



Overview On Variety Of Emily Dickinson's Themes In Poetry

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ABSTRACT :

Emily Dickinson, born in 1830 and passing away in 1886, is widely regarded as a prominent female poet in the United States. The author engaged in the composition of poetry that included a diverse range of subjects, including but not limited to death, nature, love, grief, and suffering. Among these themes, the motif of death assumes a significant and captivating part in her poetic works. She had composed a total of around five hundred poems centered on the subject matter of mortality. Similar to the majority of authors, Emily Dickinson's literary works revolved on her own experiences and subjects that captivated her interest. Demonstrating acute observational skills, the individual in question used a diverse range of imagery derived from several domains such as nature, religion, law, music, business, medicine, fashion, and household activities. These visual representations were utilized to delve into overarching concepts that transcend specific contexts, including the marvels of the natural world, the essence of personal identity, the enigmatic nature of mortality and eternal life, and the complexities of love.

KEYWORDS : Complexities , Demonstrating , Religion , Representations , Imagery.

VARIETY OF DICKINSON'S THEMES:

Dickinson did not provide a formal declaration of her aesthetic aims, and due to the diverse range of her themes, her literary works cannot be easily categorised into a single genre. Dickinson has been esteemed as a Transcendentalist, alongside Emerson, whose writings she held in admiration. In contrast, Farr gives an alternative perspective by saying that Dickinson's unwaveringly analytical mindset serves to diminish the lofty ideals of Transcendentalism. In addition to the primary subjects expounded upon subsequently, Dickinson's poetry typically incorporates elements of humour, puns, sarcasm, and satire.

Flowers and gardens: Farr asserts that the primary focus of Dickinson's poetry and letters revolves on the subject of flowers, with numerous allusions to gardens serving as a conduit to an imagined domain. Within this realm, flowers often serve as symbolic representations of various activities and feelings. The author draws a parallel between

certain flowers, namely gentians and anemones, with the qualities of youth and humility, while other flowers are linked to prudence and knowledge. She frequently mailed her poems, along with letters and nosegays, to her acquaintances. Farr notes that one of Dickinson's early poems, which was published in 1859, appears to merge her poetry itself with the posies.

The Master poems: Emily Dickinson authored a considerable anthology of poems that were devoted to a someone identified as Signor, Sir, and Master, who is perpetually regarded as Dickinson's beloved. The poetry that incorporates confessions is sometimes characterised as being intensely introspective and emotionally distressing for the reader. Furthermore, it frequently draws upon analogies derived from literary and artistic creations of the era in which Dickinson wrote. The Dickinson family held the belief that these poems were directed towards real individuals, but this perspective is often dismissed by researchers. Farr, for instance, claims that the concept of the Master is a highly intricate composite being, embodying both human attributes and godlike qualities. It has been suggested that the Master could potentially be regarded as a form of Christian muse, given its unique traits.

Morbidity: Dickinson's poetic works encapsulate her enduring preoccupation with the themes of illness, mortality, and the concept of death from an early stage in her life and throughout her whole literary career. It is noteworthy that despite her status as an unmarried woman from New England, her poetry contains allusions to a spectrum of mortality-related phenomena, including crucifixion, drowning, hanging, suffocation, freezing, premature burial, shooting etc. She maintained their keen observations of the powerful impact of a transcendent force and the subsequent integration of these experiences into their cognitive abilities. These insights were frequently accompanied by vivid depictions of intense longing and lack. According to Vivian Pollak, a historian specialising in the works of Emily Dickinson, these parallels can be seen as an autobiographical reflection of Dickinson's persona characterised by a sense of yearning and deprivation, a manifestation of her dependent self-perception as little, weak, and vulnerable. Emily Dickinson's poems of great psychological complexity delve into the topic that the absence of a desire for life ultimately leads to the demise of one's identity, positioning this notion at the intersection of murder and suicide.

Gospel poems: Emily Dickinson's body of work reflects a significant fascination with the teachings of Jesus Christ, which persisted throughout her career. In fact, a considerable number of her poems were directly addressed to him. She emphasises the Gospels' relevance to today's world and retells them, frequently using wit and American colloquial language. As per the findings of Dorothy Oberhaus, a researcher, a salient feature that serves to unite Christian poets is their deep veneration for the existence of Jesus Christ. According to Oberhaus, Emily Dickinson's work, along with that of Gerard Manley Hopkins, T.S. Eliot, and W.H. Auden, can be categorised within the poetic tradition of Christian devotion. This classification is based on the presence of deeply embedded frameworks that are apparent in Dickinson's writings. Dickinson revisits an old theme in

a nativity poem by using humour and lightness.

Undiscovered Continent: Suzanne Juhasz asserts that Emily Dickinson had the belief that the mind and spirit were tangible realms that could be actively explored, and that she personally engaged in such exploration for a considerable duration of her existence. This highly secluded site is commonly known as the unexplored landmass and the environment of the psyche, adorned with depictions of the natural world. The concept of a personal dwelling, wherein an individual coexists with their several identities, is occasionally depicted through the utilisation of sombre and foreboding imagery, such as castles or prisons replete with corridors and chambers. An illustration that combines many of these concepts is as follows: Me from Myself – to banish – / Had I Art – / Impregnable my Fortress / Unto All Heart – / But since myself—assault Me – / How have I peace / Except by subjugating / Consciousness. / And since We're mutual Monarch / How this be / Except by Abdication – / Me – of Me?.

Reception

In 1880, Dickinson composed *A Route of Evanescence* and sent it to Thomas Higginson.

The extensive diffusion of Dickinson's poems was initially helped by the proliferation of posthumous publication. The collection of poetry, published in 1890, received a diverse reception at its initial release, including support from Higginson and a favourable endorsement from William Dean Howells, a respected editor at *Harper's Magazine*. In Higginson's prologue to the original edition of Dickinson's published work, he asserts that the poem exhibits a notable degree of comprehension and perception albeit lacking the refinement and discipline that could have been acquired through her experience in the field of publishing. The evaluation that her work was characterised as incomplete and unsatisfactory is consistent with the perspectives articulated in the essays of the New Critics throughout the 1930s.

In the year 1891, Maurice Thompson, who held the position of literary editor at *The Independent* for a duration of twelve years, made an observation on her poetry, noting a peculiar amalgamation of exceptional distinctiveness and novelty. While Dickinson's endeavour received acclaim from certain critics, it faced significant opposition due to her audacious and nonconformist literary approach. The writing of Dickinson was subject to criticism by British author Andrew Lang, who argued that for poetry to have validity, it necessitates adherence to structure and language, as well as the use of rhyme when it purports to employ rhyme. The accumulated knowledge and inherent characteristics of humanity necessitate a significant amount of attention and consideration. In the January 1892 edition of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, a poet and novelist, expressed his critique of Emily Dickinson's lyrical style, asserting that she exhibited an overtly unusual and whimsical imagination. She exhibited a profound inclination towards the mystical elements included in the works of Blake, and was notably impacted by the stylistic tendencies observed in the writings of Emerson. However, the lack of coherence and structure in her verses is detrimental. It is not advisable for an eccentric, imaginative,

partially educated individual residing in a remote New England village (or any other location) to disregard the principles of gravity and grammar without facing consequences.

The scholarly examination of Dickinson's poetry was limited during the period spanning from 1897 to the early 1920s. At the onset of the 20th century, there was a growing interest in the poetry of Emily Dickinson that extended beyond a limited audience, prompting several commentators to perceive her work as inherently modern. Instead of perceiving Dickinson's poetry style as a manifestation of inadequate knowledge or talent, contemporary critics suggest that the flaws in her work were intentionally crafted for artistic purposes. In her 1915 essay, Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant characterised the poet's inspiration as audacious and described her as a singular bloom that emerged from the harsh terrain of New England. Given the increasing prominence of modernist poetry throughout the 1920s, Dickinson's departure from the established literary conventions of the 19th century ceased to be regarded as unexpected or objectionable by subsequent cohorts of readers. Dickinson's unexpected recognition as a prominent female poet by numerous reviewers led to the emergence of a devoted group of followers.

During the 1930s, several prominent figures within the New Criticism movement, including R. P. Blackmur, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, and Yvor Winters, undertook a meticulous evaluation of the literary merit inherent in Emily Dickinson's poetic works. According to literary scholar Roland Hagenbüchle, the ideas of affirmation and prohibition advocated by Dickinson have demonstrated notable significance within the realm of Dickinson studies. In a landmark critical article published in 1937, Blackmur sought to focus and articulate the primary reasons in favour of and against the poet's eminence. He stated that she was a poet who wrote with the same tireless dedication as some ladies engage in cooking or knitting. The individual's aptitude for linguistic expression, coupled with the prevailing cultural circumstances of her day, led her to pursue poetry as opposed to engaging in the creation of antimacassars. She arrived just at the opportune moment for a specific genre of poetry, namely the poetry characterised by refined and idiosyncratic perspectives.

The advent of the second wave of feminism resulted in an increased cultural empathy towards her as a poet of the female gender. In the initial collection of scholarly analyses examining Dickinson's work via a feminist lens, she is largely acknowledged as the eminent female poet in the English literary canon. Historical biographers and theorists frequently drew a contrast between Emily Dickinson's dual identities as a woman and a poet. George Whicher, in his 1952 work entitled *This Was a Poet: A Critical Biography of Emily Dickinson*, posited a remark indicating that Emily Dickinson potentially sought a sense of fulfilment through her poetic endeavours, potentially compensating for any perceived lack of fulfilment she may have experienced in her societal role as a woman. Conversely, feminist critique argues that there is a significant and influential correlation between Dickinson's gender identity and her position as a poet. In her work titled *Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson*, Adrienne Rich puts forth the

proposition that Emily Dickinson's position as a female poet endowed her with a certain degree of authority. Rich argues that Dickinson consciously opted for seclusion, fully aware of her exceptional nature and her personal requirements. Furthermore, Dickinson meticulously curated her social circle and exerted control over the allocation of her time. Rich emphasises that Dickinson's choices were not idiosyncratic or whimsical; rather, they were driven by her unwavering determination to endure, harness her abilities, and exercise prudent management of resources.

There exists scholarly inquiry on the poet's sexual orientation, with certain scholars positing that the extensive collection of letters and poems addressed to Susan Gilbert Dickinson suggests the presence of a lesbian romantic relationship. Additionally, these researchers engage in speculation regarding the potential influence of this relationship on the poet's literary works. Literary scholars have claimed that Susan played a pivotal role as the primary object of sensual affection in Emily Dickinson's life.

Legacy

During the early 20th century, Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Millicent Todd Bingham played a crucial role in preserving and promoting the literary legacy of Emily Dickinson. Bianchi advocated for the recognition of Dickinson's poetic accomplishments. Bianchi acquired both The Evergreens estate and the copyright for her aunt's poems through inheritance from her parents. As a result, she published notable works, including *Emily Dickinson Face to Face* and *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, which effectively aroused public interest in her aunt's life and writings. Bianchi's literary works propagated narratives about her aunt within the framework of familial customs, individual remembrance, and written exchanges. Conversely, Millicent Todd Bingham adopted a perspective that was characterised by objectivity and realism in her portrayal of the poet.

Emily Dickinson is currently regarded as a formidable and enduring presence within American society. Although Dickinson was first known for her unique and introverted nature, she has since been widely acknowledged as a pioneering poet who exhibited early signs of modernist tendencies. In a literary composition dating back to 1891, William Dean Howells expressed the belief that the unique poetry of Emily Dickinson constituted a noteworthy contribution by America, specifically New England, to the global literary canon. Howells asserted that the inclusion of Dickinson's work in any comprehensive literary account was imperative, as it represented a distinctive and significant achievement. The literary scholar Harold Bloom has classified her alongside prominent American poets such as Walt Whitman, Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost, T.S. Eliot, and Hart Crane, recognising her as a significant figure in the field. Additionally, in 1994, he included her in a list of 26 essential writers of Western culture.

Dickinson's works are commonly included in American literature and poetry curricula across educational institutions in the United States, spanning from middle school to college levels. Her poetry is frequently featured in anthologies and has been used as lyrical material for art songs composed by renowned musicians such as Aaron Copland,

Nick Peros and Michael Tilson Thomas. Numerous educational institutions have been founded in honour of the renowned poet, Emily Dickinson. One notable example is the presence of Emily Dickinson Elementary Schools in Bozeman, Montana, Redmond, Washington, and New York City. Several literary publications, such as *The Emily Dickinson Journal*, which serves as the official publication of the Emily Dickinson International Society, have been established with the purpose of analysing and studying the literary contributions of Emily Dickinson. On August 28, 1971, the United States Postal Service released an 8-cent commemorative stamp as part of the "American Poet" series, paying tribute to Dickinson. Emily Dickinson was honoured with induction into the National Women's Hall of Fame in the year 1973. In 1976, a theatrical production titled *The Belle of Amherst* debuted on Broadway, receiving numerous accolades. Subsequently, the play underwent an adaptation for television.

The herbarium of Emily Dickinson, currently housed in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, was officially published in 2006 under the title "Emily Dickinson's Herbarium" by Harvard University Press. Dickinson's initial compilation of the work occurred during her tenure at Amherst Academy. It has a total of 424 meticulously preserved plant specimens, meticulously arranged across 66 pages within a securely bound album. An online platform provides a digital replica of the herbarium. The Special Collections department at Amherst Jones Library houses an extensive Emily Dickinson Collection, which encompasses around seven thousand items. This collection comprises various materials such as original manuscript poems and letters, family correspondence, scholarly articles and books, newspaper clippings, theses, plays, photographs, as well as contemporary artwork and prints. Amherst College's Archives and Special Collections has a significant collection of manuscripts and correspondence authored by Dickinson, alongside a lock of her hair and the sole authenticated image of the poet. In the year 1965, the Homestead was acquired by Amherst College as a means of acknowledging Dickinson's increasing prominence as a poet. The establishment was made accessible to the general public for guided visits, while concurrently fulfilling the role of a faculty dwelling for an extended period of time. The establishment of the Emily Dickinson Museum took place in 2003, following the transfer of ownership of the Evergreens property to the college. The Evergreens had been previously inhabited by descendants of the Dickinson family until 1988.

Emily Dickinson's life and works have been the source of inspiration to artists, particularly to feminist-oriented artists, of a variety of mediums. A few notable examples are as follows:

- The feminism-themed art Judy Chicago's 1979 work *The Dinner Party* includes a place setting for Emily Dickinson.
- Both the novelization (co-written by Kate Pullinger) and the movie *The Piano* by Jane Campion were influenced by the works of the Bront sisters and Emily Dickinson.
- A character who studies literature at a fictional New England institution in Pamela

Hansford's humorous campus book. Johnson Night and Quiet Who is present? seeks to establish Emily Dickinson's covert dipsomania. He loses his work due to his addiction.

- The Emily Dickinson Reader, authored by Paul Legault and published in 2012, presents a comprehensive collection of Emily Dickinson's poetry in the form of an English-to-English translation.
- In Terence Davies' 2016 biographical film A Quiet Passion, the character of poet Emily Dickinson is portrayed by Cynthia Nixon.
- Various composers, such as Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, Elliot Carter, Libby Larsen and Judith Weir, have adapted Dickinson's works to music.
- A comedy from 2018 called Wild Nights with Emily centres on the romance between Emily Dickinson and Susan Huntington Gilbert Dickinson.
- The Dangling Conversation by Paul Simon describes a couple who are having trouble communicating because they read different poets, Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost.

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