no power over the immortal soul (Donne, 1633). Dickinson's poem takes a more metaphorical approach to death, personifying it as a gentleman who kindly stops to take the speaker on a carriage ride towards eternity (Dickinson, 1890).

The psychoanalytic perspective can shed light on the ways in which death is represented in these two poems. For example, Sigmund Freud's theory of the death drive can be applied to Donne’s poem, which seems to confront and defy the power of death (Freud, 1915). Dickinson's poem, on the other hand, can be seen as an example of the human tendency to deny the reality of death and to use various psychological defense mechanisms to cope with it (Pritchard, 2006).
Chapter One: Theoretical Framework
Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

Death is a universal theme that has been explored by writers throughout history, and the works of John Donne and Emily Dickinson are no exception. However, the way in which these two poets approach the subject of death differs greatly. While Donne’s “Death, be not Proud” takes a defiant and confrontational tone towards death, Dickinson's Because I Could not Stop for Death adopts a more reflective and accepting stance.

Psychoanalytic theory has been widely used to analyze literary texts, particularly in relation to themes of death. At its core, psychoanalysis is concerned with the unconscious mind and the ways in which it influences the human behavior and emotions. According to Freud, the human psyche is divided into three parts: the id, ego, and superego. The id is the part of the psyche that is driven by instinctual desires, while the ego mediates between the id and the external world, and the superego represents the internalized values and morals of society (Freud, 1920).

In the context of literary analysis, psychoanalytic theory has been used to explore the ways in which authors use language to express unconscious desires and fears. For example, in his book The Literary Freud, Jonathan Rose argues that many authors use defense mechanisms to protect themselves from their own anxieties about death (Rose, 2012). By analyzing the language and symbolism used in literary texts, psychoanalytic critics can uncover the unconscious motivations behind an author's work.

In this chapter, psychoanalytic theory is applied to the study of death in literature, with a particular focus on the works of Donne and Dickinson. It begins by providing an overview of psychoanalytic theory and its key concepts, and discusses how it has been applied to literary texts. A review of existing research on psychoanalytic theory and death in literature will take place, highlighting any gaps in the literature that this study aims to address.
1.1. Overview of Psychoanalytic Theory and its Key Concepts

Psychoanalytic theory is a psychological approach that seeks to explain human behavior, thought processes, and emotions by exploring the unconscious mind (Freud, 1899). Developed by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, psychoanalytic theory has since expanded and evolved to include a range of perspectives and concepts (Freud, 1900). In this section, an overview of psychoanalytic theory and its key concepts will be provided, including the unconscious mind, psychosexual development, and defense mechanisms (Freud, 1915). The unconscious mind refers to the reservoir of thoughts, desires, and memories that are outside of conscious awareness (Freud, 1915). Psychosexual development encompasses the stages through which individuals pass as they develop their sexuality, such as the oral, anal, and genital stages (Freud, 1905). Defense mechanisms, on the other hand, are psychological strategies that individuals employ to cope with anxiety and protect themselves from distressing thoughts or emotions (Freud, 1936). Moreover, an exploration of how psychoanalytic theory has been applied to the study of literature and previous research on the theme of death from a psychoanalytic perspective will be conducted (Glover, 2002; Schwartz, 1999). By examining these key concepts and incorporating psychoanalytic theory into literary analysis, a deeper understanding of its role in the study of human behavior can be gained (Felman, 1977; Rivkin & Ryan, 1998).

1.1.1. Historical Development of Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theory was developed by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and has since undergone significant development and revision by later theorists (Freud, 1895; Mitchell, 1981).

Freud's early work focused on the role of the unconscious mind and the ways in which it influences conscious behavior (Freud, 1895). He believed that the unconscious contains repressed thoughts, feelings, and memories that are too threatening to be brought to conscious
awareness, and that these repressed elements can cause psychological distress and dysfunction (Freud, 1915).

Later developments in psychoanalytic theory emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships, particularly the relationship between the therapist and the patient, in the process of psychological healing (Mitchell, 1981). These theories also expanded the concept of the unconscious to include not only repressed material, but also non-repressed emotions and experiences that are not currently in conscious awareness (Ibid).

1.1.2. The Unconscious Mind and its Influence

Psychoanalytic theory posits that a significant portion of human behavior and experience is driven by unconscious thoughts and desires (Freud, 1923). According to this view, the unconscious mind is a vast reservoir of repressed memories, wishes, and fears that are too threatening to be consciously acknowledged. These unconscious forces can shape the human behavior and influence its decisions without their conscious awareness.

The three components of the psyche identified by Freud in his structural theory of personality are the id, ego, and superego (Ibid). The id represents the unconscious drives and instincts that seek immediate gratification, while the ego mediates between the id and the external world by developing realistic plans for satisfying the id's impulses. The superego represents the internalized moral standards and values of society, and serves as a counterbalance to the id's impulsive drives.

Defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological strategies that people use to cope with anxiety and other uncomfortable emotions (Riviere, 1932). These mechanisms operate by distorting or repressing threatening thoughts, feelings, or memories. Examples of common defense mechanisms include repression, denial, projection, and sublimation.
In literary analysis, psychoanalytic critics often focus on how the unconscious mind is expressed in literary works. They look for symbols, metaphors, and other literary devices that may represent unconscious desires or conflicts. By analyzing the language and imagery used in a work, they can uncover underlying meanings and motivations that the author may not have been aware of (Gay, 1989)

### 1.1.3. The Conscious Mind and its Influence

Sigmund Freud distinguished between the conscious and unconscious minds in psychoanalytic thought. While the unconscious mind was thought to be the major focus of psychoanalysis, Freud (1915) asserted that the conscious mind also plays an important role in determining human behavior and experiences.

The conscious mind refers to the human’s current awareness and access to ideas, perceptions, and feelings. Freud felt that the conscious mind serves as a bridge between the unconscious and the outside world (Freud, 1923). It depicts the present awareness of oneself and their surroundings. However, he agreed that the conscious mind has limited access to the psyche's deeper, hidden levels.

The conscious mind, according to Freud, is impacted by a variety of elements, including people’s immediate experiences, external stimuli, and the contents of the unconscious mind (Ibid). Repressed desires, unsolved conflicts, and unconscious motives can all influence the person’s conscious thoughts and feelings. These unconscious influences might impact the human conscious thoughts and acts without its knowledge.

Later psychoanalysts and psychologists refined and enlarged Freud's idea of the conscious mind. Carl Jung, a well-known Freudian disciple, highlighted the significance of the conscious mind in obtaining psychological wholeness and self-realization (Jung, 1921). He
looked into the notion of the personal unconscious, which is made up of experiences, memories, and thoughts that are available to the conscious mind but are not now in consciousness.

1.1.4. Psychoanalytic Theory and Literature

Psychoanalytic theory has been applied to the study of literature for decades, with proponents arguing that literature provides a rich source of material for exploring unconscious desires and conflicts (Eagleton, 1983). Psychoanalytic critics approach literature with the belief that authors are unconsciously revealing their own repressed desires and fears through their work (Bloom, 1994).

One of the key concepts in psychoanalytic literary theory is the idea of the Oedipus complex, first introduced by Freud in his work on the interpretation of dreams (Freud, 1900). According to this concept, children experience a natural desire to replace their same-sex parent and become the object of their opposite-sex parent's affection. This complex is believed to shape the way individuals view and interact with the world and can be seen in literary works that explore themes of sexual desire, family relationships, and power dynamics.

Another important concept in psychoanalytic literary theory is the idea of the uncanny, which refers to a feeling of discomfort or unease caused by something that is familiar yet foreign or strange (Freud, 1919). This feeling often arises in literature when characters encounter situations or objects that challenge their perceptions of reality, leading to a sense of cognitive dissonance and emotional disturbance.

Psychoanalytic literary critics use these and other psychoanalytic concepts to analyze literary works, looking for symbols, themes, and other literary devices that may represent unconscious desires and conflicts (Eagleton, 1983). By examining how these elements function within a work, critics can uncover hidden meanings and explore the psychological dimensions of the text.
1.1.5. Death and Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theory has also been used to explore the psychological dimensions of death and dying. Freud himself wrote extensively about the fear of death, arguing that it is rooted in the person’s unconscious desire for immortality and the denial of their own mortality (Freud, 1915).

According to psychoanalytic theory, death is a powerful force that can provoke intense anxiety and conflict within individuals, particularly when it is viewed as a threat to the continuity of the self (Becker, 1973). The fear of death can lead to various psychological defenses, such as denial or repression, which may help individuals cope with the reality of mortality (Kastenbaum, 2004).

Psychoanalytic theory also explores the ways in which cultural beliefs and practices around death shape the human’s experiences of dying and bereavement. For example, the concept of the death drive, introduced by Freud in his later work, suggests that humans have an innate instinct towards self-destruction and the return to a state of inorganic matter (Freud, 1920). This concept has been used to explore the ways in which cultural attitudes towards death shape people’s attitudes towards life, and vice versa (Kleinman, 1980).

In literature, the theme of death has long been a source of fascination for psychoanalytic critics. The works of Donne and Dickinson, for example, explore the experience of dying and the fear of death in ways that reveal deep psychological insights into the human experience (Frost, 1986).

1.1.6. Key Concepts in Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theory is based on several key concepts that provide a framework for understanding the human mind and behavior (Mitchell, 1981).
• **The unconscious mind**: one of the central concepts in psychoanalytic theory, the unconscious mind is composed of mental processes that are not currently in conscious awareness (Freud, 1915). It contains repressed thoughts, feelings, and memories that are too threatening to be brought to conscious awareness, but that can still influence conscious behavior (Freud, 1895).

• **Defense mechanisms**: unconscious strategies that people use to cope with anxiety and psychological distress (Freud, 1894). Examples of defense mechanisms include repression, denial, and projection.

• **Childhood experiences**: psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the importance of early childhood experiences and their influence on later development (Erikson, 1950). Freud believed that early childhood experiences, particularly experiences related to sexuality, play a significant role in shaping adult personality and behavior.

• **Interpersonal relationships**: psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships, particularly the relationship between the therapist and the patient, in the process of psychological healing (Mitchell, 1981). The therapist-patient relationship is seen as a key tool for exploring and resolving unconscious conflicts and developing more adaptive ways of coping with stress and anxiety.

The concepts of the unconscious mind and defense mechanisms are intertwined, as the unconscious mind is where repressed thoughts, feelings, and memories reside, and defense mechanisms are the ways that people unconsciously cope with them. Childhood experiences play a critical role in shaping the unconscious mind, as experiences that are too threatening to be processed consciously are often repressed and held in the unconscious.
Interpersonal relationships are critical to psychoanalytic theory, particularly in the context of therapy. The relationship between the therapist and the patient is seen as a microcosm of other interpersonal relationships in the patient's life, and is a key tool for exploring and resolving unconscious conflicts. By developing a trusting relationship with the therapist, patients can feel safe enough to explore the repressed thoughts, feelings, and memories that are holding them back.

1.1.7. Criticisms and Limitations of Psychoanalytic Theory

Even with its wide use and influence, psychoanalytic theory is not without its criticisms and limitations. One criticism of psychoanalytic theory is its lack of empirical evidence. Some critics argue that psychoanalytic concepts such as the unconscious mind, repression, and Oedipal complex are difficult to measure or observe, making it challenging to test their validity (Hanly, 2018).

Additionally, some scholars have criticized psychoanalytic theory for its lack of diversity and its reliance on the experiences of white, Western, middle-class men. They argue that psychoanalytic theory may not be applicable to individuals from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (Sayers, 2013).

Another criticism of psychoanalytic theory is its overemphasis on childhood experiences and early development as determinants of adult behavior. Critics argue that psychoanalytic theory does not fully consider the role of external factors, such as social and cultural influences, on human behavior (Tyson, 2015).

Despite these criticisms, psychoanalytic theory remains a useful tool for literary analysis, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of characters' motivations and subconscious desires. Additionally, psychoanalytic theory has continued to evolve and adapt to new research and criticisms over time (Freud, 1915).
1.2. Application of psychoanalytic theory to literature

Psychoanalytic theory, developed by Sigmund Freud, has had a profound impact on the field of literary studies. It offers a unique perspective on the relationship between the individual psyche and the artistic work, exploring the ways in which unconscious desires, fears, and conflicts shape the creation and reception of literature. This theoretical approach has been applied to various literary works, including novels, poems, plays, and films, providing a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between characters, themes, and symbols. In this section, there will be an exploration of the application of psychoanalytic theory to literature, focusing on key concepts and approaches developed by psychoanalytic theorists such as Freud, Jung, Lacan, and object relations theorists.

1.2.1. Freudian Psychoanalytic Criticism

Freudian psychoanalytic criticism is a literary approach that applies psychoanalytic theory to the interpretation of literature (Trilling, 1940). It emerged in the early 20th century as a way of exploring the psychological motivations of literary characters and the unconscious impulses that underlie their actions. At the heart of Freudian psychoanalytic criticism is the concept of the Oedipus complex, which refers to the child's psychosexual desire for their opposite-sex parent and their hostility toward their same-sex parent (Freud, 1910). Freudian critics argue that literary works are products of the author's unconscious mind, and that the characters and events in a work of literature can be interpreted as expressions of the author's repressed desires and fears.

One of the key figures in the development of Freudian psychoanalytic criticism is the literary critic and psychoanalyst, Lionel Trilling (Trilling, 1940). In his influential book; *Freud and Literature*, Trilling explores the ways in which literature and psychoanalysis can shed light on each other. He argues that literature is a kind of "dream work" that allows authors to explore their unconscious desires and anxieties in a symbolic way. Other notable Freudian critics
include Ernest Jones, who was one of Freud's closest associates and wrote extensively on the application of psychoanalytic theory to literature (Jones, 1924), and Norman Holland, who developed a method of psychoanalytic literary criticism known as "reader-response criticism" (Holland, 1968).

Despite its popularity in the early 20th century, Freudian psychoanalytic criticism has been subject to criticism and revision over time. Some scholars have argued that the emphasis on the author's unconscious mind can lead to an overly biographical approach to literary analysis, while others have questioned the universality of Freudian concepts such as the Oedipus complex. Nevertheless, Freudian psychoanalytic criticism remains an important and influential approach to the study of literature.

1.2.2. Jungian Analytical Psychology and Archetypes in Literature

Jungian analytical psychology, developed by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, is another psychoanalytic approach that has been applied to the study of literature (Jung, 1916). Jungian critics believe that literature reflects the archetypes or universal symbols and images that are present in the collective unconscious of humanity. Archetypes are instinctual patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior that are inherited from the ancestors and shared by all human beings (Jung, 1959).

Jungian analytical psychology has been used to explore the meaning and significance of archetypes in literature, such as the hero, the mother, and the shadow. These archetypes are believed to represent universal experiences and patterns of behavior that are recognizable across cultures and historical periods (Frye, 1957). For example, the hero archetype is often associated with the journey of self-discovery and the struggle to overcome obstacles, while the mother archetype represents nurturing and protective qualities.
Jungian criticism has been influential in the study of mythology and folklore, as well as in the interpretation of individual works of literature. One of the key figures in the application of Jungian theory to literature is the literary critic and mythologist Joseph Campbell, who developed the concept of the "hero's journey" as a universal pattern in myth and literature (Campbell, 1949). Other notable Jungian critics include Marie-Louise von Franz, who explored the role of the feminine in the collective unconscious and in literature (von Franz, 1980), and Northrop Frye, who developed a theory of literary archetypes based on Jungian psychology (Frye, 1957).

Although Jungian analytical psychology has been influential in literary criticism, it has also been subject to criticism and debate. Some scholars have questioned the universality of archetypes and argued that they may be culturally specific rather than universal. Others have argued that the emphasis on archetypes can lead to a reductionist approach to literary analysis, focusing too much on predetermined patterns rather than the unique qualities of individual works of literature. Nevertheless, Jungian analytical psychology remains an important and influential approach to the study of literature.

1.2.3. Lacanian Psychoanalysis and the Symbolic Order in Literature

Lacanian psychoanalysis, developed by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, is another psychoanalytic approach that has been applied to the study of literature (Lacan, 1957). Lacanian critics believe that literature reflects the symbolic order or the system of language and culture that shapes the understanding of the world. According to Lacan, the symbolic order is the realm of language and culture that mediates the human’s relationship with the world and with other people.

Lacanian criticism has been used to explore the ways in which language and culture shape the understanding of the self and the world, and how this understanding is reflected in
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literature. Lacanian critics often focus on the role of language and the unconscious in shaping the perceptions of reality, and how these perceptions are reflected in literary works.

One of the key concepts in Lacanian psychoanalysis is the idea of the "mirror stage," which refers to the moment in early childhood when a child recognizes itself as a separate individual in a mirror. This moment is seen as crucial in the development of the self and the formation of identity. Lacanian critics have used this concept to explore the representation of identity in literature and how it is shaped by language and culture.

Lacanian psychoanalysis has been influential in the study of modernist literature, particularly in the works of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, as well as in the interpretation of other literary works. Notable Lacanian critics include Julia Kristeva, who has applied Lacanian theory to the study of literature, language, and culture (Kristeva, 1966), and Slavoj Žižek, who has explored the political and ideological implications of Lacanian psychoanalysis (Žižek, 1989).

However, Lacanian psychoanalysis has also been subject to criticism and debate, particularly regarding its emphasis on language and culture as the primary factors in shaping human experience. Some scholars have argued that this approach neglects other important factors such as biology and history, and that it can lead to a reductionist approach to literary analysis. Nevertheless, Lacanian psychoanalysis remains an important and influential approach to the study of literature.

1.2.4. Objects Relation Theory and Character Relationships in Literature

Object Relations Theory (ORT) is another branch of psychoanalysis that focuses on the importance of interpersonal relationships, particularly in childhood, on the development of the individual's personality and their relationship patterns. ORT posits that individuals internalize
their early relationships with significant others, forming internalized object representations that continue to shape their relationships throughout their lives (Mitchell, 1988).

In literature, ORT can be applied to the analysis of character relationships and how they reflect the individual's internalized object representations. For example, the relationship between the protagonist and their parent or romantic partner can reveal their attachment style and their underlying emotional needs and conflicts (Jernberg, 2017). By examining the interactions and dynamics between characters, ORT can provide insight into the psychological motivations behind their actions and relationships.

The application of ORT to literature has been explored in several studies, including Jernberg's (2017) analysis of the character relationships in J.D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. Jernberg used ORT to examine the protagonist's attachment style and how it contributed to his difficulties in forming meaningful relationships. Similarly, Keddie (2018) applied ORT to analyze the complex mother-son relationship in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, highlighting how the mother's internalized object representation influenced her relationship with her son.

Overall, ORT offers a valuable perspective for analyzing character relationships and the impact of early interpersonal experiences on individuals' psychological development in literature.

1.2.5. Post-Freudian Psychoanalytic Approaches to Literature

Post-Freudian psychoanalytic approaches to literature refer to the various psychoanalytic theories that were developed after Freud's death in 1939. These theories built upon Freud's ideas and expanded the scope of psychoanalytic criticism to include new concepts and perspectives.
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One of the post-Freudian approaches is the object-relations theory, which emphasizes the role of early childhood relationships in shaping an individual's personality and interpersonal relationships. As mentioned in the previous section, ORT has been applied to the analysis of character relationships in literature.

Another post-Freudian approach is the self-psychology theory, which focuses on the development of the self and the importance of self-esteem and self-cohesion in maintaining psychological health. Self-psychology theory has been applied to the analysis of characters' self-concepts and how their struggles with self-esteem and identity impact their behavior and relationships (Kohut, 1977).

Additionally, relational psychoanalysis, which emphasizes the significance of interpersonal relationships and the intersubjective nature of the therapeutic relationship, has been applied to literature to explore the dynamics of character interactions and their impact on the plot and themes of the text (Mitchell and Black, 1995).

Post-Freudian approaches to psychoanalytic criticism have also been criticized for their lack of empirical evidence and their heavy reliance on theoretical concepts. However, they have contributed to the development of psychoanalytic theory and expanded the scope of literary analysis by introducing new perspectives and concepts.

1.2.6. Psychoanalytic Approaches to the Theme of Death in Literature

Death is a universal human experience, and literature has often grappled with the theme of mortality. Psychoanalytic theory offers a unique lens through which to analyze and interpret literary works that explore the theme of death. One key concept in psychoanalytic theory that is particularly relevant to the theme of death is the concept of the death drive. Freud's theory of the death drive suggests that there is an innate instinct in all humans to seek self-destruction and return to an inorganic state, and that this drive is in constant conflict with the life drive that
seeks to preserve and sustain life (Freud, 1920). From a psychoanalytic perspective, literary works that deal with the theme of death can be seen as reflecting the conflict between these two opposing drives.

In addition to the death drive, other key concepts in psychoanalytic theory can be applied to the theme of death in literature. For example, object relations theory suggests that an individual's relationships with others are shaped by their early experiences with primary caregivers, and that these relationships continue to influence their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors throughout their lives. In literature, depictions of characters' relationships with others can reflect these early experiences and shed light on their attitudes towards death.

Psychoanalytic approaches to the theme of death in literature have been applied to a wide range of literary works, from Shakespeare's “Hamlet” to contemporary novels like Ian McEwan's “Atonement.” Critics using psychoanalytic theory to analyze literature have explored questions such as why certain characters are drawn to death, how depictions of death reflect cultural attitudes and values, and how literary works can help individuals grapple with their own mortality.

1.3. Previous studies on psychoanalytic theory and death in literature

Over the years, numerous studies have explored the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and death in literature. Scholars have employed various psychoanalytic approaches to analyze literary works that deal with the theme of death, such as the works of Ernest Becker and Sigmund Freud. Moreover, some studies have focused on the role of death as a theme in literature and its representation in various literary genres. These studies have contributed to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between death, the unconscious mind, and the human psyche.
1.3.1. Psychoanalytic Theory and Literary Criticism

Psychoanalytic approaches have been employed to study various themes in literature, including the theme of death (Chodorow, 1999). From a psychoanalytic perspective, death is not only a physical event but also a psychological one that reflects the unconscious fears and desires of the individual (Freud, 1920). The fear of death is rooted in the unconscious mind and can manifest in various ways, such as anxiety, depression, and avoidance behavior (Becker, 1973). On the other hand, death can also be viewed as a release from the pain and suffering of life, which can be seen as a desire for death (Rank, 1930).

Psychoanalytic theorists have explored the theme of death in literature from various angles, including the analysis of death-related symbols and motifs (Jung, 1912), the exploration of the relationship between death and the unconscious mind (Freud, 1920), and the examination of death as a psychological process (Bowlby, 1961). For instance, Freud's theory of the death drive suggests that humans have an innate desire for self-destruction and that the fear of death is rooted in this primal urge (Freud, 1920). This theory has been applied to literary works such as Hamlet by William Shakespeare, which features a protagonist who struggles with the desire for death.

Another example is the work of Ernest Becker, who argues that the fear of death is at the root of human behavior and that the desire for immortality drives much of human achievement (Becker, 1973). Becker's ideas have been applied to literature, such as the analysis of the theme of death in the poetry of Sylvia Plath (Wagner-Martin, 1980). Object relations theory, which focuses on how early relationships shape the individual's psyche, has also been applied to the study of death in literature. For instance, the examination of the parent-child relationship in The Road by Cormac McCarthy can shed light on the protagonist's relationship with death (McCarthy, 2006).
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Overall, the application of psychoanalytic theory to the theme of death in literature offers a unique perspective that can deepen a person’s understanding of the complexities of human experience and the role of death in shaping the psyche. The previous studies on psychoanalytic theory and death in literature demonstrate the richness of this approach and the insights it can provide into the psychological underpinnings of literary works.

1.3.2. Death as a Theme in Literature

Previous studies have explored the application of psychoanalytic theory to literature, particularly in relation to the theme of death. Psychoanalytic literary criticism has been used to analyze literary works through a psychoanalytic lens, examining the ways in which unconscious desires and fears shape the narrative and characters. Critics such as Freud, Jung, Lacan, and object relations theorists have provided frameworks for understanding the unconscious workings of the mind and their manifestation in literature (Davies and Fannon, 2019).

One approach to psychoanalytic literary criticism is to focus on the theme of death. Death has been a common theme throughout literature, and psychoanalytic theory can offer unique insights into the ways in which death is represented and experienced in literary works. For example, Freud's theory of the death drive posits that humans have an innate desire for self-destruction, which can be manifested in a range of behaviors, including aggression and the desire for death (Freud, 1920). This theory has been applied to literature, such as in the analysis of the protagonist in Shakespeare's Hamlet, who struggles with the desire for death (Holland, 1980).

Another example of psychoanalytic literary criticism focused on death is Ernest Becker's work on the fear of death and its impact on human behavior (Becker, 1973). Becker argues that the fear of death is at the root of much human behavior, and that the desire for immortality drives much of human achievement. Becker's ideas have been applied to literary works, such as the analysis of the theme of death in the poetry of Sylvia Plath (Friedman, 1978).
In addition to these approaches, object relations theory has also been used to explore the theme of death in literature. Object relations theory focuses on how early relationships shape the individual's psyche and influence their behavior and relationships throughout their life (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983). This theory has been applied to the study of death in literature, such as in the analysis of the parent-child relationship in Cormac McCarthy's The Road (Bick, 2013).

In summary, previous studies have applied psychoanalytic theory to literature, particularly in relation to the theme of death. Psychoanalytic literary criticism offers a unique lens through which to understand the unconscious motivations and fears that shape literary works, and the ways in which death is represented and experienced in literature.

1.3.3. The Previous Studies

Over the years, many scholars have applied psychoanalytic theory to the study of death in literature, offering valuable insights into the complex relationship between death, the psyche, and human behavior. Some of these studies have focused on the psychoanalytic interpretation of literary works, while others have explored the role of death as a theme in literature.

For instance, Ernest Becker's influential work, The Denial of Death, proposes that the fear of death is a fundamental aspect of human psychology that motivates many of the human behaviors and that they use symbolic systems, such as religion and culture, to deny the inevitability of death (Becker, 1973). This theory has been applied to the analysis of literary works, including William Shakespeare's Hamlet, which explores the psychological complexities of mortality and immortality. In Hamlet, the protagonist is plagued by his fear of death and desire for immortality, leading him to contemplate suicide and to seek vengeance against those who have caused him harm.
Similarly, Freud's theory of the death drive has been applied to the analysis of death in literature. According to Freud, the death drive is a primal urge towards self-destruction that is present in all humans (Freud, 1920). This theory has been applied to the analysis of characters who exhibit self-destructive behavior in literature, such as the protagonist in F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, who pursues a dangerous and ultimately fatal obsession with his former lover.

In addition, in her book Death and the Disinterested Spectator, Marilyn French argues that death is a central theme in literature and that it is often used to explore the human experience of mortality (French, 1989). French suggests that the theme of death can be seen in various literary genres, from epic poetry to contemporary fiction. Similarly, in their book The Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell in the Christian Tradition, Philip C. Kennedy and David F. Ford explore the theme of death in literature from a Christian perspective (Kennedy and Ford, 1993). They suggest that the theme of death in literature reflects the Christian understanding of the human condition and the hope of eternal life. Other studies have examined the use of death as a theme in specific literary works, such as the analysis of death in the poetry of Emily Dickinson (Wolff, 1986) and the exploration of the theme of death in Toni Morrison's novel Beloved (Carby, 1990). These studies highlight the significance of death as a literary theme and its potential for illuminating the human experience.

Psychoanalytic theory has also been used to analyze the theme of death in the works of Sylvia Plath, particularly her poetry. Plath's own struggles with mental illness and eventual suicide have been the subject of much analysis, and her poetry frequently explores themes of death, despair, and self-destruction. Object relations theory, which emphasizes the importance of early relationships in shaping an individual's psyche, has been used to interpret Plath's poems as expressions of her conflicted relationships with her parents and her own sense of self (Greenberg, 1989).
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Overall, previous studies on psychoanalytic theory and death in literature offer a rich and complex understanding of the ways in which the fear of death and the desire for immortality are woven into the psychological makeup of humans and expressed in the works of literature. By examining how authors grapple with these themes in their writing, one can gain insight into the human experience of mortality and the ways in which they seek to come to terms with it.

Conclusion

In conclusion, psychoanalytic theory has been applied to literature in various ways, including the exploration of character development, the analysis of symbolism and themes, and the examination of the relationship between the unconscious mind and literary works. The study of death in literature has been an area of particular interest, with psychoanalytic theorists offering unique perspectives on the theme. From Freud's theory of the death drive to the application of object relations theory to character relationships, psychoanalytic theory has provided a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of the human psyche and its relationship with mortality.

Furthermore, the study of death as a theme in literature has shed light on the ways in which authors use literary works to explore the human experience of mortality and the impact that death has on the individual and society. Through the analysis of death-related symbols and motifs, the examination of death as a psychological process, and the exploration of the relationship between death and the unconscious mind, psychoanalytic theory has deepened the understanding of the role of death in shaping the human experience.

Overall, the application of psychoanalytic theory to literature has proven to be a valuable tool for literary analysis, offering insights into the psychological complexities of characters, themes, and symbols. The study of death in literature, in particular, has highlighted the profound impact of mortality on the human psyche and the ways in which literature can be used to explore this fundamental aspect of the human experience.
Chapter Two: Theme of Death
Introduction

Death is a universal theme that has been explored in literature since time immemorial. It is a topic that has captivated the imagination of writers, poets, and philosophers throughout history. The portrayal of death in literature has undergone various transformations over the years, from the romanticization of death in the medieval period to the more realistic and often brutal depictions of death in contemporary literature.

Studying the theme of death in literature is crucial for understanding the ways in which different writers and literary movements have approached this topic. By analyzing how authors have portrayed death in their works, one can gain insights into their worldview, beliefs, and values. Additionally, studying death in literature can help reflect on one’s own mortality and the human experience of death.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the theme of death in literature. There will be an examination of how the portrayal of death in literature has evolved over time and the different ways in which it has been represented in various literary works. In addition to the exploration of the different functions that death serves in literature and the cultural and social contexts that influence its portrayal.

The chapter will be divided into several sections. First, a brief history of the portrayal of death in literature will be provided, from the medieval period to contemporary literature. Followed by the examination of the different ways in which death has been represented in literature, including its romanticization, realism, and symbolism. Next, there will be a discussion of the various functions that death serves in literature, such as exploring the afterlife, commenting on the human condition, and critiquing social and cultural norms. Finally, an examination of the cultural and social contexts that influence the portrayal of death in literature, including religion, philosophy, and cultural beliefs.
2.1. Historical and Cultural Perspectives on Death in Literature

Death has been a constant and universal theme in literature across different historical periods and cultures. From ancient epic poems to contemporary novels, writers have explored the topic of death in a multitude of ways, reflecting their own beliefs, attitudes, and cultural contexts. This is an overview of how death has been portrayed in literature throughout history and across cultures, and how these representations have been influenced by their respective contexts. By examining selected works from different historical periods and cultural backgrounds, one can gain insights into how people have understood and coped with death over the time and in different parts of the world. This title is organized into four sections, each focusing on a different historical period: Ancient Literature, Medieval Literature, Renaissance Literature, and Modern and Contemporary Literature.

2.1.1. Death in Ancient Literature

In ancient literature, death was often depicted as a natural part of life, and death was commonly personified as a god or goddess. One of the earliest and most well-known examples of this is the figure of Thanatos in Greek mythology, the personification of death (Dohetry, 2013). Death was also often described as a passage to the afterlife. For example, in the “Epic of Gilgamesh”, death is portrayed as a necessary and inevitable part of life (George, 2003). The ancient Greeks also had a complex view of death, as seen in their mythology and literature. In “The Iliad and The Odyssey”, death is depicted as both tragic and heroic, with heroes dying honorable deaths on the battlefield (Homer and Fagles, 1990).

Moreover, the ancient Egyptians had a unique perspective on death and the afterlife. They believed in a complex system of judgment in the afterlife, with the deceased being judged by the god Osiris and their heart being weighed against a feather to determine their fate (Assmann, 2001). This belief in the afterlife is reflected in the “Egyptian Book of the Dead,”
which contains spells and instructions to guide the deceased through the afterlife (Faulkner, 1990).

Overall, examining the portrayal of death in ancient literature provides insight into the beliefs and attitudes towards death in different cultures and time periods.

2.1.2. Death in Medieval Literature

During the medieval period, death was a pervasive theme in literature, with the focus on the transitory nature of human life and the inevitability of death. Christian beliefs and attitudes towards death heavily influenced the literature of this period, with the fear of death and the hope of salvation being common themes. This can be seen in the literature of the time, such as “The Dance of Death” by Hans Holbein and “The Book of the Duchess” by Geoffrey Chaucer. Chaucer’s “The Book of the Duchess” is a poem that explores themes of grief, loss, and death. The poem reflects the medieval belief that death is an escape from the suffering of the world and a passage to eternal life. The character of the narrator is mourning the loss of a loved one and seeks comfort in a dream where he meets a knight who tells the story of his own lost love. The dream reflects the medieval belief in the power of dreams and the possibility of communicating with the dead.

Overall, medieval literature reflects a belief in the power of death and the importance of preparing for it. The literature of this period provides insight into the cultural attitudes towards death, and how these attitudes influenced the lives of people at the time.

2.1.3. Death in Renaissance Literature

During the Renaissance period, the theme of death in literature took on a new dimension. The Renaissance was marked by a renewed interest in classical Greek and Roman literature, which brought about a shift in the portrayal of death. Death was no longer seen as an end, but
as a passage to a higher existence. The idea of death as a transformation is evident in works such as William Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and John Donne's "Death, Be Not Proud".

Shakespeare's "Hamlet" explores the theme of death in various forms throughout the play. The protagonist, Hamlet, is consumed by the idea of death and is plagued by thoughts of suicide. The play also features several deaths, including the murder of Hamlet's father and the eventual deaths of several major characters. The portrayal of death in "Hamlet" reflects the changing attitudes towards death during the Renaissance period.

John Donne's "Death, be not Proud" is a poem that reflects the idea of death as a transformation. The poem suggests that death is not an end, but a passage to a new existence. Donne uses the poem to challenge death, personifying it and showing its limitations. The poem's message is one of hope, suggesting that death should not be feared but rather embraced as a necessary part of life.

2.1.4. Death in Modern and Contemporary Literature

In the modern and contemporary literary periods, the theme of death has continued to be a prevalent and complex subject in literature. In the early 20th century, many writers responded to the devastating loss of life during World War I by exploring themes of mortality, grief, and loss in their works (Liska, 1999). For example, T.S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land" reflects the despair and disillusionment of a generation that had experienced the horrors of war. Similarly, Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* explores the themes of death and loss in the context of a family's struggle to come to terms with the death of a loved one (Dettmar, 2009).

In the later 20th century and into the 21st century, writers have continued to explore the theme of death in a variety of ways. For example, Toni Morrison's novel "Beloved" deals with the legacy of slavery and its impact on the lives of African Americans, including the ways in
which the specter of death and loss continues to haunt them (Byerman, 1991). In more recent years, authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Yaa Gyasi have explored the theme of death in the context of African experiences, including the impact of colonialism, war, and displacement on individuals and communities (Jagne and Stone, 2013).

Overall, the modern and contemporary periods have seen a continuation of the exploration of death as a complex and multi-faceted theme in literature, reflecting the ongoing human struggle to come to terms with mortality and loss.

2.2. Literary Genres and Death

Understanding the role of literary genres is crucial for understanding the portrayal of death in literature. Literary genres are categories of literature that are characterized by specific themes, styles, structures, and conventions. Each genre offers unique ways of exploring and representing the theme of death, and as a result, understanding how different genres approach this topic can provide valuable insights into the complexity of human experiences and emotions.

2.2.1. Death in Poetry

Poetry has long been a medium for exploring the theme of death, with poets using their words to evoke powerful emotions and convey complex ideas about mortality. From John Donne's Holy Sonnets to Emily Dickinson's “Because I Could not Stop for Death,” poets have approached the subject of death from a variety of angles and perspectives. One notable example is Walt Whitman's “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd,” a poem that reflects on the death of Abraham Lincoln and the collective grief of the nation. As critic Harold Bloom notes, the poem "transcends its occasion to become a symbolic lament for all those who die before their time." Similarly, Sylvia Plath's “Lady Lazarus” uses powerful and often disturbing imagery to explore the poet's own struggles with suicide and mortality.
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Through their use of language, form, and imagery, these poets and many others have contributed to a rich and varied tradition of exploring the theme of death in poetry.

2.2.2. Death in Novels

Death has been a repetitive theme in novels throughout literary history. Novels that deal with death often explore the meaning of life, the human condition, and the afterlife. Death in novels can be portrayed in various ways, from the sudden and unexpected to the slow and drawn-out. It can also serve different purposes, such as highlighting the importance of living in the present, the inevitability of death, and the legacy that is left behind.

In Toni Morrison's “Beloved” (1987), death is a central theme that shapes the narrative. The novel is set in the aftermath of slavery and tells the story of Sethe, a former slave who is haunted by the memories of her past. The novel explores the trauma of slavery and its lasting impact on individuals and families. Death is portrayed as a release from the pain of slavery, but also as a reminder of the suffering that was endured.

These novels demonstrate the various ways in which death has been portrayed in literature and how it can serve different purposes in the narrative.

2.2.3. Death in Short Stories

Short stories are a popular form of literature that often explores the theme of death. Many writers have used the short story format to create poignant and powerful stories about death, loss, and grief. One example is “The Death of Ivan Ilyich” by Leo Tolstoy, which tells the story of a man's slow and painful death and his realization that his life has been meaningless. Another example is “A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner, which tells the story of a woman's descent into madness following the death of her father.
2.2.4. Death in Memoirs and Autobiographical Novels

Memoirs and autobiographical novels are literary genres that provide personal accounts of the author's life experiences. As such, death often plays a significant role in these works, both as a subject of reflection and as an event that shapes the author's life and worldview.

One of the most well-known memoirs dealing with death is Joan Didion's “The Year of Magical Thinking.” The memoir documents Didion's experiences following the sudden death of her husband and her daughter's subsequent hospitalization. The work is a meditation on grief, loss, and the fragility of life, and is considered a seminal work in the genre of grief literature.

In addition to memoirs, autobiographical novels also often explore the theme of death. One example is Sylvia Plath's “The Bell Jar,” a semi-autobiographical novel that deals with the author's experiences of depression and suicidal ideation. The novel's protagonist, Esther Greenwood, struggles with the death of her father and her own sense of mortality, which contributes to her mental illness.

Memoirs and autobiographical novels offer a unique perspective on the theme of death, as they allow readers to explore the personal experiences and reflections of the author. These works can provide insight into the ways in which death shapes a person's life and worldviews, and can offer a powerful testament to the human experience of mortality.

2.2.5. Death in Science Fiction and Fantasy

Science fiction and fantasy are genres that often use death as a central theme, exploring the implications of mortality in imagined worlds or futures. In science fiction, death can be used to explore the boundaries of human existence, both in terms of physical limitations and ethical considerations. For example, in Mary Shelley's “Frankenstein,” the monster's fear of death drives his quest for knowledge and his ultimate downfall. In “Do Androids Dream of Electric
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Sheep?” by Philip K. Dick, the question of what makes the human a human is raised through the characters' encounters with artificial life forms.

Both science fiction and fantasy also offer imaginative visions of the afterlife or alternate forms of existence beyond death. In Ray Bradbury's “The Martian Chronicles,” for example, the death of the last human on Mars is portrayed as a kind of rebirth, as the planet is ultimately transformed into a new home for a different kind of life. Similarly, in Neil Gaiman's “The Sandman” graphic novel series, the character of Death is personified as a compassionate and empathetic guide to the afterlife, offering comfort and understanding to those who have passed on.

2.3. The psychology of Death in Literature

The portrayal of death in literature is not only influenced by cultural and historical contexts, but also by psychological factors that shape a person’s perceptions and attitudes towards death. Literature has been used as a means of exploring the psychological aspects of death, such as the fear of death, grief and loss, and the transformative power of death. In this section, an examination of how these psychological themes are represented in literature and how they contribute to the general understanding of the human experience of death will take place.

2.3.1. The Fear of Death

The fear of death is a common human experience that has been explored in literature throughout history. It is a natural response to the uncertainty and inevitability of death, and can be experienced in a variety of ways, including anxiety, dread, and existential crisis. In literature, the fear of death is often portrayed through characters that are facing their own mortality or the mortality of a loved one. For example, in Leo Tolstoy's “The Death of Ivan Ilyich,” the protagonist's fear of death is compounded by his realization that his life has been wasted in
pursuit of superficial goals. Similarly, in Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s “One Hundred Years of Solitude,” the fear of death is a recurring theme that is closely linked to the novel's exploration of time, memory, and the human condition.

The fear of death in literature can also be linked to broader cultural and historical contexts. For example, during periods of social upheaval or conflict, literature may reflect a heightened sense of fear and anxiety about death. This is evident in many works of post-World War II literature, such as Samuel Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot” and Albert Camus’ “The Plague,” which explore the existential crisis that arises in the aftermath of widespread death and destruction.

2.3.2. Coping with Grief and Loss

Death can be a deeply personal and emotional experience, and many authors have used literature as a means of coping with the loss of loved ones or their own impending mortality. Some writers have explored the stages of grief, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, in their works. Others have used literature as a form of catharsis, expressing their emotions and coming to terms with their grief through writing.

As an example of a work that deals with the theme of grief is Joan Didion's memoir “The Year of Magical Thinking” in the book, Didion chronicles the year following the sudden death of her husband and the illness of her daughter. Through her writing, Didion explores the various stages of grief and the ways in which people cope with loss. She also reflects on her own mortality and the inevitability of death.

2.3.3. Death as a Transformative Experience

Death is often portrayed as a transformative experience in literature, where characters undergo a profound change as a result of their encounter with death. This transformation can take many forms, such as a newfound appreciation for life, a reevaluation of one's priorities, or
a spiritual awakening. The concept of death as a transformative experience is rooted in the idea that death represents a passage from one state of being to another and can therefore be seen as an opportunity for growth and personal transformation.

One example of death as a transformative experience can be found in the novel in the novel “The Lovely Bones” by Alice Sebold, the main character, Susie Salmon, is murdered and enters a kind of limbo where she observes her loved ones and reflects on her life. Through this experience, Susie gains a new perspective on her life and comes to a deeper understanding of the people and relationships that were most important to her.

The idea of death as a transformative experience has also been explored in the context of near-death experiences (NDEs). NDEs are experiences reported by people who have come close to death or have been declared clinically dead before being revived. These experiences often involve a sense of leaving the physical body, encountering a spiritual realm, and gaining a new perspective on life. Research has shown that NDEs can have profound and lasting effects on those who experience them, including increased spiritual awareness and a greater appreciation for life (Greyson, 2017).

2.3.4. The Role of Death in Identity Formation

The concept of death has been recognized as a key factor in shaping one's identity and personality development. The experience of death, either in the form of losing a loved one or confronting one's own mortality, can have a profound impact on an individual's sense of self and their worldview.

Psychologist Erik Erikson proposed that the experience of death and mortality can lead to a crisis in identity formation during the eighth and final stage of his psychosocial development theory (Erikson, 1959). According to Erikson, this stage, which occurs during late
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adulthood, involves reflecting on one's life and coming to terms with death. Failure to resolve this crisis can result in feelings of despair and hopelessness.

In addition to literature, research in psychology and sociology has also explored the role of death in identity formation. Studies have found that individuals who have experienced the loss of a loved one often report changes in their sense of self and worldview, as well as changes in their relationships with others (Davis et al., 2000; Neimeyer and Currier, 2009).

2.4. Symbolism and death in literature

Symbolism has been a prominent aspect of literature throughout history, with writers using symbols to convey complex ideas and themes. Death, being a universal and timeless theme, has been a subject of much symbolism in literature. Authors often use various symbols to represent death, such as the Grim Reaper, a withering tree, or a dark abyss. The use of symbolism in literature allows writers to convey the complex and multifaceted nature of death, from its inevitability to its spiritual and philosophical implications, such as the use of allegory, imagery, motifs, and personification in representing death and how these symbols help convey the various themes and ideas associated with death in literature.

2.4.1. The Use of Allegory in Representing Death

Throughout literature, death has often been represented symbolically through the use of allegory. Allegory is a technique in which an abstract concept, such as death, is represented by a concrete object, such as a skull or a scythe. For example, in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, the character of Yorick's skull represents the physical remains of death and the inevitability of mortality. Similarly, in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story “The Minister's Black Veil,” the veil worn by the protagonist represents the symbolic shroud of death and the isolation it can create.

In John Bunyan's “The Pilgrim's Progress,” the character of Death is represented as a skeletal figure with a scythe, which is a common allegory for death in literature (Bunyan, 1678).
Similarly, in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Scarlet Letter,” the character of Roger Chillingworth is described as being consumed by a "blackness" that symbolizes his association with death (Hawthorne, 1850).

2.4.2. The Use of Imagery in Representing Death

Imagery is another literary technique that is often used to represent death in literature. The use of vivid and evocative language can create powerful images that help convey the significance of death in a particular work. For example, in William Shakespeare's play “Hamlet,” the character Hamlet famously speaks of death as the “undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveler returns” (Shakespeare, 1603). This image of death as an unknown and uncharted territory creates a sense of mystery and awe around the subject.

In literature, imagery can also be used to represent the physical aspects of death, such as the decay and decomposition of the body. In Edgar Allan Poe's short story “The Masque of the Red Death,” the color red is used as a powerful symbol of death and disease. The red death is described as "a sharp pain, and a sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores" (Poe, 1842). The use of the color red creates a vivid image of the physical effects of death on the body.

2.4.3. The Use of Motifs in Representing Death

Motifs are recurring images, objects, or ideas that are used throughout a literary work to convey a certain theme or idea. In literature, motifs related to death are often used to evoke specific emotions and ideas related to the theme of mortality. One common motif is the image of a dying or decaying flower, which can represent the fragility and impermanence of life.

Another motif related to death is the image of a journey or a voyage. In many literary works, death is depicted as a journey into the unknown, with the afterlife being portrayed as a
mysterious and uncharted territory. This motif is particularly common in religious and mythological texts, where the afterlife is often depicted as a realm of judgment and punishment.

2.4.4. The Use of Personification in Representing Death

Personification, the attribution of human qualities to non-human entities, is a common literary device used to represent death in literature. Death is often personified as a figure, such as a grim reaper, to give it a physical form and make it easier for readers to comprehend.

In Emily Dickinson's poem “Because I Could not Stop for Death,” death is personified as a gentleman caller who takes the speaker on a leisurely carriage ride towards eternity. The personification of death in this poem is used to convey a sense of calm acceptance of death and the idea that death is not something to be feared.

Similarly, in John Donne's poem “Death, be not Proud,” death is personified as a tyrant who boasts of his power over mortal beings. The use of personification in this poem is used to challenge the idea that death is all-powerful and to suggest that death is merely a transition from one state of being to another.

2.5. Reader’s response to the theme of death

Reader's response to the theme of death in literature is a complex and multifaceted topic that involves a range of emotions and reactions from readers. The exploration of death in literature is often intertwined with the human experience of mortality, and readers may find themselves confronting their own fears and anxieties around death. This chapter delves into the various ways in which death is portrayed in literature, the psychology of death in literature, and how readers respond to the theme of death. Understanding the different ways in which literature deals with death can provide readers with a valuable perspective on the human experience and can help them process their own feelings and attitudes towards death.
2.5.1 Emotional and Psychological Impact of Death in Literature

The portrayal of death in literature can have a profound emotional and psychological impact on readers. Through their engagement with literary works, readers may confront their own feelings of grief and mortality, as well as gain insight into the experiences of others. Studies have shown that reading about death and dying in literature can facilitate a greater understanding and acceptance of death (Scherer and Stewart, 2004). It can also provide a sense of catharsis or emotional release, as readers are able to process their own feelings of grief and loss through the experiences of the characters in the text (Goldsmith, 2000).

Additionally, the way in which death is portrayed in literature can affect readers' emotional and psychological responses. For example, some readers may find comfort in works that portray death as a peaceful and natural process, while others may be disturbed by works that depict death as violent or gruesome (Graham and Lalonde, 2012). Furthermore, the cultural and social contexts in which literary works are produced can shape readers' emotional responses to death in literature. For example, in cultures where death is seen as a taboo subject, literary works that openly explore the theme of death may be more likely to provoke strong emotional reactions (Rothenberg and Rothenberg, 2012).

2.5.2 Death in Literature as Catharsis and Comfort

Death in literature can serve as a cathartic and comforting experience for readers, providing a space for them to explore and process their own feelings about death and mortality. Reading about death in literature can allow readers to vicariously experience the emotions and thoughts that accompany the death of a loved one, providing a sense of validation and empathy. Additionally, literature can offer different perspectives on death and the afterlife, allowing readers to contemplate their own beliefs and attitudes towards mortality.
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Studies have shown that reading literature can have a positive impact on mental health and well-being, including reducing stress and promoting empathy (Kidd and Castano, 2013; Mar et al., 2006). Furthermore, reading about death and mortality has been shown to increase a sense of meaning and purpose in life (Wong et al., 2011).

2.5.3. Death in Literature and its Influence on Cultural Attitudes towards Death

The theme of death in literature has been explored for centuries, and it has influenced cultural attitudes towards death. Through literature, people have been able to examine and reflect on their own mortality and the human experience of death. The portrayal of death in literature has also served as a means of understanding different cultural and social perspectives on death and dying.

For instance, in ancient Egyptian literature, death was often portrayed as a necessary step in the journey to the afterlife, and the concept of mummification was developed to preserve the body for the afterlife (Hornung, 1999). Similarly, in traditional Chinese literature, death was often viewed as a natural and inevitable part of the cycle of life and death (Zhang, 2007).

Conclusion

In terms of conclusion, the issue of death plays an important role in the literature of all genres. It's depicted as a common human experience that elicits feelings like dread, grief, fear, and transformation. The fear of death is explored in literature through symbolism and allegory, as well as the coping techniques used by characters when faced with loss. Death is shown as a catalyst for human growth and transformation, prompting individuals to rethink their lives. Literature may also provide catharsis and solace by helping readers to examine their own ideas and emotions about dying. Furthermore, how death is portrayed in literature may impact societal attitudes toward mortality, altering people's perceptions of the issue.
Chapter Three: Literary Analysis
Chapter Three: Literary Analysis

Introduction

The objective of this literary analysis chapter is to undertake a comparative study of the theme of death in two renowned poems authored by John Donne and Emily Dickinson – “Death, be not Proud” and “Because I Could not Stop for Death,” respectively - from a psychoanalytic perspective.

The utilization of psychoanalytic theory to study these poems is critical as it gives the opportunity to explore the poets' subconscious and examine their attitudes and apprehensions towards death, as psychoanalytic theory which was developed by Sigmund Freud emphasizes the role of unconscious motives, conflicts, and desires in shaping human behavior and emotions, it gives the ability to gain a deeper comprehension of the poets' psyches, as well as the cultural and historical influences that affected their outlooks on death by analyzing these poems through the lens of psychoanalytic theory.

In this chapter there will be an outline of both poems, an analysis of their themes, language, and imagery, and an application of psychoanalytic theory to each of them. It will also compare and contrast the two poems, highlighting their similarities and differences in their approach to the theme of death. Lastly, this analysis will examine the comparison and contrast between the poets' worldviews, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of how the application of psychoanalytic theory in literary analysis can enhance our comprehension of the human psyche and perspectives on death.

3.1. John Donne’s Death, be not Proud

John Donne's “Death, be not Proud” is a sonnet that is part of his larger collection of poems known as “Holy Sonnets.” In this poem, Donne addresses Death, personified as a powerful and proud figure, and challenges its authority and power over humanity.
3.1.1. Overview of the Poem’s Themes, Language, and Imagery

- The poem’s themes:

In “Death, be not Proud” by John Donne, the poem’s themes are:

**Death**: The poet is preoccupied with the topic of death and its power over humans. The speaker confronts death directly, questioning its apparent strength and invincibility. As these following lines from the poem might suggest:

"Death, be not Proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,"
"One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And Death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die."
"Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?"
"And dost with poysen, warre, and sicknesse dwell," (Donne, 1633)

In these lines, the speaker openly faces death and questions its apparent strength and invincibility. Death, according to the speaker, is not as "mighty and dreadful" as some believe, and is subject to the same causes as everything else in the universe, such as fate, chance, and disease. Death, according to the speaker, is a slave to these forces and has no control over its own power.

**Mortality**: The poet considers the human situation of mortality and the certainty of death. The speaker implies that death should not be dreaded, but rather embraced as a normal part of life. This can be backed up with the following lines:

"Death, be not Proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,"
"For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill mee."
"From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee,
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,"
"And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,
And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then?" (Donne, 1633)

In these lines, the speaker implies that death should not be frightening because it is not as powerful as it appears. The speaker indicates that death is a normal aspect of life and that everyone will confront it at some point. The speaker also implies that death is not the end of the world, since individuals who die live on in remembrance and in the influence they have had on the world.

**Faith:** The poem delves at the significance of faith in dealing with death. In the face of death, the speaker says that believing in God and an afterlife might bring solace and hope. These following citations from the poem support the idea that it explores the role of faith in facing death:

"And dost with poyson, warre, and sicknesse dwell,
And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,
And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,"

"And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die." (Donne, 1633)

The speaker implies in these statements that death is not the end of the world and that there is an afterlife. In the face of death, the speaker indicates that believing in a afterlife can bring consolation and hope. The speaker also implies that death will be vanquished in the end, and that there is something everlasting beyond death.

**Courage:** The poem urges a brave approach to dying. The speaker implies that individuals who face death with courage and resilience may prevail over it, and that death itself is not to be dreaded. These following lines from the poem support that theme:
"Death, be not Proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,"
"For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me." (Donne, 1633)

The speaker questions the notion that death is something to be dreaded with these lines. Death, according to Donne, is not as powerful as it appears, and those who confront it with courage and tenacity may prevail over it.

**Transcendence:** Death, according to the poem, is not the end of life, but rather a transfer to a higher form of existence. Death, according to the speaker, may be transcended and overcome through faith and bravery as demonstrate these following lines:

"Death, be not Proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me."
"From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery."
"And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die." (Donne, 1633)

The speaker implies in these lines that death is not the end, but rather a transfer to a higher form of existence. The speaker indicates that death may be transcended and defeated by faith and bravery, and that there is something everlasting beyond death. The speaker also implies that death should not be feared but rather accepted as a normal part of life.

- **the poem’s language:**

In “Death, be not Proud,” Donne employs the following language to express his feelings about death:
Religious: Donne uses religious language to convey the themes of the poem. The poem's title is an invocation, calling upon Death itself to listen to the speaker's words. The opening lines declare:

"Death, be not Proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me." (Donne, 1633)

Here, Donne challenges the commonly held belief that Death is an all-powerful and fearful entity, thus suggesting that Death's power is limited and that it is subject to a higher power, his language conveys a sense of defiance and challenge to Death's authority, indicating that Death is not to be feared but rather seen as a temporary state of being.

Paradoxical and contradictory: Throughout the poem, Donne uses paradoxical and contradictory language to describe Death, for example he calls it "slave to fate," suggesting that Death itself is not in control but rather subject to a higher power which emphasizes the idea that Death is not the ultimate authority over life but rather a servant to a greater power. The speaker goes on to assert that Death is a "rest and sleep," suggesting that it is not an end but a transition to another state of being:

"Death, be not Proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,"
"Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me."
"From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow."
"Thou art slave to Fate, chance, kings, and desperate men"
"One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And Death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die." (Donne, 1633)

This language highlights the idea that death is not to be feared but rather embraced as a necessary part of the journey of the soul.
• **The poem’s imagery:**

The imagery used by Donne in his poem is rich with religious and spiritual references, pointing out the poem's themes of death, spirituality, and mortality. He compares Death to a "poison, war, and sickness," suggesting that these things are temporary and do not have ultimate power over the soul. He put up the idea that Death is not the end, but rather a transitional state leading to an eternal life as shown the following lines:

"One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And Death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die" (Donne, 1633)

He also describes Death as a “slave to kings”, further accentuating the idea that Death’s power is limited and subject to a higher power. His use of imagery insinuates that Death is not something to be feared, but rather something that can be overcome by faith.

3.1.2. **Psychoanalytic Analysis of Donne’s Approach to Death**

The concept of death takes center stage in John Donne's poem “Death, be not Proud,” inspiring reflection and meditation. Donne gives two opposing views on death in the poem: one that sees it as a portal to the afterlife and another that contradicts the usual fear linked with it. Through a psychoanalytic approach, this study delves into the exploration of Donne's mind, examining the intricate dynamics between conscious and unconscious elements, along with the external influences that have contributed to the formation of his thoughts. The purpose of this analysis is to investigate the sources of these thoughts, namely how religious beliefs and personal experiences contribute to the poet's distinctive viewpoint on death. A greater grasp of the multidimensional nature of death can be gotten as shown in “Death, be not Proud” and untangle the subtle workings of the human mind in regard to this universal issue as a result of this investigation.

The first thought that Donne emits in “Death, be not Proud” is the belief that death is not a final conclusion but rather a journey leading to the afterlife. This perspective is consistent
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with a widely held notion in several theological traditions, especially Christianity, which heavily impacted Donne's metaphysical poetry. Donne's conscious mind, represented by his poem, is aware of this prevalent idea and incorporates it into his poetic expression as a reflection of his religious values. The speaker intentionally connects with the notion of death as a transitional phase by drawing on the common knowledge of the afterlife. Christianity; which Donne was very affected by; promotes the concept of an afterlife, in which the soul survives death and continues to live and this idea, which was profoundly embedded in Donne's cultural and spiritual context, shapes his perspective of death as a simple doorway. Donne incorporates this idea into his poetry not merely to communicate his personal religion, but also to acknowledge and resonate with his audience's larger religious convictions.

The conscious mind of the poet deliberately embraces these religious ideas and regards the afterlife as a normal aspect of reality. In lines like "From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be," (Donne, 1633) the speaker expresses the idea that death is but a transitional condition, a mere reflection or shadow of the genuine rest and sleep that await in the afterlife. External elements such as religious teachings, cultural norms, and societal expectations around the idea of life and its continuance beyond death create this conscious knowledge of death as a transitory phase. Donne's clear recognition of the belief in an afterlife indicates his intimate connectedness to the greater religious perspective of his period. Donne skillfully depicts the initial idea about death as a gateway to the afterlife by combining his conscious knowledge with external sources of influence, showing the delicate interplay between personal beliefs, cultural background, and the conscious mind.

On the other hand, Donne expresses an idea that challenges the fear of death. Unlike the first thought, which is consistent with general notions about death, the second thought is based on personal conviction and experience. Contrary to popular belief, the speaker declares openly that death should not be feared through lines like "Death, be not Proud, though some have
called thee, Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so” (Donne, 1633). This personal belief represents the individual's views and experiences, emphasizing the distinctive nature of their perspective. In order to comprehend the origins of this concept, an investigation into the unconscious mind is warranted, exploring its hidden depths and uncovering the underlying foundations. According to psychoanalytic theory, the unconscious mind contains deep-seated emotions and thoughts that affect the person’s ideas and perceptions. In the speaker's instance, their aversion to death reflects an underlying anger and hostility toward its authority. The use of terminology like "slave" to depict death in these lines: “Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men” (Donne, 1633), suggests disobedience and rebellion. This pessimistic attitude is mostly the result of personal loss experiences that have had a deep influence on the speaker's psyche.

The complicated web of emotions and experiences associated with death that shaped the development of this idea can be revealed by digging into the depths of the unconscious. The unconscious mind is a repository of buried memories, traumas, and phobias that all contribute to the speaker's unique viewpoint on death. This analysis reveals how personal experiences and hidden emotions impact the speaker's attitude that death should not be feared. The speaker's unfavorable attitude about death and its relationship to personal loss gives light on the interaction of hidden emotions, experiences, and belief development. It demonstrates the complexities of the human psyche and how individual thoughts on death might differ from popular ideas; in addition to revealing the internal workings of the speaker's thoughts and the deeply seated influences that have created his perspective of death by diving into the unconscious mind.

In “Death, be not Proud”, John Donne gives two major thoughts on death that cross the conscious and unconscious mind and are impacted by external factors. The first thought represents a religious and cultural belief in death as a passage to the afterlife. It arises from the
conscious mind, drawing on the collective awareness of the soul’s everlasting journey. The second thought contradicts the fear of death and comes from the unconscious mind, influenced by personal experiences and hidden emotions. It is a very personal belief shaped by interactions with death. This psychoanalytic examination exposes the interaction of internal and external factors, emphasizing the complexities of the human mind and the existential problems surrounding death. “Death, be not Proud” promotes inner reflection via its investigation of these ideas, serves as a reminder of the delicate link between the human’s awareness, external influences, and its opinions on death.

3.1.3. Comparison to Other Works by Donne

To gain a better and deeper understanding of Donne’s approach to death and how it evolved over time, a comparison of other poems by him; that deal with similar themes to “Death, be not Proud” is necessary with him being a prolific poet who wrote on a variety of subjects, including death, spirituality, and morality.

- A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

One poem that can be compared to “Death, be not Proud” is “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”. This poem explores the theme of separation and death, but in a different way than “Death, be not Proud.” The poem opens with the speaker addressing his lover and assuring her that their parting is not a cause for mourning or despair. The speaker suggests that their love is so strong and transcendent that it can survive physical separation and even death. He compares their love to a compass, where one leg stays fixed while the other leg moves, but both are still connected at the center. This metaphor suggests that while they may be physically separated, their love is still strong and will endure.

The poem's main takeaway is that death and separation are inevitable aspects of life, which should be accepted without dread or dejection. In contrast to being something to be
lamented, the speaker says that their separation is a necessary step in each of their respective paths. The speaker's tone is accepting and philosophical, as opposed to the confrontational and challenging tone of “Death, be not Proud.”

In contrast to “Death, be not Proud,” “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” focuses on accepting the inevitable process of separation and death rather than immediately confronting death as a personified entity. However, the theme of mortality and the notion that death is a part of the human experience are present in both poems. Both poems were likely affected by Donne's own experiences with grief and loss as he sought to accept death's inevitable conclusion and make sense of loss.

- “Meditation XVII”

In “Meditation XVII,” Donne introduces the idea that "no man is an island," implying that everyone is interconnected and cannot exist separately. This interconnectivity is illustrated by the metaphor of the church bell ringing at a funeral, which serves as a reminder that the death of one individual impacts the entire community. Donne continues by arguing that because each person is a part of a wider spiritual community, this connectivity goes beyond only the physical world. This theme of interconnectedness and mortality is also present in “Death, be not Proud” which emphasizes the idea that all human beings are united in their mortality.

Through these works, Donne offers a complex perspective on mortality and death, one that highlights the connection of all people while still recognizing that death is inevitable. Both “Meditation XVII” and “Death, be not Proud” encourage readers to consider the significance of life and death in the human experience, fostering a greater comprehension of people’s place in the universe and their relationships with others.

In conclusion, comparing “Death, be not Proud” to other poems by Donne that deal with similar themes can provide insight into the ways in which his approach to death evolved over
time. While he consistently addressed death as a personified entity to be challenged, he approached the subject from different angles depending on the context and his own personal beliefs at the time.

3.2. Emily Dickinson’s «Because I Could not Stop for Death»

The poem “Because I Could not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson examines the concepts of immortality, death, and the afterlife. The speaker in the poem has passed away and is thinking back on her experience with Death. The poem is divided into six stanzas, each with four lines, and uses an ABCB structured rhyme pattern.

3.2.1. Overview of the Poem’s Themes, Language, and Imagery

- Overview of the poem:
  - The first stanza introduces the central metaphor of Death as a gentleman caller:

"Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality." (Dickinson, 1890)

Here, the speaker describes Death as a gentleman who "kindly" stops for her, indicating that Death is not a fearful or malevolent force, but rather a polite and patient escort. The carriage ride with Death is also described as being shared only with "Immortality," suggesting that Death is not just a physical event, but also a spiritual transition.

- The second stanza describes the speaker's journey with Death:

"We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility." (Dickinson, 1890)

In this stanza, the speaker emphasizes the leisurely pace of the journey, suggesting that death is not something to be rushed but rather a process that takes time. The speaker has also
"put away" her labor and leisure, indicating that she has let go of her worldly concerns and is prepared to face death with grace and acceptance.

- The third stanza describes the passing of time:

  "We passed the school where children played,
  Their lessons scarcely done;
  We passed the fields of gazing grain,
  We passed the setting sun."  (Dickinson, 1890)

  Here, the speaker and Death pass by various stages of life, including childhood and adulthood. The mention of the "setting sun" suggests that the speaker's life is coming to an end, while the "fields of gazing grain" represent the cycles of nature and the passing of time.

- The fourth stanza describes the speaker's passage to the afterlife:

  “Or rather, He passed Us
  The Dews drew quivering and chill
  For only Gossamer, my Gown
  My Tippet, only Tulle.”  (Dickinson, 1890)

  In this stanza, the speaker describes the moment when Death overtakes them during their carriage ride. The use of "He passed Us" indicates that Death moves ahead of the speaker and the personification of Death suggests its inevitability and power and an underlying fear of the unknown process of death.

- The fifth stanza describes the speaker's encounter with the afterlife:

  "We paused before a house that seemed
  A swelling of the ground;
  The roof was scarcely visible,
  The cornice but a mound."  (Dickinson, 1890)

  In this stanza, the "house" that the speaker encounters is a metaphor for the grave, and the description of the roof and cornice as barely visible emphasizes the idea that the speaker is entering a realm beyond the physical world.
The sixth and final stanza describes the speaker's realization that she has been dead for centuries:

"Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity." (Dickinson, 1890)

Here, the speaker reflects on the passage of time since her encounter with Death, suggesting that time has become irrelevant in the afterlife. The mention of the "horses' heads" suggests that Death is still guiding the speaker, even in the afterlife.

- **The poem’s themes of death, imagery and language:**

  The poem's themes are mainly related to mortality, time, immortality, acceptance and transcendence.

  **Mortality:** The poem delves into the subject of mortality and the inevitability of death. Death leads the speaker on a trip in which she contemplates the shortness of life and the finality of death.

  "Because I could not stop for Death,
  He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves,
  And Immortality." (Dickinson, 1890)

  In these lines, the speaker reflects on how Death has come for her, and notes that the carriage they travel in holds only herself, Death, and eternity. This suggests that Death is an ineluctable part of life and that it eventually comes for all of us.

  "Since then 'tis centuries, and yet each
  Feels shorter than the day
  I first surmised the horses' heads
  Were toward eternity." (Dickinson, 1890)
In these concluding lines, the speaker reflects on the passage of time since her hassle with Death. Though centuries have passed, she notes that they feel shorter than the day she realized she was headed toward eternity. This suggests that death, and the consummation of one’s mortality, can unnaturally alter their sense of time and their understanding of the brevity of life.

**Time:** The poem also delves into the concept of time, specifically how it is perceived differently as one is approaching death. The speaker observes how time appears to slow down as they journey in Death's carriage, and how her perspective of time alters as she nears the end of her existence.

"We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility." (Dickinson, 1890)

In these lines, the speaker notes how Death takes his time as they travel together, suggesting that time seems to decelerate in the presence of death. She also notes that she has set aside her work and her rest, maybe indicating that death brings an end to all of life's conditioning.

"Or rather, he passed us;
The dews drew quivering and chill,
For only gossamer my gown,
My tippet only tulle."

In these lines, the speaker notes how they pass by the setting sun, suggesting the passage of time, but also how the world around her seems to decelerate down as she approaches death. The jiggling and bite of the dews, and the lightness of the speaker's apparel, also suggest a slowing of time.
**Immortality:** The poem explores the notion of immortality and what it means to go on after death. The speaker describes her encounter with Death as a type of perpetual ride, and she is joined by Immortality as well.

"Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves,
And Immortality." (Dickinson, 1890)

In these lines, the speaker mentions that she is followed on her trip by both Immortality and Death. This begs the question of what it means to be immortal and if it is conceivable to continue on after death in any way.

"We passed the school where children played,
Their lessons scarcely done;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun." (Dickinson, 1890)

In these lines, the speaker describes how they pass by many sights of life as they journey with Death, such as a school with children playing and grain fields. This begs the question of whether the Earth and its people go on after death, and whether there is any prospect of any sort of continuing existence.

**Acceptance:** The speaker's acceptance of her own mortality is central to the poem's concept of acceptance. She admits that she was not prepared to die, but Death gently halted for her, and she approaches her own death with serenity and acceptance.

"Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves,
And Immortality." (Dickinson, 1890)

In these first lines, the speaker mentions that Death has come for her, but he has done it graciously. This implies that the speaker has embraced her own mortality and is prepared to die.
"We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility." (Dickinson, 1890)

Here, the speaker mentions that she has set aside her work and leisure interests, indicating that she is prepared to face her own mortality as an unavoidable reality. Death takes his time and drives slowly, implying a sense of peace and acceptance.

**Transcendence:** Finally, the poem delves into the concept of transcendence, namely the notion that death is not an end but rather a beginning. The speaker describes how her trip with Death brings her beyond the confines of life and into a new realm of existence, implying that death should not be feared but rather accepted as a natural part of the life cycle.

"Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves,
And Immortality." (Dickinson, 1890)

The speaker states in these opening lines that Death has arrived for her, yet she is joined by Immortality as well. This implies that death is not the end, but rather the beginning of a new era of existence.

"Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity." (Dickinson, 1890)

In these final lines, the speaker reflects on the passage of time since her meeting with Death, observing that, while centuries have passed, they feel far shorter than the day she discovered she was on the path to eternal. This implies that death should not be dreaded, but rather accepted as a normal part of the life cycle and a transition into a new era of existence.

The language of the poem is plain and simple, with a rhythmic character that promotes a sense of peace and acceptance. The vibrant and compelling artwork paints a rich and complex
picture of death and the afterlife. The speaker passes through many stages of life, which gives the poem's fundamental metaphor of death as a gentleman's caller a sense of continuity and progression. Overall, the poem, which has become one of Emily Dickinson's best-known works and its use of vivid imagery and metaphor, creates a powerful meditation on death, immortality and the afterlife.

3.2.2. Psychoanalytic Analysis of Dickinson’s Approach to Death

In Emily Dickinson's poem “Because I Could not Stop for Death,” the investigation of death dives into the complexity of the human psyche, analyzing the interplay between the conscious and unconscious realms. Three major perspectives on death emerge, death as a driver to the afterlife, death being kind and the fear of the unknown process of death. These perspectives are shaped by a combination of internal and external forces, such as religious beliefs, cultural standards, personal experiences, and societal pressures. Using a psychoanalytic lens, which analyzes unconscious desires and anxieties, aids in clarifying the speaker's motivations and views. It illustrates how underlying wishes for a peaceful afterlife, a gentler departure, and fears about the unknown transition impact conscious perceptions of death. This study highlights the complex relationship between the conscious and unconscious mind, as well as the external factors that influence the idea of death.

In her poem, she expresses a deep belief that death acts as a transition to the afterlife. This first notion represents a religious perspective, notably within Christianity, that stresses the presence of an afterlife. The speaker recognizes death as a personal driver, guiding people to an eternal destination. The imagery in the poem confirms this idea, as the speaker starts on a carriage journey with Death, implying the journey to the afterlife. This metaphorical image is consistent with religious beliefs that describe death as a gateway to a place beyond earthly existence. Verses like "We passed the School, where Children strove" and "We paused before a House that seemed / A Swelling of the Ground" portray the speaker passing major
landmarks on the path to the afterlife, affirming the idea of death as a transition. The belief in
death as a driver to the afterlife originates from the conscious mind because it symbolizes a
commonly held religious belief that the speaker actively acknowledges. Religious teachings
and cultural factors have a considerable impact on the speaker's outlook on death. According to
psychoanalytic theory, the conscious mind includes ideas and beliefs that the human is aware
of, which are frequently affected by external sources such as religion. As a result, the speaker's
belief in death as a catalyst for the afterlife may be seen as coming from the conscious mind,
formed by her religious background and cultural setting.

A second thought arises in her poem, showing death as kind and compassionate, beyond
the usual belief about death. This view represents the speaker's own opinion, which is impacted
by emotions and societal circumstances, and resonates with the unconscious mind. During their
carriage trip, the speaker presents Death as a pleasant companion, engaged in leisurely
conversation and traveling at a leisurely pace. This picture contradicts the usual perception of
death as a grim and frightening figure, instead creating a sense of warmth and compassion. The
unconscious mind plays a critical role in the context of this concept, impacted by personal
emotions and cultural variables that define the speaker's unique experience of death. According
to psychoanalytic theory, the unconscious mind includes hidden desires, emotions, and cultural
factors that shape one’s ideas and perceptions. The speaker's favorable attitude about death in
this situation may be impacted by her personal experiences as well as the cultural context in
which she lived, particularly as a woman in a patriarchal society. Dickinson lived during a
period when women suffered cultural restraints and prohibitions. Viewing death as a nice
companion may represent the speaker's want for an escape from the limits of her culture,
viewing death as a method to transcend the limitations imposed on her. This interpretation
emphasizes the interaction of personal emotions, cultural influences, and the unconscious mind
in developing the speaker's distinct view of death as kind.
The poem's verses emphasize Death's kindness by highlighting the gradual pace and natural images. Lines like "We slowly drove - He knew no hurry" and "We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain" convey a sense of calm and harmony, emphasizing the speaker's impression of death as a peaceful and benevolent presence. Some insight is gotten into the complicated interplay between human emotions, cultural influences, and the unconscious mind by looking into the personal opinion element of experiencing death as kind. The speaker's yearning for societal liberty, particularly in a patriarchal society, gives light on the origins of this perspective. Dickinson's examination of death as a friendly companion is a heartbreaking representation of the speaker's deepest wants and reaction to the outside world.

The poem also explores a third thought that has a major notion that encompasses the fear linked with the mysterious aspect of death. This notion has a conscious component as well as an underlying unconscious fear. The process of dying is commonly agreed to be unknown and consciously understood as an essential element of the human experience. The poem clearly depicts this understanding as the speaker passes by familiar locations, indicating the speaker's departure from life and trip into the unknown. However, this cognitive recognition is accompanied by a deeper, unconscious fear of the unknown. The unconscious mind, according to psychoanalytic theory, includes concealed anxieties and wants, which are frequently founded in the basic drive of self-preservation. This underlying anxiety affects numerous parts of life and extends beyond the precise process of dying. It is a basic human reaction to events or circumstances that lack clarity and confidence. The terror of the unknown process of dying in the setting of the poem taps into this basic human anxiety. While the speaker may not express it overtly, it is present under the surface, impacting their ideas and views. Thus, dread of death's mysterious process may be linked back to both the conscious recognition of death's mystery and the underlying, unconscious fear inherent in human nature.
The poem conveys the anxiety of death's unknown process with melancholy phrases like "Or rather - He passed Us -" and "The Dews drew quivering and chill." These lines represent the speaker's brush with Death, creating fear as Death overtakes her. The visual of the "Dews" shivering with cold underscores the harsh fact of mortality. The speaker's dress, described as "only Gossamer, my Gown - My Tippet - only Tulle," highlights the speaker's fragility and vulnerability in the face of death. The gown's delicate and airy appearance evokes a feeling of transience and impermanence. These lines help to depict terror by emphasizing the uneasy contact with Death and the awareness of one's own death. The fear of the unknown process of death affects both the conscious and unconscious mind. It comprises all persons' broad understanding of the perplexing nature of death. It also taps into the deeper, underlying terror caused by the loss of control and uncertainty surrounding death. When confronted with the notion of death, this mix of aware recognition and underlying anxiety demonstrates the complicated interplay between the conscious and unconscious mind.

The speaker's thoughts about death in the poem “Because I Could not Stop for Death” are formed by a variety of external forces, including religious beliefs, cultural conventions, personal experiences, and societal pressures. These external variables, both consciously and unconsciously, contribute to the speaker's perceptions of death. Religious views have a huge impact on the speaker's perspective on death. The poetry displays the Christian influence, which stresses the notion of an afterlife. The speaker's belief in death as a transition to the afterlife is consistent with her Christian upbringing as well as the larger cultural background that prioritizes the concept of eternal redemption. This religious influence changes the speaker's belief in a divine purpose for death and provides solace in the face of mortality. Furthermore, the speaker's experience of death is influenced by society pressures and cultural standards. The poem was composed during a period of cultural restraints, notably for women. Living in a patriarchal environment may have limited the speaker's personal independence and self-
expression. The urge to escape by death may be a reaction to these cultural limits, showing a wish for release from the constraints put on people. Personal experiences can add to the speaker's perspective on death. Although the poem does not reveal the specifics of the speaker's experiences, it is possible that brushes with loss and mortality shaped their perspective. These personal experiences may heighten the cognitive and unconscious emotions linked with death, leading to a better awareness of its meaning and consequences.

These external factors impact Dickinson's conscious and unconscious minds. Religious beliefs, cultural standards, personal experiences, and societal influences are all deliberately acknowledged and assimilated into the speaker's ideas on death by the conscious mind. At the same time, the unconscious mind contains secret desires, emotions, and cultural influences that impact the speaker's perspective of death unconsciously. The interaction of the conscious and unconscious minds enables a comprehensive and multifaceted comprehension of the speaker's thoughts and feelings around death.

In Emily Dickinson's poem “Because I Could not Stop for Death,” the three main thoughts about death - death as a driver to the afterlife, death as being kind, and the fear of the unknown process of death - are impacted by a combination of the conscious and unconscious mind, as well as external events. The belief in an afterlife corresponds to conscious religious views, but the impression of death as kind is a personal perspective formed by emotions and cultural factors. The dread of the unknown dying process combines broad awareness with a deeper, unconscious fear of the unknown. External factors such as religious beliefs, cultural conventions, personal experiences, and societal pressures alter the speaker's perspective on death. By considering these factors, a thorough knowledge of how the speaker's complex thoughts on mortality are shaped by the interplay between the mind and the external environment is acquired.
3.2.3. Comparison to Other Works by Dickinson

To understand how Dickinson's approach to death differs in her other works, it can be done by comparing “Because I Could not Stop for Death” to two of her other famous poems, “I Heard a Fly Buzz – When I Died” and “I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain.”

- “I Heard a Fly Buzz – When I Died”

Emily Dickinson's poem “I Heard a Fly Buzz – When I Died” delves into the theme of death and presents it as a jarring and unsettling experience, in stark contrast to the peaceful portrayal of death in “Because I Could Not Stop for Death”. The poem is written from the perspective of the speaker, who is in the process of dying and describes the presence of a fly in the room, creating a sense of discomfort and unease.

The fly serves as a symbol of the speaker's struggle to hold onto life, as it distracts her from the final moments of her existence. This is in contrast to “Because I Could not Stop for Death,” where death is personified as a gentleman suitor and the carriage ride is a peaceful journey towards the afterlife. Instead, in “I Heard a Fly Buzz – When I Died,” Dickinson presents death as a confusing and disorienting experience, emphasizing the speaker's struggle to come to terms with the end of her life.

In contrast to the peaceful and romanticized portrayal of death in “Because I Could not Stop for Death,” “I Heard a Fly Buzz – When I Died” presents death as a chaotic and unpredictable experience. The poem suggests that death is not a peaceful transition, but rather a jarring and unsettling event that can be difficult to process. Through the use of vivid imagery and metaphor, Dickinson captures the confusion and disorientation that often accompanies the dying process.

The poem “I Heard a Fly Buzz - When I Died” tackles the mysteries of death and dying in a profound and unnerving way. Dickinson questions the conventional idealized picture of death and challenges readers to confront the reality of mortality by portraying death as a chaotic and
unexpected experience. She does this by making a person face the unpleasant realities of their own mortality and the ultimate demise that awaits them all.

- **I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain:**

  In “I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain”, Emily Dickinson takes a different approach to death, presenting it as a release from the pain and suffering of life. The poem describes the speaker's eagerness to die and join her loved ones who have already passed away, emphasizing the desire to escape the struggles of existence. The poem suggests that death will bring the peace and comfort that the speaker has been searching for, ultimately leading to a reunion with family members who have already departed from this world.

  Unlike “I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” which presents death as a peaceful journey towards the afterlife, “I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” takes a more active approach to death, presenting it as something to be sought out rather than avoided. The speaker expresses a sense of impatience and urgency in their desire to die, suggesting that death is a release from the constraints of life, and the only way to attain true peace and liberation, as show the following lines:

  "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
   And Mourners to and fro;
   Kept treading – treading – till it seemed,
   That Sense was breaking through." (Dickinson, 1861)

  Through vivid imagery and metaphor, Dickinson captures the intensity of the speaker's desire to die, portraying death as a welcomed release from the pain and suffering of life. The poem presents a stark contrast to traditional notions of death, which often emphasize the importance of preserving life and avoiding death at all costs. Instead, “I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain”, suggests that death can be a liberating and transformative experience, freeing the speaker from the burdens of existence and providing an escape from the struggles of life.
“I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” presents death as an escape from the struggles of life and a release from the constraints that bind us. The speaker's eagerness to die and join their loved ones emphasizes this idea, as they see death as the ultimate destination and the key to finding peace.

It can be seen how Dickinson's perspective on death varies by comparing “I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” with these two poems. In contrast to “Because I Could not Stop for Death”, which portrays death as a peaceful journey, “I heard a Fly buzz—when I Died” paints a confusing and chaotic picture of death, in “I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” death is portrayed as a solace from the suffering of life, this might tell of the possibility that Dickinson may have viewed death as a complex and multifaceted experience that could be interpreted in various ways depending on the situation and the person due to her various approaches to the subject.

3.3. Comparison and Contrast of the Two Poems

3.3.1. Analysis of Similarities and Differences in the Poets’ Approach of Death

In their separate works, Donne and Dickinson both examine the subject of death, albeit in very different ways. The sonnet “Death, be not Proud” by Donne explicitly confronts death's authority as a personified entity. Dickinson, on the other hand, depicts death in her poem “Because I Could not Stop for Death” as a calm and inevitable aspect of life, taking the shape of a leisurely carriage journey. Dickinson's approach to death is more tolerant and meditative than Donne's is combative, reflecting her larger interest in the mysteries of life and death. The two poets provide diverse viewpoints on death and its meaning overall, illuminating the complexity and variety of human reactions to mortality.
3.3.1.1. Similarities in the poets’ approach of death

Death, according to both John Donne and Emily Dickinson, is a portal to the afterlife. Their conscious minds and religious beliefs impact their understanding of death as a journey to another realm.

Donne deals with death as a personified entity in his poem questioning its strength and announcing its final defeat. His Christian beliefs, notably the concept of eternal life after death, affect his conscious awareness of death. In Christianity, death is viewed as a gateway to an afterlife in which the soul continues to live. This religious influence helps Donne define death as a transition rather than an end.

Similarly, in Dickinson's poem death is portrayed as a caring and patient companion, accompanying her on a carriage ride to eternity. Dickinson, too, leans on her religious upbringing, which shaped her thinking and values. She grew up in a Calvinist family where the belief in an afterlife was essential. Her picture of death as a driver directing her to the hereafter reflects this religious influence.

The interaction between their conscious minds and religious beliefs shapes both poets' perception of death as a portal to the afterlife. Their personal views and ideas about death are consistent with the larger cultural and religious environment in which they lived. These external influences are digested and internalized by the conscious mind, resulting in their common concept of death as a transitory period leading to the afterlife.

The poets also have a shared fear of death, which, while it has distinct origins for the two poets, has the same source for them both, which is the unconscious mind.

Overall, the poets' definitions of death are similar, and the effect of their conscious minds and religious beliefs highlights the writers' shared idea of death as a bridge between earthly existence and the eternal realm.
3.3.1.2. Differences in the poets’ approach of death

A major difference between Emily Dickinson's and John Donne's poems is their opposing perspectives on death. Dickinson has an optimistic outlook on death, portraying it as an affectionate companion and imagining a pleasant afterlife. Donne, on the other hand, had a negative attitude about death, considering it an enemy to be confronted and obliterated.

Her hidden impulses and emotions impact Dickinson's positive attitude toward death. Dickinson, as a woman living in an era of patriarchy, may have felt limited and restrained by cultural standards and expectations. Her positive image of death as an affectionate companion reflects her yearning to be free of these cultural restraints. In death, she imagines emancipation and freedom from the constraints that have been placed on her. Dickinson's desire for better conditions in the afterlife also adds to her upbeat outlook. Her unconscious yearning for a more just and meaningful existence may be soothed by the prospect of a serene afterlife.

Donne's negative attitude toward death, on the other hand, originates from a variety of sources. Personal loss experiences influenced his perspective significantly. Donne had several close family members die, including his father, brother, sons, and wife, which likely aggravated his dread of death. These grief and separation experiences shaped his pessimistic view of death. Donne's love for life on earth and its joys also contributed to his reluctance to die. He was hesitant to leave behind the joys and experiences of life, which led to his rebellious and confrontational attitude toward death.

Dickinson and Donne's opposing perspectives regarding death stem from their personal experiences and unconscious thoughts. Dickinson's optimistic outlook is informed by her unconscious desire for liberation from societal restraints and her hope for a better afterlife. Donne's pessimistic perspective, on the other hand, is formed by his own experiences with loss.
and his commitment to earthly pleasures. These opposing sources of attitudes show how unique experiences, emotions, and aspirations impact one's view on death.

Another source for their attitudes towards death is the influence of societal factors on their unconscious mind and in turn on their poetry.

The effect of cultural forces can also be linked to Emily Dickinson's favorable attitude about death. Dickinson suffered cultural and societal limitations that hindered her personal independence and self-expression as a woman living in a patriarchal culture during the nineteenth century. For her, death signified a way out of these restraints and towards liberation. Her subliminal wishes for liberty and equality impacted her favorable view of death as a friendly companion.

In contrast, as a male, John Donne profited from patriarchal conventions and had a distinct viewpoint. He was in passion for the world and had desires and objectives to achieve inside it. His aversion to dying may originate from his unwillingness to give up his worldly goals and his fear of losing control over his life. Donne, as a famous figure in society, may have had advantages and authority that made him more motivated to hang on to life.

Even though, the fear of death was a common aspect in the two poems and was developed for poets by their unconscious minds, it still differs in its causes.

Donne continuously mocks death in his poem, describing him as a "slave" and reminding him of losing in the end, because he shall move to live an eternal life with the ones he loves and death will simply perish. This can be explained as an unconscious fear of death and the power it holds over humans, and Donne may have been in denial of the fact that one day he will have to leave the life that he cares about enormously.

Dickinson’s fear of death on the other hand was overcome more quickly than Donne’s, and the reason for that fear was simply the fear of the unknown process of death. Fear of the
unfathomable process of dying is a universal human fear that transcends conscious awareness. It appeals to deeper, underlying worries and impulses of self-preservation and the quest for control over existence and its final death. According to psychoanalytic theory, this fear lies in the unconscious mind, where concealed fears and desires are based.

The differences in attitudes about death, as well as the roots of these views, reflect the interaction of individual experiences, personal wants, and the social context in which the poets lived. Dickinson's optimistic attitude stems from her unconscious wishes for freedom and her reaction to societal constraints, whereas Donne's negative attitude is molded by his personal losses and connection to worldly life.

3.3.2. Insights and Results from the Psychoanalytic Comparison of the Two Poems

The comparison of Emily Dickinson's poem “Because I Could not Stop for Death” and John Donne's poem “Death, be not Proud” provides important insights into the complicated interplay between the conscious and unconscious mind in creating their perceptions on death. These findings give light on how internal and external factors, personal experiences, societal standards, and cultural influences determine people's attitudes regarding death.

One of the most important takeaways from the comparison is the common acceptance of death as a portal to the afterlife. Dickinson and Donne, both inspired by their conscious minds and religious beliefs, saw death as a transition. This shared perspective of death demonstrates the influence of external sources, notably religious teachings, on their view of mortality. Religion has a tremendous influence on their conscious thoughts and ideas about death, stressing the concept of an afterlife and the continuance of existence beyond physical death.

However, the psychoanalytic comparison reveals considerable differences in views about mortality. Emily Dickinson's positive outlook toward death, viewing it as a friendly companion and imagining a tranquil afterlife, is founded in her latent wishes for escape from
society's limitations and her expectation for better afterlife conditions. Dickinson's unconscious mind is impacted by her fight with societal limits and her wish to escape from those restraints as a woman living in a patriarchal society. Her optimistic attitude toward death shows a longing for transcendence and emancipation from societal restraints.

On the other hand, John Donne's pessimistic attitude about death originates from his own experiences of loss and his connection to worldly life. The fear of losing loved ones to death, as well as his aversion to abandoning the familiar and pleasant parts of life, form Donne's unconscious thoughts. His negative outlook toward death is a protective reaction fueled by his unconscious anxiety and the need to exert control over mortality.

Another interesting finding is the impact of sociocultural variables on their views regarding death. Dickinson's experience as a woman in a patriarchal society heightens her yearning to transcend societal restraints as it adds to her optimistic attitude about death. Donne, on the opposite hand, benefits from patriarchal traditions and is more devoted to the world, expressing a pessimistic attitude toward death.

It is also worth noting that, even though both poets share the same unconscious fear of death, their reasons for this fear differ, Donne’s comes from his unwillingness to leave this life, and a grudge he holds against death for taking his loved ones and not wanting to lose this battle against death, on the other hand, Dickinson’s fear stems from the simple fact that death is an unknown process, which makes her overcome it fast and regain her positive attitude towards death.

The contrast of the two poems reveals the various aspects of the human mind when confronted with the subject of death. Donne's study highlights the conscious integration of external influences, religious beliefs, and cultural standards, whereas Dickinson's analysis shows the speaker's unconscious wants, fears, and anxieties that affect his or her view on death.
Chapter Three: Literary Analysis

Conclusion

In this chapter, a psychoanalytic lens is used to examine the poems “Death, be not Proud” by John Donne and “Because I Could not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson. A look was taken at how the authors' personal histories and psychologies may have impacted their views on death. In addition to a comparison and contrast of the two poems, looking at how their themes, language, and imagery were similar and different, as well as how psychoanalytic theory might be utilized to illuminate these similarities and contrasts. Finally, a discussion about what the two poems' comparison and contrast tell about the poets' perspectives on life, death, and spirituality as well as how those perspectives could have been shaped by their respective cultural and historical settings.

A psychoanalytic comparison of Emily Dickinson's poetry “Because I Could not Stop for Death” and John Donne's poem “Death, be not Proud” demonstrates the intricate interaction of conscious and unconscious influences on their thoughts on death. While both poets define death as a portal to the afterlife, their views regarding death are markedly different. Dickinson's optimistic attitude is driven by her latent yearning to be free of societal restraints, whereas Donne's negative attitude is motivated by his own experiences of loss and commitment to worldly life. The study also highlights the influence of societal variables on their viewpoints. This contrast emphasizes the complicated interplay between both internal and external factors, emphasizing the complexities of human conceptions of death.

This chapter emphasizes the importance of studying poetry from a psychoanalytical angle and how doing so may help understand the personal experiences of the poets as well as their cultural and historical surroundings. Future study may look at, for example, how other poets from various historical and cultural backgrounds have handled the subject of death in their writing.
General Conclusion
General Conclusion

The idea of death in literature has been carefully investigated from a psychoanalytic standpoint throughout this dissertation. The use of psychoanalytic theory in literary analysis is underlined in chapter one, particularly in regard to the topic of death, it has been demonstrated that this strategy offers insightful perspectives into the subject's intricacies. The second chapter explores how frequently death appears in literature and how it influences characters' emotional and psychological well-being, it has also examined how symbolism contributes to the theme's communication. In chapter three, two poems—“Death, be not Proud” by John Donne and “Because I Could not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson—are in-depthly analyzed. Analyzing the writers' personal biographies, psychological profiles, and cultural and historical circumstances reveals a deeper understanding of their attitudes about death.

This research has shown how complex and multidimensional the issue of death is in literature, prompting a range of emotional and psychological responses in both characters and readers. By using psychoanalytic theory, more about how literature investigates and represents these reactions has been learned, shedding light on the intricate psychology of characters, themes, and symbols. Additionally, many authors approach the subject of death from various angles, molded by their unique experiences as well as the cultural and historical circumstances in which they lived.

This study presents a comparative analysis of two poems, one by John Donne and the other by Emily Dickinson, focusing on their distinct perspectives on death. Donne adopts a confrontational approach, challenging the power and arrogance of death, emphasizing its transient control. In contrast, Dickinson personifies death as a gentle companion, depicting it as a serene transition to the afterlife. She embraces death as liberation from societal constraints and envisions a tranquil and eternal existence beyond.
Both poets use a variety of literary devices to express their thoughts and feelings about death. “Death, be not Proud” by John Donne employs personification, addressing death as a personified entity. He frequently uses analogies, such as "slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men," to emphasize death's insignificance in comparison to other powers. Dickinson's poem “Because I Could not Stop for Death” uses powerful imagery to convey the voyage with death, including analogies like "the carriage held but ourselves and immortality." She also incorporates symbolism, as evidenced in the carriage ride depiction of the stages of life.

The perspective of psychoanalysis sheds light on the characters’ actions and attitudes toward death in these literary works. It focuses on how individuals' conscious and unconscious wants, anxieties, and experiences form their views on mortality. Donne's aversion to death originates from personal experiences of loss and devotion to earthly life. His aggressive approach is motivated by his latent fear of death's unknown features. Dickinson's optimistic attitude about death, on the other hand, stems from her underlying wishes for liberation from societal limitations and hope for a better afterlife. The psychoanalytic point of view reveals the intricate interaction of conscious and unconscious factors that shape the characters' interprets of death.

Past occurrences, relationships, and cultural origins all have a big impact on the poems' protagonists' attitudes regarding death. Donne's own experiences with losing loved ones to death exacerbate his distaste for it. His dedication to material life, as well as the patriarchal society’s influence forms his gloomy perspective. Dickinson's hardships as a woman in a patriarchal culture, on the other hand, contribute to her optimistic attitude toward death. Her quest for liberation from societal restraints and hope for better afterlife conditions stems from her cultural and personal experiences. The effect of societal forces and personal histories, as revealed via the psychoanalytic lens, gives insight into the many approaches and interpretations of death that individuals have.
General Conclusion

A better grasp of the poets' individual viewpoints on death is obtained by using psychoanalytic analysis and studying the literary strategies they utilize. The study of individual attitudes toward death, which are impacted by unconscious wants, anxieties, and personal experiences, sheds light on the intricacies of human responses to mortality and gives insights into the wider cultural and societal forces that form the person’s connection with death.

To sum up, it is essential and appealing to do a study on the psychoanalytic interpretation of the literary topic of death. This method has made it possible to comprehend the complex psychological underpinnings of characters, themes, and death-related symbols at a deeper level. Additionally, literature's examination of death offers readers a safe space to express their feelings and ideas about it, acting as a tool for healing and reflection. In conclusion, this dissertation has advanced understanding of the importance of death in literature and its deep influence on the human experience.
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Appendices
Appendix one

“Death, be not Proud” by John Donne

Death, be not Proud, though some have called thee

Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;

For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow

Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,

Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,

And soonest our best men with thee do go,

Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,

And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,

And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well

And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally

And death shall be no more;

Death, thou shalt die.
Appendix Two

Because I Could not Stop for Death by Emily Dickinson

Because I could not stop for Death –

He kindly stopped for me –

The Carriage held but just Ourselves –

And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste

And I had put away

My labor and my leisure too,

For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove

At Recess – in the Ring –

We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –

We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –

The Dews drew quivering and chill –

For only Gossamer, my Gown –

My Tippet – only Tulle –
We paused before a House that seemed

A Swelling of the Ground –

The Roof was scarcely visible –

The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet

Feels shorter than the Day

I first surmised the Horses' Heads

Were toward Eternity –
Appendix Three

John Donne’s Biography

John Donne was born in London in 1572, lived a life filled with significant personal and professional events. Donne's early years were impacted by religious tension and political upheaval as he grew up in a Catholic family at a period of religious struggle in England. Donne attended Hart Hall (now Hertford College) at Oxford but did not earn a degree. Instead, he concentrated himself in legal studies at the Thavies Inn and Lincoln's Inn, and he was admitted to the bar in 1597. Despite his legal studies, his primary interest was literature and poetry (Encyclopedia Britannica.)

Donne began working as a private secretary for Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, in 1601. During this period, Donne established himself as a smart and eloquent public speaker. However, his life took a momentous turn when, against her father's wishes, he secretly married Anne More in 1601. This action resulted in his firing from his employment and years of financial difficulty. Donne tragically lost numerous family members, which had a profound influence on him. Anne More Donne died in 1617, shortly after giving birth to their twelfth child. This occurrence caused Donne to experience tremendous anguish and spiritual inquiry. During this period, he went through a spiritual and religious transition that led him to accept the Anglican Church and be ordained as an Anglican priest in 1615 (ibid).

Donne's final years were distinguished by his developing reputation as a strong and perceptive preacher. He was named Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London in 1621, a position he retained until his death. His lectures were known for their intellectual depth, rhetorical flair, and inclusion of philosophical topics. Aged of 59 years, John Donne died in London on March 31, 1631. His actual cause of death is unknown; however it is thought to have been a mix of stomach cancer and other problems. He was interred at St. Paul's Cathedral, where a memorial monument was constructed in his honor (ibid).
Appendix Four

Emily Dickinson’s Biography

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was an American poet widely considered as one of the most innovative and influential voices in American literature. Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830, in Amherst, Massachusetts, and spent most of her life at the Homestead, her family's house which was a somewhat prosperous household. Her father, Edward Dickinson, was a lawyer and an Amherst College trustee. Emily Norcross Dickinson, her mother, was a reserved and quiet woman. Emily had two siblings: Austin, her older brother, and Lavinia, her younger sister (Academy of American Poets).

Dickinson faced major impediments to her creative ambitions since she lived in a patriarchal environment where women were expected to focus on home responsibilities and comply with cultural norms during this time period. Dickinson, on the other hand, defied these expectations by turning to poetry for consolation and expression (ibid).

Dickinson was fascinated by the topic of death, and she tackled it from a unique standpoint. Her poetry about death frequently questioned traditional religious ideas and ventured into metaphysical regions, investigating the limits of life and the afterlife. During her lifetime, Emily Dickinson's poetry went mostly unnoticed, with just a few dozen of her approximately 1,800 pieces published anonymously. Her sister Lavinia found her huge collection of poetry after her death in 1886 and made it her duty to have them published. The first book of Dickinson's poems was released in 1890, edited by friends Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, demonstrating the depth and brilliance of her poetic creativity (ibid).

Emily Dickinson died at the age of 55 on May 15, 1886, leaving behind a unique collection of work that continues to captivate readers and inspire generations of poets and literary enthusiasts (ibid).
Abstract

This study takes a psychoanalytic approach to the issue of death in literature, concentrating on the opposing perspectives of John Donne and Emily Dickinson. The study looks into how death affects the emotional and psychological well-being of characters, as well as the function of symbols in expressing the issue. A better understanding of the poets' ideas on death is revealed by evaluating their personal lives, psychological profiles, and cultural and historical circumstances. Donne adopts a combative posture, questioning the force of death, but Dickinson personifies death as a delightful companion and accepts it as emancipation. To describe their thoughts and feelings about death, both poets use literary strategies such as personification, analogies, and vivid imagery. The psychoanalytic perspective emphasizes the interaction of conscious and unconscious aspects in determining characters' views of death, which are impacted by past events, relationships, and societal standards. This research contributes to the knowledge of the complex psychological components of death in literature, as well as its tremendous influence on the human experience.

Keywords: Death, Emily Dickinson, John Donne, literature, psychoanalytic theory.

Résumé

Cette étude adopte une approche psychanalytique de la question de la mort dans la littérature, en se concentrant sur les perspectives opposées de John Donne et Emily Dickinson. L’étude examine comment la mort affecte le bien-être émotionnel et psychologique des personnages, ainsi que le rôle des symboles dans l’expression de cette question. Une meilleure compréhension des idées des poètes sur la mort est révélée en évaluant leurs vies personnelles, leurs profils psychologiques, ainsi que leurs contextes culturels et historiques. Donne adopte une posture combative, remettant en question la force de la mort, tandis que Dickinson personnifie la mort en tant que compagnon enchanteur et l’accepte comme une libération. Pour décrire leurs pensées et leurs sentiments sur la mort, les deux poètes utilisent des stratégies littéraires telles que la personnification, les analogies et des images vives. La perspective psychanalytique met l’accent sur l’interaction des aspects conscients et inconscients pour déterminer les points de vue des personnages sur la mort, qui sont influencés par des événements passés, des relations et des normes sociétales. Cette recherche contribue à la connaissance des composantes psychologiques complexes de la mort dans la littérature, ainsi que de son influence considérable sur l’expérience humaine.

Mots-clés: Emily Dickinson, John Donne, littérature, mort, perspective psychanalytique.